

## Chapter 09

Ethan stepped out of the building, into the foggy street, throwing his jacket on. It ruffled slightly as he breathed in.

He knew where he could find the "Disappearing Man," the mysterious criminal who evaded even the best of the city's crime fighting forces. He felt a cold shiver run up and down his spine.

Pulling the tattered piece of paper from his pocket, he walked down the street towards The Frayed Tether, the darkest bar in the city, where anyone could drink, so long as they didn't mind the other 'anyones' drinking with them.

In the Tether, a figure sat hunched over at the end of the bar. There was a good metre-wide gap around him. His reputation was well spread.

"Would you like another?"

The figure behind the bar looked up from under a ragged fedora. "Could I say no to you?"

The barman hesitated. He could see off-white teeth shakily smiling underneath the hat, but he was glad the eyes were concealed. "Of course." Despite fears, this barman never questioned.

There was a noise from outside, and the doors burst open. They weren't swinging doors, but they burst anyway.

Ethan Ramsey stood in the doorway holding a shotgun.

Slowly, almost all eyes turned to him. Only the shaking man in the fedora kept his eyes down.

"I'm here for the Disappearing Man!" Ethan shouted. Another second passed, and all at once, there was a rush for the door. Soon, only Ethan remained, watching the barman pour Petron his last drink for the night.

"Almost finished, sir," the barman whispered, his hands shaking. "It takes time to pour a good one."

Petron stood up from his lonely seat on the bar, and faced Ethan. The light was behind him, making it impossible to see any details except for a silhouette. He breathed slowly in, standing tall. His arm was concealed.

"Almost there."

Petron reached a shaking hand towards the bench, and took the full glass. By the time it got to his mouth, some of the beer had spilt onto the floor from the shaking. He lifted it slowly.

Ethan became impatient. His shotgun lifted, and a shot flew into Petron's chest. "I spilt it?" whispered the shaking man, bent double. His hidden arm withdrew, and Amelia fell forwards, from the dark of the Dark Man's coat. Amelia knelt on the ground. She had taken the full blast.

Ethan's anger turned to puzzlement. "But she was just I"

"Look what you've done now, Ethan Ramsey."

Ethan angrily aimed his shotgun at the Disappearing Man. "You can't have anyone more hidden in there! Changing shape is pointless, you're out of tricks!"

Another round fired from his gun, sending his arm backwards with recoil. His elbow hit something behind him.

"Am I...?" the voice behind him whispered.

Ethan started shaking. He tried to turn around, but a series of sharp jabs caused him to drop his shotgun and fall to the ground. Lying on the ground, he looked up at Amelia. He had failed her. A cold feeling crept over his body. Everything went dark. He was in the shadow of the Disappearing Man.

"Out of tricks?" asked Petron, standing over Ethan. "I grow tired of your efforts, Mr. Ramsey. Why not leave me alone?"

Petron walked away from Ethan, to lean on the bar.

"Good drink" he smiled at the shaking barman, finishing it off. Ethan heard him walking to the doorway, and heard the remnants of the doorway close.

"I'm so sorry, Amelia. I didn't know I got angry." He whispered to the unmoving girl next to him. "I'll get him, I swear. When he dies, it'll be me standing over him."

He stroked her cold hair, slowly stood up, and staggered out of the door.