

Excerpt from Shadows & Surrender

Lying to the cops wasn't generally something I advised, but as everything in my life was now being judged on a case-by-case basis, it had become more of a suggestion than a rule.

The man in the photo possessed that specific shade of forgettable light brown hair generic to many a white boy, and his facial features were unremarkable, but he was saved from obscurity by a purple birthmark shaped like a comet under one eye.

"I've never seen him before." I handed the photo back to Sergeant Margery Tremblay of the Mundane Police Force and the closest thing I had to a friend among cops. "Who is he?"

"Can you confirm your whereabouts two nights ago between the hours of midnight and 3AM?" Despite her flawless make-up and cute silver pixie cut, her eyes were steely and she asked the question with no trace of familiarity.

I leaned back in the plastic chair. "I was asleep."

"Alone?"

"Shocking, I know. My roommate was home."

"There's no one to confirm you didn't leave your place?" she said.

"No." I crossed my arms. "What's this about, Sergeant?"

She tapped the photo. "Yevgeny Petrov was shot dead."

My questions were legion, but I hurriedly crossed off the ones it would seem odd for me, a total stranger and a supposed Mundane, to ask. Questions such as: "Why are Mundane cops investigating this when Yevgeny is Nefesh?" Or, "How was he shot when he can turn his skin to rubber? A fact I knew because that's the form he'd been in when he attacked me, and I accidentally tried to rip his magic from his body. A girl never forgot her first time, dontcha know."

"My condolences," I said. "I'm sure his mother loved him. What does this have to do with me?"

Margery massaged her temples. "He's the one you allegedly attacked in that anonymous assault charge. When you were undercover as that old woman."

Yevgeny had never seen the real me, just the Lillian persona who I'd been illusioned to look like. However, when I went for his magic he'd recognized I was a Jezebel, enemy to the shadowy religious organization that he worked for called Chariot. Jezebels were a special breed.

“You think I found out and shot him? Bit of a leap, no? The assault complaint was bullshit. I don’t have magic, so what’s my motive in taking him out, Sergeant?” I said coldly.

Continuing my Mundane status on public record had its uses.

Margery made a sound of disgust. “All right. Quit it with the ‘Sergeant.’ I’m just doing due diligence. I don’t think you’re involved and you’re not being charged with anything, but you might know something. You’re sure his name doesn’t ring any bells?”

I shook my head. “Where was he found?”

“One of our squads took down a dogfighting ring. They found his body and called in the Nefesh homicide unit.”

Last time I’d seen him, Yevgeny was laying on the floor, a whimpering wreck believing that ants were swarming him, an illusion courtesy of my partner in crime that night. Guess Yevgeny’d gotten over the trauma enough to continue being a productive member of the criminal fringe.

“Yevgeny has magic?” I put the right amount of curiosity into my voice. “Is House Pacifica involved?”

“No. He’s registered with House Ontario. He was just here visiting his sister. She’s been notified already as next of kin.”

What a load of crap. Even if the sibling part was true, my investigations had revealed that he’d been in Vancouver working for Chariot, kidnapping marginalized teens in order to sever their magic. It was then sold at an auction where he’d also provided security.

“Are we done?” I said.

As I didn’t have anything more to add, Margery cut me loose with a sigh and instructions not to get in any more trouble until she went on vacation in the fall.

“You live for our encounters,” I said and left.

I legged it back to my car, Moriarty, and logged into the House Pacifica database. Look at that, Yevgeny did have a sister. Tatiana Petrov, a level five Weaver. Yikes. There weren’t a lot of people with level five magic in any specialty. What were the chances that she’d been the Weaver hired to set the security ward on House HQ, only to later null it and enable a German Chariot assassin to take out a person-of-interest?

There was one way to find out.