



# THIRST

AN 8 x 60' THRILLER SERIES WRITTEN & CREATED BY PHIL FORD

# THIRST

is an intelligent slow-burn thriller in eight fast-paced episodes that examines the nature of evil and myth in the 21st Century.

In a global society more dependent on technology than ever before, humanity has shed its fears of a world shaped by superstition and religion. Science is the God that will save us from anything – a new myth exchanged for the old.

It takes a creature born of Dark Age legend, that has been a witness over centuries to the creeping blight of humanity on its world to recognize the looming extinction that it will bring on itself.

Meet oligarch Valentin Volkov, who is as mysterious as he is rich.

For a vampire that has survived lifetimes hidden in plain sight whilst feeding on humanity, he now stands at the apex of a powerful corporation safely beyond suspicion, but the fate of mortals is a harbinger of his own destruction. And Valentin Volkov has lived too long to die starved of human blood.







## SYNOPSIS

Billionaire Russian VALENTIN VOLKOV is both charismatic and enigmatic. Forever in the media crosshairs, he is paradoxically a mystery: A man who lives in full view and yet in the shadows.

His Silver Wolf Corporation, run from a sky-piercing spire in central London, has interests in everything from commerce to cutting-edge science research. A torchbearer for the green industrial revolution, it leads in research into the Aether Syndrome, a product of environmental pollution, that renders babies hyper-sensitive to airborne chemicals, made worse by sunlight.

The people deemed him the planet's environmental champion, referring to him as the Green Messiah. But Volkov is a man with a thirst for power in all forms, and he is absolutely ruthless in its pursuit.

When a business rival's wife has an affair with Volkov and disappears, police discover her dismembered body concealed in her husband's cellar. He screams all the way to prison that he's been set up by Volkov.

ELLIE STAFFORD covers the Old Bailey trial and becomes fascinated by Volkov and the wild claims of the accused. She investigates the lurid stories that orbit the oligarch: his connections to the Russian secret services and Moscow's underworld, the depraved orgies, the disappearance of enemies; the women; the men. And there's the double she discovers that occasionally stands in for Volkov and makes Ellie wonder just who or what he is scared of?

Ellie's ex-husband HAL STAFFORD is a journalist whose nose-diving career is resuscitated by his sensational coverage of a series of grisly murders. His story on the London Headhunter recaptures the days of Jack the Ripper. He's a prime pain in the arse for investigating officer DCI RUTH COTTLEY. When Ellie disappears, Hal and her lover, politician and war hero MICHAEL KING, follow her trail to a Siberian island, supposedly a refuge for Russia's grey wolf.

As Hal and Mike discover Ellie's fate, Volkov prowls London searching the night. And, in a Soho backstreet, all the pieces come together.





Volkov is a vampire. A man who has survived centuries both sustained and threatened by his thirst for human blood.

But over the ages, under many different names in many different countries, Volkov has learned how to stay hidden in plain sight. But the Headhunter is a vampire-slayer and will soon be coming for him. Volkov can't let that happen, especially now that he is so close to achieving a plan that has been centuries in the making.

Over hundreds of years Volkov has been a spectator to more than the rise of science and technology and the demise of superstition and religion. He witnessed the dawn of the industrial age and he has watched as the world began to die because of it and humanity's arrogant indifference.

Volkov has witnessed buffalo hunted to extinction, the Siberian snows recede, poisonous smogs that have choked cities, and countless acres of rainforests lost to agricultural greed. Images of that lost verdant world haunt his dreams. He can remember when the air didn't taste of lead. When a child's new life doesn't become a fight for survival from its first breath.



Volkov recognizes the futility of immortality in a dying world. He intends to save it and save humanity from itself. To save himself. But first he must again walk in sunlight. And, under cover of research into Aether Syndrome, that is almost within his grasp. As is a world where humanity can make real its oldest dream – to live forever. As vampires. Sustained by a bloodstock of humans bred like cattle.



# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

## VALENTIN VOLKOV

An attractive man apparently in his forties, Volkov is erudite and charismatic. Fabulously wealthy, Volkov lives in stylish luxury atop a London spire penthouse, seated above the headquarters of his Silver Wolf Corporation.

His passport identifies him as Russian, but that passport is a lie. Valentin Volkov is a vampire; a chameleon that has adapted to passing ages, their beliefs and fashions, philosophies and technologies, always in plain sight, yet at the same time, always in shadows.

He doesn't sleep in a coffin; and there is always someone to willingly share his bed. He has accrued phenomenal wealth over centuries and enjoys its privileges, from the art on his walls to the company of the glamorous and powerful. He drinks Veuve Clicquot and enjoys the finest dishes. But to survive he needs warm human blood. It is a thirst that can never be slaked. Like his appetite for power. It is that which has always defined and driven him.

## ELLIE STAFFORD

TV journalist. She and her husband were a well-known investigative team that broke up along with their marriage after their young daughter's death. Now Ellie is trying to rebuild her life with a solo career in front of the camera, and with a new lover. But she's haunted by memories of her daughter Lucy's cruel lingering death as cancer ravaged her small body. And whatever she might tell herself, and her new man, she's still not completely over her estranged husband who had found a remedy for his grief drowning in a lake of scotch.

## HAL STAFFORD

Hal's not a bad man, he's just not good at hiding his flaws. His life went to hell when his daughter died and Ellie left him because of his drinking. He still loves Ellie. Truth be told, he's always believed that Ellie was the better journalist. Certainly, the more principled. She was always the crusader; he was more of a skirmishing mercenary who fought dirty when he needed to. The Headhunter murders give him a reason to get up in the morning and not reach for the bottle.



## **MICHAEL KING**

Decorated war hero who traded his left eye in Afghanistan for a seat in the House of Commons. Immaculately groomed and dressed, even the eye-patch looks cool on him. Makes no bones about wanting the top job and a liberal desire to make Britain a better place. Built tough, with an easy sense of humour and the political skills to achieve his ambitions. Will he be prepared to sacrifice that blemish-free track-record in order to take on the fight against an immortal threat right out of a Dark Age myth?

## **PROFESSOR JASON HEMLOCK**

Put simply, he's a swaggering force of nature. A globe-travelling virologist with the rebellious spirit and energy of a man half his age. After many months of doubting his own mind, Hemlock is reborn in what ultimately becomes an urban battle with Volkov and his evolutionary plan for the human race. The vampire is a virus that he will hunt both with science and a blade.



## **EMMA COOKE**

Emma is a self-made woman who put herself through medical school inspired by her dead father's failed battle with his mental health. A psychologist with her own Harley Street practice and a reputation for pro bono work with professional workers suffering from PTSD. Compassionate and rational, she doesn't believe Hemlock saw monsters in Africa, but when her partner turns into a vampire, she is forced to reassess her world-view.

## **ALICE FISHER**

One-time actress turned environmental activist, she bears mental scars of her brutal kidnapping by criminals as she fought against illegal logging in the Brazilian rainforest. Yet after her escape, life moved her ever-closer towards Volkov's sexual magnetism and commitment to a new world. But Emma has been the only love of her life. And even as a vampire she still loves her.

## **DCI RUTH COTTLEY**

Always gets the weird cases. A middle-aged black woman and single parent in a racially unequal and testosterone-fuelled police service where everything is always a fight. She has faced-off with evil in interview rooms more than once, but Volkov confirms her belief in spiritual evil.

## **ISIS HENNESSEY**

Director of Silver Wolf's Hillingham science centre. She's a scientist before anything else. She's never had time for love or a family and regrets both. But now she's in love with Volkov. His physical magnetism is certainly a factor, but his position and remarkable intelligence have elevated him to a deity in her eyes. She doesn't know the truth of what he is – will it matter when she does?

# WRITER'S MANIFESTO

## VAMPIRES AND ME

Vampires have always haunted me. I was six years old the day I was attacked by one. My mom was the lollipop woman when I was at infants school, crossing kids safely across the road and in through the school gates. It meant that I was always first at school.

But one day I wasn't alone. Out of nowhere I was jumped by another kid with a mouth full of cheap plastic vampire teeth. I can still see them today. I screamed and ran back to Mom in tears. I admit, I was no Abraham van Helsing or Buffy.

As I got older (and hopefully braver) in school and after I was always fascinated by vampires in literature, film, and folklore. And looking back on that bright morning (when obviously none but a vampire with a deathwish would be out and about) I realized that was the day I was bitten. All the same, I think I turned out pretty well balanced. At least I never took to wearing a cloak or plastic teeth. Not sure how the kid that jumped me did.



But vampires have been a part of every culture around the world for centuries. The first was recorded in Sanskrit. They have always represented both primal fears and desires. Like *The Lost Boys*' tagline said in 1987, "Sleep all day. Party all night. Never Grow Old. Never die. It's fun to be a vampire."

In the 21st Century, of course, we have more to worry about than vampires and somehow it struck me that you might party all night and never grow old, but that came with a unique and superior perspective on how the world has changed over time.

*Thirst*'s Valentin Volkov has lived for centuries and can remember when the rain didn't taste of lead. No human can remember how sweet the air may have been before it carried the poisons of industry. In short, a vampire has immortality, but that means it can watch the world around it die. And as an apex predator with the intelligence to successfully hide itself through centuries from the beings on which it must feed, the vampire – a creature fixated on its own survival – understands that the spectre of human extinction in a world of total ecological collapse also means its own annihilation.

You've got to love the bloody irony of humanity's survival – like that of a dwindling breed of pig – depending on its most savage predator.

– Phil Ford, May 2021



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