

The Interview of Bellamy Vale

a vignette

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Candice Kennedy sat crossed-legged and perfectly still. Her posture revealed ankle-high leather cowboy boots beneath her blue jeans. Though she kept her mouth shut, you could tell from a mile away that she was gloating on the inside. It just showed in her smirk and in her sparkling blue eyes.

She'd tricked me into this fair and square, so I allowed her her little victory and sat down with a cup of tea in my hand.

"Fine," I muttered, over the rim. "Let's get this over with."

Her smile grew; she was positively beaming at me now. *Hells, I'd always known becoming friends with a journo was gonna bite me in the ass someday – guess today was the day.*

"Mister Vale," she started, and I frowned at the formal greeting. I caught myself and remembered this was a professional interview after all, not two friends having a chat. "You are a licensed private investigator here in Cold City."

I nodded into my tea.

Kennedy kicked me in the chin, underneath the coffee table. She repeated the motion until I stammered, "Yeah – yeah, I am. Been doing that for a couple of years now."

"You've been hired by several companies to investigate insurance fraud and by divorce attorneys to add water to the mill, so to speak."

I nodded again, and added for the sake of my ankles, "Yeah, that's common legwork for a PI."

"You've also worked for the CCPD on some cases..." she let her sentence go

unfinished, forcing me to do the rest of the work for her. I glanced up, unsure if I should look at her, or at the camera she'd set up on a tripod next to the couch. I went for the blonde.

"We've crossed path on some investigations," I told her, not wanting to get into more details.

"That's not all you did?" Kennedy said, her smile turning somewhat predatory.

Hells, just last week I'd faced an angry golem, so a simple question like that shouldn't make me squeamish, but it did. My relationship with the men in blue was complicated, or rather it was complicated with one woman in blue in particular.

I gave Kennedy a look which clearly spelled "drop it," and prayed the Texan got the message.

"I mean, just a little over a year ago, you did help them with a kidnapping. Finding, and bringing home our Mayor's daughter, isn't this right?" Kennedy said.

"Well, yeah..." I was surprised to realize *that* was what she'd been aiming for. Guess this was more sensational than a PI having a love affair with an homicide sergeant.

"Townsend wasn't Mayor back then though," I felt the need to clarify.

"Right, but he was Cold City's most successful entrepreneur. And Mr. Townsend isn't even the most illustrious client you've had," she continued. "Sources tell me, someone put you on cases like the Galas Incident and the Ali Pasha Debacle..."

She let her words hang in the air again, and I struggled for an answer. This time I knew full well what she was fishing for.

In this matter, Kennedy was her own source and she knew what everyone had dubbed the 'Galatas Incident' was actually our former Mayor Jacinta Galatas leveling half of downtown as she tried to open a gate to the Underworld. And the mayhem at Ali Pasha wasn't due to some experimental drugs, but rather to an evil jinn possessing the club's patrons. I intervened in both cases, saving as many lives as I could.

"I'm not sure what you want me to say here, Ms. Kennedy."

"The cases you worked were linked to these incidents," she said. "That is the truth, isn't it?"

The truth—that was what I'd promised Kennedy. I grounded my teeth and forced myself to say, "Yes. It's true."

"And in both cases, you were hired by the same person."

"Hired is a big word," I sniggered—wasn't like I was getting paid for these jobs.

"Required," Kennedy amended.

"Yeah. You could say that." It wasn't like my boss was someone you could say 'no' to, not if you wanted to keep on breathing. But that's what happens when you sign a compact with Death herself.

"Two major incidents which cost many citizens' lives. Apparently unrelated, and yet," she waved a hand at me, "a common denominator—a link. What can you tell our viewers about that?"

I looked up, caught her gaze and held on. Kennedy was determined, like a dog with a bone. She was a good journalist and I knew she wouldn't let go. None of what we'd faced had scarred her into giving up yet, and sometimes I feared nothing would. But I knew better than her what was going on in the shadows and beyond.

There was another world out there, and trust me when I say no-one in their right mind should want to know. When dealing with certain entities, knowledge is dangerous. And Kennedy had made a name for herself outside of the journalism realm... hells, she'd made a name outside of this realm, period. And every time she dug deeper, she put herself in more danger.

"Client confidentiality," I said, without averting my gaze.

"Really?" she said. "That's what you're going with?" The Texan accent she toned down during interviews crept back into her voice. A sign she wasn't pleased by my answer.

"Yes, Ms. Kennedy," I said. "I'm afraid I cannot name my client any more than you can name your source."

That was a low blow, but it was all I had. It was dangerous enough for her to know *Alterum Mundum* even existed, I couldn't let her spread the word about it. If the news ever got out, none of us would survive the backlash.

But Kennedy wouldn't be a good journalist if she couldn't spin this to her advantage. And spin this, she did. Turning to face the camera, she said, "And this concludes our interview with private investigator Bellamy Vale, who kindly confirmed there is an entity in the dark who knew about the Galatas Incident and what went down at Ali Pasha. Stay tuned for more..."

She sat up and started packing the camera. I waited until it was tucked away in her bag to say, "I'm sorry Kennedy, but you had to know it'd go down that way."

"Don't worry, hoss." She gave me a smirk over her shoulder. "I got more than I expected."

I laughed, before sitting up and bidding her farewell.

Once Kennedy had left, I fished my phone out of my pocket and sent a text to my best friend. "Hey, Z. you *can* hack into Candice's agency servers, right?"

There'd be hell to pay for this, I knew. But if the price for keeping the journalist alive was her being angry with me – well, I called it a bargain.

"Remind me whose family *owns* the Internet?" was all the reply I got.