

## Shard Warriors – Vol.2

### Chapter 3

#### Brian

He hung up his lab coat for the day.

Nodding goodbye to his colleagues, Brian strode out of the sanitised room, made his way down a white-tile corridor.

There were several checkpoints between the labs and the parking lot. The first few were manned with armed guards, required ID and iris scans to pass. The further away he got from the labs, though, the easier it was getting through the checkpoints. The last one, the door to the underground parking lot, had just a keypad keeping the entry-point secure.

Brian typed in the four-digit passcode, opened the door, went in search of his car.

Technically, there was another checkpoint after this. A guard station outside, at the entrance to the compound. But they didn't check drivers leaving. They only cared about those wanting in.

The drive out of the compound was simple enough. No trouble, no problems. Plenty of time to think and ponder.

Shards... They were surprisingly fragile, weren't they?

Back when he'd been the Blue, he'd shattered more than a few Shards – all of them embedded in the chests of monsters. In his memories, the Shards had been tough and resilient. Able to resist even the unnatural strength of his Morphed self. But no. The actual gems themselves were more fragile than glass, it seemed.

So, why did they seem so unbreakable in his memories?

The effort it'd taken to get to them, perhaps. The struggle against Shard Monsters, finding openings and striking hard and true... Perhaps the tough fights had skewed his perspective, tricked him into thinking Shards were harder to break.

Or perhaps the Shards bonded to those Shard Monsters *had* been stronger. Something to do with the bonding or the mutation?

Certainly, there was some form of symbiotic relationship-

Brian's phone began to buzz.

He sighed, glanced at it on his car's dashboard.

Ring, ring. Ring, ring.

Keeping one eye on the road, Brian reached for the phone. Checked to see who was calling him.

He groaned when he saw the name.

Jason. Again.

Brian ignored the call, tossed his phone onto the passenger seat. Pointedly ignored the ringing until it stopped.

"Finally," he found himself muttering. "You'd think the idiot would learn by now that I-"

The phone started ringing again.

Brian shut his mouth, glared at the road ahead. His fists clenched around the steering wheel, his jaw tightening. When the rage started to bubble up, boil in his chest, he embraced it. Let it burn hot inside him.

Brian jolted awake.

The world around him was black, his surroundings indistinguishable in the dark of night.

He was in his bed. Eyes open, body alert.

What the... Why was he-

A loud thump. Another.

Heavy footsteps approaching his bedroom door. A light flashed on outside, shining through the tiny gaps around the doorframe.

His body reacted by itself; kicking his blanket aside, rolling out of bed, falling into a battle-ready stance with fists raised.

His heart thundered in his ears.

Another loud footstep, right on the other side of the door.

The doorhandle began to turn.

Brian lowered himself, legs tensed. Like a coiled snake, ready to lunge and strike at any moment. He drew his fist back, inhaled a deep breath.

The door opened.

And in walked the Red, fully Morphed and silhouetted by the light behind him.

Brian faltered, stance crumbling.

"Good," the Red muttered, voice distorted and altered by the suit's helmet. "You're awake."

Brian forced his body to relax, stood up straight.

A few moments later, his bedroom light was on.

Across the room, the Red pulled his hand away from the light switch, folded his arms over his chest.

"What the fuck is it with you lot and not answering your goddamned phones?" The Red grunted, shook his head. "Seriously, it's getting real fucking annoying."

"Jason," Brian choked out. "What do you want?"

The Red reached down, touched his Morph Belt, muttered something. His helmet retreated, revealing the face of a man Brian hadn't seen in months. Jason Morose. The bastard blessed by fate, in the flesh. His bulging muscles were visible clearly under the Red's suit – the scaly, metallic armour skin-tight on him.

When Jason took a step forward, Brian flinched back.

He couldn't take Jason in an ordinary, *fair* fight. There wasn't a chance in Hell of him taking his former friend down under *these* circumstances.

"The team's getting back together," Jason shrugged. "We need the Blue back. Belt's waiting for you back at the-"

"No."

Jason blinked at him.

"I'm done with it," Brian said, trying to sound a lot more confident than he felt. "You and the rest can go fuck yourself." *Or each other.* "Leave. I've got work in the morning."

"Call in sick," Jason snapped. He took another step forward. "This is more important than some stupid *job*. You're the Blue, like it or not. You're coming back."

"Don't have any sick days left," Brian lied.

"Then quit."

Brian's back pressed against his bedroom wall. Nowhere left to retreat. Jason stepped closer.

"No," Brian gulped. "My job's important! I can't quit. I *won't*. Go find someone else to be the Blue. I don't care! Just leave me alone!"

*He knows.* The thought was like a cold fist around Brian's heart. *He's going to kill me.*

"If I could," Jason shrugged. "I would. God knows how fucking useless *you* are. I'd trade you away in a heartbeat."

Brian's eyes flicked past Jason, to the dresser near the door.

To the ID sat atop that dresser.

"But we both know that's not an option," Jason grunted.

Brian pulled his eyes away from his lab ID, lest Jason look back and find the incriminating evidence. He forced his gaze onto Jason, matched the Red's glare.

"I'm not going back," he said. "You're wasting your-"

Jason shot forward, moving faster than humanly possible. His white-gloved hand gripped Brian's throat. Before Brian could even react, Jason lifted him up – shoving him against the wall, choking him.

Brian struggled feebly. Kicking out with his legs, arms flailing.

It was useless. Morphed as he was, Jason had superhuman strength and resilience. Brian might as well have been hitting and kicking a stone pillar, for all the good it did him.

"Remember when Gramps gave us the Morph Belts?" Jason was saying, holding him up effortlessly. "He told us they bond for life. I always wondered about that. If one of us died in battle and the enemy got their hands on that Belt, would they be able to bond it? For 'life', right? Or did he mean the *Belt's* life? If you died, would someone else be able to bond the Blue Belt, or will it stay bound to you forever?"

Darkness crept in, Brian's vision fading. His eyes were bulging, mind reeling.

"If you're not at the base come morning," Jason said, staring into Brian's eyes without a hint of remorse. "We'll find out."

Jason released him.

Brian dropped to the floor, gasping for air, choking, clutching his injured throat. Eyes watering, stars bursting in his vision, thoughts giving way to baser impulses. Fight or flight. Only there was no way to fight, and nowhere to flee.

Cowering was his only option.

"See you in a few hours, Brian," Jason said, turning away from him, beginning to walk away. "Or later. Up to you."

He paused at the door and, for a terrifying second, Brian thought the Red was going to look at the dresser – see the ID. Discover the truth.

Instead, Jason chuckled.

"Thinking of it," Jason said, shaking his head in amusement. "Either way, you'll be turning blue. Kinda lookin' a little blue right now, too. The colour suits you."

Then he was gone.

Footsteps moving away, through the little home. Out the door and into the night.

Brian crawled on hands and knees, not trusting himself to stand, all the way to the dresser. He dragged himself up, hand reaching the top of the dresser.

When his fingers brushed over the ID, he gripped it, pulled it down to him.

An ID for Brian's workplace.

The Venitus Institute. Shard research wing. Confidential.

*He doesn't know*, Brian breathed out a sigh of relief, clutching the ID close.

Jason didn't know he was working for the 'enemy'. Had been for the last few weeks. Ever since, out of the blue, he'd been offered the job. A chance to study the Shards, uncover their secrets.

At first, he'd thought the job offer was a trap. Some way of isolating Brian so he could be 'dealt with'. But no. It hadn't been a trap. It'd been an *opportunity*. A chance to learn more about the Shards, figure out why the Venitus clan had been making monsters with them, discover new ways of utilising the mysterious gemstones.

There was so much potential for the Shards to make life better for *everyone*. Entire new branches of science and research. Brian could help make the world a better place.

Not that Jason would understand.

The moment he found out – and it was only a matter of time until he *did* learn about it – Brian was as good as dead.

Unless...

Unless he had the Blue Belt to protect him.

**Jason**

He leap into the air.

The wind rushed in his ears, ruffled his hair. He flew up higher than any normal man could've hoped to jump.

His feet landed on the rooftop of Brian's home.

A gentle landing. No force of impact. No broken tiles.

Years ago, when he'd first started using the Red Belt, he'd been unable to control his newfound strength. He'd jumped over buildings, jumped *through* them, crashed into walls and burst through roofs. Not a hint of the grace or dexterity that'd come so easily to Jen. But, over time, he'd gotten the hang of it.

Three down. One to go.

Brian was a pussy. Always had been. A coward, made bold by the Blue Belt. And, even then, he'd shied away from fights at every opportunity. He wasn't a fighter. Not like the rest of them.

He'd come.

Which left Abigail as the final holdout.

His cousin. The one who'd stuck by him even as the others had all abandoned the team.

He hadn't called her. Hadn't messaged her. Not yet.

When he went to Abi, it'd be with the other three in tow.

The team would be made *whole* again.

And then they'd.... They'd...

They'd what?

*Burn them*, his Red Shard whispered. *Burn everything*.

Jason's head throbbed.

He shook himself, pushed the thoughts aside, reached down for his Morph Belt.

"Full Morph," he commanded it.

The suit's metal flowed up from his Morphed chest, wrapped around his head and formed a helmet. Like a second skin, the strange metal coated his entire body. Lending him strength and speed and endurance. It *completed* him.

Jason stretched out, readied himself for the journey home. Jumping from rooftop to rooftop, hidden by the night, the city his playground. It was one of the best perks of-

Someone was watching him.

A man standing on the sidewalk next to Brian's home, shrouded in darkness. A man that hadn't been there a few seconds before.

Jason crouched low, stared at the shadowed figure.

Whoever it was, they'd tilted their head to one side. Jason thought he saw a smile. A clean-shaven lower face. The man waved a marble-white hand at him. Then the air distorted, warped, swallowed the shadow man whole.

Jason blinked.

The sidewalk was empty again. No hint of the man. No figure in sight. The entire street was deserted.

Bizarre.

No way an ordinary human could move that fast. Not even with a Morph Belt. And that hadn't been a Shard Monster.

Jason shook his head, let out a little chuckle.

"I need to get some rest," he said to himself. "I'm seeing things."

He scanned the street for a few seconds more. Then, finally, he launched himself off Brian's roof. He landed on a neighbour's rooftop, so gently it didn't make a sound. Another hop put him on the house across the street.

It didn't take long to build up speed and momentum. And, sooner than he'd have liked, Jason arrived home.

He found Maya fucking herself on his bed. With no dildos or dicks around, she'd evidently decided that a cucumber out of his fridge was good enough.

The busty beauty took one look at him as he entered, let out a breathy moan, then slammed that cucumber as deep inside herself as she could get it. Her head tilted back, entire body arching. A high-pitched gasp burst from Maya's parted lips.

An orgasm?

Jason shook his head, had to fight down his disgust.

It hadn't been so long ago that Maya had been the most innocent of the gang. A blushing, blonde bombshell in pink t-shirts and hoodies, cheeks matching in colour and lips always spread into a wide smile. Jason might've been the group leader, but Maya had been the heart.

That she'd been reduced to *this* - the creature soiling Jason's blankets and bedsheets - was a disgrace.

Elsewhere in his small apartment, he'd find Jen. His pretty sister. On her knees, most likely. Cleaning floors or corners, rearranging furniture, organising the food in his kitchen by expiration date or nutritional value or by name. She'd only been here for a day or two, and she'd already redecorated and restructured his apartment a dozen times. The only time she wasn't bouncing off the walls, looking for things to do, was when she was fast asleep.

How useful would *either* of them be now?

Halen Venitus. He'd done this.

*Burn*, the Red Shard demanded.

And Jason would. When the time came, he'd incinerate that arrogant, evil little bastard. Roast him alive.

The Shard in his chest burned hot.

"Brian's back in," Jason said, walking over to the bed. "He'll be at the base come morning."

Or he'd be in the morgue come evening.

Not a thought that Jason relished. But, if his old friend refused to become the Blue again, he'd leave Jason with no other choice. He needed the Blue - either Brian, or a new one. The world needed them. *All* of them.

He didn't quite understand *why* just yet. But he felt it, knew it in his heart and soul.

The world needed the Shard Warriors. And it was Jason's job to gather them, unite them. Lead them.

He walked towards the bed, towards Maya.

She was too dazed, too euphoric, to notice his approach.

He reached down to his Morph Belt, touched the red disk.

"Partial Morph," he muttered softly.

The suit reacted instantly. Retreating from his head and his crotch, remaining firmly in place everywhere else.

His cock sprang free, hard as iron.

Finally, the slut saw him. Realised what he wanted.

She grinned like a lunatic, reached down to her own Belt, the pink disk there.

"Partial Morph!" Maya moaned.

White and pink metallic scales shot out from the metal belt, spreading over Maya in an instant. Her arms and legs, her tummy and back and shoulders. But not her heavy chest, nor her head or her crotch.

She spread her legs for him.

Pink indeed.