

I hate hospitals. I always have and I always will. The stark white walls and smell of disinfectant and something else that I can never quite put my finger on and frankly don't want to. Then, there's the waiting rooms, scattered with bulletin boards full of flyers warning you about cancer and the dangers of not using condoms. There's always one light that's on the blink, forcing you to sit in the stiff-backed chairs and hope epilepsy doesn't run in the family.

This is where I am right now. In the hospital waiting room, waiting for a blood test. I shudder. I try not to think about the logistics of it, but it's hard to get the image out of my mind. I watched a film once where a vampire went into hospitals and took the blood from the vials in order to feed. For some reason, this thought has never left my mind. It's not the reason I don't like blood tests, but it certainly makes me uneasy. Anyone could take my blood once I've given it. I've thought about blood too much. I feel sick.

A loud cough interrupts this train of thought and I'm glad. I look up to find the source, but whoever it was is shielded by the large tattooed man who sits between us. I wouldn't want to be the person who sticks a needle in his arm. Just one of his biceps looks capable of strangling the next person who so much as breaths on him, let alone coughs. The man notices me looking at him. He smiles. First opinions are often wrong.

"Nervous?" he asks, in a voice much softer than I would have expected. I nod. "Needles give me the heebie-jeebies too," he chuckles. He holds out his hand for me to shake.

"Kenneth Sheppard," a nurse calls out. Before I can shake his hand, the tattooed man, Kenneth, stands.

"Never did like that name," he sighs. He looks down at me and says, "See you on the other side, kid," before following the nurse into the door at the front of the room.

Now that there's an empty seat next to me, I can get a proper look at the cougher.