

The Turning Shadows

Chapter Five

As they walked by the door to the viewing room, Beck turned to Miles and asked, “What...just...happened?” in obvious disbelief.

Detective Miles returned his stupefied expression and said, “What? Which part?”

Rather than reply, Beck exited the viewing-room door, entered the interrogation room, and approached Beldam’s chair. He gingerly raised the handcuffs from the left arm, giving them several quick jerks, which showed them to be still locked tight to chair.

“One second she was locked up tight, the next, she was Casper,” Beck said in disbelief.

“If she was really at Quantico,” Miles said, “then I’d guess she received some specialized training.”

Rattling one of the cuffs, Beck stated sardonically, “Special, sure.”

“Just unlock the things, so we can close this case and call it a night.”

Beck jerked his head up, fixing a combative stare at Miles.

“What do you mean close?”

Detective Miles shrugged, held up her phone and said, “Orders.”

Beck stood up straight, looking indignant, but Miles cut him off before he could speak.

“We have been ordered to release Beldam, as no charges are going to be filed in the incident with Officer Hudson, and further inquiries into Dailyn Beldam have been forbidden.”

“And just exactly where did those orders come from?” Beck questioned.

“Take a guess,” Miles replied.

“The chief?” Beck tested.

Miles shook her head, raised her hand, and pointed skyward with her index finger.

“Someone in the commissioner’s office?”

Miles again shook her head and pointed up more emphatically.

“That was the commissioner himself?” Beck asked with a tone of disbelief.

Miles shook her head again, and thrust her index finger up several times with the ferocity of a vulgar gesture.

Beck’s eyes widened and raised both hands as if in surrender.

Miles stated flatly, “I would have thought the mayor of New York would have been asleep at this hour, but her voice is unmistakable.”

A brief, heavy silence followed. Beck broke it, tentatively asking, “So, what do we do next?”

Detective Miles took a couple of steps forward, entering Beck’s personal space. She put both hands on his shoulders, looked him directly in the eyes, and said, “We don’t do anything.”

He nodded, closing his eyes in obvious defeat.

Miles released her grip and headed down the corridor back to the squad room. Beck sighed, swiping down on the light switch, leaving the room in darkness.

As he walked past the small, staff offices, he heard his name, and ducked into the little, glass walled room that Hainey called home. The computer technician gave him an up-nod as he entered. Hainey sat behind a simple desk with a computer setup that was anything but. The computer itself was nondescript, sitting on the left side of the desk, but the collection of monitors made Beck shake his head. A single, 2-inch bar rose up two feet from a mounting bracket on the back of the desk. From the bar, six spider-like arms extended in various directions, each terminating in a quad-screwed plate that attached to the back of a monitor screen. How technicians like Hainey could possibly need or even tolerate six monitors on their desks perplexed Beck, and the general effect of the multi-monitor display, resembling a giant arachnid, creeped Beck out a little.

The creepiness was softened a bit by the little toy dinosaurs sitting just behind the keyboard. One was a T-rex. The other was the kind with the plates on his back like Godzilla, Beck thought, but he couldn’t name the variety. One more than one occasion, Beck had walked past Hainey’s work area, the glass walls limiting privacy, and he’d seen Hainey holding one dino in each hand, as the technician made growling faces and simulated them fighting. The experience confirmed for Beck that a person had to be at least a little crazy to do the technician’s job.

The slight smile that involuntarily formed on Beck’s face countered his dark mood, so he asked with only a scarcity of weariness in his voice, “What have you got, Hainey?”

“Well, Detective Beck, I can tell you with certainty at this point that Dailyn Beldam’s name isn’t really Beldam.”

“What do you mean?” Beck countered.

“The girl’s file, her recorded past, is about as real as the casabas on our waitress at Hooters last Saturday night.”

Beck’s smile expanded to fill his face, before it quickly veered south and became a frown.

“About that,” Beck said. “Detective Miles got a call from the mayor,” raising his eyebrows he said with emphasis, “not the mayor’s office, a call from the actual mayor.”

“Yeah, I got that,” Hainey replied, pointing up at the middle monitor on the left. “I was watching and listening in.”

Beck exhaled deliberately. “Then you know we’ve been told not to make any more inquiries into Dailyn Beldam.”

Hainey nodded, smiling happily in agreement. “And we won’t. Dailyn Beldam isn’t a real person anyway, so inquiring about her would be a waste of time.”

“Hainey,” Beck said with slow emphasis, like a parent exhorting a misbehaving toddler.

“The mayor called us,” Hainey said quickly, “but someone else called in the FBI.”

Beck paused open-mouthed, recalling the conversation when the FBI first spoke to Beldam.

Hainey nodded, “The FBI said their call came from 1 Observatory Circle. Do you know who lives at 1 Observatory Circle?”

Beck shook his head, “No, but it does sound familiar.”

“It should,” Hainey said, pointing at the top monitor on the right side of his array. The monitor displayed a website, <https://oneobservatorycircle.com/>, with a large heading in bold:

Number One Observatory Circle.

Below the heading in black, a smaller heading in red declared:

The Home Of The Vice President Of The United States.

“Ser-i-ous-ly,” Beck said, emphasizing each syllable like a swear word.

“Yep,” Hainey agreed. “I thought it was strange, since we typically think of the VP as a figurehead position, but then a quick Google reminded me of what he did before he got the job.”

Beck’s eyes narrowed. “And?” he questioned.

“Vice President William Stansberry was formerly the director of the FBI,” Hainey concluded.

“Ser-i-ous-ly,” Beck repeated. After a moment’s contemplation, he continued. “As much as I hate to say it, Detective Miles has it right on this, we need to drop it and move on.”

Hainey gave him a little salute. “Shiny, captain,” he agreed, but his mischievous smile suggested otherwise.

“I’m serious, Shawn,” Beck said, invoking his first name for effect.

Hainey let out a breath. “Okay, detective.”

Beck turned his back on Hainey and headed out the door. He stopped without looking back when Hainey added, “The name Beldam is interesting in and of itself.”

Beck didn’t turn around, but a side-ways tilt of his head betrayed his interest.

“There are a couple of possible derivations,” Hainey continued, “but the original meaning of the word was Witch.”

This time Beck let out a deep breath, and without another word, walked out the door and down the hall into the squad room.