A Tryst In Tyme

By

Teresa Thomas Bohannon

A Short Tale
Featuring Characters From
Shadows In A Timeless Myth

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A short tale featuring characters from my paranormal romance novel
Shadows In A Timeless Myth
Available for Kindle and in Oversized, Large Print Paperback at
Amazon and Createspace.
Available for the Nook at Barnes & Noble, March 2012.

The night was cool, dark and quiet. Looking down at the snug little house in the woods with its cheerful fire casting warmth and light into the night, one might even say peaceful and serene. But that was just an illusion, and they would be wrong. Dank, dreary and fraught with danger and death would better fit.

His rank breath played an eerie game of hide and seek in the fog-laden shadows. The rising moon was full of bright promise—but the night, pregnant with unshed tears, obscured her beauty and dimmed her light. The swollen clouds—black and heavy—transformed the forest beyond the small cottage into a dark haven for those who contemplated evil deeds—concealing him as he watched and waited for his treasured moment to come....

Clever and patient, he watched, hunkered low in the shadows, returning night after night for days on end. Always returning to the same tree-shielded knoll just above and beyond the small clearing in the woods—careful to leave no permanent sign to mark his dark vigil.

Even the dogs—the pair of them small and cute, no protection at all beyond a bark or a nip—had grown accustomed to his presence and his scent—anticipating nothing but the small treats he tossed them each night.

The clearing was barely larger than the cottage itself, with little more than a ragged split-rail fence and breathing space to separate it from the forest beyond. Clad in wooden shakes and stone, it was peasant small, or playhouse large depending on the perspective of its occupant. In this case a bit of both. The woman within sought to shelter in a world both small and cozy; but judging from the luxuries surrounding her, could have commanded a castle had she so chosen.

In another time and place it all would have been considered undeniably charming, or storybook quaint. Here and now, it was just a recipe for dark trysts and torture, danger and death.

Smoke from the fireside curled up the stone chimney into the night. Bearing a tantalizing hint of savory and spice it mingled enticingly with the whips of fog that swirled in the air. Light from the fire within pierced the darkness, casting the woman's silhouette into stark relief as she sat curled in the chair with book in hand and a glass of wine at her side. The shreds that escaped the window danced their way onto the tiny lawn creating a wild landscape of flickering shadow, casting beckoning fingers toward the watcher in the wood.

I could sense his desire as it grew, his anticipation as it peaked near beyond bearing. The sweat stained musk of him hung nauseatingly in the air. Tonight, beyond any other, the stench of it carried perceptively on the wind. Dogs a quarter mile away took note and howled in fear; but not the two at the cottage. His soothing treats had lulled them into a dreaming stupor where all was well and their mistress safe. He liked dogs. He would never hurt a dog. Women were a different story—he liked hurting women.

And so the night passed into the dead hours of evening, and the fire dimmed and she—without fear or caution—drifted into a peaceful sleep.

He watched her...and I watched him.

If the pattern, so carefully laid down time and again, proved the same—tonight would be the night...and just as the midnight hour drifted into morning, he would begin to touch himself and the depravity would begin. She would awaken from her sleep and wish to God she never had. A face. His face—twisted and ugly, unlovable and unloved, smiling grotesquely as he brandished the knife and watched as the fire's dying light danced on its long, shiny, lovingly stroked and sharpened blade. She would scream then...or try to, and then she...just as all the others who came before, would die...bleeding slowly out in the middle of her formerly safe little world, a nightmarish vision of anger and hatred leering horrifyingly at her...the last thing she would ever see in this life—unable to close her eyes even in death.

And there wouldn't be a damned thing I could do to save either her body, or her soul.

Time and again, I had tried desperately to warn her; but she had all the psychic perception of a toad—a fat, lazy toad lying all cool and comfy in a mud bath on a hot summer's day just waiting for Prince Charming to arrive with his magical kiss. Ridiculous analogy, I know. She was none of those things. Had she been so, she would not have been his type and he would not have desired her, would not have lusted for the smell of her fear in the air as he slowly tortured her with the knife and savored the warmth of her blood on his skin.

Still, I couldn't help but be angry with her.

I know. I know. You're never supposed to blame the victim, and truly I don't. I really don't. Having been a victim myself, how can I possibly blame another? But still, I cannot help but be angry with her for being here; for putting herself in harm's way, for not taking any one of a thousand different simple precautions, for just taking life as it came, unknowing and unafraid. It's wrong I know; but still I cannot help myself—it is frustrating, so very agonizingly frustrating, to watch and wait, to know the outcome and be so completely helpless to prevent it.

I tried each and every night. I floated right into her darling little house, right into her peaceful little world—gyrating madly right in front of her face, screaming at the top of my invisible lungs as my thrashing hands passed through her body—hoping if nothing else, that she would on some level, see me there or hear my screams and be so frightened out of her wits that she would run far, far away without even bothering to take the time to pack up anything but those silly little dogs. But it didn't work, of course. That only happens in late night horror shows and Shirley Jackson books. Time and again, I tried with all my strength and will. And time and again, she calmly sat through it all drinking her hot cup of tea, or sipping at her delicate glass of fine crystal-encased wine, all curled up and cozy, quaintly reading her books by candle and firelight.

It was as if I did not even exist.

But I do. I do exist. I was once like her. Young and pretty and innocent. Strong-willed and independent. Reclusive by nature and by design, living a contented, solitary existence in my own little world, all alone with my thoughts and my treasures. An isolated, unsuspecting target for evil in the night. Victim number one. The first of seven, soon to be eight.

Failing miserably with her, I tried my luck with him; but to no avail. Unlike her, he was aware of my presence—at least on some level—but there was no fear in him. How could there be? He reminded me of a tacky black T-shirt worn by every arrogant, chain walleted behemoth at any given Sunday flea market.

Yay though I walk through the
Valley of the Shadow of Death
I will fear no evil for I am...
The Baddest Muther in the Valley.

I would have sold my soul, then and there to rip out his throat and leave him bleeding in the leaf litter and loam. I hated him with every random wisp of my essence. I could not touch him. I could not harm him. And in the end, despite all my anger and hatred, and pleading imprecations to both God and Satan, I could not even drive him away. He just stared for a moment in my general direction, then spat scornfully through me before returning his attention to her.

God, how I wanted him dead.

'Then let's get on with it.' The words reverberating somewhere deep inside my wounded soul as the evil bastard screamed like a slaughtered pig and thrashed in agony and unimaginable pain before slumping to the ground—his throat slit, his eyes trapped in a lidless, neverending stare, wide with terror—raggedly gushing blood like a decorative fountain from a dozen different slashing wounds.

I whirled left and right, for all the world like a Saturday morning cartoon character, essential wisps of me spinning outward and breaking free to mingle with the surrounding fog as I spun—desperately searching for the woman behind the silently cast words.

I almost missed her as she rose from the shadows—tiny, almost impossibly old and gray, wiping blood from her mouth even as she gradually grew young and beautiful, dark haired and vibrant before my very eyes.... At her side walked a large gray wolf.

'*Who?* I whispered in the night.' As shocked as one of my ilk could ever be.

'The who doesn't matter little one.' she responded. *'All that matters is that I can see you. I can hear you...and I can do for you that which you cannot do for yourself.'*

'Why?'

'Because I needed to feed, and he needed to die.'

'So it's over.' A second voice drifted out of the darkness. I whirled again. The woman from the cottage stood behind me—as tall, blonde, strong and substantial as any Viking queen that ever lived. She had approached so quietly that I did not hear her coming.

The dark-haired one replied. *'Aye. It's done, Bestla. The sick bastard will never torture another woman. He'll never kill again.'*

'And he'll go to his grave feeling the pain and suffering he cast upon others and relive it all ten-fold times and more before he's allowed to die,' said the blonde waving her hands over his body, muttering ancient mortal words and forming arcane symbols in the air before finishing with a kick to his gut that set him thrashing anew in his death throes.

The tall blonde one reached out as if to touch my hand. It passed right through, of course. She smiled at me.

'Sorry little one, that I had to ignore your presence. Bellina and the wolf were delayed, and I couldn't risk scaring him off before she arrived.'

'You knew?'

'I was the bait.'

There was anger in my voice. *'You knew, both of you. You knew, and you didn't stop him before now?'*

The dark one broke in. *'We do what we can, where we can. There are so many, you see. We cannot be everywhere at once—and more often than not,'* she finished sadly, *'we arrive too late.'*

'And now?' I asked.

'And now...,' they looked at one another and smiled a grim smile before replying as one. *'Now, the hunt continues.'*

I smiled a grim smile of my own as I faded away before their eyes—finally, free to move on to the other side.

The end.

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The Lindsey Mountain Massacre was the stuff of legend—the spine chilling, wicked-cruel kind of story that evil-humored folk like to share on a dark and moonless night. It held all the makings of a fine and frightful tale, a blustering blizzard of a winter storm, a candlelit, backwoods mansion in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a Christmas Eve celebration in the year of nineteen and one, good folk killed by a vengeful haint...or a rabid bear—depending on who was doing the telling. Truth be told, no one ever really found out exactly what did happen or why, nor even realized just how far from the truth all their old stories fell...'til more than a century later, when folks 'round Lindsey started mysteriously disappearing and dying...and the ancient ones returned.

Vampiri, Sorceri, Faielri, Demorni...four distinct races, each imbued with a different bit of life and gnosis drawn from their creator's very souls—each with a Magick, all their own. Each, in turn, allowed to play their own unique roles upon this wondrous stage and reign over all its beasts before fading away into an eternal life within the Paths of Mist—each leaving the world, with their passing, a little less perfect, a little less Magick, a little dirtier, a little plainer...a little less desirable than before.

This is the tale of three who dared defy the Fates...and the humans who paid the price.

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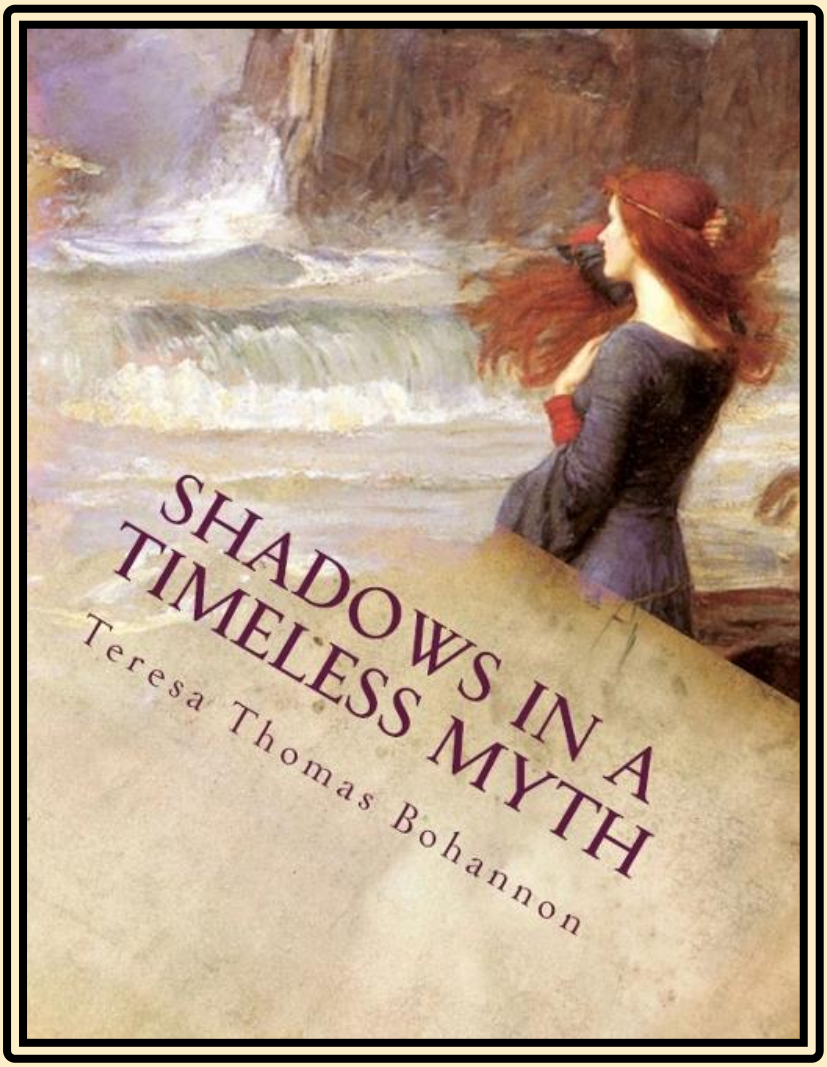
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