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Raven's Edge

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Introduction

There are cities that never sleep, cities whose lights gleam against the night and whose stories seethe below neon and concrete. Seaview is one such place, nestled against a restless coastline and crowned by towers of glass and steel. To the uninitiated, Seaview is a metropolis like any other: humming with traffic, alive with ambition, and haunted only by the dreams of those striving within it. But Seaview holds secrets—layers of history and magic so deeply woven into its foundations that most citizens pass them by, unseeing.

For as long as anyone can remember, Seaview has thrummed with an undercurrent of the inexplicable. Whispers slip between alleyways on fog-shrouded nights; strange shadows flit just beyond the edge of lamplight. Few bother to notice these peculiarities, choosing instead the comforting cadence of the ordinary. Yet beneath every bustling market and weathered brick, a harmony of the mundane and the arcane persists, alive and potent for those willing—or cursed—to perceive it.

Cora Blackwood is one such soul, walking the thin line between what the city believes itself to be and the truth that lurks beneath. By day, she is a sharp-eyed detective, a woman whose instincts have carried her through some of Seaview's darkest corridors. Her colleagues know her as dogged and unrelenting, though few would suspect the truth of her lineage. For Cora descends from a long line of shadow weavers—magicians born with the ability to bend darkness to their will, a gift and a burden carried in silence across generations.

Her dual existence is a balancing act of fear and necessity. In the precinct, Cora wears the badge and plays her part, compressing the weight of her inheritance into the corners of her mind. But as strange disappearances mount and victims leave behind only the burnt residue of shadows, the wall between her two worlds begins to crumble. The city's undercurrent of magic, hidden for so long, begins to surge. Old secrets stir, beckoning Cora to step beyond every boundary she's sworn to uphold.

Seaview, for all its glitter and grit, is on the precipice. Darkness—both ancient and immediate—draws closer, and with it comes not only danger but the possibility of transformation. Cora must navigate a city teeming with alliances she cannot yet fathom, resist betrayals older than memory, and confront the truth of who she is and what she must become. In the city's shadows lies not only the key to saving Seaview but to understanding her own fractured soul.

This is the story of Raven's Edge, where power is never without cost, trust is as fleeting as the morning mist, and redemption waits on the far side of darkness.

Welcome to Seaview—look carefully, and you just might glimpse the magic that waits within the shadows.

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CHAPTER ONE: Shadows on Main Street

The first call came in on a Tuesday, a day as grey and uninspired as the coffee brewing in the precinct break room. Cora Blackwood was hunched over a cold case file, the stale scent of forgotten evidence clinging to the pages, when her partner, Detective Ryan Hale, slapped a fresh printout onto her desk. The paper was still warm from the printer, a stark contrast to the chill in Cora's gut as she read the terse summary.

"Missing person, another one," Ryan grunted, running a hand through his perpetually rumpled hair. He was a good cop, solid and dependable, with an irritatingly logical mind that often clashed with Cora's more intuitive approach. "Name's Marcus Thorne. Disappeared from his apartment in the Old Port district last night. No forced entry, no struggle, just... poof."

Cora scanned the details. Marcus Thorne, 40, accountant, lived alone. His landlord reported him missing after Thorne failed to show up for a scheduled rent collection. Typical, mundane details that usually pointed to a runaway spouse or a gambling debt. But the address, a quaint brownstone on a cobblestone street known for its antique shops and independent bookstores, made Cora's internal alarm bell tingle. The Old Port district was one of Seaview's magical arteries, though few knew it.

"Anything else?" Cora asked, trying to keep her voice level, professional. She could already feel the familiar hum under her skin, the subtle pull of the unseen, a prelude to a shadow whisper. It was like a low-frequency vibration, detectable only to her.

Ryan tapped the paper with a pen. "Clean as a whistle, that's the weird part. Not a single print out of place, no signs of a struggle. Neighbors heard nothing. Landlord found his phone on the kitchen counter, wallet still in his jacket by the door. Like he just... evaporated." He paused, a skeptical eyebrow raised. "You're getting that look again, Blackwood. The one that says you think something's not right beyond the usual 'not right'."

Cora ignored the jab. Ryan had seen her "look" before, usually when a case veered into the truly bizarre, the kind that precinct brass liked to sweep under the rug. She attributed it to a "woman's intuition," a convenient cover for the faint traces of residual magic she sometimes picked up. "It's just a feeling," she said, pushing back from her desk. "Let's go take a look."

The brownstone smelled of old wood and something vaguely metallic, like ozone after a lightning strike, a scent only Cora could discern. The apartment was indeed neat,

almost unnervingly so. A half-eaten bowl of cereal sat on the kitchen table, a spoon still in it, as if Thorne had simply walked away mid-breakfast. The morning newspaper lay folded neatly on a chair, untouched.

"See?" Ryan gestured around the apartment, his arms spread wide. "If he was taken, there'd be some sign. A broken lamp, a scuff mark, anything."

Cora wasn't looking for scuff marks. Her gaze drifted to the corners of the room, to the spaces where light didn't quite reach. The shadows seemed... deeper here, richer. Not just the absence of light, but an active presence. She focused, narrowing her eyes, allowing her internal senses to extend. It was a subtle art, this shadow weaving, less about grand gestures and more about reading the faint echoes darkness left behind.

In the living room, near a large bay window, she saw it. Not with her eyes, not truly, but with that inner sight, the one that distinguished her from every other detective in Seaview. A faint shimmer, like heat haze off asphalt, but black. It curled just above the polished floorboards, a wisp of something that shouldn't be there, clinging to the edge of the large Persian rug.

Ryan, oblivious, was checking the window latches. "Window's secure. No sign of entry there, either."

Cora knelt, feigning interest in the rug's pattern. She reached out, her fingers brushing the faint darkness. It felt cold, colder than the room, and left a residue on her fingertips, like fine soot, though nothing visible. A shadow print. Someone, or something, had manipulated the darkness here. This wasn't just a missing person; this was a shadow signature.

"Anything, Sherlock?" Ryan asked, joining her. He peered down, seeing nothing but an expensive rug.

Cora stood, brushing her fingers subtly on her jeans. "Just... a feeling. Let's talk to the landlord again. See if he noticed anything unusual in the building, any strange visitors."

Back at the precinct, Cora couldn't shake the lingering chill from the shadow residue. She went through the usual motions - interviewing the landlord, checking Thorne's financials, digging into his personal life - all the while the hum under her skin grew stronger. This wasn't the first disappearance like this. Three others in the past month, all reported in various parts of Seaview, all with minimal leads, all initially dismissed as routine.

A teenage runaway named Liam, last seen near the abandoned Seaview cannery. An elderly recluse, Mrs. Gable, from her quiet apartment in the Upper East Side. A young

artist, Elias Finch, whose studio was found locked and undisturbed. On the surface, nothing connected them. But Cora now knew better. She remembered the gnawing feeling on each of those cases, the faint whisper of something dark and wrong.

She pulled up the old case files on her screen, laying them out next to Thorne's. Liam's case, for instance, had mentioned a "dark, oily stain" on the ground outside the cannery, which forensics had dismissed as industrial runoff. Mrs. Gable's neighbor had reported "shadows moving strangely" on her wall, blamed on a faulty street lamp. Finch's landlord had described a brief, inexplicable power outage in the studio, a moment of "absolute blackness."

To the precinct, these were anomalies, coincidences. To Cora, they were breadcrumbs, left by a force that understood the city's hidden currents better than anyone. They were traces of shadow manipulation, growing bolder, leaving clearer imprints. The faint shimmer in Thorne's apartment was the clearest sign yet.

Ryan, meanwhile, was on the phone, his voice a low murmur. He hung up and turned to Cora, a weary sigh escaping him. "No luck. Thorne's ex-wife hasn't heard from him. His boss said he was reliable, no enemies he knew of. Just... vanished." He rubbed his temples. "This is getting frustrating. Fourth one this month with no leads. The Captain's going to start thinking we're slacking."

"It's not slacking, Ryan," Cora said, her voice sharper than she intended. "It's something else. Something... different." She leaned forward, lowering her voice. "Think about it. No forced entry, no signs of a struggle, no ransom notes. People aren't just vanishing into thin air."

Ryan gave her a pitying look. "It's a big city, Cora. People have lives we don't know about. Maybe they wanted to vanish. Maybe they just packed up and left without telling anyone."

"With a half-eaten bowl of cereal on the table?" Cora challenged. "No, this is deliberate. And I think it's connected." She didn't mention the shadow residue, the cold hum beneath her skin. That would only invite more of Ryan's skeptical scrutiny, and she needed his practical focus for now.

"Connected how?" Ryan folded his arms, clearly unconvinced. "Are you thinking serial abductor? Because there's no MO. Different ages, different backgrounds, different parts of the city."

"Maybe the MO isn't what we're looking for," Cora mused, staring at the files. "Maybe it's something... unseen." She trailed off, realizing how close she was skirting to the edge of her secret.

Ryan scoffed. "Unseen? You mean like ghosts, Cora? Or aliens? Look, I'm a cop, not a paranormal investigator. Let's stick to the facts we have. Right now, the facts are we have four missing persons, and no damn idea where they went."

Cora knew it was pointless to argue. Ryan was a man of logic, of concrete evidence. His world was black and white, and her world, the one she secretly inhabited, was a spectrum of shadows and hidden energies. For now, she had to play by his rules, or at least appear to. But the shadow print in Thorne's apartment was undeniable proof to her. The city's hidden magic was stirring, and people were paying the price.

That night, after her shift, Cora drove to the Seaview Public Library, a sprawling gothic edifice that housed not only books but a labyrinthine archive in its basement. She bypassed the modern databases, heading straight for the oldest sections, where dusty tomes whispered forgotten lore. She was looking for patterns, for historical echoes of similar disappearances, for anything that might shed light on the shadow phenomenon.

Hours later, hunched over a heavy, leather-bound book titled "Seaview's Unexplained Occurrences: A Local Compendium," she found a faded entry from the late 1800s. It described a series of "shadow vanishings," where townsfolk simply disappeared, leaving behind only "a strange, inky residue and a feeling of profound cold." The local authorities at the time had attributed it to hysteria or strange cults, but the description resonated with Cora's observations.

The book spoke of "the Veil," a thin boundary between worlds, and "shadow-eaters," entities that could consume light and life, leaving only darkness in their wake. It was all cloaked in cryptic language, folklore, and superstition, but the core elements aligned too perfectly with what she was seeing. The shadow-eaters were a myth, of course, a cautionary tale for young weavers. But the manipulation of shadows, the complete absorption of a person... it was too close to her own abilities, too close to what she now suspected was happening.

A name jumped out at her from the worn pages: Silas Blackwood. An ancestor, listed as a prominent Seaview citizen and, more importantly, a "scholar of the unseen arts." The text hinted at Silas's involvement in stopping a similar wave of disappearances, though the details were frustratingly vague. He was described as a "master of light and dark," a clear reference to a shadow weaver.

Cora closed the book, a chill seeping into her bones. Her ancestors had faced this before. This wasn't just an isolated incident; it was a recurring nightmare, a shadow returning to haunt Seaview. And if Silas Blackwood had dealt with it, then the responsibility, she realized with a growing dread, now fell to her. The mundane detective work would only take her so far. To stop this, she would have to embrace the

very power she had worked so hard to hide. The shadows on Main Street were no longer just a police matter; they were a call to her heritage, a summons to the Raven's Edge.

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