

SHAWN

By Thaddeus Coleman

During the summer of 1979, Shawn Harris, 27, moved to a house in Terranceville, North Dakota. There he spends his time alone, isolated, from the world. He writes letters to his sister in New York, Mary Harris, 19. One night, while taking a break from his work—he writes technical manuals—he spots the beautiful, alluring, Nicki Lester, 26, outside walking to somewhere or other. As summer passes, he noticed that Nicki leaves her house lot at night and roams the night street. Too shy, he stays locked in his tower: working, writing, watching. Her. Isolated.

He rarely needs to leave his house as he orders all of his food through a mail order service. The only time he does leave his house is when he needs to go to the post office to send in his mail order slips, or to send or receive letters from his sister, or to send his manuscripts to the home office. The mail order usually arrives at his home. One day, however, he had to leave his house to do his laundry when his machine broke. That was the day he met Nicki Lester in person. They introduced themselves, did their laundry, and then carried on with their separate lives. He was too afraid to push for more. That was in September.

In the fall months, she, Nicki, continued to leave out at night and he, Shawn, continued to watch. In October, he got disturbing news that his sister, Mary, was murdered in New York. She was his only family, as their parent died a few years back. More, importantly, though, she was his only real social link to the world outside. She was all he talked to, personally. The only person he could really trust. He continued to write his letters to her and mail them.

Because of his sister's death, he started to watch Nicki closer. He couldn't protect his sister, but Nicki was close, she was alive. He could protect her. He wanted to protect her. Though, by doing so, he became even more isolated. He stopped working and though he kept writing letters to his late sister he stopped sending them. He only left to send out his food order slips or to pick up his food once it arrived. He watched Nicki, alone, in his wooden tower.

On the night of December 21th, 1979, Nicki went out as usual, but Shawn did something unusual. He left his house and followed her. He followed under the cover of darkness, subduing his presence. After 10 minutes they arrived at the old abandon Merritol Hotel. It was there that, out of the darkness five shadows emerged from behind the hotel's rusted gates and abducted her. They dragged her inside the hotel, kicking, screaming, yelling for help, but no one came. Shawn was frozen, until he heard the slam of the hotel's front door. He took out his lighter and used the little light to find his way to the front door. He hesitated again. He could hear her scream from the door. They started out loud and antagonizing, then became cries of powerless acceptance, and then nothing. He gathered his little courage and pushed the door open, going inside using his light to find her.

After finding most of the rooms either empty or locked he finally found her. Alone. Her body: bare, used, lifeless. His cowardice had failed her. He left her body there and wandered into the other open rooms; half searching for the shadows, half looking for a place to break down.

He was confused, scared, mad, sorry. He wandered until he got to a room and just screamed, throwing his lighter at the floor. His lighter hit something solid. It illuminated it. A shoe. There was a shadow here. Shawn lunged at the figure; hitting it hard, connecting with what felt like a throat. It gargled and fell. Then Shawn fell. Something hit him from behind. Another shadow. He saw his lighter, took it in hand and flung it at the second shadow and then gave up fighting. He gave in to the fear and regret, his powerlessness and confusion, his depression and despair. He watched as his eyes went dark and his body become like Nicki's. He watched until the end.