

Chapter 08

"What's the details on the sighting?" I'm heading to the weapon's room with one of the doctor. I was in the middle of getting my readings taken when the sighting came.

"It's a doozy. Not much details on the demon himself, but he's strong. Three police cars showed up and they've been overturned and thrown about according to the caller. Half a dozen injuries already and they can see bodies in the mouth of the alley. No numbers but the caller was panicking, so I'm guessing there's a few."

I nod. That's good, this is a violent one. It was just yesterday I talked with Jason about forming a team, there isn't one ready yet. I change and arm myself. Nothing extra, I don't need anything special to deal with a demon this murderous.

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The van drops me off at the end of the street. It's mostly blocked by three overturned police cars. People are crowded behind them, trying to look over and around them. For as scared of Demons as people are, they are also fascinated by them.

I jump over the lowest opening and walked to the alley. I can see limbs and a torso before I'm even close. The other end of the street is closed off by emergency vehicles, and ambulance and two police cars. The ambulance isn't going to be needed.

I get a sense that something is off a twenty feet from the alley. This close I can tell there isn't any blood on the limbs and torso. Ten feet away I can tell they are mannequin parts. I stop walking.

I didn't get any details, I've never needed them before. Also those who called it in wouldn't have come close enough to see if there was blood.

This was him. I don't need his scent to know it. He staged it to be as different as what I expected but didn't actually kill anyone. I walk to the alley and now I pick up his scent. He only ventured as far as where the police cars stopped, trying to box him in. He threw them to one end of the street, a clear warning for anyone to stay out. He let the police officers escape.

I look from one end of the street to the other. Fear kept anyone out until more police arrived to block the other end.

My hand is on my phone before I stop myself. The team isn't ready. I'm not ready.

I can leave. I know he isn't going to hurt anyone. He makes sure no one gets hurt. But if I leave, what message does that send to the people watching. I'm their hunter, their protector. I can lose a fight, but to walk away from one?

I look in the alley. The sun is starting to go down, so the shadows are long there. I don't see anyone.

"I know it's you."

He steps into the little light in the alley.

"What do you want?"

"I want to show you something."

"How nice you are?" I kick one of the arms at him. "That you don't like killing? You think that makes a good?"

"What I am is irrelevant. This is about them, not me. It is about what the lies they tell you."

"Humans don't lie."

"Don't they?"

I step in the alley to be out of view from the people watching. "I know you're not going to kill anyone, so why don't you stop with your games and tell me what this is really about?"

This lips on his muzzle stretch, showing a lot of pointed teeth. I think he's smiling. Not a pleasant sight.

"You know nothing about me. All you know is that I have not killed anyone in this city, yet. This will not last. If you do not chase me. If you do not catch me. People will die today."

I take out my revolver, but he's already gone. I take off after him. I don't know how serious he is, but he's a demon. killing is in his nature. I can't take the chance.

I see him jump from a wall to the other, going up until he reaches the roof. I follow him. More light here makes him easier to follow. without too many obstacles I can also run faster, and I'm keeping up with him, even gaining a little. I want to shoot him, but I'd be wasting bullets while running and if I stop I will lose him.

We jump from rooftop to rooftop, leaving the elegant residential district we were in and heading to a lower income area. The roofs get dirtier as we go, sometime having holes in them. I see clothes lines in the alleys as I jump over them. People look up as our shadows cross them. We're too fast for them to realize with it is they saw.

He disappears over the side of a building, when I jump down he's running along the sidewalk, shoving people aside hard enough they don't all get up from where they fall.

He goes up a set of stairs and crashes through a door. I follow him and almost run into him once I'm in the building, my eyes taking a moment to adjust to the lower light.

he stands to the side as I catch my balance and I see we're in a large room, all the walls have been taken down, leaving only a few beams here and there holding up the ceiling. There are people here. men and women. the man are looking at us, fear and defiance on their face. a few of them have handguns in their belts or their hands. The women are on dirty mattresses, in various state of undress. They are dirty, have been beaten, and are whimpering.

"What is this?" I ask the demon. "Am I here so I can see your handy work?"

"I have nothing to do with this."

"Fine, then another demon's work. What he's a rival and you want me to take out his operation for you?"

The demon gets in my face, and while I want to move away I don't. I'm done letting him make me afraid. "Smell them."

"I don't know what your game is."

He pushes me in their direction. One of them raises his arm and I hear the hammer pull back. I react by reflex, grab the gun hand and lift it up. He fires in the ceiling.

He smells human.

Alright, he's a recent addition, probably hasn't come in contact with the demon yet. I go to another one, smacking the gun out of his hand. Also human. I go for a third one., his gun is already pointing at me, but he's afraid. He knows what I am at this point. He knows he can't hurt me. He doesn't fire as I get close and breathe in his scent. No taint. All the guns follow me, but no one fires, if they don't hit me, they'll hit one of their comrades.

I smell seven of them before I turn to the demon. "What are they?"

"Humans."

"No! Humans don't do this unless they've been tainted. This is something you've arranged. You're trying to confuse me."

"I am trying to show you the truth."

"This isn't true!" I wave my arms at the people, who I notice are now fleeing, The men at least. The women are crying, trying to edge as far away from us as they can.

"Ask them who did this. You smelled the ones fleeing. They are humans. Ask those still here if someone else did this to them."

I crouch next to one of them, a woman with dirty blond hair, bruises all over her body. She recoils away. I can smell blood on her, as well as other scents I've never smelled before, but which triggers something in me, and instinct that something very bad was done to her.

I keep my voice as soft as I can. "Who did this to you?"

She looks at me for a moment, then at the shattered door.

"The men?"

A moment of hesitation, then a nod.

"Has there been a demon here before? Someone like him?"

The terror in her eyes is clear as she shakes her head. This can't be true, but humans don't lie. Except that if she is telling the truth, humans have lied to me before. She recoils further away, and I know he's behind me.

I stand and punch him. "No! I refuse to believe humans would do this to each other." He blocks some blows, but many make it pass his defense. "I've seen too many demons murder humans for you to convince me they aren't involved in this." He back hands me and I fly across the floor, hitting a column and falling to the ground.

"You think we want this?" he roars. "You think we want our young driven mad with hunger and forced to the cities for food? We are being starved!"

I sit there, staring at him. I can see the anger in him the rage and the despair. "What are you talking about?"

He regains control of himself, and his form shrinks. "There was a balance, once. Humans had the cities, we had the wild. but humans have been stealing the wild from us. We have less and less to hunt. Our young need more food, and they have less self control, the madness hunger brings strikes them quicker than the older ones."

"If you're telling me this to try to get me to stop hunting them, it's not going to work. I'm sorry they're hungry, but it doesn't give them the right to kill humans. I was made to protect them."

A sound escapes him, it's low and guttural. All the women cover their ears and wail. I think he's laughing.

"If I wanted you to stop killing them, all I had to do was kill you."

"Then what do you want?"

"I want you to question who you are, what you are. Go to your human, see the lies they told you and uncover the truth."

This time I'm the one who recoils. I don't want to believe Jason and Amanda lied to me, but they are the ones who told me how demons and humans were. I look around. They are the ones who taught me that no human would ever do what I am seeing here.

"What will you do?"

"I will leave. You can tell your humans you killed me, if it's what you want. I won't come back here again." he turned, and shrunk a little more, becoming close to a tall human's height, the darkness on his skin became like clothing. "If you decide the humans aren't worth your protection anymore, leave the city. I will find you."