

## Two Can Keep a Secret

### Part Two

Giallo was wearing a different outfit as he sat in the inn that the terran noble and the knights following her stayed at. He was currently drinking a glass of water and eating a small dish of mixed vegetables and bread. The woman was currently sitting at a table not far from him and staring down at a notebook. He wasn't sure what was in that notebook, but he had caught sight of her occasionally scribbling furiously into it.

"Are you ready for your second course?" a raithe woman asked.

Giallo glanced down at his plate before looking back at the woman. "I will be soon. Would you allow me a bit of time before you start it? In the meantime, could you bring me an ale?"

The raithe smiled. "Of course. Coming right up."

A short while later, Giallo was slowly drinking an ale waiting on his second course when a telv woman arrived and sat down with the terran. The redhead telv was the medic for the knight order according to notes he had on the group. He listened in as they spoke.

"Sloane! How are you doing? Still working on your designs, I see," the telv said.

"I'm good, Maud. Just trying to finish up the runes and design for the Banking Guild's runecard terminal. The card is nearly done, so I want to have the terminal completed soon. That way I can work on other things while we are on our way to Marketbol."

Giallo caught sight of the telv, Maud, leaning closer. He could barely make out what the woman said if he strained himself. "What is your opinion of the Blade and the Guildmaster's niece working for you?"

That was surprising to Giallo. The terran had only just met with the Banking Guild's head yesterday. To come out of that meeting with not only a deal to meet with presumably the Guild's leadership in Marketbol, but to have a Blade and the Guild's own niece join her House? That was a development the Academy needed to know.

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Giallo walked out of the cafe after meeting with his handler. The two had spoke of much, including the ball Giallo and several other agents had just left. Ramifications of which would be wide spread. The initial opinion was that the Order would need to know more. What was surprising to Giallo was the length the Guildmaster went to ensure the count did not apprehend the terran woman. It was something else to check into.

He also passed on information about Lord Andrei Vasile to his handler. The Order would task other agents with ascertaining the reason for the noble's interest in Lady Sloane. He was a known philanderer, yet the length he went to for the terran was beyond his norm. Either something about her enticed him more than usual, or he had ulterior motives. Both reasons were of interest to the Order.

For now, he would return to the Academy and figure out the next move. They needed to prepare to leave the city.

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Giallo sat at the inn again. He'd become a regular over the past two weeks. Choosing to maintain his cover by eating and drinking in the tavern part of the inn, even when the knights and terran weren't around. The Order's interest in the terran had increased dramatically after her actions in the count's ball. She'd shown the ability to use magic, along with one of the knights. The two of them showed extensive control that was greater than any the Academy had seen thus far. The count's interest was starting to make sense. It was a lead that would need to be checked further.

Sloane and the sun elf, Ernard, entered and sat at a table and started discussing other projects the terran was working on. He missed some of the specifics, but he heard something

about a bird. *I wonder what she's working on next.* The Academy was quite interested in her grenades and her deal with the Guilds.

He listened in as the two spoke of more things before moving to inconsequential topics. Sloane spoke of doing more work in her room and wanting to work out some math.

Giallo finished his second course and was about to get up and leave when Ernald said something that made him pause.

"I will be back later. Deryk is already trying to find a contact to meet with the Order," he said.

That in itself wasn't really news to Giallo. The two knights had been searching for a way to meet with the order for several weeks. However, Giallo did believe it was about time to force a meeting. The horde would meet the forces the count had sent out in the next day or so. Within a week, the Academy was going to leave the city. A small force like those sent out by the count would barely cause a delay, but it did mean that the beasts would arrive later than initially estimated. Experts suspected they had about a week and a half before the swarm arrived. *As if experts for such a thing existed...*

"You still think they can help us?" Lady Sloane asked.

The knight replied and slid his chair back, so Giallo stood up and walked toward the exit, not wanting to leave after the man. He made it outside in the crisp Autumn air and moved to the side, blending himself in with the crowds moving around the cobbled streets. A few minutes later, the knight emerged from the inn, looked left then right before making toward a small pedestrian alley across the street. Giallo counted to five then made after the man.

Giallo followed the man for another fifteen minutes as they wound their way through the alleys and streets. The man obviously had a clear destination, and Giallo knew that the orkun knight would be there waiting. The knight stopped at a stone arch across the street in between a row of businesses and looked around. Giallo moved into a doorway as the man stopped to prevent himself from being seen. He waited a moment before walking out as if he were leaving the building, trying to catch sight of the sun elf as he turned left, away from where the arch was.

When he didn't see the sun elf, he made his way across the street and peered into the large public gardens that were beyond the archway. It took him a moment, but then he noticed the sun elf moving through the hedges.

Endeavoring to remain unseen, Giallo moved quietly through the garden after the sun elf. He paused when he heard Ernald speaking quietly.

"Deryk, have you found anything?"

A gruff voice answered him. "No. It's as if they are purposely avoiding us. There is no way they are not aware of our attempts to contact them at this point," the orkun said.

*He has no idea how true that is. Or perhaps he does. There is something about him...*

"That is unfortunate. We promised Sloane this would be the best option. We do not have much longer with her," Ernald said.

A grunt came in reply. "We have months left with her, Ernald. We have to travel all the way to Marketbol then go back to Swanbrook. Cristole has shown that the plans can change. I know your feelings on the matter. Maud has let her feelings known as well. Ser Gisele is understandably hesitant to tie our order down to Sloane. We have to part ways, but we have pledged to do all we can to assist her in finding her daughter."

Giallo tilted his head in thought. That explained why they wanted to meet with the Order. Of course the Academy would have information concerning terrans within the kingdom. A plan was forming in Giallo's mind, one that would require him to meet back with the Academy. He could easily obtain the information the woman desired. He knew from listening and from other agent's notes that the terran's daughter was nine years old, somewhat tall for her age, and had brown curly hair just like her mother, but lighter. That would be enough for him to know if any terran matching that description or even similar was discovered. He just hoped that the girl wasn't one of the bodies they had found, dead from various sources.

Ernald continued. "How do you think we will meet with the Order?" He asked.

"I do not believe we will meet them. I half expect them to pop up behind us and introduce themselves," Deryk said.

Giallo nearly snorted as he tried to stop himself from laughing. There couldn't be a better queue for him to show himself if he planned it. He stepped out from the hedges and approached the two. The orkun instantly jerked around, two long, double-sided daggers appearing in his hands. Ernald's eyes went wide, but he quickly raised his hands, ready for a fight.

"Sers. No need for hostilities. I do believe Deryk just requested my presence," Giallo said. He was confident in his abilities, but that orkun would be a very tough fight. The scholar would be easier, but having to fight both at the same time would require him to go on the defensive almost immediately.

Ernald looked at Deryk with a confused expression, but the orkun simply put away his daggers. "I should have spoken to the wind and requested a meeting sooner, if that was all it required."

Giallo huffed a laugh and smirked at the orkun. He could appreciate the humor of the situation. "Now, I believe it's beyond the time we've met. Shall we?"

The three spoke at length about what they wished to know. As expected, information regarding the daughter was first and foremost amongst their request. What was not expected was knowledge he was sure the Academy didn't have.

"How sure are you of the count's actions with the terrans?" Giallo asked.

The two men glanced at each other, then Ernald responded. "Our source has their own reasons for obtaining this information. I am sure it is true. The Order of Secrets has no knowledge of this?"

Giallo tilted his head, deciding how to respond. "Since the Flash, the Academy has had to gather information from a multitude of sources all over the region. Our sight has not always caught everything, but once something has our *focus*, there is nothing that we cannot find out. The terrans are under that focus, if the count is doing something that you are aware of, the Academy would *appreciate* any further insight you could provide."

Ernald nodded. "We can understand that. We are aware of a number of terrans the count captured, tortured, and then killed. He apparently has one remaining terran he is holding. While we cannot prove it, we believe the terran noble he has on his court is being utilized to trap any terran they find. Especially any with... abilities."

“Any information you can provide on the terran he has, we want,” Deryk said.

Giallo noticed Ernald’s quick glance at Deryk. Obviously, that was something they had not discussed beforehand, but fit within what the Academy knew of how the group operated.

“I will need to confirm what you have told me, but I do believe we can come to an arrangement. In the meantime, I will need to meet with your Lady Sloane,” Giallo said.

Ernald’s eyes narrowed. “Why do—”

“That is fine. I will inform her,” Deryk said, cutting off his fellow knight, which garnered him a glare.

“Deryk—”

The look the orkun gave the sun elf cut off anything the man had hoped to say. Giallo just smirked.

“Good. I look forward to meeting the Lady. Until next time, sers,” Giallo said.

He left the two knights standing there, both still on edge. He hadn’t lied. Giallo did look forward to meeting the woman herself. However, first he needed to look into the count and the information obtained that he expected was from the Blade attached to House Reinhart.

*This woman may not have the largest connections of the terrans the Academy knew of, but she’s certainly doing well for herself after such a short time period.*