

# Krystin's Hunger

## Prologue

Simon smiled, "Pass the meat, please." His adolescent smile made his mother's eyes light up. Ever since *the incident*, their bond had been questionable. "Mom!" Simon roared, demonically. He would occasionally call Kristyn by her first name or flat out insult her in public. Despite the yellowing of his skin and frequent feral chatter, Simon was Krystin's baby. Try as she might, Krystin couldn't find it in herself to discipline the poor boy. She wouldn't succeed even if she tried. Simon's father was god.

Simon expectantly stared Krystin down. "More meat, mom! Now!" He pounded his fists on the table.

"Just a second, honey," Kristyn said. Her arms quivered as she passed a bowl of medium-rare slabs. Like any other family on McClellan Blvd, the Wagners had a four-bedroom, two-story home with an attached garage, driveway, perfect lawn, and two-acre backyard fenced by stone walls. Unlike every other family, they did their shopping on the streets: 24-hour gyms, rural homes, and quiet neighborhoods. Ironically, Kristyn became a vegetarian to feed Simon for the remainder of his existence.

"What's worse?" she had always asked herself, "A dead child, or never tasting food?"

Simon snatched a bloody chunk with his bare hands. It was lean, but juicy. His teeth tore through the meat. Krystin smiled. She reflected on when jaundice had claimed her husband. His love for his fellow man is what sparked Krystin's idea to immortalize Darrell. The blood on Simon's face was confirmation that his father never left.

It's Simon's world. Krystin's just living in it. That is, until she can have the most tender, mouth-watering set of ribs this side of the Mason-Dixon.

## Chapter 1: Mana Num Nums

“How’s ma boy?” Mamma Janice asked Krystin. Her face had been longer than usual lately. Crow’s feet pressed deeper on the sides of her eyes. “He still got some phooey sickness the doctor can’t explain?”

“Somethin’ like that,” Krystin responded, nonchalantly. She adjusted her apron. Rubber gloves squeaked as she rubbed the dishes clean. Krystin smiled at the dandelions blowing in the breeze. The world was vibrant through the kitchen window: breakfast, lunch and dinner played under the rural sunset. She inhaled, grinning at the thought that Simon’s time would be up soon. Krystin’s reward was just around the corner. “Ma,” she began, imagining all the ways that she would season the veal.

“Yeah, baby?” Janice responded, thumbing through Darrell’s scrapbook. Janice’s caramel skin glistened in the daylight. She was as radiant as ever, Krystin noticed.

Before he passed, Darrell urged Krystin to make his death a mystery. He knew his wife and his mother never saw eye-to-eye on most subjects; however, neither he nor Krystin understood how much Janice loved and respected her daughter-in-law. A certain, unfamiliar twinkle in Krystin’s eyes was all that made Janice apprehensive. She didn’t dislike Krystin. Janice simply felt that Krystin, a Black European, could never comprehend the African American community. Where Janice spoke up against injustice, Krystin patiently kept her reservations, calculatedly delivering her wrath by “buying the law” rather than actually fixing the problem. Janice didn’t mind it; what she did mind was that her son had begun adopting the same philosophy.

Krystin sighed. “I just—I wish I could do more to find Darrell. Simon is becoming a bit too mu—”

“You’re being silly. Where’s my grandson, Krystin?” Janice inserted, playfully. “He’s a child, you’re the parent. The boy just needs some discipline,” she said. “You’re not alone, even if it may feel like it. I’m not as firm as my husband, but I’ll do what I can to help. But, boy, if Maurice were still around, god bless his soul, he’d put Simon in his place like no other.”

“I’d take you up to see him if he weren’t so ill. You know that, right?” Krystin placed the dishes in the rack and poured two glasses of water. A thud startled her.

“Gramma!” Simon yelled. His yellow skin and red pajamas made him look evil. Compared to Janice, Simon was a pygmy, but it only intensified his feral gaze. He hugged his grandmother, gently examining the flesh on her brittle bones.

“Simon!” Krystin yelled, immediately creating some distance between the two. She slanted her eyes at him, and looked at Janice.

“I see what you mean, Krystin,” Janice laughed. “You should be in bed Simon. You look awful, but I’m glad I got to see you.” She stood up, embracing Simon. “I’m gonna tuck you in!”

“Gimme a sec s-s-so—so I can come along,” Krystin shouted, awkwardly. She tossed her rubber gloves into the sink and gulped a glass of water. Her eyes tried desperately to avoid Simon’s. They walked toward the stairs. Even if she didn’t acknowledge him, Krystin knew it didn’t matter. She quickly grabbed a knife from the wooden block. “Mom, Simon’s actually been sleeping in the guest room on the first floor. I forgot he was down here the whole time.”

Simon smirked. His wide, yellow eyes glanced at Krystin.

She nodded.

The floorboards creaked as they approached the end of the hall. Janice obliviously rambled about her day and other elderly trivialities. “Then, she told me, you would have thought the thing was made of butter! I honestly wonder sometimes if those poor cows ever see it coming.” She flipped the ceiling fan on and tucked Simon in. “Lord have mercy on them in those final moments. Betrayed by—”

“—Nana,” Simon said, interrupting Janice. “Can you kiss me right—here?” He asked, tapping his forehead. Simon glanced at Krystin again.

She couldn’t hide her drool. Krystin sauntered behind her mother-in-law.

“Of course!” Nana Janice dutifully marched to Simon’s side.

“Arghhhhhh!” Krystin let out. Relief.

Janice slumped forward with a heavy wheeze. Simon’s open palms were the last thing she saw. Janice’s width and small frame kept her headless corpse upright. Simon sucked her vertebrae, then sunk his teeth into the trachea. His gnawed and clawed his way to Janice’s chin.

Krystin yanked Janice’s head. “Don’t take all of the blood, baby. I still have to cook it. Nana’s been around for a long time. Almost as long as me.” She had been waiting for a long time to remove her ties to McClellan Blvd. All that remained now was her son.

Simon, delusional from the jaundice, paid Krystin no mind. She absorbed his ecstasy. His young, plump cheeks, and his tender, squishy eyes were so precious in those moments. He needed to live just a little bit longer; Krystin craved a grand getaway not just a clean one.