

NO FANGS

by Hera Lindsay Bird

It was midnight in Transylvania, and Madeline was bored. She decided to go for a walk. The night was warm and full of stars, and sitting outside the wrought iron gates was a girl. Madeline had very little contact with humans. Nobody ever came to the castle – not on *purpose*. The villagers were scared of them, which wasn't surprising. Besides, as Great Aunt Lilith said, it wasn't polite to chit-chat with your food.

The girl was holding a sign. "Fangs but NO Fangs!" it said. She looked to be about Madeline's age, give or take four hundred years.

"Hi," the girl said cheerfully, as if Madeline weren't a supernatural being who could drain her blood in ten minutes. The girl poured a drink from her purple thermos.

"What are you doing?" Madeline asked.

"Protesting," the girl said.

"About what?"

"You, I guess."

They looked at each other for a moment. The girl had blue hair. Her jeans had rips in the knees.

"I'm Lydia, from the village. People are terrified of you. They won't leave their houses – and I understand why. One night, on my way home from tennis, I had to knock your father out with my racquet!"

"We're vampires," Madeline said.

"Well *obviously*. But that doesn't mean you can drink people's blood without their permission."

"It's not like we have a choice," Madeline said. "It's genetic."

"It's the twenty-first century. You have choices!"

Madeline ignored this. "Listen. You should leave. My father will be back soon. He'll probably recognise you."

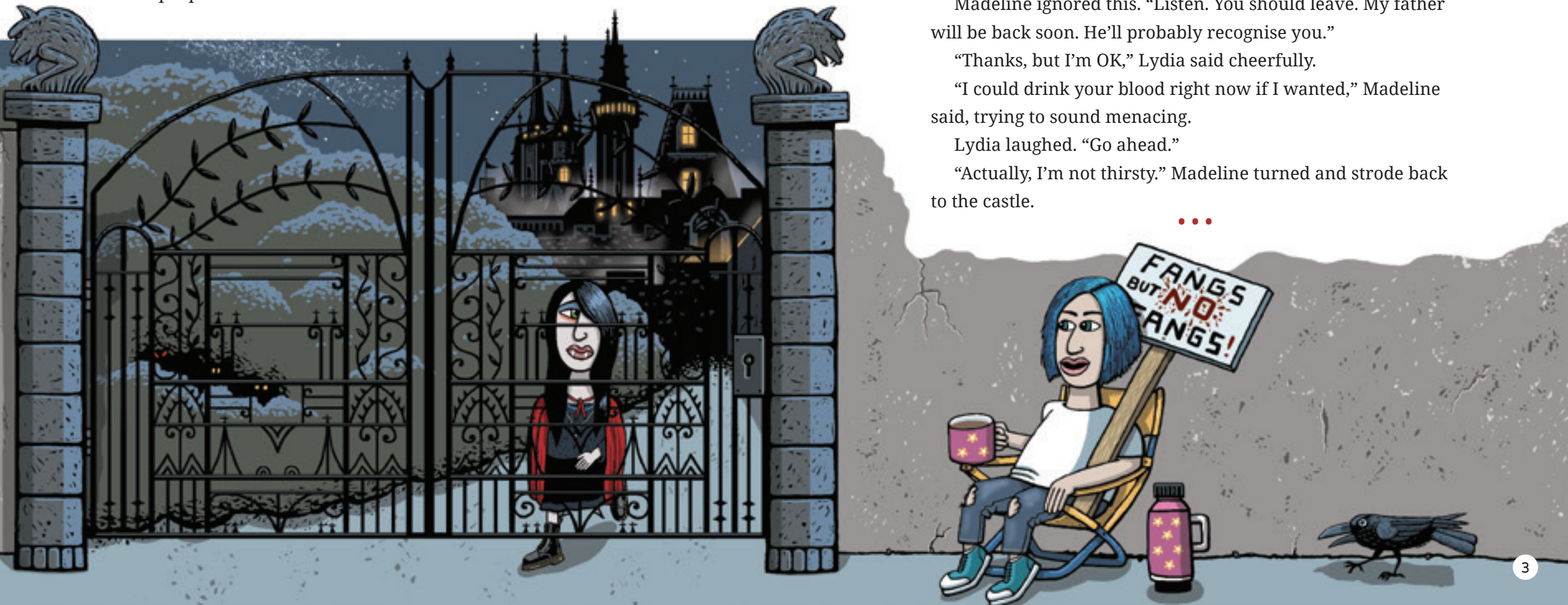
"Thanks, but I'm OK," Lydia said cheerfully.

"I could drink your blood right now if I wanted," Madeline said, trying to sound menacing.

Lydia laughed. "Go ahead."

"Actually, I'm not thirsty." Madeline turned and strode back to the castle.

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The next night, Lydia was back. Madeline watched through her binoculars. She was sitting in her yellow deck chair reading *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. Madeline couldn't decide if Lydia was brave or plain stupid.

In the meantime, she would do some research. Lydia was right. It was the twenty-first century. There were options.

Madeline typed "blood substitute" into her laptop. Hundreds of results came up. There were products made to taste like athletes' blood, and there was "blood" from vegetarians. One brand – Fangs for Nothing – promised all the nutritional benefits of real blood with a money-back guarantee. Madeline wrinkled her nose. Despite the options, nothing appealed.

That night at dinner, she told her father about Lydia. He was incredulous. "Does she know we're *vampires*?"

"I think that's the whole point," Madeline said.

"I guess we can always drink her blood if she gets too irritating."

Madeline sighed and put down her soup spoon.

"What's wrong?" her father asked. "It's B negative, your favourite."

"Why is blood your solution to everything? You know there are new products on the market that taste just like the real thing."

"While you're under this roof, you'll respect tradition!"

"And if I refuse?"

"Then you'll go hungry." Her father turned into a bat and flew away.

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On the third night, it rained. After her father left, Madeline went downstairs with an umbrella.

Lydia was shivering.

"Why don't you protest inside?"

Madeline asked. "We could play cards."

"Not until your father stops drinking my friends," said Lydia politely.

If it were possible, Madeline would have blushed. "He's been getting his own way for five thousand years," she said. "He won't change."

Lydia held up her book. "In the end, even *Dracula* was beaten by a girl."

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The fourth night, Madeline decided to cook. She had a recipe book: *The Ethical Bloodsucker*. Her aunt had sent it from California. The recipe required plasma substitute and tomato soup. To be on the safe side, Madeline added red food colouring and an extra handful of salt. Then she poured the blood-warm liquid into two bowls.

Her father was in a very good mood. "Some high school students were having a party in the cemetery," he said. "I jumped out from behind a tombstone. You should have seen their faces!" He sat down at the table, pleased with himself. "I'm hungry," he said. "Is that girl still outside?"

"Yes. I've been getting to know her," Madeline said.



“What’s her blood type?”
Madeline ignored this. “I made dinner,” she said.
Her father took a spoonful of soup. And then another. Then he spat the red liquid all over the table. “What is that?” he gasped. “Are you trying to poison me?”

“It’s from a recipe book,” Madeline said, affronted.
“We don’t need recipe books. We’re vampires!”
“Would it hurt to be a little less prehistoric?
Has it ever occurred to you that the only reason I don’t have friends is because you treat the locals like human milkshakes?”

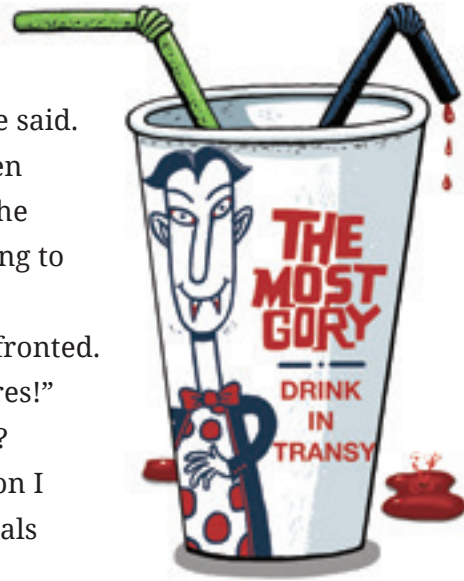
“Well I’m certainly not drinking this stuff every night.”
Madeline tasted the soup and choked a little herself. “We can order a synthetic substitute off the Internet. You won’t know the difference.”
“I won’t have you turning into a shampire like that crazy aunt of yours! Drinking blood is nothing to be ashamed of. It’s what we do.”

“I’d rather have friends.”
“I won’t discuss this,” her father said. He took his napkin and wiped angrily at his mouth. “And I won’t be told what to do by a pair of eleven-year-old girls.”

“I’ve been eleven for four hundred years!”
“Then start acting like it,” he snapped.
Madeline stood abruptly, knocking her bowl of soup. The thick red liquid dripped slowly onto the stone floor. She was sick of this gloomy, depressing castle with all its candles and black velvet. She was sick of the way people looked at her. She was sick of being alone.

Madeline left the room, crossed the courtyard, flung open the main door, and marched straight into ... sunlight!

Her skin began to fizz like a carbonated drink. She could hear her father yelling to get back inside, but her legs had no bones. She closed her eyes and felt warm waves of light. She had been so busy pretending she wasn’t a vampire, she’d forgotten that whole thing with sunlight.



Then, somehow, the sunlight was blocked. Someone was holding a large blue umbrella. Lydia. She was dragging Madeline back to safety. The door slammed shut, and the sun was gone. Inside, the castle was as dark as the grave.

Madeline’s father swooped down from the rafters, his already bloodless complexion paler than usual. He knelt beside Madeline and put a cool hand on her forehead. Then he turned to Lydia.

“Can I have access to one of your main arteries for a second? This is a medical emergency. My daughter needs blood.”

“Actually,” Madeline said, cautiously sitting up. “She needs credit card details and a courier. It’s rude to eat guests.”

Madeline’s father seemed like he was about to say something, then thought better of it.

Lydia smiled at him sweetly. “Once I’ve helped Madeline make the order, we should have a game of tennis.”



illustrations by Fraser Williamson

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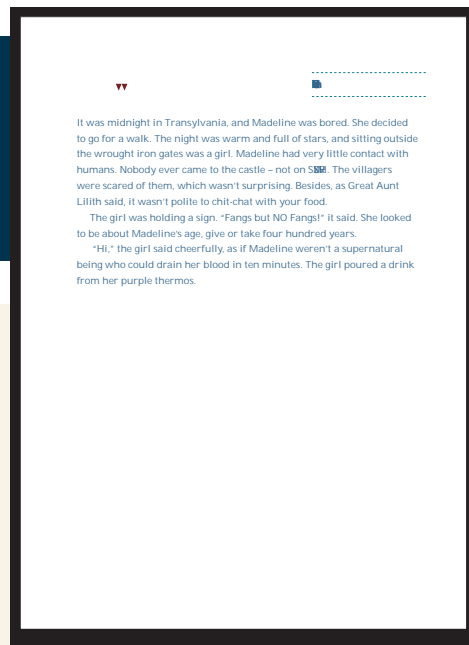
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