

IRON Y



ROBERT  
SHROUD



IRONY  
THE ANIMAL

by  
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To Chris

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Hush little baby don't say a word  
And never mind that noise you heard  
It's just the beasts under your bed  
In your closet in your head

-Metallica, Enter Sandman



# Part 1

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## **Empty Nights**

# 1

“I DON'T want to talk about it anymore. The job is the job. That's the way it's always been, that's the way it's always going to be.”

He could hear the words echoing in his head as if they were shouted in a canyon.

“If you don't like it you shouldn't have married me. You knew I was a cop when you said *I do*.”

The look of defeated anguish in

his wife's face when he stormed out of their apartment, worked a one-two combination with the words. He cringed amid the fog of the wee-morning fall air. As the canyon echoes and his wife's image began the next round, he pulled out of the loop.

*Can't be on stakeout spazzing every few minutes.*

Maybe this was a bad idea. Maybe he should have accepted his partner Reuben's invitation to dinner with his family. God knows, he hasn't had anything resembling a good meal

since Carol left.

“Kerplunk!”

At the sound, his exhale caught in his throat. He spun with his glock in hand. In that split of time he saw all his problems solved. He saw his wife back in his arms. He saw the headlines, *'Disgraced Cop Makes Good,'* and the mayor pinning on his medal—*“Good job, Detective, you’ve made the city proud today.”*

In that split of time he saw it all, right before he saw the alley cat scurrying away, after knocking an

empty soda can off the dumpster below. *Damn. Reign yourself in, Reg. You're jumpier than an office worker in a picnic sack race. Might be time to call it a night.*

He considered his options.

He could stay perched on the fire escape, inhaling wafting alley stench, and hope to god the maniac will strike in this neighborhood. His other choice was to get back in his beat up, four-year-old Town Car, limp home, and perform his nightly salute to the gin gods.

It was an easy decision.

He liked being on stakeout, but liked his gin better. Especially now, since there was no one to warm his bed. Detective Reginald Thomas Williams unlatched the metal clamp holding up the fire escape ladder. He waited for it to hit the pavement with a thud. Climbing down, he could already taste the Seagram's Extra Dry burning his throat. He reached the last step and turned to exit the back street, when his gin soaked dreams were interrupted.

"Hey, what is going on down there? Keep the noise down, or I'll call the cops."

He looked up to where the voice came from. Hanging out her window with a hair full of large, pink rollers, and a mean scowl, was an older black woman. The ladder thud may have ruffled her feathers, but his experience told him it was the neighborhood busybody. She was peeking out to see who was doing what, and whether she knew them or not. *No doubt gathering her gossip*

*notes for the next day's yak-fest.*

"Routine patrol, ma'am," he said.

"What are you *routine patrolling* in a garbage alley at two o'clock in the morning?"

"Keeping the city safe for you and yours, ma'am."

"Then catch the lunatic that is raping and hanging women up all over town, instead of trying to get your groove on with some hoe at two o'clock in the morning."

"Doing our best, ma'am."

"Fuck you *and* your best. I got a



daughter who is scared to leave her apartment to go to work. You and that best of yours ain't worth *shit*."

He could see lights coming on in other apartments. He knew before long everyone and their mothers would be fucking him and his best from their windows.

"We will take your suggestions under advisement."

"To hell with your advisement. Let me tell you something..."

He could still hear her. He made his last statement walking quickly

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