The book cover features a dark, atmospheric illustration. In the foreground, a man with short, light-colored hair and a serious expression looks towards the left. He is wearing a dark, high-collared coat. Behind him, a large, dark, shadowy figure with long, thin, black hair or tendrils looms. The background is a dark, textured wall with a glowing yellow street lamp on the left. The overall mood is mysterious and gothic.

Illustrations by
Anton Byelomyttsev and Michele Alba

GUMMER

The
World's
Last
Toothless
Vampire

PETER ANDREW SACCO



James Reed is a foster child, bullied throughout his entire short life. Through a chance encounter, he meets Ted, a toothless vampire, bitten while a wino on the mean streets. Not long after, the vampire who bit him was destroyed, leaving him the last of his kind and ... Fangless!

Gummer: The World's Last Toothless Vampire

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GUMMER

**THE WORLD'S LAST
TOOTHLESS VAMPIRE**

PETER ANDREW SACCO

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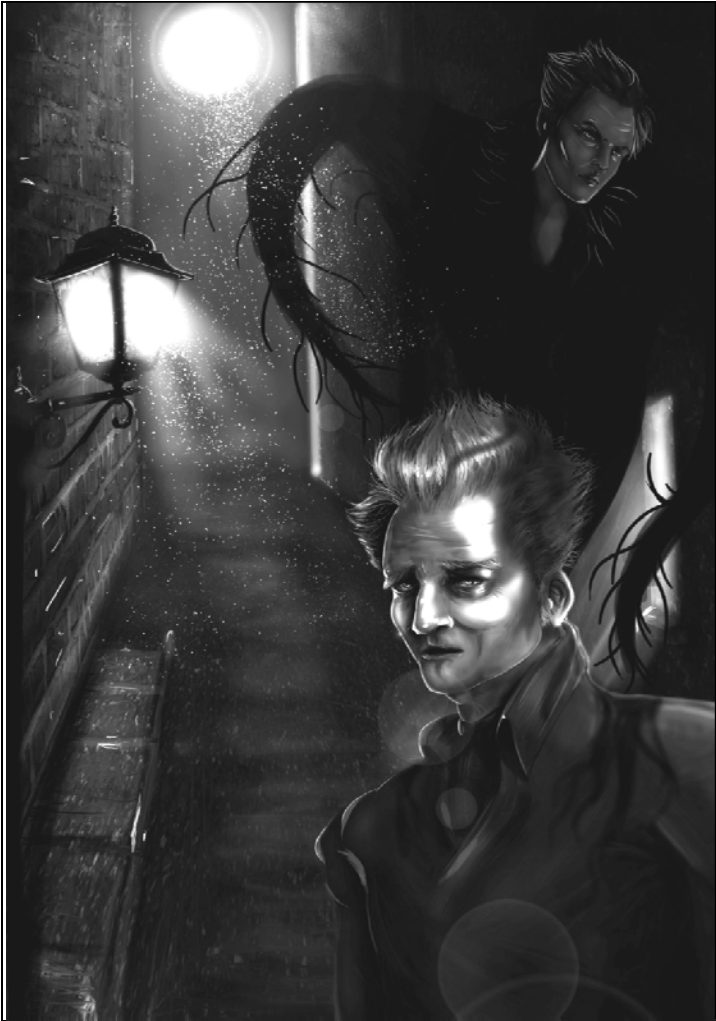
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First Edition

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Illustrations by Anton Byelomyttsev and Michele Alba



CHAPTER ONE

THE MAKING OF A VAMPIRE

Morbid darkness filled the long and winding alley which ran parallel to the main street where late night parties continued into the wee hours of the morning. Other than the occasional passerby or an underfed, skinny cat in hunt of its next meal—a fat rat living off the slops of the streets—not a creature stirred...not even a mouse, or it would probably have been gobbled up by the rat!

The long shadows continued to cast their long tails off the corners, where buildings met pavement. As if on cue, a portly rat scrambled over a set of old, worn out gray boots, once black with a scraggly-looking black cat hot in pursuit. Nearly stumbling over the pair of boots, the cat collected it's bearings before chasing down its potential succulent dinner: one fat rat.

The boots suddenly sprang to life! Moving in place momentarily before shuffling the cardboard which lay atop the body attached to the boots, the feet rolled to their sides before jerking a lanky, scrawny body into an upright position. SLAP! That was the sound the palm made holding the wavering man against the wall. Inhaling the stench and other non-pleasantries of his makeshift hotel, the wino reached down for his empty bottle hoping the gods would be so generous as to grant him just one more sip of whiskey. Just one would tide him over for now. The gods weren't gracious as the man tried to funnel his tongue into the narrow opening of the bottle savouring whatever taste he could muster on his tongue—fumes from the liquid remnants. Disgusted, he drilled the bottle against the wall. CRASH! As expected, no one came out to investigate the noise. Smashing

bottles and wind-driven pop cans were the norm, at least on this street.

As the glass shattered, a doorway popped open on the other side of the alley way with light momentarily creating a tunnel of brightness, illuminating the wino's face. The man standing in the doorway where the light was coming from tossed a garbage bag into the alley before throwing a second bag containing aluminum cans, which almost hit the wino.

"Hey, watch it!" moaned the wino.

The man in the doorway pushed open the doorway wider to see who spoke. He focused his eyes on the wino. Dressed in a tattered old suit and wearing a bow tie, the wino squinted at the man in the doorway. The man studied the wino for a moment observing his long, scraggly silver hair, sundried, puckered face, bags under the man's eyes, and as the wino was about to speak again, he noticed his toothless grin. All but glistening gums in the wino's mouth, teeth had definitely went the way of the dinosaur on him.

"You gotta name?" the man asked the wino.

Pursing his lips together the wino muttered, "Ted."

"Well Ted, get the heck out of my alley before I call the city and have you tossed out with the rest of the rats and garbage!"

"Can you spare a warm meal and drink?" Ted asked.

Reaching behind the door for a moment, the man drilled a large ham-bone at Ted nearly hitting him in the head. “Gnaw on this and get lost before I call the cops!” With that, he slammed the door and disappeared.

Ted picked up the bone and started pulling at whatever meat, fat and grizzle remained on the bone. “No need to be so rude,” Ted muttered to himself. As Ted gnawed on the bone struggling to savor whatever meat remained on the bone with his toothless mouth, long dark shadows cast the length of the alley. Momentarily distracted from his meal, he glanced up as the three shadows swallowed the small pond of light that sat in the middle of the alley. Struggling to tear away the modest shard of meat dangling from the bone, Ted affixed his gaze upon the three shadowy figures which arose from the darkness. Two young men accompanied by their lady friend—all no more than twenty years old—slowly paraded past Ted, with the two men taking turns kicking a pop can in front to them. Ted stirred in his place making a noise loud enough for the three passersby to hear. Stopping in their place, the woman giggled as the two men peered in Ted’s direction. She tossed her long, multi-coloured hair over her shoulders and leaned forward trying to get a better glimpse of where the sound came from.

“Did you hear that?” she asked. “Is it a rat?”

The three of them slowly moved closer toward where Ted rested, kicking away cardboard boxes and other debris. A piece of garbage flew in Ted’s direction almost striking him. Hambone in hand, grasping it like Thor

holding his magical anvil, he waved it at the three cursing at them.

“Get off of my property!” yelled Ted.

“Your property? Get real, old man!” replied of one the men. The other two laughed.

Still unable to make out their faces, Ted waved his makeshift anvil at them. “Get outta here or I am going to have to hurt you!”, he shouted.

The woman chuckled at him. “Whatever you bum...Get a life!”

“Get a life? I will show you...” Ted mumbled as he was now completely standing and ready to approach them.

The woman made her knees shake, in mock fear, “Oh no! I’m so scared. Shaking in my boots because some old bum said he would show me.” She was about to say more, but her voice trailed off.

One of the men was about to oblige Ted and challenge him, but stopped. He noticed a dark figure approaching from the other end of the alley where they were walking. Even though he couldn’t see the figure well, or the face, he was afraid. Something seemed to ooze off the figure, like a cloud filled with both hideous rage and insatiable hunger which was about to burst. He nudged his two friends to look at the figure. Ogling the

ominous dark shadow fast approaching, fear paralyzed all of them momentarily.

“Who is it?” the woman finally mumbled. This time her knees shaking with genuine fear.

“I don’t know and I am not waiting to find out,” the man mumbled, the one who couldn’t give a rat’s behind about Ted.

The other man started walking quickly back toward the direction they came, not waiting for his two friends. As if on cue, his two friends chased after him in silence. Neither one wanting to stay, especially when that figure was starting to move closer to them.

Ted waved the hambone at them believing he had scared them off. There weren’t many battles he ever won, but this victory was about to be one that was short-lived. As he was about to sit down and resume dining, his head jerked to peer at what his short-term alley friends had coming their way. The figure was now in focus, fast approaching Ted. Instantly, Ted sensed something was wrong about the figure—something ominous. Rather than say something, he waited for the figure to draw closer to him. He knew there was something wrong about *just waiting* to see who the figure was, because he knew it was more of a *What was this figure?* The dark shadow became a darker shadow as it lurked in front of him, peering down in his direction.

Hesitantly and afraid to look up, Ted offer his hambone to the figure. "Take it, it's yours. It's all I've got!"

The figure stood motionless, its gaze steady on Ted's hunched form.

Ted raised the hambone higher; maybe the guy just hadn't seen it. The figure still did not take it, standing frozen in deafening silence. Inquisitively, Ted popped his head upward like a turtle bobbing out of its shell. He'd never met a guy on the street who would turn down a good meal, or even a bad meal, as long as it was edible. He could barely see the figure's face which was no more than three feet away from him now. There was an uncanny feeling of menace coming off the figure before him, which made him wonder if he even wanted to see its face.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

The figure was still silent, and unmoving. It had the staunchness of a statue, the chill of an iceberg and the eerie feeling of...hell! But it moved before, so it had to be a real person.

"I can't help you if you won't talk to me," Ted mumbled, his speech more slurred.

There was a moment of silence as the figure stood appearing to study Ted. In return, Ted studied the blackness of the figure: black leather coat, black pants, shiny black shoes and long, black silk hair. He was sure

the figure was a man, but a different kind of man. An immigrant perhaps?

“I can’t see your face,” Ted moaned.

The figure continued to study Ted but as if on cue, it removed its face from the shadows and into the light staring at Ted. *The eyes!*

Ted saw them first and couldn’t pull his own gaze away from their deathly stare. They were completely red; not just bloodshot, they were blood red. They pierced him with their evil. They seemed to hypnotise him. Finally able to pull himself out of the trance state he was falling into, he spied the figure’s pale white face before affixing his stare on its mouth. They say a skunk can’t smell its own smell which by all accounts is a pretty disgusting stench. Ted couldn’t smell his stench, however he could smell the stench of old meat and blood wafting his way from the figure’s mouth. Normally, life was the sustaining force of one’s breath. Not these breaths. They wreaked of death!

The figure appeared to grin at Ted, sizing him up like a predator about to devour its prey. *The teeth!* They were long, ivory-white, and protruded from the gums. They were fangs! Was this a man or was it some kind of creature—a demon sent for him. “What are you?” Ted finally asked, forcing out words which were barely recognizable. He now knew what a piece of tenderloin steak felt like on a plate with roasted potatoes.

This time the figure smirked at Ted, its fangs pressed hard against its lower lip. He felt dazed and confused. Ted wanted to run away, but it felt like something was pinning him there. Unable to run, he just stood there, waiting for whatever horrible thing was about to happen to him.

“It’s not what I am, but what you are about to be,” it responded, with its tone of voice shrilling inside of Ted’s head like nails on a chalkboard.

“What I am about to be?” Ted asked, forcing his words out slowly. He didn’t really want to hear the answer. In fact, he wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed, but he knew his question was not only redundant, rather point blank stupid. Something bad was going to happen, and that *bad* was coming his way.

“Yes...” responded the figure. “A snack!”

Before Ted could process what was happening, or even think about reacting, the vampire swooped down upon him, sinking its long fangs into the side of Ted’s neck, instantly draining blood from the jugular vein. Ted felt the warmth moistness of his own blood splatter on his cheek and into his eyes. *Closing scene...Now playing the role of the hambone the one and only Ted!*

Ted could feel his blood leaving his body as his head grew lighter while his body grew heavy. The feeling was more intense than any drinking binge he had ever experienced and more tiring than any hangover he had ever awoken from. He could feel life, whatever little he

had of it leaving his body. He tried to scream, he couldn't. He tried to fight off his assailant, but couldn't muster any strength. As the last signs of life escaped his body, he ogled the hambone on the pavement which lay next to him. With his last moments of life fleeting like a ship setting sail, the most absurd thought came to him. *If only I could have had a whole, fresh hambone before having to give up my spirit I could have died a happy man!*

The scream of a siren howled close by. It sounded like it was coming closer. The vampire looked for a moment, still intending to return to Ted's neck and finish him off. It would tear Ted's head off to prevent him from becoming a vampire as well. Being the last remaining vampire on the face of the earth, it intended to keep things this way. For the last decade, it hunted down other vampires, eliminating them from the world, making sure it would be the only one... a lasting, living, yet undead legacy. It went back to feeding on Ted, but another siren screamed closer. This time it felt interrupted as it also heard voices coming it's way.

Carelessly, it threw Ted's lifeless body into a pile of boxes, submersing him completely in cardboard. Wiping the blood from its mouth and savouring the remnants from the side of its hand, it bolted upright into the center of the alley with tremendous speed and strength, peering toward the other way from which it came. The vampire pondered the state of the victim, that it might turn and become one of his kind. This brought an inward chuckle as it realized Ted had not teeth. *SUCKER!* it thought. Ironically, without the teeth/fangs, Ted would not

become a bloodsucker and eventually wither away. Another amusing thought crossed the vampire's mind, *Sucks to be you, bud!* This made the ghoulish vampire chuckle out loud this time as it bolted to the end of alley way and stopped. It still chuckled about Ted. It couldn't remember wanting to laugh so hard the last 1000 or so millenniums of its life.

He once helped Henry the First, the son of William the Conqueror, become the King of England in the 1100's. He was the one who assassinated Henry's older brother William Rufus in a deal that would get Henry the throne, and the vampire cart blanche ability to hunt and kill human's for blood unimpeded. After Henry's rule until 1135, it had formed friendships with many world leaders through the eras and helped with many wars and overthrows of governments. It also met with many other vampires and was the reason that the world was free from them. It had been bitten 1500 years ago while a peasant in the hills of Romania. Angered by the fact that a creature could do this to him, he sought out that vampire first, destroying it, and vowing to "kill them all!" What started out as vengeance became more of a game and eventually an ego trip. It was all about being Number One Vampire'. From that point forward, it was hell-bent on becoming the sole surviving vampire. And over 1000 years plus later, it was and it planned on being the last living vampire, so it thought!

Studying the entrance way, it quickly jettied toward the main street, moving with greater speed, resembling the DC comic superhero *The Flash*. As it flew around the corner, feet barely touching the pavement, the

immediate lancing happened so suddenly the vampire didn't have time to process what happened. *Damn it hurt!*

On the main street a young man riding a Vespa and carrying a long flag pole with its spear-like end pointing forward was riding the bike just a bit too fast for this vampire's liking. Having just stolen the flag pole from around the corner from a small park—a prank he was dared to pull off in order to produce the flag at his fraternity's breakfast the next morning—he was trying to make his getaway before getting caught. Holding the flagpole like a knight in a jousting tournament, he raced up the now barren street hoping no one would see him. The flag pole sporting the rustling flag, beating in the breeze would get him his pledge in the frat house he so long wanted to be a part of. It would look awesome next to the flapjacks, sausage and brew at the breakfast table. Normally, he never drove his black 2014 Vespa GTS 300 IE any more than twenty-five miles per hour, ever. Speed was not his thing, in fact it scared him to the point of making him squeamish. Tonight thought he rode it like he had just stolen it, well, at least like he had done with the flag. He had it in full throttle and had it at its top speed of 33 miles per hour. Surprisingly, the speed exhilarated him, or at least the thought of getting into his frat house canceled out his fear of spilling the bike at a high speed.

He never really saw what happened. It happened too damn fast! All he remembered, thinking about it later, was the dark figure flying out of the alley and running out into the road in front of him--actually, it more like *floated*

into the street! The sharp end of the flagpole skewered the figure right through the chest. The figure crumpled to the ground, lying on its back with the pole standing upright. All it needed was the flag to be at the other end to look like a landmark. Curiously, he wondered if the flag would have flown in the breeze? *Why in the world would this thought cross his mind? What the heck?*, he thought to himself in horror. He just killed someone and he is wondering about a flag blowing in the wind? *Seriously?* Not only was he going to be charged with theft and speeding, but now accidental homicide with the weapon being a stolen flag!

Nervously, the young man got off of his Vespa still wearing his large, round helmet causing him to resemble a deformed alien. “Oh man, oh man,” he repeated, clutching the sides of the helmet. “Oh man, I’m going to be in so much trouble.”

He slowly approached his fresh road kill, afraid to see the face of the person he had just killed. As he stood over the body and peered at it, its red eyes locked on his. He jumped back afraid of what he just seen! They were completely red, not just blood shot but...*RED!*

Should I call an ambulance? He thought to himself, he is still alive and I have to try to save him. Apprehensively, he approached again, this time trying not to look at the eyes. Instead his eyes landed on the teeth—large white fangs covered in blood. There was blood all around its mouth. Locking eyes on one another again, this time the vampire opened its mouth wide and let out an ear-piercing scream. The man jumped back,

confused and terrified. He felt the warmth now trickling down his leg. He pissed himself, but urine-soaked pants were the least of his worries.

Instantly, the vampire's body started to sizzle like bacon in a frying pan. The sizzling flesh quickly turned to shards of ash and the debris started to sift into the gentle breeze that blew past them. Trying to make sense of what was happening, the man moved closer to make sure of what he was seeing was real. Almost touching the body now with his foot, it suddenly made a loud sound. *POP!* Ash flew everywhere, filling the face opening in the helmet with momentary darkness. Groggled out, the man quickly started wiping at his face, especially spitting the ash out of his mouth. He heard the metal flagpole make a loud clanging sound as it hit the ground. The sound echoed throughout the hollow alley way, extra loud in the silence of the night. Finally able to see again, he peered down at the ground. Nothing! All that remained was the flag pole.

He turned around, looking at the ground. There was no body and no ash. Rubbing his eyes again he looked at the flagpole that rested at his feet. Sure there was blood on the end, where the spear bludgeoned whomever, along with blood on the flag but...no body! His breaths were starting to come in gasps. He looked around; with that shriek and the clang of the flagpole, surely someone heard. Someone would come out, and catch him at the scene of the crime. He was about to pick the flag pole, but thought otherwise. He had made sure to wear gloves; no one would know he'd taken the pole. He could just leave it, without a trace. Cops would

probably just think it was punks out causing trouble. Actually that part was correct, but committing murder was the other part he wanted nothing to do with!

It would be alright; no one would ever need to know. He ran back, and quickly jumped onto his Vespa which rested a good fifteen feet away from the original impact. He struggled to start it.

“Come on, come on,” he whispered to the machine. “Let's go baby, let's go.”

Finally after repeated attempts, it started. He sighed, but coughed, as some of the remnants of ash slipped to the back of his throat. He now felt the cooling of his wet pants as he sat on the bike. He shook his head and mumbled, "Screw the frat!" Taking a deep breath he sped away into the night, and inwardly breathed a sigh of relief...he was never there!



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