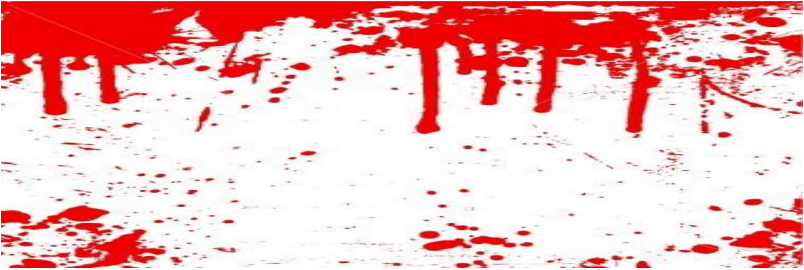


The
Business
of
Blood



Ben Carlsen

PROLOGUE

In this book you will follow the evolving lives and fortunes of a driven family. A family whose lust for blood and penchant for business combine to make them a formidable force. A family that sticks together, works together, and succeeds together. But the book is not so much about family values as it is about people who are different and how they adapt to societal changes, economic realities and inevitable pressures and expectations. When you're accustomed to living on the fringes of society, and in the shadows, the transition to a more public profile is difficult. However, change can be invigorating and at times essential. So the challenge of change is a sub-theme. And the book is about a dream. The American Dream which entails ambition, money, possessions and status. Lastly, it's about a journey of self-discovery and growth for one particular non-conformist.

Not content with repeating the same old patterns of personal assault and physical domination, our vampires, with the visionary leadership of Hendrik Profundo, seek to increase their influence through legitimate means. In America the pathway to wealth and power are frequently found in corporate structures, entrepreneurial endeavors and business success. But it's difficult to give up old habits and addictions. There may be organizations to help those with an addiction to alcohol but not for those addicted to blood. Nope, AA is real, *Vampires Anonymous* is not.

Can the Profundo family, led by Hendrik, find a way to simultaneously satisfy their blood addiction along with their requirements for money, status and respectability in the same enterprise?

With Hendrik as their leader they seem to have a good chance. But there are plenty of obstacles.

Will their new survival strategies work? Can they control strong anti-social impulses reinforced over centuries? Will they be sabotaged by the “system,” thwarted by the government, and undermined by their competitors? Will they self-destruct or will family or friends betray them? Will they find their new role in the business world a fulfilling one? There are many questions as vampires try to make it in business.

Are they ready for business? Ready to meet the opportunities and challenges of the corporate world? Prepare yourself for a novel approach and a fascinating adventure. Turn the page and read on.

Chapter One

A Business Meeting

Tanned, trim and fit, well-dressed and deliberate, Hendrik was an imposing figure as he entered the Memorial Hospital Administrator's office. He was there to do business, make an impression; establish a relationship. The preparation paid off.

"You look too white and pasty," his wife had said earlier as Hendrik was getting ready for the meeting. "Try some of this tanning spray." "And be sure to wear a colorful shirt and tie, not those black and white outfits you're so fond of." "Put the Administrator at ease, show her you care." "Twilight meetings are good, everyone is anxious to close their day, but patient-care is a twenty-four hour business." "Remember, you're representing the best firm in the blood business!"

"Hospitals prefer to manage all aspects of their patient care related services, but contracting for specialized services frequently is the most cost-effective approach," Ms. Sherman says. Especially with "Obamacare" cost-containment requirements, we need to watch every dollar. "Our internal blood bank is quite sophisticated, but I'm sure it can be more effectively managed."

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“Last month we even ran out of ‘Type O’ with a full surgical schedule. Of course, we quickly obtained the necessary supply, but it was nerve-wracking.”

She was an attractive young woman, with an Ivy League MBA and a focused although easy-going manner. Dark hair, brown eyes, in good physical condition, probably as a result of a rigorous fitness program. Well dressed in business attire, but still sensual. Perhaps in her early thirties, or even late twenties. As she sat down her skirt rose enough to display shapely legs and thighs.

Hendrik’s eyes glanced around her office noticing her Wharton Business School MBA, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals plaque, her American Association of Hospital Administrators commendation, and an American Hospital Association award for excellence.

This was an important position for her age. And, she knew it. It was also apparent that despite her business-like manner she had not completely subjugated her feminine charms. Undoubtedly they were a prized, if underplayed, asset. Or perhaps played just right. Subtly and unobtrusively.

“I’m sure we can help. We really care.” “Our blood services are without peer.” “My family, my company, and all our employees are committed to excellence and customer service. We have a culture of caring. And we’re very aware of the ‘bottom-line’.” “I can, of course, provide you with a list of references and testimonials.”

Memorial Hospital was located in downtown Boston. A large hospital by industry standards, with about 620 beds.

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The average hospital facility is around 150-250 beds; a community hospital. Memorial, by contrast, was a teaching hospital with several centers of excellence, a distinguished faculty and top-notch physicians. This is one of the advantages of size and specialized services.

There are still some mega-hospitals like Jackson Memorial in Miami and Grady Memorial in Atlanta or Erie County in Buffalo, Bellevue in New York or Parkland in Dallas. L.A. County Hospital and Cook County in Chicago were huge at one time but have undergone restructuring and downsizing. Health care experts will tell you that an optimal hospital size is somewhere between 250-350 beds. Large enough to enjoy economies of scale but not so big as to become unmanageable. With its 620 beds, Memorial was more than a challenge for management. It was not Jackson or Grady, but it had its difficulties for Hendrik to play with.

Hendrik was never uncomfortable at meetings, he thought to himself. Mortals frequently feel insecure at meetings and public speaking engagements. But not vampires.

Perhaps it was the result of centuries of confronting challenges, or maybe the constant need to be deceptive and cunning. Or it could be the *blood*, he chuckled to himself.

No, if a vampire put his mind to something...anything...it could be achieved. This is why he loved the business-world so much. Not only is it an opportunity to gain money and resources – it's a battleground of sorts where the strong prevail and conquer.

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A beautiful, high stakes (oops, poor word choice, he thought) endeavor mixing desires, ambitions, energies, strategies, and power. It's even sensual, he considered. What a magnificent aphrodisiac!

Sex sells, and greed is a powerful drive. Who doesn't want more? The dead, perhaps. But not the living or the undead.

So naturally he became attracted and then immersed and finally obsessed with world of business. And he would be successful.

People are fond of saying "do what you love, and the money will come!" In his case it couldn't be any more true. He loved *blood* and the money was pouring in.

Hendrik refocused on the meeting as the administrator said: "I remember when I was a child; the doctor told my parents that I was anemic. I didn't know what that meant, but I soon found out. My treatment began with hemoglobin supplements to introduce more iron into my system. Eventually I realized that this blood fluid was comprised of many elements and its chemistry could be modified."

This casual chitchat was a bit tedious for Hendrik. He already knew more about blood than all but the most accomplished medical scientists, researchers and physicians.

But he responded: "Yes, that sticky, beautiful red-hued fluid is special."

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Ms. Sherman quickly redirected the conversation back to the matter at hand. “Of course the Board will have to approve any contract, although my recommendations will carry a lot of weight. As you know, patient care is the primary factor but cost-effectiveness is just as important.”

“I will provide you with all our operational information and statistical data.

You can tour the facility if you’d like, I’ll make my key people available and after you have a chance to evaluate everything, you can prepare a proposal, and we’ll meet again. In the meantime, feel free to contact me.”

Then she smiled, rose from her chair, made intense eye-contact and shook Hendrik’s hand.

The meeting had lasted less than an hour.

He sensed that she was attracted to him by her body language, incessant smiles and subtle flirtation. But that wasn’t important; he had experienced this type of interaction for centuries. It no longer aroused his lust; or resulted in an overwhelming desire to sink his ivory-white fangs into her pink, slightly angular neck.

After all he was a successful businessman, with a trophy wife, a home worthy of *Architectural Digest*, and a bright future. A family man. A pillar of the community.

The days of impulsive attractions, spontaneous domination, and the excitement of fresh conquests with virgin blood were far behind him. Or at least under control. Sublimated, repressed, and suppressed.

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He briskly walked to the parking garage, pleased with himself. He smirked. His BMW was the shiniest car in the place. Black, of course, with special extra coats of lacquer so that the finish had incredible reflective depth. He eased into the driver's seat.

The drive home should be pleasant. A nice evening with a gentle northerly breeze, almost clear skies and moderate temperature. The traffic was light. Lighter than usual.

As he swung onto the freeway on-ramp the traffic slowed to a crawl. Then he noticed the brightly blinking lights of emergency vehicles in the distance.

Road work; an accident?