

The Shadow

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Angela takes slow and steady steps across black ash-covered road. The soft wind produced by her boot steps blows the ashes into the air like bits of snowflakes. After floating for a few seconds, the clumps dissolve into thin air, and new clumps of black ashes take their place. Tall, dark, buildings surround her as she walks, the tops of them being unseen due to the dark, black, sky. Is it the weather, itself, that is creating this illusion of darkness, or are the ashes completely overtaking the sky, turning it pitch black? The answer is unknown.

With her arm pressed tightly against the side of her body, she clenches a *Jagdkommando*, a 7-inch tri-dagger knife, in her left hand, ready to strike. In her right hand, she holds a *Leistung*, a gun manufactured only to kill, its name meaning “power.” The bullets in the gun and the blade of the knife are scientifically created to cause tremendous physical and mental pain. It can emit a toxin that causes hallucinations of the victim’s worst fears.

Angela’s eyes are glued to her surroundings, taking careful steps in hopes of not making too much noise; she does not want to attract the attention of other demons. She carries a small, black drawstring bag on her back, filled with packages of food, medical supplies, and an extra pocket knife. Strapped to her right leg is a lightning taser, which shoots about one billion joules of energy. She wears a black leather jacket, which is created to withstand the bite of creatures, and long, black combat boots. Her dark brown hair is tied up into a high bun so that it won’t cover her line of vision. Plus, the little creatures enjoyed pulling hair.

In the distance ahead of her, the buildings come to an end. A single, old, wooden house awaits at the end of the road. Behind it is nothing but what looks to be a desert. On both sides are more desert, not one more building to be seen. The city completely ends there.

After a few minutes, she makes it to the front of the house. The windows are dirty and broken, the shutters holding on by a single corroded nail. The outside walls have begun to rot, and the shingles are practically gone. The smell of rust and dirt fill Angela’s nose as she takes a step up the front steps, breaking some of the wood in the process. Peering in the shattered front window and finding the room deserted, she cautiously enters the rickety building.

As soon as she steps foot through the front door and into the living room, she suddenly recognizes her childhood home. To the left of her, a couch sits in the middle of the empty room. She approaches the couch and examines what lays upon it. A single piece of paper rests between the two dirty, brown couch pillows; the artistry, clearly done by a child, shows a little girl smiling with a giant black shadow behind her. She reaches down to pick it up but pauses as the floor above her creaks. With her eyes now glued to the second floor, she takes slow and steady footsteps up the stairs.

As she makes it to the top, the small hallway is now fully visible. There are only two rooms on the second floor. The room to the right is missing its door, so she takes a peek inside. To her surprise, the walls and floor are missing, as if a bomb went off. While standing in the door frame, she looks straight down into what looks to be the kitchen. She slowly backs away from the door frame in fear that the floor will break beneath her. The other door is an old, wooden door with more child-drawn pictures attached to it. She slowly and carefully reaches for the knob. Her old bedroom door creaks obnoxiously as she pushes it open. The bed sits in the far right corner near a boarded-up window, and a single mirror stands in the opposite corner facing the bed. The rest of her furniture is gone.

As she enters the room, her bedroom door slams shut, locking her in, and the room goes pitch black. Inhaling sharply, Angela quickly extends her hand, shooting a glowing ball of light that hovers above the ceiling. All around her, she hears sinister whispering. She whips around and comes face-to-face with a shadow-like creature. Its eyes are closed, but its mouth forms into a wide, toothy grin.

“Beware of The Shadows. They aren’t real; they’re a figure in your imagination. You need to remember that...” Her father’s words echo inside her head. What did he say to do? She can’t remember.

Without hesitation, she shoots it in the chest, but it vanishes at the impact. She frantically spins in a circle, waiting for it to reappear. She’s suddenly thrown backward against the wall by force. She groans at the impact, grabs her side and slides heavily to the floor. Of course, it threw her directly into a slab of wood from the wall that was bent outwards. She sits forward, the slab ripping out of her side, leaving a trail of sticky, warm blood. She winces, but quickly teleports medicine and bandages from inside her bag and into her lap. The Shadow re-appears in front of her. It’s still smiling, but it opens its eyes to reveal two white orbs. With her left hand using special healing forces to treat her wound, she lifts her right hand, emitting a protection shield.

Before she knows it, The Shadow morphs itself into a physical presence. It now looks like Angela’s evil twin, if she had one. It cocks its head to the side, admiring Angela’s shocked expression. It lets out an amused, childlike giggle, and begins to mimic the way Angela entered the room, almost as if it’s mocking Angela. She takes this chance to drop her shield and molds her hand around her taser. She takes aim and shoots The Shadow, whose

back is facing her, to which it screams out in shock. It instantly whips its head back towards Angela, now angry. Within seconds, it grips Angela's neck.

Angela begins gasping for air. She aims the taser towards its head, but the taser suddenly obliterates, leaving her hand looking like charcoal. She reaches down to her leg to grab her extra knife, but The Shadow scratches the knife right off her leg, ripping both the knife pouch and her leg. Angela cries out in pain, continuing to scratch at The Shadow while her own face stares back at her with an evil grin. With one last attempt, Angela forms another ball of light, which blinds both of them. The Shadow releases its grip on her throat, stumbles backward, clutching its eyes, and faces the mirror. Angela does the same, though she is quick to recover. This isn't the first time she's accidentally blinded herself. She stumbles onto her feet, grabbing the edge of her bed to hoist herself up, and faces The Shadows back. She presses her palm against the base of her *Jagdkommando* and swings.

She stabs the knife into The Shadow's heart. It lets out a chilling scream and removes its hands from its face to claw at its back. A tar-like substance oozes from the wound. In an instant, it becomes still. Angela releases her grip from the knife, leaving it in The Shadow's back. The creature's body tries to morph back into a shadow person, but it's no use. The Shadow's body begins to melt like tar until it's nothing but a pool of black liquid. Angela sighs in relief and clutches her side. Although she wants to rest, she also wants to get out of the house. She exits the bedroom, to which the door is now unlocked, stumbles down the stairs, and limps out the front door. She collapses onto the remaining porch step and slumps against the railing. She takes one deep breath of relief. She feels lighter. She smiles to herself, satisfied and proud. All her life, she has been preparing to fight the demon that has always followed her.

To her surprise, the sky begins to clear. The black clouds that once covered the sky seem to dissolve away as fluffy, white clouds take their place. She can see the tops of the buildings again, the sun re-appears and she notices the fluttering of bird wings and butterflies in the air around her. The butterflies flutter around her before flying into the sky, as if they are telling her "thank you." To think, all that needed to happen to right the world was eradicating her evil side... her own shadow.