

*Fallen*

It was cold and dark, but perhaps that was for the better. Most, if they traveled at all, did so during the day, cutting across country where it was safer. But he had no destination, no fear, and so he traveled the old highways day and night. He wore his cloak for no reason other than he remembered wearing it before he had become what he was now. The cloak shimmered in the darkness like oil, slick and wet on the surface of the sea. Though there was little wind, his cloak churned and twisted around his body as he made his way across the broken and sunken concrete. Beneath the cloak was a pack, seemingly quite full of supplies. At his side was a long bundle, wrapped in rags that had been sewn together.

Perhaps he was tired, or perhaps his thoughts were simply wandering, but he did not become aware of the ambushers until he was upon them. He stopped for a moment and considered going around the attackers, hidden in the darkness, but then one he discerned to be their leader stepped out from the shadows, realizing that their prey had taken scent of the trap.

“You best not try ta run. We got horses, and you ain’t got no place ta go,” sneered the loathsome-smelling vandal. He came out from behind some ancient rubble that once may have been a small town.

“I wish no fight. Please just take my supplies and leave me to go,” the cloaked figure replied.

His voice was soft and melodious, like a heavy bell being softly rung, resounding off every surface. The hood of his cloak covered his downcast head, and for a brief moment the leader of the ambushers felt pity. Something in that voice spoke of unending pain. The leader considered letting this one go, just this once. But the hunger for the kill, the need to hurt became too much for his simple mind to overcome. He pulled a club from his ragged cloth belt and began making his way forward. The other six men behind him followed suit, each pulling out a blunt weapon if there wasn’t one already waiting in their hands, feral instincts of the pack taking over.

“I am begging you please; I do not wish to fight you.” The figure’s voice cracked and trembled slightly.

After the alien sense of pity the leader had felt before, he had become uneasy of this prey. When the leader heard the strain in his victim’s voice, he mistakenly thought the trembling was from fear and became emboldened. The approaching steps of the human predators became quicker and less cautious.

He took his supply bag from his shoulder and laid it on the ground before the vandals, hoping that the food within easy reach may distract them enough to escape the impending violence.

“Please, can you not leave me be?!” This time the figure’s voice had become more urgent, but the trembling was gone. As he spoke, he gripped his left forearm with his right hand, the tendons in both arms rippling out from the strain and his entire body taut with resistance. He shut his eyes tight, trying to stave off the approaching darkness.

“Like I said before, they ain’t no place ta go.” The leader made a motion and the attackers charged, clubs and poles raised for slaughter.

The cloaked figure finally raised his head and let the hand that had been clutching his arm fall to his side. His resistance gone, he now embraced the darkness growing inside him.

His glowing white eyes were still hidden beneath his cloak and the prevailing darkness kept the black tattoo, roiling upon his arm like a stormy sea, from their view. The blackness now had control.

No one heard their screams.