

# LIES OF THE FAE

## Free Chapter I

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The babies never cry.

No matter how hungry. No matter how lonely. No matter how terrified or in pain they are.

The babies. Never. Cry.

Two men, both huge and made of solid muscle, grip my upper arms painfully tight as they lead me on. I barely stand as high as their waists. I couldn't fight them off even if I wanted to. I'm a child.

A little girl.

The room is vast, filled with countless cribs made of grey steel. Stone walls lead up to arched ceilings, with crucifixes and faded paintings of heavenly figures hanging on the walls.

The babies watch me as I pass. Some can sit. Others can pull themselves up onto their feet, their tiny hands, with filthy and chipped fingernails, grip the bars as they watch in silence. The smell of piss, shit and stale milk is overwhelming. Their mess stains the single sheet they have in their miniature prisons. Their skin is pale, almost grey. I always thought babies were supposed to be chubby and pink. Full of smiles, giggles and tears.

But not here.

I've quickly learnt that no amount of tears will change our situation. No amount of desperate pleas or reaching hands will warm these men's hearts. The bones pressing out through our dry and thin skin fail to encourage our keepers to give more food. Our bellies no longer even protest the constant cramps.

But I wasn't born here. Not like they were.

I remember love. I remember hugs and kisses. The warm embrace of a mum and the tender kiss on a scraped knee.

*Where is my mummy?*

I ask myself, over and over.

*I want my mummy. Where did she go?*

I know if I speak, the men will hit me. So I keep quiet.

My body can't stop shaking, and tears are flowing freely as the men drag me through this hellish nursery. As I struggle against them, my arms burn and bruise even further. My sobbing echoes around this hall.

The babies just look on, unbothered as I'm dragged past them, with dried blood covering the lower part of my face and staining my ears. I can only see through one eye. The other is swollen shut.

Three of my fingers are bent out of shape and my leg drags behind me.

My arms are wrapped in filthy bandages soaked in aloe vera to help stop any infection from the burns.

Finally, we emerge onto a long corridor and leave the nursery behind.

Down the hall. Up a flight of stairs, along another corridor and then straight.

To the red door.

Red as blood.

The stench of death oozes out from beneath it. The promise of pain comes with screams from whoever is already in there.

The closer the door gets, the tighter their grip becomes.

My blood runs colder as it rushes through my veins.

'STOP!' I scream through desperate tears. 'I'LL BE A GOOD GIRL! I'LL BE A GOOD GIRL! I'LL BE A GOOD GIRL!'

The door opens.

'Ahhh,' he says, showing his porcelain perfect teeth. 'There's my girl. We've been waiting for you, your sister and I.' He opens the door a little further and reveals my sweet sister. My poor, sweet sister.

'Rhea?' I whimper, looking at the snarling, thrashing creature strapped to the metal chair ahead of me. Her high-pitched shrieking mixes with a low growl, and long, black fingernails claw at the arm of the chair she's strapped down into. 'What have you done to my sister?'

'You shall soon find out. It's time to save the world, my sweet girl.' He looks at the men holding me. 'Strap her down with her sister.'

The door slams shut behind me and my screams of terror blend with my sister's monstrous screams of rage.

## *Thirteen years later...*

'HEY! WATCH IT, RUNT!'

'Sorry!' I call back as I carry on running, gripping the cloth bag close to my chest.

The mammoth man I just bumped into, throws up his hands and spits at the floor, muttering angrily about disrespectful little fuckers.

He mutters far louder when the two men chasing me, shove him out of the way so hard he hits the floor.

I turn with a grin and laugh at the fat man rolling on his back. I keep on legging it.

'STOP!' they yell. 'GET BACK HERE, YOU LITTLE SHIT!'

Not fucking likely. I like having all my teeth. And I like the bag of goodies I just plucked from their pockets even more.

Shame they felt me relieve them of their coin, or whatever else may be in here, but hey, you win some, you get chased by others.

I'm light on my feet, quick and small. I duck and dodge the heavily filled streets. Unlike the two idiots trying to catch me, filled with cheap beer that tastes of piss and lungs full of tar and smog from years of living in this polluted and dirty city.

A city that never sleeps. It never rests. Late evening means street food, the dregs from the market, and the start of the night shift for the whores. I run past them all, laughing loudly. The two trying to catch me can't navigate the streets as well as I can.

I go past the fishmongers who slam their chunky, dull blades on the heavily stained chopping boards. The stench of old fish guts turn my stomach and as I leap over the puddles of blood and slime, I grab a fish head with three eyes and toss it back at the idiots chasing me. The look of disgust as it smacks into one of their faces has me laughing harder. The monger groans and rolls his eyes as he carries on gutting whatever the fuck classes as a fish in this shithole.

I give the tattooist working by the open door of his studio a wide berth. He gets real pissed if he gets jolted. I narrowly dodge a drunk falling out of the Devilled Pigs bar and turn right, hoping that the bustle of Ladies Lane might give me some cover. Or at least some distraction.

The neon lights reflect in the black puddles and the stench of cigar smoke and sweat, somehow manages to overpower the market stink.

'In trouble again?' A half-naked woman calls, shaking her head as she looks on. Her red stilettos add inches to her height and the only other thing she wears is a matching red thong.

'Looking fine, Trixie!'

'Looking like trouble, kid,' she calls back.

'Must be a Tuesday,' her friend retorts, taking a man by the hand and leading him inside her brothel.

Trixie sticks out her foot and trips my pursuers before leaning over one of them, tits out and hands wandering over her body.

'Oh, dear. Here, handsome. Let me help you up.'

He can't tear his eyes away from her bouncing bosom and pert arse.

Trixie throws me a wink as she takes her newly acquired client inside the brothel.

*Thank you, ladies.*

But the second one, the man I liberated my score from, he's not giving up.

I duck down an alley, leap over the trash bags and used condoms, and come out on Traders Lane. Canopied market stalls display clothes scraped together from whatever the hell people can find within the city's walls. Or whatever they manage to buy from those few sellers who venture inside these walls from outside, flogging their used and unwanted shit to the lesser creatures sealed inside this city.

Old leather. Worn out and frayed cloth. Nets. Rope. Steel.

*Oh, nice!*

I snatch an adorable jumper of deep green and black stripes. The wool is thin and bare, it's more holes than material, but I do like green. I shove it inside my jacket and pull my hood further over my head, making sure my scarf is still covering the lower half of my face.

Last thing I need are these pricks seeing my face.

It's not exactly easy to forget.

The scarves are needed not only for anonymity, but the stench and pollution in the city's centre are really toxic.

As I weave between a stall of boots and gloves, I also help myself to a nice fingerless pair that will go well with the jumper.

I turn right, just as a bucket of *I-don't-even-want-to-know* is tossed from one of the countless windows above.

I hear my pursuer skid in the mess and fall.

'I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!' He roars as he scrambles back onto his feet. 'Fucking disgusting! GET BACK HERE!'

*Nope.*

I slip as I make a sharp left but quickly right myself. As I struggle to avoid the bustling crowd roaming these narrow streets, I get a chorus of:

*Watch it, kid!*

*Hey!*

*What the fuck, bitch!*

When I don't spot a pothole the size of my head, I stack it hard onto the floor and land badly on my wrist.

'Shit,' I hiss, throwing a look over my shoulder. 'SHIT!' I pull myself clear of his reaching hand and get back on my feet.

I stop myself from heading down the street ahead when I see three men dressed head to toe in black. Their knee-length coats are held together with iron seams and they wear riot helmets on their heads and metallic gas masks over their mouths. On their lapel are golden eye insignias.

'Authority...' I whisper.

They have a young guy surrounded and are openly mugging him for whatever he's brought from the market today.

Everyone in the alley is doing anything they can not to gain the attention of the only humans that are permitted within the city. They back up, keep their heads down. And when the young guy in the middle of the group is struck on the back of the head and falls to the floor with blood in his eyes, no one bats an eye. They turn away.

They choose to live another day.

I spin on my heel and dart off in the other direction.

Getting cornered by the Authority is the last thing I need right now.

Or ever.

I duck down another alley and keep looking behind me.

Bloody idiot, because when I look forwards, I see a damn wall blocking my path.

'Riiiiight. This is a dead-end. The next alley is the one I wanted.' I nod, acknowledging my own stupidity, and turn to face the incoming consequence of my actions.

The man stops at the entrance of the alley, panting hard and clutching a stitch. There's something brown smeared up his arm. His leg is covered in fish guts and there's some old cabbage stuck in his hair.

I snigger before I can stop myself.

'Give it back, you little runt. And let me pummel that face of yours.'

He steps forwards, fists clenched and a furious sneer on his face.

'Is that shit on your jacket?' I ask.

He growls at me in response.

'It looks like shit. I think it is shit. Dude... you have people poo on your arm.'

'I am going to tear off your head and shit down your neck.'

'Well. That's an image,' I grimace.

Stalling him as I look for a way out isn't giving me anything of use. There's an old, potentially lethal fire escape route bolted to the wall above, but it's barely intact. The metal was no doubt stolen over the years by salvagers and the walls stretch out of sight into the permanent layer of smoke and steam that drifts above our fair city.

'Look. How about we split whatever's in here?' I dangle the satchel. 'Then we both go away happy.'

'How about I punch your face in, and I go away happy with you dead and my money back?'

'Now, is that any way to talk to a lady?' I smile.

He pulls out a six-inch blade from his knee-length leather coat with odd-coloured sleeves and massive safety pins closing various tears.

'The way I'm talking to you is the least of your problems.'

I return the pouch to my jacket, nestling it nice and safely with the jumper and gloves, and roll my shoulders.

'All right then. Come at me, poop-man.'

He charges forwards and I'm ready. But before I can dodge the broad and frankly sloppy blow he brings down, he's thrown like a ragdoll headfirst into the wall by another.

Poop-man slides to the floor, leaving behind a trail of blood and two of his front teeth embedded in the brick.

Stood behind him is a figure dressed all in black. His leather, sleeveless jacket reaches to his knees showing off his bare, heavily muscled stomach, which frankly, is too delicious to look away from.



His intricate ink markings stretch across his ripped abs and up to his broad chest. His thick arms hang by his side, just as solid and strong as the rest of him. His black jeans fit him in all the right ways. His bulky boots are steel capped and splattered with dried blood. His black hair is a perfect mess atop his head and hangs over his vividly silver eyes that shine in the darkness of the alley. It reaches down to the chiselled cheekbones and stern jaw I know are hidden beneath his deep red face scarf. When he pulls it down, his lips are turned up in a sadistically sweet half-grin.

'You're welcome,' he says.

'I didn't need your help, Cyrus.'

'Really?' Cyrus walks towards me and stops as close as he possibly can without touching me. 'Didn't look that way to me.'

He stands a clear head taller than me and his scent instantly invades my senses. That fucking smell of cinnamon and bonfire.

It makes my mouth water. It takes all I have not to stare at the god-like body before me. And the more I stare into his eyes, determined not to enjoy his figure, the bigger his smile grows.

He is, without a doubt, the most beautiful man I've ever seen.

It's such a shame he's a massive, fucking asshole.

He holds out his hand.

'Don't you fucking dare, Cyrus.'

'Now, now, Princess. You know the deal.'

'I worked hard for this. I'm not handing it over to you.'

'I've told you before not to be thieving in my patch. You work my streets you better be ready to pay your fee.'

'I wasn't in your patch when I lifted it.'

'Well, you're in my patch now.'

He never looks away as he reaches inside my coat and takes hold of the score. We both hear the jangle of coins as he wraps his fingers around it.

'I need that money, Cyrus. I've fucking earned it.'

His hand remains in my coat as he leans closer, his nose a hair's breadth away from mine and that smile growing. He gently inhales as if taking in my scent.

'Why not go and paint some fences or empty rat traps. I hear you're excellent at those dirty little jobs. Almost as good as you are at thieving.'

'I'm done working in the gutter for pennies. I need money. This money.'

'Then how about you fuck me and earn it back?' He stills and lets out a short laugh as I raise my brow. 'And what do you plan on doing with that?' he asks, feeling the small switchblade I have pressed against his semi-hard cock.

'I suggest you get your hands out of my clothes before you find out,' I reply. 'Like I said. I'm done working in the gutter.'

Cyrus slowly withdraws but takes the pouch with him.

He hooks his finger in the edge of my face scarf and pulls it down.

'I do so love when you venture into my part of the city. You are my favourite toy. One I'm very keen to play with.'

I nudge the blade a little harder into him. 'Tell the blood still rushing to your prick to get back to less important body parts. I would hate for you to bleed out in an alley.'

The clatter of metal bins and the shuffling of feet announce the arrival of his goons. Three others step out from the shadows, all concealed behind their face scarves.

Cyrus continues to smile down at me and leans in closer, paying no mind to the threat I'm still holding between his legs.

'I can't help it. Every time I see you, I get harder than a hammer. When will you give in and ride me like a stallion?' He stops talking as I press the switchblade further into his now fully aroused appendage. 'That is not helping my situation. I love a woman who can handle a lethal weapon.' He raises his brow suggestively.

'Give it back, Cyrus.' I hold out my free hand expectantly, and he places the stolen bag of money into my open palm. But he doesn't let it go.

His eyes drift from mine and scans the left side of my face.

I blush red as he looks at the scars marking my face and I wince as he traces the very tips of his fingers down the long grooves. When he turned up in this part of the city three months ago and first cornered me in his patch with a pocket full of stolen wallets I'd spent the day lifting, he was fascinated by the four lines that cut clear across my eye. Considering that it's near impossible to leave a scar on our kind, the four huge ones that mark me, single me out in all the worst ways.

Because only one thing in this world can scar a Fae. And it's something that no one has ever survived an encounter with.

Except me, apparently.

Cyrus has conned, blackmailed, threatened and killed his way up the pecking order of the city's underground thugs and now runs the inner city. Not a bad feat for a guy in his early twenties. With a slow blink, he pulls his gaze away from my scars and resumes his smarmy smirking.

'You know as well as I do that there's no way you leave this alley with all that money. Pay up, Princess.'

As soon as I let my eyes wander for a possible escape route that involves me keeping this all for myself, his hand is around my throat and my back is against the wall.

The bag falls to the floor and the coins inside spill out, rolling in all directions.

I grab at his wrist, but he may as well be made of marble.

My feet lift from the floor. I gasp and grab at him to try and free myself.

‘You’re not so stupid as to try and steal from me, are you, Princess?’

‘Get off me, you fuck.’

‘Suck my dick, and maybe I’ll let you go.’

‘If your dick comes near me I’ll bite it off.’

He and his men laugh as he lets me go. I gulp in my breath, ready to hurl a few choice words at the wanker, but the back of his hand slams into my cheek and knocks me to the floor.

‘You’re lucky I don’t get easily offended, or a slap would be the least of your troubles. Now take your cut and get the fuck out of my alley.’

I could spit fire I’m so full of rage. I grab as many coins as I can get away with and stand, facing him, unblinking and as tall as I can manage.

‘You hit like a bitch.’

‘I don’t want to bruise that pretty little face of yours.’ He pulls my scarf back up my face and secures my hood over my head. ‘Don’t want anyone recognising you, do we now? I’d hate for the Authority to cart you off before I get my chance to play with you.’

When he winks at me, I can’t help the embarrassing little whimper I produce. The man is a dick. A colossal fucker who would slit my throat and leave me for dead in this alley if the alternative was letting me leave with all the cash. But damn, the man is hot as hell, with a body I would thoroughly enjoy, I’m sure.

I can appreciate sexy when it’s due.

'Off you pop.' He steps aside, as do the others blocking the exit. 'And stay away from Traders Lane. Authority are out in force tonight. I don't want your brains messing up my streets. You hear me?'

I don't wait to be told twice. I get the hell out of there.

# Thank you for reading

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