

Matthew Lee



Hunting
Rachel

An Erotic Horror Story

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Hunting Rachel

An Erotic Horror Story

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By Matthew Lee

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Chapter 1

The one-way mirror is my first form of interrogation in that little room. Every individual that lands at my feet is experiencing emotional distress. The mirror makes men, especially the guilty ones, angry. Guilty women usually primp and preen.

Emily Stockton neither got angry nor primped and preened. She'd barely noticed the mirror at all. I stood behind the glass, in the dark, studying her. I saw her furrowed brow and trembling fingers. She shifted on her seat often, her eyes darting around the small room like a little bird, landing everywhere. She'd been placed in the room and told I was delayed twenty minutes, so she was unaware she was being watched.

I saw the truth of her troubles in a million little ways. I already knew what she was about to tell me was true. I'd already decided if I could help her, I would.

She's frightened, the voice in my head said.

Yes, I answered. *But something more than frightened.*

I kept watching, moving beyond the body language, the gestures, the changing facial expressions. I focused on the woman.

Blonde. Pretty. Nice body.

Distractions, I told myself. *Nice, but distractions. Look deeper.*

I can read people. It's my gift. I understand what they think and feel, even when they do not. If I share what I've seen, most take offense. I have few friends in my private life. On the force, I have none.

I saw in Mrs. Stockton a tension, something hidden from herself, something she refused to face. I couldn't name it, yet, but with conversation, I might.

From what I see she's just afraid, the voice said again.

Yes, I agreed. *She is frightened, but something more than frightened.*

Emily Stockton rubbed her hands together for warmth, but she wasn't cold. The room where she sat was a comfortable seventy-two degrees.

She's anxious, I told the voice. But not merely from sitting in a police interrogation room. She's eager to begin her conversation with me but she wants to get it behind her. She has someplace to be. She wants my help, to get me started on something, but then she wants to get out of here and get back to something.

I sent my eyes around the black walls of my tiny observation room. I could never last more than ten minutes in this small space. I was sure the room was shrinking. My palms turned sweaty. A headache started behind my eyes.

Time to go, the voice warned.

Yup.

The walls aren't closing in, you know.

I know that, I said.

You aren't being buried alive.

I stopped, suddenly bathed in cold sweat.

I'd chased a bad man into a forest but his snares caught me. First I was beaten and then I was tortured. Only when he had no further use for me did he put me in that hole. He hated cops. Burying me alive was a delight for him. He tied my hands and ankles and rolled me in a large rug and put me in the back of his truck. He drove me deeper into the woods, to a cabin far from civilization. He shoved me out of the truck into a long box used to haul pipe and nailed the lid shut. I begged him to shoot me in the head. I begged him not to kill me this way. He just laughed. He did not gag me because he said he wanted to listen to my screams.

"I'll stay to hear them all," he'd said.

The dirt landing on the lid of that box was thunderous. I promised myself I wouldn't scream, I wouldn't give him the satisfaction, but there is no resisting terror like that. I screamed. I ranted. I raved. I felt so much panic and fear that, eventually, I passed out.

Passing out saved my life.

When I woke, I discovered a short piece of rebar from the bed of his truck had gotten stuck and rolled in the carpet with me. I used the jagged tip to saw my bonds and punch through the cedar lid. I pushed the falling dirt to my feet as I tunneled upward. I dug frantically, panicked, terrified.

I almost didn't make it.

No, I told the voice. The walls are not closing in. Not this time. My logical mind knows that but the rest of me still fears it.

The voice fell silent. He knew better than to challenge me in this regard. My nine hours in a box underground had given birth to him, and, occasionally, a few others, so there was little he could say about the event. I appreciated his concern. I appreciated all their concern. I was happy to have them. They'd talked me through a lot of difficult situations since that awful day.

My damaged psyche had thoughtfully pitched the main voice, the voice I heard most often, in the same tone and rhythm as my dead father. I figured we were good for each other and let him stick around. The other voices too: Miss Mapleberry, my favorite teacher from the sixth grade, and Janet Jaynes, my eighth-grade girlfriend, who would later drown in a lake at age seventeen. I don't know why the harrowing trauma I experienced created these three voices specifically.

I mentioned none of them to the psychologist they made me visit before I could return to active duty. That doctor had talked to me about paracusia and told me, given the severity of my trauma, that I should not be alarmed if "Auditory voice hallucinations" manifested. I told her I'd keep her posted.

The voices were always kind and helpful.

So what if I was technically crazy?

Chapter 2

I set the tape recorder near my notepad and smiled across the table. I took a pen from my shirt pocket and laid it on the pad. She watched every move I made, but they always do. The small interview room was intentionally boring: there were no distractions to draw her eye. The chairs were smooth stainless steel, the table the same.

"Mrs. Stockton," I said, formally.

"Please, Detective Almond," she replied. "Call me Emily."

"Emily. Call me Anders. Andy, if you prefer. Can I get you coffee? Water?"

"Water, yes."

She'd grown nervous, rubbing her knuckles and chewing inside a lip. Everyone that sat at this table was nervous. By the time they arrived at my desk, they'd been through other divisions of the police force. I get everything labeled somebody else's problem. When this desk was first established they tried calling it the Paranormal Division. That didn't work so well. Nobody took seriously the desk or the people, like me, that worked it. Now it falls under the catchall of Supplementary Investigations. I get the unexplained, the extraordinary, the strange and odd. I handle the items that would otherwise slip through the cracks.

I don't mind. I have no police ambitions. I'm not striving to make captain. I love mysteries. I love puzzles. I dig deep and discover if the victims are full of shit or if their stories have any merit. I send a summation report to my boss, Sergeant Banes. He decides if I take their case and how much time to give them.

I left Emily at the table to visit the break room, opening a fresh bottle of water and pouring into a red plastic cup. When I returned I discovered she'd removed her button-up sweater and hung it on the back of her chair. A simple gesture, but now her thin cotton top hugged the curves of her breasts

and I'd need to ignore them. She may have caught me glancing. I gave her the water, sat, and readied my pen.

"Go ahead," I said. "Tell me everything."

She took a sip.

"Fiji," she said.

"That's correct," I said. "I poured that from a bottle of Fiji Water."

"I can always tell the brand. My husband says it's my super power."

"Handy."

"Not really."

She took another sip.

"Why did they send me to you?" she asked. "Why not the department that handles kidnapping?"

I nodded.

"They heard your statement and deemed me best to investigate your claims."

"That translates to they suspect I'm crazy and you're good at detecting crazy."

I smiled reassuringly.

"Yes," I answered. "I am. But I'm good at detecting other things, too. Also, I have a soft spot for helping the hopeless and I'm an amazing shot and won't hesitate to put the bad guy down."

Her eyes flashed to mine, worried, checking to see if I joked. I didn't.

"It rarely comes to that," I finished.

She sipped her water and eased lower in the chair.

"All right," she exhaled.

I pushed the record button. She was about to start talking for real.

"Charly and I were downtown," she said.

"Charly's your husband?"

"Yes, sorry. We had dinner at The Palms and wanted to find a good spot to sit in the car and look out over the Sound. We like watching the big ships come in at night and the airplanes land. We drove around, working our way closer but unfortunately entering the seedy section of town by the wharfs. We figured that was okay because we planned on staying in the car. The air was too chilled to walk. Unfortunately, we got lost. I tried the maps on my phone but reception was bad and construction detours messed everything up. We were redirected so many times we had no idea where we were. We made so many wrong turns. Eventually he steered the car onto a dark and abandoned street that was more like an alleyway. I made a joke about how many scenes from horror movies start like this and we both laughed. The long street had one light so we aimed for it. It was a small neon sign for a bookstore of rare and hard-to-find manuscripts. We were intrigued so we parked, deciding to skip our view over the water."

She paused to take another sip.

"The moment you enter that shop you know something's off," she said.

"Off how?"

"Like, wrong. It's a vibration. The little hairs on the back of your neck stand up. They did on mine."

"From a bookstore?"

"Yes."

"Bookstores are usually welcoming."

"This one wasn't. The air was wrong. The walls felt wrong."

I skipped over asking how walls can feel wrong.

"Did you *see* anything to make you feel this way?" I asked.

"No, but I'm intuitive. There was nothing to see. They have a curtained entrance you pass through before entering the shop. There was an older man seated behind the counter at the register. There were rows and rows of bookcases, most behind glass. There were display cases for individual books. There were separate rooms off the main room for the rarest volumes."

"If it felt wrong, why didn't you leave?"

"Honestly, I do not know. I wish we had. I breathed that musty air and my body tingled. I felt drawn in, curious, intrigued, unable to resist."

I scribbled *Airborne intoxicant?* on my pad.

"We explored," she continued. "The old man never spoke, never even looked up. There were no other customers. We wandered the rows looking at everything. They had books wrapped in animal skin. They had books wrapped in human skin, which Charly thought were illegal. They had scrolls and clay tablets. Some of the items were thousands of dollars."

She took another sip. Her body was growing tense. She was headed for something.

"In one of the small rooms," she said. "They had human skin stretched on a plaque. I couldn't read the strange language but I got chills just looking at it. Charly said we should leave but I refused. I wanted to see more. The walls were draped with red cloth but I noticed one of the baseboards was a different shade of black. I pulled the curtain away from the wall and discovered a door. Charly told me not to open it but of course I did. I was feeling it now. I was full on Nancy Drew. I entered and my husband followed. There was a landing and then several flights of stairs down. At the bottom, there was a long hallway that opened into a vaulted area circled

with archways. The area had grown darker, with fewer and fewer lights, and beyond the arches was pitch black. Charly worried we were about to get lost but I charged straight ahead, picking an arch at random and using my phone to light the way. I still don't know what drove me. I felt compelled. We followed twists and turns and even took another flight of stairs down, maybe two, I'm not sure. I was just moving forward with complete disregard."

She sat up in her chair. Her expression tightened. Her full lips drew thin.

"Then I heard the growl," she rasped. "Charly did too. We slowed to a crawl, shining the light ahead. Soon we saw the bars of a cage down there in the dark. Charly stopped and begged me to stop too but I couldn't. I was breathing that musky air and had to keep going. In the harsh white light from my phone we saw human hands curled around the thick iron bars, hands with fingernails like yellow claws. I saw hairy forearms. Another step forward brought more light and I saw the outline of a man, a huge man, or maybe an animal, but more man than beast. He was naked but hairy. Another step and I saw his massive muscular chest and rippled stomach. I saw his penis hanging down and covered with veins. He moved closer to the bars and I saw he was a man but not a man, like a mix of human and other animals, maybe primate and donkey. His big eyes held intelligence. He grimaced at me but for him I must have been just a blinding white light. He had teeth like a wolf. He snuffed the air, catching my scent, and growled. Charly told me to step back but I couldn't. I was terrified but mesmerized. I felt irresistibly drawn to this creature. I started sweating."

She stopped talking. I'd seen this reaction many times. When someone arrives at a point where they're about to reveal something about themselves, usually something embarrassing, they hit a natural pause. She was finished talking if I didn't prompt her.

"Go on," I encouraged. "You're safe with me. Tell me everything. You never know what I need to hear. I want every detail. What were you feeling? What were you thinking? Try to put me in your shoes at that moment. I've solved a lot of cases by understanding what the victim felt."

She swallowed hard, drew a breath.

"I'm too ashamed to say."

"There's no judgment here," I said. "I've heard everything. Just tell the truth."

"Detective," she began, her voice sinking low. "I became aroused. How is that possible? I had my husband by my side. That horrible place was dark and scary. Arousal was the last thing I should be feeling, but I was. That dirty beast trapped in the dark called to me. He was just so *masculine*. I don't know why."

I thought she might cry but she held herself together.

"You're a good person," I suggested. "Perhaps you were drawn to him, your heart went out to him, because you felt the need to free him? Perhaps in that stressful situation you confused your feelings?"

"No," she said, looking at her hands and shaking her head. "I wish I could hide behind that convenient lie." She met my eyes. "I was drawn to him," she rasped. "I'm so ashamed. I never told my husband the truth, but I'm telling you. I need to tell someone. It's horrible. I'm not a good person, Detective. I'm an awful person, an awful wife." Her lip trembled. She was coming apart. "You must go rescue that man."

"Man?" I asked. "By your description I imagined him an animal."

"His eyes were aware," she pleaded. "There's a human man inside that beast. He's aware, he knows he's trapped. He knows I left him in that cage. He knows I left him in the dark all alone."

"You want me to find him."

"Yes. I tried. I told my husband I was going to the gym but I didn't. I tried to retrace our steps that night and find that bookstore but never did. That poor creature is still down there."

I sat my pen on the pad.

"I see why you landed at my desk," I said. "Improbable story. Zero evidence. No path back to the bookstore. No other police division would take you seriously."

"They think I'm crazy. Do you?"

"No," I said, shaking my head. "You experienced something. There might have been something in the air to heighten that experience, possibly even cause hallucinations, but you've got too much detail to have made everything up. I'll let my boss know I'll take your case. After that I'll start at the restaurant and check your story."

Her shoulders sagged. Her face softened.

"Thank you so much, Detective."

"I promise nothing except I will try."

Chapter 3

"I should go with you, Andy," my wife, Rachel, said. "You go poking around on your own, looking like a cop, nobody tells you anything. People stop talking and lawyer-up. We go together, like Emily and Charly did, and people talk to us. It's the difference between nosey cop and curious couple."

She's come on investigations with me several times. She's smart and resourceful and loves puzzles like me. I keep her away from the depraved and the wicked but a simple reconnaissance mission would be harmless. Not my idea of a fun date but why argue? Her insights help me succeed. I've got a great track record and she's a big part of that.

"All right," I said.

Her eyes turned soft.

"You're tired," she said.

"Long hours. Poor sleep."

"Have the voices been bothering you lately?" she asked.

I may not have told the psychologist but I damn well told my wife. She was understanding and supportive.

"Not bad," I said. "I've got them under control."

She kissed my forehead.

"Let's get in the car," she said.

After my interview with Mrs. Stockton, I'd used the police database to check on detours slated for the night they went out, starting at The Palms restaurant. I sketched a map and added details as I learned them until I had a fairly good idea of the route they'd taken. Without the city database, there was no way to know how traffic diversions had changed since that night. Emily would never have found the place. As it was, I narrowed the search down to six square city blocks.

I'd submitted what I found to my boss and he surprised me by squashing the investigation. He said I had too little to go on, the story was too far-fetched, and I'd waste taxpayer money. I let him know I believed Mrs. Stockton, I was intrigued, and I would continue on my own time. He tried to talk me out of it. When he realized I was resolute he said fine, as long as I used no department resources. Rachel and I had ventured out, combing the streets and back alleyways, hunting for any clue. Tonight was our third such effort and she was frustrated.

"This is the job, Honey," I said. "We're lucky Emily remembered so much about where they started. I've spent weeks on a job just trying to find a house, and don't even talk to me about stakeouts. That's boredom taken to another level."

I turned the steering wheel, aiming the Buick down a narrow side street.

"What's that?" Rachel asked, pointing out the windshield.

Purple and red glowed from a small neon sign.

Old Fellow's Books, the letters read.

"Has to be it," I said. "Right?"

She nodded, excitement rising behind her eyes. I parked half a block away and we went over our plan again. Rachel was nervous as we talked, rolling her wedding ring around with a thumb. We'd use the same cover as Charly and Emily that night: just a happily married couple walking off dinner and randomly stumbling across the place. We'd rubber-neck like tourists.

I held the door and Rachel entered. We'd dressed to match our cover story: a couple walking off dinner, and I had on black slacks and a purple long-sleeved shirt. Rachel wore a flattering skirt and top combo, greens and whites, and low pumps. Sexy, but not too much skin showing. She'd curled her hair.

The foyer matched Emily's description, as did the old guy behind the counter. We wandered aimlessly but always moving towards the small rooms in back.

"Some of this stuff is crazy," Rachel said, gazing into a display case. "Teeth, fangs, fingernails, skin: they use pieces of anything or anyone to sell a book."

"I'm sure some is illegal. Maybe I should shut the place down once we finish."

I wasn't convinced the half-man creature Emily found was real, and I had no evidence the creature was connected to this place. Both were creepy, yes, but the tunnels below could run anywhere and everywhere. I'd learned a lot in my years on the force and one thing was always true: reality never matched memory. I know Emily believed her story was true but I was doubtful about the details. Victims often describe their assailants as monsters, large and terrifying. Once I arrest them they become mere men again. Fear and imagination always amplify.

The first two rooms we checked had display cases in the center but no hidden door. The third had a discolored baseboard just like Emily described.

I moved the curtain and found the secret entrance. Rachel got so excited.

"We did it!" she hissed, excited but keeping her voice low.

"We still have a lot to do," I cautioned. "Stay sharp and focused."

She got serious. I tested the knob, found it unlocked.

"Let's go," I whispered.

"Hang on."

She removed her heels and pulled sneakers from her purse. A quick change and she was ready to go.

"Okay," she announced.

"Now you look like a cheerleader," I teased.

"I'll take that as a compliment."

We kissed.

I took the stairs to the bottom and found the long hallway, but I spotted faint doors along the length, doors Emily had not mentioned. Also, this hallway curved slightly. Had we gotten it wrong? Was this a different hidden door? I forged ahead. Process of elimination was my only path forward now.

In no time, we were lost. We wandered systematically, counting doors and archways, trying to form a map in our heads. We debated routes, tried marking the walls, tore off pieces of a tissue and dropped them behind us. For now, we were in combined basements of the buildings on the street above. The construction varied, some of it antique, some newer. The corridors and rooms were mostly clean and dry. That changed the longer we wandered. Water seeped in. Mushrooms sprouted. Moss clung to walls. Natural granite appeared. Sharp and jagged basalt too.

"All this beneath our feet all this time," Rachel said, amazed. "I can't believe it. I see tubes formed by nature connected to tunnels carved by men."

Some are crude, like they were dug out long ago, but some are smooth, like more modern tools made them. I see mining tunnels and subway tunnels and tunnels carved by saltwater. It's fantastic. Did you know any of this existed below the city?"

"I had no idea. Not like this. I knew about forgotten subway tubes and rail lines to carry coal to the port but this is far more than I'd ever heard of."

We continued wandering, sometimes entering areas we'd already mapped.

At last we stumbled upon a door we'd never seen. It was different from other old doors down here, beams of heavy wood tightly banded with iron and etched with weird symbols. A thin strip of red glowed at the bottom.

"This leads to something new," I said, trying the handle.

"Thank God. We were starting to walk in circles."

I opened the door and we stepped through.

The room was red brick arched in a dome. Another door, like the first, stood on the far side. Large symbols, tall as me, had been crudely painted on the walls in black. Lines ran from the symbols to crisscross the floor and attach to a different symbol across the room. Where the lines intersected, strange clay and wax figurines sat. Their faces, each different, looked human, their bodies misshapen, with stunted arms and legs. Every statue was male and had a penis and testicles attached which looked to be made of something other than clay or wax. I knelt to examine one closely and quickly recoiled, revulsion turning my stomach.

"What's wrong?" Rachel asked.

I tried to swallow in a dry throat.

"The figurines are fake little men but the cock and balls are real."

"What do you mean?"

"The penis and testicles are from real men," I rasped. "They were cut off and stitched to the wax with black thread. Someone is removing genitalia from living men and affixing them to these statues."

Rachel couldn't believe my words. She knelt, bringing her face close, using the light from her phone to get a good look. She carefully touched a plump head, making the penis wag.

"Why?" she asked. "I hope the men were dead first."

I slowly shook my head.

"I know the difference between post and antemortem wounds," I said. "The edges of the skin is obviously different. These were taken while the man was alive."

Rachel stood.

"That's— That's horrible," she murmured.

We sent our eyes crawling each unique sculpture. The genitalia had been removed following the curve of the man's body, an oval incision starting at the top, just above the penis, then curving around the base and then under to just behind the scrotum, then up the other side, curving around the base again to the top. The work had been done with something incredibly sharp, like a scalpel. I felt sick to my stomach.

"What—?" Rachel mumbled, stunned. "Who would—?"

"I don't know. Maybe they come from a sex-reassignment hospital but even so, this is illegal storage and display."

I was eager to leave the room. The display was a record of astonishing pain. I could only imagine they'd been removed forcibly, without consent. I saw men fighting, battling ferociously to keep their bodies intact, terror growing as they found themselves losing and their fate looming.

"Forty-eight," Rachel said. "There are forty-eight of them, no two the same. The statues sit only where the lines intersect but there are intersections

without a statue."

"Room to add more," I muttered.

"Room to add more."

I followed the curving wall to the other door. I listened and then opened it, leading us out of this nightmare and into a series of rough tunnels. Some looked like modified caves, carved and linked to make tunnels, hundreds of years old. Perhaps the original Native Americans in the area had created them. Twice we found stairs down and took them. We kept moving until our travels took us to a vaulted area with many archways leading out. I stopped.

"Emily was here," I whispered. "She described this place exactly. We got here using a different route but I'm sure she was here. She found the trapped creature soon after."

"What direction did she go?"

"I'm not sure. Let me try to recall what she said."

I concentrated. I'd listened to the recording I made that day several times and now tried to replay it in my head. I remembered her body language, her gestures, her mouth moving. She said she charged straight ahead, picking an archway at random. Most likely she led her husband in a straight line away from the direction she'd just come, but which archway had she entered with? I had no way of knowing.

"Nope," I admitted. "I don't know where she went from here. We can guess. It was one of seven. We know it wasn't the tunnel we just exited from so it must be one of the others."

Rachel chewed on that a minute.

"Let's search the ground for clues," she said. "Maybe she or Charly scuffed a shoe or kicked some moss or something. I'd bet nobody's been down here since them."

"Good idea."

Great idea. We found some trampled fungus near one of the openings.

"As good as any," she said.

I dimmed our phone light and led the way.

"Smells musty," Rachel said, after a minute. "Not a bad smell. Kind of interesting. I like breathing it. Makes me tingle. Do you smell it?"

"No."

She drew air through her nose and shivered. We crept forward. The way forward beyond the reach of my phone lamp was pitch black. Long minutes ticked off. I grew nervous.

"Maybe we should head back," I suggested.

"No," came her quick answer. "We go on."

I searched her face in the dim light. Sweat dotted her upper lip. She breathed in through her nose and out through her mouth. Her eyes seemed unfocused, or focused on something unseen. She licked her lips.

"We go on," she insisted.

I searched her face, noting signs of arousal, which made no sense. I had to be reading her wrong. We continued. In another hundred feet or so, I saw the thick iron bars. I heard nothing. I saw no movement.

"We found it," I muttered, frightened.

I realized, to my horror, I'd never considered the creature could be outside the cage. I assumed we'd find him just like she had. I had my service firearm and a pair of cuffs but little else. How monumentally stupid. Rachel leaned on me, staring into the dark. I lifted my phone and she saw the lattice of bars.

A soft growl sounded ahead, but not from the cage. I lifted my nine-millimeter from the holster but kept it pointed at the ground.

"We need to go back," I said, panic rising. "The creature may have gotten out."

"No," Rachel exhaled. She filled her lungs, breathing deeply through her nose, as if she smelled fresh baked chocolate-chip cookies. "We're close."

I heard a scuff to my right and swung the light that way. Nothing. I swung the light back at the bars.

Before me stood a creature plucked from a nightmare. Stooped, but still a foot taller than me, hairy, but in the ways a human man is hairy: head, face, chest, arms. He matched Emily's description but the eyes were far more intelligent than she'd described. My mind took a snapshot of his broad, muscular chest, his rippled hairy stomach, his pendulous weighty penis, and hairy, muscular thighs, all with no iron bars to separate us, no steel barrier to keep us safe.

He knocked the phone from my hand with blinding speed. I thanked God it landed upward with the light shining or I would have been plunged into pitch black. As it was, the phone slid away, leaving me in dim light.

The creature had no such restriction. A claw grabbed my wrist and I dropped my gun. Another grabbed the front of my sweatshirt and hurled me forward. I turned as I landed, witnessing the beast scoop Rachel into his thick arms and vanish, running with shocking speed into a nearby tunnel. I screamed at him to stop but he ignored me, carrying Rachel as if she weighed nothing. Her terrified face burned into my mind. I'll never forget the sight.

I scrambled for the light and my gun and then ran after him, haunted by one absolute truth: that creature was once a human man. That creature may still be a human man.

Go get her! the dad voice in my head insisted.

No shit, I shot back.

Chapter 4

Words cannot convey the absolute terror I felt, the helpless horror. I tried to follow but too many tunnels made my choices impossible. I heard claws skittering along stone but the sounds bounced around, coming from several directions. I searched and searched and searched, hour after hour. At last despair drained me. I was too distraught to weep. I collapsed against a wall and turned off my light to save the battery.

What now? my father asked.

I don't know.

I had no plan. In my panic, I'd lost my way. I had no idea where I was. I felt so stupid. I'd let my guard down, not taken the mission seriously enough, and in one instant everything had gone terribly wrong.

I needed help and for that I needed to get out of this place. Alone and in the dark, I leaned my head against the wall. Exhaustion called to me. I felt drained. The blackness pressed and my old claustrophobic fears rose, fears of the grave closing in. I closed my eyes.

Anyone there? I asked. *Help.*

Don't be afraid, Miss Mapleberry said. *You're a smart boy. Keep your wits and you'll get yourself and Rachel out of this mess.*

Her words comforted me. I rarely had lunch money at school but Miss Mapleberry made sure I always ate. She'd talked to me about the books I was reading. I was pleased I'd created her for an invisible friend. She brought a lot of comfort. My dad made sense too. Why I'd invented Janet was a mystery.

I awoke with a start.

"Sleep?" I muttered. "Are you fucking kidding me?"

I was filled with disbelief. How had I slept? With Rachel lost in the labyrinth? What kind of man was I? I berated myself, gathering my few items.

I listened closely for any clue, any hint of a best direction, and was surprised to hear a soft shuffling to my right. I turned on the light and headed that way, discovering a tunnel. A ramp took me higher for a short distance and then I approached a ledge which opened into a large open area below. I held my light over the edge.

What I saw staggered me. What I saw ripped a scream from my throat.

My nude wife was on her back with the creature between her legs. Her clothing lay strewn across the floor. She had her legs wrapped around the creature's waist while her hands squeezed his hairy biceps. In the first instant I thought she fought him off, struggling to get free, but then I recognized the movement of their bodies, I saw how her hips rose in time with his. She gazed unafraid into fearsome eyes.

A thunderbolt blasted my mind! This was impossible. I could not grasp what I saw, could not believe it. My wife shared a rhythm with the brute. She worked her body hard to drive him deeper, striving to capture every thick veiny inch. She saw my glaring white light from above but she did not care. She had eyes only for her fiendish lover.

Save her! the fatherly voice bellowed.

My mind lurched. This was an unbearable sight. Rachel slammed her hips against his, impaling herself over and over and over. My mind staggered and stumbled, tumbled down a dark hole in the ground. How could this have come to be? How long had I been out? How could things have changed so much?

I looked again for signs the act was forced on her but witnessed only the crushing truth: Rachel fucked the beast with as much fervor as he fucked her, maybe more. She fucked the man-beast like at last she'd found the sex she'd craved all her life.

I raised my gun and sighted down the barrel but their enthusiastic mating meant any shot fired risked hitting Rachel. I lowered my firearm and watched, horrified by the sight but utterly unable to look away. The beast

offered no tenderness, no intimacy. They never kissed, never gently caressed. This was desperate rutting, urgent mating.

With astonishing strength, like she weighted no more than a loaf of bread, he lifted and turned her, faced her away, placed her on all fours. His hard and vein-latticed cock speared her cunt from behind, forcing a loud and heart-felt moan from her throat. He grabbed her ass with both claws and sawed in and out, grunting, growling. Rachel tossed her head, lost in blinding pleasure, almost sobbing. He bit her shoulder, hard enough to leave a half-circle of red dots.

Rachel arched her back and orgasmed on his thrusting meat, her throaty cries of pleasure echoing around the stonework.

My mind was blasted from sanity. I almost dropped my phone from trembling fingers. He raked scarlet trails down her smooth back and Rachel, moaning, lifted her torso, hugged herself, groaned as his cock pumped like a thick piston in her tight hole. She shook her head as if disbelieving what happened to her, disbelieving the sensations washing over her. Her body tensed, locked down, every muscle clenched.

She cried out again as his savage cock tore another climax from her.

He snarled and wrapped her in his hairy, muscular arms, thrusting upward faster and harder. His grunts turned into animal snorting, like a bull, and then he bellowed, convulsed, muscles taut and hips jerking spastically as he blasted sperm into her.

"All of it!" Rachel gasped, meeting his thrusts with her own. "Give me everything."

The beast howled.

The floor was too far to jump. I'd break both legs, destroy my knees. I could do nothing to intervene. I shouted at them to stop but it was lost to echoes, mixing with their loud cries of passion. I watched as the beast inseminated my wife. Rachel shoved her ass at him, driving his cock deeper, planting his seed in her womb.

They collapsed together, bodies connected, his thick cock stuffed deep. I slumped, distraught, defeated. I'd been powerless to save her, to stop him and protect her. My wife wiggled against him, nestling herself under his strong hairy arms. They lay still. I had a better shot now that they'd stopped moving but when I raised my gun, my hand trembled too much. I waited and watched. I studied the pit and the tunnels which led to it and determined I might have a path down to them. I could rescue my wife. I got up and got moving.

I expected I'd find my way down to her and I did, or, rather, I found their bed of straw. They'd already left. I resumed my search but before I found them again, I found footprints in the moss that led to a door set into the wall. Beyond, metal stairs climbed a shaft with sunlight at the top. I'd discovered a way out. I had to choose: continue to wander aimlessly and hope to stumble across the beast and my wife, or go home, gather items I'd need to find her and return. That meant leaving Rachel with the monster in the meantime. I shuddered. I'd seen the creature's strength and vitality. I'd witnessed the lust, their rampant animal desire. Every minute I was gone was a minute he could mate with her again.

I've never faced a harder decision.

I opened the door and headed for home. Better to return prepared than find her now and lose her to him again because I couldn't keep her. I knew she was safe, safe from harm anyway. I'd seen what he wanted from her.

I found another door at the top of the shaft. I opened it and discovered a small room. I stepped in, closing the door behind me, and learned from this side the hidden door looked like shelves of canned goods. I stepped into a small and dingy office: wooden desk, single chair, computer, and several bookcases. I swung the door closed behind me. Another door led out from here and I heard human activity beyond, restaurant sounds.

My first thought was to speed through this office and find help, to call my station and bring a squad of guys to comb the place, but I wasn't supposed to be here. My sergeant had waved me off this case. I might get another detective to join me, maybe two, but this sprawling warren needed an army.

There were simply too many places to hide. I'd need a lot of help to clear this maze.

I would clear the maze later. Right now, my objective, my only objective, was rescuing Rachel. I'd forego the time needed to convince my superior and then requisition men and equipment. I'd skip the long explanation of what I'd found down here and the time needed to convince them they should care.

I'd hunt Rachel on my own.

The computer monitor on the desk displayed a three-dimensional map which seemed to match the tunnels below. I snapped a picture. A thick, leather-bound and ancient looking book sat on the desk and I took it. I heard dishes crash outside the door and determined that path led to people. I'd be seen. I might be captured. I decided the better route out of this place was back through the tunnels. Now I had a map. Now I had a plan. I swung the fake shelves aside and descended the metal stairs.

At the bottom, I noticed a tiny red dot marked this location. Did the other red dots scattered across the map mean exits too? I followed the path to find out, aiming for the closest exit: hand holes cut into the rock. I climbed, lifting a metal grate at the top and emerging from a storm drain into the faint glow of dawn. Graffiti dotted the concrete walls. I had cell reception again and found where I'd parked our car, driving home to gather all I'd need.

Chapter 5

I flew through my garage. I gathered weapons and ammo, night vision goggles, rope, gloves, stun grenades, and a handful of other items, anything I thought would prove useful, which I stuffed into my backpack. Before I left the house, I grabbed a notepad and sketched a map from the photo I'd taken and my experiences down there. Despite all my wanderings beneath the surface, I'd covered only a fifth of what lay beneath the city. The map showed that most of the sprawling network lay deeper than Rachel and I

had explored. I saw natural tunnels which connected to the Sound. That meant I'd eventually encounter seawater.

I returned to my storm drain. I locked the car and took one last look at sunlight filling the sky. It was a beautiful day. A light breeze carried the scent of the ocean.

I turned my back, leaving the sane world, the mundane and pedestrian world behind. I carefully lowered myself and began the long climb down. By the time I reached the bottom, the sunlight was gone. I switched to night vision.

The map changed everything. I cannot describe the sense of feeling lost in the dark, water dripping, slick moss coating the floor, night creatures scurrying about, but expecting a connecting tunnel ahead and then finding what you expected and knowing you weren't lost at all. I could navigate. I could make educated guesses about where one tunnel might lead.

I got systematic, clearing an area and then moving to the next. I broke the map into chunks in my head. I worked quickly and efficiently, hours after hour, always working deeper, farther underground. My sergeant would have been proud of me. I never lost track of what I hunted. Rachel was down here, somewhere, under the control of that monster. I had no idea why she'd fucked him like that but right now I didn't care. I needed her back. We'd sort the truth later.

Soon I heard strange sounds ahead. I paused, trying to decipher. Someone or something ate dripping ice cream from a wooden spoon. I was sure I was wrong but that's what it sounded like. I peeked around the corner. Air left my lungs in a whoosh.

She was the most beautiful female I'd ever seen, even in the greenish glow of night vision. She'd heard me and raised her head, staring in the darkness at my exact location. She was young and gorgeous, with pale skin and long dark hair. She wore remnants of old clothing draped around her body, leaving her almost naked. Large dark eyes fixed me with a stare.

At her knees she held a homeless man, based on his attire and hygiene, and she'd been gulping his life's blood from a wound in his throat, based on the precious fluid flowing down his neck. His left foot twitched.

The man groaned, revealing he yet lived. She stood tall and let him tumble to the filthy floor. She smiled at me and my heart stopped pumping. My body filled with gratitude. All my life I'd wanted her to smile at me and not known it. Now that she was, I wanted that grin to last forever. I wanted her to always want to smile at me.

I could not look away. I felt her mind travel the distance between us and enter mine, searching, examining. I was powerless, held captive by some spell. She rummaged in my head, tasting my memories while I stood transfixed, my eyes gliding over her fantastic body and stunning face. Even when she placed her bare foot on the homeless man's neck and leaned, cutting off his air until he died, I did nothing but stand and gawk. I wanted her. I forgot everything else in this world but wanting her.

Her smile broadened and my penis jumped.

"You can live," she purred.

She turned and strode into a nearby tunnel, vanishing as if she'd never existed. I remained frozen for several heartbeats, returning to myself slowly. I then hurried to kneel beside the homeless man, removing my glove to check for a pulse.

I was too late.

I berated myself for my delay. I'd remained frozen as she killed this man. I promised myself to act when I encountered her again, and something told me I'd encounter her again. She was perfectly at ease in this foul and dank place, unconcerned with becoming lost. What was a girl her age doing down here at all?

I resumed the hunt for Rachel.

An hour of twisting tunnels and dark passages and I was no closer to finding a clue. I'd discovered a body, male, young, dead for months, with a throat torn away and a can of spray paint still in hand. Author, no doubt, of the graffiti far above us.

I'd frightened countless rats and sent scores of bats flying. I'd slipped in the muck, twice, and stopped to eat. Many levels above, the sun covered half the Earth with warmth and radiant light. Down here I trudged through filth and sludge and stench.

The adrenaline of the hunt had drained away. The urgent need to rescue my wife had softened as no hint or sign presented itself. She could be miles away by now. I might be searching in the wrong place. I resisted feeling discouraged but some seeped in anyway. I closed my eyes for a moment, exhausted physically and mentally, and allowed myself a quick catnap.

I opened them to the sound of someone groaning in pain, followed by a woman moaning in pleasure. The dried mud on my boots said I'd been out a while. I quickly packed my gear and searched for the source of the sound, discovering a vent overhead. I checked the map and connected a path I thought best to arrive one level up. I got moving. I climbed some steps and jogged a while and then the tunnel ahead opened into a large area. I was about to enter when I heard another groan and then voices speaking in hushed tones. I slowed, creeping forward until I could see around the corner.

Electricity lit several bare bulbs hanging. Equipment, some medical, some woodshop, sat along the walls. A workbench, holding two pistols, separated a blood transfusion machine and a lathe. Chains hung from the ceiling.

Emily had found her way back after all, and, guessing from her description of him, she'd brought her husband Charly along too.

At the moment, things went poorly for Charly. He hung from the ceiling by his wrists, toes inches off the floor. He was gagged and cuffed and stripped. Shackles and leather cuffs held his ankles.

Two men in dark red latex aprons looked on.

One held an empty syringe.

One held a scalpel.

Emily was naked too. She was on a bare mattress in the corner, fucking the beast. Charly was forced to watch. She was ravenous for sex, sweating, spreading her legs wide and grabbing that large phallus with both hands, pulling the monster forward and into her, moaning, arching her back and clawing at his hairy ass, desperate to pull him deeper, as deep as his cock would go. She rocked her hips, working her sopping pussy up and down the length as much as she could. She whined. She whimpered. She moaned with ecstatic delight, feeling those bulky inches moving in her.

Charly's eyes bulged. His face was red. Veins bulged along his neck. He was clearly terrified and yet, despite the nightmare sight of his wife mating with the creature, his penis began to fill and rise. He struggled to rid himself of his growing erection, throwing his legs, kicking his manacled ankles, clawing at the chains around his wrists. Nothing worked. His penis lifted, head flaring.

It was at this moment I noticed a figurine on the bench behind the two men, a clay and wax figurine like the ones I'd seen before, but this one lacked a penis.

I understood in an instant: these men would wait for Charly to grow fully erect, using the depraved sight of his beloved wife fucking to do it, and then they would surgically remove his cock and balls and attach them to the small statue. Charly's desperate flailing and terrified expression told me he understood this too.

I drew my Smith and Wesson. Two quick shots would put the apron men down, but what then would the beast do to Emily? Panicked animals lash out. Charly stared and stared at the creature's cock plunging repeatedly into his wife. Like me, he was unable to look away. If I shot the creature, what would the men do to Charly? Or me? They had guns close.

For the first time, I considered my own safety. I must survive to rescue Rachel. If I was imprisoned or killed she would die down here. If they

caught me they'd removed my cock and balls along with Charly's. We'd hang side by side and watch as first one of us and then the other met that horrible fate.

I was paralyzed with indecision.

Charly wailed around his gag. Emily groaned from deep in her chest as a satisfying orgasm washed over her. The men stood by, stoic, unmoved, watching until Charly's penis was so hard he oozed a drop of precum. I suspected the empty syringe once held a drug to force him erect, some potent sildenafil citrate derivative that ignored the horror in his mind to focus solely on the sight of sex. The visual stimulation centers in his mind, like all men, saw lusty fucking and responded. No matter that it was his wife beneath that thrusting monster. Hard cock and wet pussy was all his brain saw now.

The man lifted the scalpel. Charly kicked and squirmed, his erection flipping precum around like spider webs. The man with the syringe cranked the chains and Charly was pulled taut, stretched like a rubber band and rendered immobile. Scalpel man stepped closer.

I had to try *something*.

I holstered my gun. I spun the backpack around and grabbed two grenades: one smoke, one stun. I yanked the pins and rolled both. A flash and a bang brought shouts from the men and a howl from the beast. Clouds billowed. Emily continued to moan, oblivious. I charged into the smoke, keeping then men fixed in my mind's eye, and felt a satisfying crunch when I slammed into both, sending them spinning away. I grabbed Charly around the hips and lifted, hissing for him to slip his wrists off the hook, which he did. I set his feet down and unhooked his ankles, then carried him like a bride over the threshold and out of that room. I heard the men shouting at each other, searching for their pistols. I heard the monster grunting and Emily moaning as they continued to fuck despite the chaos.

Charly is a skinny guy but even so I made only a few turns before my arms gave out. I sat him on the hard ground and cut through the leather cuffs around ankle and wrist. I left the gag which he quickly removed.

"Oh my dear God," he whined. "Thank you so much. Those men are crazy."

"Those men are still after us," I snapped. "Keep your mouth shut."

Freed and able to run, I led him through several more turns. He was naked and still erect and looked absurd flying through a dungeon like this. After we put some distance between us and the two men, I stopped to get our bearings.

"We have to go back for Emily," he rasped.

I shook my head.

"I'm here to save Rachel, my wife. I'll grab Emily too, but I can promise if we went back right now, she'd fight to stay."

"No, she'd come away with me."

"She's drugged, friend, just like you. All she wants is that monster cock. Trust me, I've seen this before."

"You're lying," he insisted.

"It's true. I didn't understand it at first but finally figured it out. That beast exudes some kind of smell that draws women in, makes them want him, robs them of a choice."

"What? Like a pheromone?"

"Exactly like a pheromone. I wonder if that's why they need all the severed dicks and balls. Maybe that's where they get the ingredients. Those guys were unafraid of the monster, like they knew they had nothing to fear. They saw him as a pet. I've seen enough evidence. I believe they created that beast. Like a breeding program or something."

He sent his eyes back the way we'd come, longing. Emily was that way, getting ravaged. He felt the need to rescue her and I understood that.

"Why create a creature like that?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"I have no answer for you. I've seen the shit people do. I no longer ask why."

His erection was pointed at my face. He saw my annoyed expression.

"They gave me an injection," he said. "I can't help it."

"Don't worry about it."

He looked me over.

"Who are you anyway?" he asked. "Military? Police? You don't seem like a soldier or cop. What are you doing here?"

"I'm a different kind of cop. Let's get moving. I'll explain as we walk."

He rubbed his sore wrists but fell in line. I left the two men far behind.

"I'm Detective Anders Almond," I said. "I run a desk at the Puget Sound police station. I handle everything else."

"Everything else? What's that mean?"

"That means if it isn't homicide and it isn't vice and it isn't juvenile and it isn't anything that anybody understands or wants, it lands on my desk. That's why I got Emily."

"Why'd they give that desk to you?"

I shrugged.

"I've got some unusual gifts."

"Like what?"

"Well," I began, feeling awkward. "I have a sense about things. I can spot a liar easily but also discern the truth. My mother was Catholic. My father

was Southern Baptist. My older brother was Buddhist. My older sister was atheist. I was raised in several churches and did a great deal of research on my own, including most faiths and mythologies. Since most of the inexplicable cases that arrive at the station involve some religious element, they picked me. Once I started racking up wins, they left me there and left me alone."

I did not mention the voices I hear. I suspected before we got out of this awful place we'd have situations where trust was crucial and if he knew I heard voices, he might hesitate to trust me. It's not contagious but crazy is hard for a lot of people.

"That sounds useful," he said.

"It's a double-edged sword," I admitted. "I speak the truth and that has cost me almost all my friendships. It's cost me relations with family members. In this job I've seen the very worst of humanity, and I mean the *worst*, all done in the name of God. My talents come with a price. Let's turn here."

We rounded a corner.

"I'm sorry Emily involved you," he said. "It's my fault they have your wife. Rachel is caught in the web because of Emily and me. You never would have known about this place if my wife and I hadn't been so nosey."

I shook my head.

"No," I said. "It's all Emily's fault. You did nothing wrong. "

His expression turned indignant.

"She said she wanted me to find the creature and free him," I explained. "She said she hated he was all alone and caged in the dark. I understand now that was a ruse. She lied. That goddamn beast had gotten to her. She'd breathed deep and had to come back. Did you know she went looking for this place without you? She only asked for my help when she failed. She set me to the task and most likely followed me whenever she could. My car

probably has an air tag on it. She had one reason for finding that creature, and you witnessed it in that room."

He struggled with that. Hard to hear your wife was hot for someone else.

"Let's stop here and rest," I said. "Are you hungry? How did you two find your way back?"

I set my pack down.

"Emily said she wanted to go back to the bookstore to buy a gift," he said. "I should have suspected something was up when she knew the way straight there. She talked to the old man at the register and he led us through a different door. We took an elevator down and stepped out into a laboratory. Some men grabbed us and took our phones. They took our clothes and put a hood over our heads and led us away. I was stuck in a room alone and then cuffed and strung up. They jabbed me with a needle. The hood was removed and I saw Emily with that monster. That's when you found me."

I had no extra clothes for him but at least his erection faded over time. He was interested in my map and I showed him the areas I'd already cleared. He offered some good insights, filling in the map where he'd explored and I hadn't. I took notes. We soon got moving again. There was a lot of ground to cover.

Chapter 6

The air turned damp, the corridors and tunnels rougher, uneven. Eventually we discovered a gap in the rock wall that had steps leading down. They looked ancient and were not on the map. They'd been carved from the stone and were slick with moss. We looked at each other, wondering if we should go off-grid.

"No stone unturned," he said.

We headed down. I drew my gun. The steps spiraled in a gradual curve.

"This looks like a fissure someone made into a staircase," Charly said.

In a little while we heard gurgling water. I tasted salt in the air. We rounded a final turn and emerged onto a rocky ledge. In front of us was an underground cavern filled with a saltwater lake. A small island sat several hundred feet out in the water, topped by a squat black hut. Far to our left a crack ran up the wall and water spilled from it, burbling and tumbling until it joined the lake. Bits of flotsam going by showed the current was strong and swift.

"How deep are we?" he asked. "How far underground?"

"I have no idea."

Rock had been cut away on the ledge and a heavy brass ring set into the stone.

"To tie a boat?" he asked.

"Looks like it."

"Which means the boat is at the island because someone paddled out with it."

"My thoughts exactly."

We stared at the speck of dark rock.

"Too far away," he said. "We can't see shit but they can see our light."

"Yup."

"You think Rachel is out there on that island?"

"I hope not. But even if she is, we can't get out there."

"We could swim?"

I pointed at the water.

"You get in that," I said, swinging my arm to point at the far end of the cavern. "You get swept that way, probably sucked down into some underwater trench where the water rejoins the Sound."

"No thanks. So, dead end?"

Movement out on the island drew my eye. I killed the light. A figure exited the black hut to gaze at us across the water, a figure with pale skin wrapped in shredded clothing, a figure with long black hair.

"Who the hell is that?" Charly asked. "Looks like a girl."

"Someone we do not want to meet. I encountered her earlier. She was drinking blood from some poor guy's throat."

"What? What is this fucking place? What's going on here?"

"Climb the stairs," I said. "Rachel isn't on that island and we know Emily isn't either. There's nothing for us down here."

Charly turned. I followed him up the steps. A spot between my shoulder blades began to burn like I expected a knife to stick me any second. I felt her eyes boring through my skin.

"She looked young," Charly said. "What's a girl doing down here?"

We put some rock between us and her. In the corridor once more, we stopped to search the map for stairs to the higher levels. The sound of tiny claws on stone made me look down the corridor. A large rat sat stared at me. I stared back.

"Weird," Charly said, noticing.

A second rat joined the first, both just crouching, observing. They were plump, well-fed with shiny black coats.

"Why are they staring?" Charly asked. "What's that sound?"

A blanket of rats walked casually around the bend, an undulating carpet of dark, gleaming pelts. They reached the first two and sat, row after row, hundreds at a time.

"We've got to get out of this place," Charly whined. "Just grab our women and run. Leave this underground nightmare forever."

"That's my plan. Let's pack our stuff and move."

I folded the map and screwed the cap on the canteen. We hurried to be on our way. With our first step down the corridor, the rats took a forward step too.

"They're herding us," Charly said. "They want us going this way, not the way back. They do not want us returning to the stairs."

He was right. Each time we moved away from the fissure and the underground lake, the rats advanced, further sealing that path beneath a blanket of tiny claws and teeth. Row by row they kept us moving.

"Makes me think that girl is controlling them," he added.

We quickened our pace. Eventually the rats fell behind and we slowed. The map showed very little of the areas this deep so when we encountered stairs up, we took them, glad to be rid of the lower levels. We discovered an air shaft and that allowed us to find our place on the map again. I spotted a small room close and suggested we go there to eat and sleep. The night had been long. Charly agreed. Inside we found some trash: broken furniture at least a hundred years old and a small tarp I cut into a poncho for Charly. No more walking around naked. The door to the room needed repair but I moved junk around as a barricade. Charly sat on an old wooden crate reading the old book I'd found.

"Have you looked at this?" he asked.

I snorted a laugh.

"No. I've been hunting Rachel and a lot keeps happening. No time to read."

He lifted the volume and pointed at it.

"We got some answers right here," he said.

"What does it say?"

"I've only skimmed a little, obviously, but it appears to be a journal mixed in with notes and lists and observations. A long time ago some guy's wife was kidnapped and he tried to get her back. He stumbled on the truth, the bigger scope of the thing. He thinks we're in the middle of a war between vampires and an incredibly old but powerful man. In fact, he may not be a man. He may be a demon. The writer of this book suspects that is so. They battle each other for human cattle, the outcast, the indigent, the homeless: the humans nobody misses when they vanish. The supply is limited."

We stared at each other.

"Vampires and demons aren't real," I said. "Horrible humans are. Our enemies aren't mythical, they're depraved. They're real, blood and bone. I've been a cop long enough to see the evil humans do."

He continued to stare at me.

"You think that rat-controlling girl living in the sewers is just a girl?" he asked.

I looked away. He had a point.

"I'll keep reading," he said, finally.

"I'll make us some grub. Read the good parts out loud."

He did. He narrated a story across centuries. Vampires feeding on and subjugating humans, stealing from the ancient demon the souls he needs. The demon saw the vampires as a disease, a disease that should be eradicated. Over the centuries the demon had almost succeeded. Scattered individuals remained, including the one below our feet, hiding, too crafty to get caught.

"Listen to this," he said. "The final entries speak of a gambit the demon plans. He'll capture human females to use as breeders and then use magic to alter the embryo, creating a savage beast no female can resist. He intends to lure the vampire and have the creature kill her."

Chapter 7

We slept, but not for long. Every sound was a threat. We took turns standing watch and dozing. Eager to continue the hunt, we ate a meal and drank some water.

"We've got another day, maybe two, before we need to hit the surface and restock," I said.

He'd found a short length of rope to tie his poncho around the waist, creating a kind of smock.

"You look like an Eloi," I said, trying to lighten the mood.

"I hope we don't meet any Morlock down here."

We took a breath and moved the junk blocking the doorway. We stepped into the corridor and discovered one lonely rat sat watching, keeping an eye to make sure we kept moving away, which we did.

We'd searched about two hours when we heard thumping and scraping ahead. We slowed, killing the light and waiting for our eyes to adjust. The corridor ended in a large room lit by a single dim bulb overhead.

A line of fifty-gallon industrial drums cut across the room. Half were already capped. Several men and women lay hog-tied on the floor, wrists to ankles behind their backs. Each was gagged, eyes bulging with fear. Four aproned men moved about, three of them lifting a bound person and sliding them into a drum, where the remaining man, armed with a mallet, would tap a lid into place and then seal it with a metal ring.

Rage consumed me.

"Stop them," Charly hissed, voice strained with horror.

I was already moving. My firearm slid smoothly from the holster and I aimed and fired in rapid succession: one, two, three, four. No hesitation. The deafening roars bounced off the stone walls, amplified. I had hours and hours of terror bottled inside, more fear than I realized. I saw the grim fate chosen for these people and a red haze filled my eyes.

The aproned men dropped where they stood, red orchids blossoming on their heads. Charly and I ran to free the hostages, starting at the far end of the line, the ones sealed the longest. We dumped gasping people to the dirty floor. I gave Charly my knife to cut their bindings and remove their gags and turned my attention to the aproned men. Three were dead. One was dying. My police report, if I ever got out of this place, would be long. They could discharge me if they wanted. I was going to kill everyone working down here. I lifted the dying man by his apron.

"Where's my wife?" I rasped, rage boiling to the surface. "Where's Rachel?"

He gurgled once and coughed blood in my face, and then he was dead. I rejoined Charly. The people we freed sat around in shock, staring at the ground.

"These guys all have the same story," he said. "A parking lot at the grocery store, a parking lot at work: they were alone and about to open their car when a hood dropped over their heads and the fumes inside knocked them out."

"Why kidnap them to bring them back and kill them horribly?"

Charly lifted his shoulders and let them drop.

"Our enemy is insane," he suggested. "Maybe the terror is the point. Our enemy enjoys horror. None of them know each other. Nobody has the same job or background. No one knows why they were taken."

"What do we do with them? They can't come with us and we can't send them to the surface alone. They are dazed and confused and possibly

drugged. They won't make it."

We studied the group.

"We must lead them to the surface," Charly said. "Postpone the quest for our wives to save these people. It's the only way."

I growled like a dog, angry at the delay.

"Yeah," Charly said. "I feel the same. Let me see the map."

Soon we headed for a water treatment plant high above. If Charly was right, the tunnels connected and we could exit that way. We gratefully left the room with the drums but stepped immediately into another room with drums. These were dusty, like they'd been sitting a long time. Along the right-hand wall the drums were open, uncapped. Those lining the left were sealed.

Charly and I exchanged a look.

"Fuck," I said.

"You don't think we'll find bodies in there, do you?"

"I gotta check."

I went back for the mallet and then started to work on the first grimy, sealed drum. It opened with a puff of pressurized air, followed by a foul stench. I lifted the circular lid. A woman, fortyish when she died, lay stuffed inside, wrists tied to ankles behind her, body cramped and twisted. She'd chewed through her gag, biting off her own tongue in a claustrophobic, terrified frenzy, dying panicked and all alone.

"Motherfuckers," I mumbled.

I looked down the row. Fifteen more drums waited.

"Let's get our people out of here," I said. "I can't bear the thought of opening the rest and finding a body in each. I'll come back with a squad of

guys and tear this whole place apart."

"I hope you do. I fear what you'll find."

We led the group through several rooms and then up some metal stairs against a wall. I was amazed at how quickly they all took care of each other. Those that recovered quicker helped those that needed more time. Despite the trauma of their circumstances, they were all eager to help. Maybe that's what connected them. Maybe that's why someone ordered them kidnapped and killed. They were good, giving, empathetic, and someone evil wanted them removed from the world.

This place was an endless maze of basements and tunnels and corridors. They'd knocked down walls or cut tunnels through rock. The work looked old, ancient in some places. I began to realize I could travel the city down here and never show my face above ground. The map I had was only a sliver of all the connecting tunnels.

"Two more levels," Charly said. "We're getting close to the street."

"Don't jinx us," I warned.

At the top of the stairs a heavy metal door set in a metal frame blocked our path. One of the victims pulled on the handle but nothing happened.

"It's locked," he called back, weakly.

I moved through the line to test the door for myself.

"Find us another way," I told Charly.

He opened the map and studied. We waited.

"Bad news," he said at last.

Chapter 8

An hour later we were still walking through tunnels. Water dripped from the roughhewn ceiling, slippery moss covered the floor. Charly had found the next best route out of this place, but we'd needed to enter the caves again. The people we led were hungry, exhausted, and frightened, but not one complained.

"They're all so good," I muttered to Charly. "Every one of them is kind."

Before he could respond, a skittering of tiny claws echoed down the tunnel. I moved to the front of the line, aiming the flashlight ahead. A wave of rats headed our way, determined.

"Damn it," I growled. "The bitch on the island has been informed of our return and sent a greeting party."

We passed a tunnel.

"Let's see where it goes," Charly said.

I ran to the back of the line and told everyone to follow me, which they did. The passageway quickly led to a branching of smaller tubes. Navigation seemed impossible. I picked the largest opening and climbed in, helping the man behind me.

"Help the others," I said. "I'll look ahead."

I was reluctant to leave the group but needed to know our route. Surprises down here were deadly. I jogged ahead, eliminating dead ends and noting the correct turns, and then went back.

The group was gone, along with Charly and the map.

What happened? I listened closely, hoping that many people made enough noise I could follow, but there were too many ambient noises already: air flow sighing, water dripping, stone creaking, rocks breaking free and falling. I searched the ground for tracks but found nothing. The rock in these tubes was dry and clean.

Panic rose in my stomach. I feared for the victims, for Charly, and for myself. I breathed deep, calming myself, and considered my options. If I assumed they did not go back the way we'd come because of all the rats, then there were four openings from this spot which a group that size could use and make haste. I picked the closest and started my search, eyes and ears on high-alert for any sign. I moved quickly, trying to gain on them and aware I still had three more tunnels to search if they weren't in this one.

They weren't.

After a short distance the tunnel opened into a cavern. My light drifted across a cage with heavy bars and I sucked air. I was unprepared to fight the beast. Lucky for me, I didn't have to. I heard a soft, feminine moan. I approached, finding an exhausted Emily locked inside, resting on a bare mattress. She was nude, with light scratches and bite marks all over her body. I aimed the light at my face and relief swept over her.

"Detective Almond," she said, tears welling and spilling down her cheeks. "Thank God. I thought I would die down here."

I flipped the light on her again for another look.

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

She was a mess. Her nipples were swollen and raw. Her lips were puffy from sucking and her labia engorged. She'd had sex for hours.

"Get me out of this cage," she said.

"Are you hurt? Can you walk?"

"Barely, but I'm not hurt."

I tugged on the iron bars. The door was locked.

"Do you know where the key is?" I asked. "I can't get through these thick bars."

"Don't leave me here," she said, a note of fear in her voice. "The beast will return and want more and I can't say no."

"I have no way to free you. I'll hide and when they come to open the door, I'll kill them and take the keys."

Her lip trembled.

"Okay," she said.

Brave. She wanted the fuck out of here but could control herself enough to go with a plan. I still had the light aimed at her and she realized I saw her naked. Lust flared in her eyes and for an instant she considered seducing me. Whatever scent or drug they'd hit her with, it lingered. She shook her head and moved away from the bars.

Almost two hours later she came forward again.

"He returns," she said, fear mixed with lust.

I drew my gun.

Emily tested the air with her nose, drawing in the aroma that owned her. Her expression turned eager and lustful. Soft footfalls echoed from another corridor and then the creature entered the cavern, wary, snuffing the air like he detected my presence. He rose to his full height and I saw him fully revealed, furry, fierce, and already half-erect. His large man-cock protruded from his crotch like a horn: gentle curve topped with a large head. Emily stared at it reverently.

A bored man in black coveralls entered behind the creature. He moved to the cage and twisted the key in the lock, swinging the door wide. Emily backed to the old mattress and lay on her back. She opened her legs, an invitation no male can resist. The creature grunted delight, shuffling forward, erect man-cock swaying.

I aimed and fired, first at the man with the keys, then at the beast. I hit both but the beast's reaction time shocked me. The man dropped where he stood

but the creature, wounded, bolted up the corridor. Emily cried out in dismay, frustrated, grabbing her pussy and clamping her legs around her hand. I ran from my hiding spot to check on Mr. Keys.

"Where's Rachel?" I demanded. "Where's the other woman?"

He was in a lot of pain. The bullet had punctured lungs and broken ribs and without immediate medical attention, he would die, which meant he was going to die because I wouldn't do shit to help this motherfucker.

"Where's Rachel?" I asked again, digging a thumb into the bullet hole.

He groaned loudly.

"Cain," he gasped.

"I wounded the beast," I said. "I'll follow the blood trail and finish the job, end your little breeding program."

He shook his head slowly.

"More than one," he mumbled, then passed out.

I left him to die and turned my attention to Emily. She clutched a breast, twisted a nipple and masturbated. I had to stare. She's an attractive woman and even these dire circumstances couldn't change that. I could not look away. She was frantic, feverish, desperate to be fucked.

"Come here, Detective," she murmured, meeting my eyes. "Fuck me. Give me your cock. Cum in me."

I holstered my gun.

"No," I said.

"Please," she begged. "I need it. Please. I'll die without it."

"Stay here," I said.

I followed the blood trail around the corner a few steps and then returned. This part would be easy. Did I lock a wretched Emily in the cell for her protection or try to bring her with me? The airborne stimulant would wear off, but when? If I left her behind, could I find her again? Without the map, I might get lost.

Emily brought herself to orgasm but it made no difference. She felt no satisfaction, no release. It made her crave sex even more.

"Pleeeeeease," she whined. "Fuck me, Detective."

I decided to bring her along. Keys had revealed there was more than one of these beasts running around and if I left Emily alone, one might find her. How could I look Charly in the eye and tell him I had her safe but then abandoned her?

"No," I said again. "But I will take you to the beast. Would you like that?"

She climbed to her feet, nailing me with sexy eyes and hot body. She did not answer. I moved to Keys, now dead, and rummaged his body, grabbing a ring of keys, a wallet, a red and black pass card with magnetic strip, another set of keys that looked personal, and an unmarked bottle of pills.

"Let's go," I told her.

She grabbed my arm and pressed her naked body to mine. I led the way out of that cavern and followed the blood drippings. She rubbed my crotch but I smacked her hand away. Minutes later she tried again.

The trail led to stairs down but she talked me out of going that way.

"That way leads to Rashad Cain," she said. "You do not want to meet him. This way is better."

I followed her into a short hallway ending in a door. I tested the knob and opened slowly, peering inside. Emily grabbed the gun from my holster and shoved me forward, slamming the door behind me. I spun quickly only to discover on this side there was no knob, only smooth wall. Fucking hell.

"Are you the man killing my people?" a voice behind me asked.

I turned.

I was in a large room with a vaulted ceiling. Brass braziers hung low, burning a strange incense. A massive chandelier, sporting a thousand candles or more, lit the place with an orange glow. A large cage sat in each corner, two of them containing nearly identical beasts standing at the bars, watching.

In the center of the room a third beast lay on a raised cushioned dais covered in purple silks. My nude and sweaty wife straddled the man-creature, holding herself over his body and slowly forcing her pussy down his throbbing erection. Her hole was forced wide around his girth. She looked like she'd been fucked for hours and I wondered if she'd already drained the beasts watching from the cages.

I continued my pivot until my eyes landed on a tall man dressed in black pants and a tan polo shirt. He looked younger than me, full head of curly black hair. His eyes caught the candlelight and glowed a faint red.

"Rashad Cain?" I asked.

"I am. Are you the man killing my people?"

I glanced again at Rachel, her face was contorted with intense, rapturous pleasure. She *loved* the cock inside her.

"Yes," I said, suddenly not giving a fuck about anything anymore. "That's me. I've been dropping them where they stand."

At the sound of my voice, Rachel lifted her eyes to fix her gaze on me. Her expression said she knew what she did was wrong, but that awareness only turned her on more. Fucking in front of her husband was a rush like no other.

Instinctively, I reached for my holster, now empty. Damn Emily.

"This is your wife?" Cain asked, gesturing. "Never mind. I see by your pained expression she is. How difficult for you. Look how she craves the creature. One will put a baby in her and another creature shall be born."

"You've drugged her," I barked. "She's only doing that because you make her. She's not to blame."

Cain smiled. He shook his head.

"No drugs," he said. "Rachel does as she wishes."

I checked her eyes. They were clear and alert. The specter that she did all this of her own free will gutted me. What do I do then? Rachel braced her hands on her knees and shoved her opening all the way down his shaft, as much as she could take, leaving a stump of several inches she couldn't fit. His thick root stretched her hole in a tight circle. She rolled her hips, feeling him in there, stuffing her with cock.

"I don't believe you," I whined, fearing the truth.

He nodded and several men entered holding Charly by his arms. He'd been stripped naked, gagged and manacled, hands behind his back. Other members of the group we'd rescued were brought forward too. My heart sank.

"You rescued him once," Cain said. "Interrupting something I'd ordered. You will not be allowed to do that again."

A man jabbed Charly with a hypodermic and pressed the plunger. I saw the fear in his eyes skyrocket. He knew what they'd done to him. He knew what was coming.

"Leave him alone," I growled.

I took a step forward. Emily entered through another door and walked to Cain. She raised my gun at me.

"I apologize," Cain said. "I'm sure you and he became friends quickly, prowling around in the dark down there, but Charles has something I need,

and I will have it."

"You have Emily."

"I do, but that's not what I need."

I took another step and Emily clicked the safety off.

"She will shoot you," Rashad Cain assured me. "You'll die, and with no one to rescue her, Rachel will become mine forever. Is that what you want?"

I stopped. Hate filled me from ears to feet. I wanted to kill everyone who worked for this monster and Cain twice. Emily handed the gun to Rashad and then she approached me. I stood my ground.

"Charly must be in mental anguish when he's harvested," Cain said. "His blood must contain certain hormones. I can force his body to secrete them by arranging certain scenarios."

I desperately wanted him to shut up.

Emily unzipped my pants and withdrew my penis, her warm hand wrapped gently around my flaccid length. She stroked tenderly, teasing my dick to life. I tried to stay soft but couldn't. Maybe it was the relief from stress or maybe it was something more perverted in me, but I expanded in her hand. She jerked faster, turning me to iron.

"Charly," I said. "I'm so sorry."

The drugs injected in Charly took effect. Despite the awful sight before him and the fate he faced once hard, his penis began to rise. He whimpered in fear.

My gaze left poor Charly to land on Rachel. My wife pulled her pussy up the shaft, inner lips clinging to his meat, before sliding down again. She slow-fucked the creature, showing me what she did and relishing every inch. My dick grew harder. I couldn't understand it. Why was I hard?

Emily slipped the head in her hot mouth. God! All the tension I carried rushed to my penis. Her tongue swirled and my rod pulsated.

"Take Mister Stockton," Rashad said. "Finish him."

Charly throbbed, fully erect. They would take him someplace and surgically remove his dick. I had no idea what these maniacs believed in or what their insane plans were, but their intent was plain. Charly would be emasculated and his genitalia added to the figurine bearing a face like his. Despite my efforts to save him, he'd end up stitched to some clay statue anyway. His wail of despair reverberated around his gag. He fought but his struggles were meaningless. The men led him away to his fate. I was filled with fear and rage but Emily's mouth felt fantastic. I was getting sucked off at the same time I watched my wife fuck herself on a sturdy dick.

A strange thrill ran through me, like chaos was claiming my life and there was nothing I could do about it. Like madness whispered at the dark edges as I slowly lost my mind. Charly headed for a grim fate and I fucked his wife's mouth. This was all so wrong. Everything was wrong, but that very wrongness was what made this world so appealing. I teetered on the brink, ready to fall, ready to embrace the insanity and decadence rather than fight so hard only to lose.

The first tingles of an orgasm made me hate myself.

"Humans are animals," Rashad said. "Savages. Nothing more. A thin veneer separates you from the primordial jungle. Beneath the skin you seethe with rage and lust. Look at you. Will you fill Emily's mouth? The wife of your new friend? The friend even now being led away to an awful fate? I know you will, because humans are animals."

The tingling had grown until I could focus on little else. We are wired for pleasure. We use it to learn. We seek it out. We become easily addicted to it. Emily was so good at what she did. My stomach sank. My guts churned. I had to stop this madman.

"You call us savages," I managed to say, "and I've seen enough humanity to know you're right. I've seen too much. But that means you're right there

with us. If humans are savage animals, then so are you."

Rashad Cain squared his shoulders and stood tall.

"No," he chuckled. "I am not."

"The truth hurts," I said.

He lifted his arms. The tan polo and black pants shimmered like a picture out of focus and then snapped back as black and brown feathers. His eyes turned red. His face extended, his features melted, reforming with a large beak. In an instant, Rashad Cain transformed.

"What the fuck!" I gasped.

Rashad was now half-man, half raven. I staggered backward, stunned, and Emily followed, keeping my dick in her mouth, her suction strong. Rachel laughed with delight, clearly already aware of Rashad's true self. She stared at Cain with wicked, lusty eyes, dragging her pussy up and down the beast's vein-covered cock.

Rashad laughed in my face.

"Human?" he sneered. "No! Humans are cattle. Humans are prey. I am no such creature. I feast on humans."

A beat of his wings kicked up dust and brought him nose to nose with me. He was a foot taller now, body muscular, ember eyes fierce. He radiated wrath and power.

"She lives beneath my feet!" he screeched, furious. "She steals what I need, what is mine by right." He lifted a clawed hand to point at my face. "You aid her. You thwart my wishes. You kill my men and prevent her capture. Stop, or your wife will be my willing slave forever."

I was afraid. No, I was terrified. I'm not ashamed to admit it. My mind tumbled down a black mineshaft into oblivion. I believe in Heaven and Hell and ghosts and spirits. I believe in the devil and demons and angels, every religion, every myth. I've seen too much. Throughout history humanity has

caught glimpses, vague clues suggesting the mystical. But it was a belief. I never had proof.

Now, I had proof.

My beliefs were forced to convert to understanding. In an instant, faith became knowledge. Now I *knew*. *I knew*. Like an explosion reverberating through my heart and my head, my paradigm shifted, dragged me along, shook me to my core.

There's a reason God doesn't leave evidence of such things lying around for people to find. God doesn't allow the spirit world to invade the physical world. They're kept separate for good reason. Humans can't handle that much truth. We need our world smaller. We need hints, not facts. The beasts running around down here could be explained as mutations, freaks, but still human.

Rashad Cain was a towering truth, an inescapable confrontation with a dire reality. Demon walk among us. There is no barrier between Earth and Hell. Our danger is far greater than any imagined.

On the heels on that monumental revelation came another, and I knew the truth of it the instant the thought occurred: the voices in my head were real. I had no psychosis. I had no mental illness induced by trauma. I'd connected with the dead while buried in that box and they'd stayed with me. Perhaps I'd died in that hole and that's when the connections formed. I died, for only a moment, and came back, bringing Janet, Miss Mapleberry, and my father back with me. Not only were demons real, but people had souls, and there was an existence after death.

Angels were probably real too. God certainly was.

I was a mess. I wanted to cry. I wanted to laugh.

The only thing that kept me rooted to this place and time was Emily's vacuuming mouth. Apparently fear of death is closely tied to lust for life because despite my terror, I began spurting, shooting hot sperm down Emily's throat in one of the strongest orgasms of my life. Rachel moaned

with joy at my corruption, at the debasement of my oaths, both to her in marriage and the department, to protect and serve. Emily was my charge, my responsibility, yet I poured myself down her throat.

My balls released a flood. My climax carried everything with it, all the turmoil, all the emotional stress. I coated her teeth and tongue and shot directly into her stomach as, several levels beneath us, Charly, my new friend and her husband of many years, had his cock and balls sliced away.

Chapter 9

Rashad said he had uses for a police officer and I would be spared. I was stripped and thrown into the empty cage. I wondered who else on the force he controlled and remembered my sergeant had steered me away from this case.

The beast I'd wounded returned, bleeding, and Cain had Emily escort it to a lab for healing.

Rachel continued to mate less than ten feet from me. The sight was made more excruciating by my understanding of Rashad's diabolic plan. These beasts were born down here. Somewhere in this ungodly labyrinth sat a nursery. Women from the surface were brought down and inseminated, over and over until a pregnancy took. That they only had four beasts so far told me of the difficulties they faced but more creatures would follow as they eliminated error and grew bolder in their kidnapping.

Rachel spun away from the beast and moved to hands and knees. She offered him her dripping pussy, looking at that throbbing erection over a shoulder. The beast moved closer, hunching over her ass and stabbing with his hips until the spear sank. Rachel gasped, back arched, head snapped back. Now she faced the bars of my prison. Her eyes were closed but her expression told me of the exquisite pleasure he gave. He held her shoulders and began to hump.

She opened her eyes.

Our gaze locked. I tried to peer into her soul, to understand what happened for her in that moment, but she was lost to gratification and indulgence.

"Rachel," I whimpered. "Baby, come back. I need you."

Her face softened, her lips parted, jaw slack.

"You want me to stop?" she muttered, grinning.

"Yes. This isn't you."

Her eyelids fluttered as the beast touched someplace deep inside. She groaned softly and lifted her ass higher.

"I don't want to stop," she said. "You don't know what this is like. You've never taken someone inside your body, felt them in you."

"I'm your husband. That's only for me."

She shook her head slowly, grinning, breasts swinging.

"His cock feels fantastic," she said. "I feel him everywhere, all through my body. I feel him in my mind."

"That's because they've drugged you, Rach. They created a creature you can't resist. It's not real."

She shook her head.

"This is more real than anything I've experienced," she murmured, eyes closing.

"They want to impregnate you," I warned.

"I know."

"They use you to make more creatures."

"I know."

My heart ached. No husband should ever hear such words from the woman he loves. Her face softened and she bit her bottom lip as the beast moved inside her. The creature wrapped his yellow claws around her throat and lengthened his stroke, sawing his cock all the way in and out. Rachel moaned, rolling her lips over her teeth. I tried to think of other things to say, anything to make her stop, but watching her left me speechless. Her brow began to furrow, her face scrunched. Her mouth opened wide and the air left her lungs. She lifted her face to the ceiling.

"God, yes," she breathed. "He's swelling. Here it comes."

I gripped the bars of my cage. The creature fucked her hard and fast and Rachel braced herself to take it. His pelvis slammed her ass, over and over, driving the thick cock deep. My wife's breathing grew shallow and fast and then her nails clawed the purple silk.

"Fuck!" she snorted. "Yeah! God!"

The muscles on her arms went taut. Goose bumps washed over her skin. She locked down for a heartbeat before throwing her head back and crying out, seized by a powerful, body-wide orgasm. The creature didn't care, continuing to fuck her hard, but that only increased her pleasure. Her voice sailed before cracking and turning into a sob. She hung her head, dropped to her elbows. The beast pounded away before howling loudly and pushing his cock deep. He was unloading those hefty balls in her, right before my eyes.

Rachel dropped to her belly and the creature followed, keeping his cock buried and his hips pumping. Again, there was no tenderness, no intimacy, no caressing or soft kisses. This was raw sex, pure fucking. Rachel loved it.

I skulked to the dark corner of my cage and dropped to the mattress. She'd seen me shoot cum down Emily's throat. She had no reason to feel guilt. I doubted she did anyway. Rashad controlled her mind. His control was complete. He tapped into something primal buried in her primitive brain, something unevolved, uncivilized.

"He's always ready," she said, lifting her head to stare at me in my dark corner. "He always wants me. He gets hard again fast. He can fuck as much

as I want, whenever I want, and he makes me cum soooo hard."

She pulled herself off his spongy cock and crawled from under his huge body. She lifted his spongy penis in both hand, sliding down to the base. He flopped to one side. Nothing showed his human origins as much as his cock: like a man's but bigger, and covered with more veins. She jerked a chin at the other cages.

"They've all fucked me," she said.

"They use you," I muttered.

She slapped his long, soft, wet shank against her open palm like a cop wielding a billy club.

"We use each other," she said.

She snuggled against the creature and tucked that large penis between her legs, closing her warm thighs around the meaty shaft.

I turned away, tormented, shredded by jealousy but, and this was difficult to admit, strangely drawn to Rachel's debauchery. Some deeply buried and perverted monkey in my brain enjoyed the sight. I chalked it up to a defense mechanism, my mind protecting me from the abject horrors I witnessed by embracing them.

Chapter 10

Sleep took the exhausted. I sat in my corner and fought the panic of closed spaces and dark walls, listening to the steady breathing of Rachel and the three beasts. Water dripped somewhere in the distance.

I'd tried shouting, waking her to free me, but she was dead to the world.

You've got to find a way out of here, my father said.

I'm working on it.

My father. I now knew the voice was truly my father. I drew a strange comfort from his presence in my head. Janet and Miss Mapleberry too.

Emily returned without the wounded creature but carrying a figurine with a freshly attached penis and testicles, which she handed over to an aproned man. I shuddered, praying for Charly. Rashad had the creatures roused and sent them hunting, turning all three loose in the tunnel system. He soon left with Emily, leaving Rachel to sleep.

I paced my cell, trying to see everything this cavern contained, but also working off the anxiety of a cage. I spotted my clothing and backpack against a wall, forgotten. I searched the bars for any weakness, tested the lock and the welds. I climbed the bars to the ceiling looking for gaps. Finally, I gave up, returning to the bed that smelled of musk. My wife had been fucked on this bed.

I was dredging my brain for a plan when movement caught my eye. A rat scampered into the area, rising on back legs like a meercat to survey the room. He turned slowly and sniffed the air and then just as swiftly departed. Soft foot falls sounded from the hallway.

She was even more stunning than the first time I'd seen her. She tiptoed cautiously, entering the room and judging the situation. The wisps of cloth still clung to her but in the better light I saw they were the remnants of clothing fallen to ruin long ago. Her pale skin and incredible body transfixed me, far more than they should have, given my predicament.

With a flash of understanding I realized she worked the same effect on men that the creatures had on women. She flipped her dark hair aside and pierced me with her big dark eyes. She seemed to float across the room to the bars of my prison.

"If I free you," her soft voice sang, "will you kill him?"

"Can he be killed?" I asked.

"Yes."

Her voice was honeyed and melodious. A pulse of seduction ran through it. My beloved wife slept close but that did nothing to temper my lust for this feminine creature. I stared. I smiled. I thanked God Rachel wasn't awake to see me behave like this.

"How do I kill him?" I asked, forcing myself to concentrate.

She gripped my prison bars and her fingers grazed mine. Her skin was cool, almost cold, but at her touch, heat exploded in my mind. My body caught fire. She was Eve. She was Nefertiti. She was the most beautiful and desirable woman to ever live, and I wasn't even sure she *was* alive.

"What are you?" I asked, trembling.

She turned coy. I wanted to rip her clothes off.

"Hell is not what you've been told," she said. "Neither are demons."

So. I was chatting with a demon.

"Are you and Rashad the same?"

Her big dark eyes swallowed me. I suddenly hated the bars because they kept us apart, not because they imprisoned me. She nodded pensively.

"More alike than different," she admitted. "Like humans with different skin. If I speak of his destruction, I also tell you mine."

"I would never hurt you," I blurted.

My eyes ached to look at her. Her perfect breasts flowed into a smooth flat stomach and down to toned thighs. She looked like a young Gothic stripper needing a place to crash and I was about to offer my couch for as long as she needed it. She leaned closer, her lips almost touching mine. A breast grazed my knuckle and I gasped, sucking air as a jolt ran through me.

"Gold," she murmured.

I understood. I saw all human history and our fascination with the elemental substance. Ages ago man discovers gold kills demons and the march of the mineral through history is set, even if the reasons are lost. I thought about the church's penchant for gold, the obscene displays. That made more sense now.

"The creatures," I said. "They hunt you. Their yellow claws are dipped in gold. He wasn't after Rachel; he was after you."

"That's right."

"Why?"

"Rashad and I compete for the same resource."

Resource.

"You mean humans," I said.

"Yes. He's killed almost all my sisters. Few like me remain."

"That's why the beasts are irresistible. He hopes to draw you in."

"Yes. He has almost succeeded on several occasions. His ploy is genius. I must stay far away and avoid their scent. My little pets help me avoid them."

I looked her up and down. Despite knowing how these demons manipulated human emotions, I was all in. I'd do anything to help her.

"All right," I said. "I'll need to acquire some gold. I can melt jewelry at home and taint my bullets."

She nodded.

"Go to the surface. Return with your weapons."

"I'm taking Rachel with me."

"No. She slumbers."

"I'll wake her. We'll leave together."

She shook her head.

"She *Slumbers*," she said again. "She sleeps the Somnus, the sleep from carrying their seed. She will sleep deeply for a day or more. You cannot wake her and you cannot drag her along. They will catch you. She's safe. They will not harm her."

"They're trying to impregnate her," I hissed.

"So far they have failed. To mate a minotaur and a human is no easy thing. The beast needs many couplings, many matings before their seed takes."

"Minotaur?"

"Part man," she said. "Part bull."

"How do I kill them?"

Her expression looked like the thought pained her.

"They die like any human," she said.

She cocked her head as if listening. I heard a rat chitter from far away.

"Rashad returns," she said. "Go."

Her delicate, pretty hands gripped the bars of my cage. She pulled and small muscles along her arms clenched. The metal began to bend. Her strength was astounding. She pulled the bolt free and then stepped back as the door swung wide.

"Go," she said again.

"What is your name?"

She rose on her toes to kiss me lightly on the lips. Fifty-thousand volts rocked my body, set my heart racing. Dizziness assaulted me.

"I've had many names," she said. "Call me Kali."

"Are you a vampire?" I asked.

She shook her head, dark hair waving. Her breasts swayed. I gasped at her breathtaking beauty.

"I am a fair child of the Morning Star," she purred. "Go."

I hurried to my clothes and backpack. I pulled on pants and stuffed my shirt into the pack. I quickly buckled my gun belt and swung the pack onto my shoulders, first retrieving the map. In less than a minute, I was moving for the exit. One more question stopped me. I turned.

"I found some small clay statues," I said. "Penis and testicles attached. What possible reason could Rashad have for emasculating men like that?"

"Sometimes to humiliate. Most times to render them a lackey. Rashad transforms them into slaves."

"He controls the men through the figurines?"

"Yes."

I thought about forty-eight men out in the city, now forty-nine, serving as Rashad's personal puppets. Politicians, lawyers, bankers: the demon owned them all.

I turned for the exit again. The monster had to be stopped. A look back showed Kali was gone. Rachel slept soundly, drunk on lust and flooded with semen.

Some men would consider her damaged goods and leave her behind for what she'd done, but I was more loyal than that. I'm faithful. I'd made a vow and given her a promise, and those things matter to me. But above all that, I loved her. I believed she was not to blame, especially after feeling the

effects of the female demon. I would hurry home and arm myself and come back, guns blazing.

Rachel needed me to save her.

So did Kali.

Chapter 11

I dipped the last bullet and reached for my spring knife. In a few minutes, every weapon I owned would have a layer of gold on it. I'd melted every piece of gold jewelry Rachel owned. If I got her back, I'd buy her more.

When you get her back, the reassuring voice of my father said. *Not if.*

Thanks, I answered.

I don't trust Kali, he added.

She's a demon. I don't trust her either.

She'll use you to eliminate Rashad at no risk to herself.

I nodded and checked the edge on the knife. Satisfied, I slid the weapon into the sheath on my forearm and rolled my sleeve down to cover it.

There's a reason these demons live so long, Dad, I thought. *They are good at surviving, at avoiding risk. She'll use me to kill Rashad and I'll use her to get Rachel back. That's fair.*

I took thirty minutes to pack my gear.

By now, Janet said. *They're probably fucking Rachel again.*

Shut up, I growled.

The water-treatment plant was the best way in and out of that labyrinth. The place was self-sufficient and so mostly vacant, monitored by one bored guy

in a control room. I worked my way to the lower levels without being seen. Janet was almost certainly correct, and that knowledge drove me. I fought to maintain emotional control but minds are funny things. Images of Rachel having hot sex kept popping into my head. Not helpful.

I made a few wrong turns even with the map but soon returned to the four-cages room, now empty. Rashad had moved everyone elsewhere. I had no idea where to begin my search. I spread the map hoping to find something promising, something that looked like a hideout, but saw nothing. A skittering of tiny claws made me look up.

A plump rat scurried along a wall towards me. I folded the map. The rat turned and I followed and soon found myself guided to a narrow tunnel. I crawled the last dozen feet, hanging my head over a ledge to look down on a macabre, soul-searing scene that ripped my heart from my chest. I swallowed a cry of dismay.

Rachel fucked three beasts at the same time. She rode one, her hands on his hairy chest, while another fucked her ass from behind. The third stood over them all, feeding my wife his thick cock which she gobbled with delight, running her tongue up and down the length, pausing to lick away leaking precum before sucking hard on the head. With three of the creatures so close, she was lost in a cloud of pheromones, desire floating through the air to fill her lungs and soak through her skin. My wife was lost to bliss, hungry for every hard inch.

Perhaps it was fatigue or low blood sugar or just something primal, but for a split-second her ravenous lust got to me. I'm a visual man and the stimulation centers in my brain lit up at the raw sexuality on display. Rachel worked her body to give the greatest pleasure. For an instant that wasn't Rachel, it was everywoman, drowning in a sea of yearning, eager to please and be pleased, longing for the imprisoned male seed, desperate to release it. I quickly slapped those feelings down.

Rachel mauled her breasts and furiously rubbed her clitoris, orgasming around the three hard shafts embedded in her. Her muffled cries of pleasure spurred the creatures and the minotaur in her pussy grunted and groaned

and ejaculated, spewing inside over and over, pure white cream escaping around his thick shaft and dripping from his balls.

I raised my pistol. I'd have one shot before the noise scared the others away. I might have time for a second shot as they fled but there was no guarantee. I was too late for the beast in her pussy. No point, now, in killing him. I selected the safest shot, the beast fucking her mouth, because he stood taller than the others, and aimed for his head. I wished Rashad was here. These gold-tipped hollow-points were for him.

The boom shook the walls, echoing round and round. Blood sprayed. The beast toppled backward slowly, his cock leaving her vacuuming mouth with a pop, trailing a string of white. He'd started ejaculating down her throat before my bullet flew.

I expected Rachel to freak out but she did not. The two remaining creatures quickly ran from the bed, leaving a confused and blood-soaked Rachel lying bewildered, staring at the virtually headless monster on the ground. She wiped her face and looked at the blood on her hands. I crawled from my perch and approached her carefully. She smiled, happy to see me, and reached for my zipper.

"Not now, Rachel," I scolded.

She was undeterred. She fumbled at my crotch, trying to free my dick.

"Rach!" I barked, grabbing her hand. "Let's go!"

I pulled and she followed. I retraced my steps up the tunnel and into the corridor where a surprise awaited: a thousand rats, with barred teeth and eyes of malice. I got the message. Kali wanted me to stay and finish the job. I'd be allowed to leave once Rashad was dead.

I turned to my wife.

"Do you know where Rashad is?" I asked. "Where would he go?"

She shook her head and rubbed the front of my pants. I would be thrilled when the effects of the musk wore off. A rat broke from the masses and approached. He sniffed my boot and scurried off in a different direction. I pulled Rachel after and we followed, hurrying through twists and turns before slowing as we approached stairs up. We climbed.

This was old-city stuff, an abandoned subway station from a hundred years ago. Most of the archways out of here were barricaded with old brick but one had been torn open, rubble strewn on the mosaic floor. I kept Rachel behind me as we drew near, growing anxious as I noticed droplets of blood on the floor. We stepped through.

This large chamber was a storehouse for old railcars. A dozen antique carriages sat on old rusted rails in various states of disrepair. The floor was uneven, with broken tiles and holes in the floor, so I told Rachel to wait for me where she was. I switched from flashlight to night vision and descended the four steps to the rail bed. I approached the first car. I stepped up and peered inside.

People sat tied to the seats, most dead, some still alive, all with multiple wounds on their throats. The ones still living had eyes filled with madness. Like Kali, Rashad fed on humankind, and these were his dining cars. Some of the dead wore clothing from bygone eras. How many cold cases would we close by tearing the lid off this place? I was sure the other cars held more bodies.

"You're a fool," the silky voice said, inches from my ear.

Adrenaline surged and my hand darted to my pistol but I was wholly unprepared. Rashad, in human form again, had approached with utter silence. His steel grip held my wrist and froze my arm. His free arm circled my throat. Why hadn't Rachel warned me? That betrayal hurt more than the bones he was bending in my wrist. His strength was dreadful. I threw my weight against him and he did not budge. I tried freeing myself, wrenching my hand away, stomping on his foot. He was as unfazed as a rhinoceros battling a butterfly. The arm around my neck tightened and soon my vision grew dim. Terror ballooned. Darkness took me.

Chapter 12

Miss Mapleberry, Janet, and my father all shouted simultaneously: *Wake up!*

I came around slowly. Like the others, I was tied to a seat in the railcar. Rashad had removed most of my possessions, but he'd left me clothed, which was his mistake. I had weapons hidden on my body. I turned my head to look out the window but my muscles didn't cooperate. I was weak, weak like a newborn kitten, and my throat throbbed.

The motherfucker had drained me already.

My ankles were bound to the steel bars under the seat. My arms ran along the back, tied at the wrists. Almost every seat held someone tied the same way. I tested the binding and was shocked to learn how weak I was. How much blood did that bastard drink? I guess this cop had outlived his usefulness. Rashad concluded I was better dead than alive and constantly coming after him. That meant bad news for Rachel, though. He planned on draining me slowly over several meals and keeping my wife to breed her. Emily too. I had to get out of here.

A soft growl from outside froze my blood.

I'm tired of this place, Miss Mapleberry said.

Me too, my father added.

A minotaur circled outside, drawn by the scent of my fresh blood. The narrow doorway would buy me some time but precious little. I tapped my forearm on the seat and felt my spring knife. I tried rotating my shoulder to press my wrist and trip the lever, but that failed. I was too weak. The woman tied to the seat in front of me groaned and I was startled to learn she still lived. She looked dead and drained. I pulled hard on my restraints, using my body weight to compensate for weakness, and tried the lever again. This time it worked and a custom SureGrip pommel jumped onto my palm. I curled my fingers around the tang and tilted the blade against the

ropes. The angle was difficult and I could move the blade only a little, but the ropes frayed quickly.

I heard snuffing at the door. The creature had found the way in and now tried to maneuver his broad muscular shoulders through the opening. I slid the blade rapidly, slicing through strands of fiber on each pass. The car rocked and I knew the monster was in here with us, moving closer from behind. Claws scraped the floorboards as it drew nearer, an annoying musk leading the way.

The creature passed me, halting next to the woman tied on the seat before me. She knew nothing of her peril. The beast leaned close, sniffing around the wound on her throat, and then gently sank his fangs into her neck. I stifled my cry of horror as the monster closed its jaws and tore her throat out, chewing and swallowing. Her head sagged forward, life truly extinguished, and the creature tilted it up again to take a second bite.

The rope around my wrist parted.

I curled my fingers around the pommel again, holding tight for an all-or-nothing stab. The creature leaned in for a third bite and I mustered all my failing strength, thrusting with fury and fear behind my arm.

It wasn't enough. I'd been too drained of blood and vitality. The beast howled at the knife protruding from its chest, howled and lashed out, smashing her skull on the way to clipping my jaw. I saw stars. The railcar spun. The beast swung again and I dropped my head barely in time. The brute yanked the knife from its chest and dropped it before thrashing and smashing as it fled the car.

I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes, I was leaning far forward, head resting against the seat in front of me. I saw the knife stuck point down and stretched my free arm, working the blade until I had it. I severed the ropes around my other wrist and then my ankles.

I rested, closing my eyes. I may have passed out again. I needed speed but my body would not respond. Rachel needed me. The creature could return to finish me off. I took an eternity to exit the railcar. I found my belongings right where Rashad had captured me. In the cars around me I saw movement from the prisoners still alive, but I could do nothing for them. I could barely help myself. I wanted to sleep more than anything.

I used the first-aid kit, spreading an antibiotic and wrapping gauze, and then tried to guess what I'd need. The pack was too heavy for me to bring everything. I took water and two knives, two pistols and extra ammunition. I slipped on my night vision goggles. I hid the backpack under a car.

I considered mercy-killing those still trapped here, rather than allow them to be slowly drained or die of starvation, but decided I couldn't spare the time or energy. I could barely walk. I turned my back and exited the room. In just a few steps I discovered a blood trail. I realized the wounded beast might lead me to Rashad so I followed the droplets, pausing often to rest.

A noise ahead made me stop. I peered around the corner and saw a man, about my age but more heavily muscled, holding a bloody axe and a flashlight, standing over the beast's chopped body. He heard my clumsy shuffle and aimed his light my way and raised his weapon, ready to fight. I lifted my hands, showing him empty palms.

"Nothing to fear here," I rasped. "My name's Andy. We're on the same side."

He eyed me suspiciously.

"They have my wife," I added. "Rachel."

"They have mine, too," he said, lowering his axe. "Tawny. I'm Gary."

I leaned against the slimy wall. Fell, more accurately. He hurried to catch me and ease me to the floor.

"What the hell happened to you?" he asked.

"A lot," I chuckled.

I sipped water as I hit just the high points. He accepted the existence of demons as if he'd already known. His reason for wandering the sewers was like mine, but in his case one of the beasts had entered the city, stealing his wife from in front of him. He'd grabbed an axe off an emergency fire box and come hunting.

"I killed that fucker," he said, gesturing at the dead minotaur.

"That's my knife wound on its chest," I said.

He looked me over.

"You look ready to drop dead," he said.

"I feel ready to drop dead. I've been through hell. I lost a friend down here. Charly. They cut off his cock and balls."

Gary recoiled.

"Why?" he asked.

"They make a kind of voodoo doll and attach the severed member. It gives them control over the man."

He shook his head slowly, contemplating such a fate.

"Let them try," he growled. "You should rest. Get your strength up."

"I can't. I have no time."

I forced my legs to work, rising to my feet.

"Let's go," I muttered. "I have a backpack with more gear I need you to carry."

I was glad to have the companionship but killing that beast had robbed us of our way for finding Rashad. I showed Gary my map and he added a few

things from the direction he'd entered. Between the ancient city, old city, new city, natural caves and lava tubes, water-carved tunnels and what the original natives had cleared, it was a honeycombed mess down here. All we could do was continue in the direction the beast had taken and deal with tunnels as they appeared, searching each for a way forward. We advanced slowly.

"What's that?" Gary asked.

I aimed a flashlight.

"Clothing," I said.

He hurried forward, gathering items from the floor, jeans, bra and panties, hoodie and T-shirt.

"These are Tawny's," he said, voice strained.

"I forgot to mention something," I said. "You're going to hate it. You probably won't believe me."

He stared, waiting.

"The creatures down here, like the one you killed. They have a scent females can't resist."

"Bullshit."

"I swear it's true. I've seen the effect, on Rachel and Emily too. It will get to Tawny as well."

He shook his head.

"Tawny would never cheat on me," he insisted. "Sex is a sacred thing to her. She made me wait a long time."

"It's not about her. You need to understand that."

He grew adamant. Angry.

"She won't," he said. "I know it."

I gave up. Hopefully he never sees the truth. We continued but he was fuming. He shifted the axe from hand to hand.

"Can you handle a gun?" I asked.

"Well enough."

I handed him the nine-millimeter and an extra clip.

"Be sure of your shot," I cautioned. "Watch your background. There are at least three women down here that need us, not just Tawny."

"I got it. Thanks."

He helped me walk and we continued.

Chapter 13

Kali stood mesmerized. The minotaur approached cautiously, still carrying the wound from when I shot him, bandaged now. Kali breathed deeply through her nose, savoring the musky scent. She'd wandered too close and the beast had her.

"What the fuck is happening?" Gary whispered. "What is that creature? Who is that girl? She's hot."

We'd stumbled on the scene soon after leaving the railcar storage area. Tunnels intersected here, a waypoint branching in many directions. We stopped to watch the scene unfold. Water dripped somewhere and the scurry of rat's feet told me Kali had friends nearby.

"That girl is incredible," Gary rasped.

"Don't fall for her," I whispered. "She's a demon too, like Rashad, the one that has your wife."

He only half-listened to me. The sight of Kali had him. I loosened my pistol. Do I save her? My hand shook and the pistol weighed a ton. The beast rose to his full height and Kali's eyes traveled down the hairy body to rest on the hanging penis. She stepped closer, ignoring the danger, and lifted the large scrotum in her palms, exhaling.

"Is she going to fuck that monster?" Gary whispered.

"Yes, although she does not want to. That monster is a man, transformed with drugs and magic, created to draw her in with his scent, and kill her."

"I don't want her to die."

"I don't either."

We raised our pistols. At her touch the brute's penis had started to fill, rising and expanding, swelling in anticipation. Kali caught her breath. She was scared, terrified, but unable to resist, unable to flee. She knew the monster would be her doom but his masculine power and pulsating cock was too much to defy. One hand began stroking the length while the other rolled his big balls in their sack.

Pull the trigger, my dad said.

I should let the beast kill her first, I thought. Then finish him. Get out from under all of them.

He said nothing, but I felt my father's remorse at my suggestion. Even dead, Kali's mystic charms worked on him too. The she-demon sank to her knees, obediently opening her mouth and slipping the creature's erect penis in. She sucked gently, reverently, eager to please the brute. Yellow claws tugged away the remnants of her old clothing. She was fully nude now and Gary and I were dazzled by her feminine radiance. The merest thought of firing a shot in her vicinity was repugnant. Gary had to feel the same because we lowered our guns at the same time.

"I can't do it," he said, turning to me.

"Same."

Her perfect mouth stretched in a ring around his throbbing cock. Her head bobbed slowly. I desperately wished it was me she sucked and I know Gary did too. The beast may have been modified from a man into an assassin, but her charms got to him as well. When she had him fully erect, he lifted her from the ground and scooped under her knees. Holding her ass in his clawed hands, he lowered her pelvis, aligning her wet pussy to the tip of his cock. She gasped and sucked air when he pierced her. His girth was too much for her petite opening so he forced her hips lower, sliding his thick shaft in. Kali moaned loud. Gary moaned softly.

"I like it," he whimpered. "I like to see her fucked."

"Me too," I added.

The creature held her tight and worked his hips, thrusting into her. Kali was quickly overcome, lost to the crashing waves of pleasure. She groaned and gasped from his assault, clinging to his hairy back, urging him to fuck her harder. She wrapped her perfect legs around his waist and her arms around his neck and squeezed, her piercing cry of orgasm echoing around the stone tunnels.

I doubt Rashad had planned for this. The grunts and growls from the brute grew louder and more frequent. He spun to force her shoulders against the damp wall and fucked with all his might. Kali orgasmed again from his efforts before he threw his head back and gave a savage roar. His balls jumped again and again, each convulsion a gushing blast of sperm inside her. She peaked as he did but then plateaued, riding a surge of pleasure as he finished spurting. Slowly she returned to this moment.

She shook her head as if some spell had broken and then pulled her hand far away. I thought she reached for something unseen but then her hand flashed forward, claws slicing through the beast's exposed throat. His rigid cock was still embedded as she opened his veins and sent blood spraying. She fastened her mouth to the wound and drank deep, riding him as he fell to the ground. She gulped and gulped, sucking his life's blood down her gullet.

"What the fuck?" Gary whimpered.

They landed hard. Kali ground her pussy around his shaft, stealing the last bit of pleasure for herself, and then got her feet under her and lifted her pussy off his still firm and throbbing cock.

She stepped back to look at the dying creature and a rat emerged from the shadows. She pointed casually at the fading brute and a dozen rats joined the first, followed by a dozen more. Then they swarmed from everywhere, eating, picking the flesh from his bones, devouring the beast.

"What the *fuck*?" Gary croaked.

She lifted her shredded clothing from the floor, examining the tatters for what she might save and discarding everything.

There was a story there but I doubted I'd ever know it.

The rats finished their task and with a gesture she sent them away. She lifted the white human skull and gazed into empty sockets.

"Let's go fuck her," Gary said. "She wants it."

"Terrible idea," I murmured. "Let's stay hidden until she moves on."

Something in my tone reached him and we hunkered down. Kali kicked the bones around, scattering evidence, but kept the skull. Eventually she sauntered off. A single rat followed her.

Chapter 14

"Rashad is down to one beast," I said, handing Gary a can of pork and beans I'd heated over our small butane fire. "Three wives but only one beast."

"That's better for our women."

"Yes, each will be subjected to mating less, but more women is worse for us. The more captured females he has, the more beasts he can create. One beast can impregnate three women. We must get those women away from him before he builds an army."

"Then why are we sitting here? Let's go take this fucker out."

I shook my head sadly.

"You need to understand something, Gary. Rashad Cain is no joke. He's an actual demon. He's not some dumb fucker we can overpower. This isn't a bar fight. Stealth is our only hope."

Gary jammed a spoon into his beans. He was a man of action and sneaking around bothered him. He sensed the truth of my words but hated them.

"Let's sleep," I said. "I'm dead on my feet. I need rest if I'm going to successfully rescue anybody."

He nodded.

"I'll stay awake," he said. "Keep watch. You get some rest."

I thanked him and picked the driest, cleanest spot against the wall. I closed my eyes and sleep instantly swallowed me. I sank into a deep slumber and stayed there.

When I awoke, my body was so stiff I could barely move. The little fire was out.

I was alone.

A note sat pinned under the stove. Gary had gone after Tawny without me, determined to make Rashad pay. Idiot. I packed up, leaving most behind like before, feeling better but still too weak to carry much.

Gary moved without caution or finesse and following his tracks proved easy. I found him. I found everyone.

The area looked like a huge drain from multiple sewer lines above, now unused. A large overflow pit, covered with a rusted grate, filled the far side. Columns supported the ceiling and braced the walls.

Gary was on his back, nude, wrists and ankles tied to pillars in this circular room. Tawny was over him, on all fours in a sixty-nine position with him but ignoring her husband. Behind her was the beast, fucking her from behind, his big hairy balls dragging across Gary's face on every thrust. He saw his wife's penetration from mere inches away.

Rashad was cruel and undoubtedly tired of us causing trouble down here in his domain. He'd decided to teach Gary a lesson. The demon, once again in his human form, stood on grimy steps, watching, Rachel and Emily at his feet. Gone were the black pants and tan polo. All three were nude. The two wives suckled his oversized balls and penis, glancing occasionally at Gary's humiliation.

Gary whimpered in fear and rage, begging Tawny to stop, demanding Rashad call the beast away, swearing to kill the half-man creature the moment he was freed. Rashad let him rant, enjoying the man's rage.

Tawny, laughing, lowered her hips so sopping pussy and plunging cock slid across her husband's face, mashing his lips, slipping into his mouth. He bellowed with muffled fury. As always, the brute thrust like an animal, devoid of intimacy or tenderness, urgently driving his cock deep over and over. She tilted her hips to press her stuffed pussy against Gary's mouth and held herself there, finding the perfect angle to receive the brute's pounding cock. Soon she cried out in orgasm.

"Nooooo!" Gary wailed, heart shattering like glass.

The beast's testicles slipped into his open mouth.

He tossed his head trying to spit them out but their size and weight prevented that, working them deeper. The beast fucked harder and faster and then pushed far up inside Tawny to begin spurting, ejaculating sizzling sperm. Gary must have felt the pulses of semen against his tongue, leaving the testicles to rocket past, pumped up from balls to penis to then be spewed

into Tawny. Gary thrashed against his bindings, screaming in anger with a mouth full.

I had raised my pistol when I first discovered the man but my hands shook too much to risk a shot. I watched in horror as hot semen dripped. Gary roared with thwarted anger. Tawny groaned with deep satisfaction, rolling her hips to keep every inch of that monster cock enveloped, milking the creature.

Now you have four people to rescue, my father informed me.

Chapter 15

I needed help. I had no close cop friends. I had no friends at all, not really, none that I could invite into this madness. I had dreamed of returning with a squad and tearing this place apart but the network of tunnels was simply too big, too complex. Rashad had operated without restriction for too many years. He knew every tunnel, every path. Any team I brought would chase their own tail while he picked us off one by one, and I certainly couldn't invite any female officers.

I laid there in the muck and grime trying to calculate my next move, searching my mind for any thread which would lead to all of us getting out of this awful place.

A growing stench made me lift my head. Rashad had left the area taking the women with him. Gary remained tied, shouting for someone to release him. The creature slept curled on the floor nearby.

A belch of foul air wafted from the overflow pit.

In my youth, I'd gone deep-sea fishing with my father and several other men. One man hauled up a lump of seaweed with an octopus entangled. They all laughed as he freed the creature, which landed with a plop on the deck. Eight sinewy arms gripped the wood as the mollusk moved towards a small hole in the railing and freedom. I remember thinking there was no way such a bulbous head could fit through such a tiny opening. I was

wrong. One leg led the way followed by others. The head compressed as the octopus pulled itself back to the sea. My father was as amazed as me.

The black and sickly green tentacle that pushed through the grate was huge, hundreds of times larger than the ones I'd seen that day, but its ability to squeeze through small spaces was the same. Another tentacle followed and then others followed those. Huge suction cups stuck to floor and wall. The arms were of ghoulish flesh, shiny and wet and partially see-through, revealing pallid veins and arteries. They slithered across the floor and waved in the air, menacing, searching. I stared dumbly, my mind refusing to accept what my eyes saw.

Gary realized something came for him and yanked on his ropes. He screamed. The beast awoke and quickly spotted the threat, frantically jumped away, seeking safety on the steps. I braced my gun and fired at the tentacles, bullets piercing soft squishy flesh, but they had little effect: a slight sting and then nothing.

Several tentacles landed on Gary with a thump. I watched helplessly as they coiled around his body, his legs, his face and head, and I heard the horrible sound of his screams muffled behind the suckered appendages, which then pulled, straining at the ropes before his bones broke and his flesh tore away. One rope broke but the others held, tearing his flesh away as hands and feet slipped free. He was dragged to the grate and then, with the tremendous weight and strength of the monster below, pulled through the rusty bars, his body cracking and snapping and breaking as he screamed again and again until one final pop caved his skull and then he screamed no more.

I wanted to vomit. I wanted to rip my hair out. I wanted to find Rashad and empty a clip of gold-tipped hollow points into him, reload and keep firing until that clip emptied too. I was filled with rage, towering impotent rage. I was so weak I could barely get myself off the floor.

The minotaur had fled down the tunnel leading away, refreshed after his nap and probably eager for another fuck. All that remained on the spot where Tawny had just fucked the beast on top of her husband, were scraps of Gary's flesh and broad streaks of smeared blood.

I gazed at the pit. What was that monster? Where did it come from? Clearly Rashad knew if he offered bait it would come, but he cleared out prior rather than face the nightmare. I'd thought the battle in this underground complex existed solely between Rashad and Kali but now I knew my view was too small. This labyrinth was a waypoint, a crossroads, an intersection of ancient horrors and modern man. Incubus and succubus led the charge but there were other players, other combatants. Who knew where it ended?

At least you're back to rescuing only three.

Terrible, terrible timing, Dad. Really.

The stench was awful. I imagined some connection to the Sound with access to seawater. Mix in centuries of blood and decay and sacrifices offered and stir.

Where did that pit lead? What was I truly facing?

Where did that pit lead?

I had to know.

I was alone. Silence greeted me from every direction. I gathered myself and my belongings and on shaky legs carefully descended the steps to the open area, stepping over splashes of water and streaks of blood and sloughs of Gary's skin. The grate had a latch but wasn't locked. Slimy rungs disappeared into the dark. The smell was awful but I knew from experience bad smells go away. We get used to them. I listened intently but heard only the sound of distant water surging. I opened the grate, suddenly afraid. Terror sank claws deep and my breath turned ragged.

Was I committing suicide? Had I given up but didn't know it yet? I leaned the grate open and set my foot on the wet and slippery ladder, moving slowly and cautiously. I closed the grate and continued down a long time.

A hard, smooth, rock floor awaited me at the bottom of the shaft. I left the rungs and sat, resting until my strength returned. I passed through an arch to emerge at an underground saltwater grotto, illuminated in pale blue by

glowing lichen. The waters slowly rose and fell. A wide ledge ran all the way around. Stalactites and stalagmites littered the landscape, some old enough to have connected into pillars.

Gary's horrific death played in a loop in my mind. If I ever got Tawny away from Rashad, how would I explain? As the pheromones wore off and Tawny came back to herself, she'd remember what she'd done to Gary.

This story had no happy ending.

In the dim blue light, I saw a crude stage and altar at the end of the cavern, so I aimed for it, resting the night goggles on my head. I soon tripped over a woman's body, long dead, in the deep shadows at my feet. I risked my flashlight. She wore clothing from the eighteen-hundreds which fell apart when I touched them. I did a quick search of her decomposed body and discovered a small clay tablet in a leather shoulder bag. The tablet was covered with markings I couldn't read, but I kept it anyway. Both her legs were broken below the knees and I thought at first someone had smashed her shins with an iron bar, but then thought perhaps she'd fallen from high on the rungs and crawled this far to die. She'd been headed in the same direction as me and fiercely determined to get there.

I continued my search and found an old book which looked like a diary and a simple gold wedding band, which I left on her finger. I took the book. I extinguished my flashlight and continued towards the altar. The waters of this grotto held at least one giant octopus-thing so I was careful to leave them undisturbed, stepping over fallen rocks and sticking to the rough cavern wall.

The stage was simply a widening of the ledge and a smoothing of the back wall. The stalactites and stalagmites here bore carvings, blurred by age. Several tunnels led away from this area, all worthy of exploration, but I had no time. The altar, a large rectangular block of discolored limestone, sat at the center. The sides had been carved with letters and faces but the details had faded from moisture and time. A rusty chain, covered in gritty dust, was anchored at each corner. The stone was stained black but I scratched with a thumbnail and revealed the crusted red of ancient blood. I pictured

victims bound to the altar and the octopus somehow summoned. I pictured helpless innocents dying horribly, fed to the dark waters of the grotto.

This all looked older than the eighteen-hundreds. Two hundred years was not long enough to carve a symbol into stone and have the elements almost erase it. This unholy place was ancient, many, many centuries old. This place reached all the way back to the first people of these lands, the Lushootseed, possibly older. Had they performed some unspeakable ritual, now lost in time, and summoned the two demons that warred above me? The thought felt true. How many more had they summoned?

Dizziness swept over me.

You need rest, Janet warned.

She was right. I sat and sipped water for a time and then continued my search. I doubted a struggling victim would be brought here using the same route I'd taken so there was probably another way out. I followed the ledge around, discovering a jail cell carved into the wall and fashioned with crude iron bars. Three skeletons sat within. A little farther I found a small dock, decrepit and crumbling. I could not imagine taking a boat out onto these guarded waters. I continued, my sense of direction telling me I was well out from under the city by now.

The ledge entered a tunnel and the blue lichen faded. Soon I was forced to use my flashlight. I knew I would not find Rachel in these ancient sections, abandoned even by the demonic players above, so now I hunted a way out to return to my quest. The tunnel twisted and turned like a primordial lava tube until I saw dim sunlight ahead. Soon I emerged in deep forest and tangled vines. I scrambled through the brush, gaining altitude to get my bearings, and stepped into fading sunlight on a rocky slope. The city lay below in the distance, too far away to get back to Rachel.

I had to go back the way I'd come.

That bleak reality crushed me. I sat in the sunlight and ate some beef jerky and dried apricots, pulling hard on my canteen to wash it all down. I rested,

reading the diary I'd found on the dead woman. I started near the end to understand her final days.

She'd gone after her husband, kidnapped by Rashad, and gotten lost in the tunnels. Eventually she found her way to the lower levels. It was the altar she sought, not a confrontation with the demon, like me. She wrote she'd learned of a clay tablet which could be used on the altar to summon a demon, one that would obey her and fight Rashad. She tracked that tablet down in a London museum, stole it, and brought it with her. She'd been so close to success when she'd fallen to her death.

She wrote of a cult, a secret society that followed Cain. Hundreds in the city did his bidding. I knew many still did and that number had undoubtedly grown. Rashad had been operating for centuries.

I flipped to the front of her journal and discovered in the first pages that she'd cracked the bizarre alphabet used with such prevalence down here. I spent some time deciphering the tablet and learned the proper words to speak. I also learned I'd need to spill my own blood to bind the demon to me. She warned demons were cunning and untrustworthy but she had no options.

You have no blood to spare, father said.

I ignored him. I needed help. I packed my gear and headed back in, noting this location should I ever need another entrance to the maze.

Chapter 16

Dad was right: I was exhausted by the time I reached the altar. I'd need days before I could give blood and did I truly want a demon partner anyway? I took one of the tunnels I'd skipped the first time and found a long ramp headed up. It opened into a cave with mechanisms used for torture all around. A skeleton hung in a small rusty iron cage. Another, dead only a year or so, lay strapped to a huge wheel, shoulders, elbows, wrists, and knees all dislocated. What an explosion of pain that must have been. Poor man. If Rashad captured you, your fate was always grisly.

I needed to rest again so I cleared a spot on the floor and laid down. The need to free Rachel was strong but I fell asleep anyway.

"Wake up," Kali said.

I opened my eyes slowly. My body felt like I'd been beaten in my sleep. A chubby rat stared at my face from inches away.

"Cain has your woman," Kali said. "Arise and fight."

I climbed to my feet. I desperately needed more rest. I needed real food and fresh water and ten days in a clean bed.

"He has a beast with him. I cannot get close. I will lead you there and you can kill him. Reducing him to one minotaur has hurt him badly. He will rebuild as soon as possible. He will send others to snatch women off the street. You cannot give him time."

I was at my limit. Every move was wracking pain.

"I need rest," I muttered. "I'm only human."

She stepped close. Even in my weakened state, her feminine mystique soaked through my skin and electrified my brain. My eyes went to her incredible body. She radiated a desire I could not resist because it came from me. The sight of her was almost more than I could take. I drank her lusciousness in gulps, my gaze sweeping her skin. Only my unshakable love for Rachel kept me true.

"You're a good man," she said. "Follow me to free your wife."

I did. She left me behind often, infuriated by my slow pace, returning to castigate my progress. At last we reached a branching tunnel and she pointed into the dark mouth of one.

"That way," she said. "I can go no closer. Find your wife and kill the demon and return. I will lead you to the surface and set you all free."

Her words landed with a clunk. For the first time, I realized she lied to me. I would indeed find Rashad down this tunnel but Kali had no intention of ever setting me free. Once Rashad was dead Kali would enslave Rachel and me and the others. We'd live the rest of our lives down here, serving her, luring fresh human victims into her lair.

"Okay," I said.

I armed myself: guns and knives. I left Kali and headed down the slowly curving tunnel. When I lost sight of her I stopped to rest a minute and then continued.

The tunnel opened into a larger room. Sewer waters flowed here, runoff from the city above. Two yellow bulbs marked the official entrances and exits for this room. One wall was red brick and large wheels, padlocked, controlled valves to regulate flow. No one from the city had been down here in a long, long time. Tawny leaned on one wheel, Emily, the other. Emily had a slight paunch to her lower belly, sure signs of an accelerated pregnancy. I was too late to save Charly's wife but there was still time for Tawny and Rachel. My wife was bent across Rashad's lap. He stroked her hair sweetly with one hand while the other was wrapped around her delicate throat.

The minotaur held her hips and fucked her from behind. Rachel's face was contorted with blinding pleasure as the thick hard shaft spread her wide and filled her. The beast's claws pierced her skin here and there but that slight pain only heightened her intense gratification. She moaned as the mind-melting sensations washed over her. I watched those big hairy balls swing and weighed my options. If I shot the beast, Rashad might rip out Rachel's throat in anger. If I shot Rashad the beast would run and I'd face Kali alone, having failed again. I knew I'd never raise a gun to that gorgeous face. I'd never do anything to harm that magnificent body.

I scanned the room again. Large pipes ran from floor to ceiling and side to side, each with an access valve. This was a maintenance room for the city sewers should anything go wrong.

Rachel groaned deeply as the brute induced an orgasm. Rashad chuckled. I tried to ignore what happened there and concentrate. If I moved carefully, I could work my way around to the other side unseen. The group was focused on other things. Then when I took a shot at Rashad, the minotaur would run away, towards the tunnel where I stood now, which had Kali waiting at the other end. The beast would run directly into her and his musky scent would do the rest. I could grab Rachel and follow the utility stairs out of here and back above ground.

I would need to rescue Tawny and Emily another time.

My heart sank. I couldn't do it. Emily already carried a growing demon spawn. I had to get all of them out at the same time.

The beast had tilted his head back, staring at the ceiling as his hips pumped. Rachel gasped, feeling something inside her, feeling the minotaur cock lengthen and expand, signs of his impending climax. I watched, frozen with indecision. The beast pumped faster and faster.

"Give it to me," my lovely wife hissed, grinding her ass at the monster, pumping her hips and encouraging his orgasm. My heart broke. I understood she was not herself, that primordial forces moved her, but the vision remained: my wife urging another male to blast her full of sperm.

"Do it," she begged, and then another orgasm rocked her.

The beast roared. Rachel cried out. They climaxed together and all I could do was stand and watch. Rashad released her and the beast wrapped muscular arms around her torso, tumbling to the ground, wildly humping. Rachel pleaded for him to fuck her harder, to never stop, her body writhing as words of lust and desire poured from her mouth. She was lost to the act, abandoning herself to him, handing her body over for his use, his pleasure. She craved his seed and offered everything she possessed to get it, to drain every drop.

Rashad laughed with delight.

Hatred filled me, flashing to every corner of my being.

I raised my gun and fired and a gold-tipped bullet tore through his neck. I fired again and then again, the weapon a dragon in my hand, spitting fire and smoke. I was too weak to aim effectively. I knew the first shot hit but doubted the others.

Pandemonium exploded. Emily and Tawny screamed at me to leave Rashad alone. The beast whipped his stiff and dripping penis out of my wife and raced for the nearest exit. Rashad, spraying blood, slapped a palm over his wound and scooped naked Rachel from the ground, his bargaining chip and body-shield, and ran for the closest tunnel. Rachel struggled to follow the minotaur but Rashad was too strong. He carried her effortlessly. I fired again but wide as Rachel was in the picture now. I took a safer shot at his exposed thigh and saw a satisfying burst of blood. Then he and Rachel vanished down a tunnel. I climbed to the floor and circled the pipes, rushing, but in my weakened state far too slow to catch them. They were gone. I followed Rashad's blood trail until it vanished under an air vent high overhead.

"Son of a bitch!" I screamed.

I returned to Emily and Tawny, both crying, fearful the beast may have been harmed. I had to convince them the creature was safe before they let me lead them to Kali.

"He got away with Rachel," I barked, furious. "So I'm still anchored to this place. I'm still your agent but I will see these two cared for and then I'll return to free my wife."

She didn't like it.

"I'll be back," I promised her. "I hate leaving Rachel but I'm useless like this. I can't run. I can't aim. I can't fight. I need rest. I wounded him, badly, and we've taken two of his women away. That's a huge set-back. We must do this right."

Her eyes were angry. She grabbed Emily by the wrist and spun her around, placing her delicate hand on the pregnant woman's belly. White electricity crackled around fingers and knuckles and Emily screamed, struggling in

vain to free herself. Electricity snapped and sizzled again and then Emily screamed wildly, throwing her body around, trying to get away. Her strength was nothing compared to the succubus. Kali kicked Emily's legs open and a clawed and furry fetus, unmoving, slopped out to splatter the tile. Blood gushed and then stopped. Emily fainted and Kali let her fall to the ground.

"No," she insisted. "Go kill Rashad now."

She was even more gorgeous angry. I was terrified of my desires for her, her demonic powers, and her fury.

"No," I stated.

I stood my ground on trembling legs. We locked eyes. I refused to back down.

"Very well," she relented. "The women will come with me to my island. I can heal them and the minotaur will not cross water. They'll be safe."

"I will return quickly," I promised.

End Book One

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