

Shard Warriors – Vol.2

Chapter 6

Gramps

Robert Finnegan. Malcolm Morose. Hunter. Nobody. Old Man. The Grey. He'd gone by so many different names and titles over the years that now none of them meant all that much anymore. And yet...

"Gramps?!"

It was, perhaps, the most apt name for him.

Gramps. Grandfather to a group of heroes.

Sure, not all of them were his kin. In terms of blood, only three of the five were his grandchildren. But the other two, sweet Maya and clever Brian – who'd reminded Gramps so much of his younger self – were practically family too. He was 'Gramps' to all five of them.

Jason, the first of The Five, was gaping at him.

Not that surprising, given the suddenness of his arrival.

What was surprising was the Red Shard planted in the boy's bare chest. Not a good sign, that. Nor were the bandages.

And answering the door partially Morphed...

"May I come in?" He asked his grandson.

Jason was too stunned to respond.

So he strode forward anyway, slipped past the boy and shut the door behind them.

Evidently, a lot had happened in the time he'd been away.

"Come on son," he said, hoping Jason wasn't too stunned to follow. "Let's see if we can't get you fixed. How long since you were bonded with that Shard?"

Maya

She watched, partially clothed, as the old man instructed Jason to lay down. Sitting the opposite side of the bed, her eyes darting from one man to the other.

Gramps was back?

It was like her brain hadn't fully registered the information. It was still processing things. And slowly at that.

Gramps was back? But... since when?

Jason lay flat on the bed, chest up. His eyes were narrowed, lips pressed into a thin line, muscles rigid.

It was the look of a man who wanted to shout and scream and rage, but who was forcing himself to hold back. Ready to snap at any moment, launch into action.

Not that he would, right? He wouldn't actually *attack* Gramps... Would he?

"The Shards look like crystals," Gramps grunted, dumping an old, beaten backpack on the floor and leaning down to search inside it. "But they're more like... seeds. Parasitic seeds. How long has it been since you *acquired* that Red Shard? And have you used its powers very often?"

"Months," Jason growled. "And no."

"The Shards feed on mental interaction," Gramps continued, producing what looked like a pair of metal tweezers. White metal, same as the Morph Belts. "Communication. The more you interact with a Shard, the more it grows. Lay still. This will be uncomfortable."

Maya watched in fascination as Gramps placed the tip of the tweezers over Jason's Red Shard, gripped it with the strange metal.

Jason gasped, eyes widening. He bawled his fists, strained in place as Gramps tugged on the Red Shard.

Slowly, the gemstone came away from Jason's skin – a cluster of stringy, red lines attached to it. Like roots that'd sprouted from a seed. After a half-inch or so, the veiny red roots came to an end. They moved slowly in the air, waving in a breeze that didn't exist.

"What the fuck," Jen breathed from one corner of the room bedroom, "is *that*?"

"As I said," Gramps set the Red Shard down on the bedside table, raised his gloved fist and slammed it down on the Shard and its roots. "They're like seeds."

When his hand came away, only a small pile of red dust remained where the Shard had been.

"To grow, they need interaction. They get that when they're used. The more a person uses a Shard, the more the roots grow. Once they reach critical size, the host undergoes mutation. That's what Shard Monsters are."

Jason was sitting up in bed now, staring down at his chest. There was a cut there, dribbling blood down his body. Nothing lethal or dangerous, though. A wound that'd heal by itself.

"If a Shard is newly fused, hasn't been used much, it can be safely removed. Once the roots reach a person's heart, though, it becomes impossible to remove the Shard without killing the host. I'd wager that's the case with Halen Venitus. He'll have those roots all through his chest. His mother will have it even worse. If that woman hasn't mutated yet, she's not far off it."

Gramps slipped his metal tweezers back inside his pack.

"It's also why, barring one exception, you'll never encounter a human with two or more Shards bonded to them. Shards communicate with each other. Slap two on someone and both Shards will feed off the other. The roots grow out instantly, resulting in spontaneous mutation. Now, enough gawking. Where are the others? Brian and Abigail. Call them. We've got work to do."

He hadn't elaborated further. Just sent Maya and Jen out to collect the others, promising answers when everyone was together.

First, Maya had called Abi. When the girl hadn't answered, she'd left a voicemail. Then she'd headed off to Abi's home, only to find the place empty. Wherever Abi was, it wasn't there.

After that, she'd just sorta wandered around.

Walking down streets, searching sidewalks and alleys. As if Abi were a lost pet, and Maya could find her by just looking around aimlessly. Which, unsurprisingly, ended up being a total waste of time.

She kept walking though. Wandering.

Gramps was back. The gang was back together. There was a plan. They were finally taking the fight to the Venitus Institute.

So why did she feel so unfulfilled?

Why didn't she care?

It was the chafing. The way her short-shorts kept rubbing against her inner thigh. The heat between her legs. The warmth and tingles inside her flaring with every other step. A distraction that demanded Maya's every thought, swallowed every ounce of attention she had to give.

Gramps was back. And he'd looked... good.

She flushed at the thought, heart thumping loud in her chest.

She wasn't into older guys. Or, well, she *was*. But not *that* much older. Not men with greying hair and wrinkles and walking sticks. Not that Gramps had a walking stick or anything...

But he was lean. Straight-backed and strong. Bold.

He was a man.

And that's what Maya wanted. *Needed.*

A man.

A *big* man, with a big hard-

She groaned, shook her head quickly.

The heat that washed over her face stung, brought with it a well of shame and revulsion.

Was this really how far she'd stooped? Thinking about *Gramps* like that? *Gramps?! Of all the people in the world, of all the men and monsters...*

Monsters...

Heat pulsed inside her.

Maya did her best, focussed on her task. But, as her eyes roamed the streets, it wasn't Abi she found herself searching for. Deep down, she knew it wasn't Abi she wanted to find.

As she walked past a pair of guys, neither of which bothered to hide their appreciation of her, it happened.

A switch inside her flipped.

She froze in place, turned to look at the guys who'd just walked past her. One of which was still staring at her over his shoulder. Not good-looking guys, but they were *big*. Strong. The type of guys that hit the gym multiple times a week.

The one looking over his shoulder at her winked.

Without thinking, Maya reached for her pink tank-top's straps. She pushed them aside, pulled them down. Flashed her tits at the guy.

He stumbled, swore, tripped over.

By the time he'd righted himself, gotten back up onto his feet, Maya was gone. Sprinting topless down the street.

She darted down an alleyway, kicking off her shoes and socks, tearing off her short-shorts. She laughed, basking in the tingling warmth spreading through her. The guy's face replaying over and over in her head.

A voice in the back of her head was trying to scold her, telling her she'd done something stupid.

Another voice was reprimanding her for not inviting both those big guys to join her in this alley. She'd never had a threesome before. At least, not one with two guys.

She wanted to try it.

Two guys at the same time. Three. More.

Monsters and huge cocks and sweet, orgasmic oblivion.

She *craved* it.

Soon. Soon she'd be able to experience it again.

A Shard Monster's cock.

If Gramps was back and the gang were together again, it was only a matter of time before it came time to fight. And while the others were off being heroes and saving the day, Maya would play the part of damsel in distress. Separated from the others, surrounded by a whole host of big, scary monsters.

Her joyous laughter echoed through the alleyway, though only one other person was close enough to hear it.

In the shadows, hidden from Maya.

He watched with a satisfied smile. The Purple Shard in his chest pulsing as he added the finishing touches to Maya's mind.

Jason

"Norman Venitus is alive," Gramps told the assembled champions.

Five sat around a metal table, with Gramps standing between two of them. Hands braced on the table's surface, eyes hard, voice firm.

"For a long time," the old man said, "I believed he was dead. Years and years ago, when I was as young as you all are now..." He shook his head, sighed. "But, I was wrong."

He told his tale, and the five listened. About how he'd heard rumours of Shard Monsters abroad, whisperings of some strange new cult worshipping them. It was, Gramps claimed, the reason he'd vanished. He'd left to investigate the rumours.

"When we discovered the Shards," Gramps said, "we tested them. Figured out what colours had which powers. Red for fire, yellow for speed, orange for strength. But there are so many types that you haven't encountered before. Black Shards, which give shadow powers. Indigo, which is separate from Purple. Aquamarine. Brown. Grey. So many. And, most important of all, the White Shard."

Gramps looked around the table, practically glared at each of them. Jason glared right back.

"Norman bonded the White Shard accidentally, before we knew anything about what Shards could do. Before we learned how to multiply them. It is, as far as I'm aware, the only White Shard in the world. Even if it were possible to create more, I doubt Norman would ever do so."

He paused for dramatic effect. Jason crossed his arms, shirt rubbing over the sore spot on his chest as he did. The place where his Red Shard had been.

"The White Shard," Gramps continued, "I believe, is the 'Control Shard'. I can only hypothesise, but from what I've seen... Norman Venitus has bonded more than just the White Shard. Indeed, as far as I know, he's fused every type of Shard to his body. Without undergoing the usual mutation."

"Get to the point," Jason snapped.

Gramps glowered at him.

Everyone else around the table glanced between the two, at each other. All too cowardly to speak up.

"I've chased Norman Venitus all around the world, following rumours and clues, trying to figure out what he's up to. This cult he's set up – it's *everywhere*. Sects in every major country in the world. And the things they believe..." Gramps shook his head. "Two days ago, I learned that he's come back here. To this city. Has been here for weeks."

The old man reached into a pocket, pulled out a small stack of photographs. He slid them across the table, each of The Five ending up with two or three.

Jason barely bothered to glance down at the photos in front of him. What was the point? Some old man that Gramps had beef with. What did that have to do with Jason? The only thing Jason gave a shit about was bringing Halen down. Ending that smug bastard once and for all.

He glanced around the table, hoping to see the same indifference on the faces of his team. *His* team.

But no. On several faces, he saw recognition. Brian and Jen were staring wide-eyed at the photographs. Abi had her lips pursed, eyebrows narrowed. Maya was practically panting, salivating. But when *wasn't* she these days?

Gramps was staring right at him.

Jason shot the man a glare, forced himself to look at the photos. Play along until-

He recognised the man.

Slicked back hair. Thirty-something years old. Vaguely similar in appearance to Halen Venitus. Wearing a neat black suit, as opposed to the priest robes Jason was familiar with. Gloves on his hands, a wide smile on his face.

The shock was enough to knock Jason's anger and frustration aside. Make him forget all about Halen and Gramps and the team and *everything*.

That man – the priest that'd set Jason on his path to reunite The Five - *that* was Norman Venitus?

Why?

How?

"I don't know what he's up to," Gramps said, looking around the table. "But, whatever his plan is, he's been working on it for decades. Nothing I've seen in-"

A phone began to buzz. Then another. And another.

Jason's own phone vibrated in his pocket, a quick pattern on endless repeat. He knew instantly what it meant. As did everyone else in the room.

A program Brian had thrown together years ago. Some computer shit that kept an eye on local news outlets and social medias, triggered a warning whenever the same select words and phrases started appearing in bulk.

It hadn't always been the best or most reliable warning system. But, right now at least, it was working as intended.

Around the table, everyone rushed to check their phones.

Monster sightings. Attacks. All over the city.

Right now.

Finally.

Maya

It'd been her idea to 'split up'.

Multiple Shard Monsters all over the city; they had no choice but to separate, each dealing with one area by themselves.

She leapt from one rooftop to another, heart thundering.

Splitting up. Saving as many people as possible. It made so much sense that none of the others had even questioned it. They'd all agreed instantly, as if they'd all had the same thought. And maybe they had. Sort of.

But Maya doubted they all had *her* hidden motives.

A group of Shard Monsters all to herself.

She trembled in anticipation.

Leapt with eager excitement.

Finally, *finally* she'd be able to let loose. Indulge in her wicked desires. Let her fantasies become reality.

Even as she raced to the scene, she reached down and touched her Morph Belt. Ignoring the quiet voice in the back of her head that wanted to stop her, make her see reason.

"Partial Morph!" The Pink shouted.

Parts of her Suit retreated. Around her chest and crotch, her bobble butt and the lower half of her face.

The next leap had her huge tits bouncing freely.

Not far now...