

I walked out of Twilight World, under the green canopy and out onto the terrace.

'Bane?' I called softly. My heart pounding, I turned and walked back towards Twilight World. I took a left and walked quickly through the bat enclosure, pausing to glance up at three fruit bats hanging above my head. I ended up back on the terrace. Glancing left and right I trotted back to the entrance of the nocturnal house and carefully picked my way through once more.

He wasn't there.

I stopped out on the terrace, my eyes burning with tears that I refused to let fall. I didn't know what to do, I was immediately transported back to a time when I was just shy of twenty and had just joined Bane on his hunting trips in America. We had stopped at a gas station along a highway to fill up the truck. I had turned to find Bane gone. Thinking he was paying or perhaps in the toilets I sat and waited for his return, each second stretching on. Soon my stomach was in knots as cars around us left and new ones arrived and still there was no sign of Bane. It turned out he had met an old friend and been led round back to look at a new motorbike. Bane apologised repeatedly when he returned but it had been a while before I forgave him. Now, as I spun looking for him, I prayed to no one in particular that he would just walk around a corner, that he had bumped into someone he knew, that he had forgotten to tell me that he would be right back.

Tears dropped rebelliously down my cheeks. He wasn't there.

I sniffed and wiped my wet nose and cheeks on my sleeve.

'Excuse me,' I approached a zoo staff member in his green top. 'I've lost my...friend.'

'Ok, come with me and we'll see if we can find them,' the man smiled warmly and turned to lead me away.

'No,' I shook my head. 'In the nocturnal house.'

'Oh,' the man stopped. 'Please come with me.'

They wanted to call the police. Three hours had passed since Bane and I had first stepped inside Twilight World and I sat on a plastic chair, hands cupped around a cold cup of sweet tea while everything was explained to me. The staff had taken my description of Bane; not quite six foot, late forties, grey eyes, dark hair shaven close, jeans and a dark t-shirt, and we had done a full search of the whole zoo resulting in nothing. They told me about the other disappearances and how it could be connected and that they would have to call the police. This concerned me.

I was desperate to find Bane, every ounce of my body was aching for his presence and I felt so sick that I had already excused myself once to dry heave into a toilet. Bane had a record and I just didn't know what the police would do if they found him; leave him be or drag him back to prison. I didn't understand the law enough to know whether the British police would be interested in an American

ex-con at all, I didn't know if he was a wanted man. The memory of him stealing thousands from an insurance company rushed through my mind. My fingers trembled around the cup as I placed it down.

'Can you wait a moment? I would like to call a friend.'

The staff didn't seem sure but ultimately it was my decision so they let me out. I could feel their eyes on me through the window as I stepped into the sunshine and pulled out my mobile phone. Bane wouldn't like me doing this but Bane wasn't here, I thought with a small sob. I punched some buttons and held the phone to my ear.

'DCI Murphy.'

'Don't you guys say hello?' I tried to smile but another sob wrenched itself free.

'Emily?' Murphy's voice became soft and I heard him moving, probably to somewhere he could talk freely. I nodded foolishly. 'Are you ok?'

'No. Yes. I'm fine. Do you know anything about those two people who disappeared in the nocturnal house in Bristol?'

'It's not my jurisdiction.'

'I know, but do you know anything?'

'You think it's something supernatural?'

'I don't know but I need to know what's going on. Do the police have anything?'

'I don't know, I -'

'I need to know, Murphy,' I said a little too loudly.

'Alright, ok. What's going on?'

'It's Bane. He's gone.' Another sob and my hand flew to my mouth in a vain attempt to stop it.

There was a pause at the end of the phone.

'Do you want me to come to you?'

'No, no, I just need to know...can you get me the details of the other victims?'

'Emily, you know what you're asking of me.'

'You're right,' I said, exasperated. 'I'm sorry.' I hung up and burst into tears, my knees buckling beneath me. I sat on the dry grass, the summer sun beating down on me, the male lion roaring in the near distance as I fought to contain myself. My phone rang and I stared at Murphy's name. I answered.

'What?'

'I'll see what I can do. Are you sure you don't want me to come to you?'

'No, no I'm fine. Don't want to lose you too,' I said with a forced laugh. It was met with silence.

'Murphy?'

'Yeah?'

'Thanks.'

We said our goodbyes, I could tell he wasn't happy about the conversation but I hung up before he could complain further. The staff let me back inside and a woman handed me a tissue.

'Ok,' I said. 'Let's call the police.'

DCI Turner was leading the investigation. He was a short man with a dark receding hairline and tired eyes. He took my details and a statement along with a description of Bane. I didn't have any photos, I don't know why. A small voice in my head wondered how long it would take me to forget what he looked like and this brought the tears back and I swallowed hard. I tried to focus on my next move. I was certain the police weren't getting anywhere; Turner was not particularly comforting on that front.

As Turner's small team left with zoo staff to close the nocturnal house, a thought struck me.

'Detective?'

'Hmm?' Turner looked up at me from a notepad.

'The other victims. I mean, their families. Would it be possible to know who they are? Maybe I could meet them. Maybe we could do something together, like support each other, or help, or something?'

Turner's eyes narrowed.

'I'll have to ask them first. I'll see what I can do.'

'Thank you.' I sat back, satisfied. If only getting the victims details in every case could be this easy. The idiocy of the concept of losing Bane being easy made me choke suddenly on my own hysterical laughter.