

MICROFICTION

The Anonymous Call

The Empty Bedroom • Expanded Canon

written by
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The Anonymous Call

Detective Mara Quinn knew the caller was Rowan Vale before he spoke.

Not because she recognized his voice. He barely used one.

Because the call came at 3:17 a.m., the coordinates were exact, and the first sentence was, "Send medical first."

Quinn sat upright. "How many?"

"Six alive."

Alive. The word carried weight.

"Where are you?"

Silence.

"Vale."

"Medical first."

The line disconnected.

Twenty-three minutes later, Quinn stood inside a shuttered house where six terrified people were being wrapped in blankets. Three armed men lay restrained in the kitchen with their own plastic cuffs. One had tried to crawl away and had apparently reconsidered.

A uniformed officer stared at the knots. "Who did this?"

Quinn looked toward the broken back door and the untouched patch of mud beyond it.

"No idea," she said.

Her phone buzzed.

Avery: YOU FOUND THEM?

Quinn typed back: We did.

She paused, then added: Tell your forest problem his knots are showing off.

Three dots appeared.

Avery replied: He says they're standard.

Quinn looked at the impossible restraints again.

"Of course he does," she muttered.

Then she put the phone away and went to sit beside a rescued boy who would not stop staring at the door.

Whoever the Ghost Predator was, Quinn decided, she could argue with him tomorrow.

Tonight, six people were alive.

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