

“One Bad Night: Parker’s Story”
Written and Copyright by Anna Abner

~~~This story takes place after [Shapeshifter’s Prophecy #4](#)~~~

Parker Han showed up at dusk with a coffee in one hand and his phone in the other to Connor Beckett’s impromptu team meeting under Maksim Volk’s Las Vegas compound.

“Good morning,” Connor greeted brusquely. The team leader eyed Parker up and down. “You feeling strong enough for a little excursion?”

Bowing his head, Parker ignored the subtext. After a week of bloodletting and beatings, was he capable of handling himself in public? After the most painful and brutal betrayal by Ilya the Cold, the man he thought he’d love forever, could he still drive, shoot, or even think rationally?

“I’m strong enough,” he said, though he wasn’t even sure himself.

“I have a particular mission for you and Xander.” As Connor spoke, footsteps sounded on the stairs. Parker sipped his coffee, and Xander appeared in his peripheral. “We originally thought Ivan abandoned the Lady Lucky casino he was running after Dominic blew it up, but I need you guys to find out for sure.”

A search and destroy mission for the monster that had tormented him?

“I’m in,” Parker said without hesitation. “I want to take out Ivan. You know that.”

“I figured,” Connor answered. “I’m keeping your team small – 3 men – to assure you can get in and get out quickly.”

Three men? “Who’s the third?” Parker asked. “You?”

Connor gestured to someone or something behind him. Parker turned slowly, expecting the sight of Maksim Volk or Dominic Hull.

It was Ilya.

“No,” Parker burst out. “No. You can’t trust him. *I* don’t trust him.”

Connor approached. "I do. He and I got to know each other pretty well when I was on my own and out of my mind. He helped get my head straight. And he knows more about Ivan than anyone else."

There was betrayal here somewhere, Parker just couldn't see it, yet.

"Find someone else for the mission." He tightened his grip on his cup of coffee, pocketed his phone, and turned to leave.

"Parker, I need you." Connor's voice left little room for refusal. "You were there with Ivan. You probably heard and saw things you don't even realize. And I think you owe me this."

Parker swore softly. Connor had literally saved his life, gotten him out of Ivan's basement of horrors, saved him from being a blood slave, and then given him a place on his team and in his home. He owed the man... well... everything.

"Fine," Parker said tightly. "Let's get this over with."

"Full tracking gear and your personal weaponry," Connor said. "You can leave now or wait until morning. Keep me up to date."

"Now," Parker said. "No sense prolonging this."

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The former casino resort looked on the exterior much as it had when Ivan and his Four Sons motorcycle club had run it – gaudy red paint, parched landscaping, and more neon than you could shake a stick at. The only sign it had nearly been demolished in an explosion was some black scorch marks around the loading dock's enormous doors.

Parker hadn't said a word to Ilya since they'd geared up and headed out, Xander driving. At the casino, Parker hopped out of the backseat and stalked directly toward the loading doors, not waiting to see if either of the other two men followed. It was hard enough being back in this godforsaken place without Ilya lurking nearby.

To think he'd given his heart to such a creature... Ilya had been so good at lying, Parker had never seen the betrayal coming. For months, the man had loved him, cared for him, and made him feel alive in a million little ways. How could Parker have missed the signs he was in love with a psychopath?

He levered open the doors and marched in. The only weapon he carried was a .38 automatic handgun tucked into the rear waistband of his black, tactical uniform. Down a slight incline, and he stood at the threshold of the bomb site.

It looked a lot different than he remembered. The walls and floor were black and covered in fallen debris from the floor above. Back when he'd been a prisoner here, it had been loaded with cardboard boxes on wood pallets and Parker had lived in a cage.

He shivered.

"You don't have to do this." Ilya had crept up on him again.

"Stay away from me," Parker said, stomping onward, bypassing the bomb site and heading for the service stairs. If Ivan or any of his horde remained in the building, they wouldn't be hanging out in the blown-up basement.

He sensed more than heard Ilya following a few steps behind.

But it was Xander who caught up to him on the first floor, littered with overturned slot machines and bar stools.

"You got something against the big guy?" Xander asked quietly.

Parker glanced over his shoulder to see if Ilya was within earshot but couldn't locate him. "I thought he was one type of person," he answered truthfully, "but he turned out to be someone else entirely."

"So, you're saying I shouldn't trust him?"

Parker's eyes narrowed as Ilya appeared in the stairwell. "Not as far as you can throw him."

The main casino floor had been completely looted and abandoned, so they continued climbing stairs. As Parker stomped over each step, he reminded himself: *Don't. Be. Fooled. Again.* Ilya had handed him over to be tortured by his brother and the horde. Ilya didn't care about him. And Parker would not be dragged back under his spell.

They cleared the first floor of hotel rooms, then roamed further onward. On the fourth floor, Parker heard signs of life. He drew his weapon, clicked off the safety, and peered down an extra-long hallway that seemed to stretch away forever. Xander and Ilya remained behind him in the stairwell. Parker concentrated on listening for

movement, a breath, a run of heartbeats, but all he could sense was Ilya. His delicious, masculine scent floated on the still air.

Damn him, he smelled good.

Parker advanced, making noise, hoping to draw out whoever was hiding on this floor.

From a door on the left, a head appeared, and Parker fired once. He blew off the creature's ear, and as the vampire dove back into his hidey-hole, Parker ran. He slid his foot between door and jam a split second before it latched closed.

The vampire had second thoughts about running and hiding. He attacked, throwing his weight against the door. "Ivan," he roared in what seemed like a warning. The heavy door tweaked Parker's foot, but he ignored the pain and fired once more. The vampire dropped, a bullet hole in the center of his sternum.

"Parker?" Ilya ran up, shoving wide the door and finding the incapacitated vampire and Parker still palming his .38.

His adrenaline spiking and making him reckless, Parker turned on the giant. "What?" he snapped, aiming his weapon at the man he thought he'd love forever. "What do you care? Another of your horde down. Does it make it worse that it was me who shot him?" Parker's breath came hard and fast, his fingers tingling with rage and long pent-up grief.

"I don't care about him," Ilya said calmly, crowding him in the doorway. "I was worried about you."

"You don't worry about me," Parker spat, the weapon trembling in his grip. "You sold me away to your brother as fast as you could." Swallowing thickly, he took a shuddering breath. "They tortured me. And you let them." He raised the gun and pointed it dead center at Ilya's chest.

How many times had he laid his head on that warm, broad chest and fallen asleep to Ilya's breathing, feeling safe and contented?

Parker brushed away the thoughts, tightening his grip on the weapon.

"Go ahead," Ilya breathed. "Take your pound of flesh, Parker."

He wasn't planning to, but the sound of his name in Ilya's mouth sent a bolt of regret and rage sizzling through him. Parker adjusted his aim and squeezed the trigger. Blood, flesh, and cloth popped from the bullet's impact in Ilya's left shoulder.

The big man hardly flinched. "Go ahead," he said, more firmly this time. "I know you want to. Empty your clip, Parker. Take it out on me. I deserve it."

His name again. Parker fired in rapid succession, his aim slipping a little with each shot until the last bullet ripped through his left lung. Ilya coughed a spray of blood and sank to one knee.

The .38 clicked as Parker pulled the trigger three, four, five more times. For a quiet moment, he stood quivering over a bowed Ilya, his mind torn between wanting to comfort him and wanting to beat him to death with the empty handgun.

He did neither. Instead, he stepped around a wheezing Ilya to stand near Xander in the hallway.

Xander's eyes widened. "Something happen between you two?" he joked.

"Yeah," Parker admitted, clicking fresh bullets into his empty clip. "I loved him, and he handed me over to his sadistic brother to be a blood slave." Parker speared Xander with his gaze. "We were happy, living in hiding, and like a fool I believed every one of his lies. When Ivan found us, he hugged Ilya like he was his long-lost friend and tossed me in a cage. They bled me, beat me, burned me..." Parker turned away, sliding the reloaded handgun into his waistband. "Never mind," he murmured.

"Wow," Xander whispered. "It must have torn him up inside, seeing that."

Parker scowled. "Hurt *him*?"

"What better way to torture him than to hurt you?" Xander shrugged, as if dismissing what he'd just said, and walked a few steps away. "Anyway, that vampire called out for Ivan. I'm guessing he's hiding somewhere above. Should we keep moving?"

Parker glanced at Ilya's hunched back. It was a mess of flesh and blood. He would heal, but he'd feel every inch.

No. No sympathy for him. Xander didn't know what the hell he was talking about. Ilya was in on Parker's captivity. It hadn't been a punishment for Ilya, it had been one for Parker.

A little shaky, Ilya coughed once more, wiped the blood from his chin, and headed toward the stairs. Parker silently followed.

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They cleared the next few floors more slowly. Ilya limped behind, so Parker took lead with his .38.

"Hold up," Xander said in the stairwell leading to the hotel's seventh floor. "Can we take five minutes? I need a smoke." He already had a pack of cigarettes out and a lighter in his hand.

Ilya sank onto the second step with a stifled groan. Parker reluctantly sat upon the top step, though Ilya was so tall, they were eye-to-eye.

There was genuine pain at the corners of Ilya's mouth, and Parker finally broke.

"Here. You need this." He passed his ex a bag of donor blood from his pack. "Drink."

Ilya waved it away. "Save it."

"We need you in top shape," Parker argued, pressing the bagged blood into Ilya's hand.

"Let's split it." Ilya bit into the thickest part of the bag, sucking a good mouthful of blood before passing it back.

Parker put his mouth on the same spot Ilya's had been, and he tasted not only stale human blood, but Ilya as well. He suckled a bit and then passed it back.

"You're hurt. Take it."

Ilya gave up arguing and finished the bag.

The words inside Parker bubbled up beyond his control. He needed Ilya to know, despite sharing a drink, they were not okay. "You just left me there," he hissed. "You could have come for me, but you left me with Ivan to be tortured. Do you know how much they hurt me?"

"Parker..."

"You did nothing," he spat.

"I got you out," Ilya returned, facing Parker and rubbing his gigantic hands up Parker's thighs. "As soon as I could, I got you out. It took time to convince Ivan, took time to organize Connor Beckett."

"You?" Parker froze, his gaze stalling on Ilya's bloodied shirt. He was certain Ilya had put him into Ivan's hands, but could Parker have gotten things mixed up? He couldn't remember the actual escape, only waking in Maksim Volk's compound. Was it even possible? Ilya had been so good at pretending.

"I carried you out," Ilya said, his hands tightening on Parker's thighs. "You probably don't remember, but I carried you out of your prison myself."

"But you and Ivan," Parker stuttered, thinking back to the times he'd seen the brothers together. "You said I meant nothing—"

"Parker, no, I had to—"

The stairwell door slammed open, and Ilya dragged his hands from Parker's thighs with obvious reluctance.

"All set?" Xander asked, bringing a cloud of fresh cigarette smoke with him.

Ilya stood first, his eyes on Parker and nowhere else. "If Ivan is hiding on the floors above, he knows we're coming. Stay alert."

#

As they climbed the stairs past the ninth floor, Parker stared at the back of Ilya's wrecked shirt. How could he believe him? He recalled the day Ivan and his leather-jacket-wearing vampires had discovered them blissfully playing house in an adorable duplex with a view of the Colorado River. Ilya had acted as if he'd been expecting Ivan.

*"There you are, brother. I've been keeping this one warm for you. Do you approve?"*

*Ilya grabbed Parker's wrist and dragged him in front of him.*

*"He's pretty. Is he the only present for your dear brother?"*

*Ilya passed Parker to Ivan like he meant no more to him than a used shoe, sealing his fate.*

*"For now."*

Parker shook himself free of painful memories, not able to stomach yet what they had done to him after Ilya handed him over.

A door opened into the stairwell on the floor above, and all three men stopped to stare upwards. Xander, in front, took the brunt of the stinking liquid hosed into the stairwell from the landing. Ilya, next in line was splashed, but not as badly. He took a step back and shoved Parker away so hard, Parker tumbled down the stairs and slammed into the wall. Dazed, he watched a bright silver lighter flung straight at Xander who exploded into a tower of flames.

Ilya stumbled away, but the blast of fire caught on his shirt, and as he rolled downstairs, Parker leapt to meet him halfway and put out the flames along his left arm and the side of his face.

"Ilya," he gasped, whipping his shirt off to smother the flames. "Are you okay?"

"No," he growled, brushing Parker's hands away as he stood and watched Xander's body fall and burn until nothing savable remained. Ilya cocked his head toward the floor above. "Easy, brother," he called, "you almost got me with your little prank."

Maniacal laughter from above.

Ilya rose to his full height, more than a head taller than Parker, and reached out a hand. "We kill him together," Ilya whispered. "For everything he's done."

But that old tickle of doubt resurfaced.

*There you are, brother. Do you like your present?*

Parker had suffered unspeakable pain for days and days. Was it because Ilya needed time to rescue him? Or because Ilya never had a plan to rescue him? Was Ilya lying now? Or had he lied then?

Ilya must have read the indecision on Parker's face. "Trust me, *koxaha*. You don't have to love me again, but I need you to trust me right now so we can finish this."

*My beloved.*

Parker always loved when Ilya called him that. "You carried me out?"

His eyes darkening, Ilya hunched down, cupped Parker's face, and kissed him. Sweet and soft, it felt like a kind of goodbye.

"Let's finish this." Parker took Ilya's hand and allowed the larger man to pull him to his feet.



“No matter what happens between Ivan and I, ignore it,” Ilya continued in a quiet voice, slowly leading Parker up the final flight of stairs. “You’re an outstanding shot. You’ll take out any of the surrounding horde with your weapon. I’ll go after Ivan.”

There wasn’t enough time to contemplate what they were facing. A hard squeeze, one last step, the exit door banging closed behind them, and Parker stood in the penthouse suite next to Ilya.

“Have you returned my gift?” Ivan teased and turned to his horde before Ilya could answer. “Boys, retrieve my gift.”

Parker pulled his .38 and took aim. Eight leather-clad vampires rushed him simultaneously. They were fast, but not as fast as a bullet. *Pop, pop, pop*. Seven near perfect headshots. The eighth vampire made it close enough to grab Parker’s arm before Parker jammed the muzzle of his .38 under the guy’s chin and fired. A last *pop* and Ivan’s guards were neutralized.

Ilya and Ivan stood growling across from each other. Parker swung his aim directly at Ivan’s skull at the same time that Ivan, without taking his eyes off Ilya, slung a chair overhand. The chair hit first, knocking Parker in one direction and his handgun in the other.

Ilya launched himself at Ivan, and they landed hard, a tangle of legs and bruising fists, but they moved so fast, Parker couldn’t keep track. He just knew he had to do something.

“You can’t beat me,” Ivan screamed. “You’re too weak. You always have been.”

Parker scrambled for the .38 and missed how Ilya ended up dazed on his back with Ivan standing over him. Ivan pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, plucked a bottle of vodka from a table, and made a Molotov cocktail like he’d done it a thousand times before. Maybe he had.

The glass sailed toward Ilya, who rolled quick enough to miss the majority, but his lower legs caught fire as he dove for his brother’s knees. They moved so fast, Parker couldn’t guarantee he’d shoot only Ivan if he fired, and he hesitated.

Ilya slipped a hunting knife from its sheath at his waist and hacked at Ivan's chest and neck. With a roar, Ivan dropped a nasty elbow into Ilya's face, stole the knife, and drove it hilt deep through Ilya's forehead.

Parker screamed.

Ivan struggled to his feet as Ilya went limp. "I've never seen him like this," Ivan said with a pained chuckle. "He's never fought back." He looked across at Parker, and their eyes locked. "He must really like you."

Parker couldn't stop shaking. Ignoring Ivan, he scrambled around the flames climbing from the carpet to the drapes and threw himself across Ilya.

"You're okay," he panted. "You're okay, Ilya." With a wet sucking sound, he yanked the blade from Ilya's forehead. Blood pulsed, running into his eyes and down the sides of his face.

"Be more concerned with your own future." Ivan rushed him, lifting him off the floor and slammed him against the far wall. With a growl, he bared his fangs to strike. Parker still held Ilya's knife, and he did the only thing he could think of, no matter how futile. He shoved the blade up under Ivan's chin and pushed as hard as he could.

He must have hit something sensitive because Ivan came to a complete stop, his mouth hanging open. Taking advantage of the tiny opening in Ivan's near unbeatable defense, Parker jammed the knife upwards, again and again. With a moan, Ivan collapsed, and Parker found his .38. He emptied the clip into Ivan's skull.

The room filled with smoke so thick, Parker could barely make out Ilya in the toxic air. There was no way Parker could carry the man, but there was also no way he would leave him behind. Taking hold of the straps on the larger man's tactical uniform, Parker dragged him into the stairwell. They made it down two flights of stairs before Parker heard footsteps thundering up from the ground floor.

Unarmed, Parker stood over Ilya, ready to make one last stand.

"Parker?" Connor Beckett rounded the landing below, Maksim Volk and Dominic Hull right behind him. "Our seer told us we needed to get over here, pronto. You okay?"

"No." Parker wilted in relief. "Ilya's really hurt. I left Ivan upstairs. Xander's dead."

"Let's get Ilya out of here." Connor waved Dominic closer and the two of them bundled Ilya up and carried him downstairs.

For a moment, Parker hesitated. "Maks," he called, "will fire destroy an OG vampire?"

"You have to burn him to ashes or take his head," Maks said, frowning. "Why?"

Parker couldn't risk his tormentor reappearing to hurt them all over again. Despite the smoke in the air and the rising temperature, Parker turned around and ran. Maks kept up, pausing only to smash the fire hose case and steal the ax out of it.

Smoke engulfed the penthouse, and Parker shielded his face with his arm, lurching toward the last place he'd seen Ivan. He reached for the ax, and Maks passed it over. With a *thwack*, Parker severed Ivan's head from his shoulders. He left the ax stuck in the floor.

Maks moved around him, grumbling, "I like to be extra careful." He punted the head about a foot away with his shoe.

Together, they fled the apartment, nearly flying down the stairs and catching up to Connor and the others in the parking lot. As sirens screamed down the street, Parker climbed into the backseat of Connor's Escalade and pulled Ilya's head and shoulders onto his lap.

"Don't worry," Connor said, peeling out of the lot. "The doc will patch him right up."

"Here," Maks said, tossing a blood bag into the backseat.

"This reminds me of when we snatched you out of the Lady Lucky," Connor said, laughing without humor. "Ilya was a freaking mess that night."

His hands quivering, Parker tore a corner from the plastic bag and poured it between Ilya's colorless lips. Rousing at the taste, the big man's eyes fluttered open.

"I'm right here, love." Parker swore, "I'm not going anywhere."

**The End**

Parker and Ilya's story starts in [Shapeshifter's Prophecy \(Beasts of Vegas #4\)](#).

Find it and more on Anna's [Beasts of Vegas series](#) page!