

RAVENPORT

Free Spirit & The Bowhuntress

The Heroic League Saga by Tim Holtorf



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Chapter One

From the diary of Tamara Morgan, February 1st

There is no way I can post this up on my livejournal, my Tumblr or even tweet about this. Which sucks, because it's the most awesome thing ever. So I write it down in notebooks and tuck them away in my personal hiding spot in my room. Even mom doesn't know where it is, and she knows where most of my stuff is that I hide.

So what's this all about that's so amazing? My heroes.

I get to live with both of my heroes. My mom and my Auntie Chels.

Surprised? Shouldn't be, not when I give a little background.

My mom is the best person in the world. Sure, she can crack down on me at times, and there's stuff I've done that I've really deserved, but she's still the best. I never knew my dad, he ran out on mom when she was pregnant with me. But she's like a superhero. Well, she is, but still. She went through college, got a masters degree in psychology, studied criminal science and became a cop. While taking care of me. Plus, that's not even the best part. Mom took up where my Auntie Regina left off.

See, Auntie Regina was a superhero. Wore a costume and everything. When she and Uncle Phil lived in Detroit, she partnered up with another costume vigilante from Windsor. He called himself Yellow Jacket, wore a yellow trench coat, fedora and tie, and had black pants, shirt, shoes and gloves. Kind of reminded me of that Dick Tracy movie with Warren Beatty. But my Auntie Regina called herself Free Spirit, wore the red, white and blue. And she is a voodoo priestess.

Which, sorta runs in the family. My mom is a voodoo priestess. She's a detective with the Ravenport City Police, and she kicks ass as Free Spirit at night. But it's more than just that mom is a bona fide superhero. She's taught me a lot, and let me make my own mistakes, and tried to teach me what went wrong. Plus, and this is the best, she's teaching me about the things I can do. When I get older, I'll be a practising

Mambo. So mom's teaching me all about it, including why I can't use my abilities out of spite or revenge.

I asked her about that one time, why she's a Mambo, but she can go out and take down a dozen gangers in a street fight. And she says it's because of two reasons; first, she doesn't use magic when fighting. She boxes, and nothing feels better than slamming a fist into somebody who deserves it sometimes. The second is my Auntie Chels.

Chelsea and my mom are the best of buds. Not only are they sisters, they're real close in age. Mom's just two years older, but Chels is just as smart as mom. She's the Assistant District Attorney for Ravenport. And she kicks some major ass just like my mom. Like mom, she took up a name and costume to go out and fight. Unlike mom, she doesn't have any abilities. Auntie Chels is the only Morgan woman not to have the gift, as mom calls it. Which is fine, because Auntie Chels makes up for it in a lot of ways.

Bowhuntress, which is apt, considering she's a crack shot with a bow. I swear, she could've been on the Olympic team if she really wanted to, but she shy's away from attention like that. Like mom, she boxes and knows some self defense. All of that including the archery she got from my Uncle Lewis, who was the Bowhunter.

Did I mention my family's cool?

6:30, Saturday morning. Yolanda Morgan pulled her Toyota Celica into a parking spot close to the scene. She got the call about ten minutes before, and was informed that police were called half an hour before that. Another murder, looked to be the same as two others committed in the last three weeks. Morgan climbed out of the car and pulled out her badge as she approached the police tape, flashing it to one of the street cops. As he pulled up the tape to let her through, she made sure her dreads were tied back neatly. At least as neatly as they could be for someone who had just been woken up twenty minutes ago.

“Good timing, Morgan,” a voice called out. Yolanda looked over as Detective Carson Mallard joined her. He wasn't a tall man, maybe about an inch or two shorter than Yolanda, but even then, Yolanda was about six foot tall.

“I'm gonna guess the victim was killed not long ago?” she asked as they walked toward a small apartment building. Brick face, two storeys high, twelve apartments total. Six on the west side, six on the east side. The apartments on two floors had a balcony, while the remaining ones were basement suites.

“Vic is still warm,” Carson explained. “Maybe an hour before we were called.” Carson sighed as he tossed aside his

cigarette. “I was gonna take my wife out to dinner today.”

“It's your anniversary,” Yolanda said with a smile. “It's morning, Carson. You've still got time.”

“Yeah, but now I'm gonna have this mess on my mind,” he added. “Plus what we called you in for.”

“You've seen this before, Carson,” Yolanda said as they walked into the apartment and began climbing the stairs down to the basement suites. “This ain't new for you.”

“It ain't new, but it's still unnerving.”

Both detectives entered the small apartment, a one bedroom facing the east. The walls were covered in posters depicting scenes of space, some from the Hubble telescope, others from science fiction novel covers that were blown up and framed. There was a small kitchenette beside the living room, a bedroom connected to the living room and a bathroom off of the bed room. The victim was laying spread eagle in the living room between the coach and the television. Yolanda took a look around the room, trying to figure out anything that might be out of place. Coffee table looked moved, pushed against one wall to make room for the victim. A pair of beer bottles sat on the coffee table. A jacket, possibly the victim's, was neatly folded and laying on the coach.

There were three others in the apartment, all crime scene investigators. They'd closed the blinds on the windows

to keep the light of the rising sun out. Hopefully they'd taken a close look at the window sills before doing that.

“Alright, everybody out,” Morgan said as she focused her attention on the victim's body. “Except you, Mendez. And you, Carson.” Mendez was a slight, young man who was dusting the counter in the kitchen for prints, he looked up as Yolanda called out her order and made an audible gulping sound. As the other two crime scene investigators left the room, Carson closed the door.

Mendez walked up to Carson as Yolanda began muttering something as she stood at the feet of the body and whispered to him. “This isn't standard protocol, is it?”

“No, it most certainly is not,” he said as he still watched Yolanda. Five years before, Yolanda had told Carson she was a voodoo priestess, and that sometimes she used her abilities to help solve the crimes that took place in Ravenport. She revealed this because she needed a person she could trust in order to do things like this. Most often, the spells she cast were simple ones, things that revealed something and pointed her in the right direction. But this, what she was doing now, this was pretty heavy.

“I know you guys told me that Detective Morgan is a witch...”

“Voodoo priestess,” Carson corrected.

“Yeah... but, what's she doing?”

To answer Mendez question, the victim's corpse began shaking and slightly writhing. Then it began coughing and it seemed to be filled with a light. Mendez just stared blankly, and it took Carson a bit to push him further into the room.

“What the ...” the corpse seemed to sputter in a raspy voice. “Why the fuck am I on the floor?” He looked around, or at least as much as he could, then stared at Yolanda. “And who the fuck are you?”

“I'm Detective Morgan,” Yolanda explained as she crouched down, resting on her haunches. “That's Detective Carson, and that's Officer Mendez. He's a crime scene investigator.”

The corpse seemed to wrinkle his forehead and squint his eyes as he tried to figure out the introductions. “Why are there a bunch of cops in my apartment?”

“I need you to be calm, okay,” Yolanda said in a reassuring voice. “I need you to listen to me. I have some questions for you, but first I need to explain something.” The corpse seemed to nod his head as he focused on Yolanda. “It's early Saturday morning. One of your neighbours called us, she heard a noise, a loud noise, and listened for about half an hour, then tried knocking on your door.”

“That was probably Mrs. Carmichael,” the corpse

replied. “We call her the Mother Hen, because she seems to look out for everyone in the apartment complex.” Then, realization started to creep into his eyes. At least, as much realization as a corpse with the back of its head blown off could. “Oh shit, there was a murder.”

“That's right,” Yolanda nodded. “Your's.”

The corpse stopped for a moment, trying to figure out the words that Yolanda had just said. “Mine? I'm not dead, I can't be dead. I'm talking to you. And why the fuck am I on the floor? And why can't I move?”

Yolanda muttered something again as she focused her hand above the corpse's right arm. “Move your arm and feel the back of your head.” The corpse complied and rose his arm up and back behind his head. His eyes seemed to grow wide with horror as he could feel the hole in his head, which seemed like a gaping crater, his brains spilled out onto the floor. “Okay, I need you to be calm, I need you to focus,” Yolanda said as she carefully put the corpse's arm down, dispelling the magic that allowed it to move. “Focus on me, alright.” The corpse nodded as Yolanda tried hard to keep the victim focused and calm. He looked like he was going to cry. “What's your name?”

“Eddie. Edward Vics,” the corpse replied, then added as he thought he might know the next question. “I'm a video

game developer, I work with the team over at Portside Games. We were working on a new adventure game to be released next year.” Yolanda looked back to Carson and Mendez. Carson wrote the information down on a notepad, while Mendez just seemed to stare blankly into space. Carson looked over to Mendez and nudged him with an elbow, whispering about getting Yolanda some gloves. Mendez nodded and handed her a pair of gloves.

“Thanks,” she said as she took the gloves and slipped them on. “What were you doing last night, Eddie? Can I call you Eddie, or do you prefer Edward?” She had leaned down and was studying the small hole in Eddie's forehead, using a pen light to get a better look.

“Um... I was at a bar last night,” he said as he tried not to look at Yolanda. He didn't continue.

“What bar, Eddie?” Carson asked. Eddie remained silent.

Yolanda studied him for a moment. Even in death she could pick up certain signals and facial expressions. “Was it that gay bar on Ninth, Eddie?” Eddie nodded slowly.

“Nobody here fuckin' cares if you're gay, Eddie,” Carson replied. “The only thing we care about is finding out who did this to you.” Carson looked to Mendez for a moment. “Although Mendez seems to still be a bit freaked out by this

whole thing.” Mendez blindly looked around like he was in a daze.

“I know how he feels,” Eddie replied.

“The only thing we care about is finding out who did this to you, okay Eddie,” Yolanda stated in a reassuring voice. Eddie finally nodded. They all seemed to take a relaxing sigh, which meant Yolanda could continue.

And then the door opened.

“Alright, what do we got...” It was Captain Bernhardt, Yolanda and Carson's superior officer. He looked to each of the officers in the room and finally to Eddie, realizing he'd just interrupted something he didn't really want to see. “Oh, Jesus Fuckin' Christ, nobody told me the body was still warm.”

“Join the party, Captain,” Carson said with a chuckle.

“Captain Bernhardt, meet Eddie Vics,” Yolanda said as she motioned to the corpse.

Bernhardt gave a small wave and a nod. He knew about Yolanda's abilities, he just didn't want to see them in action. The less he saw, the less he could divulge. “Sorry about...” he said as he motioned toward Eddie.

“You're not the only one,” Eddie replied, then looked to Yolanda. “This doesn't seem like standard procedure for cops. I mean, they never did this on Law and Order.”

“Welcome to Ravenport,” Yolanda said with a smile.

“Now, let's continue. So you went to the bar on Ninth. About what time?”

“I was there at about nine... ish,” Eddie said with a sigh. “I wasn't looking to pick anybody up, just go for a couple of drinks, meet up with some friends. And I saw this guy. Tall, blond hair, killer blue eyes, tightest smile. He had this great laugh, and this smooth voice. Next I know, we're coming back to my place. I grab a couple of beers, put 'em on the coffee table. I go into my bedroom just to check and make sure I've got a decent supply.”

“Decent supply of what?” Carson asked, rather gruffly.

“Condoms,” Eddie replied with an irritated tone. He took a deep breath and continued. “I come back out here, sit next to him, he hands me my beer and I take a drink... and that's it. That's the last thing I remember.”

“Probably spiked it,” Yolanda said as she motioned to the bottles on the coffee table. “Mendez, pack the bottles up, we'll take 'em to toxicology for analysis.” Mendez shook himself to reality and did as he was instructed, carefully putting on his gloves and putting the bottles into an evidence container. “Now, you've never seen this guy before?” Eddie shook his head. “Did he give you a name?”

“He said his name was Seamus,” Eddie replied with a goofy grin. “I thought it was a cool name.”

“Probably fake,” Bernhardt said as he stuffed his hands in his pockets. “At least we've got a description of the perp now.”

“This has happened before?” Eddie asked as he looked to Yolanda.

“Yeah, twice,” she said with a sigh. “Do you still have your ID on you, Eddie?”

“It should be in my back pocket,” he replied and looked around as Yolanda reached under the body and searched his back pockets. Not long after she came back up with his wallet in hand and held it out for Carson. Her partner took it and inspected it carefully. “You guys are gonna find out who did this, right?” Eddie asked with a weak voice.

“We're gonna try,” Bernhardt said with slight confidence.

“Eddie, I've gotta let you go,” Yolanda said as she removed her gloves. “It's time you went on.”

“What am I gonna do now?” There was actual fear in Eddie's voice.

“Well,” Yolanda said with a smile. “I know your dreams in life were cut short, but now you've got whole new possibilities ahead of you.”

“You mean...” Eddie began, and smiled slightly. “I could haunt somebody. Like that asshole I went to high school

with.”

“That's not exactly what I meant,” Yolanda replied as she tried to withhold a chuckle. “Not exactly somethin' that'll be good for you.” She looked around his apartment again, and motioned to the posters on the wall. “You've got a whole universe to explore.”

“You mean,” Eddie said as his smile got brighter. “I could go screw around with that rover on Mars. Or I could catch up to Voyager.” He seemed to relish the possibilities. Yolanda let herself laugh at this. At least in death Eddie would find some joy.

“I'm gonna let you go, Eddie,” she said with a smile. “And I promise, we'll find out who did this.” Eddie nodded as Yolanda began muttering quietly again. The light in Eddie's body seemed to fade, and he returned to being just a corpse again.

“Mendez,” Bernhardt said as the room became quiet again. “Not a word of this to anyone.” He sighed and touched his hand to his forehead. “We all keep this under wraps, because I don't need this going to the press.”

“Our lips are sealed, Captain,” Yolanda said as she stood up. “I'll swing by the bar around noon today, ask a few questions. Mendez has the beer bottles.”

“I'll join up with you at noon,” Carson added. “Three

fuckin' murders in three weeks. All with a similar M.O., but all the vics were completely different.”

“At least we got to this one early,” Yolanda said as she joined Carson. “The other two had been dead six, seven hours. No way I could have talked to them.”

“I don't wanna hear either of you say what I think you're thinkin',” Bernhardt said as he looked out the window, carefully pulling the blind back just a bit. “I know we've got a serial killer on our hands now, but I don't want the press to know. The last thing I need is a public panic.” He narrowed his eyes as he watched a van pull up outside the police line. “Ah, for fuck sake, those vultures are already here.” He quickly closed the blind and motioned to the others. “You three out the back, Mendez, take what you've got back to the labs. I'll make sure the coroner gets her pick up. None of you talk to the press, if they try to hound you, you have my full authorization to punch 'em in the mouth. I'll take the heat for it.” Bernhardt looked to Mendez. He had the look of a ten year old who'd just been told the truth about Santa Claus. “And Morgan, maybe sit down with Mendez sometime and give him the full explanation on what it is you can do.”

“C'mon, let's book and get outta here,” Carson called out as he motioned for Mendez.

Bernhardt stood in the living room for a moment, shook

his head and took a deep breath. He hated messy situations, and a serial killer was messy enough.

Yolanda, Carson and Mendez snuck around back of the apartment complex, avoiding the camera crews as they talked in hushed tones.

“So what would the connection between the three murders be?” Carson asked in a near whisper. “There's nothin' that connects them. The first was a 35 year old Latina woman, school teacher. The second was a retired postal worker, black, widower. An' this guy is a 27 year old, gay white male who is a video game designer. Nothin' adds up.”

“The victims may not be connected,” Yolanda said in a whispered voice as the three approached her car. “But what happened to them may be. I looked over the files of the other two murders. Same thing resulted. The body was placed in a spread eagle manner, on their back, in the living room. Hole in the head with their brains blown out the back.”

“It wasn't a gun,” Mendez added. He took a deep breath as the two detectives looked to him. He seemed to find his voice now that the conversation with Eddie was over. “We think it was something like an air compressor. With enough pressure to sand blast. We're still looking into it.”

“Pressed up to the forehead and given a quick shot, that

might do it,” Yolanda said with a nod. “But why. Why go to that trouble when a bullet will do.”

“No slug ta recover,” Carson suggested. “Which means no gun ta identify. Makes it harder to find a trace.”

“Yeah, but draggin' an air compressor around must be a bitch,” Yolanda said with a sigh. “Look, here's what we'll do. Mendez, get lab results on this, see what's in the bottles. I want toxicology on them. Then work with the coroner on the wound. See what you can come up with.” Mendez gave a nod, he seemed to be back in reality now that they were far, far away from the world of witchcraft and voodoo. “Carson, you should just take the day off, I can do the leg work on this today.”

“Hey, you might need back up.”

Yolanda waved him off. “It's your anniversary, and I really don't wanna be the one to ruin that for you and Lacey.” Carson sighed and finally agreed. “Besides, Chelsea and I can look into it later tonight if we have to.” Carson knew exactly what Yolanda meant by that. Yolanda and Chelsea had let him in on their alter egos two years before. It was something that they had not shared with Captain Bernhardt. The less who knew, the better.

“Alright, but no bustin' heads too badly, okay,” he said as he gave her a warning look. Yolanda nodded and Carson

walked off toward his car. Now she just had to talk it over with her sister.

Yolanda pulled her car into the driveway and parked, thinking about the crime scene and the things she'd seen in that apartment, going over the small details. She'd have to discuss some of this with Chelsea, just to have someone to go over the evidence and have a fresh idea of the clues. Highly irregular, and completely against procedure, considering Chelsea worked with the district attorney's office. Still, it would help.

The time was 7:30, an hour since Yolanda arrived at the crime scene. She needed food and a shower. Maybe Chelsea was awake. Yolanda lived with her sister and her daughter in a large, two storey house that had a rather gothic look about it. It was said, in jest, that it was perfect for someone with Yolanda's abilities. In a way, it was, considering the large house had its own seemingly supernatural air about it, a large room for a library which both Yolanda and Chelsea had filled with books. As well as making sure there was a decent Internet connection that they could do other research not found in many of the dusty old tomes they had gathered.

Still, it was home. Yolanda opened the door and tossed her keys into a small bowl that sat on a stand in the foyer of the house. One thing that was nice about this city was she didn't

feel the need to lock her doors when she was home. Most people thought of her house as 'that creepy place up on the hill that no one dared go into'. Well, that creepy place had been her home for five years, and Chelsea's for three.

“You back early,” Yolanda heard Chelsea call out from the living room. Yolanda walked into the spacious room and leaned on the couch. There was walking room behind the couch, which passed by a tall bookshelf filled with coffee table type books and a few knick knacks. A tall set of windows facing east spilled natural light into the room, but seeing how it was still February, a reading lamp or two helped with light. Chelsea, still dressed in her bathrobe and slippers, was watching the morning news programs.

“Yeah, single, white male, brains blown out and the grey matter arranged on the carpet,” Yolanda said as she watched the morning news. “Same M.O. as the other two murders in the past three weeks.”

“Called it,” Chelsea said as she set down a bowl of cereal on an end table beside the couch. “I told you this was the start o' somethin'.” Yolanda just rolled her eyes and shook her head. “Get anything from the victim?”

“Eddie Vics. He was still warm,” Yolanda said with a nod. “He was at a club on Ninth last night, picked up a guy and brought him home. Got a roofie for his effort...”

“An' then got his brains blow out,” Chelsea finished.

“Weren't with a gun, though,” Yolanda said as she stood up and walked into the kitchen. Chelsea watched after her, waiting, as Yolanda went into the fridge and grabbed an orange juice for herself. “Had ta be a high powered air compressor.”

“Those things make fuckin' noise,” Chelsea said as she mulled over the information. “Neighbours woulda heard that.”

“Yeah, I'm gonna talk ta the neighbours after I go to the night club.”

“Which one?”

“That new one,” Yolanda said as she came back into the living room and sat down on the couch beside her sister. “On Ninth Street. Faith & Fire is the name o' it.”

“The converted fire hall,” Chelsea said with a nod. “Yeah, I know that one. Meredith an' me went there a couple weeks ago.”

“You ain't talked about Meredith much,” Yolanda said and took a sip of her juice.

“There really wasn't much there, ta be honest,” Chelsea replied with a shrug. “Anyway, back ta the murder.”

“Eddie said he picked up some guy, blond hair, blue eyes. Said they were killer blue eyes, an' a pretty hot smile.” As Yolanda gave the description, a black and white cat she had named Boots jumped up into her lap and nestled in, purring

loudly. "I figure somebody with a lotta charm."

"Must be," Chelsea said as she sat up straighter in her seat. "Especially if this guy hit a school teacher an' a retired postal worker." She thought about this for a moment. "This sound really familiar. The M.O., I mean. I think I read an ol' case file 'bout it."

"Could you look inta that?"

"We're goin' huntin' tonight, ain't we," Chelsea said with a sigh. Not a question, just the apparent need to cruise the streets and find clues in a much less procedural manner.

"I figure we hit the streets at 10 tonight," Yolanda said with a nod. "We cruise for a couple hours. That is if you don't find something in the library an' I don't find anything at the bar."

"An' if we do?"

"Then we might be out longer," Yolanda said with a shrug.

"I'll head over ta the hall o' records after I shower," she said as she looked to Boots and made a kissy noise to attract his attention. "C'mon, Boots. You can cuddle with me while my sister has a shower."

"While you're doin' that, I'll round up the others an' give 'em a heads up," Yolanda said as she waited for Boots to climb into Chelsea's lap. "Darla will be happy, give her a chance ta

give a good test o' those computer upgrades she made.”

“Transportation tonight?” Chelsea asked as she tickled Boots behind his right ear.

“Lewis said he was finished those bikes,” Yolanda said with a grin as she rose to her feet. “Why not take 'em for a spin.” Chelsea gave a small victory motion with her arm. “Tamara up yet?”

“No, she's still asleep. You gonna wake her up?”

“Might as well, seein' how we're both goin' out,” Yolanda said as she walked over to a tall staircase. “I'll take her over ta Lewis' place before hittin' the bar an' askin' a few questions.”

“Sound like we got a game plan.”