

**THE HIDDEN PEOPLE**

Episode 2.08

"Cyg X-1"

Written by

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87. Thorne house, evening.

MACKENNA

I said I'm fine, Thomas. Check on Shaylee.

SHAYLEE

Don't check on me.

THOMAS

You call getting thrown through the air into a car fine? You're not fine. Sam, would you get me the first aid kit? It's in the kitchen from the last time Mackenna almost died.

Happy ruff from Sam/Murphy (Smurphy).

MACKENNA

I am not almost dying. I'm barely hurt anymore. It just caught me off guard. Do not get the first aid kit, Sam.

Smurphy whines.

NISSA

Does it even hurt anymore?

ALFIE

She just broke like four Mack-ribs. Of course it hurts.

MACKENNA

It still feels...weird. But it's just a dull throb, mostly.

SHAYLEE

And I thought changelings healed quickly. I still feel like a truck hit me.

ALFIE

Well, if we're making full disclosures, I stubbed my toe back there. That hurt a little bit.

MACKENNA

You didn't even fight that thing.

ALFIE

No, but a bunch of people in a feeding frenzy for free pancakes can be as scary as an interdimensional monster.

MACKENNA

We need to find it before it attacks anyone else.

NISSA

That's a tall order considering plan "A" was a disaster, and we don't know how else to find it.

THOMAS

Yeah, it won't fall for the same trick again. I'm sorry everyone. I should have done better; I really thought I could have gotten through to some part of her still in there.

SHAYLEE

Are you even sure Sam's in there at all? It might be better if she's not. In case we need to...escalate.

Smurphy whimpers.

THOMAS

Even if she isn't in there anymore, we can't hurt her body. How else could we get her back? If we kill her body...

NARRATOR

If you kill her body, then precious Thomas has lost yet another person he loves. Could the world really be so cruel to one so good and pure?

(darker)

It could be much worse.

MACKENNA

We'll find it, Thomas. And we'll get Sam back.

THOMAS

How are we going to do that when the superpowered half of our team is injured?

MACKENNA

I'll be one hundred percent soon. And minor bruises are the least of our worries.

SHAYLEE

Major bruises for me, but Mackenna's right. I've dealt with far worse.

ALFIE

Like being dead?

SHAYLEE

For starters.

THOMAS

Nissa was right. Our plan was a disaster, and we need a better one. I completely failed at distracting the thing possessing Sam.

NISSA

Well, it didn't help that we can't sneak up on it because apparently it can smell Mack from a mile away.

MACKENNA

Alfie, I see you opening your mouth, and now is not the time for a hygiene joke.

ALFIE

What? Me?

NISSA

I'll start researching to see if I can figure out where it's going next. Or what it wants.

SHAYLEE

Nissa, that reminds me. I have some stuff here that I salvaged from my warehouse.

ALFIE

The one that burned down? Where are you living now?

SHAYLEE

My beach house.

NISSA

You have a beach house?

MACKENNA

She has a dozen houses.

SHAYLEE

Not quite.

MACKENNA

The beach house is swanky.

SHAYLEE

They're just my parents' places. It's not like I'm--

(sharp intake of breath)

THOMAS

Are you okay?

NISSA

Yeah, what's wrong?

SHAYLEE

I'm being summoned. Just felt it. I have to go. Take a look at Dane's notes from the warehouse. He looked into just about every Hidden myth. I have to go. Now.

MACKENNA

Come back in one piece, okay?

SHAYLEE

Sure.

Stepping sideways departure.

88. Arcadia. Stepping sideways arrival as Shaylee arrives in the middle of a heated argument. She steps aside so as to not interrupt and to listen.

NARRATOR

Like a child coming home from school to her parents arguing, Shaylee hides, hoping that although they are expecting her, they won't think of her in the midst of their conflict.

ALDER NIAMH

No, Alder Odhran, that is not in our best interest. We have heard rumors, whispers of the Old Ones. They have begun to stir, pressing in on us. We need to strike. Close the gaps in our borders lest we be overrun.

ALDER ODHRAN

Alder Niamh, that will do. Exiled as they are to the corners of the world and with no organization, the Old Ones pose little threat.

ALDER NIAMH

I disagree. They have been opposed to our ways since the great war, when they fought on the losing side. Their memories are long.

ALDER ODHRAN

And how would you know these things? Do our scouts report to you alone?

ALDER NIAMH

I make the time to read our histories, Alder Odhran. If you did the same, you would understand my concern. We have no idea that they did not have a hand in the Magister's death. Who had more of a grudge against him than they did?

ALDER ODHRAN

Do not lecture me on the ancient forces that the Magister defeated; I was there. Regardless, they are banished from our realm with no real avenue for resurgence. Any incursions will be swiftly crushed.

ALDER NIAMH

Your flippant disregard for the safety of Arcadia will endanger us all. And with the Reaping approaching, we cannot afford such a lack of leadership.

ALDER ODHRAN

Stop grandstanding, Alder Niamh. The lairds are not here for you to influence, and the other alders understand your motivations. The Reaping has never and will never be infringed upon.

ALDER NIAMH

This Reaping is the culmination of the cycle. The final thirty to complete the sacred ninety fetches. Why would you risk it?

ALDER ODHRAN

I risk nothing. And the lack of confidence from our most junior alder shows her immaturity.

ALDER NIAMH

Alder Odhran has spoken to dishonor this court and my dignity. I seek only the means to mend the rift sundered by the loss of the Magister. We cannot hesitate. We must--

ALDER ODHRAN

May I return our diverted attention to the real problem at hand. The Magister is no more, yes. We all feel, even now, his magical absence. The proper course of action is to seek out Mackenna Thorne--

ALDER NIAMH

The proper course of action is to crown a new magister. His power shaped our laws for millenia. Until we name a new ruler, we shall continue to suffer the lack of--

ALDER ODHRAN

As if it were so easy. As if magisters have come and gone. The power of the magister can only come from the source, and that source is dead. Obviously.

(beat)

An actual problem, though, with a realistic solution would be a much better use of our resources. Mackenna Thorne, the source of the Magister's doom. We have a chance to restore order if we can locate her and bring retribution to her doorstep.

NARRATOR

But of course, their attention cannot be distracted forever. No matter how long you hide, or how much you try to trick the shadows into swallowing you, those arguing parents will eventually remember you exist. Their little punching bag.

ALDER ODHRAN

Which leads me to her trainer. Changeling, come forward. We have more questions for you.

Shaylee steps forward.

SHAYLEE

As the Court wills.

### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

89. Niamh's quarters. Knock on an open door.

SHAYLEE

You sent for me, Alder Niamh?



ALDER NIAMH

I did. Come in, and close the door.

Door closes.

NARRATOR

An Alder seeking words with a changeling in private? This is simply not done. And yet, the best laid plans always come from behind closed doors.

SHAYLEE

That's a lot of scrolls. If it's not a good time--

ALDER NIAMH

Historical analysis that my brethren have long neglected. They preoccupy themselves with the present, our seers with the future. None have given thought to the ancient times. We can find answers in the past; it always repeats...and I am very close.

SHAYLEE

Close to what?

ALDER NIAMH

As if a changeling could comprehend.

(beat)

You are here for something else. There are whispers from the other alders. They call me rash, brazen. They refuse to respect me. They reference my low beginnings, complain that I never stop spinning. But I know their true quarrel with me: I propose change, not just for the sake of invention, but for the necessity of the future. They do not see the signs...

SHAYLEE

Is there something specific you need from me?

ALDER NIAMH

Don't be a fool. Interrupt me again and it will be your end.

SHAYLEE

I meant no disrespect, Alder.

ALDER NIAMH

Respect from a changeling. It matters not. I summoned you here to take care of a thorn in my side.

SHAYLEE

I've already told the court I don't know--

ALDER NIAMH

Do not worry yourself. Though I'm certain Mackenna Thorne yet lives, the Court will deal with her later. There are more pressing matters at hand. Alder Odhran. He has caused many problems for me: questioning me, belittling me, casting doubt on my leadership. He doesn't see the signs in front of his face and instead reacts to nonsense. I need you to...relieve him of his burdens.

SHAYLEE

I'm sorry, what?

ALDER NIAMH

I will not repeat myself.

SHAYLEE

But I can't. I'm only a change--

ALDER NIAMH

I know well what you are and of what you are capable. No, we cannot remove Odhran entirely, but he has something I need for my...research into our histories. A journal, writ in the hand of our late Magister. Odhran thinks the legacy is his to claim, an heirloom of no value beyond its writer, but he

doesn't know, doesn't appreciate, the knowledge in the tome. I would.

SHAYLEE

You expect me to steal? From an alder?

ALDER NIAMH

Don't think that your trips to the Hall of the Sagas have gone unnoticed, trainer. You may be able to sneak past the guards, be inconspicuous to the other alders, but not to me. I need you to use that stealth to acquire a new knowledge...for me.

SHAYLEE

Won't the Court suspect your hand?

ALDER NIAMH

No. If you succeed, it will be millennia before Odhran even notices a book a missing, let alone identifying which one. And by then--well, it won't matter what he suspects.

SHAYLEE

Surely you could compel someone else, someone more suited to the task.

ALDER NIAMH

I know who it is that I compel, trainer. A deceiver. A survivor. I almost respect you. Your cunning has brought you this far. You will not fail in this task--you will not fail me--but even if you were to fall, it would be no great loss.

SHAYLEE

That was almost motivational.

ALDER NIAMH

The Hidden do not work in motivation; we work in coercion. I hereby bind you to this act.

SHAYLEE

As...as you will.

ALDER NIAMH

Good. Do whatever you must to avoid detection. Return with the book when you are finished.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

90. Thorne house. Nissa types on her laptop. Stepping sideways arrival. Typing stops.

NISSA

Did you find her? It?

MACKENNA

No. I just looked in the windows of her house, but I didn't see it. No signs of life at all. And this thing doesn't seem like the type to hide.

THOMAS

So she's gone. And we have no idea how to find her.

NISSA

That's what I'm working on.

ALFIE

We'll find her, Thomas.

THOMAS

I wish I shared your optimism, Alfie.

MACKENNA

I did realize something when I was at Sam's house, though. I don't think anyone has told her about Ron.

THOMAS

Oh no. You're right. I'd better do it. But not here.

(sigh)

Hey, Sam, come here. Let's go into the living room for a minute.

Thomas and Smurphy leave the room.

NISSA

Hey check this out. I think I found something from Dane's files. It's an entry called Humans, Faeries, and all Things In Between.

ALFIE

Whoa. Spot on, Niss.

MACKENNA

What does it say?

91. Stepping sideways arrival.

ALFIE

She's back. Good timing, Shaylee. We think we found something.

SHAYLEE

(without enthusiasm)

That's great.

A whine and a howl of agony from Smurphy.

SHAYLEE (CONT'D)

Who's killing the dog in there?

MACKENNA

Thomas is telling Sam-slash-Murphy about Ron.

SHAYLEE

Oh. Poor Sam.

NISSA

So there's a video in the folder. Let me turn up the volume.

DANE

(through audio)

All right, recording. Hello, everyone. Welcome to entry fifteen, and if you're listening to this, get out of my stuff, Shaylee.

SHAYLEE

What? What is this?

NISSA

A video in the files. There's a series of them.

SHAYLEE

Dane...

MACKENNA

How many videos are there?

NISSA

A lot. And there are articles with each video. Looks like he's been doing these for years.

ALFIE

I appreciate his thorough approach to archiving everything.

NISSA

You would never thoroughly archive anything.

ALFIE

Which is why I appreciate it.

DANE

(through audio)

Today's topic is the In-Between. Most people--and by people, I mean Hidden People--don't think it really exists. Most human people wouldn't even think about whether this would exist because they don't truly understand how fucked up the world they cannot see is.

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

Who are you talking to, Dane?

DANE

(through audio)

Shaylee, go away! I'm in the middle of something. Would you get out of here, please?

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

(teasing)

Oh sorry, are you about to tell your vlog about boogey-monster land? Go ahead, then.

DANE

(through audio)

Yes, I am. And it's real. It's been more than alluded to in my research.

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

Oh, do tell. What's the proof? The facts? Has anyone been there? Ever? No.

DANE

(through audio)

(under his breath)

Just cuz you haven't been.

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

Of course I haven't been...because it's a myth. A myth!

DANE

(through audio)

Get outta here, crazy lady. I have to start this over now.

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

Oh, please keep it. Your diary needs to know not everyone is as naïve as you.

DANE

(through audio)

You're an ass.

(beat)

Anyway, before we were so rudely interrupted...yes, the In-Between does exist. Some thought it was a mythical realm that Wodan, god of the Hidden People, would send traitors to as punishment. But the truth is it's totally disconnected from the magical world. Magic doesn't work the same there, and there are rumors of monsters that could make the Magister crumble, but you didn't hear that from me.

Sound of punching bag being punched repeatedly on video.

DANE

(through audio)

Seriously? Do you have to do that right now?

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

(while punching)

Do what?

DANE

(through audio)

Work out? Punch that thing? Literally anything while I'm working on this?

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

Got to train, Dane. Can't ever be too ready.

DANE

(through audio)

Forget it. I'll pick this up later. To be continued.

Brief static before video cuts.

ALFIE

Are you okay, Shaylee?



SHAYLEE

I forgot about these. I thought I'd never see him again. Even like this... I...

Footsteps fade away.

ALFIE

Shaylee? Hey, Shaylee?

MACKENNA

Let her go, Alfie. She needs some alone time.

Video returns.

DANE

(through audio)

Alright, where was I? Oh yeah, creatures in the In-Between.

SHAYLEE

(through audio)

(from a distance)

Myth!

DANE

(through audio)

Ass! So, I won't admit this to Shaylee, but there's no actual evidence of anything going to and returning from the In-Between. But myths have to start from somewhere, right?

Papers shuffle on audio as Dane holds a drawing up to the camera.

DANE (CONT'D)

(through audio)

These are just some of the old drawings and records detailing tales told by those who returned from The In-Between. There are your basic weird creepy gremlins with eyes for hands or ears on their back and stuff. But the most notable, the most feared monster is--

Papers switch as Dane hold up a new drawing to the camera.

DANE (cont'd)

--a predator. I call it Cygnus, after the first black hole. Why? It devours anything in sight. The rumors say that the In-Between was just another world before Cygnus. Plants, animals, all the verdant works. And then this giant monster comes along and eats literally everything it can, leaving nothing but a barren, dead world. One of the drawings even showed it eating the life from the sun and leaving the rest to rot. I'd say that's ridiculous, but hey, if you accept the rest of it...

(beat)

Wodan supposedly sealed off the In-Between after Cygnus basically ate it. Now, only those who fall through a crack in space find their way there, and no one finds their way out.

(beat)

In addition to insatiable hunger, Cygnus also remembers the scent of prey for years, and it's drawn to power by some weird mechanism.

Dane pulls the paper back from covering the camera and points at the horn, jabbing his finger into the paper.

DANE (CONT'D)

I bet it's the horn. It's the only prominent feature on its body. It can sense the aura of power just like we can sense if someone's watching us. All kinds of power: magical, physical, electrical. It'll consume what it can, and collect what it can't--at least, according to the so-called In-Between survivors. At the end of the day, this beast rules the In-Between. It's a black hole. A walking black hole with teeth. The first and last of its kind. Let's just say that what lives in the In-Between should stay in the In-Between. All right, until next time.

Video cuts out.

NISSA

We really could have used this refresher prior to our little vacation

ALFIE

Did it actually look like that? It's like if Alien, Predator, and Indominus Rex had a baby. That thing is scary cool.

NISSA

We've been face to face with it, Alfie. Cool is not my word of choice. Nightmare is closer. But at least we have a name for it now.

ALFIE

More than that, we know what it wants:  
(Palpatine voice)  
Power! Unlimited power!

NISSA

Maybe we track the power that Cygnus tries to consume.

ALFIE

Dane said it could be any kind of power. How do we figure out what kind Cygnus is after on Earth?

MACKENNA

I'm going back to Sam's house.

NISSA

They already went through it. And you were just there.

ALFIE

But we didn't search it. We only got as far as Ron's body.

MACKENNA

And we were only looking for Cygnus both times. Dane, and the Wanderer for that matter, said it doesn't just consume power. It also collects it. It had a lair in the In-Between.

NISSA

With its treasure hoard.

MACKENNA

I bet we'll find something at the house that tells us what Cygnus wants.

ALFIE

I've got it! Samnus!

(beat)

Oh come on, that's a good name, and you all know it.

NISSA

I'm sure Thomas will want to go with you. I'm gonna stay and keep working on tracking Cygnus. I think I have an idea.

92. The other room with Thomas and Smurphy. Shaylee walks in. Soft whining from Smurphy.

SHAYLEE

How's she doing?

THOMAS

I don't know. About as well as anyone who found out their friend was murdered.

SHAYLEE

I understand. They're going over Dane's research that I gave them, but I had no idea that there would be videos of him. Of us.

THOMAS

And all I can do is sit here with her... give her the occasional scratch behind the ears. I have no way of knowing if it really helps.

SHAYLEE

None of us can know. We're in uncharted territory. We just...do what we have to do to survive.

THOMAS

Sorry, I was being a bit selfish. How are you doing? Are you alright?

SHAYLEE

Mmm.

THOMAS

Come join me. Sam and Murphy have another ear that needs scratching.

NARRATOR

Of course, in spite of all his own pain, Thomas still finds it within himself to help others. Setting himself on fire to keep others warm. Undoing him requires the long game of patient cruelty.

SHAYLEE

Hi, Sam. There we go, right behind the ears...I'm sorry this happened to you. I wish we knew what to do.

THOMAS

Me, too. It's hard feeling helpless while life seems to bend you to its will.

SHAYLEE

You're telling me.

THOMAS

Want to talk about it?

SHAYLEE

I wish I could.

THOMAS

Try me. I know that I'm no Mackenna,  
but I still have two good ears, and  
they don't need scratches.

SHAYLEE

It's hard to put into words. I-I-I  
can't say.

THOMAS

Hmm, okay. Wait, does this have  
anything to do with your summons  
earlier?

SHAYLEE

(beat)

Tongue tied again.

THOMAS

Something in your contract? And you  
can't say no?

SHAYLEE

Aye.

THOMAS

Shit. I'm sorry.

SHAYLEE

It's not your fault. Like you said,  
it's hard feeling helpless while life,  
or rather the Court, bends you to its  
will.

THOMAS

I wish I had a solution.

SHAYLEE

Me, too. I better go. Fuckin' hell.

THOMAS

Hey, remember, they can force your  
will...but only you can let them break  
it.

SHAYLEE

Thanks, Thomas.

NARRATOR

The perfect tagline from perfect  
Thomas. If only it were true.

93. Inside Alder Odhran's chambers.

NARRATOR

Another quiet day in the private  
quarters of the alders of the Unseelie  
Court. In the highest room, the window  
unprotected not because of the  
difficulty to reach it but because no  
one could possibly be stupid enough to  
break in.

Window latch unlocks and swings open. The wind whistles.  
Shaylee struggles to climb through.

SHAYLEE

(muttering)

Only two hundred feet up with a sheer  
stone wall with no handholds. No  
problem. Would you like me to do it  
blindfolded next time, Alder Niamh?

(beat)

Berk.

Shaylee rustles papers and books through dialogue until she  
finds the tome.

SHAYLEE (CONT'D)

This place is filled with junk. What is  
this?

(beat)

These books aren't even valuable.

(beat)

Here...this can't be right. Mixed in  
with these worthless ones?

NARRATOR

Of course, Alder Odhran would put the Magister's tome among the other books, as if such a relic were but a mere trinket to him--it isn't, but he wants others to think it is. And mere trinkets can be easily palmed and slipped into pockets of a size much smaller than them. Such a deadly task, made so easy. But alas--

Footsteps approaching from outside the door.

SHAYLEE

Shite.

NARRATOR

Something wicked this way comes. Scrambling to the high window, poor Shaylee is too slow.

Door handle turns.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Prepare for whatever fate steps through that door, Shaylee. It's worse than you think.

Door opens. Teen fetch enters.

TEEN FETCH

You...you are not supposed to be in here. No one is allowed in here without the Master's permission.

SHAYLEE

Ah, I must have gotten turned around. I'll just be going--

TEEN FETCH

No, that's not right. You are an intruder. I must inform the Master--



SHAYLEE

No, wait...I have permission, obviously! Alder Odhran gave me secret permission. Please...just...

(beat)

You're his fetch, aren't you?

TEEN FETCH

Remain here. I must tell the Master.

SHAYLEE

(beat, sigh)

No, come in, and I'll tell you why your Master wanted me to come here.

After a moment's hesitation, Teen Fetch closes the door and walks closer.

NARRATOR

Are you trying to make this easier for her, Shaylee, or for yourself?

SHAYLEE

You're a good fetch aren't you? Always doing as your Master asks?

TEEN FETCH

C-commands. I do as the Master commands. I must...I must do as the Master commands. I-I have no other choice.

SHAYLEE

Of course. I understand.

(beat)

We have no other choice, do we?

Shaylee pulls a knife from her pocket and slits Teen Fetches throat.

NARRATOR

An iron plated knife, meant as a last resort against the Hidden and their constructs, instead finds its home in the neck of Alder Odhran's fetch.

SHAYLEE

I'm so sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Teen Fetch falls.

NARRATOR

Unable to cry out and alert her master, the young fetch crumples to the ground. Shaylee moves away to avoid any incriminating blood that might stain her hands.

SHAYLEE

(crying)

I'm so, so sorry.

Shaylee climbs out the window.

NARRATOR

Shaylee flees, her body unblemished by her crimes but her soul not so unscathed.

#### **MUSICAL TRANSITION**

94. Sam's house. Door opens.

ALFIE

Anybody else getting déjà vu right about now?

THOMAS

Ron isn't here anymore, Alfie. Neither is Cygnus.

ALFIE

Ugh, it even smells like déjà vu.

MACKENNA

Gross. What is that?

THOMAS

This makes no sense. I deep cleaned the spot where Ron's body was. This place is spotless. The only lingering smell should be the bleach I used.

ALFIE

Well, there's definitely something rotten in the state of Sam's house.

MACKENNA

Last time you only looked around the living room and kitchen, right? We need to check everything else for clues. Any signs that Cygnus was here, any indication of where it's going or some way for us to find it. I'm thinking we split up.

ALFIE

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: you know bad things happen to people when they split up.

MACKENNA

Okay, we'll start in the kitchen. But we need to be prepared to split up and cover more ground. The longer it takes us to search this house, the colder its trail gets.

THOMAS

This kitchen's a mess. Sam's not this messy. And it didn't look like this the last time.

ALFIE

So Samnus was definitely here.

MACKENNA

That doesn't tell us anything new. We already knew that Cygnus was here and that it likes to eat. Let's check another room. Bedroom maybe?

THOMAS

Does it sleep?

MACKENNA

I think it does. In the In-Between, it had a lair that it returned to.

THOMAS

Would it try to recreate its home in this world?

MACKENNA

I'm not an expert on alien monster psychology. Which way is the bedroom, Thomas?

THOMAS

Uh, I think it's this way. I'm not sure. I've never actually been in there.

ALFIE

Suuure.

THOMAS

Seriously, I haven't.

MACKENNA

Hold up. It's not the bedroom we need. Thomas, I think you're right. I think it might have wanted to recreate its home. You know, give it something familiar in this weird human world.

ALFIE

So what did its home look like in the In-Between?

MACKENNA

It was underground. The entrance was at the surface, and it spiraled down. Thomas, is there a basement around here?

THOMAS

Yeah, I think so. This way.

A door opens.

ALFIE

Eww, that smell just got way worse.

THOMAS

What's that on the walls? Is that...

MACKENNA

Blood, I think. Traced with her fingers. It's trying to recreate the five layers from its lair in the In-Between. So if we keep following the layers to the bottom, we should find...

THOMAS

Oh my god.

(beat)

I think it moved everything from the garage down here. There are extension cords, a chain saw, a snow blower, a bunch of leaking car batteries...with teeth marks. A lawn mower, a drill...

ALFIE

It's like the treasure hoard of junkyard Smaug.

MACKENNA

Look at the center of the pile.

THOMAS

Cygnus's head.

Gagging, gross noises from everyone.

ALFIE

Annd we have detected the source of the smell.

MACKENNA

She took it, remember? When we came back from the In-Between, Sam offered to take the head. But Sam was Cygnus, and this is where it stored the head. Only it's missing the horn.

THOMAS

Why would Cygnus remove the horn on its own head?

ALFIE

Dane must have guessed right. The horn is like a divining rod for powerful objects.

Mackenna's phone vibes.

MACKENNA

Hey, Nissa. How's the research coming?

NISSA

(through phone)

You guys might want to get back here. I think I know how to find Cygnus.

**MUSICAL TRANSITION**

95. Alder Niamh's quarters. A knock on an open door.

ALDER NIAMH

Trainer. Do you have what you were tasked to find?

SHAYLEE

Here.

The book thumps on Alder Niamh's table.

ALDER NIAMH

Good. You were not seen.

Shaylee is silent.

ALDER NIAMH (CONT'D)

You were not seen, correct?

(beat)

You useless idiot. You didn't lead them here, did you?

SHAYLEE

No, there is--there is no one left to follow.

ALDER NIAMH

You were smart enough to eliminate witnesses. I would be surprised, but the very least you could do is follow orders. You are dismissed.

NARRATOR

But still Shaylee lingers. What is it she wants to say to you, Alder Niamh? What barb is resting on the tip of her tongue, begging to be spit out? Where, exactly, would she tell you to shove your "orders?"

ALDER NIAMH

I said, you are dismissed.

SHAYLEE

Yes, Alder.

Shaylee walks out the door. Down the hallway. Faster and faster. Stepping sideways departure. Stepping sideways arrival at Shaylee's beach house.

NARRATOR

Alone at last, at one of the many houses she thought was safe. But never alone again. Because our dear Shaylee will hear that fetch's stutter, see the arterial spray from the wound she put in their neck, and feel the chains of her contract to the Court pulling tighter and tighter, for the rest of her life. Starting--

Shaylee screams in rage, grief, and futility. A lamp smashes against a wall.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Now.

THE END