



Playing with Shadows

Sasha L. Miller

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Dear Author,

He was told that everything happened for a reason, that there were things out there that watched your every move. He just never thought that the people telling him this were telling the truth. Until he happened to glimpse something out of the corner of his eye, something that he couldn't explain.

And now there are things in the shadows, things that want him. And he's not sure if he can hold out any longer. If only he hadn't picked up that apple on that fateful day, then the ones in the shadows would not have noticed his presence.

Photo Description: boy holding an apple, button-down shirt pushed off the shoulders, boxers showing above low-slung, belted, dark-colored jeans

This story was written as a part of the M/M Romance Group's "**Love is Always Write**" event. Group members were asked to write a story prompt inspired by a photo of their choice. Authors of the group selected a photo and prompt that spoke to them and wrote a short story.

Download the story, read it online or find it in Love Is Always Write: Volume 7.

Playing with Shadows Details

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Author : Sasha L. Miller

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From Reader Review Playing with Shadows for online ebook

Deeze says

An interesting idea. Not very heavy on romance but if you need a quick paranormal fix then this fits the bill.

I would certainly be interesting in another book.

Nina says

This was nice - and that's simultaneously a good and a bad thing.

It was nice means it was pleasant, it was pretty good, I liked it.

But it was nice also means there wasn't anything particularly remarkable about it and I didn't *love* it.

It was atmospheric enough and I liked the idea of a creepy monastery - seeing as I have a pretty conflicted relationship with any kind of religious personality, evil monks just push all my buttons in the best way possible. But it wasn't as creepy and disquieting as I wished it would be. This might also have been influenced by the fact that I read this story on the beach, but I think a really creepy story should be able to make me scared in spite of my surroundings. And being creepy was clearly what this short story was going for, since there really wasn't much in the way of romance other than one admittedly great kiss at the very end.

All in all, this could have been great, if only the principal elements of the story - evil magicking monks and forbidden love - and the feelings it was trying to evoke - fear, suspense, a touch of secret lust - had been expounded upon and developed better.

Jenny Cazzola says

This was an okay read, but the romance was not really needed. It could have gone without. However, I liked the characters and a sequel would be nice.

Cole Riann says

Well done. We don't really need more world here, no matter how much I think we all like to have it sometimes. Too much information would ruin the atmosphere that is based on subtle manipulation of secrets. More romance would be a treat, but then that depends on whether you approach the story with romance as the main objective. A hint of it and the promise of more worked just fine for me.

Katherine says

Nice little story.

Corin is stuck serving a year as a servant at the monastery, an expectation of all of age people in the land. He despises the forced work as it takes him from his family, who depend on him after the loss of their father. He wishes to hate the monk who brought him, Rafferty, but finds he can't in face of the man's unusual melancholy. Things would be much better if he could get through the night without being woken by strange things happening in the shadows.

Corin is a very blunt character, but he doesn't exactly seem unkind. He is frustrated with his situation, as it seems the monks just brings in servants so they don't have to do any work, while he himself is a hard worker. His family is very important to him and leaving them for the monastery chafes at him. Under his outlying bluntness, you can see that he is loving of those he cares about, loyal, a hard worker, and wanting to do the right thing. He works well as the protagonist and I enjoyed his discoveries about the shadows as well as the way it played out as he considered his future.

Sandra says

Offered for FREE from the M/M Romance Group, Love Is Always Write: Volume Seven.

So I wrote a nice long review which I then proceeded to lose... so basically, this was good. Not so much a romance but has the potential for future romantic feelings. Interesting plot though, could have been an intriguing full-length fantasy novel.

Julesmarie says

I was enthralled by the world in this story. So many fascinating ideas and so many intriguing elements and possibilities.

I'd love to get to read more set in this world, because the relationship felt like it was just getting started right when the story ended.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

3.5*

Mysterious and dark story.

I liked it, the plot and the world it was set in was very interesting, I was just not given all the background or information to make it great.

There was so much more to know, and I think I wish the MC's had spent more time together, I wanted to see more of their attraction to each other.

Ami says

This free short story (I just found out that this was part of 2012 Goodreads M/M Romance Group *Love is*

Always Write event) was pretty intriguing -- it had a great creepy set-up of a monastery, where servants were secretly being sacrificed to bind demons.

I also must note that this wasn't exactly a love story (or romance) except for that kiss in the end, which I thought was coming a little bit out of nowhere. The tone of this story was more of 'horror' variety than romance, even if Corin thought Rafferty as quite attractive, so it just felt rather forced considering that Corin and Rafferty didn't really spend a lot of time together as well. Rafferty was part of the 'secretive' priests while Corin was one of the servants, so they didn't exactly run in the same circle. All in all, nice quick read in between novels.

Sophia says

This short story was a very enjoyable one sitting read. I loved how the story jumped right into things giving just enough away to draw me in, but still leaving a mysterious feel to everything the main character Corin experiences. It had that old gothic tale feel to it with the dark, stone corridors in the medieval style fantasy. Nothing is as it seems even when I thought all the surprises were over there were yet more twists.

Corin, like all the others who live in the surrounding area, is forced to provide one year of indentured servitude to the priests who live in the monastery. Unlike the others who are content to serve, Corin is the sole male provider to a mother and sisters and he worries how they are doing. He resents the lazy priests with their odd requests and doesn't let them scare him by their talk of shadows and danger. Corin is forced to believe there is something in what they say when odd things start to happen around him. There is one priest that seems set apart from the others and intrigues Corin because he feels the priest is carrying a heavy worrisome burden inside. Rafferty, might be the only one who can give him answers to what he senses going on around him. One day, Rafferty does give him some answers and it is not what he wants to hear.

The plot moves right along and I enjoyed the development of the shadow part of the plot. The character, Corin is the main focus, but Rafferty's character was developed well. I did feel the very end was rushed to cram it in to fit a word count and would have liked to see that twist at the end more developed. But overall, it was a good attention keeping read. I'd love to see a sequel.

? Irena ? says

[those last few moments were just a promise of one, but I'll count them anyway (hide spoiler)]

Buttons says

This original and well written short story could be the starting point to write a great 400+ pages book. It didn't feel like a short story, it felt like a part of a great novel.

Maria says

Corin can't wait for the end of his miserable days at the monastery he works. Eight months left till he could go back his home where it's warm and bright and there's proper bed instead of thin straw to sleep on. His day starts with the cold, stale leftovers from the previous night's meal in the dining hall for breakfast, followed by the usual dull duties. And then after the tiring day, he sleeps in the small, cold room he shares with his roommates who make it difficult for him to sleep under their snores. Apart from the priests, he also hated the chatter the other servants made about the demons in the monastery which was why he never got to make any friends.

It wasn't until the day he saw a priest he'd never seen before assigning several children the duty of dusting in the mysterious library that his days started to get strangely creepy. He finds the demons to be real, a fully ripe apple in summer lying atop a shelf near the podium he was dusting off, and a priest needing his help to block the demons of the monastery by using his 'spirit energy.'

The writing was simple and immature. It was a short read but I got it finished with in a week because it wasn't compelling enough. But overall, the setting was unique and the story interesting and creepy. 3.5 stars :)

Yasmin says

lol.

Furio says

Despite the fantasy setting, this short story reads much more like a horror and I have classified it accordingly.

Ms Miller creates an adequately oppressing atmosphere striking the exact balance to make her story creepy but without having her reader wondering why the lead does not simply run away: if a setting is too menacing, in fact, the author must also devise an excuse to prevent her characters from fleeing it.

The theocracy she establishes as political background not only contributes to the bleak atmosphere but it also allows the reader some uncomfortable parallels with our reality.

While the story could have been longer, it does not feel underdeveloped. Writing is good, the two leads are well outlined and the plot is tight.

That said, I am not a great fan of horror and I only held out because I knew there was going to be a HEA.
