

20Q

PEER'S QUARTERLY 20 QUESTIONS

with

SIR DIFFEREL VAN HELSING

SIR DIFFEREL ISOLDE CHURCHILL PENDRAGON VAN HELSING, 16th Baronetess of Denver and Viscountess Dunwich, is Director of the Caerleon Order of the Companions of St. George, the agency charged with protecting the Sovereign, Church, and People of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth from all paranormal threats. She is the direct descendent of Sir Abraham Van Helsing, GCVO, the conqueror of Dracula, and King Arthur Pendragon, and has inherited both the Master Vampire and the great sword Caliburn, better known as Excalibur. Born in 1976, she lost her mother, Gwendolyn Isolde Pendragon Lady Van Helsing, within a week after her birth, and her father, Sir Henry Arthur Richard Van Helsing, when she turned 12. She married The Right Honourable Victor Edward Plunkett, 26th Viscount Dunwich, in 2001, and they had a son, Henry Abraham Vlad Helsing-Plunkett, before Lord Dunwich was killed in 2004. Despite these hardships, Sir Differel has acquired numerous honours, including a Life Peerage as Baroness Denver, the George Cross, and being made a Lady Companion of the Garter.

She agreed to sit with us for 20 QUESTIONS, and beforehand gave us a tour of her ancestral manor, where we meet her most important associates: Aelfraed Walters, her butler and Chief of Staff; Mrs. Helena Widget, her housekeeper; Madam Phillipa Trumbo, her executive chef; Magdalene King, Manager; WO Giles Holt, Master-at-Arms; Sharona Turing, Chief Analyst; Dr. Thaddeus Carmichael, Chief Surgeon; and her best friends, Eile Chica and Sonne Hiver, known as Team Girl; as well as her son and her quasi-slave, Vlad Tepes Drakulya, popularly known as Count Dracula. The vampire insisted upon joining us, and we decided to reserve the 21st question for him.



portrait by Lon Ryden

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PEER'S QUARTERLY: Let's begin with the most obvious: why Sir, when Dame would be more appropriate?

SIR DIFFEREL: For the sake of politics. I started out as a Dame, after I inherited the baronetcy, but when Aunt Miranda

[Miranda Guinevere Baroness Pendragon] staged her coup and I killed her, I became Director by default. By tradition, the heads of all important government bureaus had been male aristocrats, and while I satisfied the latter condition, nothing could be done about the former. There was talk of putting me aside and naming a man as Director, but the implied threat that Vlad represented caused the Privy Council to hesitate, even though I stated that I would never use him for personal gain. Finally, Her Majesty interviewed

me and determined that I was capable of handling the responsibility. In deference to tradition, however, she used her Royal Prerogative to give me special dispensation to be titled Sir. The Council approved her decision and that, as they say, was that. Though I suppose, the fact that Vlad had called me Sir and Master from the moment I released him from his captivity probably had something to do with it. You see, he believed that, being as I was a worthy Master, I deserved a fitting title, and convention be damned.