

MISCONCEPTIONS, AN EXCERPT

INT. CAESAR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The living room is dark, save for an old light on the radiator and the light emitted from their phones. Red solo cups filled with blood sit on the table. Three young VAMPIRES, CAESAR, LUCILLE, and ZACHARY, sit on the couch as the melodramatic score of a corny romance movie blares through the television screen. LUCILLE, absolutely enthralled by the movie, clings to her boyfriend, CAESAR, as she lip syncs the words--she knows it by heart. CAESAR is amused at LUCILLE's infatuation with the movie, while ZACH could not look more disinterested.

ZACH

This is so bad.

LUCILLE

(whisper-yelling)

Shh! This is the best part!

The woman in the movie runs out of his car into the pouring rain towards the alien man, the love of her life, whose back faces her as he walks toward the spacecraft to return to his home planet.

MOVIE ACTRESS

Mark, wait!

MOVIE ACTOR

(in an exaggerated alien voice)

Stacy... you came.

MOVIE ACTRESS

That's right. Earth is your home now, Mark.
All the wonderful times we had, did that mean
nothing to you?

MOVIE ACTOR

Of course they did, Stacy.

MOVIE ACTRESS

Then stay... stay on Earth with me.

MOVIE ACTOR

(melodramatic)

Stacy... it'll never work. I'm from Mars and
you're from Earth. It's just not meant to
be--your family will never let us be together.

STACY grabs MARK'S hand.

MOVIE ACTRESS

Mark...I don't care what they think!
I don't care that you're an alien, either.
I love you for you, even if you're not
human.

MOVIE ACTOR

Oh Stacy...

The two lovers kiss passionately in the rain and the credits roll.

ZACH

(relieved)

Oh thank god, it's over.

LUCILLE throws a pillow at ZACH. CAESAR snickers.

CAESAR

C'mon, it was a little cute.

LUCILLE

A little cute? The whole "Love on Mars"
trilogy is a masterpiece! I mean, nothing
will top the first, but the sequel and third
movies are good too.

ZACH

That was the longest two and a half
hours of my life, and you're telling me
there's *more*?

Just before LUCILLE could respond, a catchy pop ringtone chimes from her phone. The camera follows her as she excuses herself to take the call in the kitchen. We can see and faintly hear ZACH and CAESAR chatting and laughing in the background.

LUCILLE

(jovial)

Hey Claudia! How've you been?

We hear the faint sound of crying over the phone.

LUCILLE

(apprehensive)

What's going on?

CUT TO:

CAESAR laughs as ZACHARY shows him a picture on his phone, yet the laughter dies in an instant as a red-faced, teary-eyed LUCILLE enters the room.

CAESAR

Baby what's wrong?

LUCILLE

(unable to hold back tears)

Damn vampire hunters got Claudia. Her
boyfriend called me to tell me she's dead.

CAESAR stands up and hugs LUCILLE as her words melt into streams of tears, her nails digging into CAESAR's back as she hugs him. ZACHARY, unable to look at the two, quietly exits the room. The sounds of LUCILLE's sobs lower in volume as CAESAR begins to narrate while he comforts her.

CAESAR (V.O.)

People tend to have a lot of misconceptions about vampires. That we're creatures of the night; that we're all as pale as the day is long and live in those big castles. It's a load of shit, mostly. I mean, we do drink blood, but no one drinks human blood anymore.

The blood in those solo cups belongs to a cow. Which is considerably more convenient when you live in the middle of nowhere, where livestock outnumber people in tenfold, like I do.

CAESAR (V.O.)

(CON'T)

It wasn't always this bad, though. No one ever worried about vampires, before; people didn't even know we existed. Until some bozo in Upstate New York got caught trying to suck the blood out some rich guy's daughter's horse. Then all of America got sent into a frenzy, hiring vampire hunters and putting crucifixes on their doors and shit. Things got so bad in the city that I had to move back here, Marroway County, where I grew up.

CAESAR (V.O.)

(CON'T)

I hate it here. It's too damn quiet, the mosquitos are relentless, and there's a huge, obnoxious mural of white-washed Jesus that I pass every day on my way to work. It's all almost unbearable, but it's safe.

When CAESAR turns to LUCILLE, he sees that her weeping noises have slipped into even breathing--she'd fallen asleep. CAESAR maneuvers himself out of her grasp, earning a noise of sleepy disapproval from LUCILLE, and gently puts a blanket over her as she dozes off on the

couch. CAESAR smiles gently at the sight of her being so at peace again.

CAESAR (V.O.)

And right now, safe is all I really need.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF CAESAR'S HOUSE - THREE DAYS LATER

It's gray outside, which manages to make CAESAR's old bungalow style home all the more lifeless. The front door croakes as CAESAR ambles through it and motions to lock it. Just before he does, we see him dial LUCILLE's phone number. Whatever slight hope we saw on his face is immediately crushed when he's sent to voicemail.

CAESAR

(under his breath)

Where the hell is she--

VOICE

Good morning, young man!

CAESAR jolts in surprise, turning around to see the source of the voice. There on the bottom step of his front porch stands the DETECTIVE, an older man wearing a polite, blinding smile. His badge glitters confidently even in the gloomy weather, and his hat is so big it makes CAESAR certain that he's compensating.

CAESAR

Good morning. And who are you?

DETECTIVE

As of yesterday, I work for the new police unit on vampires and other supernatural events.

CAESAR

(quickly trying to end the conversation)
So they're finally doing something about
these vampires. Well, I'm glad some
real change is happening in Marroway.

CAESAR gives him a polite nod and begins to walk away, trying to make his cue to leave. DETECTIVE steps himself back in CAESAR's way.

DETECTIVE

Preston Bell, Captain of the Marroway Police
Force Vampire Control Unit, at your service.

DETECTIVE holds out his hand for a shake. When CAESAR reluctantly takes it, DETECTIVE shakes his hand a bit too firmly.

CAESAR

Pleasure.

DETECTIVE

The pleasure's all mine, Mr...?

CAESAR

Theodore. Most call me Theo.

No way in hell is he giving a vampire-hunter his real name.

DETECTIVE

Well, Theo, I've been going
door-to-door lately. Y'know, trying to
get to know the residents and with me
being a new hire and all, but I was
also hoping to get some information.
A "kill two birds with one stone" kinda
deal. Surely, you know what kind of
information I am seeking?

CAESAR

(neutrally)

You're looking for vampires. You wanna know if I've seen anything suspicious.

The DETECTIVE's smile only grew at that. CAESAR is really starting to hate it.

DETECTIVE

Couldn't have said it better myself.
Now, tell me what you've seen.

CAESAR falls silent. He needs to choose his next words wisely.

DETECTIVE

(prodding)

Go on, Don't be nervous. Humor an old man like me.

CAESAR

(after a beat)

Well, to be honest, I haven't seen anything to that nature. In fact, the whole reason I moved back home was to get away from vampires, and it's been completely peaceful. I'd certainly hate to put you out of a job, but I sincerely think there's no vampires in Marroway.

DETECTIVE

Hm. I see. Well I should remind you that vampires are masters of adapting to their surroundings. They can think like a human. You couldn't catch one from a cursory glance.

DETECTIVE

(CON'T)

As for the putting me out of a job part, no need to worry about that. In fact, a vampire was found the other day in

downtown Marroway. Rest assured, they have
been eliminated.

The DETECTIVE says this as if it's the most casual thing in the
world.

CAESAR

You said vampires can blend in with
humans. That they can think like us.
So would I have known them?

DETECTIVE

That's entirely possible, it is a small
county after all. Does the name Lucille
Jackson ring a bell?

At that moment, CAESAR felt more vulnerable than he's ever been--he's
now aware of his own mortality. He wants to scream, cry, puke,
strangle the life out of this man, anything--yet refuses to allow
himself to show any emotion. He opens his mouth to speak, but nothing
comes out. When he finally speaks, his voice is small and weak, like
a child's.

CAESAR

I don't recognize the name. Probably
have seen her around though.

DETECTIVE

Well, I'm glad it wasn't someone you
knew personally. I can't imagine how
awful it must be to find out that
someone you love is a--

CAESAR

(interrupting him)

I'm terribly sorry if this comes off
as rude but, I was actually heading off
to work when you walked up to me. I don't
want to be late, so...

DETECTIVE's usual smile turns into a smirk.

DETECTIVE

Of course, of course. We wouldn't want that would we? We can talk more in depth later.

CAESAR

Later sounds good.

CAESAR gives one last nod to DETECTIVE, before walking to his car. God, how he wants to get away from this man as fast as possible--but he's not dumb. CAESAR knows he can't run. So he walks, and calmly shuts the car door. He sticks the key in the ignition, and pulls out of the driveway. It is only when he's miles away from his house, when DETECTIVE has long since left the vision of his rear view mirror, is when he allows himself to cry for Lucille.

CUT TO:

INT. CASANO'S BAR AND GRILL - EVENING

A seedy, dimly lit old bar in a back alley somewhere in Marroway. Suspicious characters are scattered around the area, making CAESAR stick out like a sore thumb as he sits hunched on the barstool, nursing a glass of liqueur. He looks exhausted; his eyes dry and sunken, as they stare lifelessly at the football game on the television.

The BARTENDER slides him his receipt as he wipes the counter, snapping CAESAR out of his reverie. CAESAR reaches in his wallet and pulls out a credit card when the BARTENDER gives him a hard stare.

BARTENDER

(gruffly)

Cash only.

CAESAR huffs, but he pulls out his wallet nonetheless. Two ones and a few coins. Not nearly enough.

CAESAR
(under his breath)
Shit...

CAESAR can feel the BARTENDER's eyes boring into him as he rummages through his wallet, then his pockets, then his wallet again.

CAESAR
...Would you take an I.O.U.?

THE BARTENDER is unamused.

CAESAR
...give me a second.

CAESAR roots through his pockets and wallet more aggressively this time, more as a way of stalling in order to think of a way to get out of the bar rather than actually looking for the money.

DETECTIVE
C'mon, Eddy. Don't give the kid a
hard time. I got the tab.

Out of the corner of his eye, CAESAR can see the DETECTIVE towering over him, cigarette in between his smirking lips. CAESAR refuses to make eye contact with him.

BARTENDER
Preston! How've you been, man. Long
time since you've been in Marroway.

The DETECTIVE lays his money on the countertop, sending a radiant smile the BARTENDER's way.

DETECTIVE

There's ups and downs, you know how
it is. Can you get me an Old Fashioned?

BARTENDER
Comin' right up.

The BARTENDER moves to prepare the drink, leaving the two alone.

CAESAR
(not sounding at all appreciative)
I appreciate you paying for me.

DETECTIVE
It's no problem. You've clearly had a
rough day. First time at the bar?

CAESAR
Am I that obvious?

The DETECTIVE laughs as the BARTENDER slides him his drink. He
gives an acknowledging nod to the man before taking a sip.

DETECTIVE
Since it's your first time, you
should try the bread with parmesan dip.
It's the best thing in this joint.

CAESAR
Thank you, but I'm not hungry. I was
actually gonna--

DETECTIVE
(cutting him off)
C'mon, you owe me for the bill anyways.
Try it, if you don't like it, it's
over. If you do, you get free food that
you didn't have to pay for. Seems like
a win to me.

CAESAR considers it as if he had a choice.

CAESAR
(feigning nonchalant)
Why not.

DETECTIVE
(grinning wider)
That's the spirit.
(beat)
Eddy, get us the bread and parmesan
platter.

The BARTENDER nods, then gives a waiter a look. He understands, heading into the kitchen.

DETECTIVE
(out of the blue)
Caught another vampire today.

CAESAR lets out a low, impressed whistle. He's caught on to how the DETECTIVE likes his ego stroked. If he plays his cards right, maybe he could learn something valuable.

CAESAR
So, how do you do it?

DETECTIVE
What, kill vampires?

CAESAR nods.

DETECTIVE
(teasing)
If I told you, I'd have to kill you, too.

The DETECTIVE winks and laughs, CAESAR laughs too, trying not to sound strained.

CAESAR

Could you at least tell me how you
can tell vampires from humans?

DETECTIVE

Well it's tricky. Real vampires aren't
the way you see them in movies, y'know?
No long, dramatic black capes or sleeping
in coffins. Like I said before, they can
think and act like a human.

(beat)

However, in my experience, I've been
able to correctly estimate whether someone
is a vampire or not through their eyes.
Of course, I look for more concrete evidence
besides that, but with every vampire I've
caught, I could tell because of their eyes.

CAESAR

Their eyes? Why their eyes?

DETECTIVE

It's the hardest for your eyes
to hide your true feelings. That's
why they call it "the window to the
soul". Now, what differentiates the human
eye from the vampire eye, is the
insatiability within the eye of a vampire.
Sure, there are ambitious humans,
people who are driven and hungry,
but that distinct look of restlessness--
the look of someone who was only put on
this Earth to consume--that is something
only unique to vampires.

CAESAR

And how do you spot that quality of
them?

The DETECTIVE snubs his cigarette on a napkin, then he stares directly into CAESAR's eyes.

DETECTIVE
(deathly serious)
Because I see that same hunger
within myself.

The two of them get a good look at each other. Both men feign politeness and naivety, but behind both of their eyes is a look of acute suspicion. They're trying to outdo each other. Trying to figure their opposition out before it figures out them. Just as the DETECTIVE opens his mouth to speak again, the waiter returns with the food.

WAITER
Garlic Bread Platter with Parmesan.

CAESAR almost wanted to laugh. Of course it was garlic bread, and of course the DETECTIVE conveniently never mentioned there would be garlic. This whole time when he thought he was milking the DETECTIVE for all he had, he was actually testing him--and the garlic bread is the final exam.

DETECTIVE
(after taking a long sip of his drink)
The dip is good, but the real star of
the show is the bread. I recommend trying
it without the dip before anything else.

CAESAR falls silent. After an uncomfortable silence, he reaches for a slice of bread. Picking it up and examining it. It is absolutely smothered in garlic--the stench could drive him to tears.

DETECTIVE
Go on. Don't be shy. I promise
you it's absolutely delicious.

THE DETECTIVE grabs a piece of bread, taking a large bite for emphasis.

DETECTIVE
(exaggerated)
Mmmm.
(he swallows)
See? It's great.

CAESAR is still holding the piece of bread, staring at it intensely--partly because he's mulling over his options, but mostly because he can't bear to look at the DETECTIVE's infuriating smirk. The restaurant is practically silent at this point to CAESAR, as he tries to block out the noise so he can think coherently...

...he eats it.

And then, he swallows.

The DETECTIVE's smile falters, and seeing his guise come crashing down--if only for a moment--is the best CAESAR's felt in forever.

DETECTIVE
How is it?

CAESAR
(rubbing it in)
Delicious. In fact...

CAESAR signals the waiter.

CAESAR
Can I get a to-go box?

CUT TO:

INT: CAESAR'S BATHROOM - CAESAR'S HOUSE

A wretched noise fills the bathroom as the camera pans to see CAESAR hunched over the toilet, forcing himself to puke. The noises quiet as we hear CAESAR begin to narrate.

CAESAR (V.O.)

People tend to have a lot of misconceptions about vampires. Hating garlic is not one of them, although it's not enough to kill a vampire. However, one that is a misconception is the idea that vampires are heartless, ravenous monsters who only live on their own desire to kill. There are agood vampires and bad ones, just as there are good and bad humans.

CAESAR (V.O.)

That doesn't mean we can't become monsters, though. And who wouldn't, after all I've been through. After I was forced out of my home into some town in the middle of nowhere, after they murdered my girlfriend, who never once thought about hurting a human, after I puked until my throat was raw so I can continue to put up a facade of someone I am not, just to survive...after all of that, and I'm expected to turn the other cheek? To forgive and forget and be the bigger man? No, no, no. Bell wants to kill a vampire? I'll give him a fucking vampire alright--one of his own design.

We see CAESAR finally stop convulsing and flush the toilet. He stands up, turns on the sink, and washes his face in the running water. Then, he grabs a hand towel and dries off his face before staring wordlessly at his reflection.

CAESAR smiles--and for the first time, we see his eyes exactly like the DETECTIVE described--insatiable.

The war has begun.