



*Teens, spies, terrorists, and lies...what could go wrong?*

## **Into the Shadows**

by Beatrice Delrow

**Order the complete book from the publisher**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8968.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**



*INTO THE*  
**SHADOWS**

Beatrice Delrow

# **Into the Shadows**

**Beatrice Delrow**

Copyright © 2017 Beatrice Delrow

ISBN: 978-1-63491-886-2

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.  
2017

First Edition

## **Dedication**

*To Mama, Daddy, and Ben...and all who dare to dream.*



## CHAPTER ONE

I'm out of breath, but I can't stop running. I just can't. My heart feels like it's about to explode out of my chest, and the lump in my throat won't go away. I can still hear the sound of the gunshot ringing in my ear. I'm on the verge of breaking down. But I can't.

*Keep running.*

*Don't look back.*

*Don't look back.*

But for some reason, I do. And what I see makes me want to vomit. I can already taste the bile on my tongue. The body of a woman with long brown hair is lying on the ground, her eyes glassy and staring at something that's not there. A pool of red surrounds her. *Blood.* It's too much. *How can this be happening?* I turn away, and try to focus on the sound of my footsteps instead, but my eyes are already welling up with tears.

*Mom.*

The most beautiful woman in the world—always so strong and full of life—the exact opposite of that lifeless body lying on the ground. *Not this again.* The sparkle in her eyes is gone, now replaced by that glassy stare. This can't be happening. I'm dreaming. *Wake up, Anya.* I can't go through this again. *Wake up.*

I force my eyes open and sit up. I'm so caught up in how fast my heart is racing that I forget to breathe. "Mom," I whisper—to whom, I don't know. I've had the same dream again and again since I was six. You might think repetition makes it easier and that I'd be used to it by now. But it doesn't. And I'm not.

I'm seventeen now, but my dreams of that night haven't gotten any less unbearable. How can they when the memory of it is so vivid? I still remember the faint metallic smell of the red pool of blood and the echo my footsteps made on that cobblestone street. I think about sneaking out to get some fresh air, but my head is throbbing so hard, I just lay back down, force my eyes shut, and go back to sleep.

I wake up to the dreaded sound of my alarm clock and the sun in my face. *That can't be right. I just closed my eyes.* I throw one of my pillows over my head just as I see Meg, my roommate, sit up on her bed. *Seriously. How does she get up so easily every morning?*

Meg throws a pillow at me and I hear her laugh.

"Stop it," I groan.

"Oh, come on, Anya, lighten up! The sun is shining, the birds are singing—it's a beautiful day!" And for dramatic effect, she stands up, spreads her arms out wide, and lifts her face to the sun.

Yup, that's Meg. She thinks the world is one big, beautiful place full of unicorns and candy and that everything should be



pink (or at least close to that color). *Trust me, all you have to do is look at her side of the room to know that the latter is true.*

I roll onto the floor and throw my pillow at her, aiming for her face, and I hit the bull's eye.

"Ow! Anya, you could have scarred my face!"

I laugh. "With a *pillow*?"

She glares at me.

"Okay, okay, I'm sorry," I put my hands up in the air, surrendering. "Drama queen," I mutter to myself.

Instantly, her expression changes and she smiles. "So, are you ready for the chemistry test? I was up, like, all night studying."

I stand up and head into the bathroom. "Oh, right, the test! I forgot."

"How do you *forget* there's a chemistry test? Tests make up like, thirty percent of our grade!"

*Here she goes again.*

As I'm brushing my teeth, I pretend I'm listening to her ramble on about how one bad grade could affect my college application, but I'm just thinking about my nightmares.

Daddy was just on his way home from a business trip to Spain, and my little brother, Kurt, was at my uncle's so Mom and I could have a movie date that night. Sometimes, I still feel the sticky residue the caramel popcorn left on my hands, and I

can smell the old scent of the movie theater's seats. On the way home, we walked hand in hand, and I felt like nothing bad could ever happen. I wasn't scared of the dark even if we walked past the park full of trees—their many branches casting distorted silhouettes on our path. I never wondered what could be hiding behind them. I didn't imagine anything frightening lurking in the shadows.

But then I remember looking up at her and seeing her face change when she saw something—or someone. Her smile vanished, and her eyes started darting left and right until they dropped down to meet mine. Slowly, she knelt down, so her eyes were on the same level as mine, and reached for my hand. “Sweetie, Mommy needs you to listen really closely, okay?”

I just nodded. I had no idea what was going on.

“You remember the way home, right?”

“Mommy, what's wrong?”

She reached for me, taking both my hands in hers. “Anya, I love you. Please listen, baby.” She was smiling again, but looking back now, it's obvious she was just doing it to make me feel okay. Her eyes darted left and right again.

“Mommy, I'm scared!” Tears stung my eyes.

“Don't be scared, baby. The house is just around that corner, remember?” She pointed towards the direction of our house. “Anya, listen.”

She took her key from her pocket and handed it to me. “I want you to run as fast as you can to the house, open the door, and as soon as you’re in, lock it. Stay inside until Daddy gets home.”

“But what about you?”

She tried to hide it, but I caught it—her lips quivered for a split second. “Mommy has to go and do something, Anya. I need you to promise me you’ll take care of your brother and Daddy. Can you do that for me? And whatever happens, just keep running.”

I nodded, then I started crying, so Mom pulled me close to her. Then she pulled herself away like I was a heavy force she had to break free from. Almost mechanically, she removed her necklace, one she had worn since she was a child, and put it around my neck. She touched my cheek and smiled. “Take care of this for me?”

Looking at the simple circular pendant with an A engraved in it, I nodded.

“I love you, Anya.”

“I love you too.” I hugged her one last time, breathed in her scent, then I turned around and ran. Fifteen seconds into my run, I heard a muffled scream and a shuffling sound. I turned around to see the silhouettes of two men—one holding a hand over my mom’s mouth, and the other, with his back to me, pointing a gun at her. I couldn’t help it, I squealed, so he turned around. When he did, it wasn’t even the gun he was

pointing at my mom that struck me. It was the huge scar that ran diagonally through his left eye. He locked his green eyes on me and smirked before he turned around and shot my mother. I couldn't help but squeeze my eyes shut. When I opened them again, the men were gone, and that's when I saw her.

Then I ran.

When I got to the house, I locked the door shut behind me. *Just like Mom said.* Chest heaving, hands shaking, I ran to my parents' bedroom and cried there until Daddy got home the next morning. When he came in, his eyes were red from crying too, and somehow, I knew that he knew. The police notified him as soon as his plane landed. According to their report, it was a robbery gone wrong. I tried to tell them—as best as a six-year-old could, that it couldn't have been a robbery gone wrong because the men didn't take anything. But they didn't listen. And to this day, I don't know what's worse—that they didn't believe me or that they didn't even try to.

*But who can blame them? Who would take the word of a six year old who was probably traumatized after having witnessed the murder of her mother over the word of adult detectives certified by the United States Government, right?*

So instead, my dad took me to a shrink, who asked me a lot of questions I hated answering. And so after a while, I just gave him the answers I thought he wanted to hear.

I recall how Dr. Pratt would make a face when he'd think I wasn't being honest. *As if he knew the truth.* But he didn't know. He had no clue. After a few months, he explained to my

father that many times, when we see painful things, our brain sort of goes berserk on us in order to help us cope.

And I left it at that. I stopped trying. *It won't bring my mom back*, I remember thinking.

That's when it became pretty much just my dad, my brother, and me against the world.

Well, that was before I met Meg.

"So, if you don't get in the first time, you'll have to wait *another* year—and college tuition fees go up *every* year." *Speak of the devil.*

"Meg, relax. My future will be fine. I can study during lunch."

She sighs and shrugs, "If you say so."

Through the reflection in the mirror in front of me, I can see her leaning on the window pretending to be a medieval damsel in distress. I just laugh to myself. Meg hasn't seen the things I've seen. Unlike me, she thinks the world is all wonderful and beautiful and amazing. I do too, in a way, but I guess she just doesn't know that at any moment, everything could be taken away from you. Do I envy her? I have to admit—sometimes, I do. Sometimes I wish I didn't have a care in the world. People say, "Ignorance is bliss," but I don't think it is. I don't like *not* knowing things. I'd rather be hurt by the truth than live believing a lie.

## CHAPTER TWO

I met Meg in seventh grade, my first year in the Excalibur Boarding School for Boys and Girls. *Yup. Excalibur...as in King Arthur's legendary sword.* My original roommate cancelled last minute, so Meg replaced her. I found her annoying at first, with her talking my ear off half the time. *About every single thing that happened to cross her mind.* But one night, my nightmare was really bad, and I woke up crying. Meg got up and sat with me until I fell asleep. Somehow, she understood without knowing why. The next morning, I told her everything about the night my mom died and the nightmares. It felt good to finally talk to someone (before that, my Dad and Uncle Adam were the only ones who knew). And she's been my best friend ever since.

"Okay, blue or pink?" she asks, holding up a skirt in each hand.

"Blue."

"Really?" she scrunches up her nose. "I think the pink one really POPS!"

I laugh, "Then why'd you ask?"

She swings her head around, making her blond hair twirl, eyeing me top to bottom. "Some girls like wearing clothes other than sweatshirts and jeans, you know."

"Well, I can't exactly kick someone's butt in a skirt, can I?"

Meg rolls her eyes. “Ready?”

“Yup.”

\* \* \*

Walking down the stairs alongside Meg, I can’t help but notice all the younger kids and think about my little brother (who’s not so little anymore). Kurt’s in D.C. for a science fair, and I heard he won first place in his category. *That kid’s a genius*, I think as I smile to myself.

Meg follows silently behind me, her face glued to the screen of her phone.

“Meg watch where you’re going. You could bump into somebody.”

“Mhmm...” she says, still not looking up from the device in her hands, until she walks right into a guy holding a coffee mug.

He turns around slowly, shaking his arm, “What the—” he snaps. A stream of coffee’s rolled onto his hands now.

Meg, who is *still* staring at her phone, gasps. I tense up. Because the guy she just bumped into—the one who’s now got a big brown splotch of coffee all over his varsity jacket—is Peter Locke. Peter, though I’ve never talked to him in person, has a really confusing reputation here in school. Some say he’s the meanest bully. Others say he’s the slickest playboy. Either way, he’s not someone I’d want to get acquainted with. The thing is, he’s got a scowl on his face. *That’s not good.*

But Meg doesn't look the least bit intimidated, especially now that she knows it's Peter Locke. She hasn't liked him since...*forever*, so she just puts on a coy face. "Oh my gosh...*Peter!* I—I'm *so* sorry, I didn't see you there!" She doesn't even mind the three other guys Peter's with.

I almost laugh out loud because she doesn't seem sorry at all, except the look on his face makes me feel uneasy.

But Meg doesn't back off—she doesn't feel the need to. *Because she knows what I can do.*

Here's the thing. I've been training in the martial arts since I was four. And when Mom died, Daddy started getting paranoid, so he enrolled me in kickboxing, karate, taekwondo, and self-defense classes—basically any class where I could learn to fend for myself. *It was his way of compensating for what happened to Mom, I guess.*

Let's just say while all the other little girls my age were playing princess and doing ballet, I was hitting punching bags and learning how to flip people off my back. It would be a lie to say I never feel the urge to put to use those thirteen years of training...*especially now.* And I think Meg knows it. Even if I try to hide it.

In my head, I quickly analyze the situation (which is the first thing I learned in Sensei Fung's class) even if I know there isn't going to be a fight.

*Four guys including Peter. Peter's medium height and muscular, and he's fast too, as I noticed the last time Meg and I*



*watched one of the football games. The two guys closest to him are tall, but they're skinny, and the one behind him is stocky but short. In a perfect world, I could take them all on right now and not have to be summoned by Principal Reynolds.*

I have to snap myself back to reality. I look around. *I am in a school. Not a sparring ring. This is not one of Sensei Fung's exams. This is high school. And girls don't hit boys in high school.* I bite my lip and eradicate my mind of all thoughts that have to do with causing Peter any physical pain, though it's hard—after all, the last time I got to throw some *real* punches was about a month ago when my Uncle Adam flew in for a visit and took me to one of the boxing gyms in town. He's always loved watching me fight, but I constantly have to remind him to keep his voice down.

Peter's low voice pierces through my thoughts. "Watch where you're going, *b—*"

"Oh, come on, Peter," I interrupt before he has a chance to finish that sentence...*which would be a big mistake for him to make.* "It was an accident," I turn to Meg. "*Right Meg?*" I make a face at her.

"Oh, absolutely!" She gasps dramatically, and puts a hand to her chest. "You don't think I'd make you spill coffee all over yourself *on purpose*, would you?!"

Completely ignoring the drama queen, he looks at me for the first time, and something in his eyes changes. "Any, right?" His tone's different too.

I nod.

“Do you have a tissue or something?” Meg asks me, still with the fake concern for Peter in her voice.

I fumble inside my bag.

One of the guys behind Peter taps him and whispers something, then Peter’s eyes shift to Meg and back to me. The faintest smile creeps on his face, and I’m pretty sure it’s the playboy smile.

“Tell you what...why don’t you girls sit with us at lunch today...and all will be forgiven?”

My hand stops dead in its tracks. I squint as I look up at him, not sure if I heard him correctly. “Sorry, what?”

Meg scoffs behind me.

“Would you like to sit with me at lunch today?” he drags his words out slowly.

“We’re good, thanks.” *Where. Is. That. Tissue.*

He laughs, “Aw, come on...everybody deserves some fun.”

“What makes you think you’re any fun?” The words are out of my mouth before I can stop them.

At that, his gang starts giggling. *Yeah, giggling. You’d think these football players would have more manly laughs, right? Dead wrong.*

Peter turns around, "Shut up," he tells them, and they stop. Then he turns back to me, "What makes you think I'm not?"

"Everything about you, Peter."

Behind him, his buddies are laughing silently. He turns around again. "I said, shut up." He's clearly annoyed.

Finally, I find that tissue and half-put, half-shove it in his hand. "Come on, Meg," I motion with my neck. She follows without saying another word to Peter.

"I'll see you in class then," Peter calls behind us.

Without looking back, I answer. "What makes you think you've *got* class?"

Right before we step into the dining hall, Meg throws her head back laughing, and yells, "*Burn!*"

\* \* \*

The dining hall isn't as full as it is earlier in the morning, which is when most of the students here (including me) like to have breakfast. Unfortunately, my best friend is the type to spend a lifetime getting ready. *Especially since she's added yoga to her morning regimen.*

But all is forgiven the second I smell the food. Long counters lined with a variety of cereals, pastries, and other "breakfast staples" fill up each side of the room.

*This is one of the many benefits of studying in one of the most prestigious boarding schools in America.*

Meg and I each grab a plate. I fill mine with scrambled eggs, bacon, and pancakes; she goes for the blueberry pie. I pour myself a glass of cold milk then sit down in front of Meg.

While I dive right into my food, Meg stares at hers for a moment, grinning. “Why do you always stare at your food?” I ask through the eggs and bacon in my mouth, not able to mask the confusion in my tone.

“I like to appreciate my food before I eat it. Especially when it’s as *beautiful* as *this* piece of art!” she exclaims, pulling out her phone to snap a quick picture. Only then does she start eating. A moan escapes her lips, and she drops her head in excitement, almost getting her hair in the whipped cream. “Heaven is real.”

I can’t help but laugh.

After a few bites in silence, Meg says, “So...*Peter*.” she’s leaning towards me, fork halfway to her mouth.

“What about him?” I spread some butter over my pancakes.

“Don’t you think he was so weird? I mean, one minute, he’s mad, and the next, he’s asking us to sit with him at lunch?” She takes another bite of her pie. “He’s a *mental case*, that one.”

I just shrug. I've never really been one to care much about boys. "Why do you hate him so much anyway?"

Meg raises her finger in the air between us. "*Hate* is a strong word," she sighs. "When it comes to how I feel about Peter, I'm going to need a stronger one."

I draw my head back in surprise. "I didn't know you had any feelings for Peter."

She ignores me, closing her eyes and flipping through her mental thesaurus. "*Loathe. Despise. Dislike—no, that's too soft. Abhor. Detest. Abominate.* Hey, that's good. I *abominate* Peter."

"Okay, fine, whatever. Why do you *abominate* Peter so much?"

She sighs, "Remember the school play I starred in when we were in eighth grade?"

"Yeah."

"Remember at the end, when everyone was throwing roses at the stage, and then some jerk threw a stuffed mouse and I got so startled that I tripped?"

"Yeah."

"It was Peter," she says, with all the anger someone as bubbly as her can muster.

"No one really noticed that you tripped."

“Kimberly Faust did, then she ended up telling her friends about it.”

“Yeah, and they laughed for like...five seconds.”

“It was longer than that, and it hurt. And it’s *all because of Peter.*” she pouts. “Why didn’t you *karate chop* him? Or, remember when you flipped me over your back that one time? You should’ve done that to him!”

I smile at the memory of me flipping Meg over my back onto some mattresses we put on the floor a few semesters ago.

Before I can respond, Ms. Lee passes by our table holding a clipboard, and when she sees Meg and me, she stops. “Ms. Kane, Ms. Walters, how’s your morning going so far?” Our chemistry teacher has this way of looking like a cute little bird with her pointy nose and small eyes, peering from her glasses.

“Pretty good, Ms. Lee,” I answer. Meg just smiles.

“Well, I just wanted to let you girls know that instead of having chemistry for your after-lunch period, you’ll have homeroom instead. Just for today.”

Meg perks up. “That’s a first.”

Ms. Lee pouts playfully. “Well, if it weren’t for the urgent meeting I have to attend this morning.”

“What kind of meeting, Ms. Lee?” I smile at her. I hate to brag, but I’m her favorite student. *Even Meg knows it.*

She puts her hand on my shoulder. "I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to tell you, Ms. Kane...considering it concerns the welfare and safety of one of our students." She winks.

Meg looks confused. "Whose safety?"

Ms. Lee pouts again. "I'd give you an inside scoop if I knew."

"No problem, Ms. Lee," I smile. "Thanks for letting us know."

"Oh, no problem, girls. Anything for my favorite students." With that, she walks away.

Meg looks at me. "Who do you think it is?"

I shrug. "Could be anyone. Lots of high profile kids here. Hey, what are you planning to do during homeroom?"

Meg just stares at me like I'm dumb. "Um...do my homework?" She raises an eyebrow. "You?"

"I'll probably go for a run."

She rolls her eyes. "How you still convince Principal Reynolds you are an exception to the school rules is beyond my comprehension."

I smile at the thought of our goofy principal. He gives me a special pass to leave the school premises on schooldays as long as I'm not supposed to be in class. I think I'm the only one in school who has one. "He was a college friend of my dad's."

Meg pouts playfully, and we stand as the breakfast bell rings. “Bring me back some churros.”

“Don’t I always?”

“And don’t forget the chocolate dip.”

\* \* \*

After lunch, I run to my room to change into my running clothes. I walk to the bathroom to brush my hair in front of the mirror, and I catch sight of the necklace around my neck. *Mom’s necklace*. I stare at the small silver circle with an inscribed letter A.

*A for Anita. A for Anya.*

My eyes move to my reflection in the mirror. I have my mom’s eyes—everybody’s told me that. *Kind, brown eyes*. I have the same long, brown hair. Suddenly, I see the image of her lying lifeless on the ground. The same brown eyes I have staring into space. I close my eyes, taking slow, deep breaths. It works.

Tying my hair into what I like to call a *running bun*, I make my way out the room and head towards the school entrance, then I start jogging down the steps.

Walking past the brick walls and iron gates, I can’t help but think how it’s almost funny that something meant to keep you safe can make you feel like a prisoner.



“Out for a run, Ms. Kane?” a man in a security guard’s uniform asks.

I smile at Bill. “Yes, sir.”

Bill’s the nicest—to me, at least. Meg says it’s cause I have a way with people. It’s funny because Uncle Adam says the same thing. I think I get it from my dad.

*Daddy.* I wonder how he’s doing. He travels a lot cause of work, but that’s never stopped him from keeping Kurt and me close. Especially since Mom died.

I turn right to head into the woods. I like the scent of the trees and the crunch the leaves make under my feet.

Everyone has that thing they do to calm themselves down. Mine is running. For some reason, when I run, my head starts to clear. It’s like all these heavy emotions fall off of me. So, the more trees I pass, the better I feel.

About half a mile in, I veer left so I reach the clearing. Once I do, I cross the road and head into town.

The shops in Greenfields have been here for a long time. So have the people. I guess you could say everybody here is old and knows each other. I don’t know a lot of folks here, but the few I do know are quite nice.

I pass the gas station and Adriano’s Pizza Place then turn right at the corner to Raul’s Churros, right across the bike shop. I step inside and the beautiful smell of cinnamon, sugar, and Spanish chocolate greet me.

“Anyá! *Mija! Estás aquí!*” Raul is a big muscular Mexican man who moved here when he decided to leave his gangster days behind in order to have a better life. I met him when I first came to his store back in seventh grade. He and I clicked, and we became instant friends. He always says I’m the daughter he never had. He’s also the reason I’m fluent in Spanish.

I walk up to him with a smile and give him a hug. “*Cómo estás?*”

We walk into the kitchen that ironically says *Employees Only* and I sit at the small, round wooden table beside the food shelves. Raul swiftly walks toward the oven and puts five freshly made churros on a plate, pours some chocolate dip in a bowl, and sets it in front of me. “Just how you like them,” he says with his thick Mexican accent, *which I love*.

“I only like them when you eat them with me.”

“Fair enough.” He sits down in front of me and reaches for a churro. “Hey, you been practicing that move I taught you?” He’s taught me a few street fight moves *Mexicano style*, as he likes to call them. For just in case. He puts a whole churro in his mouth.

“Yup.” I reach for a churro too.

“Let’s see it.” He stands and motions for me to stand too. “So, if you got some *chico* standing in your way, what’s my girl gonna do?”

I laugh and warn, “I don’t want to hurt you, Raul.”

He pretends he's offended. "Hey, this old guy can still put up a fight. We *Mexicanos* don't go down easy. Come on, *mija*."

"If you say so." I quickly throw a punch at his stomach (a pulled punch), and when he's doubled over, half-laughing half-moaning, I shove him down so he's on his knees. Then I finish it off by stepping on his back so he's flat on his stomach, and I draw my right leg back to kick. When I swing it, I don't actually kick him, of course. *I'd never hurt Raul.*

He's out of breath but somehow manages to say "*Dios mío*," while slowly getting up.

"You got a strong punch there, *mija*." He smiles like a proud father and sits at the table. *He has no idea.*

"What happened to 'this old guy can still put up a fight'?" I tease.

"I ain't as young as I used to be."

"You're right about that."

He laughs and I sit down too. "Oh, hey, don't forget Meg's to-go bag. You know her."

He smiles knowingly and nods to the counter where I see a paper bag I know is full of churros and chocolate dip. "Way ahead of you. Hey, how long you staying?"

"Not long. I've actually got to go pretty soon."

Raul and I talk for about twenty more minutes. We catch up and he tells me more of his gangster day stories (the ones I

love to hear). His fatherly ambiance reminds me of Daddy, so I'm glad I have him here.

When I glance at the clock, I know it's time to go. I give Raul a big hug and promise I'll visit him again sometime this week, then I grab Meg's churro bag before walking out the door.

On the way back to school, I take my time looking around and enjoying the scenery. I take a different route this time, so I pass the park. At the children's playground, I see a mother and her daughter. The little girl's on the swing, holding her brown teddy bear, and is grinning while her mom pushes her. She laughs, and her face is beaming. "Again, Mommy, again!" She squeals. She's so happy. *She hasn't seen the things I've seen, and I don't think she ever will.* I only feel a spark of envy. I walk on, shrugging it off. *Jealousy won't get me what I'm jealous of.*

## CHAPTER THREE

Passing the soccer field where there's a match going on, I check the time on my phone. I still have a few minutes to kill, and there's an ice cream truck parked right on the curb, so I'm in luck.

As I sit down with a chocolate fudge ice cream cone in my hand, I think of what Daddy would say if he saw me right now—watching a soccer match eating ice cream during what's technically still a class period. I smile knowing that he'd probably just get one for himself and sit down next to me.

The field is full of lulling noises—the occasional clapping of the match's audience, the inaudible chatter of a group kids biking together, even the voice of the *tai chi* master by the grove of trees on the right saying, “Breathe *in...and out...in...and out...*” and the deep breaths of his students that follow. All that and the rustling of the trees put me in a completely relaxed state.

All of a sudden, something quick and damp passes over my hand, and I drop my cone, startled to see a huge German shepherd now eating up what's left of my favorite dessert.

I don't make any sudden movements, just in case the dog's not friendly. But when he looks up at me, wagging his tail like he's done something praiseworthy, I slowly reach out to pet him. He pushes his head against my hand and sniffs. “Hey, boy, what's your name?”

When my fingers feel a collar around his throat, I gently tug at it in the hopes of finding out more about this friendly dog. *Brewster*.

“Brewster,” I say out loud.

He lifts his head instantly.

“Are you lost? Where’s your—”

There’s a faint call from a distance. “Brewster!”

A boy holding a leash with no dog on the other end is walking towards us from across the field, but he hasn’t seen his dog yet.

I smile, “What, are you a runner too?” and scratch the side of his neck. His hind leg starts to thump, and I laugh, “You like that, huh?” wondering why talking to dogs seems to bring the baby talk out of everyone.

From my peripheral, I notice that the boy is closer now. “Brewster!” he calls out again.

Brewster barks, catching the boy’s attention, but he doesn’t leave.

The boy, who looks like he’s my age, is walking to us now with a relieved look on his face, and the first thing that strikes me isn’t his physique, or his style—it’s his eyes. I’m not even sure what color they are exactly (I’d need to be closer to find that out), but they’re striking nonetheless. If Meg were here, she’d start swooning in a second, I’m sure. But she and I are different.

“Bet you didn’t think I’d find you that fast,” he tells his dog, quickly clipping Brewster’s collar to his leash. When his eyes catch sight of the cone crumbs and drops of ice cream on the ground, he looks first at his dog, then at me. “I am so sorry,” he says looking a bit embarrassed.

“It’s no big deal,” I shrug, smiling at Brewster who’s beaming.

The boy tugs at the leash. “Bad dog.”

Brewster barks once and nuzzles his master’s leg. The boy looks at me apologetically, “Give me one second. I’ll get you another one.”

“Oh, you don’t have to do that,” I laugh, “my dog does it all the time,” but he and Brewster are already walking to the ice cream truck.

“What flavor?” he looks back at me.

“Chocolate fudge,” I say before I can decline. *I never say no to ice cream.*

When he comes back, he hands me my cone. “Thanks,” I say.

“No problem,” he shrugs. “I’m Chase, by the way.”

I nod at him. “Any.”

Brewster barks again. “You’ve already met *this* guy.”

I smile. “Are you guys new here? I don’t think I’ve seen you around before.”

“Yeah—well, *I* am. My uncle and I just moved here, and we found Brewster in our backyard.”

“Oh.”

“How about you? You lived here long?”

“A bit,” I nod. “I study at Excalibur.” I catch a glint in his eyes, but I’m not sure why.

“Oh. You don’t look like you’re from there.”

“Oh yeah?” I laugh, “And what do people from *there* look like?”

“I don’t know,” he shrugs, smiling. “Rich, entitled snobs, I guess,” he teases.

“I’ll take that as a compliment then.”

“Wait, it’s a boarding school right?”

I nod. “Yeah.”

“I thought you’re not allowed to leave campus in boarding school.”

“Special pass,” I flaunt playfully.

“Ah, the teacher’s pet.”

I could flip him over, just like I’ve practiced over and over in judo, but I just raise my eyebrow at him.

His laugh is the kind that makes one feel at ease.



“My dad and our principal were friends in college,” I explain, reaching in my pocket for my phone. *Fifteen minutes.*

Brewster nuzzles my leg; so I reach down to pet him. “Bye, boy.”

“Curfew calls?” Chase asks.

I look at him and answer, “Yeah.”

“I guess we’ll see you around then.” He smiles, and again, there’s a glint in his eyes.

I smile back, shrugging my shoulders. “I guess,” I answer, but I don’t really think so. With that, I turn and start walking back to school—to *the prison...of rich, entitled snobs.*



*Teens, spies, terrorists, and lies...what could go wrong?*

## **Into the Shadows**

by Beatrice Delrow

**Order the complete book from the publisher**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8968.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**