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The Monster in the Shadows

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Humans are adaptive and intelligent creatures; it is these aspects that allow them to survive. Not only do they survive, but they can even be considered the most dangerous creature in existence of the mortal realm.

I once met one; A human. She called herself Cynthia. I had, of course, been taught never to reveal myself for fear of humans' caution and cleverness. They would not risk my claws and fangs.

I first noticed Cynthia while I lay in the shadows of a court bench. While all eyes were upon the raging man in the witness chair, her brown eyes watched me. I had done everything required to evade all human senses, and yet she looked upon me with such intensity. I slipped back into the shadows, into our world. I knew I should report the anomaly, and yet those eyes seemed burned into me—twisting, thrashing into my gut. Curiosity finally won out and I returned to the courtroom, sure she had long since vanished, and yet, in the darkened room now blanketed in shadows, there she sat upon the bench. Brown eyes of mild curiosity.

I did not like those eyes, I decided, so I rose from the shadows till I towered above her. I gave a cruel, white-fanged smile; reached forward with long black claws, and tucked a strand of blonde hair behind her ear. She did not so much as flinch. I held back the shiver that wished to ripple up my ridge.

She gave a disinterested grunt, and I longed to crumble back into the pool of shadows. But I could not. I was now, somehow, hers.

I said nothing to no one of this encounter, this unsettlement. When she called, I felt myself drawn out of the shadows. I grew accustomed to Cynthia's expressionless, demanding self. She labeled me her friend; and I convinced myself to ignore the tremors of fear each time she called.

The curse was broken one night, and it was a night and a day I shall never forget. I rose from the shadows as I always had. We were in a living room. A kind young man sat beside Cynthia upon an old couch. He was smiling with such love for Cynthia. Upon noticing my presence, his eyes grew fearful and while his kind green eyes were fixated on me, Cynthia pulled forth a knife, and plunged it into his chest.

For the first time, I saw Cynthia give a genuine smile as she stabbed the helpless young man again and again. I heard, for the first time, her laugh of pure glee as she slit the young man's throat and even as the boy's green eyes grew dull, she continued to slash, rip, and stab. Her laughter sickened me. I crouched in the corner, folding my ears inwards in an attempt to block the squelch of blood as blade tore apart skin and flesh. Whimpering, my red eyes staring at the dull green ones that had pleaded for my help in their final moments.

Finally, Cynthia tossed aside the knife, it skittered close to where I shook. She wrapped herself around the dead boy, giggling like some lovesick schoolgirl as she cuddled into the drying blood and fell asleep. I could not leave, could not stop the tremors, the flinching at every twitch her sleeping form made. It felt an eternity before the sun filtered through the window and I fell into our world of shadows as it blessed me with its light.

When Cynthia next called, I trembled and curled in on myself. My breathing grew ragged, and I clung to the shadows. Every call threatened to

dislodge me, but I held fast until something snapped. Her calls no longer pulled me from the shadows.

I still hear her calls and, each time, I become sick with the memory of the monster, of a woman who had adapted and embraced pain, falling so deeply in love with it.

Host-III, Angelo Mendez

