

Sincerely, House Medeis  
A Hall of Blood and Mercy short story  
By: K. M. Shea

House Medeis *hated* Killian Drake.

It took a lot for a building—even a magic one—to harbor such passionate feelings against a mere being, but from the corners of its foundations to the support timbers in the rooms, House Medeis hated the Eminence of the Midwest, the upstart vampire Killian Drake.

The animosity started when Hazel Medeis lived in Drake Hall.

The Traitor, as House Medeis had labeled Mason, was stomping around fancying himself the Adept, but House Medeis knew better.

Even if Hazel Medeis hadn't Ascended, she was the Adept. And as she expanded her power base and worked on her magic, House Medeis was able to stabilize itself, at least enough so it could bear the Traitor sauntering around while it waited for the true Adept to return.

It was through the tiny, fragmented bond House Medeis had formed with Hazel that the House first became aware of *Killian Drake*. Ew.

But House Medeis was, above all else, *a house*. It didn't understand the finer points of Hazel's relationship with the vampire. It just knew the vampire got to have her when House Medeis didn't.

That was enough to forever put him in disgrace—at least, as far as the House was concerned.

So, when Killian visited the House and dared to *shoot* it, House Medeis gleefully swallowed him whole. And perhaps it should be confessed that it didn't just lock him in the basement closet, it proceeded to dump a trash bin, a dead shrub, and a stack of bricks on him as long as he was stuck there.

"Fine. I get it, you're angry you miserable chunk of magical wood." Killian narrowly avoided taking a brick to the face. "You'll protect her, that's all I wanted to confirm. Now let me out."

The House used a blip of magic to inspect its boundaries, found what it was looking for, and sucked it into the ground. A moment later, it deposited a thoroughly dirty and *angry* black cat on Killian.

Killian proceeded to growl in several old, archaic languages the House didn't understand.

The cat hissed and backed itself into a corner.

Killian ran a hand through his hair, pulling out a leaf the dead shrub had left behind, then crouched by the locked door and returned to picking it. "Hate me all you want—I don't care what a *house* thinks of me. But if she gets attacked while on Medeis land without me, and doesn't survive, I'll burn you down, salt the gardens, and turn the lot into a cemetery for everyone I kill in retribution."

The House was irritated now for different reasons—how *dare* the pasty vampire think Hazel, much less the House, could ever be defeated on Medeis land!

The House cast around the kitchen, trying to pinpoint the location of the knife block as Killian kept tinkering with the door.

"She loves you too much. I don't care that I'm sharing her—even if it's with a *house*, though it does dent my pride to think that I rate equal with a building—because her loyalty for

you sparks her independence. As a vampire, it's my nature to be possessive, but I can't be so with Hazel. She'd cut herself out of my life without remorse if I tried; she's meant for freedom."

The House stilled.

"I'm not going to steal her from you. She'd never let me, and though I wish I could, I won't." Killian stared at the door—the House recognized his expression as one of frustration, for it had seen the furrowed eyebrow look many times before. "Hazel is a wizard. She can do lots of wonderful and beautifully terrifying things because she's a wizard. And part of being a wizard is her connection to her House."

It occurred to the House it had never heard anyone refer to power—like that which Hazel wielded with her brutal fighting methods—as 'beautiful'. This made the House wonder just how likely was it that Hazel Medeis would find a suitable partner to share in the exploits of House Medeis that would not be in awe of her, or frightened by her lovely abilities?

"I like who she is, not who I could make her become," Killian continued, apparently content to rage passionately about his affection for the Adept as long as he was stuck. (*Boring.*)

But as little as the House wanted to admit it, it knew Killian was going to be a part of Hazel's life.

It hadn't increased in size on a whim.

It had grown a floor to house all the new wizards that would join House Medeis as a result of Hazel's policy changes. It had grown a brand-new *wing* to hold all the annoyingly silent, ghostly vampires Killian Drake was sure to bring.

Provided he didn't succeed in stealing her back and taking her off to his stupid Drake Hall.

Killian took advantage of the House's inaction and finally succeeded in picking the lock. He propped his dagger in the doorframe so the House couldn't slam it shut on him, then glanced at the hissing black cat.

"Are you going to take care of the animal?"

Sulking, the House opened up one of the basement storm windows.

The cat pricked its ears, then scrambled out of the corner. It hopped onto the washing machine and jumped through the open window, its tail puffed as it scrambled across the lawn, leaving the lot behind.

The House let Killian pass unmolested through the basement, though it considered swallowing the staircase so he couldn't get up—until it remembered he was a vampire which meant he didn't have the same physical limitations as a wizard. Another strike against him.

Killian paused at the base of the stairs. "I'll do everything I can to protect her."

The House creaked.

"She's going to be put in danger because of what I've done. I'm selfish enough that I don't want to do without her. But I'll pay whatever price is necessary to keep her safe."

...Perhaps it wasn't so bad that he didn't have physical limitations after all.

Still. The House didn't have to *like* him. So, on principal, the House weakened the wood of one of the stairs, so when the vampire stepped on it, it broke under his foot.

The pipes of the House gurgled in its amusement as Killian Drake released another string of heated words in various languages.

An uneasy understanding was reached between a vampire and a House that didn't like each other. Very well, it could manage that.

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It was finished.

The fiends that had attacked Hazel Medeis had been taken care of. She wasn't in danger anymore.

The celebration lasted three days. Vampires and wizards alike shifted through House Medeis, laughing in their joy. There was also a lot of hugging—mostly from the wizards squeezing each other and some deeply surprised but not-protesting vampires.

And when the dust settled, House Medius understood two things very clearly.

1. Hazel loved and had chosen Killian Drake.
2. As a vampire, Killian Drake could never be an Adept with her.

He wouldn't enter into the bond Hazel shared with the House, unlike Hazel's parents, Rand and Rose, and Rand's parents before them, and his grandparents before them.

Mason's brief takeover had frightened the House. But knowing that Hazel would be connected with someone who could never share in the comradery of a Wizard House, someone who couldn't understand the flow of magic...that made it terrified in a wholly different way.

Hazel was the first in generations to understand the true role of wizards. If she left House Medeis...

A month after the fiends were defeated, Hazel and Killian returned from a recent visit to Drake Hall.

The House listened with curiosity as Hazel shoed everyone—wizard and vampire—out. Not just out of the rooms or out of the house, but off the *property*.

Those who weren't at work hopped into cars and drove off, leaving Killian and Hazel as the only two beings remaining.

Uneasily, the House tracked their progress as the pair made their way to the top floor, then opened a closet door, and started climbing the ladder that led up to the tower that held the Beacon.

Hazel went first, pushing open the trap door and limberly pulling herself up. She smiled brightly as she stretched out her hand, tapping a gentle finger against the blue and gold tinted light of the Beacon.

Behind her, out popped Killian.

The House rattled its shutters and made the weather vane on one of the opposite turrets spin. Why was Hazel bringing the vampire up to such a special place?

Hazel smiled up at Killian as he draped an arm over her shoulder. She leaned against him, but kept her hand hovering just above the Beacon.

"House Medeis, we need to talk."

No.

No, no, no, no.

The House creaked its wooden floors, and the whole lot might have rumbled.

Its fears had been realized. Hazel was going to leave for the big, shiny vampire mansion. She wasn't going to live at House Medeis anymore. She was going to live there with *Killian Drake*. And—

"Since it seems Killian and I are going to be romantically involved," Hazel began.

"It *seems*?" Killian said.

"We want to let you know that we're dedicated to splitting our time between Drake Hall and House Medeis. There will be changes—I know you built the wing for the vampires, but now they won't just be guests. They'll be moving in."

Killian gestured with his free hand. “Permanent rooms for Medeis wizards will be made available at Drake Hall as well. Even though Hazel and I will rotate between Drake Hall and House Medeis, there will be vampires and wizards permanently stationed at both locations.”

Hazel gulped. “I hope you’ll work with us on this.” She let her fingers sink so she caressed the Beacon again. “It’s a lot of change...and things will be different. You’ll always be my home. But...do you think you could be *our* home?”

It took House Medeis several moments to understand exactly what Hazel and Killian were proposing.

They wanted to meld the two households.

They weren’t going to abandon one building for the other, nor were they going to adopt all the old traditions—like an Adept couple would.

For a moment, House Medeis didn’t know how to react. And then it felt the warm bloom of magic around the couple.

A wizard and vampire were together. Such a thing hadn’t been done in a long time.

And the magic—wild and free and *dying*—swirled around them, fresh, new, and bright.

House Medeis existed to protect the wizards living in it. And it knew the inevitable death of magic was the greatest threat they faced.

But maybe...*perhaps*...all hope wasn’t lost.

Hazel pressed herself closer to Killian and anxiously glanced up at her vampire.

Killian Drake kept his shoulders straight as he stared at the Beacon, waiting for the House’s reaction.

House Medeis tapped some of the fresh magic wafting off the pair, and got to work.

The front lawn was covered in snow, but with a little bit of magic, and some shuffling of the gardens, bright red tulips bloomed, popping out of the snow in a stark smear of color against the white ground. The tulips had been rearranged so they traced out a giant heart on the front lawn.

Hazel laughed and pressed her face into Killian’s chest as he hugged her.

And once again, from the stone of its foundations to the timbers of its roofs, House Medeis felt something. But this time, it wasn’t hatred. It was the knowledge that things would be different.

For starters, there was going to be a vampire in House Medeis. But perhaps that was for the best.

Because House Medeis *hated* Killian Drake...but it held no such dislike of Celestina Drake, Josh Drake, that funny red-haired vampire who complained loudest about the wizard hugs even though he seemed to get the most, or any of the other Drake vampires!

*The End*