

We walked up the path, under the low, leafy branches of trees lining the way, towards the zoo entrance. It was early morning and dew still hung on the blades of grass. Bane breathed in deeply and smiled, slipping his hand over mine. I glared up at him and pulled my hand free. 'What?' He asked gruffly, his Texan drawl feeling oddly out of place on such a beautiful British summer morning.

I could understand why he was so happy; it was that kind of day. The sky was blue, we were surrounded by singing birds and the green of grass and leaves and the sweet smelling air was slowly warming up promising a hot day ahead. Still, that was no excuse to hold my hand. I had taken a wrong turning somewhere, I thought. Somewhere along the way to figuring a way out of this life of death and blood I had ended up back with Bane.

He made me happy, he always had. When we first met he was the epitome of excitement and independence. He was kind and tough and he protected and taught me. He bought me my first gun, my first and only revolver. I hadn't left him because I stopped loving him; I would never stop loving him. But if I acknowledged that out loud, or allowed him to hold my hand, I would never find a way out. I would be stuck in this world of death with only Bane to hold onto and I just wasn't ready for that. I stared down at his hand and not for the first time this day, week or month, I remembered his proposal.

He had stiffened; I could feel his posture change beside me, walking tall and avoiding contact with me. Oh what harm would it do? To just hold the man's hand, to give him a little something. I knew I was being confusing, sleeping with him and then brushing away his affections. So why couldn't I just hold his hand?

Bane stopped as we reached the zoo entrance. He stood with his hands on his hips and looked up at the black animal silhouettes decorating the top of the doorway. The building was bright white and the smell of fresh paint hung in the air.

'You ready?'

I fished out my purse, straightened my top, feeling a little naked without my revolver at my shoulder, and nodded.

'Let's go. Oh, and I want to go see the gorillas.'

Bane smirked and led the way in.

The girl at the till smiled broadly as we approached.

'Good morning,' she said brightly.

'Mornin'. Two adults please sweetheart,' Bane flashed the girl his most charming grin. I opened my purse angrily, feeling a bolt of jealousy hit me. I would have slapped myself if we weren't in a public place. For pity's sake, I told myself, pull yourself together.

The girl blushed.

'Would you like to donate gift aid?'

'Yeah,' I mumbled, pushing Bane out of the way and brandishing a debit card. I signed the gift aid and paid for our tickets. She handed me a map.

'Enjoy your day.'

I forced a smile at her and turned to find Bane already in the gift shop staring at a stuffed lion.

'You know there are real ones just outside that you can stare at,' I said quietly. Bane looked me up and down.

'You ok?'

I struggled.

'Yeah.'

Bane raised an eyebrow and turned to walk outside into the zoo. I followed, my brow creased.

'Maybe this isn't such a good idea,' I found myself saying, walking out into the sunshine. Bane stopped and squinted back at me.

'What? You don't think we should check this out?'

'No, this probably should be checked out but maybe we shouldn't do this together.'

Bane came closer, dropping his voice to an intimate whisper.

'Just what is going on with you?'

I stared into his grey eyes for a moment and relished the warm wave of comfort and longing that flooded through me. 'Is this 'cause I proposed? 'Cause that was a long time ago now.'

I shrugged.

'No, it's...I don't know. I just,' I walked around Bane and sat on a nearby bench. 'I just don't know what I'm doing.'

'You're doing what you've always done. You're investigating why two people have disappeared and having fun along the way.'

I looked up at him.

'Yeah, that should really sell it to me, huh.'

Bane huffed and sat next to me.

'Ok, you need to make a decision, Emy, 'cause I can't do this anymore. You can decide whether you want to be a hunter or not in your own sweet time, 'cause we both know which way that is going.

But whether you want to be with me or not is something separate, and you need to figure that out.'

I risked looking him in the eye again, my mind racing. I couldn't do it; I couldn't just make a decision like that on the spot, despite having had months to think it through. I stood and began walking.

'Let's just check this out and then we'll go.'

'What about the gorillas?' Bane asked, following. I ignored him, the light summer day suddenly becoming heavy and muggy. I walked past the lions, pausing to glance in at the male pacing in front of a group of school children. I turned to the left, following the lion enclosure round and to the entrance to Twilight World.

'You know you're way around well.'

'Came a few times when I lived near here.' I walked into the nocturnal house and paused to let my eyes adjust. I felt Bane follow me.

We walked slowly through the warm building. We peered up at shadowy walls and into dark enclosures, looking for anything that could be considered suspicious, something that the police may have missed. The building was heavy with the summer warmth, darkness and sounds of deserts and forests. I moved to the side, out of the way of other visitors, and peered through the glass of an enclosure. Bane moved past me.

'So, do you know whereabouts they disappeared?'

'No, just that it's in here somewhere.'

I joined Bane and looked up into the eyes of an aye-aye. It held my gaze and I pulled myself away, moving on slowly to the next enclosure. Bane overtook me, walking slowly round the corner. I saw movement in the darkness of one enclosure and paused to watch the sloth. I ambled round the corner and saw a man and child staring into the darkness at some unknown creature. I looked around and walked past them into the next section. Bane wasn't there. I turned and retraced my steps.

'Bane?' I whispered hoarsely. 'Where are you?'