

Quinn: Hey, folks, Quinn here. As you may have realized, this is not a regular Monster Hour episode. We are taking a little break this week, both to get caught up on our recordings, but also just to take a deep breath for ourselves and our wellbeing.

Instead, what we have for you today is our first Patreon exclusive episode we originally released back in December, where a young Brandusa, aka Constance's Buni, finds her life at a crossroads in more ways than one.

A huge thank you to Susannah Lewis of Thornvale, another fabulous Monster of the Week podcast, for joining me to play the inimitable matriarch of the Rodescu family. It's a role that we would trust to precious few, and I think you'll agree that she knocked it out of the park.

Episodes like this would not be possible without the generosity of our Patreon supporters, including our newest patrons, Anna, Sky, Ethan, Sunny, and Kevin. Patreon funds help us pay for hosting, equipment, and technology, develop swag and merch to help grow our audience, and generally frees up bandwidth that allows us to put time into cool new experimental stuff like this.

So, if you enjoy this episode and want to hear more content like it, or you just want to help support our creative endeavors here at Monster Hour, I'd encourage you to go check out our Patreon at patreon.com/monsterhour, or by checking out the link in the show notes. Thank you again for all of your patience as we regroup and recharge. We'll be back in two weeks with episode 51 of Monster Hour on June 8th. See you then.

[Monster Hour theme]

Quinn: Hello, everyone, and welcome to a very special Patreon episode of Monster Hour. I'm Quinn, your Keeper of Monster and Mysteries. Joining me today is special guest Susannah from Thornvale. Hi. Susannah, do you want to introduce yourself, and tell folks where they can find your work?

Susannah: Sure. Yeah. So, I am Susannah. I am the Keeper of the Thornvale podcast. That is a Monster of the Week show as well. It is about three monster hunters as they struggle to protect a small town off the coast of Florida, and it is set in my Dragon Knights universe, which my books in the *Deep Hollow* series are also set in. There's a lot of lore and a lot of fun stuff to talk about, and some very, very hard-hitting monsters. I'm known as a mean GM, so-- [Quinn laughs]. And also, this is my first time literally ever playing Monster of the Week. I have-- [crosstalk]

Quinn: [crosstalk] have played before?

Susannah: I have kept it over and over again over again. I've never played.

Quinn: Oh my gosh.

Susannah: So, I am really looking forward to this.

Quinn: Fantastic. As an aside, if you are not already listening to Thornvale, you absolutely should be. It is one of my favorite podcasts. I think it's one of the best Monster of the Week podcasts out there. So, absolutely, go check out Thornvale. Susannah and her crew are fantastic.

Susannah: Thank you. And there's a lot of it. We just finished our first season, which was over 70 episodes. So, you'll have quite a binge if you decide to go for it.

Quinn: You will not be disappointed nor be lacking for content.

So, today, we're going to be playing a special episode of Monster Hour. We're going to be doing an episode that is focused on Constance's Buni, Brandusa, similar to the Stoney Special.

For folks who listen to that, we're going to be rolling the clock back a little bit, a little bit more actually than last time, and looking back at some of the experiences that led Brandusa to be the wizened, venerated expert at monster hunting that we know in the main timeline.

Susannah, do you want to talk a little bit about Brandusa, the character that you'll be playing?

Susannah: Sure. Basically, the Brandusa you guys are going to see is 25. I am a former Olympian. I was on the national skiing team, and I have recently returned back home.

This may surprise some of you, because I know if you have listened to Monster Hour long enough, you have an idea of Brandusa. But I am playing a mundane, which I'm also very excited about, because I've always said if I play Monster of the Week, I want to play as the mundane, because I think it's probably my favorite class. [chuckles]

Quinn: Fantastic playbook.

Susannah: It is an absolutely amazing playbook, and I am going to have a lot of fun doing it. But yeah, so I'm playing a very young Brandusa before she learns about some of the more creepy and interesting things about this world.

Quinn: Although that might change soon.

Susannah: Oh boy.

Quinn: With that, I think we can go ahead and jump in.

The year is 1965. And Brandusa, you are, as you mentioned, 25 years old. It's been almost a year since your first and likely final appearance at the Olympics with the Romanian National Ski Team. While you were the first woman ever to represent your country in the Alpine skiing contest and brought home two bronze medals, the new government of General Secretary Ceaușescu has indicated that-- They plan to move away from the cultural touchstones of the previous socialist regime, including its athletes.

You've been granted a moderately generous stipend and a sizable acreage in your hometown of Abrud on the condition that you fade quietly away from public life. Your return to Abrud was perhaps not what you expected or hoped for. Your parents passed away several years ago, and your siblings have all married and moved away to forge their own paths in different parts of the country. The pastoral mountainside village that you grew up in seems colder and darker than you remember. Part of it's the people more subdued and standoffish as many struggle to meet the production targets set for them. But there's something else, too. Something you can't quite put your finger on.

Before we jump in, Brandusa, I'm curious-- I think it's been a few months since you've moved back to Abrud, how have you been filling your time?

Susannah: Thinking a lot of gardening, probably some hiking. It feels strange being back home when it's not like I remember it. I'm having a hard time being around people a lot. So, I think I'm doing my own thing as much as possible.

Quinn: What are you growing in your garden?

Susannah: Mostly turnips, and I'm not very good at it.

Quinn: [laughs] Amazing.

Susannah: I'm trying.

Quinn: Do you get a few lumpy ones?

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: Like, what's the pitfall here?

Susannah: Honestly, most of what I'm growing is weeds. [Quinn laughs] I just figured gardening is a thing that people like to do, and I was not prepared for what it actually takes.

Quinn: Okay, so, you've done some hiking, you're enjoying the mountainside, and you're doing some gardening, and you're improving, you're getting better every day.

Susannah: I'd like to think so.

Quinn: [chuckles] So, your family is largely gone, but I'm sure you've made some friends in your time here. You're mostly content or most comfortable staying with yourself. Who are some of the people you think you've made friends with, or even just acquaintances in the town?

Susannah: I think there's maybe someone that I had known beforehand that was like a friend from school before I had left for the Olympics beforehand. I think it was a girl named Alexandra.

Like me, she's still not married. I think she's probably dating someone, but not married yet. Her parents are very pushy about it, so she occasionally likes to get away and hang out with me every once in a while.

Quinn: Cool. Anybody else?

Susannah: I think I've talked to people, but I haven't really hung out with many people before, or anybody else at the moment.

Quinn: Sounds good. So, you've got your friend Alexandra. And beyond that, you've mostly kept to yourself and are just trying to set down roots again. I think my last question is, where do we find you on this day? Just any old day.

Susannah: I think I am probably hanging my legs off of the top of some mountain peak. I have climbed up there, it has taken me all day, and I am nearly out of water. But the good news is it's much easier to get down. But for the time being, I am just enjoying the fresh air on top of the mountain.

Quinn: Did you go with Alexandra, or is this a solo trip?

Susannah: I think it's just a solo trip. Yeah.

Quinn: Okay.

Susannah: She had a date or something.

Quinn: One that was set up by her mother.

Susannah: Well, like I said, she's dating someone. Honestly, it probably was set up by her mom still.

Quinn: [laughs] Wonderful. So, you're up on this mountaintop, you're looking down at the town, at your home, and I think you can see in the center square of town the preparations underway for the weekly Saturday night market.

It's not a large gathering. There's not a lot of fanfare. It's basically a local farmer's market. Folks from around town bring produce, they bring small tchotchkes and trinkets, they bring clothing and other things to sell and exchange and barter on a weekly basis. It's a really nice community building event. And the preparation's underway. You can see the stands being set up, you can see the streets being blocked off. And in a few hours, it's likely to be underway.

Susannah: I'm of the mind that I should probably get down, especially, because I'm running low on water. So, I spend a little while, probably 10-15 minutes, just enjoying the air, and then I turn around, start back and down.

Quinn: All right. So, you head down. It is easier as you navigate down the mountainside. And just as you're finishing up your last sip of water, you reach the trailhead. It's not far from the edge of town. I think you probably walked there, unless you took your moped.

Susannah: [chuckles] No, I probably did walk.

Quinn: Okay. I think as you get close town, you see Alexandra headed your way. She waves at you and smiles and says, [as Alexandra] *Brandusa, did you go for a hike? You look-*

Susannah: Red.

Quinn: *-thirsty.*

Susannah: I look red. I know. I know.

Quinn: [chuckles] [as Alexandra] *How was it?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *It was nice.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Wonderful. Wonderful. I have to say, I think Radu might be the one. He's so sweet.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, I'm very happy for you.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *He's training to be a dentist.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *A dentist?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] Yes.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You know, I don't remember the last time I went to the dentist.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Brandusa, dear, you really should go. It's important to take care of your teeth. I can set you up with Radu. I'm sure he would take care of you.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I would be very interested in meeting this person.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Do you have plans? We could go to the night market and perhaps I could run into him there.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, I was going to do some weeding, but anything to avoid that.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Those weeds will wait. Besides, you never seem to make much progress. They just keep coming back.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You are not wrong.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Leave the turnips and weeds for tomorrow, Brandusa. Let's go.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *[chuckles] All right.*

Quinn: The night market is in full swing as you and Alexandra make your way inside. I think you recognize a lot of the folks there, their neighbors, or just people you've seen around town. It's not a big town, so it's pretty easy to run into people. I think when you reach the stand that Radu, and who you assume is his mother are at-- I think you actually recognize both of them. I don't know that you've been introduced, but you've just seen them around town.

Susannah: It's a small town.

Quinn: Yeah, exactly. Alexandra skips up and says, [as Alexandra] *Radu, fancy seeing you again. This is my friend Brandusa. Brandusa, this is Radu.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Hi, Radu. I've heard so much about you.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Hey, what's up?*

Susannah: I give my friend a skeptical look.

Quinn: [as Radu] *It's nice to meet you. I'm Radu. Just helping my mom set up, you know?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I hear you're training to be a dentist.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *I am indeed. It's a good career. I think it'll really set me on the right path.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Glad to hear it.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *What do you do, Brandusa?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh, well, mostly right now, I do a lot of gardening.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Oh, that's cool. Do you have like a farm or like an orchard?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *It's a fairly small garden.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Oh. Okay. Okay. That's cool. That's cool. Awesome. Awesome.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm working on it.*

Quinn: I think Radu looks at his mother. The stand is pretty much set up. He's like, [as Radu] *Mom, do you got this? I want to hang out with my friends here. Is that okay?*

She gives a very tight smile and nod, and he gives her a hug and a kiss on the cheek and walks over to link arms with Alexandra and says, [as Radu] *So, what's going on? What's the plan?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, right now, I have to find something to drink.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Well, we could go to the-- What do we think is a good name for either a stand that sells some drinks or like a nearby tavern, restaurant, pub?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *The Hungry Beaver.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *The Hungry Beaver. [chuckles] Okay. Yeah. We could go to the Hungry Beaver. It's just down the street.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah, that'll do. Just literally anything liquid at this point.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Okay. Okay, let's make it happen.*

So, the three of you head literally about a half a block away. There is a small, single storey, antiquated structure. It's got a painted wood sign of a beaver gnawing on a log, [Susannah chuckles] and it says The Hungry Beaver. You all head inside. Radu buys a round of drinks, whatever variety you want, and the three of you sit down at one of the tables.

Susannah: I probably get a beer or something, but also a big glass of water. I start chugging the water and then sipping the beer.

Quinn: [laughs] As you're hydrating, I think Radu and Alexandra are exchanging some pleasantries, just some small talk. It's a little bit of a third wheel situation, mostly because you're busy hydrating. [laughs] But I think as you step back into the conversation, it opens up a little bit. And Radu turns to you and says, [as Radu] *So, how long been in town?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, I grew up here as a child. It's been a few years, though. I left for a couple of years.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Well, that explains why I guess I haven't seen you around town, but must be good to be home, right?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *For the most part.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Well, you certainly showed up at an interesting time. Did you hear about the girl that's gone missing?*

Susannah: I just lean forward. [as Brandusa] *No.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah. What was her name, Alexandra?* [as Alexandra] *Oh, Radu, we don't need to get into this. This isn't a pleasant talk.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, no, I'm interested.*

Quinn: She shoots you a look why are you ruining this nice conversation. But Radu is all into it, and he says, [as Radu] *Oh yeah, it was Aurelia. She went missing two days ago. Her mom hasn't seen her, her betrothed hasn't seen her, nobody knows where she is. Well, not nobody. There's rumors all around town. People have claimed to have seen her, but nobody can find her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *How have they seen her?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Well, they see her walking down the street at the edge of town or in the forests near the graveyard, in the old church. People seem to see her everywhere, but nobody approached her. Or, when they do, they lose sight of her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *How strange.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah, super, super strange.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I wonder if it's a case of cold feet.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Could be. Could be. I mean, some people are saying she's having an affair, but--*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh, well, that's quite rude.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Well, some people are saying that. Some people. I would never say that. Just some people.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Just some people.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Her mother put out a small reward. I was thinking about doing a little bit of looking around myself this evening, if you're interested.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, and I look at my friend. [as Brandusa] Can we go? Can we go search for the missing girl?*

Quinn: She rolls her eyes, but at this point, I think she has seen the writing on the wall. And so, she looks at you and nods and then looks at Radu and says, [as Alexandra] *I mean, I suppose we could go take a look. It could be a fun. It's like hide and seek or an Easter egg hunt. It'll be great. It'll be great.*

Susannah: I got a big smile on my face like, [as Brandusa] *Oh, this is interesting.* [Quinn laughs] *This is the most fun I've had in a year.* [chuckles]

Quinn: So, I think you all finish your drinks and leave The Hungry Beaver. And Radu and Alexandra, and you circle up and he says, [as Radu] *All right, so, how do we want to go about this? What do you think? Should we split up and canvas, should we go try to find some of the people who claim they saw her, should we go talk to her mom or the betrothed?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, her mother does seem to think something's gone wrong, so perhaps her first.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Great. I think, Alexandra, you know where she lives, right? We can go see if she's home.* Alexandra reluctantly nods. And so, the three of you head to go meet Aurelia's mother. Let's call her Miruna.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: Miruna owns a small cottage at the edge of town. I think she's probably in her 50s, but the years have weighed a bit heavy on her, so she looks a little bit older. Her hair's starting to gray. She has a really kind, but weathered countenance to her. When you knock, she opens the door slightly and greets you, not unkindly, but a bit skeptically, and says, [as Miruna] *Yes? What can I do for you?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Are you Aurelia's mother?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes. Have you seen her?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, but we wanted to look into it.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Oh, certainly. I would love the help. Come in. Come in. Come in. Here, dears. Come inside. It's cold. Come in.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Okay.*

Quinn: And she opens the door and lets you inside.

Susannah: Yeah, I glance at the others and [as Brandusa] *All right.*

Quinn: Yup. They all pile in with you. I think she puts a kettle on and makes a little bit of tea, and you all have a seat in her perfectly pleasant living room.

Susannah: Do I see any pictures of the missing girl?

Quinn: Yeah, I think there's some pictures. She's a young woman, probably somewhere in her 20s. She has like a sad beauty to her, but otherwise, pretty normal.

Susannah: Hmm. You said she made us tea.

Quinn: Yeah.

Susannah: I think I sit down with my tea and holding it between my hands. I look up at her and I say, [as Brandusa] *So, she went missing how long ago?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Oh, two days ago. She didn't come back from the mill where she usually works. Her fiancé Clement hasn't seen her either. He's distraught. He's been searching for days. I don't know what to do with myself. I'm just worried sick. This isn't like her at all.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *What is she normally like?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *She's a good girl. Very polite. She's been working at the mill for almost two years now, and she's just head over heels with Clement. They're expected to be married in just a few short months. She's just always been the apple of my eye. Shy, but very kind.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Was she having any issues at the mill?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *No. No issues at the mill. Well, she did mention that there had been a visit from a new cultural agent from the government. I don't remember his name. I guess he's been staying in town for a couple weeks now. He was asking quite a few questions. Didn't cause her any trouble, but seemed to pry.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *What kind of questions?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Asking about morale at the workplace, asking about whether or not individuals were meeting their production targets if anyone had expressed any discontent and she looks both ways, [as Miruna] You know what they usually ask.*

Susannah: I give her a knowing nod.

Quinn: Cultural agents are like the Ministry of the Interior. A lot of them are known to be members of the Securitate, which is the secret police. It's a common cover alias. So, this is likely a visiting member of the Securitate.

Susannah: Hmm. [as Brandusa] *I've heard people say that they have seen her around, but no one has been able to talk to her?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes, I've heard many people say that they've seen her, but no one seems to be able to, as you said, talk to her or find her. I don't know if it's just rumors, people being cruel, or if she doesn't want to be found for whatever reason. But I know she's out there still.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *And there was nothing to indicate that she had any interest in leaving beforehand?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *No. She seemed a bit quieter than usual, but nothing that raised my alarms before she disappeared.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I have a question.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] Yes.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Might I be able to look in her room? Maybe there's something she left behind, some notes. I'm sure you've looked over it, but a fresh pair of eyes might help.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *If you think it would help, sure. Certainly. I've looked over and over, but you're welcome to take a look. Her room is just back there.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah.* I smile and I put my tea down, and then I get up and I gesture for the others to follow me.

Quinn: Yeah. It's a small bedroom. It's quite simple. Just a plain bed, some sheets. There's a small dresser, and vanity, and curtains for the small window.

Susannah: I'm going to start looking around, see if I can find any notebooks or anything in the drawers just to see if there's anything that someone might have missed, kind of dig around a bit.

Quinn: Give me a roll to investigate a mystery.

Susannah: Okay. [rolls dice] 11.

Quinn: On a 10 plus, hold two.

Susannah: All right. Yeah. What is being concealed here?

Quinn: Always a good question.

Susannah: I know.

Quinn: Tell me about your approach to searching this room a little bit.

Susannah: I'm trying to look in any nooks and crannies, anything hidden away, like something she might not want someone to find, you know? Like under the bed, in the closet, or if there is one, or hidden in some clothes. I assume anything obvious would have been found already.

Quinn: Okay. So, you're doing a pretty thorough comb through of this room.

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: I think you look in between the frame and the mattress, and you find a small note tucked away. It reads simply, [as Agent] *I would appreciate your insight into the working conditions and morale of the town. Please come visit my office at the station.* And it is unsigned.

Susannah: Yeah, I think I show it to the other two and I am like, [as Brandusa] *Well, this looks interesting.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah. It seems like that's probably from the agent, right?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *That was my thought.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *The cultural agent? Yeah. I guess he did take an interest in her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Maybe we should take an interest in him.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah, I think we probably should, although we better do it discreetly.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Carefully. Yeah.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Super discreet.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] Yes. I give a skeptical glance at Alexandra.

Quinn: She smiles a bit knowingly.

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: You have another hold.

Susannah: Oh, yeah. I guess where did it go? In other words [chuckles] like, where did the girl go?

Quinn: I think what you notice, is that it looks like there's some scuff marks on the windowsill. The lock is a little bit bent. It looks like someone broke in here.

Susannah: Oh. Yeah. I point that out and I'm like, [as Brandusa] *Is it me, or does this look like someone broke in? Why would someone--*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Extremely suspicious.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I think we'd better show her mother this.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Do we want to worry her more? She seems stressed as it is.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know, I just feel like no one's taking this seriously, and it wouldn't hurt to--.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Honesty is the best policy. We should totally tell her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes. I just feel like maybe people would take it more seriously, you know?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Brandusa, you are totally right. Let's go tell her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh, okay.* So, I go tell her. I think I bring her up there and show her.

Quinn: I think she starts crying as soon as you show her.

Susannah: [as Miruna] *Oh no. Someone broke in? Someone kidnapped her.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, let's not be too hasty.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *What do you mean don't be hasty? What else could it mean?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know, but perhaps now you have something to show the police.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes, I'll go to the station right away. Thank you,* and she starts putting on her coat.

Susannah: Yeah. I think I start walking towards the outside, and I wait for her to leave.

Quinn: I think she ushers the three of you out, locks up, and starts hustling. The police station's not far, but she starts heading that direction.

Susannah: Do I know if the police station was the station on the note?

Quinn: I don't know that there's any other station in town. Abrud is too small for a train station.

Susannah: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

Quinn: So, unless there's some other station you don't know about, it's probably the police station.

Susannah: Okay. I think I'm a little apprehensive about going and talking to this agent. I mean, that seems like-- I don't know, he seems scary and governmental, and I'm not sure I'm down for that. So, I think I turn to the others and I'm like [as Brandusa] *You know, someone said that they saw her at the graveyard. That seems an unusual place. I mean, maybe we should check that out. I would literally rather go to the graveyard than go talk to this agent right now.* [chuckles]

Quinn: I think Alexandra nods vigorously and she says, [as Alexandra] *I mean, if he really is securitate, absolutely. We don't want to mess around with that. I agree. I'd rather go to the graveyard.*

Radu puffs his chest out, and he says, [as Radu] *Well, I mean, I'm not afraid of anyone, but I'm also not afraid of the graveyard, so that's fine. We can go to the graveyard. That's cool. That's fine.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Let's go to the graveyard.*

Quinn: So, the three of you make your way-- The graveyard is actually a little bit further. It's on the edge of town, up one of the hills. And you make your way there.

I think it's getting pretty late at this point, probably 11:00, maybe midnight. So, it's pretty dark. But you've been to the graveyard before. It's not a big unknown. I think everyone in town has been familiar. Your parents are probably buried there. So, it's a mixed bag of creepy and familiar as you make your way up the hill to the grounds.

Tell me a little bit about your approach.

Susannah: Yeah, I think I approach fairly calmly. I mean, I'm not the kind of person that believes in superstitious nonsense. I don't really think the graveyard is particularly dangerous or anything. So, I'm calm and mostly very-- I'm very vigilant. Like, I'm looking for anything out of the ordinary.

Quinn: I think it makes sense to have you roll to investigate a mystery here-

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: -as you make your way further into this graveyard and find yourself traipsing down the unpaved dirt worn paths and between the graves and tombstones.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: Do you have any light, by the way, or are you just using the light from the moon and the stars?

Susannah: Yeah, I'm hoping that it's bright out.

Quinn: You can see it's dark. But there's enough that with your eyes having adjusted to the darkness, you can see at least the vague outlines of most things from the distance.

Susannah: Yeah. I didn't come out here planning on investigating gravesites, or [Quinn laughs] have a flashlight, or anything.

Quinn: So, go ahead and give me a roll to investigate a mystery.

Susannah: [rolls dice] 7.

Quinn: On a 7 to 9, hold one.

Susannah: I guess I'll just do. Where did it go again, saying like, "Where's the girl? Did she go here?"

Quinn: I think as you're walking, you pass by a large but squat tree. And amidst the branches, there is a piece of fabric. It looks like the fabric that would belong to a nice dress. It has been torn off as it was snagged on this branch.

Susannah: I reach down and snag it up and I say, [as Brandusa] *Does anyone know what she was wearing when someone saw her last?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *I don't know what she was wearing, but everyone says they've seen her in a dress.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *In a dress. Well, dresses aren't particularly uncommon.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Do you think it's hers? Do you think she's here?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't think she's here, but I wonder if she was here.* I look around, I'm trying to find her, make sure she's not here.

Quinn: [as Radu] *Let's see. You asked where did it go? I think we can just continue off of that.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *All right.*

Quinn: There's multiple sets of footprints along the dirt paths. But I also think that Brandusa, you see amidst these, some indentations in the grass. They're not following the paths. They're not approaching individual tombstones. They're weaving through this space. They're just moving further and further towards the back of the graveyard, which is on the other side of this hill, away from town.

Susannah: Hmm I think I mindlessly track this set. I don't really think about it. I'm just like, [as Brandusa] *Oh, that's interesting.* And my brain just goes, [as Brandusa] *I guess I'll follow that.* So, I think I just mindlessly track it forward without really saying anything to anyone.

Quinn: Do you think Radu or Alexandra would follow you?

Susannah: I think they probably would, just to see what I'm doing.

Quinn: You're not slipping away stealthily. You're just on your own mission.

Susannah: Yeah, I just notice it. I don't even think I'm consciously following it. I'm just like, [as Brandusa] *Huh.*

Quinn: So, you're making your way deeper inside. There's more trees in this part, and it's just a little more difficult to see. But as you get close to what you believe to be the outer boundary of the cemetery, you hear faint laughter.

Susannah: I immediately look up.

Quinn: It's not immediately clear where the laughter is coming from, but it is coming from generally ahead of you, towards the very edge of the cemetery. And it is most definitively the laughter of a young woman.

Susannah: I turn and then was like, [as Brandusa] *Do you hear that?*

Quinn: They both nod absolutely silently.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm going to go check that out.*

Quinn: Alexandra grabs your hand and shakes her head, no.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *It could be her.* I shake out of her hand and start walking towards it.

Quinn: You move a little bit closer and a little bit closer. And not too long after, you see two figures come into view, a young woman and a tall man dancing. And you hear that laughter come again.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *What on earth?* Yeah, I just hide there in the trees, watching a little embarrassed, like, [as Brandusa] *Should I be seeing this?*

Quinn: I think it makes sense here if you would like to read a bad situation.

Susannah: Sure. [rolls dice] 10.

Quinn: On a 10 plus, hold three.

Susannah: All right. Are there any dangers I haven't noticed yet?

Quinn: Yes.

Susanne: Oh.

Quinn: I think you notice as these two are dancing, it's not just that this man is leading and the young woman is following. You almost have the sensation of watching a puppet. Like, her movements are just not quite right. They're just a little jerky. And as you listen to the laughter, it sounds a little stilted. Something is not right about this interaction, despite the initial appearance of maybe something amorous or flirtatious.

Susannah: What's the biggest threat?

Quinn: As these two are dancing in the moonlight, you see the man lean forward as though he's leaning in for a kiss. But instead, he buries his head in this young girl's neck. I think it's too dark to see exactly what's going on, but it doesn't look right.

Susannah: Hmm. What's the best way to protect the victim?

Quinn: Interrupt this.

Susannah: Yeah, I was afraid you were going to say that. Yeah, I think I take a look at what's going on and I'm like, [as Brandusa] *That seems wrong.* I rush out of my hiding place and say, [as Brandusa] *What's going on here?*

Quinn: The man looks startled as he turns to you. You can see in the moonlight the sheen of some dark liquid on his mouth. He looks at you and says, [as Vladimir] *Nothing untoward, and who might you be?*

Susannah: I start slowly hiding and reaching my hand at my pocket for my pocket knife, and I walk forward a little bit.

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *Sit tight, my dear.* The young girl sits down just like cross legged. This man who you now can see a little bit more clearly, he's quite tall and would be handsome if he weren't so gaunt and pallid looking. As you are taking steps forward, he is, at first, you think, walking towards you, but then you realize his feet aren't entirely touching the ground.

Susanne: Right.

Quinn: Eventually, he stops moving his legs entirely and just seems to float towards you and says, [as Vladimir] *And who might you be, my dear? You're out far too late, far too alone.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I promise you, I am not alone.*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *Oh. Do we have company?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Who are you?*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *I would love to meet them.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Sure, you would. Who are you?*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *My name is Vladimir Dragić. Cultural agent.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Right.*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *Can I ask what you're doing in the graveyard so late in the evening?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Just felt like going for a stroll. It's quiet.* Now, all the time, I'm walking a little closer.

Quinn: Closer to the man or closer to--

Susannah: Closer to him. Yeah.

Quinn: Oh, okay. He says, [as Vladimir] *Such a strange place to go for a stroll.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No doubt.*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *I think perhaps you think you saw something that you didn't.* And Brandusa, I would like you to give me a roll, plus cool.

Susannah: [rolls dice] 10.

Quinn: Your mind feels cloudy for a moment, but it passes quickly as you stare into Vladimir's eyes. And he says, [as Vladimir] *I think it would best if you forgot what you saw here.*

Susannah: I immediately stand up straight and I say, [as Brandusa] *Yes, why don't you let me take my friend back with me, and we'll be out of your hair.*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *Yes, I believe our romance is not going to work out.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, I don't think so.* I go out, and I get close enough, and reach out for the girl's hand, and try to grab it.

Quinn: You take her hand. She doesn't resist as you pull her along, but you notice that her hand is very cold.

Susannah: Yeah. I pull her after me.

Quinn: And as you walk away, Vladimir says, [as Vladimir] *You best be getting home.*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] Right away.*

Quinn: *[as Vladimir] Things aren't safe in the night.*

Susannah: He adds that, and I just nod and start walking as fast as I can. Not running, just speed walking. Trying to look as nonchalant as humanly possible [Quinn laughs] while being confronted with an obvious vampire.

Quinn: Wait, oh, you already knew it was a vamp-- Oh, man.

[laughter]

Quinn: Yeah. So, you speed walk back to where Radu and Alexandra are waiting. This young woman in tow. Again, she's just letting herself be pulled along, but you make it back unaccosted, and you turn around to look back at where this figure was, and there is no one there.

Susannah: Excellent. I think I finally I'm done with this and I'm like, *[as Brandusa] Okay. Found her.*

Quinn: *[as Radu] Is she okay? She looks--* Radu waves his hand in front of her eyes, and she doesn't really respond. Alexandra, too, looks concerned. *[as Alexandra] What happened to her shoulder?* There's an obvious bite mark on her shoulder that's stained with blood. It's not bleeding profusely, but it's obviously a wound.

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] I really, really want to say she was drugged.*

Quinn: *[as Radu] Oh, man, that's awful. We should get her back home. She looks okay. So, whatever's in her system, we can just wait it out.*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] Yeah.*

Quinn: *[as Radu] I'm sure her mother will be just so excited to see her.*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] Yeah, I'm sure. Yes, let's get her back.*

Quinn: So, the three of you with this young woman in tow, who you presume to be Aurelia, head back to her mother's house. You knock again, and once again you're greeted with a skepticism. But as soon as she sees Aurelia, Miruna throws open the door, throws her arms around her daughter, and kisses her and is like, *[as Miruna] Are you okay? Are you okay?*

Aurelia doesn't respond. I think she looks and mumbles something that you can't quite make out from the distance that you're at. And Miruna finally turns to the three of and says, *[as Miruna] What happened to her? Where did you find her? What's wrong?*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] I found her in the graveyard. I believe she may have been drugged.*

Quinn: *[as Miruna] Oh my God. But she's okay?*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] I don't know.*

Quinn: *[as Miruna] Well, we'll go see the doctor first thing in the morning.*

Susannah: *[as Brandusa] May I speak to you privately?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes, I suppose. Aurelia, dear, can you go sit down on the couch?* Aurelia does indeed move by her own and go sit down on the couch.

Susannah: Yeah, I think I try to take her into the kitchen or something.

Quinn: Yeah, you find a private space.

Susannah: I turn to them and say, [as Brandusa] *Would you mind watching her?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah, no problem. We'll watch over her. We got it.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Excellent.* I walk into the kitchen with the mom. I've got my hand in my pocket again. I'm playing with that pocket knife that I've got in my pocket just nervously, like it's something that's there. I keep flipping it open and closed in my pocket.

I finally take my hand out, because I'm worried about stabbing myself in the thigh or something. I put my hands on the kitchen counter, and I turn around and I say [as Brandusa] *Can I ask you something? Like, honestly, I'm not trying to make fun of anything, I promise.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *What? Yes. What is it? What is it, dear?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Have you ever heard of strange things happening around here?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I mean, there's certainly plenty of folklore, but I've never seen anything strange myself.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I saw something tonight that I can't explain.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *What did you see?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I saw your daughter with a man, that cultural agent. And she seemed wrong as soon as I saw her.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *The same way she is now?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] Yes.

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I thought you said she had been drugged.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I think he wasn't what he says he is. He was covered in her blood, and you could see that wound on her neck. Am I crazy?*

Quinn: She looks scared.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Look, I don't know exactly what I saw, but I need you to keep a close eye on her.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I will. I won't let her out of my sight. She won't go to the mill. She won't go anywhere. I will keep her under lock and key here. I will keep her safe.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Just maybe if anything goes strange, you can call us.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Of course, I will. I will. Thank you. Thank you, Brandusa, so much for bringing my dear Aurelia home.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You're welcome.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I wouldn't ask you to interfere in the affairs of a cultural agent, much less something else. But if you do anything, please be safe.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'll do my best. I. I don't know why, but I have a feeling we won't be seeing much of him soon. Just a feeling and a hope, I suppose.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I hope so too. Brandusa, dear, it's been such a day. If you wouldn't mind, I would like to get back to my daughter.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I'll call you in the morning.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *She probably needs to sleep, I hope.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Let me know how it goes. If anything strange happens, please let me know.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *I will. I will.* Is there anything else that you want to get out of this scene?

Susannah: No, I think I just go back to my friends and I'm like, [as Brandusa] *Is the Hungry Beaver still open?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Yeah, I think it's open till 02:00 or 03:00, whenever they decide to close down. But it's got to still be open.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Anyone feel like celebration drinks? I think I could use some.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *I'm not sure celebration is the right word, but yes.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, we got her home.*

Quinn: [as Radu] Yes, we *did*. So, the three of you head back to The Hungry Beaver and get another round of drinks. You and Radu and Alexandra are seated at the table.

Susannah: I think I'm probably just quiet, like drinking my drink really slowly, just thinking.

Quinn: Alexandra is, I think, doing the same thing, glancing at you occasionally. Radu is mixed between looking furtively at the door and you and fidgeting a little bit, and finally, he says, [as Radu] *Okay, so what happened? What did you see? You got to tell us. What did you see?*

Susannah: I look around. Is there anyone there?

Quinn: There's probably a dozen people in small groups, plus the bartender. But you don't get the sense that anyone's eavesdropping on you or anything.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm not sure you would believe me if I told you.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *But you got to tell us. Come on, you got to tell us.* I think Alexandra kicks him under the table. And Radu is like, [as Radu] *Ouch. Ow. Ow. Ow. Mm.*

Your friend Alexandra looks at you and says, [as Alexandra] *She looked really shaken up and that wound. I believe more things than usual, Brandusa, after a night like this.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *What do you know about vampires?*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Vampires.* Radu whispers under his breath, and then Alexandra kicks him again.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I told you you wouldn't believe me.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *I don't know a lot. I mean, when I was a kid, my mum would warn me about the strigoi that would come get me if I didn't do my chores. But I always thought those were folklore. What did you see?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm not so sure. They're myths.* And then, I tell them what I saw.

Quinn: So, you recount the whole tale-

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: -the strange dance in the moonlight, the bite and your encounter with the cultural agent, Vladimir Dragić? And the two of them listen spellbound. And Radu, I think, is the one who responds. [as Radu] *Wait, Vlad?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah. Don't think I didn't catch that.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Like Vlad Dracula III? Vlad the Impaler? Dracula?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Look, I'm not saying what I saw was Dracula. It's not that uncommon a name.*

Quinn: [as Radu] *Certainly not in Romania. But a vampire named Vlad,* and he starts to chuckle a little bit.

Susannah: It's so ridiculous.

Quinn: I think even Alexandra has a little laugh. But it is very clear that she is taking you seriously. Radu, maybe, maybe not. But she does not doubt you.

Susannah: Yeah, I think I catch her eye and I can still see that "I get you" look in her eyes.

Quinn: Yeah. Actually, you know what? Why don't you give me a Trust Me for Radu-

Susannah: Yeah. There we go.

Quinn: -to see how seriously he takes you.

Susannah: Yeah, I think what I say is, [as Brandusa] *Look, I think we need to not talk about this anymore. Just trust me on this.*

Quinn: [laughs] So, why don't you read Trust Me for us?

Susannah: Yeah. So, Trust Me is when you tell a normal person the truth in order to protect them from danger roll charm. On a 10 plus, they'll do what you say, no questions asked. On a 7 to 9, they do it, but the keeper chooses one. There's some options there.

Quinn: So, give me a roll plus charm.

Susannah: [rolls dice] 4.

Quinn: Oh no. [chuckles]

Susannah: Oh, he doesn't believe me.

Quinn: Yeah, he's not just chuckling. I think he starts laughing. He's like, [as Radu] *[laughs] Oh, Alexandra, your friend is so funny. Oh, goodness, Brandusa, you are hilarious. Should I get us another round?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Actually, it's getting late. I think I'm going to turn in for tonight. It's. It's been a long night.*

Quinn: The three of you part ways, and head back to your homes, and the night passes peacefully. Well, the night passes uneventfully. You tell me if it passes peacefully.

Susannah: No. no. I mean, in terms of sleeping, that isn't going to happen.

Quinn: Yeah.

Susannah: I saw way more than I expected tonight and I have a lot to think about.

Quinn: Yeah. But it does pass uneventfully, at least, and you wake up the next morning. It's cloudy and overcast. And shortly after you get up, your phone starts to ring.

Susannah: I get a sick feeling in my stomach, and I pick it up. [as Brandusa] *Hello?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *Yes, is this Brandusa?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *It's Miruna. I just wanted to call to let you know.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I know. I know. Is something go wrong?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *No, no. You know, Aurelia, she's still asleep. It must have been a difficult night. But she seems like she's doing well. I just wanted to call and let you know.*

Susannah: I let a little bit of air out and I'm like, [as Brandusa] *Thank you for letting me know. I appreciate it. And if there's anything I can do, let me know.*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *You've done plenty, dear. Thank you again. Thank you so much for bringing her back to me.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm very happy to have helped.*

Quinn: Do you have a clear idea of what you would want to do next? I have a prompt, but if you have something you want to do, I don't want to jump the shark.

Susannah: No, I don't think so. I think I'm probably going to spend the rest of this morning just sitting and probably drinking something warm and-- I didn't sleep very much, so I'm probably just a little exhausted. So, I don't think I'm doing anything in particular, at least, unless you have a better idea.

Quinn: That makes sense. You spend your morning working in the garden, drinking something warm, trying to just shake the experience from last night. And around late morning, your phone rings again.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Hello?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Brandusa, it's Alexandra.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Alexandra? What's going on?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *I don't know where Radu is.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Radu?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *I just stopped by and his mother said he didn't come home last night.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh no.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *I hate to ask, but can you help me look for him?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Of course. No, no, absolutely. Meet me at The Beaver in a couple of minutes. I'll be there in just a moment.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Okay, I'll be right there.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Okay. Yeah.*

Quinn: You arrive. I think Alexandra arrives almost simultaneously. She throws her arms around you in a big embrace. You can see it looks like she's been crying.

Susannah: Yeah, I gave her a big hug.

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Oh, Brandusa. His home is not far from here. I don't know. I don't know what he could have done,-*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know. I don't know, but--*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *-what could have happened.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Did you all continue talking about what happened last night?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *He walked me home. He was joking about what you said. And he said he was going to go back there and prove it was just the tricks of the moonlight. I told him not to and he swore he wouldn't, but--*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *We need to go back there.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Yes, I agree.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Let's go.* I have my moped, so I'm going to offer for her to hop on the back of the moped, so I can get us there faster.

Quinn: So, the two of you hop on the moped and you go back to the graveyard. What's your approach here?

Susannah: I think this time, I'm a little panicked. So, I'm just going to tear through and see if I can find him. I'm going to go back to that spot that we were at last night.

Quinn: I think you don't have any trouble finding that spot again. Why don't you give me a roll to investigate a mystery.

Susannah: Okay.

Susanne: [rolls dice] 9.

Quinn: On a 7 to 9, hold one.

Susannah: Where did it go?

Quinn: I think you can trace the footprints from your interaction with Vlad and Aurelia. But you realize that there's another set that lead towards this clearing near the back of the cemetery.

I think at the base of one of the trees, you see a branch that has been broken off. It looks like it's been sharpened, probably with some sort of knife. So, it's still leafy, but the tip is pointed. You can see that it is stained with a bit of blood. It looks like there's a trail that leads further away out of the cemetery into the forest.

Susannah: Oh, that stupid fool. She muttered that to me before remembering that Alexandra is behind me.

Quinn: She looks at what you're holding and shakes her head and starts to sob.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Come on. I think he must have gone this way. I'm going to follow those tracks.*

Quinn: You follow them into the woods a short distance. And not too long after, you see Radu leaning up against the base of a tree. A large wound on his neck, blood staining his tunic, and he is unmoving, glassy eyed.

Susannah: Oh, crap. Yeah, I think I move closer, try to get a better look at him.

Quinn: I think this is another investigative mystery if you're looking for more information.

Susannah: [rolls dice] 6. You know what? I'm going to use a luck point on that.

Quinn: Okay. So, you are using your first of two luck points, so that bumps it up to a full success. So, on a 10 plus, hold two.

Susannah: What happened here?

Quinn: I think you can see a few things examining Radu's body, he obviously died from blood loss. The wound on his neck, it's not like an open tear. The only word to describe it is discreet. But he bled for an extended period of time. I think you do notice that several of his

limbs don't look quite in the right place. They're probably broken. I think you also see that he does not have any puncture wounds, which you can infer to mean that he was not stabbed with the makeshift tree stake.

Susannah: Yeah. I guess what can hurt it. Did he actually hit this thing with a tree stake?

Quinn: I think that is the conclusion that you draw, which means he must have stabbed Vlad with the stake, and it clearly did not stop it. So, whatever you've heard about staking a vampire, it's not that.

Susannah: Oh boy. Yup. [laughs].

Quinn: [chuckles]

Susannah: See, the problem is now that my friend is going to lose her mind. I don't think I'm good at the whole consoling thing. [Quinn chuckles] So, I think as soon as I see the body, I'm going to try to grab onto her and turn her around.

Quinn: Yeah, I think she's coming up behind you following timidly. You reach her before she can see this scene, and I think instead, she just falls into you crying. She's-- [crosstalk]

Susannah: Yeah. I just hold onto her swallowing the lump in my own throat, because I don't know what to say. I'm going to hold on to her until she stops. I'm going to keep an eye out, because I feel like we're not in a good spot for this.

Quinn: Eventually, she dries her tears, looks at you, and says, [as Alexandra] *What do we do? Should we just go home? Should we just be quiet?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *Maybe all of this will just blow over if we just leave it be.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know. There's a part of me that doesn't want it to. I don't want-- Whatever did this to get away with this.*

Quinn: I think from the side, you hear, [as Emil] *What thing?*

Susannah: [chuckles] Oh no.

Quinn: You see a young man, probably about your age, dark features, angular face, and he's carrying a shovel. He looks like he's got dirt, stain in his clothes. He looks at the two of you and says, [as Emil] *What thing?*

Susannah: Yeah, as soon as I heard something, I definitely brought my hunting rifle with me this time. I have that rifle off my back and pointed straight at him.

Quinn: He holds up the shovel, and he's like, [as Emil] *Whoa, whoa, whoa. Calm down.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Drop the shovel. Drop the shovel.*

Quinn: He throws it down to the ground.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Who are you?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *My name is Emil.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Emil?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Yes. I'm the groundskeeper here.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh. Right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *What thing?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *We're not in a good place for this. Somebody killed someone back there. There was a friend of ours. We were trying to find him, and we did. We need to get out of here, please.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Why don't you come back to the cottage?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Okay.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *We can discuss there. May I pick up my shovel?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah. I don't really put away my rifle, but I lower it.*

Quinn: He nods, and he very slowly and carefully picks up his shovel. I almost said rifle. He doesn't have a rifle. You have the rifle.

Susannah: I do.

Quinn: He picks up the shovel and gestures for you to follow him. You make your way back through the cemetery grounds, off to one of the other edges, and there is a small cottage there. There's smoke coming out from the brick chimney, just like a quaint little house. He opens the door and motions for you to step inside.

Susannah: Yeah, I do that.

Quinn: [as Emil] *So, what happened?*

Susannah: I just look at him, and then I look at my still super distraught friend, and then I look back at him-- I just do this exasperated sigh and was just like--

Quinn: [as Emil] *Yes. Sorry. Working by oneself in the graveyard.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Emil, what do you know about vampires?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Vampires?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Well, I know what my mother and father told me. Working in a graveyard, there's quite a few precautions we have to take.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Once the families are gone, we go back and drive a stake through anyone who died before their time, anyone who we knew to be of ill repute and a black heart staking them to the ground prevents them from rising. But once they're up, no good.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, I don't think so.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *There are several kinds of. There's the strigoi, which are the most common. The Moroi, which move from body to body, inhabit whichever they please. I believe there's the vrykolakas. You tend to hear stories of those more down further south in the Balkans, Greece. But I mean, that's the basics.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *That's more than I knew.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Why do you ask? Please tell me it's purely for intellectual curiosity.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I would really love to tell you that, but I don't think I can.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *If there was a vampire in this town, it did not come from my cemetery. I have made sure to take every precaution. I did exactly as mother and father instructed.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't think it came from here. I know who it is. It came from out of town.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *You know the vampire?*

Susannah: *I'm just staring at this guy like* [as Brandusa] *I cannot believe I'm having this conversation.*

Quinn: *Yeah. He seems more acclimated to it than you are.*

Susannah: *I'm just like,* [as Brandusa] *It's all I can do. Like,* [as Brandusa] *I have to talk about this with somebody. So, I'm just like,* [as Brandusa] *Yes, there's a man from the government. Do you know about the missing girl?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Rumor has it that she was returned last night.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *We found her last night with him.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *You found her? So, that's not your friend?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, that was-- He found her with us. He went back looking. She was with a vampire. I can't believe I'm saying this. But I saw it. I saw it happen.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *You are not wrong to believe it. In fact, believing it may have saved your life. If there is indeed a vampire, then we must do something. It only grow stronger as it feeds.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *He has to go.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *So, the vampire is a visiting government official. He seems to like my graveyard.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *And otherwise perhaps would be at the station. Probably stays there during the day, avoid the sunlight. For what it's worth, it only makes them weaker, doesn't kill them. We need to devise a plan of attack.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *If we could lure him out during the day. I'm fairly certain that staking them doesn't work. But how do you kill a vampire?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Well, it depends on what type of vampire it is.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Are there any that hypnotize?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *The only vampire I've heard of that can actually hypnotize people. Well, you only read about that in Dracula.*

Susannah: I just don't know what to say.

Quinn: He's smiling a little bit. He's like, [as Emil] *Oh, what a funny joke.* And then, he realizes you're serious and he goes absolutely stone faced and says, [as Emil] *Are you sure that it was hypnosis?*

Susannah: I describe how I found the girl, and I describe the feeling that it tried to take over me.

Quinn: He shakes his head and says, [as Emil] *I don't know how much of what I know will be applicable, but I suppose we will do our best, if he is indeed who you say.*

Susannah: I don't even know what I'm saying.

Quinn: [as Emil] *Removing the head and burning the body is a good bet for any type of vampire.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *All right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Holy symbols will help protect against any influence,* and he walks over to his bed. His house is like a studio, basically. It's almost all one room. So, his bed is just over in the corner. There's a picture of a woman who you assume to be his mother, and hanging over it is a cross. He picks it up and lifts it up to put it on. And then hands it to you and says, [as Emil] *You should take this. I have another.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *All right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *I have all of the best practices that my family passed down to me to ensure that the unquiet dead do not haunt our town. But not all of that lines up with Bram Stoker's work. If you listened to him, a stake through the heart should have done it. But that's certainly not true. But yes, what else do we know of Dracula? He can't cross running water.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know, I didn't read the book.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *He's not allowed to enter a house without being welcomed. He must sleep in a box full of Transylvanian soil, though that should be no problem here.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] Yes.

Quinn: [as Emil] *Perhaps, the truth is somewhere in between.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Perhaps. All I know is I'm pretty sure the stake doesn't work. I think that's what our friend tried to do.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *And that aligns with what my mother told me. The stake is to prevent them from rising to stake them to the ground.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You know, that makes a lot more sense.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *It does, doesn't it?*

Susannah: Yeah. I think she shares like a little bit of a laugh.

Quinn: Yeah.

Susannah: And then, I think she turns around to Alexandra and she says, [as Brandusa] *Look, I don't know what of this you want to be a part of. I wouldn't want you to get hurt. I know it's been a day. Do you want to help?*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *You're going to try to take on Dracula? You're going to try to kill Dracula?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'm going to try.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *I won't leave you alone to do it. Not after what he did to Radu.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Okay.*

Quinn: [as Alexandra] *I will have my vengeance.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I'll help you get it.*

Quinn: I think at this point, it's probably time to decide your plan. You have information, you have your team, and you have the general whereabouts of the monster. How do you think you want to approach it?

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Here's what I think. I think we need to find a way to lure him out during the day. If we can fight him during the day, it will be much better for us, I think.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Agreed.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *But short of just asking him to meet me in the cemetery, I don't know what to do.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Well, he does know you.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *But I'm worried he would be suspicious.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Agreed. It seems dangerous. What about Aurelia, the girl?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Oh. Now, that's possible. He seemed attached to her.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Doubt he likes unfinished business.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No doubt. Yes, he might come out for her. I hate to use her as bait, though. It seems dangerous and wrong.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Extremely. If you have a better idea, I'm open, but--*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't. Unfortunately, I think that is our best bet.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *All right. So, where should we do it? I know this graveyard like the back of my hand, but--*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know. It's home court advantage for both of you. And he met here. You might not be as suspicious.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Might be comfort more than any tactical advantage.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *All right. So, we bring Aurelia here, hope that that draws him out.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *And then, hit him really hard.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Yes.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Do you have an axe or something like that? I have a gun. I don't know if that will do anything.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Unlikely. His body is dead. For all intents and purposes, another gunshot wound will do little.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I think you're right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *I have my shovel. Its edge is keen. Keep it sharp.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You keep your shuffle sharp. You really are prepared for everything, aren't you?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Well, it makes the job easier. [Brandusa chuckles] You know what they say. Work smarter, not harder.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Of course.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *And we have an axe out back that will certainly do the trick.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *All right.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *We'll need fire on hand as well. Perhaps, Alexandra, if you're in this, perhaps you can help, be on hand with some fire.* She nods grimly, and walks over to the fireplace, and starts building a fire.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes, that will work, I think. I guess we're ready. At least as much as we we'll ever be to fight Dracula.*

Quinn: [chuckles] He lets out a forlorn chuckle, looks at you and says, [as Emil] *You know, when I was digging a grave this morning, I didn't think I'd be doing it for myself, but here we are.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Well, let's not get ahead of ourselves. I think it's time to go talk to Aurelia.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Okay.* Emil offers to go with you, or he offers to stay here and get the trap ready, such as it is.

Susannah: Yeah. She doesn't know him, and I think it's probably better if I don't bring any extra people.

Quinn: Yeah. So, the two of you agree on a spot in the cemetery to spring this trap, basically. I think rather than me describing this, I think I'll let you, just as the fight is playing out, pick terrain features that would be in the place where you and Emil are setting this trap-- [crosstalk].

Susannah: Oh yeah. I think that makes sense.

Quinn: But you take your moped back into town and arrive at Miruna and Aurelia's home.

Susannah: I knock and I stand there awkwardly waiting.

Quinn: Shortly thereafter, Miruna opens the door and lets you in and says, [as Miruna] *Brandusa, yes, what can I do for you? I'm afraid Aurelia's still sleeping.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Would you mind if I check on her?*

Quinn: [as Miruna] *No. Please, feel free.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah.* I go up there.

Quinn: Yeah. You enter Aurelia's room. She's in bed, and she is still sound asleep.

Susannah: Yeah. I think I go over there and try to gently move her to try to wake her up.

Quinn: You have to shake her several times before she starts blinking the sand out of her eyes, and looks at you, and just faintly murmurs, [as Aurelia] *What? Who are you?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Do you remember last night?*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *You do?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Do you remember last night?*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *I was coming home from the mill?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *Was that a dream?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, it wasn't. But I think you may be missing some pieces.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *I think I went dancing with a handsome prince.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *He was not a prince.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *Are you sure?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *Who was he?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You were abducted by a vampire. A real one. And you were missing for days. You can ask your mother.*

Quinn: I think I would like you to give me a Trust Me.

Susannah: Yup. I was waiting for that.

Quinn: [laughs]

Susannah: [rolls dice] I got a 7. They ask you a hard question first. They stall and dither a while, or they have a better idea. Technically, I haven't asked her to help me out yet, but--

Quinn: I assume that's coming, though.

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: Let's play it out a little bit more while I think about this.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *A vampire? What?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Believe me, I know that it sounds insane. But do you feel that on your neck?* I gesture.

Quinn: She reaches up and palpates her neck and winces. [as Aurelia] *Oh.* And she tries to look at it, but obviously she can't quite see it.

Susannah: Does she have a mirror nearby, like a hand mirror?

Quinn: I don't think there's a hand mirror, but there's a vanity. So, she stands up and looks at it and gasps and turns back at you and says, [as Aurelia] *You're saying I was attacked by a vampire?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] Yes.

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *That's why I was dreaming this whole time?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] Yes. *He had you under some sort of spell.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *And you freed me.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I did. My friends and I.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *Oh, thank you so much. Thank you.*

Susannah: And then, I get quiet and I say, [as Brandusa] *One of my friends, he went back after we freed you, he tried to take it on himself.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *Did he? Did he?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yeah, he did. And I don't want to let it get away with that. I want to find a way, and I think I have. I have found a way to take it out once and for all. For what it did to you and what it did to my friend.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *I don't know if that's incredibly brave or incredibly foolish, but it's probably a bit of both.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Yes. I am here, because I need to ask you for a favor.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *What do you need?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *This is going to be difficult, but I want you to try to ask this vampire to come back to the place that he attacked you. We need to bring him out in the daylight, so that we can fight him.*

Quinn: [as Aurelia] *You know him? Who is he?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Do you know the cultural agent?*

Quinn: She's already looking quite pallid. A lot of the color is already gone from her face, but it drains further. She says, [as Aurelia] *Oh, I was terrified of him before he was a vampire. You want me to go to him now?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *You don't have to do anything. I only need you to lure him there.*

Quinn: So, I think I know what option I'm going to go with. We don't have to play this out, but I'm going to go with, they stall and dither for a while. And the consequence, is that in the time that it takes you to convince Aurelia and Miruna to do this, it is going to be approaching sunset. So, time will not be on your side.

Susannah: Yeah. Can we just wait? Like, the point is to get him out during the daylight. I feel like what we're risking here would be him going out and finding more people to kill. I don't know what to do.

Quinn: I think Aurelia, I don't think she wants to wait.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: It's one of those like, she has psyched herself into this. I think, in fact, if you try to tell her to wait, she just storms away and starts heading to this police station to speak with Vladimir.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: Because if she's going to do it, she won't wait.

Susannah: I guess we're going to do this now. I'm going to go meet back up with what's his face, the grave guy, and get ready.

Quinn: Emil.

Susannah: Yup.

Quinn: You moped back and you arrive at the graveyard. When you show up, I think Emil steps out from his hiding spot and looks at you and says, [as Emil] *What took so long?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *She was not easy to convince, but--*

Quinn: [as Emil] *It's much to ask. I'm surprised you were able to convince her at all. I wouldn't do it.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *[laughs] Yes. Well, I guess she's got a good reason.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Yes. Are there any final preparations that you make before Aurelia and Vladimir arrive?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know anything about hunting monsters. Like, I feel like we're just going to hide in a bush.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Okay.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't think I have any skills in this area, so I'm just going to wait. I have a holy symbol and an axe, and that's what we're going to have to go with.*

Quinn: The axe, by the way. I think we'll go ahead and use the same stats as the mundane's fire axe, which is three harm hand messy.

Susannah: That's what I figured.

Quinn: Yeah. So, go ahead and mark that in your inventory. After maybe half an hour, 45 minutes, the sun not quite at the horizon, but the sky turning, under ordinary circumstances, gorgeous pastel orange and pink. You start to hear the sound of footsteps and singing.

A low baritone voice singing a tune in a dialect that you recognize as Romanian, but can't quite understand, as though it's different or old.

Susannah: Balls he is Dracula. Okay. Yeah, I wait till the singing gets closer.

Quinn: And they come into view. Vladimir is wearing a thick, dark wool overcoat and a cap. He is arm in arm with Aurelia, who once again has the almost puppet-like movements as she almost skips alongside him.

Susannah: All right. I guess let's get this SOB. So, I pop out and I attack a vampire with a fire axe.

Quinn: [laughs] Outstanding. Give me a roll to kick some ass.

Susannah: Yup. Oh, my tough is not good. [chuckles] This is not going to go well. [rolls dice] 7.

Quinn: On a 7 to 9, you trade harm as established. So, your fire axe is three harm, correct?

Susannah: Yup.

Quinn: All right.

Susannah: I'm just going to sneak up from behind whatever gravestone I'm hiding in and wait until he's just past me and then just swing it to the middle of his back.

Quinn: And it collides with his form. It's tough and rubbery as it hits. I don't know if you've ever struck a human with a blade before, but--

Susannah: Can't say I have.

Quinn: Well, this isn't what you think it would feel like.

Susannah: Uh-huh.

Quinn: It feels much more like what you would imagine striking a body that has experienced rigor mortis would feel like.

Susannah: Great.

Quinn: But you land a solid blow. The axe goes straight through his torso, and just this slight trickle of blood starts to come out, but also a bit of viscera starts to just hang. He turns to face you and looks mildly surprised and like a bit inconvenienced and says, [as Vladimir] *Well, that wasn't very nice. How did you lure me into a trap?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Hi, Vlad. Meet my friend Emil.*

Quinn: Emil jumps out from behind a tree trunk and swings the shovel. It just lands into Vlad's collarbone and just gets lodged there.

On a 7 to 9, you trade harm as established. So, as Vlad surveys the surroundings, he unlinks his arm from Aurelia and lashes out at you, Brandusa, for two harm.

Susannah: Okay.

Quinn: He seems a bit off kilter from Emil's blow, but it is nonetheless an extremely painful raking with sharp claws over your torso.

Susannah: I'm going to yell [as Brandusa] *Fire. Now.*

Quinn: You shout that, and Alexandra bursts out of the cottage. She's carrying a big cauldron that's just full of smoking coals and charcoal. She runs out. And what do you want her to do? What was the plan for her?

Susannah: My goal is to set him on fire, so that it's basically distracting at this point, because I want to try to get a bunch of hits in him, but I think it'll be easier if he's on fire.

Quinn: Okay. As you say that, Alexandra bursts forth from the cottage. She's carrying a black cauldron that's just filled with these coals. She's got big woolen mitts on to hold the handle, and she runs forward towards Vladimir. He sneers at the two of you, turns and looks at her and says, [as Vladimir] *You're running a little bit fast for carrying something so dangerous. Don't you think you should just set it down?* And she stops in her tracks and sets the cauldron down on the ground.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Hypnotizing bastard.*

Quinn: [as Vladimir] *You seem a bit cold. Maybe you should warm your hands.*

Susannah: Oh. I wouldn't let him keep talking. I definitely would not let him keep talking.

Quinn: What do you do to stop him?

Susannah: I'm going to swing my axe into his jaw and try to stop it from working.

Quinn: I think this is actually going to be a protect someone rather than a kick some ass, because you're trying to stop him from delivering these commands, which, as you are hearing the direction he's going, are almost certainly going to put your good friend in danger. So, go ahead and give me a roll to protect someone. And Brandusa, you have a special move for protect someone, right?

Susannah: Yeah. So, I have a move called let's get out of here. So, I can protect someone with charm instead of tough. Usually, I have to tell someone what to do. I think in this case, I'm just going to say, [as Brandusa] *Shut up, you hypnotizing bastard*, and just smack him in the face. Or, [Quinn [laughs] try to anyways.

Quinn: I imagine you're also shouting at Alexandra to not listen to him.

Susannah: Yeah, yeah. I'm just like, [as Brandusa] *Don't listen to him*, and smack.

Quinn: So, go ahead and give me a roll plus charm.

Susannah: [rolls dice] That will be a 10.

Quinn: So, on a 7 plus, you protect them okay, but you'll suffer some or all of the harm. On a 10 plus, you get to choose an extra effect. You suffer little harm. One harmless. All impending danger is now focused on you. You inflict harm on the enemy, or you hold the enemy back.

Susannah: Honestly, I think considering I'm trying to axe him in the face, that I inflict harm on the enemy makes the most sense in this case.

Quinn: I think that does make sense.

Susannah: I want to stop his jaw from working. [chuckles]

Quinn: Yeah. So, not only do you interrupt Vladimir's hypnotizing process, but you coldcock him with the axe in the head, and it splits his face open.

Susannah: Yeah.

Quinn: He just has a giant open wound on his face. I think you can see into his mouth.

Susannah: Great.

Quinn: As you do this, he whips back around. And this time, he does look angry. He does not look sardonic, or amused, or mildly inconvenienced. He looks mad.

He grabs the shovel that is still buried in his shoulder, and Emil has been trying to wrench it out, and he flips it and sends Emil flying end over end across the graveyard until he collides with a headstone. And then he, I think straight up punches you, like closed fist. And the force is unbelievable.

I think you have, in your career as an Olympic skier, had a yard sale several times. You've wiped out pretty bad, and this feels like that, but worse. You are sent flying backwards, going end over end, and you're going to take three harm.

Susannah: I am super unstable now.

Quinn: You are fighting Dracula.

Susannah: [laughs] I have no real other method of doing anything other than just trying to get up and beat the crap out of this guy. So, I'm going to get up and try to beat the crap out of this guy. Like, I have no special powers. I'm just a person. I'm a human being, and I am trying to murder Dracula.

Quinn: You are.

Susannah: Oh boy. [Quinn chuckles] I start to just get up.

Quinn: You see Vladimir Dragić walking towards you pretty casually. His face and body falling apart, and he starts speaking to you. I'm not going to be able to do the voice, but it doesn't sound right because his mouth is split open. So, listeners, imagine what that might sound like, because I can't split my own mouth open.

Susannah: [chuckles]

Quinn: But he starts speaking to you and says, [as Vladimir] *You know, I was having a pleasant afternoon before you and your friends decided to interfere. You have spirit, I'll give you that. But I think it's time you stopped fighting me and maybe took that axe to use.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.* I pull out the cross. Yeah, I'm going to pull out the cross.

Quinn: So, give me a roll plus cool. But take plus two for having your holy symbol.

Susannah: Okay. 10.

Quinn: All right.

Susannah: Exactly.

Quinn: That's good. That's the number you want.

Susannah: Yup.

Quinn: Which means that-

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Shut up.*

Quinn: -you feel your mind being clouded for a moment, but you grip the cross tightly and the feeling fades. But he's still speaking to you. You get the sense that he either can't tell or is not used to anyone resisting his commands. So, he's still standing over you, saying, [as Vladimir] *Yes, I think it is time that you took that axe and buried it in your friend's chest.*

Susannah: I sit there for a second catching my breath, and then I start to get up and I grab onto the axe and I stand up next to him. And I don't do anything and I start walking towards Emil. And then right as I'm past his line of sight, I turn around and I whack the axe into his neck.

Quinn: Okay. Give me a roll to kick some ass.

Susannah: Do I get any extras, because I have the holy symbol?

Quinn: The holy symbol won't help you in fighting.

Susannah: [crosstalk] zero. It sucks.

Quinn: I do think it would make sense to give you a plus one bonus for the element of surprise here, because you did lure him into a false sense of security. So, yeah, go ahead and take a plus one.

Susannah: All right. [rolls dice] Oh, I didn't need it. I rolled a 10 straight up.

Quinn: Hey. Oh, nice. On a 10 plus, you get to choose an extra effect. You gain the advantage. Take plus one forward or give plus one forward to another hunter. You inflict terrible harm, plus one harm. You suffer less harm, minus one harm. Or, you force them where you want them.

Susannah: Yeah, I think I'm going to have to suffer less harm, just because I don't know if this is enough to kill him. And if it's not enough to kill him, I have to suffer less harm. So, yeah, I'm going to suffer less harm.

Quinn: So, you catch Vladimir completely off guard. You land a solid blow right on his neck, and his head comes clean off. [Susannah gasps] And it goes rolling to the ground. Emil staggers to his feet, picks it up and just holds it away from the body.

As the body starts to fall, one of the arms reaches out towards you and rakes those talon-like claws over you. Again, it's a glancing blow, but you do take one harm. The body has not stopped moving. It has stumbled and fallen and is now in the process of standing back up.

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Emil, what do we do? What do we do?*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Burn it. Burn it, burn it.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Burn it? Fire.*

Quinn: Alexandra looks confused for a moment, and then--

Susannah: I'm just pointing at the body. [as Brandusa] *Fire. Fire, fire.* I'm just taking my axe and probably just trying to swing it at the body to keep it back.

Quinn: Emil's trying to figure out what to do. He clamps his hand over Vladimir's eyes, so that he can't see what's happening. The body immediately starts [Susannah chuckles] moving in a much more jerky fashion. You can hear Vlad's teeth churning as he's trying to bite Emil as he's holding onto him. You're fending off this body, and Alexandra runs forward. As you step out of the way, heaves this cauldron full of coals onto the body, and it almost immediately just starts to burn.

Susannah: I keep hacking it honestly. Once it's covered in fire, I just keep hacking it into pieces.

Quinn: The sun is setting and it's growing dark. You're standing over this burning body, hacking at it, and it begins to stop moving. Emil walks forward with a stern look on his face, and he's holding the head, and the motions of the teeth have slowed and stopped.

The three of you are just standing there, probably in shock as you look over the cinders. And then, you hear a faint whispering and you realize that Vlad's mouth is starting to move. He's whispering words. They're not Romanian. They're not a language that you recognize. Some of it sounds like Latin, some of it sounds like something else. But he's whispering these incantations, and they're getting faster and more fevered. And his mouth--

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Smash, smash, smash.*

Quinn: [chuckles]

Susannah: Keep going, though.

Quinn: Emil is holding this out like, [as Emil] *I don't know what to do with this.* Alexandra is looking on in utter shock and confusion. I think Emil takes out a small knife and starts stabbing the head, because he doesn't know what to do. But it doesn't stop these incantations, until Vladimir's mouth opens wide, and this gaseous white vapor bursts out, pauses for a moment to look at the three of you. You feel this baleful presence, and then it shoots up into the sky and disappears.

Susannah: I start to say something, and then I just collapse onto the ground, because I have two hit points, [Quinn chuckles] just clutching whatever body part of mine is super broken.

Quinn: Emil immediately runs forward and moves to provide some basic first aid and comfort. He's not doing great, but he's not nearly as bad as you. Alexandra is just in shock, but eventually, she comes to your aid. The three of you are just gathered around this burning body that was Vladimir. Alexandra looks at you and says, [as Alexandra] *Did we win?*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I don't know. I don't know what that last thing was.*

Quinn: Emil shakes his head and looks confused, says, [as Emil] *I don't know either. But if it's like a Moroi destroying the body even if the incorporeal form escapes, it will take months, if not years, for him to return to a corporeal form. If nothing else, we bought ourselves time and safety.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *Time. Time to make sure this doesn't happen again. Time to get better at this.*

Quinn: [as Emil] *Yes. I fear this may not be the last time.*

Susannah: [as Brandusa] *I can't feel my fingers.*

Quinn: [laughs] I think that's a good place to stop it-

Susannah: All right.

Quinn: -with the three of you comforting one another by the cinderling remains of Vladimir Dragić.

Susannah: Oh my God. My heart is beating so fast. [chuckles]

Quinn: That was fantastic. Susannah, thank you so much.

Susannah: That was awesome, dude.

Quinn: Do you want to remind folks one more time where they can find you and your work?

Susannah: Yeah, absolutely. So, like I said at the beginning, I am Susannah. I am the Keeper. So, I run the show over at the Thornvale podcast. You can find it by searching Thornvale. We have run a full whole season of Monster of the Week, and we have something called One Shot Mondays, where we run different systems.

We just finished a Honey Heist game that was hilarious. We have run Shadowrun, Deadlands Reloaded, and Masks. So, if you thought that I was a fun person to have a little guest on here, I am an even more fun keeper. So, you should definitely come check out the show or any of the other many, many shows that we have. We have a lot. They're really fun.

Quinn: Fun and absolutely terrifying. Go check out Thornvale. It is fantastic. Thank you, Susannah. And thank you all for listening.

Susannah: Thanks for having me.

Quinn: Stay spooky.

[Monster Hour theme]

Quinn: Agreed. I certainly want to savor these last few minutes of my life.

Susannah: I am not talking to you, Alexa.

Quinn: [laughs] 13 ways to fight Dracula. [Susannah laughs] Alexa, how do you kill a vampire?

Susannah: Alexa, how do you kill a vampire?

Alexa: Here's something I found on WikiHow. To kill a vampire in a work of fiction, have your character attack it with a holy object, [Quinn laughs] or something that's been blessed by a beast.

Susannah: Alexa, shut up. We're on the right track.

Quinn: Drive safe.

[laughter]

Susannah: Oh okay. All right.

Quinn: I'm going to keep that as an outtake at the end for it, for sure.

Susannah: You should.

[Monster Hour theme]

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]