

TRANSIENT STAR

By

Shana Lyris Hamilton

2014

shanalyris@gmail.com
801-735-8900

FADE IN:

EXT. BEDROCK, CALIFORNIA, TOWN SQUARE - SPRING 1914, EARLY MORNING

A woman is leisurely walking across the square as her dog runs alongside her. The bell tower on one side of the square chimes six times.

The woman is throwing a knotted rope for the dog to run after and return. She throws it, and it lands in the middle of the square, by the far corner of the statue of the town's founder.

The dog runs for the rope and disappears behind the statue. The woman whistles, and the dog comes running back, leaving a trail of dark footprints. The woman bends down to look at them as she pets her dog, and notices they are the dark red of blood. With a horrified look on her face, she hurries toward the statue to see what is behind it. She screams.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - 15 MINUTES LATER

SHERIFF BLAIN CONNOLLY and his deputy, FRED, who wears an eye patch over one eye, are talking to each other while they examine a woman's body lying near the statue. She is wearing a filthy sheet and is covered in blood, and there is blood all around her. Near her arm and drawn in blood are two circles next to each other, one with an asterisk in it. The crime scene has been cordoned off.

Fred sketches the scene as Sheriff Conolly carefully examines the area around the body.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Make sure you record the blood patterns, Fred. It looks like our Jane Doe tried to draw something before she was killed.

FRED

Of course, Sheriff. I just wish we recognized her.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Well, I'm sure we'll find someone who can place her soon. As soon as the mortician gets here, we can start knocking on doors. In the meantime, what do you think of these symbols?

(CONTINUED)

FRED

Oh, Sheriff, you know I'm not much good when it comes to writing, 'specially in code.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Well, there's got to be someone who can help.

FRED

Yes, there must be.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

You know, there's that home for transients on the edge of town. What if someone there knows this woman?

FRED

I don't know, Sheriff. Why would someone there know her?

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Just look at her, Fred. You can tell she wasn't healthy. She's dirty and dressed in what looks like a sheet.

FRED

Yes, Sheriff.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

She looks like a transient, so the home that offers shelter seems like a good place to start.

FRED

All right. Well then, I can go, Sheriff.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

You've had your good eye on the woman who runs that home, haven't you, Fred?

Fred looks taken aback.

FRED

I, uh, am not sure what you mean, Sheriff. I don't know her.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY

All right, whatever you say, Fred.
Well, we can both head over there
to speak with her.

FRED

All right, Sheriff.

Something at the end of the square catches Fred's eye.

FRED

It looks like the mortician is
here, Sheriff.

EXT. TRANSIENT HOME - LATE MORNING

The transient home is a simple house with a small patch of grass in front of it, and a tidy path leading to the front door. There are no other houses around it, and there are large clumps of bushes and trees both behind it and across the dirt path in front of it.

There is a crude metal star nailed above the front door. Through the windows, all that can be seen is the closed curtains. It is quiet.

Sheriff Conolly and Fred pull up on a motorcycle, the Sheriff driving. They park, and they both step off, removing their riding goggles.

They walk toward the house and knock on the door.

After a moment, the door opens, revealing LINDSAY HYMAN. She is beautiful and wearing a pair of slacks and a short-sleeved blouse. Her hair is pulled back in a ponytail.

LINDSAY

Can I help you gentlemen?

SHERIFF CONOLLY

I certainly hope so. I'm Sheriff
Conolly and this is my deputy Fred.

Fred nods silently at Lindsay, and then looks at the ground.

SHERIFF CONOLLY (CONT'D)

We're hoping you can help us
identify someone.

LINDSAY

Who?

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Well, that is the question of the day. I'm sorry to be unseemly, but there has been a murder, and we think the victim may have been an, urm, well from out of town.

LINDSAY

Oh, I see. You think this person might have been staying in my home?

The sheriff opens his mouth to speak, but Fred pipes up.

FRED

We know you do quite a service to the community here, and we knew you would be just the right person to help.

Sheriff Conolly smirks at Fred.

LINDSAY

Yes, well, to be honest, most people don't stay in my home for long. They hear from others that I have warm beds and warm food, but it's not a long-term situation. I'm not sure I even know how many people have stayed with me since I arrived early this year, nevermind being able to pick out a face.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Indeed, I understand. If it's all the same, though, we'd still appreciate you taking a look, just at the sketch of her face. You don't need to see all the blood and mess right now. We don't want to offend your sensibilities.

FRED

You being a proper lady and all.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Er, yes, quite.

Fred pulls out the drawing and holds it out for Lindsay, who takes it to study. After a moment, she shakes her head.

LINDSAY

I'm sorry, but I don't recognize her.

(CONTINUED)

FRED

Perhaps I could accompany you to the mortuary, see if you recognize her face.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Now, that won't be necessary, Fred. Listen, Fred made a few sketches, so you can hold onto that one. See if it jogs your memory.

LINDSAY

Of course.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Before we go, do you mind my asking how people know about this place? Transients, that is?

LINDSAY

Oh, word of mouth I suppose. They tell their friends to look for the star.

Lindsay points above the door.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

I see. Very nice.

LINDSAY

Now, if you gentlemen will excuse me, I have a lot of work to do.

Lindsay closes the door, and Sheriff Conolly and Fred turn to walk away.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

She's lying.

FRED

What?

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Didn't you see her face when she saw the sketch? She recognized that woman. Also, she has that star above her door. Maybe our victim was trying to draw a star to lead us here.

FRED

I don't know, Sheriff. It didn't really look like a star to me.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY

We can hardly criticize the victim's artistic abilities in her last moments of life.

FRED

Of course not, Sheriff. It's just --

SHERIFF CONOLLY

I know you think she's pretty, Fred, but you can't let personal feelings get in the way of an investigation. It's not like you were ever going to talk to her, otherwise.

Fred looks down at the ground.

SHERIFF CONOLLY (CONT'D)

Besides, I've heard chatter about odd noises and lights coming from this place for months. I've just never received a formal complaint or had reason to investigate. Now, I do.

Fred kicks at the ground.

FRED

If you say so, Sheriff.

Sheriff Conolly and Fred climb on the motorcycle and drive away.

The curtains in the house move. Lindsay is watching through the window as Sheriff Conolly and Fred drive off.

EXT. LINDSAY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Sheriff Conolly and Fred are seated on some rocks behind a large cluster of bushes across the dirt road from the house. They look tired.

FRED

I think she's staying inside, Sheriff. She probably has a lot of work to do, taking care of those people.

Sheriff Conolly attempts to perk up.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY

We've only been here a few hours,
Fred. Besides, it's not so bad.
Your one eye was pretty keen to
spot these rocks hidden in the
bushes.

FRED

Well, I didn't want us sitting on
the ground.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Of course not. In fact --

Sheriff Conolly stops speaking when the sound of a door opening is heard. Fred and Sheriff Conolly look toward Lindsay's house and see her stepping out. She's holding an empty basket. She closes the door and walks around the house, disappearing in the back.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

This may be our only chance, Fred.
Let's go!

FRED

Sheriff, I really don't think this
is a good idea.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

We're just looking for information,
Fred. No one is going to get hurt.

Sheriff Conolly hurries toward the front door as Fred follows. Sheriff Conolly looks around and then quietly opens the front door and steps inside. Fred follows and shuts the door behind him.

INT. LINDSAY'S HOUSE

Sheriff Conolly and Fred are standing in a sparsely furnished living room. There are several chairs and a table in the middle. There is a hallway to the side and a closed door at the back of the living room.

Sheriff Conolly strides toward the door and opens it to see stairs leading down. He beckons to Fred, and then heads down the stairs.

INT. LINDSAY'S BASEMENT

Sheriff Conolly and Fred step off the bottom step and into a research lab. On the edge of the room, there is a table covered in paperwork and several metal instruments.

Another table, with a chair pushed underneath it, has a telegraph sitting on top. Next to it is a pile of papers.

In the center of the room is a white surgical-like table with straps for arms and legs. At the head is a helmet with electrical wires running out of it and into a generator nearby.

Sheriff Conolly walks toward the table on the side and begins to look through some of the papers. He sees typewritten articles with titles that include "Electroshock Therapy" and "Mind Control." He reads through handwritten notes that include recent days and times along with designations for "Patient 1," "Patient 2," etc.

At the same time, he sees papers that are written entirely in German.

Meanwhile, Fred is examining a file of papers on the other side of the room. He sees some travel papers from Germany with Lindsay's personal information.

Just then, the sound of a door opening and closing upstairs can be heard. Sheriff Conolly and Fred freeze and turn toward each other.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

(Whispering) We've got to sneak out of here quietly. We can come back with a warrant.

Sheriff Conolly walks toward Fred and the stairs when he sees Fred is holding something.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

What have you got there, Fred?

Fred turns to put the papers down behind him.

FRED

Nothing of interest. I think we're barking up the wrong tree here, Sheriff.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Nonsense, Fred. You have to look past your not-so-secret feelings

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY (cont'd)
for this woman. She's clearly a
criminal.

Sheriff Conolly picks up the travel papers and reads through them.

SHERIFF CONOLLY
She's German! I don't detect even a
trace of an accent when she speaks.

The door at the top of the stairs opens, and Lindsay walks through it. She looks down to see Sheriff Conolly and Fred.

LINDSAY
What are you doing down here? You
have no right!

Lindsay sees all her paperwork and rushes down the stairs. Sheriff Conolly steps in her way.

SHERIFF CONOLLY
I'll ask the questions. Did you
think you would get away with this?
Performing mind control experiments
on innocent people and, for what?

LINDSAY
Oh please, innocent people. They're
only innocent because I made them
that way. You should thank me for
taking common criminals off the
street, feeding them instead of
leaving them to steal food from
your precious town's farms.

SHERIFF CONOLLY
You can stop lying. I know you're a
German spy.

LINDSAY
I'm no spy. I'm simply doing the
work of the greatest country on
Earth, work you weak-minded
Americans could never fathom.

SHERIFF CONOLLY
I'm so weak-minded that I'm going
to have you tried for murder.

LINDSAY
(Scoffing) Murder? Please. That
woman probably did herself in.

(CONTINUED)

Sheriff Conolly reaches out to grab Lindsay's arm, but she dodges him and lunges toward her table. She pulls out a match and lights it, throwing it toward her papers. Sheriff Conolly grabs her, slapping on handcuffs.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

You're under arrest for murder and spying.

LINDSAY

You're a fool! It doesn't matter what you do to me, anyway. I've already passed along all the information to my colleagues. Soon, you'll all be saluting the German flag. Es lebe das geheime Deutschland!

The table with the papers is being consumed in flames, and the fire is spreading.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Quick, Fred, we've got to get out of here.

Sheriff Conolly pushes Lindsay up the stairs with Fred on his heels.

EXT. LINDSAY'S HOUSE

Sheriff Conolly, Lindsay, and Fred burst out the front door. Smoke billows out the door, and screams can be heard from inside.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Fred, there must be patients trapped in a room upstairs!

FRED

Yes, Sheriff. What about Ms. Hymen?

SHERIFF CONOLLY

You watch her, Fred. I'm going back in.

Fred hesitantly takes Lindsay's arm as Sheriff Conolly runs back toward the house. He looks at Lindsay's handcuffs and then at the keyring on his belt. He fiddles with his keys for a moment, and then looks up to see Sheriff Conolly running out of the house with a patient thrown over his shoulder and another one stumbling behind him as he pulls her hand.

(CONTINUED)

SHERIFF CONOLLY

They won't run out on their own!
There are more inside, Fred!

Sheriff Conolly deposits the patients near Fred and Lindsay outside before running back toward the house. Large flames have overtaken the upstairs and the Sheriff cannot get in through the door.

Lindsay turns her face toward the patients.

LINDSAY

Run! Get out of here, and never
come back.

The patients look at Lindsay, and then turn and run toward the trees. Sheriff Conolly jumps toward them.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Wait! I can help you.

The patients keep running.

FRED

We better get someone out here to
help with the fire, Sheriff.

The sheriff turns toward Fred and Lindsay, and then nods his head.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

Yes, and I better call some federal
agents to help with this one (nods
toward Lindsay).

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - DUSK

The sheriff's department is a small brick building with one window and a front door. Outside, Sheriff Conolly watches as Lindsay is escorted, in handcuffs, by two federal agents from the Bureau of Investigation.

They load her into the back of a police car, which is open, per the style of early 1900s law enforcement vehicles. The side of the car has lettering that reads "Bureau of Investigation (BOI)." The one agent walks to the driver's side while the other shakes Sheriff Conolly's hand, and then climbs onto the passenger side. They drive away.

Sheriff Conolly watches them, and then turns toward the building. He walks inside.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

There is a desk with a few pieces of paper sitting on it. A chair is pushed against it. Next to the desk, Fred sits on a stool, staring into space.

Sheriff Conolly walks in and looks at Fred, who looks up. The sheriff sits at the desk and sighs.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

The agents say that they've found
Germans around the country,
conducting their experiments.
They're preparing for war.

FRED

War? I hope not.

Both men sit in silence for a moment.

SHERIFF CONOLLY

I just wish we had found out who
that woman was. In her final act of
defiance, Lindsay insisted she
didn't kill her. Apparently, going
down as a spy is better than going
down as a murderer in her mind.

FRED

You don't say.

Fred rubs around his eyepatch as the men settle into silence, again.

EXT. LINDSAY'S HOUSE - THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER

The front door bursts open, and Jane Doe runs out onto the porch with Lindsay on her heels.

JANE DOE

You'll never get away with this!
I'll tell everyone!

LINDSAY

Speaking with a German accent)
Who's going to believe a girl who's
home is the streets? You have
nowhere to go but back inside. Come
on, you can have some soup.

(CONTINUED)

JANE DOE

Leave me alone! You don't control me, anymore. Don't you see? You failed. I can think for myself.

LINDSAY

You're right. If you come back inside, we can talk about it.

JANE DOE

No! I don't care if the first person doesn't believe me. I'll tell another person and another person until this whole town and the world knows the truth. You'll be destroyed.

Lindsay lunges toward Jane Doe, who jumps back and then turns and runs. Lindsay runs after her, but Jane is faster. Lindsay slows down as she turns hesitantly to look back at her home.

A head pokes out from the doorframe, another patient dressed in a white sheet. The patient's face is blank, staring at Lindsay and the outside world. Lindsay turns back in the direction Jane ran, but it is dark, and she can no longer see her.

LINDSAY

Verdammt.

Lindsay walks back toward the house. As she walks in, there is some rustling in the bushes a short distance from the house.

Fred has been sitting on a rock, hiding behind the bushes and drinking. He stands, a bit unsteadily, and watches Lindsay. A look of determination crosses his face as he turns in the direction that Jane Doe ran.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER

Jane Doe runs through the square and stops to rest against the statue in the middle. She is panting. She looks around and, seeing nothing, sinks to the ground.

She is crying when Fred appears in her view. She looks frightened until she sees Fred's deputy badge flash in the moonlight.

(CONTINUED)

JANE DOE

Oh, I'm so glad to see you. Please help me. A woman on the edge of town is doing horrible experiments on all of us.

Fred reaches behind his back and withdraws a knife. Jane Doe freezes.

JANE DOE

What are you doing? I'm not the criminal! Please, you have to come with me to her house. She's working for the Germans!

FRED

You won't hurt her!

Fred lifts the knife into the air and slashes down as Jane Doe screams. Her arms flail out, grabbing Fred's eye patch and pulling it away from his face. She sees a scar across his sealed eye socket in the shape of an asterisk. The eye patch snaps back against Fred's face as Jane Doe's arms drop and she slumps against the statue.

Fred suddenly looks frightened as he sees what he's done. He looks around, and then down at Jane Doe, who is lying still, barely breathing. Fred turns and runs.

Jane Doe's eyes dart around in terror as she tries to pull herself up. She fails and slumps back down. She then begins to draw with her blood.

FADE OUT