

If These Walls Could Talk

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If These Walls Could Talk

by [I_prefer_the_term_antihero](#)

Summary

Vampires do not have reflections, and castles do not have hearts. But Dracula is no ordinary vampire, and Castlevania is no ordinary castle. If castles can fight, maybe they can think too.

The series, and Adrian's childhood, told from the perspective of the castle.

Notes

I was writing a different Castlevania fic when I started describing things as if from the castle's perspective...and I thought that was a very interesting idea, so this happened. The idea was also inspired by Sypha's "it's fighting me!" I thought that was really interesting because she was speaking almost as if the castle were a living thing. And, well, I love personifying things.

Also, ever since reading [Iza's a loyal heart](#) fic I've wanted to try writing something from a non-human perspective. And boy was it worth it. This has got to be one of my favorite fics I've written, honestly!

Plus I really wanted to write about Alucard's childhood, and I thought this was a great way to do so somewhat comprehensively, but also concisely.

I thought it was just an interesting idea, and that Sypha's was kind of an offhand comment, but when I rewatched a few scenes for research, I realized...I think this idea is actually supposed to exist within the canon. There are subtler references to the castle having an aliveness, Sypha's is just the easiest to catch. I'm curious if anyone agrees, especially after reading.

I have a very limited knowledge of the games, but I'm trying to learn more about them, and really like working in little references to them here and there!

I was originally planning on posting this as one long thing (and I may still do so after I finish), because the sections are very much connected and meant to flow into each other, and I think it'll be easy to miss things if they're separate. But I realized it would be easier, both for me to post, and for people to read, in bite size-pieces. Plus it has very clear-cut sections that are easy to split into chapters. So here you go!!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

"Lisa"

Chapter Summary

“My mother’s name was Lisa, and she was mortal...She actually showed up at his front door. She found the castle and banged the door with the pommel of her knife...She was remarkable. She beat on the door until my father let her in, and then demanded he teach her how to be a doctor.”

“Is this how the castle felt to you before my mother first arrived at your door?”

The castle doesn’t like children.

Well, maybe that’s too strong to say. It simply isn’t the place for them. Its existence is a signpost: *leave me alone*. It is not used to having company—much less a family—inside it, nor is it ready to welcome for a crying, puking, giggling thing into the world. It does not intend to be a cozy place to coddle him into adulthood.

The castle itself pierces the sky, its turrets and towers the dripping stain of the sun’s blood across the moon.

The bare walls hold no colorful tapestries for a child to enjoy, no paintings of its many inhabitants to tell of—for there was only ever one (and maybe that ought not change. It is safe to say the castle doesn’t like change). The royal red and gold carpets are more suited to kings; not designed for spit-up, mud, and scuffing. ‘Don’t play with that’ would be a motto around here; so many contraptions either easy to break, or which could break the child. The fireplaces, while almost always lit, only ever coughed warmth onto the floor before them—they provided no snug space to curl up on a winter’s day. Even the mirrors here are empty, holding nothing but a reflection of the bare walls they sit upon.

There are certain people who were seemingly born as they are; they never owned toys, never crawled on the floor, never walked with clumsy steps—their footfalls were always this calculated count—never burped on their mother’s nice shirts, and surely never had anything so dull as a childhood. They were always just...here, on the world. There was no innocence, and no losing it. So it was with Dracula.

The very thought of Dracula ever owning toys, even in some nice cottage far away from here, with a doting mother and an absent father, with a funny last name like Cronqvist, defied sense to the castle. So no, no toys here, nor any simple charts for learning; the books divulged their secrets to more mature minds. Just blood and books, gold and gears, forgotten magic means, mirrors that reflect nothing, and a pile of prayers to a good God they used to justify their ungood, and ungodly deeds.

All these things—or their absence—do not make for the picture of a baby-proof home.

The castle has grown accustomed to being cold and dark, and listening to one master alone. It's not a quaint place lovers look on and think *we'll raise our kids here someday*.

Its master isn't the ideal father either—after all, the castle only reflected its king. Its master knows only of blood and nails, fangs and wails, words too big for a child's mouth, and worlds too dark for a child's heart.

Can he be soft? Can he be gentle? Can he keep those claws, which have ripped out better men's hearts, from piercing a child's—*his* child's...how could one who killed so many have a child?—skin? He knows many spells, but is there one that can turn those screams into laughter?

He has been soft before. Once. And that is with this woman.

Many women have walked the castle's halls: shivering, shrieking damsels at his feet; cold and calculating queens; fragile bodies on the floor, that he broke with the same regard a child does a vase that matters to someone else.

Those ordinary people who do come often have pitchforks in their mouths, and fiery words in their closed fists. Curses stacked on the end of stakes, banging like the castle is the church bell signifying their own funerals.

It is for this reason that the castle does not like outsiders, does not open its doors easily. But it cannot *deny* anyone entry. Unlike the humans' doors, which find his master guilty until proven innocent.

They always came at night. At night, when the loudest sound is your own breathing. At night, when their fires echoed loudest, and their shouts burned brightest.

They came when the flowers were closed, when only the most eerie and vicious of animals played with the skins of their prey, and the moon waxed the world in cold, drunk shine. The sun could not watch them, could not show their blood-struck hands in their full glory.

She came at sunset. When the sun still glazed her deeds in sanguine auburn, but was just deciding to turn its gaze and let the kids have their fun. Not quite day, when the sun would kill things like Dracula, but not quite night, when the hours are named after witches, and lust is strongest—be it for the body, or the blood within it. Somewhere in between death and life, violence and peace.

This woman came with a knife in her hand, yes. But a knife, at least, was not a sword. It was not a pitchfork, a spear, a whip, or a stake; all weapons that signify, if the fight wasn't there, you were bringing it with you. Not a war-starved weapon, pointing with mal-in—and -con—tent towards the castle doors and all the things inside it. Not a thirsty thing. Something that by default faced the other direction. Something that can start a fight if it wants to, but doesn't crave it.

The golden woman came at sunset, with a knife in her hand, and looked upon this thing, this castle that others called ‘ugly’, and ‘monstrous,’ and ‘grotesque,’ looked upon it with awe, and gasped in wonder.

She knocked. She didn’t bang her fists upon the stone, didn’t ram pitchforks and assorted insults against the innocent doors, like how-dare-they protect their master.

She knocked, and the doors opened before she could raise her fist a second time. Maybe, just this once, not because they didn’t have any other choice.

The doors—foreboding, menacing, and all the other spooky -ings one can think of—opened to a world strewn in light; the demon’s castle looked brighter, more beautiful, more alive, than half the churches she’d been to.

Her footsteps were gentle against the castle’s floors. Not a slow, forced gentleness, but also not a piercing, purposeful march. There was no apprehension to her footsteps; her feet carried her as if anxious to take her to as many rooms as they could.

At first her steps were the only sound, enough to fool some into thinking they’re alone.

And it became clear both that she was not alone, and not a fool.

But when she saw the demon, she put the knife away, and used her words.

She used her words to repeat those she herself had heard: stories. But not the kind that make monstrous men run at the doors with naughts and crosses, the kind pious people buried along with all evidence that the world wasn’t made of black and white.

Not all the stories told that this place was cold and dark and full of death.

Amongst all the stories about death, there were others that said Vlad Tepes brought this castle to life with science, forbidden knowledge, and a little bit of lightning. Stories that say there is *life* here.

And, in exchange for proof that these life-stories true, Dracula asked for a trade, a trade that would prove the *other* stories true too. He gave up the killing a while ago—the castle has been in one place a very long time—but he was still not used to giving for free, and definitely not used to getting for free. Vampires trade in blood and names, not diamonds and declarations. Vampires trade in things they can swallow. This castle, too, had been a gaping hole set to swallow the world and everything that entered. Never once had it given.

And she dared to say, that this place, its master, should learn to give, when the humans have done nothing but take from them—or try their best to. He ought to be the one to invite her in, to ask what she would like, to dispense pleasant words and kind actions, when the humans forgot they invented hospitality, and showed no invitation for him to even enter their homes.

But she didn’t come with a mouth full of garlic, and hands full of superstition. Her feet did not drill holes in the floor with their sharp toll, they wandered the scenic route.

She was used to being cheated. Dracula and his castle were too. But that was not why she was there. She was not there for cheap tricks, or death. She wanted something real. A little bit of the life the castle has to offer.

Her defiance wasn't that of a terrified citizen, or angry queen, either; rather the calm resolve of someone who is asking for something they know in their heart is good, and knows they will get it. The kind of person who believes there is good in everyone, and that this good will ultimately always win, and who won't leave until they convince this good to show its face.

The castle has watched countless men and women cower at the foot of count Dracula. Some, do have a measure of god-sanctioned defiance; they come with whips and scourges to defeat him. The castle and the king are bound together in their resolve against them.

Except one. Except this woman. One human whom both master and castle found themselves reluctant to deny, cast away, or kill, maybe even...taken with.

She may be human, but she was not like the rest; she did not light the night on fire with her thirst for blood.

So maybe, just maybe, they could let one ray of sunlight slip through the cracks.

She was also not devoid of life, and maybe that was the key.

'Devoid of life' was an accurate portrayal of the castle. Bats flying out of blackness is a good description of a cave, and caves don't usually come with the brochure 'teeming with life', or 'great place to take your kids!'. The castle had a soul-sucking quality to it; those who entered often found themselves leaving less alive than they arrived. It took after its vampire master. Those who didn't actually lose their lives within its walls, often remarked upon leaving that the flowers bloomed brighter, the birds sang louder, the grass was greener, and that they missed the sunlight.

Sunlight. Such a base thing; vampires don't need the light or warmth to be happy.

Sunlight. Such a base way to die; wanting to get out of the cold and the dark.

"Is this how the castle felt to you before my mother first arrived at your door?"

Castlevania was alive once. Once Dracula set the pumps, and its heart began to beat. He turned the gears, and its lungs inhaled. He forged the lightning, and it began to think. Once the books, full of unknown knowledge, jumped off the shelves to get the vampire king's attention. He filled the bottles and beakers, and they bubbled, as if laughing at a joke only they shared.

They were both alive, once.

That waned, with time. The gears got arthritis, the books caught pneumonia, the experiments atrophied. The castle *ached* before she came.

And Dracula, alone in the halls, picking up books and putting them down again without so much as a polite glance through them, because he read them all before. Dracula looking into

fractured mirrors that could take him anywhere, but deciding there wasn't anywhere he wanted to go. Dracula, looking into old mirrors that don't reflect him—like there was never anything to reflect, nothing alive here to begin with, and there isn't a master for this castle after all. Nothing but a grave. Dracula sitting alone in his study, staring into the fire. No one to talk to. No sound but flipping pages and crackling fires—nothing alive. Alive but dead. This castle. Its master. Undead is the proper term.

The other women who came through here reflected the castle, or else the castle took the life out of them the moment they entered. Queens with malice-stained past, and cracked, icy future in their eyes. Just as cold as the walls. Subjects, humans throwing gruesome insults, silky flattery, or fluttering pleas at his feet. Just as empty as the mirrors.

Only one refused the castle's bite. Only one walked in looking for life, rather than death. *Looking* for a thing no one thought existed here. Already presumed dead. Put six feet beneath the ground. But maybe it was here all along; maybe the light hid in the castle's corners while the dark came out to play, and she just had to coax it out of its hiding places. Maybe the bell was ringing all this time, she was the only one who came close enough to hear it; the only one who came to put flowers on the grave.

Maybe when she felt the machinery pumping she knew the rhythm was a heartbeat. Maybe when she heard the gears clanking she knew it was the sound of inhaling and exhaling. Maybe when she saw the lightning, she wondered what it was thinking. Maybe she looked at these books, these instruments, and saw what the vampire king saw once; something alive. They weren't dead yet—un- or otherwise. Just sick, and in need of proper treatment. She was a doctor after all. Maybe her first subject was the very books she learned from.

Lisa, who looked at this blotch on the sky, with Death in its towers, and darkness splattered on its walls, and thought *that's where I'll learn to heal people*. Lisa, who gaped in amazement at the beast of a building. Lisa, who didn't shudder upon entering. Lisa, who didn't scream when its master touched her, but turned to him with calm resolve, and told him she'd teach him to be more human. Lisa, who's life eclipsed the undeath in this place.

And there *was* a trade that occurred that day. For Dracula's immortal knowledge, Lisa would teach him how to live a mortal life. To travel the world as a man, to walk as a man, to eat and drink, laugh and cry, as a man. Immortality for mortality. They gave each other the world, as so many lovers promise to do. Vlad would make her immortal, and Lisa would make him mortal, with no exchange blood.

(Except to create a thing with both their blood running through it.)

So maybe, after all this talk of life, it is fitting that she wants to *create* life inside this castle.

Fitting, maybe. Fitting for *her*. But the castle is not mortal yet, and wishes it could protest that it isn't the right size, refuse to try on the idea.

Dracula is apprehensive as well, for the castle and he are used to each other, they take after each other, because the cold, and the dark, and the death, and the *alone* does something to you after a while; you start talking to the walls. After the cold queens and quaking colleens leave, or leave their bloodstains the floor. After the beasts and their silver-stained bullets turn

back into righteous men in the sun. After he simply outlives everyone else. When all the living things hate, fear, or else betray you, when all the living things can die, and you, who are undead, cannot, it's the lifeless things that stand firm by your side. When the day ends and the shadows come out to play, when you're the only one left, in the end you still have the walls. And then...the walls are *all* you have. And if you talk to them long enough you make a sort of pact, spoken or silent, with those speechless stones: *'you're the only one I can trust.'*

Dracula speaks to them one day, says he wonders if he can do this, be a father at all, not to mention a *good* one. The castle cannot reply. But something deep inside the walls wonders if it might be nice to hear Dracula laugh. It might be nice to put on some different clothes. It might be nice for someone new to listen to from time to time. It might be nice to live again.

The castle is concerned. Used to doing things one way, being one way, and only hearing one voice.

But that doesn't mean it is unwilling, that it intends to kill the child.

It never kills anything—Dracula does that. It cannot do anything on its own, and that includes change.

The castle doesn't like change.

...But that doesn't mean it won't.

And if its going to change, its master must change first. They must change together.

Vampires do not have reflections. But Dracula has a castle, and that castle will be damned if it isn't his mirror.

Reflections are simple to change; put on some makeup, some war paint, a new change of clothes, get a piercing somewhere. Simple, yes, but not easy, to change completely, because that doesn't mean anything's changed inside.

The castle did not come equipped for child-rearing; there are no rooms full of toys and cradles and school supplies.

So if this is to be, they must build their son's world themselves.

Together they set aside a room for the child's arrival. Just one, single room. And the castle too knows, from the start, this room will be different from all the rest. They will put paintings on the walls, and banners in the halls; things to interest him, to tell him of his parents, at least, even if there are few other relatives to spend Christmas with. The carpets will be darker, instead of the stringent red, and they will make their words smaller, the books easier to understand. The rest of the castle is warm in color, but cool in atmosphere. This room will be cool in color, but warm in atmosphere. The fire will always be set in its place, and they will try their best to make sure the warmth reaches him; if the fire fails, they will knit blankets; if the blankets fail they will make him tea, or warm milk with honey; and when everything else fails they will hold him. If there are tears here, scornful stares will not greet them, instead, kisses and lullabies will be behind door number three. If this room lives, it will be because of something much softer than pounding metal and lighting.

If a child is to live here, they must change that reflection. Everything Dracula's castle appears to be, this room will be the reverse. Separate. Something... *other* than the castle.

This room will bottle all the laughter had in this castle. This room will be made of and for living, not the death the rest of the place is steeped in. So much so that this room will not *stand* for bloodshed.

Lisa brings in supplies from her town; color and cloth, boards and brushes, needle, and thread, and paper; all the things one needs to build a universe.

It is Dracula who takes the paint, who changes the color to something other than the blacks and reds of the rest of the Vampire's world, cementing on the walls themselves *You will not be dark here, my castle. You will be kind to him, Castlevania*. The castle doesn't know its master to work with his hands like a human, but Vlad is not the same within this room either—this room is part of the trade. He doesn't use magic, or science, as if he is telling himself with every hammer that they are going to change together, the way one does when talking to the mirror.

Lisa sits in a chair and stitches together cloth and fur to make little creatures, toys for the boy to play with. Soft things, not sharp. They are reflections too, littler, simpler ones, of the creatures howling and prowling outside the castle's walls, or scurrying within them.

But it is the ceiling that is the crowning jewel of the room. Something they paint together—splashing it onto each other's clothes and noses.

His parents love the stars. They often walk outside the castle walls, fingers knit into each other's, to gaze at them. They are scholars at soul, and have charted the constellations. They want their child to be able to do the same, to watch the stars, even if he's not outside. At the end of every day they want him to be sung to sleep by the symphony of the night.

For them, maybe, but to the castle, one of the most interesting things about this room, is the mirror. This is strange, as, while there are other mirrors in this house, they are nothing more than a silver decoration; they have no purpose here, unless they float in shards and possibility. This is an ordinary mirror. It does hold something now, however, and that's Lisa—only giving more credence to the idea that she is the only living thing in this castle. The castle wonders if they think it will reflect the child, as if they are hoping he will take after his mother and the room.

The mirror, and the windows. In the rest of the castle, the windows are always closed, curtained, or too small to let any real light in. But here they are big, and inviting to all the wiles of the day. Dracula protested—fearing he would burn. Lisa insisted—hoping he would shine.

The mirror, the room, are empty now. The windows closed. The books and charts dormant as the rest. It is not dead, but it's not alive either. Not even undead. Just a question. An almost.

The room lays on Frankenstein's table; just one lightning strike—(or one child's laugh)—away from breathing.

"Happy"

Chapter Summary

"I had entirely different books under my childhood bed. My father was a polymath, my mother was a doctor, and I grew up very fast."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The castle doesn't like the crying.

This new being is here, alive, and apparently 'alive' means 'up at all hours bawling.' The castle is used to a general tone of sorrow, of people screaming, and wolves howling, but this incessant wailing, for no reason, certainly not a *good* reason—(are there any 'good' reasons here?)—is not something that it enjoys echoing within its halls all the time. The room is not empty, isn't cold, or dark, but 'warm' and 'light' and 'full' would be pushing its luck. Letting the woman and her new life in, setting this room aside, changing that reflection, building this little universe, may just have been a mistake. Life is far more foul than death, the castle concludes; at least death is quiet.

But then there's another sound: sometimes, if they are very lucky, the child laughs.

...and the room fills with the sound, like air in its lungs.

It isn't just *the* room anymore. It belongs to someone. It has a master. It's *his* room. It's *Adrian's* room.

Centuries went by when there was no laughter in these rooms. Not a single word, nor note of song, how could there ever be laughter? Dracula's castle was not a place for it, Dracula was not the creature to give it—(unless you count the maniacal kind). It was something neither castle nor master lamented the absence of—(aside from that of his victims, there was little lament here. The place was hollow, and that means there was no emotion here; no joy, nor real sorrow. Happiness is only real when sadness is too). But now that Castlevania knows the sound, a little of 'happy'...it may just melt all its gears to fill every hall with that tiny, shimmering sound.

And when Vlad smiles, laughs in return, bouncing this little golden boy on his knee—(so unlike how he treated the sons and daughters of others before)...the castle thinks it might just be able to handle the crying.

There's a painting here too, now. The walls in this room are not stagnant and bare. The three of them left one day, and when they came back—smiles on their faces, laughs in their throats—there was a painting in their hands, which they gave to the room.

A reflection of the family. Of ‘family.’ Of ‘happy.’

There was no need for paintings before. The only master of this castle was here, in the blood—why depict him why you could just meet him? The castle didn’t need brushstrokes on canvas to remember what Dracula’s face looked like.

The castle may not have watched kings and queens reign and wither, may not pay homage to them with its walls, but it has three inhabitants now—the boy has two ancestors, one a king, one an ordinary woman—and well, they may as well reside on the walls too, just in case they’re not always here; God knows it’s too easy to lose anything living here.

Just to make sure the boy remembers their faces. What ‘happy’ looked like.

Soon the castle will understand that living things grow, and that perhaps the painting is not there for remembrance after death, but to remember when he was a tiny, smiling, crying ball of giggles...because he won’t be like this forever.

The painting isn’t the only thing on the walls either; the mirror. As they predicted, it is not empty here, though not magical, it isn’t purposeless. It sits, watching all that goes on, and it holds the boy in its silver grasp, as well as his mother. They are real. They are alive. Two drops of sunlight.

Sunlight.

That’s the other thing; the windows in the room are open now.

Humans seem to hunt, to find joy in, the sun. Vampires cannot even *live* in the sunlight, much less enjoy it, so Dracula has no choice but to keep his castle dark.

But Adrian has a mother too, and is not all vampire. The point of the room was never to be pitch black anyways.

And when he opens the windows... it’s as if the castle is a cat, and the little boy pulled its tail. It hurts, in a way; too much, too fast, without permission, thinking a part of its body is something to play with. The castle would like to scold, hiss, or at least glare at the boy, and wonders if the laughter’s worth the sting.

But he doesn’t let up. And somewhere in this too-exciting production, the castle grows to anticipate the sunlight’s bite. This isn’t like the ever-ache the emptiness wrought. It’s a pang like medicine; not pleasant, but something you need to take every day.

And Castlevania does need it.

The castle thought its fashion was black, but when the child opens the curtains; when he plays with those toys his mother made in the golden afternoon; when he holds the prisms his father gave him to the rays, and they split into spectrums; when he lays as a teenager on the floor, surrounded by his own drawings, and crumpled attempts, draped in golden light, staring up at the day-stricken stars...it thinks gold doesn’t look too bad on it.

Life stirs. Adrian opens the door to the room, and it starts to seep out into the halls.

The gold tiptoes along the walls, hides under beds, and behind couches. It sits quietly on cushions and floors and windowsills. It scurries through all the rooms, and toys with all the things under the motto ‘don’t play with that!’ It dances to the rhythm inherent within it.

The boy and his mother, two rays of sunlight, chase each other through the halls. Their footsteps, the soft, chirpy patter, is music against the castle’s stones—always so different from its master’s unrelenting score. They run by Vlad’s study laughing, and call its master, his father, to come out of the dark.

The castle is used to the unkind tones of its master, even towards children; it more than half expects him to scold them for the noise, to shut the door, or say nothing.

And sometimes he does.

But there are other times when he picks up the boy, puts him on his shoulders, and rushes through the halls himself, that death-knell of a walk becoming another spirited harmony in the song. Sometimes they even take this music outside; Vlad and his son become those running, howling things in the forest.

The castle has never seen its master like this. Just like when he worked with his hands to build the room. It isn’t sure it likes. But then...it isn’t sure it *dislikes* it either...

That isn’t to say he never scolds the boy. In fact, one of the times he did was simply for opening a window somewhere outside his room. It may seem a small thing to raise one’s voice over, but it’s understandable when spontaneous combustion is on the other line. Its master is not ready to end the night. Castlevania is unsure, but it will not die in the light; in fact, against its better judgment...it thinks it’s starting to *live* in it.

He made Adrian cry when he reacted this way. Crying never meant a thing here; Dracula has caused many children to weep in his presence. But these tears—instead of making him raise himself up, look scornfully on, as he always did before—make Vlad pause, blink, soften his tone, kneel in front of him, try to stop them from flowing. So the castle pauses too.

Adrian is a bit of a sensitive child. At least, the castle draws that conclusion. Dracula’s job doesn’t call for wonton emotion, and he’d never fall for someone with a penchant for sentimentality. But the boy, though much of the time he takes after his parents, continues to shed tears even when he is older. Even if it is just him, alone in the room, and a secret only the castle knows. The castle no stranger to crying, especially since the boy spent much of its early life doing nothing but that. But now that the crying has meaning, now that the castle is beginning to understand what sorrow is—(and it doesn’t like to think what it must have meant when Dracula’s victims sobbed at his feet, that they were someone’s parents, someone’s children, and their castle’s probably wanted to protect them too)—it is not sure it wants to be familiar with *Adrian* crying. But it cannot wrap its walls around him, hold him tight, and keep him warm like his parents can. It can only sit and wait for it to be over, and try to urge the fire to reach out to him.

Adrian is smart; he ages fast (that is, Lisa seemed surprised at how fast this transition occurred), and he learns faster, agile in his pursuits and eager at the knee of his learned parents. The castle is glad of this, as it was getting sick of all the easy words and games.

Though it does miss the tiny smiles and laughter sometimes. Crying was more common when he was a tiny, wordless life, but so was laughter. The castle learns as children grow up, though sadness isn't so frequent, 'happy' becomes a rare gem too. Because they are only noise to a baby, only it testing out its new mouth. As they grow, as they learn of words, and both 'happy' and 'sad,' both crying and laughter, have far too much meaning.

All those things his parents built and brought—the charts, and books and stars—start to become useful. Vlad walks a curious, more mature Adrian through the libraries, and to the rooms where the shards of not-quite-normal mirrors reflect places other than this one, transporting him to new worlds, both literally and figuratively. He may not be able to open the windows outside his room, (at least not when his father is around), but all those things that for so long sat dormant and unread on their shelves now come alive, much like the things in the room; little toy soldiers at the beck and call of the child's imagination.

Imagination. The castle didn't know what that was until now. It is the essence of that life-creating attribute Lisa brought here. The stuffed cloth becomes growling wolves in the child's hands. Toy figures become humans, vampires, locked in a duel. Empty words become stories, become worlds. Empty pages become landscapes and portraits. The child's mind gives life to inanimate things, like some sort of wandless, effortless, magic.

And, seeing its master take the boy through the halls, showing him all the magic, the mystery, the meaning of things, the castle realizes it's watching its master come to life as well.

Lifelessness was a fact of life here, it never seemed wrong or lacking, but the castle wonders if only children have the power to imagine things to life, or if this exists in adults too. It's never seen Vlad play with toys, but now it knows that toys aren't just silly objects; they are living things, animals, and people, and worlds, to a child. The castle wonders if reflections can be toys too. Castlevania wonders if this thing, this need for something more than lifeless stone, this need for life, this simple, complex magic, might be why lonely people talk to walls.

There are books in that room. But they do not sit still on their shelves. There are toys and in that room, but they are not worthless trinkets on the floor. There is a mirror in that room, but it is not empty. There are windows in that room, but they do not stay dark. There is a fire in that room, but it is not cold. There is a boy in that room, and he is alive.

Adrian laughs, and he cries. He reads and he learns. He casts spells and he casts his pen to the page. He plays, and he draws, and he imagines, and he brings to life everything around him.

And that warmth, that light, that life, is spreading through Castlevania like medicine in its veins. It never minded the cold, the dark, the death, and the lonely, but the warmth...the light...the life...

Adrian opens the windows, opens the door.

And, in the center of life-strewn universe they built, the room sighs.

Chapter End Notes

This is definitely one of my favorite chapters/sections of this fic. I loved being able to write about Adrian growing up from the castle's perspective. I hope you guys like it too!

"Alucard"

Chapter Summary

“‘Alucard’, they called me. The opposite of you. Mother never liked that. Did you know that? She hated the idea that I might define myself by you. Even in opposition to you. She loved us both. Enough that she wanted us to be our own people. Living our own lives. Making our own choices.”

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry this took so long!! And that this chapter is so short. My December was so busy, what with Christmas, vacation, family over, etc. I had hoped to get this out before all that, but with what writing/posting time I had I ended up needing to focus on the christmas/time-specific fics, and I didn't want to rush the chapter. In the end I'm very glad I didn't, as I'm much more proud of how it turned out now!

I fear I'm jinxing myself by saying this, but the next chapter shouldn't take that long, as I'm not as busy now, I have it pretty much written out--I just gotta finish editing--and it's one of my favorites! It'll be longer too!!

...Sorry for all the excuses...On to the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The castle doesn't like it when Adrian leaves.

Adrian is a child of both worlds, so he must walk in the day every once and a while. He cannot stay in the castle, in the night, forever; he must travel outside the room, feel the sunlight without the glass. He must understand his mother's people; his human half. A glass half full is a glass half empty, and he understands his duty to fill in the blanks where humanity is supposed to be.

Castlevania is unsure. Afraid, perhaps. It does not know much of humanity...but it does know that their blood tastes sweet, their words sound sour, their hands feel bitter. It knows they are not likely to treat the son of the vampire king with kindness.

It knows of only one human whose touch and words are sweet without taste.

If his mother can be kind... is it possible other humans can be too? Or does being a mother simply necessitate kindness? Is it possible there is more to them than sour speech and the

bitter fists? That they are more than just something to fill its master's appetite and quiet his boredom?

Lisa tells them all so. She gathers her family in the room, and tells them stories of knights and heroes, witches and villains. Of good kings, and evil priests. Of good gods, and evil queens. Of demons and zombies and the heroes who rose up against them—(and maybe Adrian can be one of them, some day). Of people who have nothing but manage to change the world anyways. Of people who have everything but are empty all the same—(that one started to sound a little too familiar). And not all of the stories are read out of books. Some are real, were history. Some she'd even seen herself. Some were told to her. She said she heard some of the most wonderful ones from a Speaker once. She even made some up. Until Adrian himself formed stories when she wasn't there to tell them.

Dracula looks out the window at the rain, chuckles to himself at the fact that too many of her stories end happily...but something deep inside his eyes is trying, trying to believe her. To believe there's truth to these stories, even those she made up. To let the light in her eyes flow into his. He tries to make up his own stories too, sometimes. But the darkness in his presence does its best to swallow the light in her words.

Adrian snuggles up beside her and the gleam in her eyes reflects in his without a second's resistance. Enough that after a childhood of listening to these stories, begging for his parents to take him outside, he can barely wait to experience it himself.

That's not to say he never left. She took him out on little trips, letting him take bites of the world out there. Each time he came back with treasures—(well what he considered treasures)—in his hands, and a grin secured firmly to his face, and he'd ask with voice bright and fast as a hummingbird, where they'd go out next, and how long he'd have to wait. Even his father took him out to the enchanted forests and grottos of the world for lessons, but always made sure they were the deepest, most well-kept secrets of the world, where no human would find them.

Well, most of the time. There were times when he came back with tears in his eyes. He'd ask *What's a 'monster'?*, and his father would lean down, put his hand on his cheek, and say *Definitely not you*. Lisa would plead or argue with her husband, but when Dracula would leave, the moon would turn red, and he'd remember what blood tasted like.

But this is different. This isn't some day trip to come back with trinkets, some night lesson to come back with knowledge. The time it's stretched out, and stretching them thin.

When he leaves and doesn't come back that night... that morning...the next...the room tries to speak but finds there's no breath in it, like it got the wind knocked out of it.

This is a different emptiness from what Castlevania was before. It isn't a principal, not simply a fact of life. It is an absence. An absence of something living. An absence of a fact of life. A true emptiness in that the room was once full.

It doesn't take long for the room to know what *I miss you* means; that absence creates ripples of yearning in its wake. That emptiness aches to be filled. It misses the games he played in

the sunlight, it misses the lullabies, the drawings, counting the stars and sitting by the fire, the moments when the family would tell stories to the walls they didn't know were listening.

It even misses the crying.

The clock tower's ticking eats away at them from the inside.

And within the ticking, the room, the castle, wonder what the humans will do to him out there.

Will he be a monster in their eyes? An enemy, a beast, an ugly thing? Will they not see the light in his nature, rather the dark that nurtured him?

Will he be a cacophony to their ears, the screeches and howls of undead things, instead of the symphony they know his voice to be?

Will his blood be that of demons and beasts to their noses, and will they cast him out for not being human enough?

Will he be a toy in their hands, just as he played humans-and-vampires, just as he pretended to fight monsters with wooden swords?

...But he is alive, and living things ought not be played with, for they cannot be imagined into something they're not.

And if he *is* a toy to them...what will they make of him? Will they imagine him as a human like them? Or will they imagine him into a monster he is not? Will they realize he is neither? Will they think he needs the night when he is perfectly fine in the day? What stories will they tell of him?

Castlevania has not met many humans. But those it has were prone to make monsters out of decent men, and weapons out of instruments of peace.

Will the humans' mouths be forked and deadly as ever? Will their hands be weak and empty as ever? Will they assess him as fuel for their ever-greedy fire? Will they take the life—they who have so much of it—take the single life they have here, the one that brought it to them all—and crush it out of him, figuratively or literally?

Will they bully him, and scorn him, and lie to him, and cheat him and hate him and...*hurt* him?

The room twists and spirals in its thoughts, as if going down a hill, and throbs at the last word.

Or... says the castle softly, Will they welcome him? Will they understand him? Will they see him as we have? As he truly is? Will his light withstand the darkness in them? Can he bring life to these bloodthirsty beasts?

When Adrian returns, what—or *who*—will he be?

The castle and the room wonder, and wait, and question, and long for him as they are left in the dark, holding their breath until breath itself is but a fleeting memory.

They couldn't say how long it had been since he left, it could have been a lifetime. But one day, as black and white as the rest, the morning comes with spreading color, and breath tumbles into the deepest corners of the room again.

They are equal parts nervous and eager to hear the stories he has to tell; for these monsters and men are more than toys.

And he *does* have stories to tell.

Out there, adventure exists in more than just books. Out there he can learn without charts and lectures; he can learn by doing, by experiencing. He can put to use, and to the test, all the spells and techniques he practiced indoors. Out there the scenes that were pictures before are real, are alive—the rain licks and the snow bites, the grass whispers as the wind sings its haunting melody, and the rivers join in response. Out there he can smell the trees, and flowers, the campfires, listen to the howls and chirps of the animals, and feel the sun on his skin without the glass to separate them. Taste the world. And out there the heroes and villains are animate too—he can speak to them, and won't have to dream up their responses. He can make friends and enemies out of words and actions instead of wood and clay. Out there the threats, the demons and monsters are real too, and he has to fight them with something sharp—be it his pen or his sword. Out there, imagination is a weapon against reality. Out there he doesn't have to imagine his world to life because it already is. And he is alive in it...this is his life that he is finally living.

That is what a life is. The idea echoes in the room.

(If this is a life...are we alive? The room asks.

Alive isn't the same as life. Castlevania mutters softly, and doesn't explain.)

And, amongst all the adventures they learn that while he walked the world a spell, his mother's people gave him a new name:

"Alucard."

Alucard. The reverse of Dracula.

They looked at him, they listened to him, they spent time with him and they understood—*(breathe again and be still, they understood)*—they understood that he was not the dark and the cold and the death his father is. In fact, they thought that he was so different from his father that this reversal must be his name.

The room is proud of him, happy for him, relieved, for this was its purpose, its hope. Relieved to have him back—more full of life and light than ever.

Lisa, while always proud of him, doesn't like the name. She named him after all, it makes sense that she wouldn't appreciate a dismissal of the name she chose. But...there's more to it

than that. She doesn't want him to be defined by his father. She doesn't want him to be a difference, a reverse. She wants him to be himself. Him and his father to be different people. She wants them to be themselves; not dividends, fractured pieces of one another put back together in different orders.

(But aren't we all fractured pieces of each other? Don't we take fragments of each other to make up ourselves?)

This is a strange thought to Castlevania, for it has always been defined by Dracula, and never minded, but perhaps mirrors ought not mind their reflectors. Adrian is no mirror. Still, the castle has always compared the boy to his father. The room was always meant to be the opposite of the Dracula, of his castle. The boy's very existence has always spelled the reverse of everything they knew. Its only fitting the boy would be a reversal of his father.

'Adrian' is a nice name...but 'Alucard' fits like a tailored suit.

Adrian likes the world. Makes sense, he likes the sun, the day, the mirrors, the books, the stories, the people.

But what doesn't make as much sense, and what's more important, is the world likes him. At first its strange, but as the castle thinks about it more it makes sense; they may have come with pitchforks before, because they didn't like Dracula. ...But Alucard is not Dracula.

The room breathes deep, more alive than ever. And, as its master returns, tells his story, the room learns too.

Castlevania may be able to move for its master, but the room is stuck in its place. It cannot see the rest of the world like the boy can. It understands now that Alucard being different from Dracula also means that he cannot stay inside like his father does. That though it hurts when he leaves, the room can never be everything he needs the way the castle can for Dracula. That he is made for something bigger than four walls...even if those four walls were part of what made him.

It understands that breath cannot be a constant for it. That its master will leave, and the room will be hollow and ache for certain periods of time. This is a fact of life. This is what living is.

But it also understands that he will always come back. This isn't something it reasoned or multiplied out. This is just something it knows within the oldest parts of it; that they will never be apart forever.

Now that the room is alive within the castle it will always be its own existence. Even if it's empty, even if it gets broken and battered, it will always be the universe they built for him, a universe can't be destroyed by mortal hands. It can never be fully erased as long as Alucard lives.

(...And Castlevania understands that is dangerous.)

The room understands that though life was always a stagnant thing for the castle, it is more dynamic and elusive for it. It will go through periods where there is nothing in that room, and the emptiness will throb, but in the same way that Alucard has the kind of life Dracula could never have, the room will have the kind of life the castle could never have.

The room's breath will ever be catching itself and falling, like a dance, as if always during the most exiting part of a story.

Chapter End Notes

Is there anything from this chapter (or any of the previous chapters!) you guys would like me to make a little fic about?

(it would probably be similar to the little Drac, Lisa, and Adrian interaction that is [Seven Years Bad Luck...Or Maybe Just a Moment](#))

There are so many things in this chapter I feel would be really fun to write out actual scenes of; Lisa taking Adrian out on little trips, and both the positive and negative outcomes of those, Drac teaching him lessons in the most beautiful and secret places of the world, telling stories, Alucard going off and experiencing the world on his own...Feel free to let me know what specific things you might like to read about in the comments, or drop a prompt in my askbox on my [writing blog on tumblr](#)!

"Empty"

Chapter Summary

"He's gone mad. And from that, there is no recovering him...It's a tragedy...He could've changed the world. I think he might have, if Mother hadn't died.

"She'd sent him out into the world. That's why he wasn't there when the bishops took her...She sent him to travel...

"Imagine if...the religious inquisition hadn't proved true all of his worst instincts about humans."

"And now he's going to use her death as an excuse to destroy the world."

"Oh, the world will still be here...But you will not be here...None of you...There will only be Dracula and his war council, and the hordes of the night..."

"Imagine it. A world without humans, under endless invented night. And Dracula in his castle, his revenge so horribly complete that there is nothing left to do but look out over a world without art or memory or laughter and know that he did his work well. That he did it all for love."

Chapter Notes

Boy, it feels really good to post another chapter of this. ...Apparently I did jinx myself after all, hehe...But I hope it was worth the wait!! This is definitely one of my favorites. (...Have I said that about them all? XD)

A huge thank you to everyone who has left comments!! They really and truly do encourage me so much, and keep me writing, so thank you so so so much for that <3

I decided to capitalize "Castle" and "Room" from now on (and I will go back and capitalize them in early chapters at some point), even though, to my knowledge, that's not grammatically correct, because I was working on a later chapter and I realized that things might get confusing later, and that was an easy way to make things clear now. I may have missed a couple, so forgive me for that, and/or any typos.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Castle doesn't like the idea of its master going away.

They have been inseparable for such a long time now; the Castle has bent and broken and been Dracula's castle for centuries. Its master leaves every once and a while, and he visits the woman's home. But weeks, to months, to years without him is too long for a mirror to be apart from the thing it reflects. This is a vampire's castle and Dracula is that vampire; he must

stay inside its walls, in the cold and the dark, lest he burn. This is Dracula's castle, and Dracula must stay within its halls. If he doesn't...what is Castlevania after all? Just an empty tomb. A shell of something that was once living. A broken toy on the playroom floor, left there to start its dust collection after the child grew up.

Dracula never *has* to leave, for the Castle can take him wherever he wants to go in a flash of lightning and a rumble of dust and thunder. The idea that Vlad would travel the world *like a man*, all alone in the light, without his Castle, his shroud of darkness, isn't right, to both of them, at first.

Hasn't Castlevania done enough for its master? He is not like the boy, who needs to walk in the day. All he needs are these walls, the blood, and the night.

The woman has a way with persuasion. This was part of the trade, after all, Castlevania remembers. Dracula gave Lisa undying knowledge, and she took the immortal beakers and books—a part of Castlevania—out into the world to 'do some good.' (The Castle wasn't sure quite how that worked, but she did have a knack for making good out of the patchwork pieces of evil.) It is Vlad's turn to be given a piece of her mortality to take inside.

Lisa assures them that, just as Adrian came back more alive than ever, this will be a better form of life for Vlad too. He will have to be more careful; to stay out of the sun, to ask to be invited, to wear traveling cloaks, not royal robes, to temper his thirst, and be patient with humanity—(just as she has been with him)—but in the end he will come back clothed in gold, and it will all be worth it.

Castlevania wishes it had human hands to hold onto him, but all it has are cold stones, and mechanical bones; it cannot keep him within its walls forever, without collapsing.

Dracula kisses them goodbye with hope in one hand, promises in the other, two rays of sunlight ever in his heart, saying he'll be back.

And he doesn't come back that night. That morning. The next.

When Adrian left, the Room understood the meaning of the words '*I miss you.*' It realized what it was to be empty—that is, in that it was once full, and was missing something. After all those years, Castlevania too finally understands the true meaning of all those words once used to describe it: 'lonely,' 'dark,' 'cold,' and 'empty.' It *was* those things, it never *felt* those things itself before.

Dracula may have been cold and dark and undead, but he brought life of a sort to the Castle. He made it breathe, its heart beat. Just his footsteps in the halls was a comfort, a kind of music—be it mechanical and half-dead. And finally he talked to the walls. 'Emptiness' for it is was an adjective, not a noun; it was an outfit it wore, not a feeling etched deep within the walls in a place no one could ever really touch.

It didn't know what it was like to lose your purpose, what a hopeless existence it is for a mirror to be without a reflection.

The Castle doesn't know if it ever breathed, but it thinks it understands the breathlessness the Room must have felt without Adrian. It is big, and rich, and intricate...and hollow. It's like there's a hole somewhere deep inside it that cries to be filled, and can never be as long as its master is away.

But we are not alone, says the Room.

It looks up and remembers this is true; Adrian remains. Their boy. The boy who belongs to its master, the woman, and the Room together. And Castlevania likes to think he belongs to it too, in some way. The boy for whom that death-defying Room exists. The boy who stole patches of sunlight when his father wasn't looking, who cried when no one was listening, who brought books, toys, and drawings, lonely vampire kings, and old decrepit castles to life.

It feels cold and dark, dead and empty...until Alucard opens the windows.

The Castle is thrown into a pool of gold, and the sensation is jarring; the switching of states, temperatures so fast. Such a drastic change so quickly isn't all right with Castlevania, especially when it is so different from how its master always dressed it. It is Dracula's castle, that piercing, dripping stain that no light enters. It shouldn't go out in colorful garb, it just isn't fitting. Though perhaps the jarring change is ultimately less painful than dipping each room in slowly.

It's that same tail-pulling sensation from when he was a boy. Except this is much worse, because it's the *whole* Castle—its entire form—and he never closes them. Before it was just the Room, and the Room is a part of the Castle, so the Castle could feel its burn, but it was dulled there. When he opened the door to the Room, the light slithered out, its scales doused in poison, leaving a stinging trail as it went. But its cage was always in the Room; its venom didn't remain in the Castle's veins forever. Now there is no barrier between the Castle and the light, no home for the sun to crawl back to. It has been let loose, and the stones are soaked in venom, like needles all over the Castle's body.

Its existence is now drenched in sunlight. Before long it becomes like how they painted the Room so long ago, it is a fact of life—at least while Alucard reigns, and the Castle looks completely different dressed in morning sunrise.

The sting begins to fade; the Castle becoming immune to the poison. And, after the pain ebbs, the Castle can look at itself objectively, and thinks somewhere deep beneath its walls, in a place it would never share, that maybe this change is not a bad thing.

The Room breathes deeper than ever before, enough to laugh. Grinning it turns to the Castle, as if saying *Feels good doesn't it?*

Castlevania looks away.

There was so much it didn't notice about itself before. The gold on the carpets shimmers, it knows now that mirrors glitter, and how much dust was on the bookshelves—(Adrian is sure to brush it off)—it knows now why others put pictures on the walls; because the stones are so

bare and uninteresting in the light, and the fires are such a aggressive light and heat compared to the soft blanket of warmth over the world, like snowfall transforming all.

It knows now why humans like to go out during the day.

It is a different kind of life. It isn't like the science Vlad used to make it breathe and beat. This is softer, quieter, warmer. Less mechanical more...*real*. It doesn't mean Vlad's method of bringing it to life was bad or wrong, nor that Alucard's is good, or right, it's just different. And maybe different is okay for now.

The boy looks different too.

Adrian's features are illuminated, his expressions dance in ray and shadow, his hair is like liquid gold draining across his shoulders, his eyes flicker and dance like candlelight.

And he doesn't burn.

Adrian reads books in the sun, and he practices magic and sword in the sun, he drinks tea and wine—not blood—in the softly lit kitchen, polishes the shelves, makes sure everything works properly, and sits on the balconies and lets the wind brush through his hair, all in the sun, in the sun. Sometimes he leaves to go outside, into towns, to get rid of a monster or two, but mostly he leaves to visit his mother. Even when he does, the world is left in a satisfied glow.

His golden hair and eyes are no longer a bright spot on a dark canvas, but a reflection of his universe. His parents may have built his universe long ago, but he has spread his Room throughout Castlevania, conquered the multiverses around him, claiming them for his own, until the Castle doesn't know which of them is which anymore.

The gold dripping through the halls reminds the Castle of that word from long ago, the one used to describe the baby in the painting: "happy." It may be a pale echo of the world back then, when all three of them there, but the Castle is well versed in the world of reflections, and knows there is a world in which they don't exist, and an echo may not be the real thing, but it will satisfy as a substitute.

Those times are quiet, with fewer raids, fewer pitchforks, shoutings and fires, because people like Alucard. They didn't like Dracula, but Alucard is not Dracula. And Castlevania could enjoy the excitement...but the quiet is nice for a while.

Even so, the quiet does remind it of what, *who*, is absent. The Castle misses its master. The boy, the sun, the change, may help, but that fact will always remain at the back of its consciousness. There will always be some emptinesses that cannot be filled with substitutes. It misses its master, wants him to come back. Even so, it thinks it may be able to last a few months longer in the sun. Until Vlad returns, at least.

And he does.

Dracula does return. And when he does, he is not the same. But not in the way they were expecting; he does not arrive full of life, spreading his newfound spirit throughout the halls—as Alucard's glowing return made them anticipate. He doesn't come with a new name and

tales of how he defeated monsters and made friends, he doesn't return with a new perspective, and a handful of smiles. He returns, but it's almost as if he still hasn't. He is more dead than Castlevania has ever seen him. As if the sun burned him after all. But it burned something deep beneath his skin.

There is no joyful banquet of welcome. He does not kiss their cheeks, hug them and whisper into their ears *I missed you so, my Castle, my Sunlight*. He does not come bearing gifts for his son, nor decorations for his Castle, from afar. He does not sigh and say *it's good to be home* and remember his purpose.

Castlevania may not have ever breathed, but there was something like it when Vlad was here. He brought it to life somehow. Castle's cannot speak but it felt they had a way of communicating somehow. Mirrors cannot speak either, but we hear their words all the same. But Dracula doesn't talk to the walls anymore. And he cannot hear his Castle's reply.

He marches in all too quickly, a purpose in his stride. But it's not a fulfilling purpose, like that of the Room, nor a reflective purpose, like that of the Castle, rather it's the emptiness before. Emptiness, yes... but not like before. Not the adjective, the outfit from his previous reign, not the noun, the feeling from when he was gone, instead it is a verb; it is something active. It's more than just a lack of something; something grew, came alive in and of the lack. It's a hungry emptiness, like the humans' fire set to swallow everything deemed unworthy. The Castle has worn emptiness before, but this is different...or maybe *it* is different now.

Vlad left as a man, walking on his own feet, taking the slower path, but he comes back as a vampire, teleporting in a flash of flame, forgetting that he has legs that would like to carry him to distant lands, and hands that would like to touch the world, and eyes that would like to see the scenery.

The once light-laced windows shutter at his arrival, the curtains slam shut, as if the Castle got a chill at his footsteps. As if they were doing something wrong, and had to shut it down as fast as possible. Every single one of them shivers, closes, dares not refuse their master.

All except the those in the Room. Those in the Room do not shudder or shut down. Dracula is not their master. They will not obey. They cannot do much to protest the night, but they will do what they can; they will stand open and unafraid of the dark.

Castle's can't get slapped in the face, but if they could, this is what it probably would feel like.

Coming home without the home in his heart...like Castlevania isn't home for him anymore.

They were learning how to change together; its master was supposed to return full of life. Together they were meant to feel the light's sting, together they were meant to learn to live in it. To see the true state of their world, without the darkness to cover it up. Instead he came back empty, all that life he gained while Lisa and Adrian were here used up, stolen away from him by a cruel world. The Castle wasn't worried about the humans ransacking what little light existed in Dracula, as they feared with Alucard—surely Vlad could only gain, he did not have enough in him to lose.

Castlevania understands now what it should have done; it should have collapsed all its walls to keep him inside.

It is far worse to know the light, and have it snatched away, than to only know the dark.

The Castle would be happy to at least have its master back, regardless if the experiment succeeded...But it isn't sure it does.

Dracula has been angry before, but anger was a thing to take outside and deal with, not bring inside. The Castle is, for the most part, a quiet, soft place for him to spend his time, to contemplate, and learn, to experiment in, not to brood in rage. Rage was for the outside world. Inside may have been cold, dark and empty but it was serenity.

The darkness and the cold and the death this Castle once transmitted are no longer a radio station to be changed with the flick of a dial. These qualities have infected Dracula's very being, it seeps out of him with every waxing and waning footstep, it oozes out of him as he sits in his study—no longer in quiet contemplation, but an unrest that is so loud it resonates perfectly with everything Castlevania is made of. It resonates so perfectly it reminds Castlevania of everything it once was when the vampire king ruled, tuning, turning it back into something that cares not for the color gold, and the discrepancies between its existence then and now melt away into before. It resonates perfectly with everything Castlevania is made of...and it thinks it just might shatter.

—(And maybe that would be a good thing, because it would let the light in. Maybe that's the only way to let the light in now)—

The emptiness the Castle was before, the emptiness the Castle felt when Dracula first left has swallowed its master, and Dracula is now not a thing to reflect, but a negative space on the pages, a black hole that takes in all light and life and devours it. He walks in, not as its master who brought it to life, returning that life to the emptiness, filling those places the light still couldn't reach, those places ever missing him... but as an empty shell that cannot fill anything, and only makes them all emptier the longer they look at him.

Dracula has been undead before. But that was *undead*; not quite alive, not quite dead either—and he could swing to either side. This is different.

With one swipe he rips off all the gold the Castle wore just yesterday like thieves in the night, leaving it broke and naked on the highway, and such a drastic change so quickly sends it lying on the floor in shock, one question dying on open lips, tears draining down its cheeks:

Why?!

When he left so full, what could have taken all that away? What could have taken away even what little life he had before it all? Did the world chip away at him slowly, or was it one event that kidnapped his life? What, who did they need to destroy?

Then, as Dracula marches into the library with the big broken mirror, and talks to a crowd of humans with tongues of a fire, it learns:

It is the woman. The woman who knocked on the Castle door all those years ago with the pommel of her knife. The woman with the soft hands and the defiant heart. The only human who was sweet in more than taste. Lisa, who brought sunlight into the darkest reaches of the Castle.

Vlad's wife has been taken from him.

Dracula's life has been taken from him.

The sanguine nature of humanity. Their penchant for setting things on fire. The ravenous nature of those flames. Vampires are known for being bloodthirsty, but the Castle always knew their thirst never compared to that of humanity. Vampires are known for catching on fire but she was never turned, and did she need to burn?

The world has taken the woman, and, worse, its master's life away, and the Castle is more than willing to go to war for it. It agrees humanity must die for such a crime.

Hating and blaming the world, the humans who once scratched at the doors and howled at the moon is better than facing the thing deep inside Castlevania that tells it it's all its fault. All its fault for letting her take pieces of it outside.

After all, it was the parts of Castlevania—the beakers and books—which she took outside to help people, to 'do some good,' which got her killed. So maybe its master is right that they can't be helped. Maybe there isn't any good in the world after all.

But something is still here. The Room says, once again. *Someone.*

Yes, she brought life into this place, and much of that life would leave with her. But have you forgotten that there is a life that cannot be taken away with her? That they created life within your miserable walls and that life, well, lives? Remember that a piece of her is still here, and you don't have to pretend death is all that's left.

The Room sees that the boy's father is cold, and dark, empty, and dead. But unlike the Castle as a whole, for which these words are outfits to wear, facts of life, the Room has learned these are problems, and there are solutions to them. Solutions which the boy can enact.

He is dark. Observes the Room.

It ponders what to do with dark things.

So open a window, it tells Adrian. *Let the sunlight in.*

The Room's window has always been open, and it does not know the flammable nature of full-blooded vampires. But starlight is a kind of light too.

He is cold. Observes the Room.

It ponders what to do with cold things.

So hold him. It tells his son. Like he did for you, all those years ago, when you were a tiny, bawling thing.

He is dead. Observes the Room.

It ponders what to do with dead things. The Room sits and thinks and begins to despair, for it does not know how to bring the dead to life.

The Castle takes a deep breath, and finally speaks up;

You opened the windows and cast the darkness away. It tells Alucard. You let the sun in and warmed my halls.

So take that gold, form it into a cloak, and dress him in it. Teach him what your universe looks like, what I looked like, when you were here.

Take him by the arm, and walk with him out into the stars, call them by name, like he, you and your mother did, long ago.

Go to him. Hold him. And don't let go.

Lisa brought life to this place. You are the life they created. You are their legacy. You are the one life her death cannot take away.

If you can do that for me, if you can bring this old, wretched castle to life, you can reanimate your father too. All you need to do is remind him that you are here.

The Castle hopes, somewhere in the back of its mind it dreams, he can still come back to life. It is his reflection, after all; surely what worked for the Castle can work for Dracula.

But...it is his reflection, after all. And as Alucard marches through the halls, and while the Room continues to urge the boy to go to his father, the Castle digs its nails into its palm until it bleeds, biting back against the anger bubbling inside it even so, knowing that war cries cannot be rewound so easily.

The boy answers their call, though maybe not in the way they expect. No...it is better than some loving display.

He does not open the windows, but he does open a door, and when he walks in, his face is barely visible, not because it's dark, but because he is draped, surrounded in light, like the sun itself is behind his decree. The light has followed him from his room, slithered along the halls, and formed itself into wings on his back. His tone is firm and defiant, and as he confronts him, Lisa's voice rings through the halls.

And the Castle understands now that light, warmth, and life, no matter how much they seem so, are not soft, not weak. They are violent, and they burn.

Alucard opposes all the war, the blood, the revenge, proving once and for all that the Room has reached him, fulfilled its purpose. And his words—while Dracula's drip with rage, like the blood down his fingers—are filled with the same *I-know-what's-good-and-I'm-not-*

leaving-till-it-comes-out his mother's words were once laced with. Echoing behind every sunstruck syllable is his mother's *I want to save people*.

And they understand at last that rooms aren't the only things with purposes.

Dracula has been undead before, but this death is different; this is more than a living death, death is a living thing in him.

Death has its strings wrapped around the vampire king's wrists, plugged into his chest. This war, the cold, the death, and the emptiness, are all he wants, all he *is* now.

The Castle's consciousness thrashes between the two sides; between Dracula's black anger and Alucard's golden hope.

And anger wins.

The Castle is used to being spattered with blood, but when the boy's—

—*Adrian*, who laughed, who played pretend, and showed them what 'happy' was, Alucard, the reverse of Dracula, who let the light in—

—blood is spilled by its *master*, the boy's *father*, the one who created him and his light-strewn world, who laughed, and played with him, and painted the walls, and walked amongst the stars, who should know more than anyone he is worth listening to—

Castlevania thinks it might not like the cold, the dark, the empty, or the blood at all anymore.

The red stain is an unbearable itch it's hopeless to scratch. The blood burns like acid on its floors, a brand of this war, this death, this emptiness burned upon its flank, as if making it remember its original purpose and habit, and who it is meant to obey. It wants to collapse on the floor, to writhe and scream and clutch at the place where it hurts.

But castles do not cry. They do not scream. They do not ache.

It can only be a reflection, can only do what its master wants; be an instrument of war. That is all. It can only obey, and try to remember what it liked about the color black.

Alucard—still alive, thank whatever gods might be out there—cannot stay in these blackened halls anymore, and neither can the sunlight. When he leaves, he takes with him all the things he brought inside.

Dracula shuts the door to the Room; he hides the walls he painted, the toys she stitched, the stars they gazed at, the books they fell asleep to together, and the window where the boy danced in the light, like he's playing peekaboo; if he covers his eyes, the outside world will stop existing...or in this case, the inside one. As if it lying dormant will allow the emptiness to swallow it, and it to become a part of the Castle again. As if he's trying to forget the very life he's going to war for. Like he can silence his own heart, tell it that it doesn't, doesn't, doesn't beat anymore. He hides the only pocket of heaven that ever existed in his finely crafted hell, and tries to pretend that there was never any laughter, any light here, and they can all forget what it was to be happy.

The Castle wonders if this is what it feels like when people try to lock away the best parts of themselves because they ache.

But the Room has become something more now. It has always been different, separate. It was never just not-cold, not-dark, not-empty, not-dead. It was not a negative. It was warm, light, full, and alive. And that doesn't just go away. Its very existence *defies* being swallowed. It has always protected the thing inside it against the blood and the dark and the death, and it cannot, *will* not, accept them now. It enjoyed playing make-believe with the boy, but this isn't pretend, imagination, the Room knows what is real, and this is a lie, and the Room will not stand for it, will not accept the thought that it never existed, never held any sunlight, that there was never any laughter here. It is alive, and it can only sleep, not retreat back into a state of nonexistence. It is not dead, and will not just sit still; it shivers in the cold and the dark. It may be lonely without the boy, but it will not just sit there in silence, or else get down on itself, quietly mourning the boy's departure, thinking there is nothing it can do. It *knows* Alucard is coming back. The Room has grown up, and it doesn't fear its master is gone forever when he leaves for a while. Its master *will* return, and when he does, he will fight. He will oppose the cold, the dark, and the death again, this time stronger. So no, it is not empty, just uninhabited.

And Dracula knows this. Dracula knows he cannot let the Room have a single second to breathe, because if it does, hope might just come back. So he wraps his claw around the Room's throat and squeezes.

And it hurts. Far more than the sting of sunlight, Castlevania knows how much the Room hurts. Because, though they are separate, the Room will always be a part of the Castle. The light's sting may have hurt, but it was passive, the side effect of medicine. This is an active, hateful, and sick. The Castle may have winced at the light's bite. But the Room squirms within, and grapples at his grasp, fight alight, life and rage blazing in its eyes, locked on Dracula.

The books cough until their lungs bleed, the toys whine until their voices break, the drawings beat against the walls they're upon until their skin rips open, the stars twinkle until they can't open their eyes, and the the painting of that child in the arms of his mother and father, 'happy,' hangs limp on the wall with its tongue cut out. The Room *burns* in the middle of the Castle.

I won't forget. Castlevania says fervently, shaking its head. *I won't forget Lisa. I won't forget Alucard. I won't forget who they were when they were together. I won't forget what it was to be happy. I won't forget who I was in the light. I won't—*

But Dracula rips them apart, the door shuts, and their connection dulls. The Castle's own heartbeat begins fading.

The Castle gets frostbite, goes numb in the cold. It starts to go blind in the dark. The emptiness starts to rot its chest. Something in it dies.

Castles do not have hearts, but Castlevania wonders if this is what it feels like when one breaks.

And the Room suffocates.

Chapter End Notes

I felt kinda bad about butchering that summary quote...It's one of my favorite quotes in the entire show, its so beautifully described and really loses much of its weight when it's cut down...But so much of what he said worked really well for this chapter, and I couldn't put the whole quote there...so...

Also, I don't usually like to step out from behind the curtain and ruin the magic, but I wanted to make things clear here, since I thought maybe they started to get confusing...the Castle and Room aren't *actually* talking, and they don't have some human form somewhere...I just wanted to describe them more human-like the more the fic goes on, the more human they're becoming, in a way.

FYI, the next chapter might take a little bit, even though it's short, because I'm thinking I'm probably going to need to rewatch S2 to help with the next few chapters--making sure I've captured everything, and that what I have captured is accurate.

Thanks again for all your support!! Your comments really do make my week!!

"War"

Chapter Summary

"You really don't understand the act of forging. He's not dead. We make life from death here."

"And you make soldiers for Dracula, which is one reason why he invests so much in you despite your...humanity. ...Dracula brought us all here to fight his war, Hector. All the vampires under his reign."

"The war. Not his war."

"...Hector do you think this war is going well?"

"We're hardly losing."

"No, of course not. But it seems chaotic, undirected, as if we were lashing out at humanity without any real plan beyond wild destruction."

"I think wild destruction is what he wants."

"Are you still my friend?"

"Always."

"Then know that you may be alone."

Chapter Notes

Hey y'all. I'm so so SOOOO sorry this took so long...especially since it's so short. I hope you all are still interested in reading, and like it even so <3

I'm also hoping, since I am indeed rewatching the show, the next chapter will come out much more quickly...cross your fingers.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Castle does not like these guests Dracula has let in.

It knows many of them; has housed a number of them before. But that was *before*. Before the Life. Before the Light. And it no longer likes the death and the dark. It no longer likes the way these guests squabble, and talk of death and war as if it's not at their beck and call. It feels like it's infested with bedbugs, bitten a hundred times in its place of rest, itchy till it can't fall asleep anymore.

The war room is always the most jittery and loud, housing the war its named after.

They have brought their war with them. The Castle must and will fight Dracula's war, but only *Dracula's* war. Dracula may think they fight his war. But the war they bring is their own, more insidious, having its own branches, trying to choke out its master's goals. There is descent. Secrets fluttering on silver tongues, like moths in the halls, congregating around any light here. Viruses, lies contaminating its walls. Betrayal against its master, who was gracious enough to invite them in.

Its master wonders to the walls who his friends are—as well he should, for he has so few—and the Castle wishes in its numb state he never let them in. Why couldn't he have just stayed with his boy, and let the light reach him?

Godbrand's voice comprises much of the war in the war room; all thirst, and little to no thought. Very much a vampire, the undeath in him attempting to steal the life of everything he comes into contact with. So human; his words comprised of bloodthirst, fists full of fire.

Camilla's dagger-sharp footsteps in the halls, the towers, like pinpricks, like tiny little bites. A parasite that wriggled into Castlevania's heart, attempting to make it beat to her duplicitous rhythm. The queen, who walks in stride with the cold, the death, and the dark that took the Castle so long to grow out of the habit of wearing. They are like a loyal shadow at her heels, clawing at the walls. The Castle liked her once, for the same reason it doesn't like her now.

She challenges Dracula and all the life he ever managed to find.

There are other vampires too—some with names, others toy soldiers—but they are hardly worth mentioning, for there are little more than smoke and noise, mist and shadow.

...Well, maybe the Castle doesn't dislike everyone.

Castlevania likes Hector. Likes the sound of Hector hammering the death out of things in its dungeon. It may not be the golden life, it may not be warm or tender, and it may make demons for war, but it is life of a sort. The boy is kind and gentle, and he likes dogs, and sunlight.

It is nice to have dogs and cats scampering and yipping in its halls. Hector is right when he says they are far better than people. Dracula never let Adrian get a dog, and this kind of pure, gentle life is the closest thing to sunlight they can get in this night-shrouded place. In the same token, Castlevania wishes it could bottle up the sunlight and bring it down into the dungeon to him.

Castlevania likes Isaac. Very much in fact. Isaac is loyal to its master, and loyalty is a rare commodity in these infested halls. He may be the only who still has it. And that is a kind of life too. The Castle snatches a smile when it sees the two speaking as friends, glad there is, at least, someone left its master can speak to.

It is because the Castle likes Isaac that it doesn't like the sound of Isaacs whip. Self-discipline isn't so bad of a thing...but the Castle knows of pain now. The Castle wouldn't have cared before, but now it knows what little boys who believe in love deserve; it knows that good masters never whip their servants, their children, or their castles. And 'doesn't like' is not merely a preference now, because the sight of Isaac's blood...it hurts. But Isaac lived too

long in the sun, and now he prefers the cold and the dark. And Death has claimed him for its own, just like it claimed its master, wrapped its strings around him, and he will be a living death though he is still alive. He grew up in the sun, now he belongs in a dark place...but the Castle doesn't want to *be* that place anymore.

Maybe Castlevania likes them because Dracula likes them. They're the only creatures in the Castle Dracula likes; the only two who are human.

The only people he's ever truly liked are at least half human.

Why can't he see that he doesn't hate humans? He just hates bloodthirst.

Godbrand grumbles, he questions, and demands for things that don't belong to him.

Camilla schemes, and denounces them all as less than livestock.

Hector tries to discern the most humane way to put humanity down.

Isaac beats his back bloody, and he tries to be a friend to Dracula after all.

And Dracula sits in his study and doesn't smile anymore.

He makes the fire as bright as he can, and no matter how bright and warm the fire is—no matter how much the Castle tries to refine all the light Alucard filled the world with into this one room, fill the emptiness, resurrect the death—it can never warm him. He needs to be held. The Castle cannot do that. Only the boy or his mother could. And they are too far now.

The walls watch him, and wait for him to talk to them again. And the walls, for the first time, wonder—(and hate themselves for wondering)—if the word isn't *undead* anymore.

Life was once a part of the undeath, hidden in the corners and crevices...but is death a fact of the unlife now?

There are fights, words and fists, like tumors, like cysts. Unlike the humans who once banged on the Castle's door for vampire blood, Godbrand takes the vampires out to feast on the wine of human veins. Camilla latches her teeth onto Hector and he becomes host to her lies; the sun-and-dog boy taken in by the parasite, and Castlevania would shout at him not to listen, that she doesn't have his best interests at heart, to listen to its master still...if only it could talk.

Godbrand dies with a whip around his neck and flames in his chest. The brutality dies at the hand of the boy who believes in love. And the Castle wouldn't have cared before, but now its complicated. It is glad for a little less noise, but the blood and the death make its stones crawl, and it hates to see it all on the hands of a young man who should have been appalled at such an act. Now its *sad*, sad for Isaac's sake. Because he's just a young man, like Adrian.

Castlevania misses the boy, and the days of sunlight. Prays that he will return, with dancing gold at his heels.

They mentioned Alucard, once. In a way Castlevania hasn't heard his name spoken before. After all those years of his little feet toddling upon its stones, the sun stinging slowly and quietly; they say his name, like it's a threat. It's sound causes unease when they were always so sickeningly confident. He is not a threat, an enemy, *within* the war, but a threat *to* the war itself. His name could end this war.

And the Room snatches an inkling of air at the sound of his name, tries to cry out, but only croaks a frail war call—a war call against this war. The Room tries to smile through the pain, because if that's true it reflects him; he stands against the cold, the dark, and the death, like the Room always did.

Castlevania prays he will stop this war, this dark, this death, this hungry emptiness, and he will save his father. But it is losing hope each curtained sunrise.

The Room, breath stolen from its lungs, unable to cry out, waits. The kind of anticipation as when this new life was going to arrive in the first place, but there is no apprehension this time. The Room was not alive, then, and this is a living waiting. It waits with feeble attempts to remove the claw around its throat, breathless cries upon its ever-silent lips. Waits for its master to come home—for its master is not home, and it is not a home without its master.

The Room waits, and without breath things start to become rather funny.

At first it's Godbrands remarks, then it's Carmilla's schemes. Then its Hector's pets, and Issac's unyielding loyalty. The death, the darkness, and the cold, cruel injustice of it all. They should make the Room's walls boil with anger, and at first they did, but now it wants to laugh instead.

Hypoxia, they call it. When, lacking oxygen, everything is just a little too funny.

The Room is hypoxic.

Chapter End Notes

I'm curious, for my next "[Tepes Family Cuteness](#)" fic, are you guys most interested in reading some DracuLisa pregnancy fluff, a cute little scene about Drac and Adrian turning into wolves and bats, or about Adrian stepping into the sun for the first time (and it freaking his parents out)? Those are all things I'm working on currently XD I wanted to the pregnancy one first but I'm having a little trouble deciding what they should do haha!

"Burn"

Chapter Summary

"Do you see the Castle?"

"Take a look."

"Good. Keep Focused on it. I have to be able to see it to put my intent on it."

"Your intent?"

"That's all magic is, Alucard. Changing things in accordance with my intent."

"And my intent is to drag that grotesque thing here."

Chapter Notes

Yay!! I did it!! I didn't make you guys wait months and months for the next chapter!!

This one's one of my favorite chapters. Sypha's lines in this scene are part of what inspired the fic itself!!

IMPORTANT: I messed with the indentation of this one, so in order to accurately view it as I intended, please view this *on your computer or tablet*!! If it looks wonky on your phone and you can't read some lines just say "hide creator's style" and it'll make the indentations go away!!

I hope you enjoy!! Your comments give me life!! :D <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Castlevania doesn't like being controlled.

Does not answer to anyone but Dracula. However reluctant it may be to obey certain orders, it will always do what its master wishes. It isn't sure it wants this war, to be an instrument of this war, but it will be damned if it doesn't fight for him.

Its most base instinct and desire has always been to protect its master. That's what it was at the beginning; just a shield. Not a home, or a haven, or a cozy place to raise one's kids. It didn't always have wants and musings of its own. Once it was just walls. Walls there to keep out the elements—both the cold, and the hot—not to mention the mobs. Once it was just walls; before someone started talking to them. Even if it can't be a sword in this war, it will always be its master's shield.

So when it feels intent creep in with jagged, electric claws from all sides, pulling, dragging it somewhere unknown where its master didn't tell it to go, wrapping around its motor functions with blue-hot fingers—too much like the hand around the Rooms throat—a command that doesn't belong to its master, it must not, *will* not obey. Dracula said to stay put, and whether here is a good place to be; whether he was coerced into placing Castlevania there for the sake of a little silence; and if Dracula is in his right mind, are moot points, because it was *Dracula* who said it.

There has been too much pain, too much betrayal, too many silver words, too many other voices trying to sway Dracula, and too many times the Castle wanted to beg its master to listen, listen closer, unable to do a thing to stop the collapse they set in motion.

Today, today has been too much. Carmilla's parasitic rhythm fulfilled. Even now, battering rams against the door—but this time it is the vampires, not the humans, who want to tear its king from its throne, the thumping of heavy hearts against the door, and there is nothing Castlevania can do but sit there and hope its door is strong enough.

Her soldiers, a swarm of bees after their queen, and the buzzing is far too loud in its halls, louder than its ever been. The Castle is overwhelmed, so when this *other* force grasps Castlevania *itself*, as if molesting it, it is too much to bear. Castlevania isn't just obeying orders anymore, it is *angry*.

Blood in the halls and the sound of metal against metal. The buzzing turning to stinging. The war has arrived in the war room.

Isaac runs to Dracula to tell him what the Castle—(and perhaps Isaac himself)—knew all along; that they had been betrayed.

Dracula has so little strength to fight so Castlevania must do what castles are made for: protect him, fight his battles for him, be his sword and shield and armor all at the same time. His reflection, which can better fight for him.

It may not quite believe in what its fighting for, but Castlevania has a will, and has been sick of all this for far too long. Too many motives fighting for control, too many voices winning out over its master. So desperately it wanted to fight, to talk, to beg its master not to listen, but it couldn't. With everything else that happened it had to sit and watch and beg that someone *else* would fight.

Castlevania doesn't like feeling useless, only able to listen.

It's been feeling this for far too long.

Castles are built to protect their masters. Built to keep the arrows, the fire, the canons, and the worst of words from finding their mark. But Castlevania moves, and the arrows, the canons, the fire, and the words are all already inside. And no one dares try to move the Castle itself.

But this, this time the threat is against Castlevania. Not Dracula—though ultimately it knows, its master is surely their bloodthirsty goal. *This* is something it can fight. It has never been able to physically fight anyone before; rather than just with walls, with the thing inside it that

moves, that obeys. This, this last force opposing its master's will, is the only battle Castlevania has ever been able to fight in this war, and it will be damned if it doesn't *fight*.

"Nobody takes my castle from me."

The words, in Castlevania's ears; the battle speech of the war lord, the soothing croon of the father, the encouragement of the teacher. Though he may not yet realize quite how literal the words ring.

The intent slithers down from the walls into the engine room, jumping from beam to beam; a cat with needle-sharp claws. Those claws turn to tentacles running along its gears, caressing it with prickling, stinging, venomous resolve, reaching with greedy talons for the die at the center of its being—the one that serves as its heart and legs at the same time.

When the Castle doesn't listen, the tendrils don't give up, rather they grow stronger, longer, intention spreading like infection, the lightning that once brought it to life curling; overgrown ivy on the roofs, and parapets, and halls...everywhere...enough to make it begin to lose its sense of direction.

No. It is a castle after all. It shouldn't be too hard for it to be an anchor. It digs its feet into the mud.

But the intent does the same, claps down stronger than ever, enough that even before the blue grows around the pillars in the war room—tickling, itching, biting—its master notices—

"Magic."

Castlevania doesn't understand—it's an anchor, stuck in place, a water wheel pedaling backward, gone off kilter, digging itself into the mud. How can this—this *thing* hold it's own against *Dracula's Castle*?

The two are locked in combat, locked like doors—(all the while many locks on many doors shuddering inside Castlevania, shuddering at the idea that someone could take control with a mere thought)—unable to see the face, the form of their opponent behind each other, just knowing there is only this; picking away at the keyhole until one of them clicks.

Castlevania will never, *never* give up. It has never been able to fight before, and after all this pain—after all this losing—losing Lisa and Alucard, after the blood of the boy landed on its floor, after the war and the parasites started infesting its halls, and the bitter treachery ended in this brawl—it is going to fight till everything in it burns.

And it does. It fights till, at its core, where its most important parts are—the gears that Vlad once sang to life with a lightning song—it begins to catch fire.

Lightning even erupts from the die itself—the thing the intent is reaching for.

It will not obey.

But...

But—

(But Castlevania's feet

are

slipping.)

It's seen magic, it's protected Dracula from countless intents; human, vampire, and demon alike...but never a will quite like this.

And.

And...

And—

For just a moment....

its strength fails.

And Castlevania flickers.

NO!

It takes hold again, quickly as it lost it. Comes back, just a few meters from where it last was, digging its blistering, bloody heels back into the dirt.

No. It *will* not lose this battle. They have lost, are losing so much, it will not lose anything else. Not today. After having to sit by and watch all this loss, it will not, it *cannot* lose.

Castlevania is Dracula's Castle. Dracula and his Castle don't lose.

But

—

Castlevania is slipping.

It flickers once,

No!

twice,

NO!

a third,

No no no no NO!

Turning upside down, appears, disappears, the sound of this rending the air like a thunderous heartbeat—*Don't, Don't, DON'T*—but finds its ground, and if it had breath it would be heaving heavy on its chest.

Ground... Though the “ground” is a river, and waves rise up all around like the tongues hungry beasts themselves, rushing, crashing, cackling beasts into the war room where the war is being waged, and the water is holy, and the soldiers are not.

Though it may be in one place again, the intent is not finished yet, and Castlevania revolves in place as it strains against it—(knocking out a good portion of the city)—like playing tug of war with its own heart at the center of the rope.

And the moment it stops still the intent curls around its towers again, whispering sweet words about giving up.

Castlevania, breaking and burning, replies *Never*.

Blue bleeding like electric royalty to the windows Alucard once opened, the windows Dracula forced shut, shattering them; the roofs they once sat on, howling at the stars and naming the moon, lunging for the die that is Castlevania's heart, and though they may think it doesn't, this heart beats.

It's limbs and lungs are turning to charcoal, but that fight still blazes in its eyes.

But Castlevania is not young...and it has to take a second to breathe.

And in that second, it loses everything.

This heart beats. And now that heart starts spinning out of control. It rages and buzzes in every direction—not like bees and bugs crawling on it, this is a far deeper buzzing within its chest, something more emotional...something like horror. And the gears turn in the fire, and it hurts, it hurts like hell to have someone *else's* will running through the deepest parts of you, to fight a thing that's crawled into your own heart, and stomped on your wishes. It hurts like hell to burn—this fire as hot as it can be; blue, so hot its cold—to burn and wonder if your body is your own stake, until the deepest parts of you are melting.

With a last cry the window behind the die shatters, sending the lightning into the air.

All is still, and it is exactly where the intent wanted it to go.

It opens the door, pukes up the holy water, and the not-so holy soldiers, the moon is reflected on the surge, and it is red enough to make the water look like blood.

Castlevania wonders feebly where they are. A forest before it, mountains behind it. But something is beneath it too now...like a dungeon, but a dungeon full of books...a library...a library full of skulls...

The Belmonts. The ones with their whips and scourges. This is where they lived once. And it realizes if *it* can be here, that this is probably where they died, once. They don't live here anymore. That the house burned...perhaps similarly to how the Castle is burning now.

Beneath Castlevania now is the hold within which resides all the knowledge to defeat its master and everything like him...and Castlevania, still burning, knows it will never move again, that it has joined to its worst enemy forever in sickening matrimony. And Castlevania knows now that the worst is true, after everything the intent must have belonged to a Belmont—perhaps the last of them—and they are coming now to do what they do best: hunt vampires.

Castlevania knows that, the one battle it could fight, the one battle that could turn the tide, it lost. Castlevania knows that it failed.

Castlevania, sitting on the floor, bruised, burning, coughing up blood, unable to move again, knows—

They are going to get in, whoever, whatever they are. Surely they—with all their whips and scourges and their bloodlust—are going to walk through that door, and add to the grand pile of losses it and its master have acquired lately, perhaps placing at the top the greatest loss yet.

That door. The front door the battering rams forced open today. The front door the mobs through pitchforks at long ago. The front door the stakes crowded around like an audience to a silent, one-man show. The door Lisa banged on with the pommel of her knife.

The Castle closes its eyes. Tries not to look as whoever they are step up to its door, as if burying its face in its hands, both covered in blood, burned and broken.

Just end it quickly.

The front door does open. They don't even knock. And as it does, something...something which has been holding tight, digging its nails in for far too long, releases its grip.

And the Room—

—the Room which was, once upon a time, brought to life by a vampire king who thought he couldn't love, and a woman who knew he could, and a couple of paintbrushes; painting walls and sewing toys; the Room, which once housed all the light and life and laughter this place ever contained within it; the Room that held a boy who cried, and carried the stars in his eyes, and the kindest of words in his fists; the Room which once sighed, and smiled; the Room which once waited for its master to return, and now has been waiting for much longer, with a claw wrapped around its throat, denying it air—

—the Room, so long spent waiting, the Room, so long spent gasping, so long croaking, so long clutching at the claw around its throat; the cold threatening to burn it away, the emptiness threatening to swallow it whole, the death animating all its worst thoughts; the Room, always hoping its life would return, but always one step from losing hope; the Room which has been finding everything too funny, if only to save it from how everything was so sad—

Breathes.

And within that breath, so soft, are spoken two simple words:

My boy.

Chapter End Notes

Someone: Hey are those last couple paragraphs grammatically correct?

Me: *taking a sip of coffee* Absolutely not.

This chapter kinda wrecked me, in a good way XD Writing this completely changed how I viewed the scene when I watch it in the show. When you first watch it it's like "Yeah Sypha!! Do it!! Do it!! Bring the castle here!! You got this!!" but after writing this, watching again I felt tears in my eyes thinking of just how hard the Castle is fighting her.

"Heart"

Chapter Summary

"Go back whence you came! Trouble the soul of my Mother no more!"

"How? How—How is it that I've been so defeated?"

"You have been doomed ever since you lost the ability to love."

"Ha—Ah... Sarcasm. 'For what profit is it to a man if he gains the world, and loses his own soul?' Matthew 16:26, I believe.

"Tell me. What—What were Lisa's last words?"

"She said 'Do not hate humans. If you cannot live with them, then at least do them no harm. For theirs is already a hard lot'. She also said to tell you that she would love you for all of eternity."

"Lisa, forgive me. Farewell my son."

Chapter Notes

Hey all! I am SO sorry this chapter took so long to come out. ...And even more sorry that's something I've had to say more than once with regards to this fic.

My perfectionism really got the best of me with this chapter, as this is my favorite scene in the whole series, and I really wanted to capture the scene as best as I could, all the while not using the images for it I already used in Such Fragile Things. I still will likely edit it in the future... but I had to stop at some point. I do really like what I've come up with.

I also think I just...don't want this fic to be over. This is one of my favorite fics I've ever written, if not my true favorite. The idea that very soon I won't be working on it anymore is really sad to me, so I guess I've been milking it a bit.

But I saw that season four was on its way and that really lit a fire under my butt because I really do want to post my season 3 chapter before s4 comes out. I'm not sure I'll accomplish it as it almost always takes me longer than I have to get a chapter out, let alone two, but I'll try, at least.

I really really hope you enjoy it!! If you enjoy this chapter, *please please consider commenting*. I assure you it'll be more likely I'll post the next chapter faster the more people comment on this showing you still enjoy this fic. Each comment is a little shot of energy and motivation for me.

Important!!

Once again I have messed with the indentation of this chapter. Please read it on a

computer or tablet to get the full experience. If you are reading on your phone please click “hide creator’s style” so it’s easier to read!!

If you get here and are thinking “Wait, what was this fic about? What were the main themes?” then this would be a good time to reread/skim back through the earlier chapters. This is the climax of the fic and will (hopefully) be more impactful the more you remember about the rest of the fic and its many themes.

Anyways. Enough excuses. Enjoy the pain!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Hey there, Sunshine, the Room adds with a smile.

The Room forgot the sweet tang of breath. How gentle, how vicious. Like honey, like relief, like a cozy blanket and a fireplace. It came in great, gulping gasps, and living was painful after such long breathlessness, but hurt far less than being half dead.

The Room rushes to Castlevania, shaking it, saying, *Open your eyes! Open your eyes! It’s Adrian. It’s our boy. My master. My sunlight.*

And Castlevania limply flickers open its eyes, for it cannot help but obey.

Obey to see the golden man standing in its doorway.

And it feels a jolt of warmth in its broken chest.

Alucard has returned home. He arrives at the doorstep with resolve in his closed fists and a sword on his tongue. The threat to the war they all knew he would be, and the Room promised it would rear him to be.

But he isn’t alone this time.

There are two humans by his side. One with fire in her fists—quite literally—the other with a barbed tongue at his hip.

Castlevania recognizes a crest on the clothing of one of them, gold and proud: The Belmonts. The ones who came with whips and scourges to defeat its master long ago. The ones whom Dracula and his Castle were bound together against in their undead war. The ones whom Dracula trusted his Castle to protect him from. The owner of the hold now beneath Castlevania. He has come to defeat its master like the rest...but this time the boy is by his side, and for that reason, the Castlevania is unsure how this will end.

“I terrify them,” the Belmont explains the plan, “Sypha disorients them, Alucard goes over the top and we support him.”

“Yes.” The Speaker confirms.

Alucard holds his sword out horizontally in front of him, unsheathes it, and speaks:

“Begin.”

Alucard is *with* the Belmont.

And Castlevania knows when it sees them, the fire in their eyes, that they are the intent that brought it here. That they have indeed come to kill its master once and for all. It had wished when the boy returned, it would be with the promise of hope. But there is no promise of life and the sparing of it this time.

They bring death inside with them; the war room is filled with war, blood and burns on its floors, but it is different this time, because this is not an ambiance, a continuation, a fact of life, it is a swift and fatal kiss—the end they said he would bring, once. The blood is rotten on the floors, but it doesn’t itch or burn. And the boy uses those techniques his father taught him on brighter nights about turning into things with teeth, and the ones his mother once taught him on sunnier days about how to make metal listen.

They did not bring life inside this time, not life of the same kind at least. The war, the death, has followed and swallowed them too, but not in the same way it has its master. They are not blood*thirsty*. The cold the dark and the death are merely clothes they wear, they have not reached the deepest parts of them; there are still light-starved Rooms in their hearts waiting to breathe.

There is a song at their heels as they dance in rings of fire, with the wind and the moon, upon the blood and water Castlevania isn’t sure will come out of the carpet. It is a song that is all too familiar. It has been played here before, when other, more, less, holy Belmonts barged in long ago. A song of blood and tears.

Bloody tears its master cried once, for his wife when he realized they had taken something that could not be borrowed, bartered, or souled.

They’re bringing an end to the strife, and all the undead lives that facilitated it, and vice versa. They are cutting the puppet strings, and not all puppets can live without them.

Isaac fights the nameless soldiers on the staircase for its master...until he sees someone who is far from nameless.

Isaac’s reddened eyes meet Alucard’s golden ones. Alucard’s sword aims at him, but it hits the deadened flesh of the nameless instead.

Isaac runs to tell its master—Dracula, busy ripping out the heart of a nameless—who’s here; that his sun has returned, and at his side is magic and might.

Dracula knows the prophecy.

He’s willing to die—Issac. He stands before Dracula, his form barely able to shield three-quarters of Dracula’s, willing to give his feeble human life for Dracula’s indefinite undead one. He believes knowledge and will are more important than the blood of a good man. He

believes in love, and loyalty is love of a sort. And it is Castlevania's understanding that when someone is willing to live for something, they are also willing to die for it. This is the noblest of causes.

"You are the greatest of your people, Isaac. You have a soul, I think." As Dracula says the words, he raises his hand, and the mirror shards behind them begin to rise. "Perhaps that is more valuable to the world to come than a dusty collection of books and apparatus."

Lisa looks on from the portrait, and Castlevania thinks it is a look of pride. She always did stand for saving human lives rather than destroying them. Isn't it funny that in what will perhaps be the deciding battle of this war, the one where his goals should possess him stronger than ever, it is the human who he values more than himself?

"Or perhaps you simply deserve a better fate than to die instead of me."

"I choose my death, as I chose my life." The words are stronger than iron.

"Then I regret only that I have taken a choice for you." A hand at his shoulder.

Dracula throws him halfway across the world, to the kind of place Isaac was born in, and the kind of place Isaac least wants to die in.

Isaac believes in love. And it is for this reason, this belief, that Vlad saves his life, Castlevania knows. Saves his life, by denying the choice he so desperately wanted to make—perhaps his whole life—and had no regrets or apprehensions about making, rather a lot more in being kept alive.

And when the mirror shatters and falls, his son is standing there, like he did a year ago, though this time he is not backed by sunlight. The only light in the room is the fire glinting in his eyes.

A pause. To remember the dead.

"Father."

A word. To remember the living.

"Son."

This should be a reunion, perhaps. Better people would think they should happily hug each other, and say they missed each other, and that they love each other all the same. Better people would say that the sunlight should plead with the dark to come back into its embrace. All the sinners know there was no chance of that the moment Dracula scrawled fate on his son's skin with his own claws.

Instead, there is nothing but bitter, fighting words:

"Your war is over."

Dracula tilts his head to the side. "Because you say so?"

“It ends.” Alucard looks at his sword, the one she taught him how to use. “In the name of my mother.”

Dracula looks at his son, the one she gave him. “It *endures* in the name of your mother.”

“I told you before I won’t let you do it.” Alucard’s voice is so soft, yet solid and unwavering. There is no anger, but he will not step aside. Not this time. Even when the claws come. “I grieve with you...but I won’t let you commit genocide.”

“You couldn’t stop me before.” Dark assurance in soft words.

Footsteps. A cue to the magic and the hunt behind the curtain, who step out on either side of him.

“I was alone before.”

And Castlevania understands. Understands that they are not here to talk things out. Understands that they are not here to save Dracula, to appeal to the good in him, as Lisa once had, and the Room once thought. Castlevania itself even hoped, when the boy returned, the song would be a bit more inspirational. But, beaten and broken and bloody, Castlevania understands now, if Alucard stands with the intent, if Alucard brought a Belmont—

Then they do not believe there is a chance. They are not here then, to talk him out of it. They are here to halt this war in its tracks, make it rear up, lose its balance, and fall.

—(And Castlevania knows, deep down, that to do this... they must end something else)—

Alucard is bringing back the sunlight. But there is only one way he can do that, and goodnight is not quiet.

And make no mistake he *does* intend to bring the full, the warm, the life, and the light back, just like Castlevania and the Room wanted. But there is too much cold, dark, death, and emptiness here to do this quietly. They are here to kill Dracula—the master now puppeteered by Death’s strings rather than his own soul.

The Speaker raises her fingers to her lips as if to say a prayer, or perhaps take a heavenly name in vain for the sake of a little silence. The Belmont’s whip clinks in his hand. Alucard’s sword sings as he raises it.

Alucard drives it towards his father: a bolt of golden lightning through the room, pinning him against the fireplace as books fall to the floor. Castlevania, wincing at the pain, knows that will bruise in the morning.

The picture of his mother cracks and falls, as if she has to close her eyes for this.

Alucard, growling with fierce resolve, pushing the sword into him with all his might. But Dracula has the sword in his hand, rather than his heart. He steps calmly forward, barely having to use any of his strength to combat so much of his son’s, as if he’s about to tell him to put the toy away.

A glint of golden eyes. Alucard pulls back the sword. A slash. Two. Three.

Dracula raises his arm as if to knock the sword from his shoulder.

Instead he bashes his son's head into the fireplace—and Castlevania cries out at the feeling, feeling its stomach burn.

The Speaker and the Belmont ready for a fight. The floor splinters—(Castlevania grimaces, tasting blood)—as Dracula flashes through the room, and pins the Belmont into the wall, against the wall, sending his sword out of his hand. He keels over onto his hands to cough up blood, the puddle crawling on Castlevania's skin.

Castlevania never had any qualms with the blood of Belmonts on its floors before, so this hurts less, but this is different, and Castlevania still wonders if Dracula could be a little gentler with his Castle.

A flash of light at his side. He raises his cloak as the Speaker sends tongues and teeth of fire at him.

“Speaker magician!” Its master realizes.

He rushes at her, knocking her hand out of position. She creates an ice shard before her with the other.

He scratches up with a claw, sending her flying with the broken pieces towards the ceiling, and angry gashes appear on her arm as she rolls along the floor.

“Sypha!” The Belmont calls.

He must love her in some way, because in a fit of some sort of emotion—instead of picking up his sword—the Belmont uses his fists. They probably haven't failed him before. But this is Dracula, and his punches don't cause the king to so much as flinch.

“You must be the Belmont.”

Castlevania laughs a little at the words; it too thought the method was rather common of his line.

It's Dracula's turn, and his punch doesn't just cause the Belmont to flinch, the sound is as if he hit rock, sending him into the air with the force. He doesn't give him a second to breathe, rather reaches his claw is around the human's neck, holding him there.

He raises his other claw level—a blade, more trustworthy than any.

“The end of your line.”

Before he can make these words true, another blade stops him: his son's, driving itself through both his arms.

While he is pinned the Speaker, knowing this is an opportunity she will not get again, rushes forward—still bleeding, mind—a bead of fire between her fingers. Dracula cannot move to protect himself, and the magician, knowing this, lets the fire loose to lick his face raw.

Dracula drops the Belmont, attempting to get away, deciding his own life takes precedence, but it is hard to get away when your hands are tied together with metal.

The Speaker, seeing that her fire is about to hit Alucard, falters. And in that moment Dracula wrenches his arm off of the blade and uses it to knock her down, before sending his other fist into his son, who goes flying along with his sword hitting the wall. This one may not be so hard as to bruise, but, with everything aching and breaking, the smallest tap hurts Castlevania.

The Belmont pulls a blade of bone from his back-belt, and as Dracula turns he drives it into his chest.

It's not close enough to his heart, but red distaste fills Dracula's eyes. He thought this was a game, but they have some amount of ability, and he may have underestimated them. As Alucard and the magician get up he attempts to grab at the Belmont in quick motions, but he has some skill in dodging.

The Speaker rips off her shirt and cauterizes her wound as the Belmont and Dracula dance in the hallway, neither weapon hitting flesh.

Dracula sees the Speaker's intent over his shoulder, and as the Belmont lunges at him grabs his arm and throws him into her, stopping both their attacks. An effective move, if Castlevania does say so itself.

Alucard sees his opening and rushes forward, pinning his father to the wall, which shatters behind them with a painful lurch.

Dracula puts his hands together and brings them down over his son's head with such force the floor cracks.

And Castlevania coughs blood.

Alucard pushes his arms away and slaps both sides of his face, getting a grunt this time. Dracula sends him back with such force it almost seems like a shockwave, creating wind and smoke curling around them all.

The Speaker roots him in place by sending ice spears into his leg. The Belmont clears the smoke by spinning his whip, before creating more by sending that whip—the one he fed the vampires that didn't agree with their compositions—sizzling into Dracula's chest. There's an explosion to be sure—a rather big one—but after the smoke dissipates, and a wait with bated breath, Dracula is still standing just as he was before—as Castlevania knew he would—like all he threw at him were words.

...At least at first, to show he isn't taken down so easily. He does fall to his hands thereafter.

“The Morningstar whip.” The words are scratches in the carpet. “Well played, Belmont. But I am no ordinary vampire to be killed by your human magics.” The words sizzle on his tongue. “I am Vlad Dracula Tepes,” he crosses his arms with purpose. “and I have had *ENOUGH!*”

His voice is a shockwave of its own across the sea of stone and bone. He sweeps his hands to the sides, his cloak rising like wings as he floats into the air, and creates a ball of magma: the cheat that will end the game. He was going easy on them until now.

It rumbles towards them, eating the carpet as it goes—and Castlevania can feel the burning in its chest. The Belmont’s eyes widen with fear at last. The Speaker rises to the occasion without hesitation, and holds out her hands to stop it with the force of her magic. It’s a force to be reckoned with, for sure: at first she succeeds, but, though it may be slowing, it isn’t stopping, and her feet are slipping. The Belmont puts his back to hers, as any good friend and comrade would. Alucard phases in front of them, the burning wind rushing against his face. He calls his sword, which sings as it reaches his hand, poises it, and drives the point into the magma ball.

They each fight with all their might, the Belmont and the speaker begins to grunt with the weight of it. The ball gives a falter their way, and Castlevania is sure even three cannot match Dracula’s strength, but the Speaker gives a final push, which gives Alucard just the right amount of momentum to drive it back toward his father, who is as caught off guard by the display as Castlevania is. He needs no sword or magic to stop it, however, and puts his hands out to hold it. Gold and red push against each other, until Alucard gives a deciding motion, then another, another, each chipping away at the ball until the sword goes flying and it’s just Alucard’s arm against Dracula’s throat, and their momentum creates a sizzling tunnel in the wall.

Castlevania may not know what guns are, but it knows what it feels like to be shot.

The two burst into the library, shattering the already shattered mirror.

It was so quiet in here. Must they sully the silence with the sound of strife? They read here, once. Sometimes alone, sometimes to each other. Whispered to each other of history and mystery.

Dracula lands on the floor and Alucard floats above him in the room in which he once stood on his level and told his father calmly he wouldn’t stand for genocide.

There’s anger in his eyes now.

Dracula hisses, then gives a war cry, and the two allow their hungry fists to attempt to devour each other as best they can in the air, red and gold flashing.

The Belmont picks up a sword in the other room and, deciding it’d be best not to follow them through the tunnel—(Castlevania is glad for that decision. The wound is still raw and would more than likely sting tremendously if they walked on it)—he and the Speaker run up the stairs to follow them.

They're on the floor now and their punches fly like starlings—their duel reflected in the shards of mirror fluttering, jittering about, ever awaiting their command, as if attempting to tap their shoulders and ask what they should do, and why they are hurting each other—until they are hitting the bookshelves they once were gentle with—lest the pages rip and the silence tear—the ones they once smiled and discussed philosophy beside.

Castlevania's head aches, nausea in the back of its throat.

A smiling boy and his father handing him another book, saying if he liked the first he'd like the second too, are all but gone now.

Dracula throws Alucard into the ceiling, and enters the room above with an unearthly sound, in an unearthly way: only his cloak is visible, moving like slime. As his hungry footsteps lick the floor behind him, Alucard is heaving on his side that same floor, his hair falling across his face. He turns around, fear coating the sound he makes as he, without his sword, grabs the nearest block of wood that happens to have a point on the end.

Dracula laughs, like they're playing a game—(they did once, do they remember? Humans and monsters. Sometimes there were princes, and knights, or pirates. Even a princess or two. And the wolves and the bats were free in the night wind)—and stops.

“You mean to stake me?”

“You want me to.” Alucard murmurs, turning around with some difficulty.

“What?” Dracula chuckles, still with that put-the-toys-away intonation.

“You didn't kill me before.” Alucard breathes. “You're not going to kill me now. You want this to end as much as I do.” The look in his eyes is almost crazed.

“*DO I?*” The tone is almost crazed in response, the nonchalant edge gone, the words resounding with power and grief.

Alucard scrambles away like an animal, causing Dracula to punch the floor instead of his head—Castlevania's body lurches. It feels a gentle touch at its chin, someone trying to wipe the blood off perhaps.

“You died when my mother died. You know you did.” He reasons as Dracula's breathing gains weight. “This entire catastrophe has been nothing but history's longest suicide note.”

Castlevania jerks its head up, eyes wide at these words.

And Castlevania understands.

The cold, the dark, the empty, the death. They all make sense now.

Alucard rushes at him, Dracula knocks the stake out of Alucard's hand with ease, but, in a moment of extreme dexterity, Alucard manages to grab it from the air and drive it into his chest still. The look in his eyes is almost pleading, like he's going to ask “*Daddy did I do a good job? Did I do it right? I've gotten better at fighting haven't I?*”

“Not quite close enough.” There is a gurgling quality to Dracula’s enunciation.

No more playing.

He shoves Alucard so hard its into the next room.

Castlevania keels over onto the floor, it’s stomach aching and prickling.

Dracula pulls the stake out and heaves before rushing after.

Floors below the magician and the Belmont can hear them, and are trying their best to catch up, to have a say in this fight.

But Castlevania isn’t sure they have much chance of that, as they are flashing through the halls now, Alucard, a foot off the ground, zig-zagging between the walls in the narrow hall as Dracula keeps punching bloodless stone—

—(The stone may be bloodless, but *god* this hurts)—

Until Alucard punches him back, sending them into a room, a bedroom—(but not that one)—and the room is a pile of rubble with just that. And Castlevania can feel the splinters. That furniture was nice.

Dracula grabs Alucard’s face and shoves him into the dining room, pinning him to the table like he’ll eat him too if they’re not careful, and those chairs were perfectly nice too—

And Castlevania sees a little boy waiting at the table for his birthday surprise, and his father pulling out a burned cake, and his mother laughing. There was no fear then. Though its master was a creature of blood it never thirsted for theirs, and they knew this full well. Can they see it too? Why would they destroy this room if they did? Why would they destroy each other if they did? Are they even the same creatures as those in the memory?

At this point Castlevania is pretty sure they broke a few of its ribs.

Alucard kicks his face and gets on the table on all fours, rushing him into the next room still.

Castlevania’s bleeding, broken heart skips a beat. Surely they must have broken a few ribs, for how else could they get into Castlevania’s heart? The control room, where its gears still lie dripping, glowing as orange as a brand, once beating organs now blazing stalactites.

They punch each other along the platform, Dracula’s cloak whipping about, like a cat’s fur trying to make him look bigger and scarier.

They are framed in the paneless window—those bones have been all but broken too now. The frame where the picture—that is to say, the die—no longer sits. For Castlevania’s heart didn’t just break, it was destroyed when they brought it to this place, the place where its enemies once lived, and still stand today.

—(So why can Castlevania still feel it beat?)—

In the frame now is moon drunk on blood, a night soaked in tears—and the wind whispers to their cloaks, bidding them to whip around them.

Dracula draws in a hissing breath.

Alucard stands tall, his eyes aglow, gold melting into something new in this forge, his hair whipping about him as he raises his fist yet again.

They are getting tired. Their snarls have a weakened quality to them now.

—Can they see the father and son in this room, the father teaching his son that his Castle is special?—

But instead of just punching him, Alucard teleports beside his father, hitting his shoulder, sending a gust of wind to his face, then teleports around the room to send his fist into him over and over, from every possible angle, and some of his kick-offs create cracks in the already breaking bindings of the room.

It feels like pins and needles, but it's okay. *It's okay.*

Why?

Dracula's grits his teeth, sharp as ever, his eyes alight with bloody determination, his hair playing about this gaze. To end it, on the next hit he grabs his face, shoving him by it onto the stone platform. He shoves him once, twice, a third, the metal cracking, the metal creaking—

Castlevania's gut lurches, and it can taste bile and iron at the back of its throat, and it's hard to breathe.

Then its master raises Alucard back up, holds him by the face in the air a moment, and punches him with such force he is blown across the length of the platform and through the thick stone wall into the next room—

And Castlevania vomits blood.

Dracula bolts after him, the dust creating patterns in his wake—and Castlevania could gaze in the clouds if it weren't for whoever's trying to slap it awake.

Alucard coughs, and it sounded deep.

Its master is nothing human now. There's a growl in his throat as he marches towards him, and another cough in Alucard's as he struggles to stand.

Another punch, but this one is not fast like the rest, nor is it blocked. Alucard tries to stand up, to rush towards him, but he is getting tired, and Dracula hits him again. Another growl. Alucard takes a single step back, soft against the floors. An exhale. Another of both, and as Dracula raises his fist the murmur—plea?—on his son's lips sounds a lot like “Father,” as if he's reached his limit, and has to stop the game.

It's too late to hit quit now.

The vampire king doesn't grant the plea—or perhaps even hear it; with a belabored punch he sends him into the next Room, rolling this time, instead of flying, the contents of the Room staying in tact...all except the bed, which catches the boy.

The next Room. But this one is not like the rest. It is not just *a* room.

This one breathes.

A gasp, another growl, a scratch against the wall, and—

Castlevania burned today in this bloody fight, on this bloody night. Its skin, its legs. Even its heart broke.

Castlevania. The thing that Vlad Tepes brought to life with a little bit of lightning, several gears, and a few words. No magic words, just words: the ones he spoke on lonely nights to the walls about how he'd like to be something more than ruthless.

Castlevania did everything it could. It lies burned and broken and unable to fight now because of it.

But none of that burned half as much as those scratches on its walls.

There have been many stories told about Dracula, and there will one day be *more* stories told about Dracula, books written, enough that one could fill libraries with just the retellings of his story. And Castlevania has no doubt that one day these scratches will be on their covers. This growl, these scratches are the signet of a vampire, of a monster: the disfigurement of his Castle, bloody intent directed at his son. The dark, the death, and the emptiness have overtaken completely. That is all a monster is, really. That is all he is now.

He marches into the Room, his cloak flowing, dipping and twirling in the broken wind. The sound of Alucard's breathing fills the Room as he heaves against the bed.

Or maybe the breath is the Room's own.

The Room has seen all that happened, it has been watching Castlevania beaten bloody till it could barely breathe, or see through the blood dripping down its face, let alone move. Castlevania could barely feel the comforting hands on it, the attempts to bandage the wounds, or at least stop the bleeding that it knew could only belong to the Room. Castlevania could barely hear the Room's frantic, desperate calls to action, to get up, or just ask if it was okay. And now the Room stands, fists clenched at its sides. The Room wants to fight back. It *will* fight back.

The Room is not violent. From the very beginning it stood against all the violence, the dark, the empty, and the death. That was what it was made for, after all. As much as it would like to, it does not wrap its hand around Dracula's throat, claws digging until it draws blood, and demand "*How does it feel?! How does it feel to be on the receiving end?!*"

The Room's footsteps are soft as it comes up beside Dracula. It puts its hands over the king's eyes and whispers in his ear, gently as it can:

“Remember me?”

Then, quietly as it came, it removes them, as if playing peekaboo, revealing that it was there the whole time, his eyes were just covered for a while.

It may as well have been removing scales, because Dracula freezes, his eyes wide, as if he's seeing, not just the Room, but the whole world for the first in a long time—And he is. The first time with living eyes. And one sees things very differently with living eyes. And Castlevania was his world and it hopes he sees the world differently, for Castlevania is not a thing for him to beat and break. Just when Castlevania thought there was nothing left...there is something more than anger in his eyes now.

Dracula's angry cloak quiets, falling docile at his feet: a sign of reverence towards the Room, and all it stands for.

Alucard, after allowing his breath to regain itself, looks up, his eyes widening too at his father. His father. No anger, no fear, not even determination now. Not in this Room. This Room is different. He remembers now: in the hush that has fallen across the world like freshly fallen snow, this *is* his father.

The Room kneels at it's boy's side, putting a hand on his shoulder feeling nothing but life and love, so much so it extends to the creature that created the scars on its throat, and on its boy's chest.

“It's okay. You can go to him now.” The Room says.

And it knows what that means.

It knows that sometimes peace comes at the price of war.

Dracula curls his hand, the one with the claw that just made marks on the walls that are written in stone, and will never be undone. Within the glow of the window, his reddened eyes too are no longer angry. For so long those eyes sat dormant, empty, and glazed in his skull and at last they contain something. The Room's words have gotten through the glaze, shattered the glass.

“It's your Room.”

It's more than just a statement. He made a promise when he made this Room. This Room was to be his son's Room. There would be no violence, not in this Room. Not ever. Not today in as much as not ten years ago. He will not hurt this Room. He will not dare touch it, for fear those claws will mark more than just the walls; that all the memories will come crashing down.

The words are not angry. They are not dark. They are not empty. They are not dead. They may seem dry, and stated, but they are dripping with such longing and loss it might fill the whole Castle.

The desk where Vlad taught Adrian of letters, and of numbers, and of the borders of the world. The wardrobe where Lisa dressed him up in fine clothes, and casual ones depending on the occasion—Dracula had so few special occasions to celebrate alone, they were a lovely thing. The bookshelf full of all the knowledge of immortals, and the stories of mortals. The carpet where the boy sat and played with his toys. The nightstand, still with a potion bottle upon it, and the cards of a game they've no doubt forgotten how to play, right where they left it long ago. The shelf above it with another bottle, and a tiny satchel of even tinier precious things, and a little toy lamb. The bed upon which Vlad and Lisa once sat and told stories, and sang lullabies, or else lay curled up next to him when the nightmares got too vicious to bear alone.

—(How many did he have to face alone?)—

And Castlevania can see them all. The father teaching his son to count, and to write. The mother running after her naked toddler, trying to convince him clothes really aren't so bad. The careful pouring of the potions so they change color, or explode just right, the father smiling proudly when he gets the questions correct. The pride of the mother when her son won the game, and the way her husband said "again" like if they just played another round he would win this time. The boy playing with the lamb and the wolf; they they got along in his stories.

The control room never was Castlevania's heart...was it?

Alucard stands—the motion fluid now—blue light caressing his face as he raises his eyes. Vlad too looks up. But they're not looking at each other, or the Room, rather into the stars. Not the ones outside, the ones they painted—brushing paint upon each other's noses, so long ago, and Castlevania can see that too—as if those stars hold all the bottled wishes of childhood. It always was crowning jewel of this Room.

Adrian's eyes oscillate like perturbed waters, because he knows, he knows he's about to lose it all. And yes, there's a sort of childlike yearning in Adrian's eyes, as if he's wishing upon those stars that he didn't have to do this, because he'd really rather find another way to spend this night.

The stars wipe the bloodstains off of Dracula's eyes. The blood drains off the moon too, as if he is so powerful he can bid the sky to bleed.

His lips shake with long-forgotten words—(or maybe they were just buried, and not everything buried in a grave stays there)—and he holds his hands to his chest, if nothing else to stop them from hurting innocent boys and castles, and shuts his eyes.

"*My boy.*" The words are said like everything in him is breaking

And it is.

—(The control room never was Castlevania's heart. Does that mean it never broke?)—

"I'm—I..." The word falls to the floor, so soft, like it's the only apology he has to shed.

"I'm... *I'm killing my boy.*" And the truth is so gentle and broken its almost more painful

than all those punches to the walls.

He steps across the Room, and this time his footsteps are not foreboding, not marching nor stalking. They are soft. He is only walking. This boy is not his prey. Not in this Room.

He walks to the picture on the wall, the one called “Happy.”

Castlevania remembers the day they took it home. The painter really did do a good job, Lisa had said, and Castlevania agreed. Castlevania soon learned that even when they were not here, even when the boy was not small, even when they were not happy, that moment would still be captured upon the wall to return to any time they missed it. Long ago Dracula had no need of pictures and paintings. But those pictures have been everything to him, and everything left him, now that Lisa is gone. They are all the traces left of what they once were in this Castle. That picture—the one Dracula buried and tried to forget existed—that picture bottled happiness, and it gives Vlad back his happiness now. And it makes him so very sad.

“Lisa. I’m killing our boy.” Vlad says to the memory. “We painted this Room. We...made these toys.”

His eyes as they dart around the Room—to the books, to the basket with the wolf and the blocks—are glazed, but not in the same way as before, this time it is with memory, and that makes them more alive than ever, as are his words. And in that moment she is alive too, and he is Vlad, Lisa’s husband, and Adrian’s father.

“It’s our boy, Lisa.”

And then as he looks down his eyes are not glazed at all, rather they hold understanding. He understands what must be done.

Alucard’s foot pushes off the ground, bends the knee, stands, and, no, he is not Adrian, for there is a cracking, a cracking like lightning, a cracking like the world breaking.

And it is the most horrible sound either the Room or Castlevania have ever heard. More horrible than the squelching any heart Dracula ever ripped out. More horrible than the desperate pleas of his victims. More horrible than the cackles of his friends. More horrible than the crying of the child that Castlevania can still hear echoing through the Room.

—(The sound Castlevania hated so so long ago, and now longs for far more than anything else in the world, longs for that painting to swallow the universe and bring it to life again)—

Castlevania and the Room can both feel that sound like a thousand splinters and spider bites, like both of them shattering as if they were made of glass after all. Even the furniture here bleeds.

Vlad backs up, putting his hands over his face—*Don’t hurt them, they don’t know what they’re doing*—

—(Yet...he hurt them all. So much so he didn’t just disgrace her words, he tried to kill her gift, their son, her blood)—

“Your greatest gift to me. And I’m killing him.”

He lifts his hands from his face and looks into his son’s eyes, his own so alive, despite their glass, tilting his head to the side. Everything slow and gentle now. He is Vlad. He is Adrian’s father. Not the vampire king who put innocents on stakes. But they all know something happened to Vlad on the night Lisa died.

“I must already be dead.”

And Castlevania, burned and bleeding, understands. The final piece of the puzzle has been put into place. It has been dead too. It’s life, bound in red to its master, will break to the call of a stake. Because a reflection cannot exist without the thing it reflects.

Because...they are mortal.

That was the trade, all those years ago: immortality for mortality. Lisa would gain an immortal mind, and Dracula a mortal soul. He would teach Lisa the knowledge of immortals, the methods of healing that must be kept secret to live with a vampire like time held no grip on them. And she would teach him how to live as a man, how to travel as a man, how to care for his son, as a man, as a father. And in that moment his soul was bound to hers.

She brought the undeath in him to life, and Castlevania understands; only things that are alive can die.

It learned through Lisa, through Adrian, what it was to be alive. And it knew that undeath, while not death, is not life. Dracula was undead and his body could not die. But now that she brought him to life, he could die. His soul already died with her. He’s been rotting in an empty shell—no wonder Death could tie those puppet strings to him. That’s why the emptiness in him was so active; cold and dark and empty were only adjectives before, now they are nouns; he was emptiness, death, walking around. And that, too, is what Castlevania has become. It too is mortal. It didn’t die with her, but something in it ceased to tick when Dracula came back without a soul in his chest, and it knows, bruised and burned, broken, and bleeding that that stake in his son’s hand is calling them both.

You knew all along, didn’t you? Castlevania asks the Room, and there is no malice, no blame, there.

The Room jerks its head up to look at Castlevania, then its eyes soften and it grimaces. *I hoped I was wrong.* The Room replies softly. *I...I hoped there was another way.*

Alucard’s eyes hold some sympathy, some semblance of the boy they once knew, in fact rather too much, for both threaten to pour out of those eyes and stop all this. He doesn’t want to. But it’s too late for anything else.

Vlad eyes hold some semblance of the man they once knew, so much so they threaten to make him something more than ruthless, something that doesn’t deserve to die. He closes them tilting his head. He knows what must be done.

There is no anger in either of their eyes, no determination, not even resolve. Not anymore. Adrian wants to free his father in the only way he can.

A step forward, and this step has purpose, that stake is silently growling, drooling at his side as he stalks his prey. Another. Another. Like the beating of all their hearts, and the atmosphere is so silent that everything can only break.

And Dracula will not stop him, will not fight back. Not this time. Like all those times he let his son win, because even though he was more skilled at the game, it was more satisfying to see Adrian smile.

He is not here to talk things out.

Alucard barely raises that stake—

A second horrible cracking, this one in flesh.

This time he aimed higher.

Dracula's mouth fills with blood, it seeps through the cracks in his teeth. The blood from his chest drains down the stake—the broken piece of childhood—down his son's arm, collecting on his elbow, and when it hits the carpet a burn begins to appear on the Room's chest.

A grunt as Vlad leans forward, the blood dripping from his mouth to the floor—another angry gash upon the Room's skin, and the Room is trying to pretend it's okay, but it can't hide the hurt in its eyes.

It knew what had to be done...but the violence goes against its nature.

His eyes fill with blood, but not from undead purpose. The moon is still clean. These are those bloody tears, the ones from the song earlier today. He is free, relieved...and he will never see his son again.

“Son.”

To remember the living, and those who will live on without him.

And the word is spoken very differently than it was earlier today. Then it was solid and hollow. Now it is ghostly, and so full it could hold all the world. Their world, at least.

This Room, this Castle, that word. They are their whole world.

And it is an honor to have been a world to such terrible, wonderful creatures.

“Father.”

To honor the dying, and what they once were while alive.

The word on Adrian's tongue is the same, though more solid, more alive, and thus able to hold more pain. A faltering breath, a cracking forgiveness.

The word means something now, at the end, where before they were nothing more than titles. They are pleading with each other. They are bleeding with each other.

They don't want to do this. They shouldn't have to. It is far too cruel.

Mothers shouldn't have to bury their daughters, and sons shouldn't have to kill their fathers. It's an unspoken rule of life.

But Alucard can't stop there. He must finish this. The fire, the resolve regurgitates in his eyes, and he pushes harder, like with the magma ball, and, no, this cracking is worse, because Castlevania can feel it in its own chest now.

Castlevania can hear its master's heartbeat, can feel it with the drops of blood dripping and sizzling on the floor, and it thinks it might just be its own heartbeat.

Alucard does not hate his father: there is pain on his face. But he cannot stop there.

He must end this war. And unlike those given with kisses to his forehead once, this goodnight is not gentle. Not this time.

He inhales,

closes his eyes,

and breaks his father's chest.

That stake goes right through Castlevania, and something in it involuntary breaks.

The control room never was Castlevania's heart. The destruction of the die was merely the amputation of both its legs, still bleeding out. This is a breaking, not of skin or bone, but of something deeper. It thinks this might just be what it feels like to cry.

And something happens in the breaking. A change of some sort. Castlevania isn't quite sure what—pain and disorientation are the best of friends—all it knows is that the world is smaller now, and hurts less.

And as Castlevania's heart breaks, the reflection in the painting shatters, the reflection of the bond between father and son severing with a stake.

The world is so much smaller now.

Dracula's head jerks back and, eyes now seeing something other than this world.

Dracula is no ordinary vampire, so he does not die like an ordinary vampire. Rather than catching on fire, there's just smoke and ash; his face drains, turning from ghostly pale to a charcoal, black without flame, before it really is ash, sliding off his face, his cloak like sludge.

There's no orange, just the red stain, and the grey his life was marred of. Ash and smoke. The true undeath.

Alucard turns his face away, still holding the stake in place.

Dracula lifts up a hand, a skeleton hand, and Alucard turns to see the skin sloughing off around his ring. Though his spirit may have left, it seems his body won't quite let go of this world; with mere bones Dracula reaches out, takes a step forward, as if to touch his face, to hold his son one last time, to catch the last embrace he was not afforded.

Adrian has shed that resolve, now he can do nothing but take slow and careful steps back away from the monster he has no sword or shield to fight. He the child again, the one who belonged in this Room, shying away. He is Adrian, the one who didn't like the stories that were bloody. And in all the years the boy spent in this Room, the sheer fear in Adrian's eyes as he looks up to see his father's rotted face, with mouth agape, leaning bloodlessly towards him—an image that Castlevania fears will haunt him the rest of his days—is matchless.

Hurried footsteps at the door. The Speaker and the Belmont, at last, have made it to the show, though it seems they paid for only the final song. They step upon the threshold to see the rotting corpse of the king stepping towards his fearful, tearful price.

The Belmont draws his sword, and Dracula's deflated head—the one that seemed so alive moments earlier—lies in a bloody pool on the floor. And as the neck bleeds and the Belmont watches the body fall to the floor, he isn't sure if that was enough.

And Castlevania can't feel its heartbeat anymore.

“Alucard. Step back.” Sypha's voice is tempered. “Let me finish this.”

He does, the steps cautious and small, sorrow in his gaze. He holds the unbroken bedpost till his hand shakes.

Castlevania never liked children, the crying, the leaving, the guests, or being controlled.

But it did like Lisa. It did like Adrian. And—be it a sting—it did like the sunlight. And always and forever, it loved its master. A reflection cannot help but adore the thing it reflects. A creation cannot help but be a worshipper of its creator. A dream cannot help but revere its dreamer.

“You want me to.”

Smiling a little at how true the words were, in the end, Castlevania found it quite liked the relief.

Castlevania puts a hand on the Room's cheek, smiling, and its mouth tastes less like blood now. It looks at the moon—bleeding no longer—and blue calm fills every part of it.

“What a wonderful night to have a curse.”

The Room stares at the castle, a little horrified by the sentiment.

“What...What should I do?” The Room stutters, fear and realization coating its words, for it knows what's happening.

Castlevania smiles wider than ever, and its voice sounds softer; *“The children.”*

“What?”

“You should let them in. Any child who needs refuge. Along with as many guests as your master wants to welcome. And you should cry. Cry when you need to—and let your master cry too. Stay, but let him leave, if he must, knowing he will always come back. Let yourself be controlled at times, because sometimes that which feels the least right is the most right.”

“I—I don’t understand.”

“Be warm. Let the light in every window. Be full, and most of all, live. Can you do that for me?”

The Room holds onto the Castle to keep it from falling, tears already descending its cheeks.

“I—I will try.”

The Speaker lets the flame loose to eat the pieces, to engulf its master’s body in the fire he stared at all along, as if yearning for its embrace, creating a spiral of flame upon the circle in the carpet.

They were right to assume it wasn’t over, at least, because there are shapes in the flames; from the smoke and ashes rises a tower of skulls, a legion of spirits, more than a one king’s soul should hold. They’re all crying havoc, war, blood and pain from a yesterday long forgotten. Their smoke snuffs out the flame, blight covering the Room, blocking out the stars that so enraptured them earlier. Sypha and the Belmont cover their faces, but Alucard is unsurprised and undaunted by the darkness lurking in his father’s chest, and faces it without looking away. This darkness bursts out the window like a flower bloom, flows like a river out into the hall—the one cracked and bruising—flying over the war Room where the war resides no longer, and escapes into the night, fluttering, spiraling around Castlevania’s parapets like butterflies.

On the charred floor, the only thing left of the king is his wedding ring.

Castlevania sees the vampire king as he once was; young and restless. The skeletons eating stakes. Castlevania remembers what it once was: lightning, books, gears, and a few lonely words. It sees the woman with the knife at the door. It watches them build the Room. It watches the boy grow up into this beautiful thing.

Castlevania always wondered if it could breathe. It was never quite sure. The Room always seemed to possess a kind of life it never had; a life that hid in the breath.

“Take good care of him for me,” Castlevania murmurs to the Room.

“Have I ever failed you before?” The Room tries to smile, wiping its eyes.

As the sun rises over the hills, a single ray filters in through Castlevania’s window, touching it, filling every part of it, and for once it doesn’t sting.

And with the last sigh of the last ghost circling the parapets, Castlevania exhales its last breath.

Chapter End Notes

If you don't think I almost exclusively listen to the numerous versions of Bloody Tears, and various Within Temptation songs while writing this then you're wrong, because that's exactly what I did. (The WT song "The Reckoning" fits so well with Castlevania it's not even funny anymore).

If you are wondering if I had to rewatch that scene/episode to get all those details right, yes I did, many times.

In a way, this chapter was what this fic was all about. In the show, them reaching Adrian's room is amazing and beautiful, but I really wanted to write a fic in which the room's existence was set up from the beginning. I hope it was impactful!!

I don't know if the Castle dying will surprise people or make sense. It wasn't my original intents with the fic, however, very soon after I started, in a similar way that I rewatched certain scenes and realized it was indeed alive, I rewatched the last few episodes and realized "oh, it *dies*." Seeing the burned control room, watching Alucard walk through the empty, broken Castle, I didn't see a living Castlevania...I saw a dead Castlevania. So I don't know if it makes sense to anyone else, but it makes the most sense to me that the Castle dies when Dracula dies. (Don't worry, things'll make even more sense in the next chapter).

I don't know if this is going to sound arrogant, but this chapter has one of my favorite lines I've ever written in it. Bonus points if you can guess what it is. Or you can just let me know what your favorite lines are, if you have any, haha! I love hearing what people particularly liked.

P.S. Would you guys be interested in physical versions of my fics? I created [a version of them](#) as a Christmas present for some folks last year, and I feel like finishing this fic off might be a good time to work on creating a more polished version of that (I don't know if this fic has enough content for a physical version of it by itself? It might). If you are, please check out [This survey](#) to let me know!!

End Notes

Interested in reading more Castlevania fics? Don't hesitate to check out my other fics!: [Undead Memory](#) is about the month when Alucard was alone, and how he deals with the ghosts of his parents.

[Inverted Recurrence](#) is about Alucard repeating the SOTN fight with fake Trevor and fake Sypha because he wants to see them again.

[Happy in Between](#) is written for the prompt "Would it be possible for you to write some Dracula/Lisa pregnancy fluff?"

[Fluidity](#) is some Dracula and Adrian shapeshifting fluff.

[Such Fragile Things](#) dives into Dracula's feelings meeting Adrian for the first time...and seeing him for the last time.

[One Last Kindness](#) is written for the tumblr prompt "Slight prompt/AU. Vlad arriving to the village earlier than in canon. Though is it early enough to save Lisa?"

[Seven Years Bad Luck...Or Maybe Just a Moment](#) is about Adrian breaking the mirror in his father's study, written for the prompt on tumblr "Please give us Lisa and Vlad just being loving science parents (bonus points if they're protective)".

[What a King Considers Beautiful](#) is another fluffy little fic for the same prompt ^^ but focusing on the science part!!

I also have made a [series for all my Castlevania fics](#) please follow it if you always/only want to get notified when I post for Castlevania!!

Comments are more than appreciated!! They give me the motivation to keep writing!!

Also, don't hesitate to drop some Castlevania prompts in my askbox on my [writing blog on tumblr](#) (but no nsfw please!)! Or just stop by there, or my main blog ([@i-prefer-the-term-antihero](#)), to say hi!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!