Eye For An Eye

by orphancount

Summary

Ricky Goldsworth was used to being the hunter. Nobody had prepared him for when he might become the hunted.
Ricky Goldsworth was used to bullets being the biggest threat. Nobody had prepared him for when demonic powers would be used against him.
Ricky Goldsworth was prepared for a lot of things, but a demon following him home, intent on taking his soul, was not one of them.

Notes

This fic never would have happened without this incredible work of art by @deamonau on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bzo1_d9nqY2/?igshid=1j3k19jw4ud7x

See the end of the work for more notes.

“Forgive me Father, for I have sinned.”

Ricky Goldsworth said those words every single week at confession, but not once had they been sincere. He didn’t feel remorse for his sins, and he saw no reason to seek forgiveness. The only reason he still wasted his time coming to church to listen to stories he didn’t believe and say prayers that were falling on deaf ears was to keep convincing everyone that he was an honest, church-going citizen.

He never told Father Thomas his real sins. The most Ricky would admit to was a lie he had told a coworker or a lustful thought he’d given into when he saw a beautiful woman. Ricky kept silent about the crimes he committed by nightfall. His lips were sealed when it came to details of the
lives he stole from people who owed him debts they refused to pay. Nobody suspected that Ricky was behind those actions, and he intended to keep it that way. As long as he went to confession and came up with minor transgressions to accuse himself of, he kept himself in the clear. No murderer would go to the priest to speak of the things he had done after all. That was what everyone around Ricky believed.

When all was said and done, Ricky walked out of the church, conscience clear not because God had washed him clean of his sins but because the blood staining his hands had never been something that bothered Ricky. Sometimes people needed to be taken care of, and Ricky shouldn’t have to feel guilty for being the person who was willing to pull the trigger when nobody else would.

Shane watched with interest from one of the benches facing the altar at the front of the church. Normally when he came into this place, he was surrounded with hungry souls searching to be filled with God. It was always a fight for Shane to steal these souls, as he had to force the faith out of a person before he was able to claim their soul as his own. The man walking past him now, however, seemed completely empty. There was no conviction in this man, nor any desire to find a deity to give himself to. Shane was at a loss for why someone like this would even come to church.

The presence of this human excited the demon, though. Shane wouldn’t have to try at all to get his soul. Shane couldn’t quite read him, but he could sense that this man was tainted by numerous sins. He was already walking a path that led straight into hell, and Shane could effortlessly fence him in so he had no choice but to keep following it.

All Shane had to do was get this man to verbally renounce any faith in God. It would be easiest to talk to him now while he was still in the church. Standing up, Shane stalked down the aisle, long legs allowing him to catch up with ease.

The human didn’t even spare Shane a glance as he buttoned up his jacket and perched a black fedora on his head. It was apparent that he enjoyed the silence of being alone, and had no desire to walk with a friend. The man stuffed his hands into his pockets and tilted his head down towards the ground as he exited through the door that had been left propped open.

Shane followed the man out of the church, noting the way he shrunk in on himself. It didn’t seem to be from a lack of confidence. It was like the man was keeping a low profile, trying to avoid anyone approaching him. This was even better for Shane, who would have no problem getting the man alone. He liked to play games with people before he stole their souls, and it was a lot easier to shift into his demon form when there was nobody else around to witness it.

As they were walking, the human came to a sudden halt. Shane almost crashed into him, not expecting him to stop walking. He managed to stop himself, awkwardly towering over the human, Shane’s tall figure casting a warped shadow over the human and the sidewalk.

“Stop following me.” The man said quietly, pushing his shoulders even farther forward.

“I’m not following you,” Shane shot back. “Can’t two people happen to be going the same way?” It was an obvious lie. He was following this man. He had been foolish to get caught so easily, but his overeagerness from having such easy prey to chase had been made Shane momentarily lose his sense of patience.

“Just stop following me if you know what’s good for you.” The man replied coldly, shaking his head as he kept walking. Shane just grinned. He liked someone who had some fight in them. It got boring when every human immediately fell limp at the sight of his demonic form. Shane imagined this one would throw a few punches of his own.
Initially, Shane obeyed. He didn’t follow the human, instead choosing to remain in place and watch him continuing walking down the sidewalk. Once a reasonable distance had been put between them, Shane picked up the pace again, keeping his strides short in order to avoid him advancing on the human too quickly. The demon was admittedly a little frustrated that he hadn’t been given the chance to acquaint himself with the human; he wasn’t a savage, and he liked to know the name and story of a person before he forcibly dragged them down below for an eternity of torture.

As he walked down the sidewalk, Ricky could feel himself still being followed. The stranger was still trailing him for some unknown reason, and Ricky was growing increasingly apprehensive that this man had been hired to trail him for one reason or another. He quickly dismissed this idea, however, as it occurred to him that none of the mobsters or other criminals in this city would be foolish enough to hire someone this bad at their job to follow him.

There didn’t seem to be any other reasonable way to explain why someone would be following Ricky, though. Outside of the seedy criminal underworld, nobody knew the name Ricky Goldsworth. He wasn’t famous, and he didn’t have family or friends. He lived alone in a run down apartment in a bad part of town, and he hardly ever went anywhere during the day unless he needed groceries or dry cleaning. Nobody would have any reason to be suspicious of Ricky; he was good at covering his tracks and keeping what he did in the dark secret. Ricky was drawing a blank as he tried to explain to himself why someone would choose to so obviously follow him in broad daylight, and he was quickly nearing the conclusion that this long-limbed idiot trailing him was about to have a target on his back.

Ricky slammed the door of his apartment shut, storming down the hall and into his bedroom. Typically, when he came home, he locked the door--turning the two deadbolts and sliding the chain lock into place to ensure nobody would be able to break in without knocking the door and alerting Ricky to their presence. Today, however, Ricky chose to leave the door unlocked. It backed him into a vulnerable position where anybody could open the door and sneak up on him, but that was what Ricky wanted. He wanted the man who had been following him to sneak into the apartment, where he would fall right into Ricky’s trap.

Shane was, to say the least, surprised when the door to the apartment swung open without a fight. He had been expecting force to be necessary to break past the door, and it struck him as odd that someone would leave their home completely open in this way. Shane, however, didn’t waste any time inviting himself inside the apartment, quietly shutting the door behind him. It struck him as even more suspicious when he saw the numerous locks on the door, but that did nothing to deter the demon from making his way inside. He briefly entertained the idea that the man living here had set some sort of trap for him, but Shane quickly shrugged the idea off, confident that he could easily handle anything the human threw at him with the same effort one might swat away an annoying fly.

Ricky strained his ears, trying to listen for the sound of the door closing or the sound of footsteps outside his bedroom. He sat on the bed with his back to the door, a gun grasped in his left hand, examining it. Countless people who had gotten on Ricky’s bad side had met their fate with this pistol, and the man didn’t have to think twice about adding another name to the list of victims.

There was the sound of a door knob turning, followed by the creak that always accompanied any door in the apartment opening. Ricky wasted no time leaping up, twisting his body around and pointing the gun at the tall figure in the doorway.

“I told you not to follow me.” Ricky snapped, surprised when there was no semblance of fear on the other man’s face.
“I didn’t know you were the boss of me.” The man took a step forward, inviting himself into Ricky’s room and offering a cocky grin. It was like he wasn’t aware of the gun pointed directly at him; he walked into the room, leaving his body completely unprotected as a target for Ricky’s bullets.

“Why did you follow me home?” Ricky’s finger twitched, ready to pull the trigger.

“You caught my eye back at church.” Shane raised a hand, slender fingers glowing with a scarlet fog.

Ricky blinked a few times, taken aback by the strange glow of the man’s hand. He had never seen anything like that before. He racked his brain for an explanation as to why this was happening, but nothing came to mind other than magic, which Ricky knew wasn’t real.

“Why is your hand-?” Ricky gestured, unable to finish his question.

“Oh, this?” Shane turned, looking at his hand as if surprised by it’s sudden red appearance. “Well, Mister Goldsworth,” He had determined the human’s name after finding an envelope addressed to him that had been left on a coffee table in the living room. “You’re a church-going man. Don’t you believe in Satan’s army?” Shane blinked, his eyes turning completely black, like lumps of coal sitting in his skull.

Shane had decided he would dismantle Ricky one piece at a time. Instead of busting out his torn, blood-red wings, black eyes and twisted horns all in one burst of light, he would reveal each component of his demonic form one at a time, slowly chipping away at the man’s composure.

Ricky didn’t show any reaction to the way the man’s eyes changed color. He kept his face expressionless, but internally his mind was swirling. People’s eyes didn’t just become lifeless and black like that. This stranger had said something about Satan’s army; was he implying that he was a demon? The thought sent a shudder down Ricky’s spine. His mind wandered to the cross he kept in a drawer in his bedside table; his mother had given it to him years ago, and, while he wasn’t a religious man, he still kept it around. If this man really was a demon, the cross would protect Ricky from him, right?

Gun still poised to shoot, Ricky walked backwards, not taking his eyes off the stranger as he went to retrieve the cross from the top drawer of his nightstand. Ricky was smart enough to know turning his back or taking his eyes off the enemy for even a moment would end poorly for him.

Shane watched with curiosity as the human fumbled around inside the drawer. He took another step forward, advancing on Ricky, hand still raised beside his head in case he needed to strike. He doubted Ricky was going to have anything that could actually hurt him, but it was better to be safe than sorry.

“Back off demon!” Ricky snarled, closing his fist around the cold metal chain holding the cross and thrusting it in front of the demon’s face. He placed the gun against the demon’s chest, finger dangerously close to pulling the trigger.

Shane chuckled softly, wrapping his thin fingers around the barrel of Ricky’s gun, and pushing it away from his body. The cross emanated a scorching heat that made Shane feel like his skin was going to melt off of his bones. The demon grabbed Ricky’s wrist, forcing his arm up and pushing the cross away from his body.

Ricky grinned up at the demon, flashing his perfect white teeth as he came to the realization that this cross really could hurt the demon. His gun was useless, but at least Ricky still had something in his arsenal to fight back against this thing.
Shane jerked his hand back, pulling the gun out of the human’s hand and tossing it over his shoulder. It hit the floor with a loud bang, skidding across the hard wood, slipping under the dressed pushed against the wall.

“So, tell me, Ricky,” He grunted. “Why do you go to church? Why waste the time? I can sense your unbelief.”

Not in the mood to discuss his spiritual life, Ricky transferred the cross into his empty hand, quickly thrusting the wooden ornament against the demon’s right shoulder. Ricky didn’t feel anything, but the cross burned right through Shane’s shirt, searing the surrounding flesh.

The demon let out a loud cry of pain, instinctively throwing a fist, which connected with Ricky’s jaw, causing his head to snap back. The human stumbled a few steps back, the cross still gripped tightly in his fist. There was a dull pain in Shane’s shoulder where the cross had burned him, but he still focused his attention on Ricky.

Shane lunged at the human, grabbing him by the shoulders and pushing him down to the ground. He needed to get the cross out of the human’s hand and restrain him long enough for the demon to worm his way into Ricky’s soul.

Ricky, however, wasn’t going to let the demon win this easily. Using the hand that still had the chain wrapped around it, Ricky threw a punch, which collided with the side of Shane’s head. The demon grunted, neck cracking as his head jerked to the side. The chain had burned his skin, leaving another angry red mark blazed into Shane’s skin.

Taking advantage of the brief moment during which the demon was disoriented, Ricky rolled over, managing to pin Shane down to the floor. He dangled the cross over the demon’s face, grinning at him triumphantly. Ricky felt powerful, like he had total control over the demon.

Shane, however, didn’t allow himself to stay pinned for long. He lifted his hand, which had started glowing again, and thrust it forward. Along with the motion of his hand, Ricky went flying backward, his back slamming into the wall. His body crumpled to the floor, head now pounding with excruciating pain. The cross lay on the floor beside him, no longer in his hand.

Shane stood up, his body transformed into a different form. He was no longer a human; a pair of leathery red wings, which seemed torn in a few places as if a wild animal had ripped them up, sprouted from his shoulder blades. A pair of inky black horns twisted from his forehead, and his fingernails had elongated into sharp claws. Even his teeth seemed all become fangs. This was his true form; this was the appearance that usually caused humans to surrender without another word.

Ricky was admittedly terrified of the things standing before him. As he raised his head, he found it hard to even maintain eye contact with the monster. It was a horrifying sight that only the most depraved mind could dream up in the darkest nightmares. Any doubts Ricky had about this thing coming from hell were quickly dispelled now that he knew what was hiding underneath the veil of flesh.

Even so, Ricky Goldsworth was not going to go down without a fight. Legs shaky from a combination of fear and pain, Ricky managed to push himself up into a standing position, kneeling down to pick up the cross.

Shane watched Ricky with amusement. It was rare that humans actually had the mental strength to fight back against him, and he was admittedly impressed at the way Ricky held the cross out towards Shane, like a challenge. The human trusted the small artifact too much, but, if he wanted to play this game, Shane was more than willing to join in. Ricky was merely a pawn on this chess board, and he didn’t stand a chance.
Shane took a step forward, a glowing hand poised to strike at any moment. Ricky lunged forward, running at the demon. Realizing that the human was going to try and tackle him, Shane sped up, running at Ricky. As if he were a bullfighter, Ricky dodged to the side right as the two of them were going to crash into one another. Shane, taken aback by the maneuver, was disoriented long enough for Ricky to wrap the chain of the cross around his neck. The searing pain all around his neck caused Shane to yowl loudly as he tried to pry it off. Ricky had holding the chain tight enough that Shane was choking as he tried to pry it off of his skin. His efforts to remove the chain proved fruitless, and Shane ended up with even more burns, now branded across the pads of his fingers.

“You never told me why you followed me home,” Ricky observed as he kept the demon held in place with the chain currently strangling him. “I want answers. Now.”

Shane refused to answer. He kept his mouth sealed, continuing to struggle in an attempt to break free of Ricky’s hold, to no avail.

When he received no answer, Ricky pressed the cross against the point where the demon’s wing connected to his skin. This elicited an even louder cry of pain from the demon; he was nearly screaming in pain as he begged Ricky to stop.

“I’ll stop when you answer my question.” He sneered. Shane was stubborn, and he kept his lips sealed. He never told humans what he wanted from them until it was too late and their soul was already in his possession. If they knew what he wanted, they would never give it to him.

Ricky watched as the cross burned right through the leather wing, separating it from the demon’s skin. The cross cauterised the wound, leaving a large red mark where the wing had been severed from the body. Ricky hadn’t even realize that would happen, but his lips twisted into a sick grin as he discovered a whole new form of torture to subject this beast to.

Shane’s throat was raw from screaming in pain. Tears pricked his eyes at the sheer pain of having his wing forcibly cut off. The anger over what the human had just done to him was enough to finally give him the strength to grab the chain, ignoring the pain that pulsated through his hand as he yanked the chain forward, breaking it and slamming the cross into the wall, which caused the wood to fracture into small pieces that littered the floor.

Shane turned to the human, his face contorted with fury. He was out for blood now; the soul didn’t matter to him anymore, he just wanted this human to suffer like he just had. His hand glowing again, Shane shoved Ricky into a wall, holding him in place this time. He didn’t want to leave any room for the human to squirm free or fight back.

“You took my wing from me,” Shane reached out, running a clawed hand down Ricky’s face. “Perhaps I should take something back.” He contemplated for a moment. “An eye for an eye, that’s what they say, right?” He traced his thumb under Ricky’s left eye.

The human was completely frozen, the demon’s power making it impossible for him to move. He tried to brace himself for the pain, his throat seemingly swelling shut, trapping his screams of pain inside. The demon’s claw pushed against the back of his eye, and in an instant Ricky’s sight became limited to a single eye. The entire left side of his face was in excruciating pain, and he could feel dripping out of the now-empty socket and down his cheek.

“You took my wing from me,” Shane hissed, dropping Ricky to the ground. The human was in too much pain to even fight anymore. He reached up, pressing a hand over the fresh wound. Bile rose in his throat when he accidentally slipped a finger into the vacant hole; Ricky felt like he might get sick as he pictured what he must have looked like in the moment. At least what he had done to the demon hadn’t left any open wounds, and could be easily covered up. His wound was still profusely
bleeding, and everyone who looked at Ricky would be quick to notice that something was missing.

Shane crouched down, rocking on his heels in front of the human was he admired his work. His back still ached where his wing had been severed, and he felt off-balance only having one of the appendages remaining. Reaching out, Shane took Ricky's chin, forcing the human to look up at him.

"Mister Goldsworth," The demon spat the name, words tinged with obvious disgust. "Why does a man with no faith in God go to church?"

"How do you know I have no faith in God?" Ricky countered, raising an eyebrow.

"I can sense your unbelief."

Ricky didn't like hearing that. He wondered what else the demon could sense. Could the demon read all of his emotions?

"You're a heartless man, Goldworth." Shane continued. "You don't care about what the priest teaches. So why waste your time in church?"

"Maybe I'm looking for the faith I lost."

"That's not what it is." Shane scowled. "You don't believe in God. You don't believe in any higher power."

Ricky didn't answer these accusations. Instead, he decided to swing a fist, attempting to land another blow to the demon's head. Shane was quick to stop him, catching the first mid-air.

"I like your fight, Goldsworth." Shane admitted. "No human has ever lasted this long against me."

"You just go around killing humans?" Ricky asked curiously.

"Not exactly." Shane shook his head. "Not the way you do, anyway." He chuckled softly. He had been able to discern with a little digging into Ricky's mind that Ricky was a criminal. He killed people for fun. Shane was amused by that.

"Wha-?" Ricky was caught off guard by the demon implying that he knew his secrets.

"I forgot to mention," Shane chuckled. "I can't exactly read minds, but while you were vulnerable I went through that brain of yours." He explained. "Trust me, I'm not gonna judge you for killing a few people."

Ricky chuckled. "A few?" He smirked. "I've taken more than a few lives." He paused. "So what do you want with me? If you're not gonna kill me, why are you even here?"

Shane contemplated just being upfront with the human. "I want your soul." He decided to admit. Ricky blinked a few times as he processed the words. "You want my soul?"

Shane nodded.

"Won't that kill me?"

"I could make a deal with you. You can keep your soul until you die. Then it becomes mine."

"And why would I say yes to that?"
"Perhaps I could offer something in return. We both like taking things from people, you their lives and me their souls." Shane's lips curled into a grin. "What's to say we wouldn't make a good team?"

"You want to help me kill people?" Ricky laughed. "Because you want to steal the souls from my victims?"

"Exactly." Shane nodded. "Do we have a deal?" He extended a hand. It was a lot easier to rip a soul out of a dead body. He didn't have to do any work to obtain it that way. He wasn't technically allowed to end a human life, but if Ricky was the one doing it, Shane wouldn't be breaking any rules.

"Its a deal." Ricky nodded, taking the demon's hand and shaking it. His jobs were about to get a lot more interesting.

End Notes

Should I write a sequel?

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!