

London Nights

Book 1: The Lost Boy

Von Ulysses

Kapitel 6: Lies and consequences

"So what exactly are you guys doing?" Kearon asked.

It was a sunny day and the tourists were out in droves. The area was buzzing like a beehive.

Richard tossed the wrapping paper of his grilled cheese sandwich into a bin. He had taken Kearon to one of the local Costa, his favourite coffee shop chain. It had been crowded with tourists and locals alike so they had taken their breakfast along and eaten it in the small park next to Christ Church in Spitalfield. The park was part of the Jack the Ripper tours but most of those didn't start until the late afternoon since the tour guides considered it more atmospheric to roam Whitechapel and Spitalfields in the dusk when Jack had been out to murder his victims. At this hour the park was still quiet except for two elderly men who sat on a bench and a guy walking his dog.

"This and that. Helping out, if you will." Richard shrugged. "I wasn't a member of the team until recently. When Tariq came along, he stirred things up. Before that, it was usually Velkan who was out on assignments. Castor is more of a support player and I'm not even sure Sydney cares enough to help anyone unless he has a stake in it. The Whitechurch Group has a network all over the world and London is the headquarters of sorts. This is where it started. So before Jon came along, Velkan usually worked with operatives from other branches or alone."

"And what is the Whitechurch Society exactly?"

"A group of individuals from all sorts of supernatural backgrounds working together. Helping in cases which cross species lines or when the local authorities ask for our assistance. Elisabeth has her own agenda, too, though, research missions and the like. We're fighting the good fight, you could say."

"That's so cool."

Richard smiled. "It is but it's also dangerous at times. That's why Velkan didn't really want me involved. And Myra was just our resident scientist. She spent most of the time in her lab in the basement. Until Jon and Tariq joined us. When Tariq and I got closer, he went to Liz and asked her to form Team Young Whitechurch as he called it. That's him, Myra and me. We didn't get any major assignments yet but got to do more work and Tariq is training me and Myra in self-defense."

"Where is he at the moment?"

"With his family." Richard drank the last bit of his caramel latte. "He was born near the Rub al Khali desert in Saudi Arabia. He's a bedouin. His brother was captured by a demon and we saved him but he was hurt pretty badly so Tariq stayed behind to help

care for him. He'll be back soon, I hope."

"Does his family-?"

"No. I was a friend there. It's better that way."

"I see." Kearon looked around the park as if he was searching for something.

"Are you okay? You seem nervous ever since we got here, if I may be honest."

"Oh? No, no, everything's fine. I'm just not used to being... I mean... I usually kept myself hidden in the factory."

"No one can see that you're a fae."

"But other fae might recognize me. You did."

"Oh well, that is true but in my case that wasn't a bad thing." Richard stood up. "Come on, let's get your stuff and go back to the mansion. There's still a lot to see there and I need to introduce you to the others eventually."

It was just a short walk to the factory which didn't look more inviting in the bright light of the morning than it had in the twilight of the evening before.

"How long have you been hiding here?"

"A few weeks. It's safe. No one ever goes here, not even the other homeless."

"I wonder why."

"What?"

"Nothing." Richard felt a cold shiver. He subconsciously rubbed his arms. This area of London was steeped in blood and darkness. Shadows of centuries of poverty and death lingered, unseen and unfelt by the humans. This had once been the most densely populated and poorest area of London and no one ever counted the people who went missing in the alleyways and dark corners. Jack the Ripper was just the tip of a dark iceberg which still loomed over this part of town.

"Aren't Banshees drawn to places of darkness?"

Kearon stopped and looked at his feet. "Why do you say that?"

"I'm just being curious. No judgement, don't worry."

"We are... naturally tuned into the darkness, yes. We're not afraid of it."

"That's why you love the mansion. And this place."

"But Whitechurch Manor isn't evil."

"I never said anything about evil. Just darkness. And Whitechurch Manor has a lot of darkness."

"You don't think I'm evil?" Kearon asked quietly.

"Not for a second."

Richard met Kearon's eyes and the Banshee smiled brightly. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes shone happily.

"That's... I... I mean... thank you..."

"Shall we get your things?" Richard said to help Kearon out of the situation. He put his arm around Kearon's shoulder faster than he had thought about it but to his relief, Kearon didn't seem to mind. Together they walked into the factory.

The inside of the factory wasn't much more pleasant now that daylight streamed through the high dirty windows. Dust danced in the beams of light and some birds were making noise somewhere on the walkways above. White stains of hardening bird poo were dotted everywhere and rats scuttled off as the two men walked past the conveyor belts. All things which had been hidden by the blackness of the night before. The rest of Kearon's things was still where he left them. Richard helped putting

everything into the duffle bag which he brought along. As they were almost done, Kearon suddenly froze.

"Oh no." he muttered.

Richard felt the presence of danger, too. The hair on the back of his neck stood on edge as his senses picked up footsteps. He turned around to find three men walking towards them. They looked rough. All three wore hoodies and camo pants with thick combat boots like it was uniform, they probably all belonged to the same gang. Richard grabbed Kearon and pushed him behind himself.

"We don't want trouble, guys. Just walk away."

"Oh, he don't wan' trouble." the guy in the middle said, flashing the gap where his left upper front tooth used to be. "Shame that ya foun' it, laddie."

"Do you want money? I got some."

"Money." The right one laughed. He had a big scar which ran all the way from his chin up to his forehead. "Do we want money, Kearon?"

Richard's head jerked around to find Kearon hiding behind him. The Banshee was even paler than before.

"You know these guys?"

"I-"

"Oh, he know us, all right, don't ya, lad. It's lad now, innit?" Tooth gap chuckled.

"Who's ya new friend? You going in for them boys now that ya have a knob yaself?"

"Shut up!" Richard growled.

"Oh, ya a fierce one, ain't ya. Kearon got himself a protector. Thought ya could come crawlin' out of ya hidin' place and prance around now that ya have 'im, didn't ya, laddie?"

"Please, guys-" Kearon begged.

"What is going on here?" Richard turned around to Kearon again but he kept the men in the corner of his eyes.

"He owes us, lad." the right one finally spoke. His lower face almost disappeared under a thick, ill-groomed beard. "He owes the boss for the prick he's got dangling between his legs now. Peckers don't come cheap."

Richard could see the tears in Kearon's eyes. The banshee was trembling, about to panic. He had to do something. Three guys. He was alone. However, he had the strength he could rely on both through the blood of the wolf and the sidhe which ran through his veins and his wolf side heightened his reflexes.

His eyes flicked around, taking in the surroundings. He just needed the element of surprise.

"Look, guys, we really don't want any trouble-"

Richard didn't finish the sentence. He swirled around and threw the duffle bag into tooth gap's face. It wasn't heavy and wouldn't cause any damage but it served its purpose. Tooth gap stumbled back and the other two jumped out of the way. Richard leaped towards them and punched beard in the stomach before dodging a blow from scarface. He slid under the flying fist and grabbed an iron bar from the floor, thrusting it upward into scarface's crotch.

The man's howl echoed through the factory.

Richard turned and prepared to slam the bar into tooth gap but he anticipated Richard's move and got hold of the bar mid-swing. Richard lost his momentum and tumbled into the oncoming fist which connected painfully with his face.

He ignored the pain and dodged the next punch before landing one himself.

"Kearon! RUN!"

Richard didn't see if the banshee had followed his command since now he had to deal with both beard and tooth gap. Scarface was still on the ground holding his privates. Both men were preparing to attack him. Richard's heart pounded in his chest. Adrenaline coursed through his body. He hadn't been in the main battle against the flower demon in the desert, having been tasked with keeping Tariq's injured brother out of harm's way. However, this was what he had been training for all those months with Tariq.

Tooth gap made his move first, throwing himself at Richard ready to grab him but Richard stepped out of the way and let him tumble past, slamming his elbow into the back of the man's head. He crashed to the floor but beard was already on the move. He managed to get a punch in but Richard was able to take a hold of the man and thankfully beard wasn't much taller than he was. Richard prepared for the pain as he headbutted the man, sending him falling backwards.

"Kearon?"

There was no answer. Richard looked around but couldn't find any trace of the Banshee. His head was ringing from the attack on beard and in that moment realisation dawned on him. He had made a crucial mistake: He had forgotten about the third man.

Richard swirled around but only in time to see the metal bar in scarface's hands swing into his field of view. The impact was instantaneous and painful but only for a few seconds. Then the darkness swallowed Richard's mind as he dropped to the floor, unconscious.