

Fourteen's Secret

By C. Jade Wyton

Fourteen discovers that Ratrick is aware of her secret plot to murder her mother, when he tries to pry for more information.

Mentions of murder, manipulation, and abuse.

~~~~~

‘Do ye ever wish ye had a name?’

The question took Fourteen by surprise, and she paused her work; crossing the arms of the corpse she had been preparing for reanimation over their chest and dropping her own to her sides.

She said nothing, as the rat-like man beside her cocked his head and made a dismissive motion with a hand.

After a moment of quiet, she sighed and shrugged.

‘*I have a name,*’ she signed, before reaching up to flick the tag on her ear.

‘Nah. I mean a real name, not a barcode,’ he clarified; his nose twitching as he sniffed the corpse in front of the woman. ‘Both those sisters of yers got names. Ain’t ye ever wished ye had one, too?’

‘No,’ Fourteen lied.

She had wished for a real name, once. A long time ago. She’d wished she’d had any sort of identity... but then. Only real people got real names. And she wasn’t a real person— And she had no interest in being a real person.

If she became a real person, a *real* real person, with a name and identity of her own, it would only hurt the people she loved all the more when she....

She shook the thought from her head, clicking her beak in annoyance before signing to Ratrick again, ‘*Mother doesn’t have a real name, why would I need one?*’

Ratrick shrugged, his nose twitching faster as he leant in closer to the corpse in that strange, animal-like way he always moved.

Fourteen huffed at his lack of answer, and made to continue the body’s preparation—

Ratrick bit into the corpse’s shoulder, tugging a chunk of flesh from its body... and Fourteen gave him a smack, hissing at him angrily with a sound borrowed from her sister’s feline companion.

‘Not DONE yet! ARSEHOLE!’ she exclaimed, each word taken from a different person she’d met.

Ratrick didn’t flinch as he was hit; if anything, he simply chewed faster and swallowed the piece as quickly as possible.

‘Where’s Wonda gone off to, anyways?’ he asked, wiping his mouth on his sleeve.

Fourteen tensed, her hands freezing as she reached for the corpse again. She hesitated for a moment, before drawing back and cutting her eyes at the man beside her.

*'She's over there,'* Fourteen signed, before motioning to the courtyard. *'Can't you see her?'*

Ratrick followed Fourteen's hand, before a sickening grin appeared on his face.

He dropped his voice to a low whisper, leaning in close to Fourteen and gripping her arm with a feverish enthusiasm. He chuckled in her ear, his rank, rotten breath brushing Fourteen's feathers and catching in her nostrils.

*'I know a unicorn when I see one. And when I don't,'* he whispered. *'And that thing in the courtyard ain't the princess; no matter how much yer've got Singer dressing it up as her.'*

Fourteen gave another hiss, accompanied by a low growl.

*'It ain't got her laugh down right,'* Ratrick added. *'I've watched her enough to know what she sounds like when she laughs. And her smell. I know what shape-changing magic smells like.... Y'might want to fix that, before God catches on.'*

Fourteen turned her entire body, then, shielding her hands from all but Ratrick's eyes.

*'When did you figure it out?'* she asked, her hands slapping together in a furious way.

*'Two nights after Blathe left,'* Ratrick answered, quietly. *'I'm assuming ye sent her with him?'*

Fourteen's breath caught in her throat, and her hands shook so much she couldn't answer.

It had been nearly a month, now. She hadn't suspected anyone had known what she'd done. Let alone so quickly!

She'd thought, if anyone would have realised it, it would have been Leena. But that was why she'd had to keep the woman so busy. Not even a full day after sending Wonda away, Leena had clearly noticed something strange about the replacement Fourteen and Singer had made. Something they had missed about Wonda that only Leena knew. One of those secrets that best friends kept.... That was why Fourteen had needed to distract her.

She thought her distraction had been suitable. But fear edged in her fur as she realised she may have make a mistake. Somewhere, something might have gone wrong—

*'Does Leena know?'* she asked, hurriedly. *'You two are friends— Does she know?'*

*'Nah,'* Ratrick chuckled, not bothering to lower his voice. *'Ragthiem's kept her too busy, I'm assuming that was under yer instruction?'*

Fourteen nodded.

*'Yer playing with that poor boy's emotions, girly,'* Ratrick told her; that sickening laugh coming back to him. *'He wants her, y'know. He wants her like Mill's rutting stallion wants to break down the pen between him and Ludri's mare. And yer knowing she wants Wonda in the same way. I saw the bruises ye gave her about it.'*

*'I need him with her,'* Fourteen retorted. *'He's the only one who'll think to comfort her when I—'* she cut off before finishing her sentence, scowling. *'Why am I even telling you this? You're not a part of it.'*

‘Aren’t I?’ Ratrick chuckled, before finally dropping his voice again. *‘I know enough. I know yer been whisperin’ with Ashdown fer close to a year, now. And I know since yer’ve heard Thirteen’s on her way home, yer’ve stopped teaching Singer how to land a killing blow on ye. Ah, don’t look like that! I ain’t told on yer. And I don’t intend to. It ain’t my place to step into yer family’s private drama. But I’m curious— I thought it was God yer wanting dead, not yerself.’*

Fourteen clicked her beak again, letting out another growl and squeezing her hands into tight fists.

*Fuck this stupid fucking arsehole rat! How did he know so much?!*

Ratrick gave a wet sniff, his grin growing as he read the frustration on the woman’s face. *‘I’ll share my secret, if you share yours,’* he whispered.

Fourteen’s fists tightened, and every feather and hair on her body stood quivering on end—

*‘If yer planning on getting yerself hurt, I’d hate to see little Singer on his own,’* Ratrick told her, seriously. *‘I could help him get somewhere safe fer ye. Away from Mori.’*

Fourteen let out her breath, and let the goosebumps in her skin lay flat.

*‘Nobody knows everything,’* she admitted. *‘Except for me. It’s better that way. If they know as little as possible, there’s less for them to let slip by accident.’*

‘So yer not telling me anything?’ Ratrick asked. ‘Pity. But who am I to argue with the daughter of God?’

Fourteen almost laughed, but it came out as a scoff, instead. *‘You adore my mother,’* Fourteen signed. *‘Why would I share my plans to kill her with you?’*

‘I dunno, I got a tellable face,’ Ratrick joked. Then, he shook his head. ‘It ain’t my job to stop ye. God ain’t told me to do nothing, but to do as I’m told by her family. So if ye tell me I ain’t to talk, then I ain’t to talk.’

‘Ain’t to talk,’ Fourteen echoed, in Ratrick’s own voice.

‘Understood,’ Ratrick grinned, licking his lips as he glanced down at the corpse. ‘Anything else you need from me, girly?’

For a moment, Fourteen was still. Then she slowly nodded.

*‘Not now, but after Thirteen’s returned,’* she signed. *‘I’m going to need your help to....’*

She hesitated.

‘Go on,’ Ratrick said, casually.

*‘I will need your help to kill it,’* she signed, before motioning with a flick of her head to the fake Wonda in the courtyard.

‘Kill it?’ Ratrick echoed with a laugh. ‘Oh. Yer really are intending to make yer mother feel all the hurt ye can, ain’t ye?’

*‘I need her torn to shreds,’* Fourteen answered, simply.

*‘Yer gonna break Leena’s heart, if she thinks Wonda’s dead,’* Ratrick chuckled. *‘Do ye intend to tell her? Or is her love collateral damage?’*

*‘Leena couldn’t keep a secret to save her life,’* Fourteen gave an annoyed snort. *‘And if she found out, it would be to save her life. She can’t keep a secret, so I’d have no choice but to kill her. And I don’t want to do that— I may hate her, but Wonda adores her. And so I’ll do what I can to keep her alive. And maybe, if I’m lucky and she stops being unreasonably stubborn, I could make it so she*

*might not be so miserable.'*

*'Ah, and yer wanting Ragtheim to be the thing making her happy, ain't ye?' Ratrick raised his brow. 'I could help with that, if yer like? The girl listens to me. Even if it's just a little.... I can try and sway her, 'fore she finds herself completely lost.'*

*'I would appreciate that,'* Fourteen signed; surprised by her own honesty.

*'Then it's done,'* Ratrick chuckled— Before bending down and stealing another chunk of Fourteen's project and sprinting on all fours towards the castle.

*'BASTARD!'* Fourteen screamed after him, in Blathe's voice this time, and fired a hot green flame at his feet as he ran.

He simply disappeared through a door; leaving Fourteen alone with her thoughts.

Thoughts which, with the new information Ratrick had given her, she quickly turned into new plans and plots.

—END—

If you enjoyed reading, please consider supporting me and my work at  
**[cjadewyton.com](http://cjadewyton.com)**

~~~~~

This publication is provided for free and may be redistributed as long as credit to the author is provided and no money is made from its distribution.

Permission to change this document to other ebook formats is given for the sole purpose of ereader compatibility.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, livings or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

No generative artificial intelligence was used in the writing of this work. Any use of this publication to train generative artificial intelligence technologies is expressly prohibited.