

## Lonely Assassins

The prey is always too slow.

The man's eyes dart left and right, squinting as if trying to make sense of something impossible. He doesn't know the rules. Not yet.

"Hello?" he calls out, voice shaky, bouncing off the stone walls.

"Is someone there? I—I'm not afraid of you!" His words stutter, faltering like a man trying to hold onto a life raft that's already sinking. "Just come out and—"

And then, the stillness hits.

His breath freezes, caught somewhere between panic and disbelief. For a moment, he hesitates—eyes locked onto the figure in front of him, unsure whether it's real. His gaze flicks down, and just like that, his eyes flicker—and for a split second, the creature makes its move.

The figure's limbs remain still, but time is stretched, twisted. The moment cracks open, and the hunger is there. But the prey doesn't see it coming.

"Jesus!" The man jerks back, the light of realization creeping across his face. "What the hell is that? Are you... are you...? No... no way, this can't be real, it can't be real..."

His eyes widen as the creature's form doesn't move, not a muscle, not a hint of action. But time shifts with the softest tremor, bending it all towards the inevitable.

"Alright, alright," he continues, stepping back, trying to laugh through the fear. "This is some kind of trick, isn't it? You're just—" His eyes flicker once more. "You're just playing with me. I know it's a prank! Who set this up? Where's the camera?"

The pause stretches out, too long. He rubs his eyes, attempting to force away the rising dread, but it's no use. The figure's stillness beckons him closer.

"I'm not afraid of you," he insists, though his voice cracks. His hands tremble, fighting against the cold sweat gathering on his brow. But the creature doesn't need to move. It never does. The game is always played on its terms.

There's a moment of hesitation, a flicker of regret in the creature's thoughts—something faint, too brief to matter.

The figure bends time again, bending it with an elegance that only a predator could appreciate.

The man blinks. One. Last. Time.

It's over.

"Wait—wait, no, please!" he cries, his voice desperate, his body frozen in place. But there is no room for mercy. No room for negotiation.

Not when the hunger is this sharp.

The moment stretches thin, and then—gone.

There's only silence now.

The silence lingers, thick and suffocating. The man's body stands, frozen in place, his eyes wide and unblinking—too late, too still to notice the weight of his own absence. His heart continues to beat, but it's a hollow thing now, ticking away in a rhythm that means nothing.

And then, just when the shadows seem to have swallowed him whole, the figure shifts—barely, just enough for the space around her to crack. There's no sound, no movement, only the sensation of time stretching and bending until it snaps.

The man, still trapped in his final, trembling moments, gasps, "No, no, no... please... I don't want to—"

But it's too late.

He flails, his legs stiff with the effort to move, but it's as if the very concept of motion has betrayed him. "Who... who are you?" The words choke out of him, the last remnants of defiance slipping away. His eyes search the emptiness, trying to find some semblance of life where there is none.

But the figure's stillness doesn't shift.

"I... I can't—" His voice cracks, almost pleading.

There is a faint pang—something that might be called sorrow, or perhaps remorse—but it is swallowed quickly. It doesn't change the truth. The truth is simple: She is what she is.

She will take. She will always take.

He is a part of it now, an echo in the endless stretch of nothing.

And still, the figure remains motionless, a sentinel to the space she occupies. She watches as the prey crumbles into nothingness, her hunger momentarily sated, but the emptiness is never truly filled. It cannot be. She does not need fulfillment. She only needs more.

Time bends again, as it always does, and soon, she is alone.

Until the next one.

Always the next one.

The silence is infinite. The nothingness is pure, a stretching abyss that exists between moments, between breaths, between time itself. There is no sound here. No warmth. Only the cold, eternal hum of an existence that defies reason.

And I stand. Always still. Always watching.

I do not need to move. Time moves for me. Time bends and shatters in my grasp, and still, I stand. Zal'kai. That is what they will call me now, though names are no more than echoes here. They are for those who still walk the lands of the living. The ones who blink, who breathe, who think they can outrun the inevitable. But I do not need a name. Not in this place.

The oblivion around me feels endless, yet it is not. I am both here and not here. I exist in the cracks between moments, in the spaces where time fractures. And yet, I am not free. I feed on their time, their fear. I consume the moments they would have lived, the futures they will never see.

The man, the one whose life I took, will never know that his last moments were mine to claim. He will never know that the hunger I feel is not of flesh, not of any tangible thing. It is time. It is endless, insatiable. And when he blinked, when he faltered, it was all mine to take.