

First Lie: Clocktower

Delicate dots, burstable by breath, vibrant as they shimmered down the dark of dusk. Her feet **fussed**, cold and swamp, as she shivered across to the skirt of the skyscraper. A nightingale revolved around the titanic structure, chirping its chime to the clicks of the clock. In this mortifying moment, this gentle heart could not have been more alive. Each beat bellowed a cry of salvation and hope, as a metallic pain **pulsed** in her bare back. Blood dripped from the spadille etched into her skin. Her hay hair rumbled under the **stormy** sky as she stood silently, staring at the streets in slow. “You promised me,” she said, picking up the chain and wrapping it around her neck. Her mind **mumbled** memories of her children, tears wetting her crisp cheeks, locking her toes against the sharp rim. With that person stabbing her shadow, she had no choice but to comply. Tension tightened around her waist, strangling her, as **goosebumps galloped on her arm**. She placed her hand over her heart and loosened up, pushing away her anxiety as she jumped. **Swarmed with the sizzling air resistance, wrapped in internal tears and external raindrops**. After what seemed to be an eternity, she finally felt free. The woman heard the nightingale sing.

*“Free, flying high,
Angelic, soaring in the sky,
Death, ever so shy,
Silence, sweeping right by.”*

The city shined sharp **with beams of lights blinding the moon’s**, the populace carrying on with their lives, all but alone. She gifted the world a grin, for she had found a friend. For the first time, she noticed the beauty of the city that constantly cried. It resonated with her, **holding** her hand, as her heart came to a sudden stop. Her soul had withered away, but the event did not go by unnoticed. Was this event planned to go by as it did or did the culprit commit a blunder? A man wearing a black hat had witnessed the worrisome event. His cyan car reflected his black blazer, as he noticed the clock above her stop, **a sweeping sound altering gallant gazes**. The minute hand seemed to look like an arrow, pointing downwards; similarly, the hour hand seemed to match a compass needle.

The man sat on his friend’s sofa. His eyes stirred back and forth, staring at the grandfather clock. A crucial crunch **crawled into his cranium**. “A pendulum!” he spouted out as he stood up suddenly, dripping drops on the carpet.

“What? Spencer Sohl, have you lost your mind?” his friend with the wavy, gold hair **pinched his nose**.

“It was such a sad moment, but I can’t help but think there was more to it, especially since it marked the tenth anniversary of Spadille’s retirement,” Spencer said as he brushed his fingers by his forehead. “Let me describe the event in more detail...”

The woman’s body lay right in front of Spencer’s feather-featured eyes as the forensics team and police swarmed the roof. The dark-skinned police captain’s eyes radiated the image of a healthy male in his twenties, a slight scar on his right cheek, and turned-up nose. “Detective Sohl, what do you make of this situation? The poor woman, her face... it depicts such a remorse emotion, but she was smiling, as if...”

Spencer grabbed the tablet, sliding up the screen, viewing the holographic images. “The Spadille, he’s back. I noticed her back, it’s just like how it was when I read about him when I was

younger. The masked murderer who was never caught has risen again after ten years,” Spencer said as he smiled. “I wonder just how much of it was planned?”

“You’re smiling?” the captain said, confusion caught between his lips.

“It’s a challenge, Captain Burney. It’s a call to be caught. Now that I’m in business, he’s going to get what he wants,” Spencer explained, walking towards the corpse. “The suicide with a smile, that’s exactly how it seemed as she jumped.”

“Rocket wasn’t too happy about missing this one, just give him his feed, later when you’re on patrol.”

The tired detective rubbed his toes against the carpet. “So, Spencer, did you use your ability, the whispering... what was it again?” his friend asked as he plunged the paintbrush with metallic bristles in paint. Crimson drops of the oily liquid oozed from the wooden rod.

“I was just getting to that, Leonar, let me just process this. Pace is important when telling a story, it’s how you use the plot to throw a punch,” Spencer sighed.

Her light toned finger poked at her frail feminine face, short straight stands, and purple pupils fitted in her almond eyelids, “Detective Sohl, I suppose, you’d want us to leave, just give us a moment and we’ll let you work.”

“Abby, just cause we’re at work, doesn’t mean that you have to be so formal, didn’t we promise each other that when we got our positions, we’d act as we always did. But yes, I would enjoy the emptiness, just for a brief,” Spencer stated as he peeked at the wet streets from above. The street lights struck back at him, as he noticed people staring from the opposite skyscraper, faces flooded with fright.

“Careful!” Abby exclaimed.

“Just trying to envision what she saw at the end, no worries,” Spencer said, waving his hand on her hair.

Finally, vacancy whelmed the vicinity. Spencer breathed in slowly, knelt down, and slid his hand across the quiet concrete, his other hand on the victim’s forehead. “Whispers in the walls, whispers in the walls, ever so wild or worn, I beckon a call, the whispers of this poor soul’s last moments please,” the detective chanted softly. The place seemed to emanate bits of blue as his coat began rattling. “It’s soft, she did not seem to have much regret.”

“Transformation and forgiveness. Transformation and forgiveness. My poor boys, surely this will bring you happiness, one day for sure.”

Spencer stood up, surged in sadness, flicking his eye gently. *No matter how many times I do this, it never gets easier.* “She was thinking about her children, huh? Of course, she was... surely this was no suicide, she was being threatened... but why the assuring smile then?”

“So, you couldn’t really figure it out?” Spencer’s comrade smiled, eyes scraping into Spencer’s.

“Usually the victims would talk about regrets, or even mention the name of the murderer, but this one just felt a lot calmer, I’m at a loss.” Spencer shook his head slowly.

“Is there not more? You’ve stopped like that’s it, that isn’t interesting enough, you’ve made it seem like it’s just another ordinary case,” Leonar explained his take on the tale, “**Surely, there’s more.**”

“Oh, but there’s more, and it’s sweet cream!” Spencer described, spraying his hand in the air as he tucked into his seat.

As the rain patted his hat, Spencer heard a knock on the door behind him. He rushed towards it, to find it locked. He gave the police a call, just to find out that they had already left. His heart was aflutter with both fear and excitement playing catch. He grabbed the cold knob, shook it, and whispered, “Whispers in the walls, show me the way.” Blue sparks oozed out, as he could hear a nimble voice in his head. It was the sound of the soul who had made the lock. He pulled out a multi-tool from his back pocket and inserted it inside the knob. After a few clicking clashes, it opened. Spencer’s eyes reflected back the eerie epithet of emptiness. **Rushing** down the stairs, he heard one of the doors slam shut about five stories under. Spencer gave chase, with dire determination, to find himself in a hallway **drooping with** darkness, a red glow at the end. His mouth **drizzled** dry, and an unusual song, without lyrics, seeped from one of the rooms. The glow’s position seemed to replicate eyes. The detective ran towards it, only to find the elevator’s light. But it was not for nothing, a chilling wind **whizzed against his scar**, he noticed the open window **and a pipe leading** down. Simultaneously, he noticed the number on the elevator screen change, **indicating** someone going down. Without hesitation, Spencer latched on to the pipe, and slowly but surely, slid down. His heart **heaved without hesitation** as the pipe pinned in due to the pressure, but it held on. The nightingale flew right by him, **sore from** singing. He slid down as low as it went, but it was not enough to reach the bottom, he jumped in through the open window to the side and ran for the staircase. Looking down, **slapped by surprise**. A man in a black robe, armored in an expensive kevlar suit, wearing a helmet with an artistic spadille design covering the eyes and hair, revealing parts of his lips, gave off a smile, as the two looked, eyes locked. The man dropped an object on the floor, as he disappeared. Spencer sprinted to the ground floor, shattering the door-glass as he slammed it in fury. His heart pushing his chest outwards in outrage. “I was so close!” **Spencer** grunted. He looked at the floor, **noticing** a rose. The petals seemed to be layered in rows, and the word *lies* was calligraphed on each petal. Blue sparks radiated from the rose, as he whispered and it reciprocated back, “Play.” Spencer slugged himself to the glass entrance, into the rain, riveting regret on his rear. He opened the door to his car and zoomed away.

“I was not close at all, I played right into his hands,” Spencer explained, sighing.

“That’s a bummer, maybe he just wanted to be noticed, he’ll do it again, so you better be ready. But the woman in question... really hope I could have helped her, my family has all the money in the world, but it just keeps going to waste in this dying society, as even the charities have been plundering the money due to the mafia running the streets now. Those scum need to be removed, my grandfather was so close to implementing a sound system, but then they caught on to him,” Leonar declared.

“Walt Leonar, big and bold on the headlines, it would be a day uniting the past and the future, I hope you can think of something to enrichen this city, I’ll help with whatever I can, so be sure to call whenever you feel like it.” Spencer **rubbed his shoulders**. Leonar looked at his canvas for a brief moment, **nodding**. “Together... We can surely do it together like we did as children.”

“You see that aquarium there?” Leonar pointed towards the wall beside the delicate statue constructed with arrows. “Look under, it’s a hologram projector. It helps with my art, quite deceptive, right?”

“Oh, **what they don’t know, won’t hurt ‘em.** I wonder what else I’ve already missed.” Spencer wet his lips.

“So, you want to stay here, or you heading back?” Leonar asked as he got up to get some food.

“I’ll dip, taking the bullet back to **the station, I still have my patrol,**” Spencer announced as he departed from the Walt Manor, and into the busy city which would not seem to stop crying.

“How’s it coming along? That project of yours, it was something to do with droids linked to peeps, right, Pen?” Chowing down on his sandwich, Rocket lounged his legs on the dashboard as Spencer drove. Ambient music mumbled through the car, merging with the rain ramming onto the vehicle. “The rain’s really pouring away today.”

“The idea is to have droids backed by human intelligence and control. This way they don’t need to have a brain of their own. We don’t need Volin leading self-dependent bots, but we do need a way to protect the people in a way in which we can retaliate. My next meeting is soon, I gotta keep my palace as a detective at the precinct.” Spencer irked as Rocket wiped his hands on the seat.

“I... How many times do I gotta tell you?”

“As many times as it takes you to realize that things don’t matter,” Rocket rubbed his lush lips against his hairy arm. “Anyways, really, droids? Where are we even going to get a system to build and control them?”

“There are many techies and docies here which’d be enough to install them, I just need to find a way to regulate it.”

“The people... Some of them are hopeful after tonight’s events that Volin may be exterminated, but others are just more fearful, Spadille... bastard killed an innocent, that isn’t how it should be!” Rocket pressed his knuckles together. “When I catch that bastard, he’s going to feel the wrath of these knuckles! Pen, you’re the one who speaks all about justice and what not, you really think his way will make things better?”

“I can’t say... but I terribly want to implement a new judiciary system. I don’t agree with how Volin has ruled.”

“Ah, there’s a big but coming,” he said, staring at the woman passing by, nodding.

Spencer smirked at his partner, “B... Anyways,” he raised his finger, “it all comes from this one cop from Kleaver, around two decades ago. I read his journals, back when there was no such thing as rain, no Volin, and even that famous tree still existed. He wrote of simpler times, burdened with bloodshed, but at least we moved forward, now Volin has taken all control. That cop, he didn’t know what justice was, in a city where death is second only to the sunrise.”

“Pen, I don’t got the meat,” Rocket’s finger drilled his head, “just tell me what you mean.”

“Sometimes I’m greatly disappointed in your lack of philosophy, but alas, Volin controls the streets and society with fear. But what if, instead of attaching the strings of fear, we incentivize others to reach their potential, even criminals. We are all creatures of habit and mislead pasts, Volin greatly understands that, but they’ve applied it wrong. They’ve suppressed it all, but what if we let thinking be free, what if we take the greatest there ever could be and plan a system which draws upon each person’s strengths.” Spencer’s smile turned into laughter.

“Pen, we’re living that already, people are free to do as they wish under Volin’s rule, as long as they abide.”

“What use is such if all the credit goes to Volin!”

“Pen, watch out!”

Spencer quickly turned left, avoiding the child in bloody rags. “Was that?”

“Don’t say it, don’t you dare say it...” Rocket tapped his index on his lips, raising his brows. “Shit, Spencer, look at the screen, there’s a hostage situation at the museum!”

The helicopter hissed a hurricane, sniper scrutinizing into the building. A crowd of cries crept outside the building bustling with antiques. Spencer dashed towards the officer. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m afraid we were too late. They’ve already begun the massacre—”

“Is anyone still alive?”

“We believe so, there’s at least one child left, that’s why we still haven’t raided—”

“I’m going in, it’s safe, he’s trapped himself in.” Spencer rushed inside, slapped by the scent of salt, almost tripping against the pool of blood. “*Help!*” Spencer ran. “*Help!*” the detective, drowned in despair, rampaged in silence.

Trousers trickled with blood as he heard the door. *Must be Rocket, finally.*

“Where is it coming from! I can hear it in my head, she’s calling for me, I am her hope!” Rubbing his forehead, he sighed, *never gets easier.* “Whispers!” his eyes burst blue as cries of agony ripped his ears. Closing his eyes, he envisioned the scene...

Just one robber, sweating with strips of silence, finger foiled against the trigger, legs levied with lethargy. The police outside echoed with negotiations. “Shut up. All of you just shurrup.” Though no one inside would dare speak. He pointed his gun to the corner, “Move, move.”

His trousers tugged down, forced into frantic frustration, he pulled the trigger reflexively, bursting the mother’s head. “Mom? Mom!” The child looked up at the robber, kicked away.

“Look! Look what you made me do. Now, they won’t even let me free. I’m a dead man walking.” He pointed the gun at the child, when the father interrupted, receiving a shot in the leg. “Oh no, I can’t let any of you go, now. If I’m dead, so are all of you.” His tongue slithered, almost calming him down. He shot, again and again, until the shiny floor fully reflected the bloody ceiling. Watching as the blood seeped outside, he ran inside the place. The child cried for help, following the man.

“Please, bring mommy back. Wait, maybe you can bring daddy back, that...” The child broke into void vehement, tears trampling down her cheeks, choking on her own breath. The robber grabbed her.

“You’re the best thing that’s happened to me. I get all this money, and those cops, they’re stupid, they’ll still try to save your life,” the man lost himself in a blaze of laughter...

Spencer followed the trail of blood and the thoughts calling for help. *Almost there, but...* Spencer cocked his gun, “Do I want to do this?”

Opening the door, he noticed piles of bags surrounding the man. He quickly ducked towards the counter, hiding, reassuring the child, gesturing her to keep silent.

In erratic ecstasy, “The good guy is here!”

“What? They’re already in here? There’s no window here, they can’t see me.” The girl points towards Spencer’s hat. “Oh, not you don’t!” The man fired away, just missing Spencer’s head.

“Woah, woah, take it easy. No one has to get hurt.” Turmoil tensed Spencer’s throat as he gulped, heart hammering heat through his jittering fingers.

“You’re right, I’ll kill both of you instantly, and then no one will feel the hurt.” The man rammed the gun onto her head as screams screeched their ears.

What do I do? What do I do? Whispers? Spencer placed the gun on the counter. “I’m unarmed, I can’t harm you.” He inched forward. “You want the money, yes?”

“Just stay where you are.” Spencer still inched forward. “Look, man, I’ve killed people, but she’s gonna be on you. You okay with living like that?”

“Is this just? The air around Spencer clawed his stiffening collar.

“Huh?”

“Whispers!” Spencer looked right into the man’s eyes. “You... were raised to survive. Your dad was a good man, Bran, a good, good man. He’s proud of you.”

“He’s really,” the man stuttered, “proud of me?”

“Just look at this much money, now you can afford to save her, right?” Spencer moved forward.

“Yes, yes! Now, I’m a free man. I have the money, too. All that’s left is too...” His smile shaped into a chaotic crescent. “She’s dead! I have no need for this, I really am a dead man,” the man said, finger tensed on the trigger. The shot fired as a wave of sorrow whiplashed Spencer. A spray of blood bludgeoned at his coat, as the girl rushed towards him.

“First lesson of the academy, never part with your gun. Second lesson, always keep the gun pointed towards your adversary. Third lesson, shoot first, questions later. It is not surprising you were expelled Spencer, this era has no place for someone like you... Someone as kind as you,” Rocket roared as his gun gassed with glittering electricity. “Your sense of justice, no matter how pure, will not save lives, Pen. The trigger saves lives.”

“But it also takes them! And then we aren’t any better, Rocket. We need to give others a choice, otherwise we’re no better than Volin or Spadille.”

“We all come to peace with it, one day or another, don’t take too long, Spencer, or you won’t be able to.”

Spencer watched Rocket leave. The girl sobbed in his arms as he sprinkled his fingers in her hair. The detective whispered, “I do respect you, but for just how long? You were the best to pass the academy, and I was a failure.”

Before heading into his apartment, he rang the bell of the opposite room. Face packed with pleasure as his eyes reflected a festive figure. She let him in, **delivering** a drink. “Same old, work on the case, and then come home to read a book routine, huh?”

“It couldn’t be better,” Abby replied, wearing a black bra and stuffy grey pajamas, revealing the albinism on her stomach.

“Do you ever want to paint your stomach? It’s as white as a canvas, ripe for ruining,” Spencer said, slurping his hot drink.

“Funny... So, after using your ever so mysterious ability... Did you get anything? Who did it?” Abby asked with a cat’s curiosity.

“I know who did it—”

“Who? Who!” Abby inquired with vigor.

“You need to let me finish, got to pace it right. Why do I need to keep explaining this to people?” Spencer said, annoyed. “I don’t actually know, big bombshell, right?” Spencer stated as he looked at the beautiful view from the monumental windowpane. “It’s all just black at night, united,” he murmured. **“It’s quite ironic how something so void breathes with such voice.”**

“No, not really, it’s the little lights that give it life.” Abby shrugged, **wiggling her fingers in her hair.** **“Anyways,** what a buzzkill, but you must have gotten some lead, right? Well, from our side, all we can say is that she was not forced, well apart from that symbol engraved into her. That was truly awful, her body definitely did not want to go through with that,” Abby added on as she lay on the adjacent sofa, spiraling her finger on the cushion.

“Here, for you.” Spencer passed her a bouquet. **Her joy lasted but a moment as her hand passed through the holographic lense. Her eyes jabbed him with disappointment.** “I met him, well if it was him, he seemed a bit off, but then again, he always did know how to operate ominously,” Spencer said as he brushed his forehead. He took out the actual rose Spadille left, stood up and implanted it in her hair, **smirking with childlike charm.**

“It’s Spadille, I can tell you as much, that sign, it’s the same one as ten years ago, his last known crime, that big case, he teased something, but he never went along with it. He was never even caught, but yet he stopped, it’s been bugging me ever since, and now I have the opportunity to get some answers,” Spencer yawned.

“I understand, I remember those days... you were so obsessed with going through news to find out if you could solve any of the mysteries, all by yourself. You’re still playing that silly game, aren’t you? Your caring nature still lives on to this day, well it’s the only thing which suggests you were once just a simple boy. That reminds me, do you have a riddle for me?” Abby questioned as she reciprocated the yawn.

“Riddle, hmm. Okay I got one: Aged but still traces of youth linger close by. Whole evolved into shades. I once danced in fire, but now only smell the ashes. I want to be held, but it won’t end well. That’s it, you have to figure it out,” Spencer sang.

“Seems all over the place, but at the end, just kind of dull, if I have to say. It’s like saying the thing had potential, but then just dropped it, that’s sad,” Abby said.

“Keep guessing, Abby, that’s your goal, so find yourself... a warm spot,” Spencer said as he headed towards the dollhouse at the corner of the room. He scrutinized the dollhouse they had built during their childhood. “Can’t believe you’ve kept it, all these years. Whose idea was it again, to build it?” Spencer asked, only to find Abby asleep. Spencer grabbed a blanket, spread it wide over her, locked the door, slid the key under her door, and left for his apartment. “So that’s what she thinks about herself, interesting,” Spencer mumbled. He welcomed himself, to an untidy room, littered with magazines and clothes. Walls layered with posters regarding famous quotes and detectives. His bed was made, due to his morning routine, his personal method of maintaining discipline.

Darkness hovered above the crying clouds, dining with the moon’s diamond rays scattered in the rain. The garden leapt with laughter as the man with sunflower seeds on his shoes smirked, “There’s no going back now. You really aim to get your revenge on this place.”

Spadille’s helmet drizzled with dancing droplets, “This place is too beautiful. It has done me no wrong. But Volin, we cannot let it keep going.”

“You mean, you cannot let them go, but you know... The police will try to stop you. Detective Sohl won’t stop.” The man brushed his chest. “This isn’t a game.”

“The detective is only a prey to his own habitual duties. He is not a threat or a target, neither is he to be harmed, but yes, he will be a thorn, but at least I think we have something ready to distract him.” Spadille looked at the faint landmass floating far past the shore, “Do you have any news from Charades? Do they have the material ready?”

“I’m afraid not, I hope it doesn’t alter your plans too much, but the mind and especially *meganic* are not easy to decipher. Much less materialize. And they aren’t going to support this personal vendetta of yours.”

“I’ve waited long enough for this day. Let the Charades know that once they are ready, I will be waiting, but until then, I do as I will. This city is like an art piece, it has no idea just how beautiful it can be.” Spadille's finger subtly sucked onto his helmet like a sudden gravitational pull.