

Nightmares From Eberus

A Speculative Fiction
Collection



JC De La Torre



Wesley Chapel, Florida

Nightmares From Eberus

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To Rita – My rock, my best friend, my soul mate.

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Introduction

I absolutely love short stories. Always have. It's really a passion of mine. As great as Stephen Kings' epic novels like *Cell*, *Bag of Bones*, and *The Dark Tower* saga, capture the mind and tantalizes the soul, his short story collections such as *Skelton Crew*, *Four Past Midnight*, and his latest, *Just Past Sunset*, have always been my favorites of his work.

I routinely visit websites with speculative fiction short stories and seek out magazines with excellent short story content.

Through the years, I've written several short stories, none of which I ever pursued to have published. I had always focused on my novel length fiction, while the short form works just sat on my computer, never seeing the light of day.

After completing *Rise of the Ancients – Annuna*, I realized how much I truly missed writing short stories. As I reader, I always loved the beginning, middle, and end of my entertainment, to be wrapped up in short order. I loved the concise razor thin simplicity of writing a short-form work, knowing that if I wasn't careful, there was a chance that the story could become too long and eventually have to be saved as a later novel invention.

Unlike the Horror master, King, I didn't just write Horror. I touched all the different sub genres of speculative fiction. I enjoyed writing space opera, as much as I took pleasure in a toe-curling horror opus. I loved dabbling in fantasy and the occult, as much as I enjoyed monsters.

Still, *Nightmares from Eberus* is perhaps my darkest work. At times this collection seems to have elements of pure evil just dripping from its pages.

I enjoy scaring you, dear reader. I love making you think, What if? I take delight in challenging what you believe to be true while taking your mind to places where you don't want to go. I realize that sometimes you don't want to go where I may want to

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take you. I know that some of these stories may not sit well with you. Some may anger you or make you feel as if I've gone too far.

This is fine, my beloved reader, because as an author I'm always seeking a response – whether positive or negative.

I just hope you know that while it is my goal to entertain you and challenge you, I never meant to offend you or your beliefs. They are your own, and I dare not say you shouldn't believe in what you truly believe. No fiction story should change or challenge that.

At the end of this collection, I've included *After the Nightmare*, which gives you an idea of where all of these ten stories came from – the how, when, and why.

While this is my first short fiction collection, I can assure you, God willing, it won't be my last.

I'd like to thank you, dear reader, for joining me on this journey through my darkest nightmares. I hope you have fun and at the very least they give you a jolt. I tried to include something for everyone in this collection; Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, and the Supernatural. All are among these ten stories. If you don't like one type of genre, feel free to skip to another story. I'm sure there's something here you'll enjoy.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to the next time we can get together. Now, grab a cup of coffee, position that lamp just right, and don't fall asleep - for you're about to embark on *Nightmares From Eberus*.

JC De La Torre

June 26, 2010, Wesley Chapel, Florida

Serial

First, I'll tell you what I am not. I am not a vampire that glitters in the sun. I don't fall in love with human beings, nor have I any ties to my mortal coil. I left that long ago. I don't care for vampire rights; I am not seeking a synthetic alternative to human blood. Despite long life, I have not been ignorant to all around me. I've learned things, amazing skills that have served me well.

I can't turn into a bat or wolf. I can't fly. I do not have the power to control the mind, although I can be extremely persuasive. When I hunt, I don't speak to my food, trick them into a comfort zone, or seduce them. It would be tantamount to you seducing a cheese burger. I don't fight or destroy other vampires, nor do I prey on just the evildoers. I have no aversion to sunlight or crosses, although in the sun my power drains. I cannot be killed by a stake through the heart.

I am not a 'psychic vampire'. I don't walk around trying to steal aura or what have you. I'm not a pretender, one who drinks blood because it provides me some sort of sexual arousal.

What I am is a predator and I am hunting you. I typically don't do this – communicate – but you are a rare breed of human. You show characteristics that could make you a high quality addition to our kind. You don't seek it, like many who have romanticized the visions of *Nosferatu* in the movies or literature.

The quality I see in you is your desire to prey on others. Not evil like me, mind you. You see the weak-minded, those who are failures in the epic battle for survival. You pounce on their vulnerability and take what you desire.

It has gotten you to where you are today. For that, I say bravo! Still, you could be so much more.

Let me continue by telling you about us. As you would expect, many mortals know about us, thanks to the invention of film. Still, they don't know the *real* us until it's too late.

There aren't many of us left, you know.

How we were created remains a mystery to us all, much as it is for you. Are we God's creatures, Satan's warriors? I know not of these things.

I do know the first was named Upir' Likhyi, living in the 900's. He created an army of us across Europe and Asia, creating a panic among the human population. During the 1100's, our kind became hunted. The human beings became so concerned about our existence; they would turn against their own, burning perfectly edible morsels at the stake for superstitious signs that were neither accurate nor true of the accused.

We retreated into the hills of Romania and fed on animals that resided there. Our disease, DNA, whatever you call it – infected some of these – mainly wolves, creating a different beast.

As our numbers dwindled, the oldest sought to create new 'offspring'. That is how I came to be.

Like many of our kind, I am not completely vampire. I am a half-blood. To be pure vampire puts you among royalty in our society. Yes, there is a Vampire King and Queen and they do procreate in a very human fashion. All of us know of them and are connected to them psychically. We cannot refuse their commands.

As for how I became what I am? The year was 1888 and I was working for George Lusk and the White Chapel Vigilance committee in London. Our goal was to capture the fiend who was known by most as Jack the Ripper. With the police bumbling and baffled, we patrolled the streets looking for any suspicious characters.

It was there near Miller Court where I spotted a strange looking fellow wearing a dark long coat. He had a small felt hat that covered his eyes and he was moving quickly from the area. I had seen him before, nearby the other killings. As I followed, I noticed droplets of blood on the ground from where he had tread.

We had a whistle we were supposed to blow if we found something suspicious going on, but I didn't signal. I followed him

down a dark alleyway and through what seemed like a maze. I lost him in the darkness. Unnerved I turned to return from where I came, but couldn't figure out in which direction I had come from. I was lost.

He hit me with more power and force than I've ever felt in my lifetime. I was slammed against a brick wall and the air expunged from my lungs as I slumped to the ground.

I was dazed as I looked up to view him – it was there I saw our blood rage form for the first time.

His hands were tipped by long, dagger-like claws. His face was elongated, with immense canines protracting from it, blood from his previous kill still drizzling down his white chin. He had some facial hair, a small mustache that turned up at the corners and bushy eyebrows – but he was most distinctly not human.

“You dare follow me!” The beast croaked.

I turned my head from the horror in front of me, and a warm stream of urine began to saturate my trousers.

“No,” it continued, “You will not turn from your destiny. I know you, Allister Connacher. I know you have gotten close to me on several occasions, yet didn't realize it.”

“You're...you're him.” I gasped.

“I am the one you call the Ripper,” it confirmed, “And now you've seen me for what I am. It is time for you to make a choice.”

“What...what choice?”

“Life or death.”

“Choose death and you will end up like those whores I have been feasting on. I will dive into your midsection and pull out the most blood drenched, tastiest morsels. Suck them dry and bathe in your blood until I have reached my fill.”

“Life...I choose life...” I quickly responded.

It smiled a large, knife filled grin.

“If you choose life,” it continued, “You will become like me - a murderer, a monster. You will be consumed by your bloodlust until you can no longer control it.”

“Yes...life...life.” I cried.

“So be it,” it replied, “Just remember, you chose this.”

The vampire grabbed me by the neck and pulled me close. I struggled and he swung his claw-filled hand, striking me in the temple and knocking me woozy. As I began to lose consciousness, I could feel him force my mouth open and regurgitate into it.

I woke in the alley the next day, alone, my face and shirt covered in blood. I felt strange, weaker than I ever felt in my life. I searched my body for injuries but there were none. It was not my blood. I struggled out of the alley, concealing myself from any curious onlookers. I moved quickly, trying to avoid suspicion and made it back to my home.

I lived alone, had few friends, and didn't venture out for several days. I could feel my body changing, morphing into something completely different from what I once was. I found if I kept my windows covered and the sun did not touch me, I would not feel as weak as I had when it's light hit me. It would be night when the changes occurred. I was strong, powerful. My heart raced and I could feel my features changing.

I would try to eat, but nothing satisfied my hunger. I tried to drink, but nothing quenched my thirst. I felt as if I were going insane, I could hear things, voices that were not there. I could hear others from the other side of the building speaking.

On the fifth night, I remained in my home, lying in the middle of my living room floor and could sense someone walking in the hallway. A knock came at my door. I could smell perfume and sweat; plus, something else...a musk that invoked a salty taste in my mouth and turned a ravenous hunger.

I creaked the door open to see Molly Chambers, a whore I had befriended during my Vigilance duties.

“Pardon the intrusion, Gov'nah,” she said, “But I was frightful worried 'bout ya. Hadn't seen ya on patrol for a few.”

“Indeed,” a voice came from my mouth that didn't sound like mine, “I've taken ill.”

“Oh you do look a frightful sight, sir,” she rambled on, “Can I make you somethin’ ta eat?”

Curiously, my mind filled with her thoughts. She had fallen in love with me. Silly whore, I could never love her, but there was something else I wanted.

“Yes, I need to be fed,” I didn’t even know I spoke the words, “Come in...please.”

Molly pranced through the door but before it was shut I was on top of her, ripping out her throat before she could scream and sinking my teeth into the exposed artery. I sucked hard and all insatiable hunger seemed to begin to subside. I tore off the top of her dress and with my hands – suddenly deformed like that of the Ripper’s, I dug into her chest, ripping through bone until I reached her internal organs. Some had more blood than others and I devoured them whole.

It was an ecstasy I had never felt in my life. Sex, cannabis, none of it compared to the ethereal feeling of that first kill. I tell you this not to disgust or frighten you, but to give you the full picture of what you will become when you say yes to me.

You see, it’s not just a small peck on the neck. Sucking the blood does not satisfy the hunger. The real nourishment comes from ingesting the organs. You devour the innards of your victim entirely.

As I finished off the last of Molly’s blood-filled heart, savoring each bite, I sensed another presence in the room.

“I had begun to believe I made a terrible mistake by choosing you,” an unfamiliar voice said.

“Who are you?” I called out to the darkness.

“It’s your friend...Jack.”

I scrambled to my feet and moved to a corner where I knew all my sides were protected. Suddenly, a flame illuminated the room and I could see him. In his right hand he held a candle; the flickering light revealing a surprising change in his appearance. No claws or monstrous teeth. He looked like a pale human.

The Ripper smiled.

“Well, don’t you look the sight?” He remarked, “Come, take a look at the beauty you’ve become.”

I gingerly exited the corner and walked toward the mirror in the hallway, careful to step over the corpse of Molly Chambers. What I viewed in the mirror was hideous. It was no longer Jack that possessed the shark-like teeth, but me. I had the knives on my finger tips. I became what I was hunting. I was the monster. I was the Ripper.

“You’ve transferred your evil to me,” I growled.

“Don’t be a fool,” he laughed, “You and I are no more evil than the lion on the plains of Africa. We feed to sustain ourselves, to continue our existence - just as the lion feeds on the gazelle.”

“What have you made me?”

“We are known by many as *Nosferatu*,” he continued, “But most know us by our other name.”

“Vampire.”

“Yes,” he smiled. “You are no longer Allister Connacher. That person died in the alley by Miller Court.”

“So I cannot go out into the sun? I am the undead, Creature of the night?”

“The sun will not destroy you,” he corrected, “It simply makes you weaker. You are at your weakest when the rays hit you...and you cannot feed during the day. Most of us just sleep away the day so we do not have to experience that feeling of weakness. Others look to avoid suspicion by carrying out mortal lives during the day while becoming their true form at night.”

“And this face, these features?”

“That is your bloodlust. When you are at your most famished, you cannot control it and your true face is revealed. You must feed. I suggest you don’t wait as long next time, for if you wait too long and attack someone in public, you will be destroyed.”

“So we can die?”

“Definitely, there are ways.”

“How?”

"I am not going to tell you that," he replied, "I'd just strongly advise you to keep your head about you."

I fell to my knees, looking at poor Molly's body. I began to weep.

"There, there," Jack cajoled. "Soon you will lose feelings for these beasts. They are no different from cattle."

"But we are the same."

"Hardly."

"Do we not have the same organs? The same eyes, form, everything? I am human."

"Not anymore." He was growing impatient. "You are no longer one of them. You are not food for the immortals. You are immortal."

"I don't want this. I don't want to be a bloodthirsty killer."

"You are what you are," Jack continued, "You chose this, remember? I told you would become as I am."

I nodded. I had chosen this life instead of sacrificing myself to death. My cowardice brought this on me.

"There, look in the mirror once more." He said.

I did as he commanded and I was me once again. My thin face had returned. My blond moustache had stains of blood, but it was there. I no longer had the protruding teeth or the claws.

"Once the lust is satisfied, the monster returns to his cage." Jack continued, "And leaves you with the cleanup."

"What am I to do with her?" I asked.

"That, brother, is entirely up to you." He smiled, "I like to leave them where they be, flaunt my power and strength in the face of the human beings; have them fear me, because nothing tastes better than the tears of the terrified."

He turned to leave then looked over his shoulder, winking.

"I'm off to America," he said. "I suggest you join me there or some other place. I've ruined London for our kind."

With that, he departed, leaving me weeping at my monstrosity.

I dismembered Molly, dumping her into the Thames. They would find her later but never connect her to the Ripper killings. I left London for Milan, then Rome, Transylvania, Moscow and Paris. I continued to travel the world, feeding, looking for more of our kind.

I never saw Jack again, for that I'm glad. I heard he met his demise in America, at the hands of a rival Vamp named Secratius – A Roman.

I traveled to America in 1905, making it there before the First World War began. I moved silently from city to city. No one knew of my existence. I always disposed of the bodies well.

During the day, I worked in broad daylight. I had different trades throughout the years. With enhanced senses, I was a talented artist, sculptor, and anything else that worked in my hands. As the years went by, I became fascinated with death, murder by humans on humans. I began to work as a detective, homicide.

My specialty was to track down serial killers. I learned how the police investigated, what tools they used to discover the murder. It protected me as I fed.

Of course, you know that I began to get lazy. It's what drew you to me.

I understood what Jack meant by flaunting the power. It's intoxicating. The increase of terror in the victim's eyes as you present your true form heightens the experience. I no longer sought to dispose of the bodies but to leave them in the most sordid of ways. I grew creative, sending in Jack's style of letters to the press.

Working with the police, I could keep ahead of them every step of the way. It's not that I feared them; I could never be harmed by them. I just didn't want to hurt people I worked with, colleagues, for doing their job well. It's like having pets. You don't want to eat your pet Yorkshire terrier do you? You can, it would probably sustain you but you'd feel bad about it - same principal.

So I began to change evidence, lead them in opposite directions, deflecting them from me.

As I grew bored with my current location, I transferred to other cities' homicide divisions. Strangely, the serial killer that I so routinely investigated seemed to follow me to each location or was I following him? Only, the m. o. would change each time, making them believe one was not connected to the other. It really became a tremendous game for me to play.

Please understand, it's not that I want to hurt people, far from it. Like the butcher who doesn't want to hurt the pig, I feel a bit sorry for my kills. I try to finish them quickly so they don't suffer. I'm not a complete monster.

Typically, I search for my victims among those wanting to become it. My preferred feeding grounds are "gothic" clubs, searching for those begging to be kissed by a real vampire. Unfortunately, they have no idea what that truly means. It's sad really. They are so desperate to belong to a separate subset – to be special instead of 'weird'. They want to know that their belief in the reality of vampires can be substantiated. Yet when they get that truth, the fear in their eyes does well to pain the soul - if I had one.

Once they are gone, they can't feel pain, thus their remains are there for my fun with the police.

But I got sloppy didn't I? Or maybe you were just that good.

Much as I did when I found Jack so many decades ago, you discovered me. You figured out my pattern and you pursued me. You forced me to change my name again, leave law enforcement, hide from you, and once more go underground with my killings.

For a while I hated you for it because you were ruining my fun. But now...I've come to realize that I needed you. I needed to reconnect to this century, for I was becoming a bitter, old vampire. Those vampires who become disconnected from the centuries typically will find a nice quiet cemetery and slip into a coma from which many never recover.

After centuries of death and blood, you grow tired of it. You want it to go away. I was close to that before you came along.

You quickened me with your dogged determination to capture me; your thirst for my head.

I don't love you, far from it - but I see in you a little of me. Since I have been ordered by the *Nosferatu* royalty to give rise to a new one of us before the decade is out, I think you may be the only candidate worthy of this life.

You live alone. Your life is your work. You have no friends or lovers. You have a dogged determination to capture your prey. Those are qualities a potential vampire must possess. Without a family, you won't feel remorse if you accidentally kill them in a bloodlust. Without friends, you don't have the attachment that holds you to the mortal coil. Desire to capture your prey is essential to your survival.

It's not all bad, you see. Certainly, the hunger is insatiable and disposing of the bodies can be cumbersome. At first you may feel guilty about the kills, as I did, but you'll soon come to realize as I have. They're all just Big Macs. If you don't think about where the food has come from, you won't have guilt over it. The bodies are like the empty boxes the burger comes in. They need to be disposed of.

You can of course, be selective. Some of us just kill evildoers or loaners. I'm not as discriminative. If someone has the misfortune to cross my path when I am in bloodlust, it doesn't matter if they're a soccer mom, that's a mother of four, or a serial rapist. Still, I do have tastes of which I've already described to you.

So, its time. As you're reading this, I am perched outside your window right now – don't look. You won't see me because I'm to fast. Don't bother turning on more lights, either. It won't help you. If I wanted you dead, you'd already be so. Honestly, I've grown so hungry. I can go either way with you. So just know, the game we've been playing these long months is over.

Here it is. The question I must ask you before we decide which road to take.

Do you want to live or die? Just remember, if you choose life – you did this to yourself. I accept no blame for what you become.

You chose this existence.