

VAMPIRE SPA

CHRISSI RAE MATHIS

Tall. Tan. Bold.
With silver-green eyes,
and hair of chestnut gold.

Mum buys C's outfits at only the poshest stores,
a seasonal wardrobe,
revolving like doors.

Today is BIG.

CHRISSI's 15 years old!
To celebrate, a Spa Day!,
at only the best (duh), LE ZOLD'S.

Mum checks in on the cell.

Daddy sends Birthday Girl his best.
And for missing the big day,
promises an extra fat check.

At the spa, they arrive.

The girls hop out one by one.
First CHRISSI,
then Lizzi,
then Midge,
Beth,
and Sun.

All checked in. The girls are set!

Hair
Nails.
The works.

Then lunch in the garden and shopping at Burt's.

First stop?

The salon.

CHRISSI sets before a mirror.

At her bright, lit reflection,
she purses and she peers.

And just as **C**'s busy admiring her view,
batting her eyes,
contemplating a new do,
her stylist arrives and breaks her reverie.

"MISS MATHIS, WELCOME!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

MY NAME IS MELODY."

CHRISSI's eyes fling wide open.

She gapes at **MELODY**'s face;

Heart-shaped and angelic,
the epitome of grace!

MEL's skin! Smooth! Poreless!

Tanned as if from paradise.

The exact, perfect color of **C**'s double, nonfat latte.
Caramel. Always iced.

And that hair! Black and shiny like **C**'s newest patent purse.

Sharp green eyes.

Dimpled chin.

UGH, could this get any worse!?

But then **MEL** flashed a smile,
a bright, fanged, berry curve.
And, horror of horrors,

CHRISSI realized...

MEL is even prettier than her!

No...No...NO!

C looked around the room,
enraged and perplexed to find,
that she wasn't the hottest girl there for the very first time.

Every aproned figure,
the girls and the boys,
were glittering, perfect statues.
"IS THERE NO ONE UGLY YOU EMPLOY?!"

CHRISSI's outburst stilled the room.
Even her friends stared.
Thank goodness for **MEL's** diversion.
"WHY DON'T WE START ON YOUR HAIR?"

Another freakish beauty,
this one tall, blonde and fair,
Washed, massaged, conditioned,
CHRISSI's frequently envied hair.

Then back to **MEL's** neat station.
Back before **MEL's** mirror.
"ALRIGHT MISS CHRISSI," MELODY posed,
"TELL ME, WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?"

**"WELL, EVERYONE SAYS IT'S PERFECT SO THERE'S NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO...
I GUESS SOME LIGHT LAYERS.
BLOW DRY.
AND LIKE, MAYBE SOME CURLS TOO."**

MEL flashed her sparkling fangs
and quickly got to work.
Comb out.
Spritz.
Snip. Snip. Snip.

She flowed about her station,
a shining blur without a jerk.

"15 TODAY!" Mel said as she stilled.

**"I REMEMBER MY 15TH TOO. IT WASN'T MY FAVORITE BIRTHDAY...
THE CIVIL WAR HAD BEGUN A YEAR EARLIER. IT WAS..."**

she paused to think,

"HM, THAT WAS IN 1862."

C, who hates math and believes she's not too bright,
had heard of the Civil War...

*That would make MEL...
well really, really old...
Right?*

"ANYHOW," MEL buzzed on.

"TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF."

She smiled warmly as she clipped up hair,
then gently pulled some out.

"WELL MY FRIENDS AND I GO TO ST. ANTHONY HIGH.

IT'S LIKE REALLY EXPENSIVE TOO.

WE LIKE FASHION...

SHOPPING...

NAILS...

YACHTS...

THAT'S REALLY ALL WE DO."

"WELL THAT'S NICE.

FRIENDS ARE IMPORTANT.

BUT I WAS ASKING MORE ABOUT YOU..."

"UM, I DON'T KNOW?" **C** stuttered, confused and again annoyed.

"WHAT DO YOU DO APART FROM YOUR FRIENDS?"

**DO YOU LIKE MUSIC? MOVIES? ART? STUDYING? READING?
WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?**

CHRISSI glared.

Hadn't she just answered that?

And then, as if reading her mind,

MEL beamed like a fine, sly cat.

Pointed.

Fierce.

And yet somehow kind.

"WELL...I LOVE FOREIGN MOVIES.

I MAKE CANDLES IN MY SPARE TIME.

I LIKE READING DIRTY ROMANCE NOVELS...

BUT WE'LL PRETEND I DIDN'T TELL YOU THAT.

I LIKE TO BAKE.

I LOVE WINE."

C's nose wrinkled.

Confused.

Her eyes squinted.

Wary.

Her head cocked to the side.

**"I DON'T GET IT...YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL...BEING ANYTHING ELSE IS
LIKE TOTALLY UNNECESSARY."**

At this **MEL** actually laughed out loud,

"GIRL, I THOUGHT THAT TOO.

SADLY IT TOOK ME ALMOST 90 YEARS TO UNDERSTAND.

BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY FOR YOU.

"OUR WORLD IS OBSESSED WITH THE SUPERFICIAL,"

MEL went on emphatically.

"BEAUTY IS WORSHIPPED BEYOND SUBSTANCE,

**FASHION BEYOND PURPOSE,
WOMEN'S BEAUTY IS TREATED LIKE A PUBLIC COMMODITY."**

**BUT BEAUTY ISN'T SPECIAL.
IT ISN'T EVEN RARE.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH A PERSON'S VALUE.
IRONICALLY, THE BEAUTY OF LIFE
IS IN WHAT'S LEARNED,
DEVELOPED,
GOODNESS GROWN...
IT'S IN WHAT'S SHARED."**

So many of these words,
on **CHRISSI**, they were lost,
and yet she felt a stir.
Like some sleeping giant in her heart,
her mind,
her soul,
was waking with a gentle purr.

MEL brushed through **C**'s locks in silence.
The curling iron's light blinked.
CHRISSI gazed aimlessly through the room,
feeling suddenly foolish.
Silly.
Empty.
Unsure what to think.

Cute.

Beautiful.

Pretty.

Fine.

Fair.

Slender.

Hot.

These words are what she clung to.

It's the only attention she'd ever got.

*Never fun, smart, creative.
 No bright, scrappy wit.
 But at least she's pretty.
 That's who she is...
 That's enough...
or is it?*

Again as if by magic, MEL spoke on unsaid thoughts.
 Her emerald eyes shone.
 Her adroit hands curled.
 Her bi-cuspids, the mirror lights caught.

"IT FEELS NICE TO BE CALLED CUTE...BEAUTIFUL...PRETTY..."

MEL winked a knowing eye.

**"AND IT'S HARD TO SEE IN OURSELVES WHAT NO ONE EVER HAS,
 BUT IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE TRY."**

"WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?" CHRISSI asked.

MEL sighed, shaping a long, golden curl.

"WELL, BEFORE BECOMING WHAT I AM NOW..."

C suspected that MEL didn't mean her styling career.

"I WAS A VERY LOST GIRL."

**"I WAS JUST LIKE YOU;
 BEAUTIFUL. POPULAR. PRAISED.
 BUT SELFISH, UNINTERESTED, EMPTY.
 AND SELF CONSCIOUS IN ALMOST EVERY WAY.**

**THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEAUTY.
 I'M A STYLIST,"**

MEL explained, gleaming and lithe.
**FASHION AND TRENDS ARE WHAT I DO.
 BUT YOU'VE GOT TO KEEP BALANCE.
 PERSPECTIVE.**

YOUR IMAGE SHOULDN'T DOMINATE YOUR LIFE.

FOR WOMEN ESPECIALLY,
 IF YOU'RE "PRETTY ENOUGH,"
 THE WORLD SEES LITTLE ELSE.
 SO IT'S UP TO YOU TO DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE,
 TO BECOME SOMEONE YOU RESPECT FOR HER MIND AND HER SOUL,
 NOT JUST HER FRIENDS, FACE, OR WEALTH.

MEL laid her tools aside.
 She plucked a few bottles her way.

"YOU HUMANS...YOU EVOLVE SO SLOW..." she mumbled to herself as
 she coated **CHRISSE**'s curls with spray.

"OUR FACADES ARE CIRCUMSTANTIAL,
 A PRODUCT OF HABIT AND GENES.
 IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'RE BORN WITH THAT MAKES A PERSON
 BENEFICIAL OR HAPPY.
 IT'S WHAT YOU DO WITH IT.
 IT'S THE THINGS YOU CHOOSE TO BE.

Sprays aside, tools down,
 MEL smoothed a few rebel hairs.
 "I'VE SAID TOO MUCH TODAY.
 I GUESS I JUST CAN'T HELP MYSELF;
 AFTER ALL... I'VE BEEN THERE.

I JUST THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW.
 EVERY GIRL SHOULD.
 YOU'RE NOT JUST WHAT OTHER PEOPLE DECREE
 YOU'RE MORE THAN YOUR FACE OR YOUR FIGURE.
 AND TO ANSWER YOUR PREVIOUS QUESTION,
 I GUESS I'M TELLING YOU THIS BECAUSE I WISH MORE PEOPLE
 WOULD HAVE TOLD ME."

MEL stepped back, her arms out wide, a signal she was done.

"ACTUALLY, I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. LET'S JUST SHAVE IT OFF!"

Silence...

Then **CHRISSI** burst out laughing!

"I'M JUST KIDDING!"

"OH MY GOD! AH, AND YOU THINK THAT YOU'RE NOT FUN!"

I did think that,

CHRISSI thought to herself.

In my head... I didn't say it aloud.

As she left, she turned and waved at MEL,
now sipping a blood-red smoothie,
fangs shining,
with her vampiric, stylist crowd.

Vampires...

the thought shook **CHRISSI**.

But she scoffed and followed her friends,
on through the salon to where their nails would be done.

C's color? A deep, purply, red called "Love 'til the Berry End."

Hair.

Nails.

The Works.

They lunched in the garden while they discussed skipping Burt's.
Over soup, sandwiches, and a lovely fruit display,
they decided, instead of shopping,
to visit the Oscar de La Renta exhibit at their local MFA.

It was here wandering amidst the designs.

The elegance.

The grace,

That **C**, for the first time,

felt her stuck, ignorant fears oddly displaced.

Somewhere deep inside,
at **CHRISSI**'s very core,
she felt a curiosity to know herself, to try something new!
Hmph, maybe she'd even learn about the Civil War. ♥