

Chapter Five, "Curry's"

Arthur went straight from the theater to Curry's, popping four pain killers as he walked. He preferred to walk most everywhere. The city wasn't large enough for a car, in his opinion, even in weather like this. He walked in the rain, letting it shower over him. It couldn't have been good for his health but he hardly cared. It was all about revenge at this point. He had to kill her. And that meant finding her first. He knew that if he hung around the more *avante garde*, "arty" places in town, he would run into her. She struck him as a flower child, someone more than ten years behind the times and, as such, interested in such things as fringe theater and coffee houses. And it had paid off.

Curry's was a little pawn shop down from the theater in a bit more seamy part of town. Arthur waltzed in like he owned the place. The little store was packed floor to ceiling in junk and metal. Knives sat next to typewriters, guns next to wind-up toys. Curry himself sat behind a counter separated from the store by a strong metal cage. Forty, big but not yet fat, Curry exuded body odor and greed in equal measure. He greeted Arthur with a wave and planted the local paper up against the metal cage for Arthur to see.

"See what they're saying?" he said.

"I'm sure you'll tell me," Arthur said.

He walked over to a soda machine forced into a corner unceremoniously, dropped a quarter into it and received a Tab as a reward for his efforts. He popped the top and took a large swig.

"They're saying," Curry said, looking at his paper again, "that Caleb Sands and an unidentified man were found butchered, most likely by a wild animal."

Arthur nodded, still drinking his Tab.

"Jesus, you look like shit," Curry said.

"You're no peach yourself," Arthur said when he finished the soda, crushing it in his hands and sending it into the oblivion that was the floor of the pawn shop.

"Never seen anyone take a butchering like you did and not want to go the hospital," Curry said.
"You know you owe me on that."

"Yeah," Arthur said, approaching the metal screen.

"How much you have to pay that newspaper man?" Curry asked.

Arthur put a hand out and leaned against the cage. "A lot."

"Ain't he got no scruples?"

"Ever know a newspaper man who did?"

"True enough. Not gonna hold up to scrutiny, you know."

"I know. Any dick worth his salt would be able to find out that there was only one body found in that warehouse. But, here's hoping that bi--" He was about to say "bitch" but stopped himself. He hadn't told Curry that his attacker was a woman. That would have been too embarrassing. "That cocksucker isn't too worried what the police think and doesn't do much snooping, I mean."

Curry nodded. "Yeah, here's hoping. Eye patch suits you, though."

"Cut the shit, man. Where's my cut?"

"Well, I was thinking."

Arthur sighed and looked up towards the ceiling of the dirty pawn shop. "Angels and ministers of grace defend us."

He turned his back on Curry and leaned against the metal cage. Curry kept on speaking, undaunted.

"I was thinking," he said, "that since I saved your life and all--"

"Please," Arthur said.

"I was doing my rounds, buddy! Caleb wanted his pistol delivered. You know how he is...was. If I hadn't been there, you'd be dead, no question."

Arthur turned around to face the other man again. His face looked like a stone carving of a serial killer. "I'm a hard one to kill."

Curry put up both his hands in defense. "I'm not saying you aren't, it's just...well, you were missing an eye. And ol' Caleb was tore to fucking shreds. Ain't no one else was gonna save you."

"Okay, genius, I get it."

"Doc Graves did his best with you, I warrant. I mean, he's just a veterinarian but he's skilled. Can't believe you wouldn't go to a hospital. Or that you're up walking around already."

Arthur shook his head. "I don't have time for hospitals. I gotta find this...son of a bitch and kill him."

Curry put down his hands. He looked a little more calm now. "Sure, sure, but I was thinking that since I did all that for you, that you could just let me keep your share. Just this once."

"You were, were you?"

"Yeah."

Arthur smiled a cruel smile. "Behind on payments, Curry? Kids need feeding? Cat sick?"

Curry clicked his tongue. "No, but--"

"I don't care what problems you have. That's my cut."

"Well, I mean, I think it's kind of strange that here you are still taking a cut of my profits even though it was Caleb who I was paying a cut to, not you."

Arthur slammed a hand onto the metal cage, pushed his one-eyed face up to it. Curry jumped, and unconsciously backed away from the criss-cross metal bars.

"And who was the one who always collected it for Caleb, huh?!" Arthur screamed. "Who came in here every week and took that money out of those sweaty little palms of yours? Me! I am taking over where Caleb left off, you hear me?!"

Curry was silent. He smiled to himself and pulled a pistol from under the counter. It was a .357 Magnum and Curry placed it on the counter with a smirk. The son-of-a-bitch actually thought he had gained the upper hand here.

"You think that scares me?" Arthur said. "Something came at me and took one of my eyes out, you fuck. You think a gun scares me? You think you'd be able to stop me before I choked the life out of you?"

"Through this cage?" Curry asked.

There was an audible click.

"You think I didn't have a duplicate key already made?" Arthur said.

"Okay!" Curry said. "All right! I'll get your cut, calm down!"

He fumbled under the counter as Arthur opened the door to the cage and leaned against the counter. Curry stood up and placed a fat envelope on the counter. Arthur took it, counted it and put it in his back pocket.

"That the gun you were delivering to Caleb?" he asked, pointing at the .357 Magnum.

"Yeah," Curry said.

"I half expect it to be empty, knowing you."

Arthur picked up the gun, checked the cylinder, cocked the gun. He nodded, satisfied, and stuffed it into his jacket.

"You're taking that, too?!" Curry said.

Arthur shot him a look and the man was silent.

"It'll go with that other order that I presume you have for me," he said.

"Found the bastard yet?" Curry asked.

"Saw 'em, yeah. Now comes the tricky part. You make 'em?"

"Yeah, weren't cheap, either. But here they are."

He turned and grabbed a wooden box off the shelf behind him. He placed it on the counter in front of Arthur and opened it.

Inside were six bullets.

All silver.

Chapter Six, "Kimberly"

Earlier in the evening, about the time that Camille was exiting the movie theater and before she stepped into the Coffee House Theatre, a young woman named Kimberly Watts sat in the Stonewall Diner, waiting for her order. She was twenty, had short blonde hair and idly drummed a soft rhythm on the counter with both of her drumsticks.

"Kimberly" by Patti Smith was on the jukebox. Serendipity.

Business at the diner had picked up considerably since the day before. The storm had stopped on several occasions, so people must have thought it was finally dying down. Kimberly wasn't so sure. The clouds covering the town looked ominous. A waitress approached her table. She put her drumsticks back in the small duffel bag sat next to her.

"Hi, I'm Wendy, I'll be your server today." Wendy looked eager, ready to please. She held her pencil and order pad at the ready. "Start you off with something to drink?"

"Pepsi, please," Kimberly said.

"I don't recognize you. In town for a vacation?"

Kimberly shook her head. Wendy waited for more but Kimberly was silent.

"Move here?" Wendy asked.

"No. Actually, I go to Brown."

"Nice." Wendy frowned. "Aren't classes already in session? Had the day off or something?"

"Uh..." Kimberly paused. "No, I don't have the day off. Skipping, I guess."

Wendy smirked. "Hey, I don't blame you. What made you come to Bolton?"

Kimberly blinked. Thought about it. "I don't know. I felt drawn here."

Wendy nodded.

"You already know what you want to order," she asked, "or should I give you more time?"

"I'll have the cheeseburger, I think," Kimberly said. "No mayo, please. And if the fries are big, fat ones, that would be great."

"You're in luck. They are."

"Excellent."

Wendy left to fill Kimberly's order. Kimberly, left alone, pulled a book out of her bag, a ghost story collection by M.R. James. She was about to start reading when she saw the man sitting in the corner booth. There was something strange about him, something she couldn't quite put her finger on. He seemed wrong. A toothpick danced on his lips and he stared at her. Kimberly frowned and stared back, defiantly.

"Here you go," Wendy said.

Kimberly jumped as Wendy put her Pepsi down on the table, startled by the waitress' sudden arrival.

"Oh, sorry, hon," Wendy said. "Didn't mean to scare you."

"No, it wasn't you," Kimberly said, looking past Wendy to the man in the corner.

Wendy caught her glance and shot a subtle look over her shoulder.

"Oh, the Toothpick Man," she whispered. "Yeah, he gives me the creeps, too. Just ignore him. He's harmless. Probably."

Kimberly laughed and Wendy joined in.

"I'll be back with your food in a few minutes," Wendy said when they had stopped laughing.

"Thanks," Kimberly said.

She read while waiting for her meal and kept on reading when her meal came, holding her cheeseburger in one hand, the book in her other, avoiding the Toothpick Man's gaze. She had a few small conversations with Wendy, but mainly her mind was in the book.

Well, her mind wasn't just in the book. It was also on that little encounter earlier in the day. It was on that girl in the car, the one she had shared a strange moment with. She was quite cute, Kimberly thought. A bit on the young side, perhaps.

She shook it off, thinking she was acting silly. She probably wouldn't ever see the girl again.

Camille ran out of the theater, down the street, down an alley, over a wall, and soon was in the woods. The moon was high and she could feel the change coming on, could feel the Beast fighting to get out. It was a defense mechanism, Camille realized. The Beast was the only thing that could drive Papa, that

strange woman, from Camille's mind. It was trying to help her, in other words.

Well, for good or bad, the Beast was out of the closet and bathed in moonlight. Camille sprouted a fine layer of hair over her body. Her legs bent and she dropped to all fours. The color of her eyes deepened and her teeth grew sharp. Her nose became a snout.

It was painful but it was pain long endured and mastered ages ago; it had almost turned into pleasure. Another pair of jeans bit the dust as the Beast took over. Feeling especially wild tonight after the stress at the theatre, she tore away most of her other clothes as well, leaving herself naked except for a few scraps still hanging on.

The She Wolf bounded through the woods towards the ocean, howling at the moon as she ran.

After dinner, Kimberly took in a movie at the same theater that Camille had frequented earlier in the evening. She saw *Visiting Hours* which was entertaining enough, though a little frivolous, in her opinion. She wandered downtown for a bit before it happened.

The gun was in her face before she could do anything about it.

"Give me your bag!"

The young man was skinny, wiry, with lank blond hair. He had appeared out of the darkness of an alley and he held the gun - a .38 - like he hadn't ever held one before. In Kimberly's opinion, this made him even more dangerous.

"Okay," Kimberly said. "Okay, it's yours."

She started to take her duffel bag off but the young man stopped her.

"Not out here," he said and pulled her into the alley.

Kimberly could see a car parked in the alley, could see another young man in the driver's seat. Their gazes met.

"Hey, fuck no," Kimberly said and handed her bag to the young man with the gun.

"Pat," the man in the car said. "Let's take her with us."

"Why the fuck are you using my name, man?" Pat said. "I told you to call me Flash. What the fuck?!"

"It don't matter," the man in the car said.

"Please let me go," Kimberly said. "You have my bag."

"She's too pretty," the driver said. "She's gotta come with us."

"She looks like a guy, man!"

"Nah, I like her. Bring her."

"Shit," Pat said and grabbed Kimberly by one arm, hauled her to the car.

He threw her in the back seat, sat down next to her. The gun was still in her face.

"Oh God," Kimberly said. "This can't be happening."

"Shut up!" the driver said and started the car.

They pulled out of the alley and sped down the street. Kimberly got a better look at the driver as he looked right to make a turn. He was dark-haired with grey eyes and a hard look on his face.

Pat kept his gun on Kimberly, still holding it like an amateur. Kimberly was afraid it would go off at any moment.

"Where you going, man?" Pat asked.

"I'm heading towards the docks," the driver said.

Pat gave a small, panicked gasp. "What? That's where they found that boat this morning, man. Fucking horror show. Bodies with their heads ripped off, blood everywhere."

The driver shook his head. "That's bullshit. There was nothing in the papers about it."

"Did you turn on a TV?"

"No, didn't have time today. Been trying to get money for the stuff."

Pat gestured wildly about. "Well if you had, man, you woulda seen it. Ain't made it to the papers yet."

The driver shrugged, eyes still on the road. "It's perfect for us, then. Every lowlife around here will be too scared to hang around."

"We gotta go get the stuff, man! I need a hit."

Idly, Pat scratched at his arm with the barrel of the gun, taking it off Kimberly for a second. He was distracted. Kimberly rummaged through her bag, which sat open on the seat between the two of them.

"They'll wait!" the driver said. "I wanna have a little fun with her."

"We don't have time for this, man!" Pat said.

"Come on, don't she have something? Doesn't she do anything for you?"

"I guess, man."

"Well, okay, then, we're agreed. We go to the docks, behind one of those empty warehouses, have our way with her and then go get the stuff."

"What we do with her then?"

The driver turned to look at Kimberly. His eyes were menacing.

"We'll burn that bridge when we come to it," he said.

They had reached the docks. Kimberly could see them ahead. They passed through two warehouses, a short pier ahead of them. She had to make her move.

Her hand closed around a screwdriver in her bag and she acted on instinct. With her free hand, she

pushed the gun away from her and struck with her other hand, plunging the tool into Pat's upper left thigh.

Everything else happened fast.

Pat screamed and pulled the trigger of the gun. The sound was deafening inside the car. The bullet hit the driver in the right cheek. Traveling at a slightly upward angle, it exited his left temple, blowing his brains all over the front seat of the car and shattering the driver's side window. The driver's lifeless body slumped forward, foot still on the peddle. The car sped down the pier, heading for the water at top speed.

Kimberly pulled the screwdriver out and plunged it into Pat's thigh again. She finally let go of it and turned, hoping she could jump out of the car before it sailed into the air to land in the water.

But it was too late.

Her hand clasped the door handle just as the car left the end of the pier and flew through the air. There was a moment of weightlessness before the crash of the water.

Kimberly and Pat were tossed around the car as water began rushing in. Kimberly took a deep breath, knowing that she would soon be underwater. She risked a glance at Pat. He pulled the screwdriver out of his thigh and looked around wildly.

Soon, the entire car was filled with water. Kimberly made a break for it, swimming into the front seat, pushing past the driver's dead body and out into the open water.

Again, she risked a glance down at the car. Pat was doing the same thing as she, trying to get out of the car through the front seat. Kimberly was about to move when she saw something that didn't make any sense.

The car was sinking head first to the ocean bottom, which wasn't too deep this distance from the shore. The headlights of the car illuminated the ocean bottom as it descended.

There were at least a dozen women there, nestled among the seaweed. They were so intertwined with the weed and in the dirt that they wouldn't be visible if not for the headlights.

There were arranged in groups of two or three, cradled together, naked, arms around each other. They had grey/white skin and they weren't moving. Were they dead bodies? Bodies anchored to the bottom of the ocean by some serial killer? The car was going to land right in the middle of them, just a few feet away from one particular group.

Kimberly couldn't waste anymore time. She swam to the surface of the water and took a deep breath as she emerged.

Pat broke the surface just as Kimberly started swimming towards shore. She swam as fast as she could but he was on her just as she hit land, which was a little beach just under the dock.

Luckily he had lost the gun somewhere underwater but he still had his fists. He punched her in the stomach before she could wiggle away. She doubled over, stunned by the sudden pain.

"Bitch!" he said. "Fucking bitch, man!"

He fiddled with his pants, pulled them down.

"I'm gonna fucking fuck you death!" he screamed. "You stupid, fucking whore!"

Kimberly struggled to find her breath and finally did. Pat tore at her jeans, trying to get her legs apart. She fought him as best she could but was still struggling with the pain. That's when she saw them.

At first, she only saw the tops of their heads, just below the surface of the water, illuminated by the bright, full moon. They looked like mannequins floating under the water. But that's not what they were.

The women from the bottom of the ocean emerged from the water, looking like the grey fins of sharks before heading towards the two of them. None of them had eyes. Kimberly was filled with fear. She felt light-headed, the terror was so profound. This was impossible but there they were: corpses raised from the dead. Blind Dead.

She tried to escape but Pat was on top of her. She had to get him off of her, had to warn him, even if she didn't want to.

"Pat," she managed. "Stop. There's--"

"Fuck you!" Pat said. "You shut the fuck up and take it!"

"They're behind you. They--"

"I'm not going to fall for th--"

The women were upon him. One of them grabbed him from behind - one hand crushing his balls, the other gripping the wound in his thigh - while another dead woman tore off his pants. Pat yelled out in alarm as another one of the corpses wriggled her fingers around his ass cheeks pushing her hand up his rectum. Pat's eyes nearly popped out of his head. His scream caught in his throat. Nothing else came out of his mouth. Not then, at least.

Kimberly screamed for him. His bottom half began to split at his ass cheeks as the Blind Dead pushed her arm farther up his body. Blood sprayed from the man, covering the dead woman as she wriggled farther up his body.

A moment later, the Blind Dead's hand popped out of Pat's open, non-screaming mouth. His tongue, torn out, slithered out alongside the hand and dropped into the water. Blood covered Kimberly.

The corpse hand grabbed hold of Pat's lower jaw and pulled. After a moment, it broke away with a horrendous tearing sound. The Blind Dead woman pulled it back down along his body, where it acted like a knife, cutting his insides apart. She didn't quite make it all the way down. The hand with the jaw

popped open at his stomach and split him apart from there down.

His body slumped into the water. The Blind Dead held Pat's jaw like a trophy as the others advanced on Kimberly.

It was over.

Kimberly knew it. They were either going to kill her or, worse, make her like them. There was no way out. She was too terrified, too exhausted to make it out alive.

That was when she heard the howling.

It came from above her, on the docks. She looked up and could just make out through the slats in the wood a creature on all fours. It was a woman. Some kind of wolf-girl. To Kimberly, she was beautiful.

A scary, beautiful She Wolf.

To Be Continued...

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