

Skin Walker

_____ “Get comfortable,” Sebastian Quinn said, walking to the driver's side of the car, sticking an unlit cigarette between his lips. “I’ll be back in an hour or so.”

“An hour in this weather?” The driver said, gesturing at the falling snow. “You’re liable to catch your death out here, Boss.”

Both men stared straight faced at each other before breaking into childish grins, the joke known to both of them.

“Thanks for the ride, Luis,” Sebastian said before turning away.

“No need to thank me every time, Boss. It is my job after all.”

Sebastian walked down the graveled hiking trail and allowed himself a small moment of peace. Far removed from the city, only the moon, half shrouded and low in the night sky, provided any meaningful light; which didn't amount to much. A smile cracked his lips as a frigid breeze made its way easily through his thin dress clothes and bit at his sun-kissed flesh. *I almost feel human again*, Sebastian thought, tucking his hand into his slacks. *Almost*.

After fifteen minutes of walking Sebastian stopped, lit the cigarette that still hung in his mouth and walked off the trail. Entering the surrounding woods, the meager light from the moon fought to shine through. Within minutes all light had been stifled by the tall trees that loomed above, but Sebastian trudged on. Every root, rock and low hanging branch were as visible to him as if he were seeing them during the day. Even more so. With the grace of a predator, he made his way through the winding woods which had taken on a melancholic silence. No animals made a noise, too afraid of the monster that stalked through their homes. The unnatural silence didn’t bother Sebastian. Not anymore at least. Hearing the songs of animals was just another thing he lost after his transformation... his plunge.

Before he knew it Sebastian found himself at a rocky hillside, bathed in moonlight from the crescent moon, now unfettered by clouds and trees. Below it the whole of the city was unveiled, its lights blinking like stars reflected in a pond. His own personal Eden.

Walking to the edge the pull of the abyss tugged at him, lured him down, and he welcomed it.

“You think you’ll jump this time?”

“Can’t a man get a single night by himself these days?” Exasperation encircled his words as he mourned the brief moments of peace he had.

“Because if you do,” the voice continued, ignoring his retort, “I’d like to get my bets in early on how many rocks you’ll hit on the way down.”

From the corner of his eye he could see it slip from the shadows. Like a starving wolf it stalked behind him on all four of its elongated limbs before erecting itself to its full height. Thin, leathery, bloodless skin clung tightly to a skeleton that tried and failed to appear human.

“Although, Seb,” the creature cackled, its lipless, permanent grin widening in delight, “if you were trying to off yourself again we both know this won’t cut it.”

Sebastian recoiled as the creature placed a bony hand on his shoulder, its knife like claws digging lightly, but deliberately into his flesh.

“I’m tired of hearing your voice monster,” Sebastian sighed taking a drag from his cigarette, “crawl back in your hole with the others and give me a moment of peace.”

The creature drew back as if in pain, raking its hand over where its chest was. Its yellowed eyes, sunken deep in its skull, never leaving his face.

“You wound me, Seb,” it mocked, “I thought we were friends.”

“I pity anyone that would call you friend, Monster.”

“Manners, Seb. Remember what your mother taught you.”

Sebastian's eyes flashed, rage boiling inside him.

“Mention her again,” Sebastian snarled through clenched teeth, “And I will tear you apart. Limb from limb, piece by piece until you are nothing but a sad misshapen heart beating on the floor. Do you understand me?”

The creature, its toothy maw forced in a permanent grin, twisted into something sinister and ugly. Standing up to its full height, it towered over Sebastian. Its emancipated limbs tensed and its eyes, once cloudy yellow orbs, focused much like a predator focuses on prey.

“Try it,” Sebastian growled, letting the shared bloodlust wash over him. “Try it, and see where it gets you.”

For a moment Sebastian felt a pull in the back of his mind. A sharp tug that sent his thoughts free falling. *Not yet you son of a bitch.* Pulling back with all his might, Sebastian fought

the creature's influence. Fought the claws gripping his soul, threatening to bury it. Finally the creature recoiled and took a step back.

"You are a cage, Sebastian Quinn—" The creature looked at the low hanging moon bright in the night sky. Its eyes somber as if close to tears. "A cruel prison meant to keep me locked away from this beautiful world. But every cage degrades with time. Every lock rusts and becomes brittle with age. You may be in control now... but I will be free one day. And when I am I will take everything from you.

"Leave," Sebastian huffed, a bead of sweat forming on his brow despite the cold.

As ordered, the creature turned and retreated into the darkness so quietly it was as if he was never there.

"Enjoy your night, Sebastian," the creature's voice echoed through his mind. "You may not have many left."

"How was your little getaway, Boss?" Luis said as Sebastian got in the car. "Were you able to find a little peace and quiet?"

"Not exactly," Sebastian sighed, massaging the bridge of nose. "But nothing worth talking about."

"Uh-huh..."

Pulling out of the small parking lot, within moments Sebastian and Louis found themselves driving under the orange lights of highways heading home.

"Any business while I was gone?"

"Nothing serious, Boss." Luis replied, turning down the radio. "A couple of the boys had a run in with the cops again but that's about it."

"Any casualties?"

"The boys are alright. A clipped wing or two at most. Cops are good too."

Sebastian let out a breath he didn't know he was holding.

"Good... good."

"You may not be a badge no more, but you still act like one sometimes you know that."

Sebastian couldn't help the slight smile that crept on his face.

“What can I say, old habits die hard.”

“Still, little funny your life, Boss. Sounds like a book I saw at the store once. Detective turned crime boss. You can't tell me that's not some crime drama story or somethin'.”

Sebastian quietly watched the world speed by through the window.

“That book you saw, you know how it ends?”

“I don't know, Boss. I didn't read it. Why? You got an idea how a story like that would end?”

For a moment Sebastian remembered the parting words of the creature.

“Not a clue...”

Prompt: This piece was made as part of a horror themed game I would play with my friends. The goal of this piece was to write a scenario where a monster who evoked dread through his words and sinister presence and not his actions.
