

Bonus Chapter

It was night on the Lanton University campus. As the man walked along the lamp-lit paths, he took out his knife and fingered its blade.

Sharp enough, he thought.

He'd certainly spent enough time sharpening it against a whetstone today.

It was an odd feeling to be carrying something, anything, that was meant to be used as a weapon—that was positively intended to take a human life.

In fact, the whole idea of killing was new to him.

The very thought of it quickened his pulse—and not in a disagreeable way.

An adrenalin high, he realized.

Probably nothing compared to how I'll feel when I really do it.

But was it appropriate to feel that way?

He reminded himself that he wasn't in it for the thrills. He had serious reasons to kill.

But if the act gave him a rush of energized pleasure ...

Why not? I might as well enjoy it.

As he neared the campus library, he saw the front door open. A dark-haired young woman came out carrying a pile of books. He recognized her immediately. She was an attractive psychology student, a senior ...

Intelligent too.

A serious student.

And well-liked.

Those qualities alone ought to make her an appropriate target.

But was he ready?

He stepped off the path into the shadows where he wasn't likely to be seen and tucked the knife away so its glint wouldn't show in the lamplight. He watched as the girl came down the steps from the library. She paused when she got onto the path and looked around.

The man felt a trace of worry.

Does she know someone's watching? he wondered.

No, she didn't appear to be wary or alarmed—just indecisive.

Deciding which way to go, he figured.

Was she tempted to head on over to the Centaur's Den, the local bar and student hangout? She certainly seemed to be gazing in that direction.

He was intrigued by what might be going through her mind right now.

Maybe she was thinking she needed a little break from long hours of studying, and a couple of beers to help her unwind, and maybe the company of a few friends would also be nice if she should happen to run into them.

On the other hand ...

He heard her let out an audible sigh.

He smiled as he sensed the meaning of that sigh ...

It's a school night ...

... and if she stays out late or drinks too much she'll be groggy in the morning, and besides ...

... she still has more studying to do when she gets back to her room.

Sure enough, she turned and walked toward Gettier Hall, one of the on-campus dormitories.

Now the man had a decision to make.

Should he just let her continue on her way, or start stalking her?

He let her get a fair distance away, then stepped out onto the path again and began to follow her. He walked softly, playing the scenario out in his mind ...

I get close enough behind her that she can hear my footsteps.

She gets scared a little, turns to look, and sees me.

She's relieved.

She knows me and likes me.

I offer to walk her the rest of the way to the dorm and ...

He felt that adrenalin rush again, and this time it scared him.

Could he really go through with it?

Could he really take a human life?

Not that he had any moral concerns about the matter.

He had no such feelings at all.

Still, the deed would be so final, so irrevocable, like nothing he'd ever done in his life before, and there would be no turning back from it, no undoing it ...

She was nearing the dormitory now—too close, he realized, for him to carry out his plan.

He felt a bit ashamed, knowing that his quarry was about to get free.

Will I ever be able to do it? he wondered as he watched her unlock the front door to the dorm and continue on inside.

If he couldn't, could he live with the knowledge of his own cowardice?

I've got to do it, he thought.

Just not tonight.

For some reason, he also had a strange feeling ...

My first victim will be some other girl ...

... not Riley Sweeney.