

Shell Shocked

BEING A VAMPIRE IN SOMERSET IS NO EASY CHORE

By Art Stevens

I find it tough being the only male vampire in Somerset. I have to stay in all day and only come out at night to play and dine. That's why you never see me out in public during the day.

Another problem I have is that I need to drive into New Brunswick periodically at night to prevent myself from pouncing on Somerset residents. The blood supply in Somerset is very thin because of the age of most people here. I need healthy blood and need to hang out at late night fraternity parties at Rutgers University.

Whenever my significant other and I arrange to meet socially with Somerset friends for dinner I tend to stare longingly at their necks. What's interesting is that no one has questioned the fact that I haven't aged in the more than fifteen years I've been in Somerset. People who know me obviously think I have youthful genes.

I've looked long and hard to see if there are any other vampires in Somerset but so far I haven't come across any. It's not like gays in the military where you don't ask, don't tell. The problem is the vampires I've known for centuries simply can't afford homes in Somerset. They tend to live near college campuses so that they can dine young and stay young. They say that there is an embarrassment of riches where they live. Sometimes I visit my friends in college towns and get there by way of overnight delivery via a Federal Express big box. While visiting with my old vampire friends, I also manage to fatten up somewhat before returning home. But I can't get any of my old friends to visit me at Somerset.

Yes, I've made many friends in Somerset but I'm concerned that one day they will find me out. It's not like coming out of the closet to announce that you're gay or partial to mushrooms. Most people are rather uncomfortable around vampires and fear for their well-being. Not too many folks have a thing about living forever and that's the real problem. They can't imagine that their great grandkids could look older than they do one day.

I've been a vampire exactly 287 years. I was a member of the Cheyenne nation. Yes, I have Indian blood in me along with all the other ethnic traces of blood that I've accumulated through the centuries. I remember the moment I became a vampire. I was out hunting for bison when I came across a band of Spanish conquerors. I was chatting with them about what America would be like in a hundred years when they surrounded me, held me down and started biting my neck.

At first, I thought that this was the Spanish way of greeting new friends. But after they left me, I began to feel dizzy. That night I had the most incredible urge to drink blood. Now, mind you, I had never had a taste for drinking blood before. It certainly wasn't a

Cheyenne thing to do. We may have been Native Americans, but we were civilized and respected family and tradition very much.

I went out of my village tepee that first night and wandered over to the nearby Mohican camp. I crept into the barracks tent of division A warriors and had my first neck bite. After that it became second nature to me.

I'm sure you guessed by now that my significant other is also a vampire. How could she put up with me otherwise? I was single for about a hundred years after my initiation into the vampire nation and at that time we didn't have online dating services. I met her about 135 years ago at a pottery show in New York and we've been together ever since. In fact, we're about to celebrate our 130th wedding anniversary soon. I get goose pimples whenever I think about that.

But she and I have had to make major sacrifices living the vampire life. It's so wonderful that Somerset has such a great nightlife. I can honestly say we're literally out every night. We're very sensitive about biting necks in Somerset though. We're eager to protect the environment because if we didn't would Somerset still be Somerset?