

Psycho Shifters Chapter 2

SADIE

THE SACRED LAKE

Blood dripped down my arm, and it splashed onto the floor that I was trying to clean.

I sighed and searched for inner peace because it was just another shitty day in the shifter realm.

Crack.

Again, D~~k slammed his belt across my back, and the loud sound echoed through the otherwise silent tavern.

My blood splattered.

“Now you’ve done made a mess. Clean it up.” D~~k leaned forward, and his spittle hit my face.

Over the years, D~~k had become increasingly ornery and irrational, which was impressive because he’d started out as a violent piece of shit.

Personal growth was not his strength.

My back burned unmercifully.

I rubbed at my eyes tiredly and gagged as D~~k’s smoky beta scent irritated my throat.

“Clean faster!” he yelled and whipped his belt down with beta strength.

D~~k was a retired beta war “hero.” Hero was clearly a subjective term.

I would call him monster, pig, scumbag, piece of shit, skank, not hero.

Again, D~~k slashed my skin mercilessly.

At twenty years old, I was starting to think D~~k had beef with my flesh and was actively trying to remove it from my body.

My best guess was he was jealous that my skin was so gold and shiny.

The open wounds on my back burned as I scrubbed the floor faster, and I fantasized about taking the brush and shoving it down his throat.

The tavern was empty, and I was cleaning up the bloody mess from the bar fight I'd started after a beta groped my a~s.

I was a lowly null servant, so shifters groped and pawed me like an object.

Patrons also heckled me because my appearance was short and scrawny, my eyes a unique shade of red, my hair a long platinum white, and my skin a brilliant gold.

Sadly, at five and a half feet tall and barely one hundred and twenty pounds, I was a runty null. For sure the shortest and scrawniest person in the entire shifter realm.

Well, other than Lucinda.

My sister was also about my size, but smaller because she was younger.

The only differences were her hair was a golden, honey blonde, her body a little curvier, and her face a little softer.

Now Lucinda was away at school until she was eighteen.

In the shifter realm, kids were sent away to live at school from thirteen to eighteen. Lots of kids perished in the cold, so the oligarchy didn't waste efforts educating them until they were thirteen.

As a result, for two more long-a~s years, I was stuck living alone with D~~k—who had poorer mental health than a rock.

The only good thing was D~~k didn't hurt Lucinda.

He liked to focus on me, to the point where I was confused why he didn't just k~~l me.

Every day I caused chaos, and every day he whipped me with his belt.

It was almost like we had a routine at this point.

I was still waiting for the part where we transitioned away from violence and started a new schedule of meditating, journaling, and sharing our feelings.

Instead, it was an all-out war.

My recent plan had been to feed the rats in my room so much stolen cheese that they would band together into a small army.

D~~k's home was now the rats' home.

I chuckled to myself as three rats scurried across the far wall of the bar, climbing under broken chairs, searching for more food.

The sight of the little buggers out and about, living it up in the tavern, almost filled my eyes with tears.

They were so cute and good at invading D~~k's home mercilessly. It was inspiring.

The bastard slammed his belt across my back again, and my smile turned into a grimace.

I bit down on my lower l~p to stop the silent scream that tried to make its way up my broken throat.

My eyes burned with the beginning of tears. There was only so much pain my body could take.

He hit f~~~~g hard.

More of my blood pooled across the mahogany floor that I was trying to clean.

Rage started to build inside me until my hands shook and my heartbeat pounded in my ears.

Yesterday, when I'd turned twenty, I'd woken up and the solution to all my problems had been obvious.

I had to k~~I D~~k.

My plan had always been to suffer through D~~k's beatings until Lucinda came back from school in two years.

Yesterday, I had awoken with a burning need to k~~l the fucker.

Two years was too long.

D~~k had to die. Now.

Maybe I could find the secret location of the portals to another realm, or maybe the oligarchy would execute me.

Either way, if D~~k was dead, he couldn't hurt me or Lucinda.

It was the perfect plan.

“Hit me one more time. See what happens.” My voice was rough and mangled from years of screaming and a~~~e.

I spat onto the ground in front of his boot.

D~~k's ruddy complexion flushed, and his eyes lit with anger.

He slammed his steel-toed boot into my stomach and swung his belt.

“Useless w~~~e!” His beady eyes flashed, and his jowls shook with rage. D~~k wasn't the best with his words.

It was a tale as old as time. The servant on her knees, covered in blood, with the master enraged above her.

But I always liked the darker books—where the servant killed the master and bathed in his blood.

“It's Sadie, not w~~~e.” I grabbed the belt mid-swing, and his beady eyes widened in surprise.

Time stopped as we both gripped the edge of the weapon.

I focused on the lever in my brain: the little switch, that if I tipped just right, set me free.

The numb clicked on.

Endless numbness.

Cold relief.

All my emotions poofed out of existence, and the world became less vibrant. Colors held less hue.

My scattered, emotional thoughts dissipated into cool nothingness.

The endless rage, pain, sadness just disappeared. I was hyper focused on the threat and eliminating it.

It was the only reason I had survived my teenage years under D~~k's increasingly violent a~~~e.

The switch in my brain flipped me into an emotionless b~~~h that could survive anything.

The only downside was the numb needed to recharge after each use.

When I'd turned twelve, the numb had suddenly appeared.

It had arrived too late to save my voice, which was rough from screaming during beatings, but it kept me alive.

Now everything inside me was cold, icier than the glaciers outside.

Sweep out his legs. Take the belt. Wrap it around his throat and k~~l him.

D~~k startled out of his shock, and a snarl contorted his face. The twitch of his right eyebrow was his tell.

Things were about to get even bloodier.

D~~k wrenched his arm back and flung my small body forward, but I didn't release the belt.

Superficial flesh wound, no internal damage. Sweep his leg. Punch out his ACL.

My legs snapped forward, and I swept his legs out from under him. D~~k hit the deck with a thud and crashed over chairs in the empty tavern.

He released the belt.

Wrap it around his neck.

He roared on the ground, and I pounced. Before he could move, I had the belt around his neck and was choking him. His big, meaty elbows flailed backward and rammed into my ribs. He broke bone, and I didn't flinch.

Tighter.

When I was numb, pain didn't register.

D~~k struggled and slammed my body back into a table, but I didn't release him.

His swollen face turned purple, and his beady eyes popped out of his head.

"I took you in. I saved you." D~~k gasped as he fought for his life.

You didn't save someone by whipping them.

Long, nasty scars mutilated my torso, the raised white edges a stark reminder of every beating.

"No, you beat me."

K~~l him.

He choked as I tightened and pulled harder at the belt around his neck.

It took forever to choke out a beta, and D~~k's neck was thicker than most, but the numb didn't care.

I was in no rush.

All of a sudden, the tavern door slammed open. A person stood at the entrance.

I was startled by the unexpected noise, and the numb switched off. Sometimes that happened when I was surprised.

Now my emotions choked me and my side f~~~~g hurt where D~~k had slammed it.

A cloaked intruder stood in the doorway.

A blustery, icy wind blasted into the room and whipped his hooded garment.

“The oligarchy has received word that a twenty-year-old servant lives at this residence. New orders: all servants will also get tested at the sacred lake,” said a deep male voice.

It wasn't a question.

The snowy wind howled behind the intruder, and he opened his cloak to flash a massive machine gun.

Technology didn't work well in the freezing temperatures without help, which was why the gun glowed blue with fae enchantment.

I released D~k from my stranglehold.

I couldn't k~l him without getting blown to pieces, which really sucked.

Without preamble, the figure threw a warm cloak at me (that must be his thing), grabbed me around the neck, and shoved me out into the miserable cold.

D~k followed behind us silently as we crunched across the thick snow.

I thanked the moon goddess that I was wearing my thick boots.

It was winter, so the temperatures were well below freezing, and a mix of snowy hail pummeled through my threadbare jacket.

My bloody wounds burned my back, but I could feel the skin starting to scab slightly.

All null shifters could heal wounds within a couple of days' time. The bleeding from my back injuries was already stopping, and I knew from experience that they would completely scar over in about three days.

Unlike ABOs, who didn't scar, my weaker frame scarred awfully.

As the negative temperatures pricked my skin, it burned with the unnatural warmth of frostbite.

I shivered, but I would survive.

Unless an adult null shifter was trapped out in the cold all night, they'd live.

Visibility was shit, and the minutes passed in a blur of white.

Then the cloaked dude restraining my neck shoved me forward, and I fell to my knees in a thick snowbank.

Through icy lashes, I looked up.

I was kneeling at the edge of the sacred lake.

Mountains and pine trees reflected off the lake's serene surface.

Snow fell thick and fast, but it disappeared in midair and nothing touched the unfrozen water.

Rumor was it had been enchanted by the fae thousands of years ago, long before the war.

I shivered and sighed with exhaustion. I was scrawnier and weaker than every null I had ever met.

Everyone knew ABOs were always physically larger and more impressive, even before they transitioned.

This was a fool's errand.

The cloaked man spoke, his voice low and rough. "Sun god, you bless us. Turn half the lake black for an alpha's beast, turn a quarter of the lake purple for a beta's strength, and turn the river's edge yellow for an omega's seed."

Before I could react, he removed a long, wicked-looking knife, slit my arm, and held it over the lake.

My forearm burned as he turned my arm over and squeezed.

As if in slow motion, my blood fell toward the silver surface.

A gust of wind slammed against the red droplets, and it was as if the air itself sought to redirect them, a desperate attempt to halt the unfolding events.

My blood sprayed the snowy banks.

However, one drop kissed the surface of the silver lake.

The lake turned black—every single drop.

Midnight black, soulless black.

Alpha black.

The endless darkness of the black lake contrasted with the pure whiteness of the snowy valley.

Alphas were violent, terrifying, and extremely rare.

As my ears roared and my knees trembled, my sweat defied physics—it broke out across every inch of my frozen flesh.

There were no women alphas.

Ever.

Before I could do anything, D~~k grabbed my arm and yanked me back. “You’ve done it now, w~~~e.”

He dragged me away, but the cloaked man grabbed my arms and tore me out of D~~k’s clutches.

The strange man threw me over his shoulder and sprinted through the thick woods. As he ran, he lifted his gun and fired shots back at D~~k.

I hoped the bullets hit.

My vision blurred as trees sped around me.

Alphas were angry psychos who shifted into terrifying beasts.

They were revered like gods.

Fierce, terrifying, psychotic, immortal gods.

Military leaders. Violent guardians of the portals.

Alphas battled monsters because they were monsters. There were only a handful of alphas left. Every single one adored and feared.

Now I was one of them.

I struggled to breathe through the shoulder in my stomach and the terror that crippled my brain.

My vision became kaleidoscopic.

Then I glimpsed the lake through the thick pines. I hadn't known true bloodcurdling fear until this very moment.

The lake was no longer black.

It was blood red.

According to the oligarchy, the fae had enchanted the lakes to turn three colors, and red wasn't one of them.

My eyes watered from terror, and a whistling sensation tunneled through my ears.

I prayed my eyes were playing tricks on me.

Finally, I passed out.