

# Second Sight: The Decay

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### Chapter 1

“Detective Levin! In my office now!” Chief Lewis yelled.

I walked through the SBI office to see what good old hot head wanted this time. Chief Lewis was always a prick. All he really needed was to pull the stick out of his ass once in a while, but I’d never tell him that. Worst of all his cigar smoke choked everyone that went in there.

“We’ve reopened the Norcastle mass murder case,” Chief Lewis said biting down on another cigar.

“The murder capital of the country? Lovely!”

“Don’t toy with me, after your last few mishaps I’m losing my patience.”

I lit a cigarette and winked at him, “We should meet up after work for some dinner, my treat.”

He puffed on his cigar a few times leering at me with those big bloodshot eyes. I thought about bringing turtle wax in one day to polish that shiny dome of his. If the Chinese takeout didn’t put him six feet under his blood pressure surely would. I loved to rile him up. He always gave me this glare like he wanted to tear my head clean off but I knew he never would. I had too much dirt on him.

“Shut up Levin! Go solve that case and get Norcastle outta’ your head. You grew up there, you

know it better than anyone. Go see Doctor Moore before you leave.”

I smiled at him “Not the vacation spot I’d choose, but beggars can’t be choosers.”

Chief ran his hand on the top of his head and slammed the door behind me as I walked out of his office. I walked next door to see Dr. Moore. Moore was a middle age man with short brown hair and a trimmed beard. He was the best psychiatrist in Drova. The best I knew anyway, it’s not like the chief was going to give us an allowance to see an outside shrink. I straightened out my suit and knocked on the door.

“Come in,” Moore said.

I walked inside and sat down looking at all of his diplomas to pass the time. Moore dug through his notes making a few scribbles here and there.

“Can you get me out of this assignment?” I asked.

Dr. Moore leaned back holding onto his torn armrests. He stayed there for a moment and sighed.

“Not this again... we’ve been talking about Norcastle all year,” Moore said rubbing his temples.

“So that’s a no?”

“Every method we’ve tried thus far has given bad side effects.”

“I know Doc, but is sending me back really going to help? It’s like sending a Vietnam Vet back to the jungle!”

“Why do we have to do this every time, Rick?”

“I just think it’s bullshit. I mean there are tons of other cases. Gordana had some disappearances; Maelstrom is full of lunatics, hell even Drova has its fair share of perps.”

“That’s enough!”

Dr. Moore looked me in the eye and leaned forward onto his worn-out desk. I had never seen him like this. He always seemed relaxed. I never believed in all this therapy nonsense either. My only issue was insomnia. God knows the other detectives weren’t going to lose their beauty sleep. I always got the calls at 3 AM to investigate the crime scenes. If any of the others ever went I’d hear an earful the next morning from Chief Lewis. They’d use me as the doormat if they could.

“I know it’s going to be difficult, and if you have some kind of bad reaction call me. Here’s my card,” Moore said handing me his business card

“Doc... look. I can’t do this right now. I have other cases on my desk.”

“It’s this or Chief will put you on administrative leave. I tried to talk him out of it, but he won’t budge. I have done everything in my power to help you. I feel for you, I really do, but at this point, we don’t have any other options. You have to go back,” Moore said.

I stormed out and headed down the hall toward the stairs. Going back to Norcastle didn’t feel right. I never wanted to see that town’s hideous face again. The phones rang off the hook at every desk. At least I got the sweet sound of silence away from the phones and Chief’s constant screaming. This assignment was the hardest I had ever dealt with. I dreaded every moment leading up to my inevitable departure.

“Hey Rick wait,” Dyson said.

I stopped at my ex-partner’s desk. Dyson had just turned 55. He’s been part of the SBI since I was in

diapers. When I joined the force, he showed me the ropes. He had a thick country accent, pot belly, and a rough beard.

“So what did chief want this time?” Dyson asked.

“I have to go to Norcastle. They won’t let me out of it this time. I keep kicking the can down the road but what am I gonna’ do?”

“You better be careful out there. It’s dangerous.”

“Tell me something I don’t know.”

“Are you going to be okay?”

“I don’t know. I have to go and try to solve a 10-year-old murder case that has no leads, no suspects, and not a damn clue from anyone. I don’t see the point.”

“Neither do I man, but at least you get away from the Chief.”

“That’s true.”

I stood up and walked out of the precinct to the parking deck. This was it. I was going back to home sweet hell. I opened a pack of Marlboro reds and fired one up. A young woman leaned against my car. She was one of those goth types. Black baggy pants with chains and a black mini skirt halfway covered by a dark hoodie. She was around 5’6 and 120 pounds soaking wet. She looked around the parking lot aimlessly. Typical street punk type. I figured she was waiting for her junkie boyfriend to come out.

“Excuse me, are you waiting for someone?”

“No, is this your car?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry, I hope I didn’t scratch it.”

She put out her cigarette on her boot heel and moved. I gave her a polite smile and got in my Crown Victoria. I wasn't supposed to smoke in the car, new city policy. But what were they going to do, arrest me? It wasn't the sexiest car. Not like the state police who drove Corvettes to catch people going 20 over the limit. It was at least incognito. My blue lights sat on the dashboard, and there were no protruding antennas. The girl came up to my window and knocked.

"Hey, I'm sorry to ask, but are you going by Mario's Pizza on North Street?"

North Street was on the way back to my apartment. Muggers, rapists, gangs of thugs all roamed that area. I dealt with them all the time. Terrible sights that will always be burned into my memory forever. It's a wonder that all cops aren't emotional trainwrecks. Maybe we were, but some hid it better than others.

"Yeah. Sure. Hop in," I said.

She smiled and got in. She avoided direct eye contact and didn't say much.

I looked up at the sky and said, "It's about to rain."

She smiled and looked down.

"Yeah, I didn't notice, but when it rains I can use my hood," She said.

"Then you'd catch a cold. I'd hate to see that happen to a pretty girl like you."

She blushed and said, "My name is Starr..."

"I'm Detective Rick Levin, SBI. Nice to meet ya."

Her eyes darted around the car, and she trembled.

"No need to be scared. You're in good hands."

“Okay...” she said.

“So what were you doing at the precinct. Waiting for someone?”

“No... I just wanted to stop for a smoke. It’s been a bad day. I figured it would be the safest place to stop.”

“Tell me about it... I just got the worst case of my life dumped in my lap. Chief is trying to drive me to drink.”

“Oh... what case?”

“I’ve got to go to Norcastle. It’s a shithole.”

“Be careful in Norcastle...”

“Oh yeah? Why’s that? You been there recently?”

“No... I just know a lot of bad things have happened there recently.”

“Don’t worry, I can hold my own.”

We pulled up to Mario’s pizza and parked at the corner.

“Here you go. Stay safe,” I said.

Starr got out of the car smiling and said: “Thank you.”

“No problem, here’s my card. Call me if anything happens.”

Starr snickered and said, “Thanks, I will.”

I hoped she’d be alright getting home. I contemplated waiting outside and giving her a ride home, but I had no time to wait. Chief needed me to leave for Norcastle as soon as possible. I got back onto North street and pulled up to my apartment complex on West 52nd Street.

I parked in my usual spot near the fence in the very back of the lot. The thought was no one would try to steal the car this far in. It had worked so far. I took one

last drag and flicked it out the window before keying the engine off. I looked at myself in the rearview mirror. I looked like shit. No sleep and no sanity. I rubbed my eyes with my hand and tried to forget creeping thoughts of Norcastle I'd buried long ago.

After a minute or too I got out and went into my apartment complex through the side door. The main entrance always had a few drug dealers hanging around the steps. I was in no mood to deal with them today. I got in the old elevator, and it slowly started up to my floor. After it screeched for a while the doors opened. I walked down the hall to my door and went inside.

I dropped my keys on the end table and turned on my old rusty lamp. It didn't look like anyone had broken in. It's not like there was much to steal. All I had was a futon, a few guitars, and four-day-old take-out in the fridge. It wasn't Buckingham Palace, but it was mine. I put my life on the line for the public, and the Chief never gave me a raise. Sure, he would give me a cheap medal but give me a dollar extra an hour? Shit! That cheap prick fired anyone who asked for one.

I opened my laptop and logged into TRAX's website. The prices had gone up in recent months, because of the summer season. I put in my ticket number and decided to leave at 3 AM. I didn't have much choice, the next train going there was in a week after tomorrow.

I never could figure out what would cause such mayhem back in Norcastle. After my neighbors were murdered, I got the hell out of dodge. I wondered why Chief put me on this case? It's been 10 years. It's not

like bringing it back up will help anyone. To be honest, I thought we should've left it cold. Let the dead rest in peace.

The futon frame creaked as I laid it out flat. It had the sweet smell of sweat and shame. Before long it was going to give way, and I'd have a spring up my ass. I could see the headlines now "Cop dies from a spring up the ass." You laugh now, but it would've sold like hotcakes. Plus lugging a new futon up four flights of stairs didn't seem too appealing after working 12-16 hour shifts.

The precinct had bunks that I could've slept in. More comfortable than my futon but I couldn't sleep naked there. The best I could do there was sleep in a pair of slacks and a white beater undershirt.

After working the usual 12-hour shift, I'd go to Mario's, go home and by the time I tried to go to sleep the phone rang. Then I was up for another few hours writing notes from a tip the victims thought of. Cops are never off duty. Your phone stays on 24/7, and most of us were lucky to get 3 hours of sleep a night. Most nights I couldn't sleep at all. I thought about the victims I met throughout the day. The worst is when I had to tell a mother and her crying children their father was dead from a mugging gone awry.

I started to doze off, and my phone rang. I put the pillow over my face and screamed hoping the ringing would stop. The caller ID read "Dyson." I didn't want to answer it but once again if I refused to answer the phone Chief would give me a lecture.

"Hello..."

"Hey buddy," Dyson said.

“What’s going on man?”

“That Norcastle place is fucked up, brother. I didn’t want to tell you at the precinct in front of anyone. I keep hearing about people going through there and going crazy. Make sure you take your pills. If you need me, call me. I’ll be stuck in this shithole while you’re gone on a wild goose chase.”

“Yeah... thanks. I’m gonna get some sleep, keep in touch.”

“Hey wait. One more thing.”

“Yeah, what?”

“There’s a rumor about something called ‘The Red Reaper’ in Norcastle.”

“What the hell is a red reaper?”

“I don’t know, just some guy who was traveling through there caught footage on his dashcam of someone on a rooftop with a giant red scythe.”

“Shit... I’ll keep my eyes peeled then.”

“Be careful out there. We’re all counting on you.”

“Thanks... I’ll call you later. Bye.”

I drifted off around 9 PM. Got a few hours of sleep, three at best. I grabbed my travel mug filled with cheap instant coffee and headed out the door. The traffic was heavy with everyone on their way home from the baseball game. The Drova Falcons vs. Kent Blue Devils. It took almost 20 minutes to cut into West Broad Street. The horns honked and people screamed out of their windows.

“Hey move your ass!” I heard one particularly angry driver scream.

Friendly bunch of people, good old Drova. The beautiful symphony of screaming idiots and horns

blaring every day in traffic. Seemed like the only day without a traffic jam was the day that didn't end in "Y." My coffee was stale. It tasted more like gravel and dog turds than actual coffee.

The sound of car horns and crazed sports fans gave me a massive headache. Downtown was filled with skyscrapers full of offices. The workers all looked miserable. The day to day grind of paperwork and the office weasels sucking the boss off would drive any man to drink.

A green Jeep pulled up beside me. The passenger inside glared at me. It was a man with a blank visage. A white face without eyes, a nose, or ears. Only a mouth. He stuck his tongue out at me and hissed. Its tongue was long, black, and sizzling. I floored the gas pedal trying to escape its gaze.

"Oh shit!" I yelled as I slammed on the brakes almost running into the back of a taxi.

The taxi driver yelled some unintelligible swear at me waving his fist out the window. When I looked back, the creature was gone. It must've been from sleep deprivation. Lack of sleep can cause hallucinations, right?

I arrived at the train station. The platform was silent. Not a single soul in sight. Strange for the station to be empty. Even if people weren't headed to Norcastle, the neighboring towns along the way were always flooded with people commuting. Many people worked in Drova, but at least half of them lived elsewhere in the adjacent cities like Innsbrook, Hillsboro, or Chesterfield.

It was cheaper to live out there since Drova was the capital of the state and most corporations wanted the prestige of having their HQ here. Most of the city dwellers were rich or eating stale government cheese.

I scanned my ticket and took a window seat in coach. Coach was generally the place poor people sat, and if you didn't watch your stuff, someone might steal it. On a typical day, you'd see a bum in the back of the car sleeping with a newspaper over him and see crackheads twitching in the corners.

My anxiety grew higher as I looked around and saw no one else around. I was happy that nobody else was here, but at the same time, it felt wrong. Steam came from of the sides as it started to move down the tracks. I was all alone. No attendants or staff in sight. I really could've used a whiskey or something to calm my nerves. Must've been a slow day.

Trees and wildlife passed by the windows as the train rode full speed ahead. Drova to Norcastle was an eight-hour trip. I needed the sleep. It would help me think more clearly once I arrived "home." I leaned back in my chair and opened a bottle of sleeping pills taking two. Twice the dose the bottle recommended but I didn't care. I wanted to sleep the entire way. Most nights I would pop two, and if I was feeling particularly spicy, I'd down them both with a cold beer.

As I drifted off, I saw the same faceless creature from the car. It walked in toward me. It wore an attendant uniform. A blue coat with golden buttons going down from his forearm to his wrist. It reached out to me with his pale white palm. I tried to move,

but the pills had me so tired I passed out before I could get away.

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