


The Guardian Angels Pack - Volume 1

A photograph of a muscular man's torso from the chest down to the waist. A cheetah is superimposed on the image, running horizontally across the man's chest. The cheetah is in a full running stride, facing left. The man's skin is tanned and his muscles are well-defined. The background is a grey stone wall.

Connor

Virginie T.



Virginie T. Connor

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Connor:

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Аннотация

A paranormal romance between a metamorph and a fatal (people with supernatural powers) against the backdrop of a power struggle. Originally, the world was populated by humans, shapeshifters and fatels. Apparently there was peace between the peoples. But if we had scratched the surface, we would have discovered that the reality was quite different. With method and patience, rebellious animorphs packs exterminated all the fatels one by one. They made them disappear from the face of the Earth. Finally, this is what everyone has been thinking for the last twenty-five years. My name is Connor, I am the alpha of the Guardian Angels pack, responsible for protecting witnesses from the excesses of rebel packs. However, I did not expect to discover that the person to be saved is none other than my long-awaited soul mate and the last of her species. I am ready to do anything to drive her safely to my territory and claim her mine.

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Virginie T. Connor

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I de *The Guardian Angels Pack*

Virginie T

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Volume 1

Virginie T

Translated by Ferial Benhamiche

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Prologue

Originally, the world was populated by humans, shapeshifters and fatels. Apparently, there was peace between peoples even if we mingled very little, living next to each other without real contact and all had a well defined place. But if we had scratched the surface, we would have discovered that the reality was quite different.

The fatels had held power for decades. Normal, their ranks included prophetesses, telepaths, telekinesists and other creatures with extraordinary power. They were very powerful and acted as judges in case of conflict because of their exemplary wisdom. Certain shapeshifters clans envied this power. They considered themselves just as powerful and, as predators, felt that it was up to them to rule the world. They wanted to be the powerful chiefs, unlike the fatels who ruled with rightness and empathy. And the packs had an undeniable advantage: the animals felt the magic which circulated in the blood of the fatels. The Black pack, among others, was one of those clans in search of wealth and recognition.

With method and patience, the dissident clans exterminated one by one all the fatels to reach the high economic and political spheres. The first affected were the prophetesses. The clans wanted to eliminate in priority those who had the capacity to predict their project, and therefore attack them. Most

humans ignored their physical particularity, because these, very precious for their people, lived almost with self—sufficient. But shapeshifters knew all about them. They had no offensive power and their eyes betrayed them in the face of enemies. Impossible for them to hide among humans. Despite their incredible power, they could not do anything against the massive attack that hit them. The others were then tracked down and killed one by one in the penumbra, without that it raise any questions. Car accidents, heart attacks or attacks of "wild animals" in the forest. Nothing seemingly suspicious, even if it has raised questions among humans and shapeshifters over time. The rebels made them disappear from the face of the Earth and the existence of the fatels quickly fell into oblivion. Since there was no concrete evidence pointing to the culprits, only suspicion, no one was punished. No one has avenged this peaceful people exterminated for their essence. A real genocide. For our salvation, the rebel packs did not become the world masters either. Humans and other packs realized what had happened under their eyes and were horrified by their own inaction. Things have changed, evolved, since this drama, by strengthen ties between humans and shapeshifters, so that such a tragedy can never happen again. But it was too late: the damage was done, the magic people had been wiped out.

Actually, this is what everyone has thought for the past twenty—five years ...

Chapter 1

Sevana

I do my shift at Jefferson Hospital as I do five days a week, two to three times a day. I love this place. I work in the intensive care unit of a small hospital in the center of a town mainly directed by humans, a people of which I am one. I know I am useful here, and that is why I chose this position six years ago. I want to help people and this is the perfect place to do it.

– Hello Sevana. Did you have a good weekend?

– Hello Ashley. Not bad and you ?

– Great. A nice weekend to stay in bed with my new lover.

Did you have interesting meetings on your side?

Always the same question on Monday morning. It's boring and a little exasperating. I love Ashley. She's been my friend since I was hired in this department, however I know exactly what her raised eyebrow means. My sentimental life, or rather, the absence of my sentimental life, has been his favorite topic of discussion for as long as I can remember. I'm only twenty—six, damn it! I don't feel the panic of my biological clock that seems to worry my friend so much. To believe that I have an expiration date and that I will soon expire! Not that I'm not interested in men. I have

had relationships before. Let's just say that my little peculiarity is not to everyone's taste and that few have given me enough self—confidence to show them my real self. Not to mention my extraordinary ability which sometimes teaches me things that I would prefer to ignore and which aborts my flirting much sooner than expected. Like, I'm just a hobby before Mister's next real adventure. It doesn't really make you want to stay with the said oaf who just wants to have a good time with me. I don't want to be a quick date by the way. I'm better than that. That's why I know in advance that my weekend activities will not be to Ashley's liking.

– No. I had a cocooning Sunday with a good book and a hot bath. A real relaxing weekend.

– You are despairing. At this rate, you will end up being an old maid and you will live surrounded by cats! When are you finally going to find yourself a nice little human to take care of you?

I stick my tongue out like a kid. What she may think or fear is going over my head. I am sure that when the time is right, the man made for me will come into my life and never leave it.

– Do we meet to eat?

– Okay. See you later.

Why do I agree to join her for the meal each time? I know how the conversation will turn out. She will still try to arrange a meeting with one of her acquaintances. And these arranged meetings, for the few that I accepted just that she leaves me a little quiet, they all turned out to be disastrous. Men around her tend to imagine that I only think about sleeping or that it's

all cooked, since after all, I'm lucky that they pay me a little attention, and so they don't have to make an effort to seduce me.

I go into the nearest room, internally blaming my weakness in front of my friend, I just don't want to offend her, but it costs me. I mentally shake myself to put aside my thoughts and take up a professional position. I go to the patient's bedside and perform my ritual. Always the same: I read the file, check the patient's constants and touch his hand. This last point is my personal trademark. There is only me who do it this way and I remain extremely discreet about this detail, but it is essential. Let's say that I have, um, intuition. Sometimes, with a simple physical contact, I learn things about the person in question. I see her future, a possibility, what she could be if no outside person intervenes, anyway. As part of my work, I will know whether the patient's condition will deteriorate or not. In service, I'm called the Guardian Angel. I have saved many lives over the years and my colleagues are no longer surprised when I ask for help for a patient who seems stable. As now, for this wolf shape—shifter who arrived very badly this morning, and whose heart will stop beating in a few moments. I'm not wasting time and activate the intercom.

– RESUSCITATION'S TROLLEY ROOM 4.

The doctor on duty came running, followed by my friend Ashley, who was responsible of the floor in pairs with me.

– Check-up, nurse Slat?

– Male wolf shapeshifter patient, 20 years old, multiple

lacerations in the abdomen, several broken ribs, double fracture in the left arm.

– Reason for the alert?

– Imminent drop in heartbeat.

The doctor does not question my diagnosis. I regularly depend on his team, he is used to my alerts given several precious minutes in advance and if, at the beginning, my alerts were called into question, this is no longer the case today. The doctors trust me completely. He immediately prepares the defibrillator and everyone waits in silence to intervene at the right time. We are not going to electrocute a man whose heart beats at a regular rate. I am sure of my prognosis, but one thing puzzles me: it is not the first shapeshifter that I deal with, even if it is rather rare to receive them in this hospital, and I know that their metabolism differs of humans. They usually heal quickly. Much faster than us. but, this man is as damaged as when he was admitted. None of these wounds have started to heal and he has not regained consciousness once. Something is missing. An anomaly that I cannot identify and that seems important, and the presence of a trace of bite in his neck worries me. I'll be doing a thorough search later. Maybe his blood test will tell me more about him. For now, no time to wonder any longer about this anomaly. The heart sensor starts to slow down.

– We are losing him, let's move away.

The doctor performs the first electric shock without any results.

– We increase the power.

Another shock followed by manual pulmonary ventilation by me while Ashley takes care of the resuscitation device.

– Again.

At the third discharge, the patient finally stabilizes. His heart curve takes regular peaks. A new discreet physical contact on his hand allows me to confirm that he is out of danger. For the moment, anyway. Only the future will tell us if he is finally saved. I will keep an eye on him closely until the first sign of awakening and then I will stand back, keeping the promise made to my parents.

– Another great job, Miss Slat. Someday you'll have to explain to me how you're doing to predict the aggravation of patient health when there is nothing indicates to us. You allow us to do miracles. You saved the life of this canine. It would be very helpful to have more nurses like you.

I smile at him blushing and shrugging my shoulders because I have no answer for him. I do not know how my talent works and I have long considered it as a malediction, because I have no control over it. I have always had this ability, as far back as my memory goes, and my parents forbade me to talk about it to anyone. They have been very clear on this point. Interdict to talk about this and my physical imperfection, because people would instantly reject me. My family had a precept: people do not like those who are different, to blend into the masses. I followed their advice and it has been pretty successful so far.

That's when two men appear in the room. Very imposing, broad with shoulders and a muscular body, they hardly pass in the frame of the door and are impressive. Their faces are closed and their eyes glisten with reflections of molten gold. shapeshifters, without a doubt. I've never seen them in excellent physical shape and the malevolence that they give off makes me uncomfortable. I take a step back to find myself in a dark corner of the room. Probably useless reaction, because they scrutinize only the man lying under the sheet, without more interest for the people around.

– Tsss, tsss, tsssss, why did you resuscitate him? We will have to do the job again now. This time, we will not leave until we are sure of the success of our mission.

Repeat what? What mission? Their facial expression may be neutral, but their intentions seem bad.

Ashley immediately stands in front of them, hiding their view of the wolf. She barely reaches them at shoulder level, but you shouldn't trust her frail body, my friend can be fierce if necessary.

– Sorry gentlemen, visits are prohibited in this area. Are you family?

Without even giving her a look, the more hefty of the two, a long haired brown, a gash on the cheek, gives her a violent blow on the head. I scream when I see my friend falls to the ground like an inert mass, blood on her temple, unfortunately drawing all their attention to me. They then approach me with a flexible but

threatening approach. Real predators and I became their prey. I understand better why my parents taught me to stay away from animorphs. My supervisor courageously tries to intervene despite an undeniable difference in size. My colleague looks like an unlucky hobbit against two orcas! There is a clear imbalance of forces. Unfortunately for him, the second man grabs him by the neck and makes him tumble against the wall at the other end of the room without any difficulty, as if he weighed no more than a feather, making him losing consciousness. So I find myself alone facing them and in all lucidity, I do not make the weight against these two brutes with doubtful intentions. From my height of sixty centimeters and fifty poor kilos, I certainly do not have the strength to push back males who seem so swollen with steroids that their veins stick out on their biceps. I have to not to lose time while I wait for the guards to arrive.

My shout must have raised the alarm and the reinforcements should not be long in coming. I absolutely must make them speak. I can do that. When I stress, I talk nonstop, a real blabbermouth. The only problem, I am beyond stress, I am rather terrified, which ties my throat instead of untie my tongue.

– What do you want ? I can certainly help you.

– Just to resolve a clan business. Nothing that concerns you, doll. Stay quiet and you'll only get a small bump on your head. You are of no interest to us and you should not try to save this traitor again.

Ashley's aggressor looks at his accomplice, indicating with

a head movement the inanimate and defenseless patient on his hospital bed, giving him a silent command. I want to intervene, but Mister Scar blocks my way by placing himself on my path without taking my eyes off, blocking my visibility on the patient. I have to tilt my head to the side to observe the sequence of events. The one I suppose to be the underling goes towards the patient and plunges his hand directly into the thorax of the wolf without hesitating for a second, as if everything was normal, clutching what must be his heart until the outline of the electrocardiogram is flat. The distress beep is deafening in my ears and a cry of terror sticks in the back of my throat in the face of the horror of the situation. I am there, helpless, attending a real execution. Once satisfied with the work of his partner, Mr. Muscle stares at me again and takes a deep breath to smell my perfume, smell is an essential sense for them. I know it's a shapeshifter's reflex, which doesn't prevent me from being uncomfortable, as if someone had touched me without asking my permission. His eyes suddenly widen and he grunts as he rolls up his lips, discovering long, sharp fangs. That's a bad sign. It seems that the scent of my soap displeases him. I stammer more than I speak.

– Sorry, my perfume is a little strong.

– Fatel, you shouldn't exist. I will solve this problem immediately. My ancestors didn't do it all for nothing. The fight is not over.

What is he talking about ? He is crazy. The fatels have indeed

disappeared. I learned this during my history lessons when I was a child, without knowing under what circumstances. The fatels are invoked only for the scientific advances they have allowed. It is not a very glorious story, and both humans and shapeshifters prefer to ignore their inaction and the consequences on the world that this has engendered. I was only a baby when the last fatel was massacred and my parents are all human. Trying to understand his intention to kill me, although his reason eludes me, I try to dodge towards the door, but he grabs my arm with incredible force. My bone creaks in a terrible noise, but I don't have time to scream my pain when sharp claws like razor blades pierce the flanks to hold me against his chest. He then plunges his nose into my hair and inhales again.

– You smell magic. It's going to be a real delight. Don't move, it'll be fast. Or almost.

That's when the second man, thinner, but just as athletic, sniffed my neck before planting his fangs deeply.

– How is it possible ? I thought this people have disappeared.

– And it is the case because she will join them into nothingness.

– As soon as we take what we want?

– Of course. The strength tenfold is for us.

Please no. They won't settle for a bump at the end. A huge ball of anxiety clogs my larynx. They cut my stomach, bite my collarbone several times, sucking my blood like vampires, except that they are only fiction and my aggression is real. It looks like

they are enjoying torturing me. I feel my strength give up as my blood spills over the white tiles, forming a most macabre contrast, and the suffering is unbearable. I pray that I will pass out before my last breath and that my ordeal will end, which happens when armed guards open the door with a crash to rescue me.

Chapter 2

Connor

I take my coffee on the terrace of my chalet, like every morning, when I can. I often travel for work and I have made this place my haven of peace. The exterior is all wood, from floor to roof, and arranged to receive the entire pack, with tables and chairs scattered here and there at the front of the building. The place is quiet, in the middle of a wood, ideal for the metaphor cheetah that I am. Impossible to guess, seen from here, the original function of this place. I need greenery and space to feel free and relaxed and congeners for social contact. It is for this last reason that my chalet is not isolated in the middle of nowhere as I sometimes feel the urge, but near other chalets of the same style as mine, without being on top of each other, giving us some privacy.

I hear activity coming from the surroundings, doors slamming and leaf creaking under the weight of the walkers. My lieutenants, as well as my beta, will soon come to see me for our daily ritual: racing and fighting in our animal form. Sometimes dominant members of the pack join us to keep themselves good form. This is important for team cohesion and essential for

strengthening the pack bond. After all, we are an extraordinary clan. The only pack of animorphs of different species. I love these moments of calm when we give free rein to our animal part.

– The form, Connor?

– Not bad and you ?

– Hum, like a morning when I wake up alone in my big bed.

Phew, Nate is incorrigible. If he sleeps alone, without a woman to warm his sheets, he is in bad mood. However, here, the rules are strict and the same for everyone: no foreigner (man or woman) in this specific case, on our territory. It's a security matter. This territory is a refuge for many of us and it is impossible to enter it without being authorized. And since we haven't been out for many days, since the end of our last mission in fact, Nate is starting to feel alone.

– We'll go out tonight, if you want. You can find to yourself a hot bear.

– Nop, not a bear, they are too insistent. Each time they expect a serious story and it is no way. I prefer to wait for the right one, the only one created for me. I understand Nate's point of view. As shapeshifters, we know that we have a soul mate somewhere on this earth. Unfortunately, few find it and it is not uncommon for a shapeshifter to decide to unite with another who is not intended for him, but who makes him happy. I am like Nate. I'm waiting for the perfect woman for me. I am convinced that if I deserve it, fate will put her in my way. My beta arrives at that time and takes the conversation along the way.

– Like all of us bro. Right Connor?

– Exact. Hi Sean. The others arrive?

– Liam and Owen spent the evening in town. You know them, they surely have a hard time getting out of bed of their conquest of the day. They shouldn't be long.

Yep, that remains to be seen. They must still sober up.

– OK, let's start girls.

I love to tease them, it motivates them. In reality, they are formidable fighters, as seasoned as I and loyal friends. I would put my life in their hands without hesitation. We undress quickly so as not to disintegrate our clothes and take the shape of our animal. My beast is pleased to be on all fours and does not waste time, it leaps on the lion in front of us, which responds with a stroke of the paw much wider than its own. It is much larger than us, but my animal is more agile and faster. Everyone has their assets. Sean and I turn around, mutually seeking a flaw in the defense of the opponent, when Nate's bear charges us and sends us rolling against a tree. His favorite technique: the ball of demolition. Nate is not delicate, but he is effective. Grrr, I'm going to have a bump. He's going to pay me this big oaf. Against a grizzly bear, the smartest thing is to run to get it tired. A mastodon weighing more than three hundred kilos is formidable when it loads, but it certainly does not have the endurance of my feline. My animal is the fastest in the world, I am unbeatable in racing. I still have time to get started. So I go between two trees when the bangs of bone characteristic of a shapeshifter sound.

The latecomers have finally had to get out of their ethylic coma and don't waste time getting into the dance. The game will get tough. A huge gray wolf hits me on the right flank just before I pick up speed while a beautiful black panther, as graceful as deceitful, grabs my left hind paw to make me fall to the side. Liam and Owen are used to work in pairs and have their own attack techniques. Fortunately, my buddy is over two meters tall. Nate jumps and drops heavily on Liam who moans under the weight. The bear is really not in finesse, I am pleased not to be its target when I see a gray crepe buried by a hairy mountain of a bright brown. I take this opportunity to grab Owen by the skin of the neck and force him to back away. Sean then launches into the fray, roaring and growling. To all of us, we form a huge ball of yellow, black, brown and gray fur, speckled in places. Difficult to distinguish who claws who or what. We fight, bite and run most of the morning before taking human form in front of my chalet, covered with tufts of hair, blood and saliva. For a stranger, the scene we offer could be alarming. In reality, our injuries are superficial, the goal of the exercise not being to badly injure , but to acquire new techniques and new reflexes as well as to improve our skills in the art of combat. In few hours, nothing will appear there. I grab the jet of water and rinse us unceremoniously. We are not afraid of cold anyway. Our blood is warmer than that of humans, protecting us from temperature variations. We then sit outside with a beer to take stock of the training.

– Good job guys. Liam, Owen, was the night short?

– Sorry Connor, but this chick was too sexy and ...

– I don't need details, Owen thank you. You were less efficient, slower than usual. Force is not everything in the case of an attack. Watch out.

I sometimes show myself hard, but our survival depends on it. And I care about each of these dumbass, even if I would never confess to them.

– Relax Connor, we don't have a mission right now.

Ah, Nate's optimism. In the group he is the quiet force and the defender of the oppressed. As if these guys need to be defended.

– I know Nate, but it won't last, it never will.

Sean doesn't say a word, he knows I'm right. He is my beta, my right arm, and manages the secondary missions when I am not available. He takes even less good time than me and I already take few. And just like for me, this job is his whole life and his reason for existing on this earth. He is the one who brought us together, even though we all have personal reasons for being here. The five of us represent the little Guardian Angels pack. There are other members of course, but we are the most important and the strongest. I'm the chief, the alpha. I am responsible for everyone and I take this role very seriously. The last three present with me are the defenders, the lieutenants. They have a role just as essential as me. Without the five of us, no more packs. It would become vulnerable and quickly disappear. Our work, thanks to substantial subsidies, allows us to support the clan and has given us this territory, an ancient, highly fortified human military base.

But this is valid only if we stay alive to do the job. Our job is not without danger. We serve the governor when the human police are overwhelmed by events. Only for witness protection in investigations involving shapeshifters. Humans are no match for an angry and determined animorph. What are fists worth against claws and fangs that can shred you in less than a second? So we're fighting ours to make justice prevail, replacing the missing fatels. We are the most powerful species on earth and I estimate, like my companions, that this does not put us above the law. Still, the witnesses must be alive to appear in court, and this is where my team comes in. Most of the people we have saved, often from their own pack, some alphas who love excess and oppression, have settled here with us. This is how this pack was born.

Chapter 3

Connor

Well, what did I just say to Nate? To believe that I am clairvoyant, or that the governor heard me. I knew it had been too long since my phone rang.

– Hello Governor. How are you?

– Good, but truce of banality. We have a problem.

As usual, he would not call me otherwise. His phone calls are never to announce good news. But his tone makes me nervous and puts my senses on alert. The governor is never worried. Tense, stressed, yes, but never anxious and today I could almost smell his fear through the handset. My friends immediately notice my change in posture, I stiffened, my instincts alert, and immediately take their seriousness, awaiting information about their next mission.

– I'm listening to you.

– There was an assault in a human hospital. A wolf who had been admitted the same morning was killed.

It's rather unusual for an animorph to end up in the hospital, especially a human hospital, but apart from that ...

– OK, but I can't do anything for him anymore.

– Obviously, and an investigation is underway to find out the reasons for his pitiful state when he arrived. But you could help a nurse who was at his bedside.

– Of course. Did she know him? What pack is she in?

– To my knowledge, she did not know the victim and she does not belong to any pack. She's a human and she's in a coma. She was attacked by the shapeshifters who came to finish off the wolf.

I get up from my seat and start pacing. This story is not trivial.

– I'm sorry ? Usually, clans don't even tire of threatening humans because they are too scared of retaliation to testify against them, so attack them! We've only protected shapeshifters until today. Why do they hurt this human woman?

– This is what you are going to have to find out while protecting her. They ran away and left her for dead only because of the guards arrived in the room with handguns . They were forced to shoot several times so that the animorphs decided to drop their victim. Vigils who have spotted several shapeshifters on guard around the human hospital since the assault on Miss Slat a week ago. We think that they want to know if she is alive or if she will succumb to her injuries soon. And they might want to finish the job when they find out that she survived. It is out of the question that a war breaks out between humans and shapeshifters. Humans will not disappear without a fight if the matter gets out.

– Okay. Send me the address. We'll be leaving within an hour.

This is a strange case. She will be the first human to benefit from our protection. Not that it is not important, I respect everyone's life, human or shapeshifter, it is the same for me. Everyone has a place on earth and a role to play. Why would shapeshifters want the death of a nurse? How important is it to want to make sure that she is dead, at the risk of starting a war? It does not mean anything.

– Connor, a problem?

– I don't know, Sean. This mission is unusual. We have to protect a human left for dead by shapeshifters.

– Why would a clan do this?

– This is the hundred thousand dollar question that will have to be answered. The governor fears a war between the two peoples. Which could happen if a pack attacks a human hospital. We may be physically stronger, but we are not invincible. Humans may be afraid and shoot at all of the surrounding animorphs. Sean, I entrust the pack to you. The others, we take off in an hour.

I take my bag in my room without wasting time, turning and returning events in my head without understanding the meaning. The trip to the hospital took us 3 hours by plane plus thirty minutes by car. Have you ever seen wild animals on a plane? It's like putting a lion in a cage. It's not good. We are not made to fly. So we arrive anxious at the hospital, nervous and a little aggressive. We would need to release the animals to relieve the pressure. Unfortunately, the shapeshifters I see watching without any discretion, confirm to me that the situation

is unstable and perilous, so freedom will wait.

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