

# Chapter 31

## The Shadow

“What took you so long?” the psycho girl snaps, her dull brown eyes alight with fire. The same inferno in her eyes is what’s still residing in my chest.

My heart hasn’t stopped pounding, and I’m plagued with the unbending need to fuck her again. My brain feels like it’s been tossed into a skillet and pan-seared to a crisp. I need to focus, but it’s nearly impossible when the taste of Addie lingers on my tongue, and I’m still gripped by the feel of her tightly wrapped around me.

I don’t know how I’m supposed to concentrate when I just found God. Or rather, I think I just became one.

But how can I feel like a god, yet be completely stripped of power when it comes to her?

I don’t know.

All I know is I fucking love haunted fairs now.

"I got caught up with something," I murmur, sweeping the room for lingering employees. Or any deadly surprises if the murderous look in the psycho girl's eyes is anything to go by. She's still planning on killing me, and the notion is laughable.

If it were so fucking easy to kill me, I would've been dead long ago. These scars are proof of that.

After our confrontation, the broken doll and I decided to team up for the time being. Since Mark decided to take matters into his own hands and try to kidnap and enslave my girl, I decided he was no longer worth keeping alive. The two seconds it took for him to conspire against Addie was the equivalent to writing his name in a Death Note.

There’s no chance of his survival.

So, we knocked out the four of them. The doll said she’d take them somewhere where the guests wouldn’t find them and meet up at midnight

to get my answers and finish them off for good.

Claire, of course, witnessed the entire thing, and the doll sent her running. I couldn't do anything at the moment when I had four men to handle, but the second I walked out of that haunted house, I had one of my men find her and take her somewhere safe.

Plain and simple, Claire is an abused woman who deserves to live a life in peace. But she also bore witness to a crime, and I can't allow her the opportunity to tell someone.

Afterwards, I immediately went and found Addie and tracked her the entire time. I let her have her fun, visiting all the haunted houses and creepy carnival tents, and ride the thrill rides, all while I stayed quietly behind her, just out of sight. Making sure no one even looked at her funny without consequences.

"Where are they?" I ask, pinning my eyes back on the strange girl. Blood is already splattered across her white nightgown. I arch a brow but don't say anything.

She nods towards the stairs. "Up in my playroom."

She begins to lead me up the stairs but stops short and looks off into the foyer, seemingly staring at something. But I see nothing.

"Stay down here until I call you guys up," she says, still staring off into space. My brow lowers as I try to figure out who the hell she's talking to. She pauses for a moment before she says, "I can handle myself," and continues up the stairs.

Well, this is fucking awkward. I've gotten myself into a lot of interesting situations over the years. *Real* interesting situations. But this one hits the top of the list.

Clearing my throat, I ask, "So, uh, what's your deal?"

"What do you mean, *my deal*?" she snaps.

"Those people you were talking to—do they not like me?" I ask, amusement prominent in my tone. I'm still not entirely sure what's going on with her. Maybe she's high off drugs, maybe she's mentally ill, or maybe she can see spirits or some shit.

"My henchmen? No. Nor do they trust you."

Her *henchmen*? The fuck is this girl actually seeing? And are they supposed to be her helpers or something?

"You uh, told them to stay down there and that you can handle yourself?" I ask. "They're not coming up too?"

She pauses on the steps, whips towards me, and throws her arm out to point behind me. "Do you see them walking behind you?"

I don't even turn to look. No one will be there. Aside from the two of us and the four men upstairs, no one else is inside this house.

I smirk. "No."

"Then there's your answer! I don't need my henchmen to protect me from you. And since you're here, I figured they could sit this one out," she explains impatiently.

So, she's mentally ill. Got it.

"Ah."

"Ah?" she repeats, aghast. "What does that mean?"

"It means you're fucking insane, little girl. Where are these demons again, or whatever you call them?" I ask, my own tone becoming clipped.

It took five seconds to no longer give a fuck about what she's seeing. It doesn't impact me at the end of the day, so I couldn't give less of a shit at this point. If she wants to pretend there's gigantic talking bananas following me around with pitchforks, then I'll indulge her as long as I get my time with the four men waiting for me upstairs.

When she brings me into the room, they immediately start screaming. Wriggling about like worms caught on a hook. I can't tell if Mark is screaming because he thinks I'm going to help him or kill him, but I suppose I'm going to do both. Help him atone for his sins and then kill him for it.

"Do they know you?" the doll asks, and I hum in confirmation, taking in their appearances and broken bones.

The other three men look at me like I'm the boogeyman. And that's as Zack, the self-made millionaire. Wait until I tell them who I really am—I'm sure their faces will look like Casper's.

I only need to learn about two things. Find out where the rituals are being held and how to get into the place, and find out if the Society is after Addie. Whatever else they have to say is no longer a concern.

"You sure no one can hear them?"

"I do this all the time," she answers simply. I inspect her from the corner of my eye, looking her up and down.

“You kill people often?”

She’s a small thing, but the girl can fight. And by the near-constant murderous gleam in her eye, it truly doesn’t surprise me.

She shrugs. “Only the demons.”

I can’t help the small grin. “Do you call yourself the demon-slayer too?”

She snarls and stomps her foot like the child she’s dressed up to be. “You’re not funny!”

I disagree.

But instead of arguing, I turn my attention back to the matter at hand.

Just as expected, the second I rip the tape from his mouth, he starts pleading for his life. And the minute I tell Mark who I really am, his reddened face instantly drains of all blood until his skin is an ashen, grey pallor. The other three men’s faces follow suit, looking at me as if I’m the grim reaper.

I smile.

I *am* the fucking grim reaper.

I ignore Mark’s reminders that we were friends and his pathetic attempt to point the blame on his business partners while citing his own innocence.

It doesn’t surprise me that he’d pass off the blame so easily to others. He’s selfish, narcissistic, and a complete imbecile. And by the look on the distressed men’s face sitting next to him, they don’t think highly of him right now, either.

In the short time that I’ve known Mark, I’ve discovered not very many of his colleagues do.

He’s loud, boisterous, and outspoken. Always trying to be the cool guy and fit in with the crowd. I’ve also heard through the grapevine that Mark tends to disagree with a lot of his colleague’s political views. Always voting opposite on bills within his own party.

Don’t give two fucks about politics either, at least not the kind that deals with laws and regulations. I break those on a daily basis. The fuck would I care about what laws are getting passed when I’ve never applied them to my life anyway?

I also manage to piss off the demon-slayer when she starts whining about not getting to kill them yet.

“By all means, start the killing,” I say, gesturing towards Miller, Jack, and Robert. “Don’t let me stop your demon-slaying.”

The air whistles, my only indication that some type of weapon is on its way to plowing into my head like the asteroids that killed off the dinosaurs. I jerk to the side, watching the blade sluice right past my head and into Mark's gut.

That looks like it fucking hurts.

And then she goes off the deep end, tackling Robert and stabbing him until he's literally mush. Despite the fact that he's no longer a solid mass, she keeps going. It's when Mark starts puking that I've had enough.

Sighing, I get up and walk over to her, grabbing her hand and stopping her from her inane stabbing. She's got strength and energy, that's for sure. It takes a lot to stab someone repeatedly. It's more exhausting than people give it credit for. Stabbing someone even up to a hundred times with the force she's using would have a grown man panting for breath.

And while a thin layer of sweat coats her made-up face, she looks like she's ready for more.

"Now you're going to stop me from demon-slaying?!" she shrieks, her voice pitched so high, it nearly makes me cringe. *God.* Fucking women and their screeching.

"Little girl, there're quite a few things you need to get serious help for, but I'd say anger management is top of the list."

She stares at me, her face starting to get twitchy. She looks like a malfunctioning robot, and I'd say that this experience now takes the number one spot of the interesting situations I've gotten myself into.

She looks on the verge of exploding, so I reign in my temper and demand, "Look at me."

Her big ass brown eyes stare up at me, and if it wasn't for the crazed glimmer in her eye and the fact that she's covered head to toe in blood, she'd look innocent and sweet.

What a fucking lie that would be.

"Drop the knife." Her hand instantly seizes, letting the knife clang to the blood-soaked floor. "What's your name?" I ask.

"Sibel." She pauses. "My friends call me Sibby."

A pang of pity stabs at me. Something tells me the only friends this girl has are the people in her head. This girl is alone—completely alone. Judging by her niche for lurking in the walls, I would bet money that no one that works at this fair is even aware of her presence.

Sighing internally, I decide to throw the girl a bone. Don't know if it's because I feel fucking bad for her or what, but fuck, I guess I do.

"You're an interesting person, Sibby. But I'm going to need you to calm the fuck down. I can't interrogate in peace when you're over there stabbing someone like a cracked-out banshee, you feel me?"

She physically relaxes at the use of her nickname. At me declaring her as my friend. And fuck if that doesn't make me feel a little worse for her.

Reluctantly, she nods her head, and after reassurance that I'm not making fun when I call her a demon-slayer and wiping an eyeball off of the tip of the knife, I hand it back to her as a peace offering. And then I go back to interrogating Mark.

This time in fucking peace.

"Mark, are you going to give me the information I need? I want to know where you do the rituals," I ask, my voice as emotionless as my expression.

"Z, I swear, I don't know anything!" Mark lies. There's vomit stuck on his lip from when he puked while watching Sibby completely obliterate his dear old friend.

Shit was brutal, even I can admit that.

I reach down, pick up Mark's hand, dig the tip of my knife under his nail and pluck it right off. Mark screams bloody murder, but the sorry piece of shit hasn't even felt real pain yet.

"Try again," I say evenly. He protests again, lying through his veneers, so I rip off another nail with the tip of my blade. When I position my knife under the third nail and lift, he finally gives.

I almost laugh. The children he kidnaps last longer with torture than he does, which shows that Mark was always weak.

"Okay, wait, wait!" I pause, lifting a brow and waiting for him to continue. His breathing is erratic as tears and snot track down his face. Licking his lips nervously, he confesses, "S-some of the kids we take, we take them to an underground club."

Sibby comes closer, her face enraptured as Mark confesses his dirty sins. I shoot her a warning glare to back off before I turn my attention back to Mark.

"Where is this place?" I ask calmly, though a burning heat simmers beneath the surface. It takes practiced control to keep my voice even.

“You can only access it through a private gentlemen’s club—*Savior’s*. You need special access to even get in the club, let alone gain access to the...” he trails off, and it seems as if he’s struggling with his words. Finally, he forces out his next words. “To gain access to the dungeon.”

A growl builds in my chest, but I wrestle it back down. My hand nearly shakes with the need to plunge this knife deep into his throat, but I refrain.

“Yeah? And what do you do in this dungeon?”

His eyes shift nervously, and his mouth flops soundlessly.

In one quick motion, I flick off the nail my knife was poised under. The answering scream does little to abate the fury crawling throughout my body.

I will thoroughly enjoy killing this man. His tortured cries as his body slowly dies will be my lullaby as I fall asleep tonight.

It’s not until I position the knife under another nail before he finally says anything of value. Crimson rivulets are spilling from Mark’s hand, but I’ve barely begun truly making Mark bleed.

“Wait! I said, *wait*, goddammit!” I cock a brow at him again, urging him to continue. “We uh—we perform rituals on them.” He tightens his lips, a pained expression on his red face. “That’s how we’re sworn in to the secret society. We must perform a ritual and drink the blood of a virgin.”

He confirms what they do to the children, the government’s involvement, and I make sure to have him clarify the two men left breathing next to him are a part of these fucked up rituals. It takes stabbing Jack in the thigh before he admits to his sins, but Miller admits it immediately, not wanting to suffer like Jack and Mark.

“Can I play now, Zade?” Sibby asks impatiently from beside me. She’s vibrating with the need to kill, and in this moment, I can relate to the little demon slayer. We have the same mission, and that is to murder some fucked up individuals.

“Go ahead and have fun with those two. I have a couple more things to get out of dear old Mark first,” I concede, nodding towards Jack and Miller.

“If you don’t let me go, I won’t tell you anything else! Nothing!” Mark shouts, desperate as death draws nearer.

“You’re a weak man, Mark. You’ll tell me anything I want to know once the pain becomes too much. You either die slow, or quick.”

Sibby happily prances towards them and goes for Jack first. She slashes up his face, and it takes monumental effort to ignore her. Especially when her cheeks flush so brightly, I can see it through the makeup.

I swear to God, if she gets off right in front of me, I'm leaving.

I bend down, getting eye level with Mark and hold the knife to his dick. The tool he uses to torture young children will definitely be getting a knife plunged through it tonight while he's still breathing.

"Who did you speak to about Addie?" I ask.

Mark stutters, his eyes continuously glancing over to his friend's torture. A bone cracks, followed by Jack's loud wail of pain.

I dig the knife down further. Mark's eyes snap back to mine at the clear threat.

"Focus on me, Mark," I say darkly. "Who did you speak to about Addie?"

Licking his lips, he asks, "In what regard?"

"In any regard that has to do with you kidnapping my girl and selling her, like you were planning to do before I walked in. Did you speak about her to anyone in a position of power involved with these rituals or Savior's?"

I know the answer before he opens his fucking mouth and says it. The dimming of his eyes as he accepts that he's about to suffer a great deal more pain.

"Yes," he whispers.

I lose my composure for just a second, enough to snarl and slice my knife across his chest.

He screams, his face beat red from the agony coursing through him, but I'm not done. Not by a fucking long shot.

"Who?" I bark, losing my control over the beast threatening to rip out of my chest.

When Mark continues to moan in pain, I poise the knife right back over his dick and dig it in sharply. Enough to break skin, but not enough to cause any real damage.

Yet.

"Okay, okay!" Mark yelps, his eyes widening at the pain.

"Who?!" I boom. "I want fucking names, Mark."

He snuffles but gives me the names I need to know. The names of the people operating the rituals. Names that are more than likely aliases. But it's a start.

He admits he's never seen their faces before, and all communication has been through a video feed where they're shadowed in darkness.

They're some type of secret underground government, and based on Mark's ramblings, they have far more control over our government than I thought.

The President is just a puppet, and these people who refer to themselves as the Society—they hold the real power.

"Tell me why you did this, Mark. Why did you insist on going after Addie when you knew she was mine?"

His chin trembles, the waste of flesh the epitome of a pathetic old man.

"She was already marked."

My heart drops, thudding down my spine like a deflated basketball rolling down a staircase.

"I took a picture of her because she looked familiar. And when she told me her name, I realized that she was a target of the Society's. It worked out perfectly that they happened to call me, and I told them everything. She... she's worth a lot of money, man. And the Society wants her. It doesn't matter to them who you are—it doesn't even matter who *I* am. When the Society wants someone, they get them. And if I was the one to bring her in... I would've been highly rewarded."

He snuffles, though it doesn't prevent the snot from leaking out of his nose.

"Why did they target her?"

Mark sputters out a wet, humorless laugh. "Why do they target anyone? If they're young and beautiful and happen to be noticed, they're on the Society's radar. She brought attention to herself in one way or another. It could've been from her books, or you know how women are these days. With the way they dre—" I snatch his hand again and flick off another nail before he can finish such a stupid fucking sentence.

As if showing any amount of skin is a goddamn invitation to be raped and kidnapped.

His answering scream does little to lessen the fury.

"I-I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry. Look, you just don't ignore the Society's demands. And they're going to come after you, Z," Mark warns, his voice tight with pain but also grave.

I hope they do.

They'll be saving me the trouble of coming to them.

Knowing that Addie was marked doesn't only spark anger, it sparks genuine fear for my little mouse.

It never mattered if I came into her life or not—Addie was destined for human trafficking, and the fact that she happens to be the girl I'm absolutely crazy about feels like kismet.

It feels like fucking destiny that the man who haunts her is the same man who dedicated his life to destroying the people set out to take her life.

"I know you don't care," Mark forges on, noting the look on my face. "But the second they find out I'm dead, they'll up and move."

I've accepted this.

I look over at Sibby, the girl now having moved onto Miller. She could be a scapegoat.

If the Society gets word of a deranged girl killing these four men—a girl who's killed before—they would chalk it up to the partial truth. Wrong place, wrong time. An unhinged girl who swears she can sense evil sniffed these men out and decided to murder them in cold blood.

She's the perfect scapegoat, actually.

But the thought of using her—it doesn't sit right with me.

She's a lonely, fucked up girl who helped me carry out these murders. Doesn't matter that she would've done it anyways had I not been there. Without her, I wouldn't have gotten the information I did tonight. And I can't let that go unrewarded.

So, I resign myself to protect Sibby. I'll clean up the evidence, dispose of the bodies and do everything I can to infiltrate Savior's before they relocate.

"Will they demolish?"

"Yes," Mark answers quickly. I let out a slow breath and nod. By saving Sibby, I'm giving up the first lead I've truly had.

"I-if you let me go, I can get you in," Mark barter desperately. "I'll help you and you can do whatever you want. Just as long as you let me live."

"The other three are already dead," I say. "They're going to relocate anyways."

"Not if you pin everything on this girl. That's what you planned, right? To let her take the fall for it?"

Sibby is still too blind with bloodlust to hear what Mark is saying, but I would've been honest about it anyway. Sibby and I never promised each other anything, and I'm pretty sure the girl still plans on killing me.

But she won't succeed because despite what she thinks, it's only her against me. And I've fought far too many bad guys to allow a little girl to take me out. Even if she is a little badass.

I refocus on Mark. "Do you know where they'd relocate?" I ask. Mark hesitates, sensing that he will no longer hold any leverage if he confesses. I dig the knife deeper into his dick to drive home my point.

I'll know if he's lying.

"No," he admits, his lip trembling. "They wouldn't tell us until afterwards."

I nod my head, lift my hand, and plunge the blade deep into his pelvis. His screams do little to abate the pit of dread and anger churning in my stomach.