

The People Downhill

by Marilyn Botta

I am thinking evil thoughts - thoughts that a sane human being should not even be considering. I am trying to ignore the incessant howling, barking, and whining downhill from my bedroom but it is becoming increasingly difficult to do so and I am getting blindingly angry by the minute.

I am so disturbed because no matter how many times we ask nicely, threaten, put notes on their door, that animal is still out there at all hours. I am most upset because by them ignoring our complaints they are essentially saying, "screw you!" Who are these people anyway and who the hell do they think they are to disturb a whole community? The next day, I go outside my back door and look down hill, beyond the pine trees on my property to where I think the barking might be originating. Suddenly, the dog lets loose with the barking as if he is saying, "Here I am!"

I take a picture with my phone and send it out to the board members and lo and behold, they say that these people live right next door to them and give me an address. I've been out there at all hours, screaming at them into the night to, "Shut that damn dog up or I'll call the police!" and in it goes only to return the next night to haunt and harass me - personally it seems. I wonder if others are as bothered by this as I am, or is it just me?

I do research and find out that the owner of this property is deceased so I have no idea who actually lives there - are they renters or squatters? - nobody seems to know. I interview people living next door and find out that they leave the house at night, dump the demon dog on the patio for hours, and slink back just before dawn, following in the leader's umbra. One by one, they enter the house, take the dog in, and do not reappear until the next night. That sounds suspicious to me. At this point I just want to eliminate that dog - maybe they *are* vampires but who cares as long as they don't mess with my sleep.

My head is spinning with many unanswered questions and ideas. Maybe I can get rid of two menaces - I begin to fantasize about murder - but is it murder if the object of your hatred is the undead? What if the dog is not among the living either? Do I need a silver bullet to kill it and where can I even get a silver bullet anyway and would I need a special gun? Can you kill someone who is already dead and remembering *True Blood*, I know that you can by staking it in the heart or using a silver bullet to achieve the Final Death. On this night, I have homicide in my heart and start planning how to rid myself of these tormentors - I cannot take it anymore.

The next day I decide to consult the Internet since everyone knows that is the most reliable source and everything is true. I Google "how to kill vampires" - then, "how to kill a vampire dog" - then, "how to get a gun" - then, "how to get silver bullets." I

start thinking of how the whole community will hail me as a hero when the deed is done - "Beverly the Vampire Slayer" has a nice ring to it. I could even start a business or star in a new reality TV show. Who would've thought that this terrible situation would open the door to boundless opportunities?

I find many websites giving detailed instructions on how to deliver the Final Death to a vampire. I decide I will use a combination of wooden stakes and silver bullets to make sure these monsters will no longer walk the Earth. I look through my garage and find one long sharp wooden stake, but what about the others? I'll have to go to *Lowes* and ask if they have any vampire killing kits. I have another problem because I'm not sure who exactly inhabits that townhouse, since it appears to be musical tenants (or whatever they are) that change every other week. I don't want to be outnumbered and risk being turned too (although that might not be a bad idea either, because I will be immortal). But what would I do with my two parrots - can I turn them into vampire birds? I decide I do not want to become an undead unless I can take my birds into that world too. I may have to enlist the help of others but whom do I ask - who would believe me? How about putting an ad on *Craigslist* that would read, "Vampire slayers wanted. Call Beverly."

The more I think I have a solution, the more questions arise which lead to even more until I am overwhelmed with fear and I am getting cold feet. The What-Ifs are starting to outweigh the benefits of ridding the world of these bloodsuckers. Then a thought comes to my mind - why not call Animal Control and file a formal complaint? I had been told that they really take these complaints seriously and achieve results. I put my murderous plans on hold in favor of a *more sane*, less dangerous solution. I go on their website and record my complaint, including all the recent evenings that creature has been out. I also include the strange comings and goings of the occupants of this dwelling, leaving out my suspicions that they and the dog are indeed vampires.

It has been two weeks and all is quiet on the Anchor Lake front, although I am still waiting for the "other shoe to drop" because it seems too good to be true. Although I still think they are vampires I realize I should not share that with other people. I'm still watching them and if this remedy proves untenable I'm ready with my gun, silver bullet, and special vampire killing kit. I have received numerous inquiries to my ad on *Craigslist* so I am prepared to strike at a moment's notice. I will wait and see how it goes.