

Sample chapter of Pray for Daylight/the Blood Feud

It started out as a good day for Kristian as he prepared to showcase his paintings for the Bourgeoisie elite class who normally looked down on someone of Kristian's status. Barely above the poverty line in Paris, Kristian managed to sell a few paintings here and there. Begrudgingly, he accepted his girlfriend Celine's offer to help. He knows in order to keep seeing Celine he must not become a poor beggared, enlisting the help from the French Government. He collects his paintings hurriedly and smiles thinking of his beloved Celine as he looks at her portrait—his favorite.

Kristian's apartment's, a mess, depicts the hectic life of a young starving artist. Looking at his pocket watch given to him by his father Antoine Dumas, he remembers. "I'm late!" A scheduled lunch with Celine totally slipped Kristian's mind in his excitement. He quickly gathers himself, grabs an apple and jaunts out the door.

Celine Batiste, beautiful and eighteen years old waits inside a tree covered park along the Champs-Elysees watching the men play Bocce Ball. She looks around for Kristian, who's running a little late. Several elderly men try to wave Celine over to play. "It's such a lovely day. Come on over," one of them said. Celine smiles as she holds her umbrella high to block the afternoon sun. "I'm waiting for my boyfriend," she said softly. Undeterred, the men keep on trying prompting Celine to blush. Kristian finally shows up rescuing her from the onslaught of the eager men. She smiles and waves at her new friends. "Au revoir," she said. The two star-struck lovers walk along the famous street as merchants wave them to come inside. "Someday I'm going to open my own gallery on this street and sell my paintings for everyone, not just the bourgeoisie class," Kristian states with confidence.

"I believe you will Kristian. Someday everyone will know and love you the same way I do."

“I just hope that when you become famous you won’t forget about me and the little people,” Celine jokes. The two romantics come across a chocolate store. Kristian is dragged inside.

“Celine...”

“Don’t worry Kristian. I will buy them for the both of us. After tonight, you may take me to dinner.” As Celine looks over the chocolate, Kristian’s eyes wander as he looks at the patron’s fine clothes and well-spoken speech. He starts to feel uncomfortable. Celine smiles at him, but Kristian feels the eyes watching him even though they are not. “Is this one okay Kristian?” Celine asked. “Kristian?” Kristian walks out quickly like a person suffocating to death. Celine pays for the chocolate and runs after him.

“What is the matter, my love?”

“I couldn’t breathe in there. Forgive me, Celine,” Kristian said. He wipes his brow with a white fancy hanky.

“You have been acting ever so strangely Kristian,” Celine said. “If I didn’t know better I’d think your mind was on someone else.” Kristian straightens up and tries to convince a concerned Celine otherwise. “You can’t be any further from the truth my love,” Kristian quickly states. “I just began to feel inadequate somehow. I’m beginning to feel the pressure of showing my work in front of your friends.” Celine waves for a carriage as the midday sun gets even hotter. She grabs a hold of Kristian’s hand as a carriage driver spots the two. “They are not my friends they are father’s associates and their wives. If you charm the wives like you’ve charmed me, you will have them eating out of the palms of your hands.”

Celine’s father Gilbert is not that fond of Kristian. Part of an aristocracy heritage, Kristian doesn’t hold true for his little girl. As Kristian sets up his work, the bourgeoisie among the crowd begins to chatter. Among them is Kristian’s father Antoine and sister Amelie who try to ignore

the chatter for as not to draw attention. Leading the chatter is Henri Montross, Gilbert's closest friend and confidant, Pierre Lefevre, and Francois Baudin. "Don't worry Gilbert this sham of an artist will melt under the pressure tonight. He's obviously no match for any contemporaries today," Henri boasts.

"Yes, but my daughter is infatuated by this young man's nefarious character," Gilbert answers. "No doubt he comes from a certain type of breeding." A small spatter of laughter from the group is heard by Antoine and Amelie. They look over at the high-class socialites with disdain. "They are talking about Kristian father," Amelie whispers. Antoine pulls Amelie aside out of earshot. "You must control your temper daughter—for Kristian's sake," Antoine said. "They will someday get their comeuppance." Cheese and wine are passed around amongst the crowd. A well-dressed stranger is among the people. He handed a glass of wine by a buxom maiden. A quick smile from the stranger is not missed on the young girl. Everyone else has not even noticed.

The chatter becomes louder, some positive and some negative. The negative complainers are complaining about everything, but they still are eating the food as fast as it's placed on their plates. Celine is ready to make an announcement as Kristian adds the final touches to his display. "Attention everyone," Celine said. "Kristian is now ready to showcase his paintings. Enjoy."

"I want to thank everyone for coming out tonight. My work is a part of who I am as an artist and the things that inspire me. I want you to take your time and feel free to ask questions."

The bourgeoisie group lifts their collective noses to the sky not giving an inch to Kristian's talent. Antoine and Amelie clap their approval as they meet up with Kristian. Antoine kisses his son on both cheeks, followed by little sister. "We're so proud of you Kristian," Amelie gushed. The small crowd moves about the room like a herd of elephants holding each other's tail. The

women peer through their hand-held spectacles at each detail of the paintings. “I think they’re wonderful,” Bernadette Montross said. Her comment did not sit well with Henri—quickly pulling at her arm. “Nonsense!” he insists. “The boy’s attempt at Impressionism is an insult to Monet.” Once Henri started his criticism, it didn’t take long for the rest of the group to join in. Soon the floodgates opened while an obviously pleased Gilbert smiles. Antoine takes notice of Gilbert’s sadistic pleasure and calls him out.

“This is all your doing Gilbert!” Antoine said. “This is about my son and your daughter isn’t it?”

“Your son’s lack of talent speaks for itself,” Antoine. “They are nothing but cheap knockoffs of much-talented artists of today. Antoine takes out a white glove to smack the face of Gilbert, but Kristian holds his hand back. “He’s not worth it Father,” Kristian said. The embarrassment brings Celine to tears at what her father has done. “I hate you!” she screams at Gilbert.

“It’s for your own good!”

“No! You couldn’t stand it that I love someone that didn’t meet high moral standards!” Celine shouts. Kristian pulls his family aside. “Father, please take Amelie home!” Kristian angrily said. But Antoine still wants a fight. “If he wants a fight I’ll settle it with a duel!” Kristian pulls his father and sister out the door with Celine following. It’s a clash of classes, and Celine is caught in the middle. “Go home father! I will take care of this!” Kristian said. Amelie drags her father along. She knows Kristian’s temper can sometimes get the best of him. “Come on father—let’s go home.”

Kristian stares at the ground, looking for answers where there are none. Celine tries to give him some. “My father has never done anything like this before Kristian. He is a good man,” she said. Kristian looks up from the ground, his eyes glaring in the moonlight. “You’ve done this to

me, Celine. You made me hope that a poor man could live in your world. I was deadly wrong.” Celine has never seen that look in Kristian’s eyes before or speak in that manner. “I have always been by your side my love!” she protests. She grabs Kristian’s arm as he heads back inside. “I won’t let us fall apart!”

“You have no choice!” Kristian snaps. He pulls away and runs inside. The room is full of laughter when Kristian storms in the room. You can hear a pin drop at the stifling silence.

“I don’t know when I will be able to do it Mr. Batiste, but I promise you...I will get revenge on you and your arrogant friends!”

“You don’t like my paintings?! My work is a joke?! So be it!” Kristian smashes the paintings before the stunned audience that begin to run for the hills. The mysterious man calmly walks out smiling as if to be enjoying the anarchy. The guests of Gilbert are shaken by Kristian’s passionate denunciation. Celine cries as she tries to go inside the gallery. She’s restrained by her father. “Forget him Celine. He’s not the man you thought he was.”

Hours had passed before it took for Kristian to gain his composure. His work is destroyed, all except the portrait of Celine—his beloved. He gets up gathering himself and collects Celine’s portrait and walks out the gallery a broken man.

Slowly walking down a cobbled street with his prized possession with him, Kristian is met by the mysterious man from the gallery. “Excuse me monsieur, I seem to have lost my way,” the stranger said. The finely dressed man raises his head and top hat. “You’re the man from my gallery this evening,” Kristian responds. The man tips his hat at Kristian. “You’re one of Gilbert’s friends.”

“I assure you I’m not young man,” the stranger said. “I’m an admirer of your work and I was shocked at the treatment those aristocrats showed you.”

“But you speak much as they do,” Kristian said.

“Any language can be learned—from the right teacher,” the man said. “I can also help you get revenge on all of them who disrespected you tonight.”

“Who are you?” Kristian asked.

“My name is Andras Blaise.” Andras extends his hand to Kristian. Kristian takes hold of Andras’ hand. He suddenly sees Andras conquering on the battlefield, a darkness and power beyond imagination. “I can make men quiver at your feet, women fainting at your mere whisper,” Andras said. A searing pain rushes through Kristian’s arm. He finally pulls his arm free. “What are you?!” Andras picks up Kristian with one arm and throws him up against a wall on the cobblestone street. “I’m king of the vampires.” Long fangs protrude from Andras’ mouth. He sinks them deep into Kristian’s neck, releasing rich blood to suck. Kristian tries to fight back, but Andras has the power of ten men.