

# Silver Shackles

## Revelations Book Two

### Chapter One

#### In which we meet Ed

“I have information for you.”

The voice on my private cell phone was male, deep and husky. Kinda sexy, in fact. At first I thought it might be my boyfriend, trying to disguise himself by pretending to be an obscene caller. It wasn't David at all and I started to get a little unnerved.

“Who is this?” I asked, scared by the desperation I heard in my own voice. I sat up in bed and squinted hard into the shadowy corners of my bedroom. The red digital display of my bedside clock said 11:13 pm. “How did you get this number?”

Before the ringing phone woke me, I'd been dreaming of Neve MacAlpin and the last time I'd seen her. The Queen of the Unseelie faeries wanted to force me to shift into my Jaguar permanently, just so she could chain me with silver to the foot of her throne. I'd be an over-sized housecat, put on display to prove her strength to her enemies and allies alike. I was haunted by this; visions of losing myself to my Cat showed up in my dreams at least twice a week.

“It's about the shooting in Cedar Rapids,” the voice said, ignoring my questions.

I blinked in shock, catapulted into instant clarity at the mention of Cedar Rapids, and fumbled to turn on the lamp at my bedside. I grabbed a pencil stub and a small reporter's notebook off my nightstand and balanced the notebook on my bent knee. “You have information about the murder of Justin Gladwell?” I asked. “Have you spoken to the local cops or the FBI?” I'd give my left canine for an exclusive eye-witness account of the shooting of a twenty-one-year-old college student, who also happened to be a Wolf. But I was dating the director of the PLEB's Tucson field office and I didn't want him mad at me. The sex would be awful.

“I'll only tell you my story. And only if you come to me to get it,” was the reply.

Well. That wasn't ominous or anything. “You still haven't told me your name or how you got my private number,” I said. “If I'm coming to you to get this story, I'd like to feel we have a relationship built on trust. So why don't you tell me your name?”

There was a lengthy pause and I waited it out. David had impressed upon me the high value of silence during interrogations. People usually hated silence and rushed to fill it. Often these bouts of verbal diarrhea were when the most important and vital details of a case came out. And while this bizarre conversation wasn't necessarily an interrogation, the principle still applied.

“Call me... Ed,” the voice finally decided. Well, it was better than Deep Throat, I supposed.

“Okay, Ed,” I said, writing this down. “Why don't you tell me why I should come to you, wherever that is?”

“Iowa. I was there. At the scene, I mean. I saw the whole thing.”

My eyebrow climbed my forehead in shocked surprise. A real eye-witness who hadn't been debriefed by the police yet? I was in TV-exclusive land now. I could milk this story for weeks and kick the crap out of my competition. David's disappointed face flashed before my eyes and I reined in my rampaging ego for a moment. "Ed," I said carefully, "you really should speak with the authorities before you talk to me. If you were there—at the scene, I mean—they're going to want your statement. In fact, I can put you in touch with a PLEB agent who would be more than willing to talk with you."

"I don't trust them. I only want to talk to you." He went quiet, as if wrestling with a decision. After a few moments, he said, "If you don't believe me and want something you can verify before you trust me, check out the coroner's report. It'll back me up. Pay special attention to what it says about Gladwell's hands. I'll call you back in two days. That should give you enough time to look into it." Ed hung up before I could say anything and I was left staring at the phone for a few seconds, stunned into immobility.

Holy crap on toast. If Ed was right, this story was huge. This would be as big as the Rodney King beating. Bigger maybe. I was positively vibrating with excitement now. I glanced at my phone, hoping that Ed's number had been captured by my caller ID, but it only displayed Unknown. "Well, shit," I muttered, disappointed but not surprised.

Still reeling from the conversation, I put the phone and the notebook on the bedside table. Then I glanced at the clock, knowing it was late. I should go back to sleep; I had an on-air interview in the morning. I snuggled back down in bed and tried to fall asleep.

Finally deciding that it was pointless to try and sleep after the phone call of a life time, I climbed out of bed and took a shower. I spent a long time standing with the water pounding into my shoulders and back, while I tried to figure out how to get my hands on that coroner's report. As the heat and water pressure helped flush the adrenaline from my system, I realized that there was no way the M.E.'s office would release any information to me. I was a reporter, after all. Whatever I talked about could taint the jury pool or give away state secrets or something. Maybe I could ask David to look into it for me?

Nope, that wouldn't work either. I stepped out of the shower to dry off and get dressed. Asking David to use his position and influence to get me information would definitely screw up our relationship. Especially if I then turned around and used it against one of his brothers in blue. David had been a cop in San Francisco for five years, and his loyalties ran deep. He would never agree to give me privileged information, especially since I wasn't going to use it to help investigators.

Who then? Who could I ask for that report? Baron Fonterra, maybe. Baron was an ex-Hunter who owned Tucson's world-famous Critter bar, Mashath. He'd created an amazing network of witches, mages, vampires, Critters, and other Hunters throughout the world during his forty-plus years of hunting for the Catholic Church. He still kept in contact with most of his contacts, despite the fact that he no longer performed sanctioned killings for the man in Rome with the big, funny-looking hat. Baron would know someone in Cedar Rapids who could get me that report.

After dressing and fixing a pot of coffee, I went into my home office, booted up my computer, and transcribed the notes I'd made during my phone call with Ed. I hoped he was right about what he saw and not just feeding me a line so I would make him famous. When my notes were complete, I surfed the web for a while, reading through the BBC and the Aljazeera sites to catch up on what was going on in the rest of the world. Northern Europe was plagued with bizarre weather—thunder and lightning one day, record high temperatures the next, followed by six inches of snow a few days after that. It was bizarre enough that both websites had devoted extensive coverage to it.

I spent a few hours with the websites, scouring them for interesting bits of information that I could use to build shows around. When I surfaced from the world wide web, I saw that it was light out. My

stomach reminded me that I hadn't eaten anything since seven the previous evening and even that had only been a bowl of popcorn and a glass or three of wine. I made myself Granny O'Rourke's Famous Irish Porridge and scarfed it down.

When I finished breakfast, I decided Baron would be up now. He had once told me that the last time he'd slept past dawn had been in 1966, the year before he became a Hunter. After retiring, he had settled down and bought some acreage in the far west of Tucson. It was now a working sheep ranch, called Windmill Ranch. His two Border Collies, Pickles and Angus, were awake and active the moment the sun peeked over the eastern horizon. I picked up the phone and dialed his number from memory.

"Good morning, Windmill Ranch. Polly speaking." Polly was Baron's daughter and she provided the other half of the cottage industry at Windmill Ranch. Baron raised blue-ribbon Angora sheep at Windmill. Polly spun their fleeces into yarn, dyed it with her own handmade dyes, and then turned the yarn into beautiful, soft sweaters, shawls, and scarves.

"Morning, Polly. It's Riley O'Rourke."

"Hi, Riley. Dad's out walking the fence line and then he's meeting with the vet about one of the ewes."

"Oh, no. It's not Alberta, is it?" Alberta's fleece had made one of my favorite sweaters.

"No, no. Not Alberta. Another one. She's got worms. Dad and the vet are going to... well, never mind that. It's gross. You want me to have him call you when he's done? Could be a while."

"Yes, that would be awesome. Thanks, Polly. Bye." I reflected upon the fact that sheep ranching seemed like one of the most disgusting jobs I could imagine, right up there with back hair waxer and septic tank maintenance. Maybe Mike Rowe could do an episode on it.

I read through online news reports of the Cedar Rapids shooting. Most of the reports were rehashes of the same details. Justin Gladwell and his friend, Eric Bjornstaad, had gone to Eric's ex-girlfriend's home to recover belongings that were left behind after the break-up. Eric's ex, Veronica Gustav, had taken out a protection order against Eric, a fact of which Justin was unaware. When the men showed up at Veronica's apartment, she called the police and reported the men were threatening to break in and kill her.

CNN's website had posted audio from Veronica's 911 call and I listened intently to it. The girl sounded far too calm for someone who was supposedly being threatened by a violent ex-boyfriend who had beaten her bloody and broken in the past. After reading the article that accompanied the audio, I discovered why. She had admitted during questioning after the shooting that she had lied to police. She hadn't wanted to give up the stereo and CDs Eric had come for, and she knew that if she told dispatchers he was threatening to kill her, she'd get a faster response. Police officers had, in fact, arrived less than four minutes after that 911 call.

Eric and Justin were just coming out of Veronica's apartment when Officer Bradley Parkington and his partner arrived on the scene. Parkington had circled around behind the apartment complex to cover the back, while his partner covered the front. The partner told the young men to get down on their knees with their fingers interlaced behind their heads. According to the officers' statements, Justin drew a gun and lunged towards the other officer. Parkington had fired three shots into the Wolf's back in order to save his partner. I wondered if Parkington packed silver ammo every day as standard procedure.

No gun had been recovered from the scene. Bjornstaad swore that Gladwell did not have a gun with him that day. Justin's friends and family backed up that statement, affirming that he did not own a

gun, nor would he ever use one—why would he? He was a Wolf and that made him stronger, faster, and more agile than a human being.

Allegations that Officer Parkington was known for his extreme hatred of Preternaturals had been discovered as well. He did, in fact, have a long and documented history of making threats and using unwarranted force when dealing with Critters.

And now, at least according to my anonymous eye witness, something was very hinky with the shooting and the official story from the Cedar Rapids' Police Department. If the ME's report confirmed what my source claimed, it would blow the story wide open. Once more, I'd be out in front of a huge story involving the Preternatural community, just as I had been during the Revelations. Granted, it wouldn't be on that scale, but it'd still be pretty damned big.

After glutting myself on news web sites, I checked the weather. Tucson would be hot, humid, and stormy—bizarre weather for June. I checked the forecast for the East Coast and was surprised by the reports of an unseasonable cold snap. There was even snow in store for the mountains in Vermont and New Hampshire. It seemed like the weird weather in Europe had finally arrive in the states. But wasn't that almost impossible? Didn't weather systems move from west to east? Hmm... That was something I needed to look into. Maybe it had something to do with the climate changes, like the ice caps melting and all the droughts in California.

I left for work soon after; I hoped Baron would call during one of the lulls in my day, otherwise we'd be playing phone tag.

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The TV studios at Black Cat Media were loud and frenetic when I arrived. Phones rang off the hook. Interns ran through the aisle between cubicles as though demons were chasing them. Hanging in every corner, flat-screen TVs displayed news channels from all over the world. The show's director, Ernie Padilla stood in the doorway to his office, shouting across the secretaries' area at one of the camera crew. Ernie was a middle-aged man with too-long arms, and a habit of covering his eyes with his hands and puffing out his cheeks so that he looked like a beleaguered monkey when he was stressed.

My personal assistant, Elaine Patterson, was waiting at the front door for me when I arrived. Her hands were full of a stack of pink phone message slips and some manila file folders. I hated finding her hovering. It meant that my day would be ridiculously stressful and by lunchtime, I would want to scream and pull my hair out. I gave the studios' receptionist, a cute little traitorous blonde named Paula, the Bent Eye as I passed her desk. She must have informed Lainie the instant I pulled up.

I muttered darkly at Lainie, who paced along beside me as we made our way back to my office. She took it in stride. My Japanese invective slid right off her back. She was used to it and remained willfully ignorant of the meaning behind the words.

“Did something explode during the twenty minutes it took me to get here this morning?” I asked her once I'd settled down behind my grandfather's antique English banker's desk. It had been a staple of his office in the Boston district attorney's office for more than thirty years.

“No, but you've got a bunch of calls to return before the satellite interview. Oh, and Brian would like to meet with you for ten minutes about tonight's script. He's having a problem with some verbiage.”

I groaned and laid my forehead down against my desk and gently banged it on my blotter a few times. Brian was a new writer who liked to pepper his scripts with technical terms I couldn't pronounce. I tripped over them every time they popped up on my Teleprompter. Since Ernie was such a perfectionist, he went into apoplexy over the sheer number of takes required to get usable footage. Finally, I'd pulled Brian aside and told him to dumb down his scripts. After that conversation, he'd started insisting that I personally gave the thumbs' up for everything he wrote. As if I didn't have enough crap to do.

I lifted my head and gave Lainie a level look. "Tell Ernie to deal with Brian. That's his job after all," I said as I thumbed through the stack of messages. "Please ask David to bring some peach Bellini gelato and a cheeseburger from Mikey B's for lunch. Then could you please look into flights to Cedar Rapids?"

Lainie nodded and scribbled down my instructions. "Cedar Rapids, huh? When?"

"I have no idea. I've got something brewing but I don't know when I'll need to leave. Can you do an open-ended ticket?"

"I don't think they do those anymore, but I'll have the network travel people figure it out."

"Thank you, Lainie." I gave her a grateful smile as she nodded and left my office. I would be utterly lost without her.

I sorted through the rest of stack of message slips, classifying them by their importance, and then began returning the most critical calls. I was a little disappointed to see that there wasn't anything from Baron. I finished the last call just before the satellite interview. As I walked through the building to the studio where the uplink was, I handed my cell phone to Lainie. "Baron's going to call at some point," I told her, "and with my luck, it'll be half-way through the interview. If it doesn't look like he'll be waiting for long, ask him to hold until I'm done. If it does look like a long wait, though, nail down a firm time for me to call him back today, and then schedule time for it. In pen. It's super important."

"You got it, Boss." She handed me a stack of index cards with notes the writers had prepared, then headed back to her desk.

I went into hair and makeup, sitting down in the stylist's chair to read over my notes. The girls slathered on enough greasepaint that they'd have to scrape it off with a trowel after the interview.

Oh, the glamorous life of a TV star.