

Eloquence
&
Shadow



I had just curled up on a faded red bean bag, against a towering library bookshelf when a pair of leather combat boots clomped up to my left side, the buckles clinking musically against the numerous silver zippers. The book resting in my palms was named *Dreams and Shadows*, written by C. Robert Cargill and looked like a very promising read. I was quite disappointed when a pair of heavily tanned, long fingered hands reached down and plucked it from my grasp like a ripe fruit. I looked up, raised a quizzical eyebrow and tucked a long strand of white-blonde hair carefully behind my ear.

"Whatcha doing there, combat boots?" I asked, as smooth as a silken petal.

"I know what you are." The boy looking down at me responded intensely. His eyes were shaded by his low-hanging black bangs, so it looked as though his irises were pure inky black. He had a thin, streamline nose and a deep cupid's-bow on his full upper lip. His face was as warmly tanned as his hands. He fussed with his charcoal gray shirt, pulling it down over jeans that looked like a starless night sky.

"Oh yeah? And what am I? It must be a great secret: even I don't know it." I quipped.

"Yes, you do know. You just don't want to demonstrate because you don't want to scare people. You and I are cut from similar cloth, Dove." His voice was deep, but it wavered like a flickering candle flame, like he was upset.

"How do you know my name?"

"Can we talk some place else?" His voice rose subtly, imploring me to comply.

"Sure, let's walk around outside. It's after school, no one is ever out there." I smiled kindly, looking into his eyes and reached out for the chalky blue cover of my book.

He looked at me strangely. "Maybe that's not the best-" Impatience bloomed in my chest, frustration rising up to meet it.

"Yes, it is. Let's go outside." My voice was slightly musical, taking on the poetic quality that I knew was my ability working.

"Ok." His voice was monotonous, losing its overly-emotional quality. His graceful hands released the book to the floor with a dull thud.

I pushed open the thick metal door with the flats of my palms and twisted to hold it with the length of my body for the raven-haired boy.

The blankness faded from his eyes and after a short shake of his head, he began to speak rapidly like a river roiling over uneven stones.

"I know about your power. I have one, too. You're not alone, Dove. There is even another girl in our school, Miriam, she has one as well." His eyes were wide, a deer in harsh headlights, and in the ebbing light of the evening, I noted that his eyes were actually pure black, glittering like solid pieces of polished jet.

"Ok. You know what I can do, controlling people with speech. What do you do?" I peered at him like a child into darkness. "What's your name, anyways?"

"My name is Nye Kendall, but people like us call me Dusk. Well, I can do quite a bit. Anything with shadows, really. I can make them solid, create them, and sometimes do astral projection through them. But that's barely important. I have an initiative. There is an underground collective of people like us, like Miriam. It's called: The Key.

His eyes were glowing, alight with passion and something else. Something I could not place.

"Alright....?" I was unsure to respond.

"We are going to be done with hiding. With being afraid to take off the mask. With the normal people." His coal black eyes stared at me and it almost looked like the shadows were curling towards him like waves on a grey beach.

"What do you mean: done with them?"

"I'm not sure I should tell you. It's happening very soon. You might be scared." His head tilted, brow furrowing.

"Tell me. Now." I forced my words to be calm and steady, but allowed myself to use my ability.

"We're going to make a world that's only people like us. Special. I'm going to kill them all. Everyone normal." His plan slipped forward from his lips, hurried and unthought of. He looked confused for a moment before realization dawned across his features like the first days of sun on a chill morning. "Don't *you* use your power on *me*!"

I could see it now in his eyes. He was totally crazy. "Shhh, it's okay." I murmured, an attempted balm soothingly spread on a fresh wound.

"No. No, it's not," His voice was terse, rushed, and rising with aggravation. "Dove, I can tell you're not on my side with this. Don't try to stop me."

"I'm not-" I began in an attempt to soothe him.

"YES. YOU. ARE! Stop it, stop lying to me!" Nye took a slow step towards me, midnight eyes lit from within with manic passion. He punctuated each phrase with a footfall. "You see, I'm going to do it right now. End them. While you watch."

"How?"

"You see, people can't hear your lovely, enchanting voice all over the world, but I can tell you this: there are shadows everywhere." He closed his eyes and I noticed suddenly that night had fallen. The sky was dark and kissed with silver, glittering stars that lent a beautiful atmosphere to a not so beautiful scene.

Dark strands swirled around him and gathered at his feet, clinging to his jeans like ashy spiderweb. Shadows fell like leaves from the trees around us and where they touched the ground, it turned thick black. Nye's lips moved and he spoke to the shadows around him, swirls of black twirling from his lips. Like the lacy curling of burning paper, icy, jet black rippled across his skin starting from the left side of his chin. It bled across his skin as his lips moved. I took a careful step forward.

"Stop this, Nye, you don't want to do this." I let my power weave into my voice.

The shadows hesitated, then flooded on, the tide crept up his legs, almost wrapped around his hips. A pair of opaque headphones formed over his ears. "I'm not listening." His voice rang out mockingly from everywhere around me. Every bit of his skin I could see had turned shadow black.

I frantically looked around, panic falling over me like necrotic leaves a stiff wind, looking for something, anything that could help me to stop him. I spun in frantic circles, clenching and unclenching my fists, nails pressing like blades into my damp palms. I felt hysteria rise within me and a high pitched laugh bubbled out of my quivering lips. The same thought ran through my head like a racecar, circling the track over and over again: *this is insane*. I felt so helpless all of the sudden. I couldn't **do** anything. I stared in the face of an impossible task. An immovable object meeting an unstoppable force. So, I did the only thing I could do in the moment. I screamed.

The shadows froze mid-writhe. Then, my scream took form. It was immaterial and effervescent. It was green, the cold, pale green of blood under pale skin and light throbbed, ghostly, within it. Where it touched the living shadow, the shadow cracked. They audibly shrieked, their pitch drowning out mine. They shriveled to ebony dust on the ground in small hills. Suddenly, it went silent. I knew I was still screaming, but it was like the sound was irrelevant because the shadows cleared with a *whoosh* and I saw something. I saw Nye on his knees, his graceful fingers locked around his ears, his mouth wide in a silent howl, teeth bared like a wild beast. His finger nails dug into his tanned cheeks and thin streams of crimson blood ran down his chin and across his creased forehead. I stopped screaming, the silence immediately became deafening, and rushed to his side. The crown of his forehead gently dropped to his knees, the blood falling in ruby teardrops to the crimped grass. He crumpled down, his head lazily lolling sideways and back, his knees facing the trees, long arms splayed, and shoulders watching the silent sky. My wavering hands floated just above his still skin, butterflies hesitating to land.

"Nye?" I whispered, careful as though he were paper thin glass.

His eyes fluttered opened and I gasped. They were pure milky white. "I was shadow. They were me. My soul." His voice was brittle, tired. He sounded hollow.

"I'm sorry." My voice shook and I choked on a sob.

"It's okay, Dove. I..." His voice trailed off, his face fell lax, and his head slowly rolled to rest back against the vibrant green grass.

"Nye?" He didn't respond. "NYE?!" I shrieked. I bent my head over him, a flower facing the sun and cried. I knew that I'd killed him and instead of feeling joy for defeating him and saving lives, I only felt sadness. Despair. He was a gem. That power... He could have been happy, lived a normal life.

I was still sobbing when people found me. I haven't spoken since then.