

Chapter 08

Ethan slumped in his large leather chair in front of the fireplace, completely defeated by the Disappearing Man. How could you track a man who changed at will? After weeks of tracking, Ethan knew nothing about this mysterious man. He didn't know where he could be, where he had been, or even what shape he would be if he found him.

Ethan had even given up walking around the streets. Each animal he saw walking past could be Petron. There was simply no way to tell.

He stood up, and slumped towards the kitchen. Reaching up into a cupboard, he accidentally pushed a glass, which fell and broke on the floor.

"What a pity," he said, and took another one, leaving shards of glass all over the floor. Pouring himself a good helping of whiskey, Ethan stumbled back to his chair in front of the fire.

Just as he had sat down, there was a knock at the door. Ethan closed his eyes for a second, cursing the meddling outside world, and got out of his chair.

The door opened to reveal Amelia, the Disappearing Man's ex girlfriend, who had attempted to help him previously.

"Hello, Amelia."

"You won't catch him by staying at home, Ethan," she said. "I hope you haven't given up completely."

"There's no point in chasing him. He can't be tracked. Trust me, I know."

Amelia stepped forward, so that she was standing inside. "At least let me come in and keep you company in your misery."

A small smile flickered on Ethan's face, and he waved her into the room in front of the fireplace.

"So what's keeping you from catching him?"

"I have no idea where he could be. I have no idea where to start. And even if I meet him on the street, he could just change and get away. It's hopeless."

Ethan slouched into his chair. Amelia sat down beside him, there was enough room for both of them. She leaned into him, her warm hair brushing his chin. "And what if you knew where he was?"

Ethan's eyes lit up. "You could help me?"

"I could."

"You know where he is?"

"I have a vague idea. He never told me where he would be when we were together. He just knew where I would be. But once, on a cold night, I took his

jacket home." She was curled up in his lap like a cat. "Inside, I found this."

Amelia reached into her pocket and pulled out a raggedy piece of paper. Ethan took it, and read.

"It's a receipt for a bar tab."

Amelia smiled to herself. "It is."

"At The Frayed Tether," Ethan continued. "The Tether. The bar where they never ask questions, and the clientele never answer. It's the gathering place for criminals. The police never bother looking there; they figure the scum have to have somewhere safe."

"Just promise me, Ethan," Amelia whispered, looking up at him.

"Promise you what?"

"You'll catch him."

"I swear I'll try."

Amelia got up and looked Ethan in the eyes. "Try?"

"I can't do any better than that, I'm sorry."

"I want your firm promise that you will catch him."

Ethan stood up suddenly, the fireplace heating up his red face even more. "And anyway, why are you trying to help me? You only met me a week ago!"

"I want him caught. I want him dead! You have no idea what he put me through!"

"Then why didn't you give me this earlier? It's not just some small task, walking into The Frayed Tether and asking to see the Disappearing Man!"

Amelia stared at him for a second, and then felt herself weakening. "I never gave this to you before because I never thought you could kill him until I saw you face him." Amelia sat down in the chair, and pulled her legs up in front of her. "He's killed so many people, Ethan. Each time the police or some gang send someone to catch him, he just kills them. He's never had to worry for more than a day about a single person."

Ethan sat next to Amelia, and put his arm around her.

"But I've survived? How have I survived longer than anyone else?"

"He's getting tired, Ethan. He's getting sick. Each time he does one of his little tricks, it eats away at him. Every time before you, it's only taken one trick to dispel someone, or even just kill them, but he's had no time to rest with you. No time to heal."

Ethan leaned backwards in his chair, stroking Amelia's hair.

"I" Ethan started. "I promise. I'll catch him. I'll keep going. I won't give up until he's been stopped. I promise."

Amelia smiled. She closed her eyes.

"Thank you, Ethan."