

## Westcrest

### Episode #22: I Spy Sarra

Sometimes Sarra gets the opportunity to pretend she's just a normal girl. They never last long, but her shopping trips away from the mansion, when she's allowed to spend her afternoon rifling through clothes, are some of the happiest times in her life.

She wouldn't admit this to anyone else and usually when Chatravati informs her that it's time for her to make another shopping trip into town she pretends that it's something that she hates, but the little girl inside of her—the one *without* the combustible hands—enjoys nothing more than a day at the mall.

Marcus knows this and so he leaves Sarra alone. He parks the conveyance somewhere nobody will notice it, and arranges to meet her back there at a certain time.

Sarra finishes her shopping in little over two hours. Now (with a little more spring in her step) she's walking along a deserted street, swinging the bags containing her purchases in each hand. Today she bought Jeremy a new jacket that she hopes will replace the oversized one that he always seemed to be wearing.

Somebody grabs her. Her first emotion is outrage, even as they force her into a narrow alleyway and press her face sideways against the bricks. She drops the bags and something frilly and pink spills out across the pavement. Her palms tingle.

But then her hands are tightly bound and some gooey, *freezing* stuff is oozing between her fingers. As her assailant winds thick lengths of bandage around her hands she realises that the tingle is fading. She has been "countered" as Chatravati would put it and now her anger turns to fear.

She does not cry out, even as rough hands drag her towards the dark shape of a van waiting at the far end of the alley. She is bundled inside and into darkness.

"Hello, Sarra," says a voice that is so deep and low that it is though the darkness itself has spoken. Sarra squints, gasping as she spots a pair of bright eyes staring back at her.

"Allow me to introduce myself," says the dark man. Every word is like the slow beat of a ceremonial drum. The air in the back of the van feels close. "I am Saul DuPont."

"You don't know who you're dealing with," she says.

"I know *exactly* who I'm dealing with." The man fishes in the pocket of his coat and produces a photograph. It is of Jeremy. "Do you know this boy?"

Sarra purses her lips, but she knows that she's already given it away.

DuPont nods. "Of course you do. Truly, I should dispense with the formalities." His voice is thick with the accent of the Caribbean and his skin is so dark that he blends with his surroundings, making him appear as little more than a pair of bright eyes—and now, a slowly expanding grin of pristine white teeth.

"Ah, here it is," he says. He dangles a small straw doll between the tips of his fingers. The little doll is wearing an oversized yellow jacket and has a head topped with a mop of dusty blonde hair. Slowly, DuPont reaches into the pocket of his coat and withdraws a small tin. He opens the lid to reveal that it is full of needles; glinting, even in the dim light.

"What do you know about *voodoo*, Sarra?" Asks DuPont, taking one needle and holding it up before her. Every fibre of Sarra's being is telling her to run, but trapped here in the van she knows that she has nowhere to go.

Sarra's eyes widen as DuPont jabs the needle into the doll's abdomen. "Even now," he says, watching Sarra. "Your friend Jeremy is writhing in pain."

DuPont reaches into the tin and produces another needle. With a single fluid motion he uses it to puncture the stomach of the Jeremy doll a second time. His grin is even wider now and his eyes are sparkling.

"In two or three days, the pain itself will kill him," says DuPont simply. "But you have the power to stop it, Sarra. All that I ask of you is one simple favour..."

Sarra knows that she should be asking more questions, but she's seen enough evil in her life to recognise it now. Even if DuPont is lying, agreeing to help him might be the only way she can make it out of here alive.

"What?" She says, tears shining in her eyes. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to steal something for me," says DuPont.