

For occult
forensics
investigator
Tess Corday,
the evidence
can be out
of this
world.

Night Child

NOT CROSS - AN OSI NOVEL - CRIME SCENE

Jes Battis

"Hooks you from the very first line."

—Keri Arthur



ONE

“That’s a dead vampire.”

Selena Ward, my boss, raised an eyebrow. “Uh-huh.”

“You dragged me out of bed, to a disgusting alley on Granville Street—at two in the morning—to see a dead vampire?”

She handed me the clipboard with the MCS entry log. Anyone entering a mystical crime scene has to sign in first, just like a regular crime scene. The only difference is that some of our responding officers aren’t human. The scene was divided into three zones with a base of operations, or staging area, near the far end of the alley where extra photographic equipment, evidence bundles, and chemical reagents could be stored in portable kits. The perimeter around the vampire’s body was taped off as the primary focal point, with access far more restricted than the outer edges of the scene. It all seems orderly until you have to explain to a high-ranking investigator that she should really get the hell out of your way. I’ll admit it—I did get a secret pleasure out of that sometimes. There weren’t any doors or fire-escapes at the back of the alley, so the only natural point of entry and exit was the street.

“Take a closer look,” Selena said. “Make sure to put on gloves.”

Tasha Lieu, our Medical Examiner, gave me a wink as she passed by. “Just released the scene, so it’s all yours.”

“Thanks, Tash.” Selena looked tired.

I was already fishing the gloves out of my purse. “Sorry to call you out so late,” I said sheepishly. I’d always assumed that Tasha had some type of normal human life outside of the CORE, unlike the rest of us. She was an intensely private person, and all I really knew about her was that she lived in Marpole and had a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon strip taped on the wall above the autopsy sink.

“No worries, I’m a night owl. See you at the morgue, bright and early tomorrow morning. I should have the post done by the time you get there.”

I swallowed. “Yeah, great. See you there.” It was just like a trip to the dentist, only the dentist was a vivisected corpse. Not my idea of a sweet morning. Tasha waved and left the scene, stepping carefully over the caution tape.

“Where’s Siegel?” Selena’s frown had deepened. Shit.

“Parking. The strip is packed, as usual, so I sent him down to the seedier part of Nelson Street. He may have to fend off some goth-chicks, but he’ll survive.”

West Granville was Vancouver’s nightclub district, and its irregular streets were an explosion of noise and neon light. Hipsters danced the night away at Aquarius and The Plaza, while underage kids drank pitchers of cheap Molson at The Roxy. After last call, the strip became a drunken labyrinth of kids eating hot dogs and fries from late-night vendors, taxi cabs dodging each other, and police cars wailing their sirens. Just another night in Terminal City, as Vancouver was often called, since the only thing beyond it to the west was ocean. Like Shangri-La. The end of everything. No wonder demons liked it here so much.