



SWE's McLaughlin City's Stories

Shadow

Book 2

Written by Bashan Savage

Shadow

Bashan Savage

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Smashwords Edition

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Chapter One

The lighting in the compartment car flashes each time it passes under one of the McLaughlin City's many tall buildings. Packed beyond full capacity, different sounds and smells bounce off the walls. It's late, so the majority of the people on this monorail ride are young, with a small mix of elderly and single parents with children. Using a handrail is a man who doesn't fit any of these categories, yet blends in quite inconspicuously. Wearing a trench coat on a typical summer night is not uncommon since the weather of this area usually permits it. On his head is a matching Stetson hat that barely exposes his face, except to the person sitting next to where he's standing.

He has already surveyed the train, no one interests him. He looks down and tries to zone out the various conversations he hears, including the people whispering at the front of the car.

He thinks, "Here I am in 'Mac L' City again. I haven't been here since the World's Fair, and it looks fairly different now."

He looks out the window to see a few skyscrapers, "Yup, a little different. Well, I guess it's good to get out every once and a while with the people, so at least I can keep up with the local trends. It's not like most snitches wear the latest clothes or gear. I believe that's what they call it now days."

The lady next to him looks up and blushes when she realizes a very handsome and well-groomed man in his early twenties has been standing right next to her the whole ride. He notices her looking. She realizes this and turns away.

The man thinks to himself, "Too bad lady, it could never be. There was a time when I was foolish enough to believe in love, but I've learned a long time ago, love and me don't mix."

He looks away in effort to not encourage any communication. "So those are the new Trezelle Thomas shoes. And to believe in this day and age, with mass production methods and thousands of shoe companies that anyone would pay several hundred dollars for tennis shoes. And it's even less conceivable that people still kill for them." A teenager seated a few feet in front of him provoked this thought. "I guess several all-star appearances and championship after championship really do mean

something, like big pay checks.”

The train screeches to a slow stop. The man waits patiently for nearly everyone to exit the train before he does. The place he's going means very little to him and time means even less. Once he's exited the train, he stands off to the side and unfolds a piece of paper. “Who needs a smartphone when you can use a good ol' napkin.” The unfolded napkin reads, “Go up three blocks, cross the park by the statue and the tallest building is it.” He then throws the napkin into a nearby trash bin.

He can see the park off in the near distance, he heads towards it. “If I wasn't so bored with life...again, I probably would not have taken the job offer from these criminals. It's not like I need the money. For most people ten million dollars is a lot of money, but money along with time has lost its importance to me hundreds of years ago. I just hope that they aren't typical mafia type who wants someone dead, and for ten million it's probably a lot of someones.”

He enters the park. It's late at night, so he's the only person in earshot besides a late night jogger and his dog.

“I don't kill for pleasure. Never have and never will. It's just not me. Now hurting someone is a different story. Usually these mafia guys have a tough time hearing that I don't kill for money, so I usually have to leave a room full of clear headed people.”

He comes up to the statue. “A statue of Donovan Wates? I thought that one day he would have a statue of himself...in his house but not in a so-called public park.” He stands in front of the statue looking it over, he says, “A nerd with muscles? Can someone say ‘Oxymoron’?”

“No! But I can say give us your wallet!” demands one of three armed assailants who had approached the man from behind. He heard them approach but figured they were just nightwalkers, joggers, or something, so he paid them no mind. He turns around to find three men, two armed with knives, one with a bat. The three men start trying to circle him. He notices that the assumed ringleader is wearing a pair of nice Italian shoes, easily worth a couple of grand. The man figures that these shoes must have been specially ordered because the man's feet must be at least size fourteen.

“So much for the wallet, huh?” asks the man, who is standing nonchalantly.

“What?” asks the ringleader.

“Well, you asked for my wallet, but before I could even hand it over, you three started circling me.”

“Um...yeah give us a wallet!” says the assailant in a demanding yet uncertain voice.

“Where do they get idiots like this from?” thinks the man silently.

The ringleader who has more balls than brains demands again, “Give me a wallet!”

The man tries not to laugh at what he just heard and thinks, “Give me a wallet? Did someone forget his criminal acts flash cards?” He decides to have a little fun with these guys before he heads off to his business appointment.

“Can I give you his?”

“What? His what?”

“His wallet, you did say a wallet right? Not anyone’s in particular?”

The leader of this goon squad looks baffled but one of the other goons grows tired of this game and charges the man. The man easily ducks his attacker's wild swing, elbow's him in the midsection, then raises his forearm sending him to the ground. Another one charges, the man dodges his feeble attempt and chops the attacker in his throat. The thug drops to the ground, choking gasping for air and rolling around.

The ring leader finally runs at the man, who easily sidesteps him. He trips him on the way past, sending the attacker head first into the metal statue. The collision sounds like a church bell chimed once.

“Ouch, that had to hurt,” said the unharmed man as he approaches the only one who's not unconscious, he's on his hands and knees. The approaching man says, “See, you aren't able to kick it with the big dogs, but I am,” then kicks the man in his face. Now all three would be attackers are out cold.

The man kneels down and digs into the downed man's pocket. He pulls out the man's wallet, then walks over toward the downed team captain and says, “Here you go champ, here's a wallet,” then tosses the wallet of his partner in crime on him. The man then continues his way through the park, with the Katsuya Corporation skyscraper in front of him.

Chapter Two

The man approaches the steps of the building. He stops in front and looks up at the skyscraper. He blinks his eyes, and when they open a sheet of yellow has replaced his pupils and retina. The man continues to look up, his vision greatly improved. He looks at the second to the top floor of the building. That whole floor's windows are lit up, while most of the buildings other offices are dark. "So, that's where the meeting's gonna be." He blinks again and his eyes have returned to normal. He heads into the building. After clearing the revolving door, the security guard stationed at the desk asks, "Can I help you?"

"I'm here to see Mr. Katsuya."

"And you are?"

"Here to see Katsuya. Something wrong with your hearing?"

The minimal wage rent-a-cop decides against questioning this man again considering that most of Mr. Katsuya's guests don't like being ID'ed. He picks up the phone, "Somebody is here to see Mr. Katsuya...I don't know he hasn't said, but he should be on your monitor."

The man surveys the area, paying no attention to the guard's conversation. The guard hangs up the phone, "Okay, you've been cleared. Mr. Katsuya is expecting you. Please take the elevator to the right. We only leave one running after hours."

The man leaves the counter and heads toward the elevator. "Even though he didn't mention it, it's gonna be either one or two. I bet two," he thought to himself. The elevator chimes as it stops at the lobby.

The doors open and two Japanese men in black suits are standing inside. "I was right," thinks the man as he enters the elevator, turns around, and takes his place between them. The elevator starts its ascent. The man starts to think to himself, "I've heard some bad things about mafias, but none worse than what I've heard about this particular family of the Japanese mob. While these so called mafias don't hold a stick to the acts of Khan or even Zulu, as far as organized crime today, they are up there. I heard they even cut out the tongues of their spies and ninjas so they could never talk about the families activities, but that makes little sense because they could just write it down." The elevator stops on the ninety-ninth floor, which apparently is the top floor, as indicated by the button options. "I could swear I saw a floor above this one." He thinks as

he exits the elevator with one man in front and one in back of him.

They make their way down a long winding hallway, then the front man opens one of two conference room doors. The visitor steps in. A well-dressed Japanese man in his early forties is looking out of one of the office's wall-like windows overlooking the park. "Thank you gentlemen, you are excused."

"Yes, Mr. Katsuya," says the man who opened the door, who now pulls it shut behind him. The Japanese man sits down.

"Please have a seat."

"No, thank you."

"Are you sure? It's gonna take a while to explain exactly why I hired you."

"You mean 'might have hired me'. I haven't decided yet."

"Why do you sound so reluctant?"

"Because common street thugs don't wear thousand dollar shoes."

"Come again?"

The man throws the ID card he took from the wallet of one of his would-be muggers in the park, onto Katsuya's desk.

Katsuya inspects the card, "Oh...I see, but come on now, you understand I had to test you and see if you are as good as I've heard."

The man understands this perfectly, he's been tested many times before and even tested others, but he doesn't show it, instead he sits down as a gesture of acceptance.

"Well, as you probably already know, I'm Jin-Jun Katsuya, one of the chairmen of the Katsuya Corporation, but you can just call me Kats. And what shall I call you?"

"You can't, the number is unlisted."

Kats laughs, "Strong and funny. Must be a real lady killer."

"I'm a nobody killer."

"Oh, no, that's not why I want to hire you. I know you probably have heard some bad things about my company and my family, but let me assure you a lot of what you might have heard has been blown out of proportion."

"Like cutting out tongues?"

"Exactly. Our agents are not mistreated like that. And that subject brings us to why I, we need your help. One of our ex-operatives is killing off our board members. And we need your help to stop her."

"Ex-operatives? Sounds like a disgruntled ex-employee who wants

payback. I'm sure your company has its own internal ways of dealing with issues like this.”

“Yes, actually we do, but this was no normal operative, this was Shadow.” Kats expression shows the degree of seriousness involved but the man doesn't seem interested but does say, “Shadow? The deadly female assassin? I heard she was only a myth.”

“That's what I heard about you,” says Kats with a grin.

The man leans back in his chair, “So, why is she killing your people?”

“We have no clue. That's why we need your help. After fruitless attempts to capture her, we the remaining board members decided that to catch a myth, let's use a myth.”

The man doesn't react to the comment; he continues to sit leaned back with his Stetson's brim blocking his eyes from view, “So you want her alive?”

“Yes, if possible. She had been missing for almost ten years; then, out of the blue, she reappeared killing off our board members.”

“Missing?”

“Yes, we sent her away on a mission to retrieve for us a lost artifact from the Tomb of King Foymama.”

“The King of Greed.”

“Yes, you heard of him?”

The man thinks back to the time he had to battle the King's pet killing machine, Taxa, to retrieve an item to save a village that was cursed. This was back in the days when the monks used to take care of him.

“Continue.”

“Okay, where was I? Oh yes, well, she never returned from the mission and considering her mission success rate was one hundred percent at the time, we assumed she must have been killed.”

“So, you have no clue why she would be killing off her former employer?”

“Well, actually, we don't have anything solid, just theories and that is why I need to know if you are on board because if so, then the next board members life is in danger.”

“How many has she killed?”

“Six, all in Japan. The other members are now here in the states as a way to better protect them. We assume she'll be stateside within the next

twenty-four hours.”

“How many are left and when did you move them here?”

“If she kills or attempts to kill Mr. Ioto, then our theory is correct and that will leave four. And we moved them here about twenty-four hours ago.”

“Let me get this straight. She's been killing your people in some kind of predictable order and you can't stop her? And you moved your people to the States and you believe that she'll be here for them that soon?”

She's that good. Now do you understand our need for concern?”

He feels like it could be the biggest challenge since he prevented Judaki from destroying the world. Even though he's starting to feel excited on the inside, outside shows nothing. He decides to cover his excitement, just in case it did show with a traditional gesture all mafia employers have come to expect, “So ten million, right?”

“Yes, ten million U.S. dollars.”

“Okay, I'll catch her and bring her back, but I need as much information on her as you got.”

Kats slides forward a folder that was on his desk on some papers. The label head says, “Codename: Shadow.” While the folder has the words “For Century” written in Japanese and black ink.

The man looks at the folder but doesn't pick it up, and then he looks at Kats who says, “I told you I had to test you. So now I know you understand Japanese, Mr. Century.”

The man starts to think of the emotional pain attached to that name. That was the last time he allowed his heart to love and he had to abandon it for the best of both them. The man grabs the folder and stands up and heads for the door.

“So we'll be in contact Mr. Century?”

The man says without turning around, “Yeah, real soon and if you're gonna call me by that, at least get it right. It's Century.”

Then he exits the room.

Chapter Three

The little girl sits excitedly as her mother works on her angel costume for the annual school play. The young mother of this bundle of energy has the dress almost complete.

“You're gonna be the cutest angel in the whole play,” says the mom.

“Yup and with the prettiest dress. I'll be a princess angel.”

The mother laughs, “Sure dear, you can be anything you want.”

“Mommy.”

“Yes dear.”

“Thank you.”

The lady smiles, “You're welcome, sweetheart.”

She lifts the finished dress from the sewing machine, “Stand up Betty. I want to see how it's going to look.”

Little Betty leaps up with a grin that would lighten up a whole room. “Okay mommy. I'm going to be the bestest princess angel ever.”

“Yes you are, dear, yes you are.”

A pickup truck pulls into the driveway with the music almost blowing out the cheap quality speakers.

“Oh no! He's home and I didn't even start dinner! I completely lost track of time!” says the lady as she frantically makes her way into the kitchen, while Betty sits on her stool next to the sewing machine.

In the kitchen, the woman is scrambling around to make it appear as if she's been cooking. She puts the thawed hamburger in the frying pan and turns the burner on high. She starts a pot of water and tosses spaghetti noodles in.

The front door opens and her husband walks in. “Damn idiots at work, fucking write me up. They can kiss my fucking ass!”

He tossed his work jacket on the chair he passes on the way to the kitchen. His path takes him through the room where Betty is sitting quietly, he doesn't notice her. He opens the kitchen door and to his disbelief dinner is not ready. “What? Dinner is not ready? What the fuck have you been doing all day?”

She's pouring the sauce into a saucepan, her hand is shaking so much that she spills some of the sauce on the stove. Once the jar is empty, she reaches for a towel.

He grabs her by her arm as she reaches, "I asked you why didn't you fucking start dinner earlier? You know what fucking time I get home each damn day!"

With tears and fear forming in her eyes, "I'm sorry. I was working on Betty's costume for the play."

The man is so furious that he pushes her to the side and starts pacing around the kitchen. Little Betty sits quietly in her place as she watches shadows on the open door play out the actions of both parents.

"I fucking work all day and this is my fucking reward? You don't have to do shit. I provide for you and this is how you pay me back? No respect at work and no fucking respect at home. You could have worked on the fucking costume tonight after dinner!"

"But the play is tonight," she pleads.

"So fucking what! No one's fucking going anywhere!"

"Mark please! She's been waiting to go to this for weeks."

"So fucking what! I haven't eaten shit! No fucking one is going anywhere. I am going to lay down the fucking law in this house!"

Betty's tears go unnoticed in the other room. The mother is now crying also, "Mark, please."

Mark's patience has grown thin and he's getting tired of tears. "Shut the fuck up bitch!" he yells as he hits her with a closed fist.

"See what you made me do you stupid bitch!"

The lady is now cowering on the floor and choking on tears and spit. She pleads, "Please take it out on me, but not Betty. I'm the one who messed up. Please take her to the play."

"I'm not taking her anywhere! Shit, she's probably not even my fucking kid. You were out whoring around!"

"You know that's not true. You're the only man I've ever been with."

"Then why the fuck were you found naked at that mother fucking campground?!"

"Yeah right you fucking slut!"

Little Betty's blue eyes are wide-open and dripping tears. Her mother is sobbing on the floor balled up in the corner.

"Stop your fucking whining!"

Mark then climbs on top of her, huddled in the corner and starts punching her in the head. Her arms block some punches, but some of Mark's timed punches make their way through.

Little Betty grips the costume angel so tightly, that one of the wings breaks off and falls to the floor. The little girl's eyes are locked on the shadows on the door.

The mother's screams and flesh meeting flesh are finally drowned out by the smoke detector that goes off due to the burning hamburger on the stove. The noise does not distract the man from his attack.

A phone ringing draws Shadow's attention to the present and to the person sitting behind his desk in his office. On the dark rooftop, Shadow stares down into the office through the sky roof. It's nighttime and late, only an occasional car can be heard driving around on the streets below. The man motions for two other men to leave the room. They do, and then the man continues his phone conversation. Shadow looks around the office and notices that no one else is in the room. She draws her sword from its sleeve.

In the back seat of the taxi cab, Century thumbs through the files, “Nothing too exciting or shocking in here, which usually means one of two things, either she's really over hyped or this folder is missing some pages. I hate being left in the shadows no pun intended.”

He flips to the part about her past. “So the myth is true, she was a prostitute before becoming Shadow and she was also a junkie too. Not too surprising to use her, someone the world would hardly miss.”

He now reads over the training files. “They must have worked her ass off to learn that many things. Considering just the physical training part must have taken a long time considering she would be a recovering drug addict. And I haven't met many prostitutes who have the capability to learn six different forms of martial arts, along with various armed and unarmed combat techniques. And she can read and write fourteen different languages.” The list goes on.

He decides to double-check something in the file. “Just as I thought, something doesn't add up. She learned all this in five years, that's even more than I could handle.” Century looks out of the window of the taxi because he noticed it's been sitting for a while.

“Hey what happened? This heap of junk finally break down?” refers Century to the situation and the rustic vehicle.

“No, my friend, there appears to have been an accident or something. The street is blocked by police.”

Century does his vision-enhancing blink to get a better look. He

sees several cops, including the detectives casing the scene. Also, a few Japanese men in expensive suits standing behind the yellow tape. Century looks at the address of that building, which is four blocks away. "It looks like a party started without me."

He hands the cabbie a hundred dollar bill.

"Hey, I don't have change," says the cabbie.

"And I don't have time," says Century as he exits the cab, "so with the change, go out and buy yourself some breath mints and an air freshener for the car." He then shuts the door and heads for the building on foot.

Chapter Four

Century blends in with the crowd of civilian on-lookers. He asks the man to his right, "So what happened?"

"I don't know, I think someone got killed."

"Why'd you say that?"

"Well, there was an ambulance here earlier, and look how many cops are here. It even looks like some detectives are here."

Century nods then starts toward the building. Once he reaches the yellow tape, he ducks under it. A police officer heads to intercept him. Century digs into his inside coat pocket as the cop turns and tries to stop him.

"Hey buddy, you can't go in there."

Century removes his hand from his coat flipping out a wallet with a badge and I.D. card, "I'm special agent Jones, FBI."

The cop doesn't seem too shocked to be out ranked and lets him pass. Century thinks, "Amazing how many times that has worked."

He heads up the stairs and into the building. There seems to be one officer directing the CSI team. Century approaches the man and flashes the fake identification and same spill. The man states his name and title in return.

"So when and where did all the action happen? And where is Mr. Ioto's body?"

"I believe upstairs, but we haven't been able to confirm anything."

Century ponders, "What's going on when a guy on the streets knows more than the lead CSI captain?" He asks, "So why so many people on the scene?"

"911 got called from a frantic housekeeper. That a man staggered out of a room with a ninja star lodged in his neck. The lady said she saw Mr. Ioto's body missing its head, lying on the carpet. When we arrived we found a dead man who was apparently tossed or fell off the roof.

"And why haven't you been able to confirm Mr. Ioto's death?"

"I don't like to play into rumors, but as you probably already heard this, but it's common knowledge that this so called camera company is a front for the mob."

"What do you think?"

"Well, it doesn't matter what I think, but chew on this. On the way

here we got a call from the chief saying that we can't go above the first floor. Then when we got here, they had more attorneys than they had security."

"Well I'm going to get to the bottom of this."

"Good luck, I don't even think you guys can get through there."

"I can."

"Like I said good luck."

Century heads toward the elevators. There are three people standing in front of the elevator; two are security guards and the third seems to be an attorney. When Century reaches the trio, the attorney says before Century even has a chance to speak, "Can't you guys get it through your thick skulls? The higher floors are off limits and we aren't talking about anything to anyone."

Century, who doesn't ever have much patience usually has even less now, "I work for Mr. Katsuya," he says.

"And so do we, and your point?"

Century squeezes his fist and raises it to the man's face, once his fist is clenched two-six inch spikes stick out of his knuckles," These are my points!"

Both of the men on the sides of the lawyer reached for their weapons hidden in their sports coats, but stopped once they seen the spikes are only an inch from their co-workers face.

The lawyer gives a nervous gulp, already sweating. The attorney tries to use the only weapon he has ever used, the law. "If you even touch me, I'll sue you for everything you own and have you spend the rest of your life behind bars." This speech was a little stronger than Century thought the attorney could muster, but it was still laughable.

In his ever so steady voice Century replies, "You can't sue..." Then similar style spikes extend from the side of his arm, through holes in his coat, from wrist to shoulder, "If they can't find any witnesses or the plaintiff."

The men move their arms away from their pistols.

"Enough of the bravado gentlemen. We have an ex-operative to catch," says Katsuya who has just walked up, wearing a very expensive white suit. "Norton, let us through."

"Yes, Mr. Katsuya," says Norton the lawyer, with a sense of relief in his voice. Century's weaponry withdraws. All three men step aside.

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