

CHAPTER THREE

BLOOD MONEY

"Have you ever considered vampires? They populate women's romantic literature, permeate pop culture. Women seem to find blood letting sexually stimulating. What do you think of that?" she said.

I replied, "I haven't much, thought about it, I mean, it seemed loathsome, repulsive and unimportant."

"Like slasher movies, Chuckie's back, Halloween part 374, snuff films."

"I suppose. I've never seen a horror film, or read a horror story."

"You're kidding? Didn't they make you read some Poe or The Lottery when you were in school? They were required reading for eons. "

"Oh, yes. We read The Lottery."

"That counts as horror, don't you think? And Hester Prynne, The Scarlet Letter, Frankenstein."

"I did read The Scarlet Letter but I thought of it more as historical fiction. I never read Frankenstein. Monsters have never interested me, compelled me. I considered them creations of the subconscious problems I was doing my best to transform or eradicate. It never occurred to me to be fascinated by them. Have you read all those books?"

"Most of them. I agree with you, they're all working out fear and, if you can work it out another way, then great, who needs them? How many films can you watch about the Holocaust? I mean you need to see it to know it's real, to confirm and acknowledge it and then, good, done, clear it, assimilate it. But if you keep watching, obsessing, it's like digging a hole in your soul, a pit so large that all the bodies they threw in the lime pits would barely line the bottom. Then again sometimes you need a refresher, a memory jog, a remind her what the twentieth century has been about.

"I think the vampire craze is unique, a subtle variation on the S & M themes, the sex fear violence subjugation routines. The vampire wants a female's blood. This is unusual. Most men are entirely turned off by female blood. The vampire's got to have her blood. This pleases our average Jane, on a visceral level, her blood no longer an object of repudiation and fear, transformed by maniacal darkness to the object of male compulsion, attractive. As a metaphor it speaks to us.

"Contrary to common sense, blood abstractions, blood ties, the blood of nations, blood brothers, blood letting, blood spilling, blood lines, have all been men's exclusive province.

"Ah! You can just picture our passion starved heroine cooing and crooning as she reads the passage where he digs his mouth deeply into her neck and lets her blood flow into himself. And this is a most salient factor, the fact that women adore to melt, be absorbed, float away into, be one with, this is the theme of female passion.

"The blood stands for her energy which she longs to give and because she doesn't have the courage or the self-possession to give it, she imagines it being taken from her, sucked.

"The vampire is both a gigolo giving a woman every possible courtesy and compliment and a baby suckling her life fluids, needing to suck her juices, in order to survive. Because violence has, so far, overcome all attempts at resistance and refusal to participate, our species, infinitely adaptable, has incorporated and absorbed, as usual, what it cannot disperse or ignore. We have integrated force and violence into the roots of our psyche. Our sexuality has defined itself within the context of continuous warfare, otherwise how keep procreating, how continue this madness?

"And now? What are we doing? Not those of us living in abject poverty and those of us living in areas immersed in violence, but those of us living our lucky peaceful lives "far from the madding crowd," what do we do for fun? We re-enact, re-create, sometimes complete, replete with props and costumes, the violence, the use of force, the humiliation, the rape, the subjugations that we originally endured against our will. Or maybe we've always been a bloodthirsty lot, turned on by hate, torture and other people's misery.

"What can I do?"