

9. FEAR STRIKES BACK

Ray Worth begrudged the presence of Sienna in Cordelia. He thought she was up to something unpleasant, and he wanted her punished even before she could act out her plan. For him the bad thoughts themselves were unconscionable. Her mannerisms were enough to set him off. Even the curves of her body spoke of sin. It was his God-given obligation to root out such wickedness before it had a chance to spread.

As she walked by him on the sidewalk, he almost refused to give way. She avoided him. He looked back at her with his stern demeanor. Her perfume washed the air as she passed by. He could feel it choke him. She smiled as a delightful spring day graced her steps.

Even though she felt positively elated, she still knew that someone was lurking in the shadows. She soaked up all the daylight to shore up her defenses. Nothing could harm her as long as she was kissed by the golden light.

For his part, Ray Worth wished her the storm clouds that she deserved. He had actually stopped his journey to turn around and watch her walk away. He observed how her tight jeans hugged her frame. They just pulled her together. He could sense the tightly wound fabric. His hands seemed to tug it harder. To make her scream her confession.

She was still wearing that red scarf, that infernal red scarf. He wanted to undo that knot. To let the fabric do his bidding. He watched the silk sail in the wind. It spoke of her carefree nature. For him it was the badge of her shame. He wanted to grab a hold of it, to feel the smooth silk against his rough hands.

She cocked her head in the air as if to defy him. It only made him more angry. If he could get alone, he would show her the wrath of the lord. But he let her be. She would only get into more mischief and end up digging her own grave. He turned away now satisfied with his air of superiority.

Sienna knew that it would only be a few hours before it was again dark again. She needed to make the most of the daylight hours.

Someone on these streets knew more than they were telling. For that man, she was the ghost come back from the dead. She walked the streets as if she had just made her return from the underworld. Her journey had only enhanced her features. Where before she had been beset by the worries of the city, the redeemed Sienna was a sight to behold. The birds of spring kissed her path. Her face radiated with the same glow as the sun.

She could remember precious little about her former life. But her body still had a memory. No one could avoid that assertiveness that she brought to her walk. It set the other women of the town into their little fits of jealousy. They were only checked by the pity that they took on the poor girl. Everyone knew how she had been left out in the wilderness to die. Even if they envied her golden touch, they feared the same monster who had ravaged her. That same demon could take any of them or their daughters if he chose to satisfy his incredible appetites.

It would be an hour or so before Lynette picked her up.

She stopped in the ice cream shop. She wanted a pistachio cone. The mothers gave her a strange look. She ignored them. She ordered her cone.

“I want a double scoop.”

She paid and then took a big bite. The ice cream tasted so good to her. It was nice and

cold going down. It almost made her ache.

One of the teens came up to her.

“I just love your nails. Who did them?”

“I did. I haven’t had much else to keep me busy while I’ve been out there recovering. It’s really easy.”

The girl went back to her friends where she pointed and laughed. Sienna ignored them and kept eating her cone. She was still eating when she left the store. She felt like a kid again. For the time being, she had no worries.

She knew that where ever she looked that someone was a suspect. But she tried to ignore the threat. She walked along the square without a care in the world. If they wanted to haunt her nights so be it, but she would use the bright sunlight to take back the day.

Lynette finally picked her up after her errands.

“That pervert Ray Worth was giving me the eye,” Sienna informed Lynette.

“He gives everyone that evil eye of his.”

“It’s like a freaking horror movie.”

“He thinks that he’s the angel of God.”

“I’ve heard about those types.”

She thought about what she had just said. She could still make sense of the world around her even if she didn’t yet understand her place in it. As for Ray Worth, if he was hassling everyone why should she feel any different? She felt that he bore her a special wrath. That she had transgressed more than anyone else.

She didn’t feel guilty even if that was his intent. But she wondered what happened to fear if it lingered to long. Would it make her overly cautious? Every time that she stepped out of bounds her fear would increase. And if something went wrong she’d blame herself. She’d start to feel guilty.

There was Ray Worth looking down at her pitiful soul. He knew about the desires that she harbored in her. She was worse than any of these wayward teens. Sienna had been felled by her attacker because of her evil deeds. If they were part of her corrupt nature, they would only well up once the occasion presented itself again.

“I think that everyone in this town has probably been spooked by him once or twice. Sienna, you can’t take it personally.

But she did. She took it to heart. She wondered if the Deacon Worth had ever followed them back to the house. Had he given his warnings? Would he make good on his threats?

“Lynette, let’s not go back to the house just yet. I need a drink.”

The little girl was feeling all the woman.

Once in the bar, she sucked down a couple of vodka cocktails like there was no tomorrow.

“Slow down, girl.” Lynette was trying to warn her.

“It’ll only make me sleep better.”

“But who knows what you’ll be doing before you get to sleep.”

“I won’t be hanging around here too long.”

It was early and there was hardly anyone in the bar.

“Lynette, let’s strike up some music.”

She had the jukebox blaring Thin Lizzy. She shook her hair as she did her dance around their table.

Lynette seemed shocked, “Where did you learn how to do that sort of stuff?”

She wasn’t at all defensive, “I don’t know where the hell I learned anything. But it makes me feel good.”

She did a little dip and then she posed.

“I’m glad there aren’t a lot of guys in here now. I don’t know what they’d think.”

“Ray Worth, take that for you sinning ways.”

She started to think about Jack again. In a way, he was giving her a similar feeling to Ray. Not that he was creeping her out, but Jack wanted to know too much. And with so little to hide, she was feeling extra vulnerable. All of a sudden her mood changed.

“Let’s get out here!”

Lynette was confused, “I’ve got two more drinks coming.”

“I just need to go.”

Outside, she quizzed Sienna, “What the hell was that.”

Sienna was sitting down on the ground in front of the car.

“I don’t know what came over me. I just felt like I was going to pass out.”

At home, she felt a little better.

“I need to go up for a nap.”

As she was falling asleep, she could feel herself falling. She tried to check herself and she jumped.

“Whoa!”

She pushed her adversary and then she ran. After the dream, she talked to Lynette at the kitchen table.

“I had a bit of that dream again. I think that I drank too much.”

“What did you eat—some ice cream? It all must have upset your stomach.”

“Something like that.”

“It takes a while to build up your tolerance.”

“I don’t think that I can tolerate these appetites inside me.”

“A monster lives inside.” Lynette’s humor helped cover the actual fear that she felt.