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Wake Up, Open the Door, and Escape to the Sea

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Wake Up, Open the Door, and Escape to the Sea // Brennen Lutz

There could be something knocking my window
But I won't look upon its face. Keep on
Knocking witch. These monsters could be under
My bed or in those small dark corners the
Red and blue lights cannot touch. Dark inside.
The vampires have been at this door for nights.
They are here for blood. Mine. Little do they
Know, I won't be another meal. Black cats
Skirt the room's edges. Cannibals whisper
Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing...
I turn from this scene to the bottle. Empty.
Looking through the dark glass, obscuring sight
Now I realize the swimming shadows
Have eyes that stare into my spleen. Liver
Protests against an abundance of dreams
Drowned by a sour whiskey. My stomach
Aches now. I don't want to vomit in here.
But the great white vampires are still bang bang
Knocking at my window. I want to run.
I could open the door, and if I fought,
I could reach the sea before they tore me
Limb from limb. Blood frothing and bubbling
Like foam floating above the waves. Maybe.
But not tonight. Tonight is for dreaming.
Dreaming of cities, people long deceased.
We ran down desperate streets, maroon stained
Jeans were too hot for the dead summer night.
But we had to keep running or they would
Have caught us. Little did I know that once
Bitten, she was theirs. And she had told me

"I love you," A time too many. To love
Would have been to never speak such words
For our words are bonds that must be broken.
They bit her on the first day, but not I.
We managed to work our way from the streets
Where people crunched and vampires increased their
Numbers innumerable. As cancer
Metastasized from city to city.
We safely spent the night in my office.
At least they spread quickly enough that
Electricity remained active for
The first few hectic and dangerous weeks.
I had never greeted the spreadsheets with
Such pleasure and relief as we had that
Lonely night. I would have thought others to
Think, as I did, of shelter in the bank.
But no one appeared. The streets had claimed
The police who had responded to fear
And loathsome gruesome sights of blood and pain
Unlike the daily terrors they had faced.
I watched as bullets gave way to numbers.
The books were wrong. Vampires bled as we do.
They died rather the same too. Blood was their
Life. Stolen from us. No immortality.
She told me that if we could reach the shore
We would be able to cross the river
Banking on the notion that they can't cross
Running water, we would be safe at home.
My home lies secure beyond the river
Along the coast, seldom frequented by
Out of towners. This fact comforted me.
I believed we could be safe boarded up here.

I'm here now, and as usual, I was wrong.
So much went wrong, but I am so alive.
The only way to cross the damn river
From the city was the underground.
We decided to leave the office that
Morning. The sun seemed to drive them away.
It burned bright that July day. 89
Degrees. We walked. No weapons. Blood had caked
Upon my clothes while I slept beside her.
The city was empty save the witch birds
Cackling above our heads heralding death
Of a city, a nation. Of a race.
Doubtless, we were not the last of the breed.
Were I a smarter—or a stronger man,
I could believe myself the last. But, no.
I saw no others after the tunnel.
And that old wizard was the only man
We met along the way. I would believe
Him to be an angel, sent to help us,
But—he was probably just an old man.
A beard like Santa Claus and half the girth.
The man's staff was an old hunting rifle.
In truth, he typified the rednecks south
Of the city. So why we met him there,
At the tunnel, I will never know. Maybe,
He was going to look for a grandchild.
The gnarled wizard coming down from his watch
Among the trees and forests west of here.
I know he never found that child. He died.
A man like him would never turn to blood.
When we met, he raised a palm to heaven.
Hello, or an oath he was safe to us.

He said he would accompany us through
The tunnel, for he thought it dangerous
To go without a weapon beneath light.
We entered as a car would, though we walked
It was probably 400 meters
From one end to the other. Run or walk
Was the question the wizard asked of me.
Walking seemed more likely to keep us whole,
Together as a group. I liked the man.
In the darkness, he said a thing I loathed
To hear. "Once bitten they're damned to suffer."
He suggested I keep an eye upon
My love, beautiful, even through the blood.
Halfway through the tunnel, something stirred.
I gave my ears a moment to listen
For wind or other natural causes
But none appeared. It could only be them.
The wizard skipped my listening step or
Was aware before I was of others
In the dark. The orange lights glowed dim but
Warm. The wizard fired three shots in rapid
Succession at vampires who had shambled
From behind gray cars parked along the walls.
We sank to the edge of the corridor.
Not at a sprint, but running, we made for
The end. More sharp cracks echoed through my head
Loud enough to drown the grunts as they pulled
Him down. A momentary scuffle, and
A spray of blood. One more gunshot.
The vampires were content with one victim.
Salt air greeted us when we came up to life.
I'm a fair few miles from the tunnel though.

It took the rest of the day to reach home.
Luckily, summer days are forever.
Around 7:30, we were still boarding
Windows. It's knocking. Oh god. She's knocking.
She fell as night fell, with little warning.
A burst of colour across a gray face
And then darkness descended. I could not.
I thought of ways I could have saved her.
Nothing. Terrified, I pushed at clawing
Arms. Grappled for a moment. Teeth exposed
In a terrible snarl, out the window
She flew. Did I know vampires could pass out?
No. Can they? Someone is knocking. Knocking.
I boarded that window while she was out.
Everything is boarded. I'm not safe
Though I thought I would be. Could be hundreds
Outside. I don't know. Too many to count.
That whiskey was the last I would drink. Now.
I rummage my closet. I have to try.
I pull out a thick canvas jacket, camo
It's not. But a dark grey blends as well with
The sea. I thought the day was safe, but no.
The sun shines through cracks in boarded windows
And still there is a knocking. I owned a
Gun. Once. It's locked away as it should be.
But I pull it out. It's an old pistol.
But it should still fire straight enough for me.
I have no more food. The ocean calls me.
I check the gun and see that it's loaded.
My jacket is pulled high around my neck.
If my coworkers could see me now, with
These workboots tied around my feet. Who would

Think I would have been so prepared to fight.
I was not. The gun is a dead uncle's.
The scene swims again. Shadows on my floor.
All cats are grey as I yank the door off
My hinges. Unhinged. I look upon it.
The sea is darkly green and blue and red.
Vampires peer from behind parked blue cruisers.
They'll never get me alive. Sledgehammer
Red, explosions in my skull. I have to
Reach the sand. My blood tastes awful bitter
Somehow, I dropped the gun, and made the sand.
So much blood. But waves lap at my fingers.
At least the red will wash away. No stains.