

*In Memoriam*  
*Shadow World Supplemental Scene*

Very little has changed in that dark alley, even in a year. The Dumpster is still in the same place. It still stinks of mildew and garbage and the faint stale smell of cigarettes. In the heat of high Summer the stench is as overwhelming as she remembers it...though that night it was raining, and tonight the sky is clear.

She stands at the alley's mouth for a long time, just looking, deciding.

"Are you sure you're ready to do this?" David asks her, moving in close, his presence at her back protective and soothing. "You don't have to."

"I need to," she replies softly. "Just...I need a minute."

"Would you like me to leave you alone?"

"No," she says quickly--more quickly than she intended--and grabs his hand. "Go with me...please."

He meets her eyes. She still hasn't gotten used to that...the way her breathing slows down when they match gazes, the way touching his skin brings her such peace. It's the energy between them finding balance, but more than that, it's her way of reassuring herself that he's still there, and will be, forever.

He hadn't wanted to come here tonight, but would not object to whatever she needed to heal; they've been together only a handful of months, and in that time she's worked hard to let go of her fear, and of her rage...rage that had saved her life in this very spot...where she had killed four men.

Steeling herself, she steps forward, releasing his hand so she can stand on her own. She walks slowly into the alley, all the way to the back, and can hear David following at a respectful distance.

It feels exactly like walking up to her mother's new grave. After a month of wrangling with her father's lawyers, she'd gotten permission to have Marilyn Grey moved from a near-anonymous spot at the State Cemetery to a plot in a private memorial park beneath a canopy of live oak trees and a nearby willow. She has been there many times this summer, as she gets used to her strange new life, and spent time on the little stone bench by the grave telling her mother her story.

*"I made it, Mama. I survived. I wish I could have helped you make it too...but I thought you'd want to know I...I chose to live...sort of."*

Here, though, there is no birdsong, no rustling of leaves in the late summer breeze. There is only the stink of humanity's trash reminding her of the night she, too, was used up and thrown away like trash, only to come back to herself raging with a fire that would consume and transform the entire Shadow World.

She sighs, reaches the spot she remembers specifically. Here, she stood; and here, she said, "No." And all around her they fell, screaming, emotion so dark and overwhelming they couldn't fight it, and one by one, their hearts gave out...one, two, three, four.

Tears are falling from her eyes, but not for the men she killed. Their deaths have lost her no sleep. She cries for the girl who died here, her thighs streaked with blood, her throat raw from screaming, beaten and degraded in every way they could think of in half an hour behind a bodega...the girl who died here...every last inch of her humanity torn away with her clothes, until all that was left was the hate-black, scarlet-raw, howling will to survive.

For that girl, mind full of penetrating voices, body used and torn, heart trampled beneath the twin boot-heels of insanity and rape; for that girl, who had played for cash outside a bookstore, and dreamed of fame, and missed her mother; for that girl who had to die so that she could be born again to stand, take up her sword, and one day become Queen...Miranda weeps softly as she kneels over the grimy concrete and lays down the bouquet of white roses tied with a black velvet ribbon.

She knows, then, that she'll come back here next year, on this night, and the year after that...but one year, she won't need to, and after that she'll forget to, and when that happens, perhaps it will be well and truly over.

For now, she folds herself into her husband's arms, and together they stand over the only memorial that exists to Miranda Grey, human girl, and if there are still tears in her eyes, there are tears in his also.

She looks up. "Are you all right?"

He smiles slightly, looking sheepish to have been caught having an emotion. "I think back to this night so often," he says. "I think...if I had gotten here sooner."

She returns the smile gently and kisses his lips. "I love you for that," she says, "But it wasn't your fault. The only people to blame are the men who did this, and they've met their justice."

Taking a deep breath, which is only slightly shaky, she carefully turns her back on the scene and walks back toward the street, taking his arm as she goes. "Here lies Miranda Grey," she murmurs, the sight of the roses still in her mind. "Daughter, sister, college dropout, up and coming musician, certifiable nutcase..."

David squeezes her hand as he says, "May she rest in peace."

Miranda smiles, this time with a blooming flame of joy. "She is," she says, and lays one hand on her own chest, the other on his. "Right here." Her smile becomes a grin, and she kisses him and says, "Now let's go get some ice cream."

He bows, offers his arm again, and leads the way.

**©2012 by Dianne Sylvan. May not be reproduced or distributed in any form without express written permission from the author.**