

ALL CHILDREN GO INSANE

Chapter 1 Excerpt

Client: Yael Aharoni

D. lived a shy shoddier than bats; at least a bat could witness light but not fly in the daylight. Things were worse in D.'s life, because the urban life he went day-by-day only surveyed the night, the darkness. The people of the tall building world never spoke or saw of daylight and seemed to pretend that they never heard it mentioned in a conversation during the various years of their lives. Bats were nocturnal, but D. could never see day even if it will kill him when he did. Yet as he roamed the darkened streets of post-rain, he had a not-to-lost memory in the depths of his mind. When he was alone (which happened often), his mind took a trip to the past in where D. was a child and light was everywhere. Everybody back then called it the sun. People recently, when asked, said that the sun was always there, nothing's changed. It made D. wonder all the more if he imagined this himself, or did people truly think that the ever-present night was day.

The date: Friday, October 10. Everybody forgot the year. The rain had just finished its weeping, and D.'s feet were plummeted with water. As he walked he could hear the swishing of his black business shoes and the rustling of his pants' sleeves. Aging past sixty, D. was obviously no longer a young man to wind up criminals and stop the no-do-gooders from their disastrous deeds. His legs snapped when he attempted at running, and his mind lost its charm where back in the happier times he could remember minute details of notes, recalling the most forgotten of things. They called it photographic memory. Nowadays he forgot lots of things to the point he didn't remember what floor his apartment was on. That led to embarrassing situations which D. was grateful he could forget about instead of having it replay over his mind until it bore repetitive resonance of a broken or looped phonograph. On a smaller note, the gray-almost-white hairs on his head he still resented but they never resisted not showing up in the mirror. No magic could fix that, he thought when he read some of those fantasy stories in bookstores. Tiny sparks of magic existed where humans wished for things they'd never get.

Leisure time, as people called it, didn't come many times in D.'s life. Cafes made up a good thirty percent of the shops opened, but those events came every once in a while, usually with a friend or client in need of his service. When D. was off from working, you could find him striding the streets with his hands in his coat pockets. No, he wasn't looking for anything in particular like a case; most of what he did on those days went on in his head, where his thoughts lay.

However D. wasn't dwelling inside his mind at the moment, but one sure thought settled into the floor of his brain where, despite the crummy-filled photographic memory, D. kept remembering.

Take a small peek through the velvet curtain if you like. There you'll see the old detective who somehow never thought of retiring (he never gave any answers) as a young boy with eyes so blue you'll drown in them. The now gray-turning-white hair was drastic change to a bedhead yellow. He sat next to a woman who had an arm over his shoulders - his mother. She wore both a red dress that sparkled and a heartwarming smile. A cheesecake with ten lighted candles spiked onto it was in front of them.

"Go ahead," she had told him. "Make a wish."

It was a sunny day, he remembered. So bright the day was that the sun no longer had its usual shape but that reminiscent of a brightly lit white pearl.

The younger D. had mulled over the wish he had in his head. Back then, he had no name to distinguish him from others. With one huge take in of breath, the younger D. had blown all his might until the candles wore out their tiny flames. Gray smoke was placed in its aftermath.

His mother hadn't asked what he wished for, and she didn't have to. Countless times people - especially parents - egged the birthday boy/girl to their wish. It never failed to make D.'s hands shake with anguish. Annoying as scratching Styrofoam, the question never made sense. Wishes were meant to be kept in secret, right? Parents and adults shouldn't have to ask their children for something that they shouldn't have business on.

Now old, there was no family left for D. As far as he could go back in his memory, D. never knew of his father. His mother never spoke of him, and as for the question of his father's existence still clung to the air. Long ago D. had let go of his father's memory - if there ever was any - but it lay in the back to haunt him later on. He didn't want that memory to stalk behind him for more than a simple "Boo!"

On his tenth birthday, he still had no name to identify him with. Children at school provided the wildest suggestions, most of the lot teasing or mocking him with them. Back then it went under his skin, throttling him, but even now D. would've thought that, if he were to have no name to be called with, it'd suffer him tremendously. Already his heart lived on misery and surviving day-to-day obstacles that would sound basic to a wealthy man but would, at the same time, bring a poor man to his knees. Because of a poor financial state did D. once broke down crying. He didn't need the situation of the lack of a name to pull him down even further.

Then on a particular odd day in which D. always thought of as a random occasion his mother had announced that, since of his nameless identity, he'd be able to choose his own name for his next birthday - his eleventh birthday that was. All the sunshine and warmth did the sun once bring to the world - at least D. thought it so - could not make the younger D. happier. His mother that belonged to so few memories in his mind was his only love: she was the pure interpretation of a loving, caring woman. Through the streets of the

city D. never met a sweeter woman than his mother. The sweetness that she used to hold within her radiated so bright she appeared a goddess, rays of love shooting off her Venus body and threads. With that woman telling him that if he desired a name to be called by and she approved, he'd do it. He mulled over numerous names that'd take too long here to mention, none of them sounding right. Regular and normal children had their names pre-chosen, whether they liked it or not, but at least someone chose a name for them. It was that much, to say the very least. The young D.'s mother claimed she never chose a name because the law prevented her so. Was it his father who wanted the one child of his to remain nameless? Finally, he settled on Dean Whittaker. To this day D. still wondered that according to his younger self if Whittaker was supposed to be a surname or not.

He surfaced back to a younger D.'s eleventh birthday party. At school kids gave out invitations cluttered in balloons and streamers and glitter vomiting rainbows and cutesy adorableness. He instead had a small party with his mother, nothing more. The traditional cake n' candles were present, but still something was missing.

And for the eleventh time the younger D. had blown out those candles, one extra candle for the new birthday. Like always, his mother wore a pretty flower dress and produced tiny finger claps whenever he blew them all out, another wish barely escaping the tip of his lips. That birthday, his mother didn't finger clap after he blew out the candles. Fate decided to have her collapse.

She breathed quick breaths. The younger D. took immediate action and rushed to her side. He didn't know what to do; her skin turned white and frail and her fingers were straining to move. It seemed the worst of it went at her neck.

"What... what the...?"

In between her words the mother had went to control her breathing.

"Dear...dear - what happened?"

His mother died on his birthday. Quite a funeral it was. As the old saying goes where he lived - and people there said it a lot - another year alive, and another dies.

A dozen police officers crowded inside an apartment. Many of them leaned or were forced into the walls, knocking a few belongings along the way. Inside this particular one, plush beds and furniture lavished in the hue of purple and blue. The lights weren't on, but with their flashlights the officers saw the polished oak desk and a shelf containing century-old books to accompany it. An officer named Lincoln tried to inspect one of the books but the others warded him off.

"Best if you stay away from those," said a man. Preston was his name, but everyone called him Owl because he didn't need a flashlight to see through the dark.

"How so?" wondered Lincoln.

"Never know what's in those books. It could be dark stuff."

Lincoln refrained himself from laughing. "Dark things like what?"

"Occult, maybe? I dunno, but I do know to stay away from rich people's things. Who knows what scary things they could be hiding from the world?"

"And it could be nothing, contradicting your silly fears."

"Well, that's you, spot, but ah I wouldn't want to be the one to ah find things I shouldn't be looking at."

"Bet you twenty that what's inside this book I'm holding isn't what you think it is."

"Twenty? Twenty what, dollars?"

"I was thinking cents but--"

Owl backed away. "Are ya outta your mind, Lincoln? Twenty goddam cents? You've gotta be one of the most insipid comen - no, not even! Cheapskate, that's more like it! A dirty cheapskate who wouldn't risk their--"

A loud voice boomed above them all: "QUIET, ALL OF YOU!"

They all silenced.

"Owl," said lead officer. Big Hands, they called it. Yes, it and not him or a she because the lead officer acted so egoistic, very not human, that it seemed the perfect pronoun. Behind its back they did this since no one wanted to know what would happen if they did it in front of its face.

Owl's face morphed into one that belonged to a demon; that, or a grouchy student on a bad hair day waiting to take a yearbook photo. Lincoln was left with five other officers in the living room. They went through most of the owner's things, but nothing made any sense.

Why are we doing this? Lincoln thought. He decided to lie out on the couch and let the rest do the work. Unfortunately this lasted ten seconds, even in the dark. Damn those flashlights.

"Lincoln?" one of the officers asked. "What are you doing?"

"Relaxing," he answered. "What else does it look like?"

"Hmm, what else does it look like?" the officer mocked. "Does it seem like laziness to you? Wading out until the salary comes in the mail?"

Lincoln stood up. "Hey, it's not like that--"

"Of course it's like that!" The whitened light of the officer's flashlight made Lincoln cross-eyed. "You think that if we'd all just lie down and relaxed, grab some beers while we're at it, we'd get paid? Putting work away doesn't get you anywhere."

"What's the big deal about this man anyway?" Lincoln wondered. "Sounds like a big joke to me."

Lincoln, if you paid close attention to the budding hairs sprouting out the bottom of his chin and the sly yet rebellious attitude he portrayed, he was the youngest of the officers. The one officer speaking to him grabbed the back of his head where his hair reached the tip of his neck and yanked him out of the couch. He wasn't fuming like the others when they saw him slacking, but the officer kept a poker face.

"Look, you think this is all easy, don't you?"

Lincoln shook his head.

"Don't play with me, Deed. You know you think so."

He laughed at that. "Is this some new psychology trick you read about in those books you keep hidden in your locker? I'm not buying into it."

"Can you please let me talk?"

"Well, excuse me Idaho, but you were the one who paused for more than two seconds. Looks like to me that you were expecting a reply."

Officer Idaho crossed his arms. "There's a door right over there," he said as he pointed. "You can get out or you can continue investigating with the rest of us and figure out just exactly what happened the night McDermott disappeared."

"What's wrong with lying around for a while? Don't you all get tired or something working hours upon hours searching for something that might not even be here? That gets frustrating, lemme tell ya."

Idaho's hands were behind his back so Lincoln couldn't see, but nobody needed to look to know they were balling up and shaking. He did it too many times it became a routine - any longer and the rest would probably use it as a base for their new drinking game to pass time with. Thinking about it, Lincoln wondered why Idaho bothered about him and the couch. If people can make up drinking and betting games, couldn't he be allowed to lie down for a little bit? People could be so pushy when they really wanted to.

"There is something here and we will find it," Idaho declared. "And you know what, Deed?"

Lincoln didn't want to answer, but Idaho went with it anyway.

"You know what? We're going to find it without you!"

For a second time Lincoln laughed. "You know you're sounding like the nerd in high school who keeps his best grades like a cheesecake poster inside his locker."

Idaho would have outraged causing a mini brawl to begin between the two of them if it weren't for Big Hands. He kept his usual posture of such a straight back a ruler must have been pressed onto it until God knew when. Big Hands' eyes were looking into something, and that was unfortunately Lincoln.

"Officer Deed," said Big Hands. "I need you."

Lincoln tugged at his collar. "Uh, couldn't you get someone else instead? I'm kind of busy right now."

"Busy? Doing what, you're on a couch!"

"About that . . ."

Big Hands didn't want to hear it. "Come with me, now. There's a call for you."

"Who's it from?"

He was already leaving. "You know who."