

ALL
THE
HIDDEN
MONSTERS

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*For the twenty-year-old me –
told you you'd prove them wrong.*

*And come he slow, or come he fast,
It is but death who comes at last.*
Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion* (1808)

I

OREN

‘Single victim. Female. Young . . . mid-twenties. Throat cut. Defensive wounds to arms and torso. No transformation.’

Oren circled the body, examining all angles.

Still in human form, she was lying on the floor of her Upside apartment living room, ruining a perfectly good rug with her blood. Her shoulder-length blonde hair was stained red at the tips, and her eyes were still open, staring vacantly at the memory of the last thing they saw.

He crouched and held a hand over her chest, a few centimetres from her non-beating heart, and closed his eyes. ‘Body core temperature cooling but not cold. Dead less than an hour.’

He sighed and got to his feet.

‘Blood spray on the walls indicates throat was cut before she fell . . .’ He paused, glancing at his notebook open on the coffee table. ‘Or . . . staggering back from her killer.’

Blue ink transcribed his musings, fading and changing itself with every fresh observation.

‘Partial footprint in the blood. Mug of coffee: mostly

drunk. Apartment in good condition. Bedroom untouched. Kitchen,' he poked his head through the doorless arch into a small workspace, 'in order. Noticeboard – nothing of interest.'

At least, not to him.

He walked back into the hallway. Keys sat in a dish on a small table beside the door, a few bits of junk mail discarded beside it. He turned the letters over, examining both sides, then threw them back down.

'What a Thursday you've had, Lucinda Hague.' He waved a hand and his notepad appeared on the table. 'Front door undamaged. No forced entry.'

He went back into the apartment, stood for a moment.

Something felt . . . off.

He turned on the spot, sniffed.

Nothing.

He sniffed again.

Still nothing.

Interesting.

He couldn't put his finger on it . . . Why was this bothering him? At first glance it really did appear to be a human crime, the fact the victim was a Downsider mere chance. And there was nothing at the scene to give away supernatural secrets. He should walk away and leave the humans to deal with it. They'd never know the unlucky Lucinda Hague was a werewolf, the only Downside race that could live Upside permanently. He pitied them. Saw

their desire to try and live human lives as a denial of what they were.

He frowned. He didn't like being unsure. Roderick – his so-called captain at the Arcānum, the elite force of warlocks that kept the peace in the supernatural world – would write it off quickly if he couldn't produce anything concrete.

He tutted, irritated. Roderick had given him an hour before he tipped off human authorities to a disturbance at the address, and he'd used most of that.

Time to go.

He gave Lucinda Hague one final, impassive glance, then shrugged, and slipped from the room.

. . . And heard a heartbeat humming like the wings of a trapped bird.

He paused.

He usually tuned out emotions. Had honed his skill set over many years to control his over-heightened senses, and he'd almost missed it.

He wrenched open the apartment door so quickly she dropped her umbrella in surprise.

A girl trussed up in layers against the cold, her thick coat buttoned high over a scarf, stared at him. Her dark, wind-whipped hair was falling out of its scruffy bun, untamed and as wild as the look of fear in her brown eyes.