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Table of Contents for Sample Only

- [Prologue \(Opening\)](#)
- [Chapter One](#)
- [Chapter Two](#)
- [Chapter Three](#)

Prologue

Wednesday, 21 November.
03:30:

Thump, thump, thump...

The revolving doors at the end of the lobby had started spinning on their own, gaining speed with each revolution.

They were supposed to be locked.

Shannon jumped, then forced herself to be calm and arose from her seat. She walked carefully across the marble floor of the lobby, moving uneasily between the twin banks of elevators to investigate. As she

passed their mirrored doors, she was suddenly spooked by her endlessly multiplied images, seeming to walk along with her. She wanted to turn and run. Hide somewhere.

But there was nowhere to hide. And it was her job to investigate. She couldn't let her apprehension keep her from her *duty*, even though she felt she had already done more than her duty for one night.

Much more.

She paused just beyond the elevators, listening.

One set of doors had stopped temporarily. The other doors continued to spin.

...thump, thump, thump...

She strained to see. It hurt her eyes to try to focus on the doors themselves, because beyond them —outside —there was only snow and blackness, creating a stark contrast with the interior of the building.

The howling wind assailing her senses in ragged counterpoint to the noise the doors made.

She took another step forward. Her view shifted to the floor in front of the revolving doors.

...thump, thump, thump...

It was a *wetsound* now.

Because something was caught in the doors, preventing them from moving smoothly.

Something that the doors continued to batter —

A head.

A head Shannon thought she recognized.

Each slap of the doors mangled the displaced head more, rendering the features on the dead face less familiar. Shannon was drawn closer, her morbid curiosity aroused, part of her still not convinced it really *was* a head.

She jerked back as a spray of blood jetted from the revolving doors, splattering her.

...thump, thump, thump...

Suddenly the head was jolted loose and spun along the floor, tumbling over and over until it came to rest with a dull *splat* in front of one of the elevators. Now its hideous image was multiplied in the mirrored surfaces of the elevator doors—reflecting an infinity of heads.

Shannon coughed and covered her mouth with her hand to hold back the churning bile burning her throat. She looked away from the head and focused on the revolving doors, daring them in her mind to do anything.

As if taking the dare, and freed of the obstacle, both sets of doors began spinning again, accelerating till they were virtually a blur. Now each turn splattered Shannon with more and more of the bloody residue left by the head on the edge of the circular frame.

She was showered in blood.

She would have screamed, but she knew that was what they wanted. They wanted her to admit defeat, to let them take her mind over completely.

They wanted her to believe they were real!

But she was too tough.

She muttered a curse and turned away from the doors, clamping her hands over her ears to muffle the whirring sound they made as she started to return to her post at the security desk.

Nothing, she vowed—*nothing*—they could do would make her admit defeat. She was stronger than any of them!

Her resolve made her feel a little better.

Then the head spoke to her.

Tower of Evil, Chapter One

Tuesday, 20 November:

08:05:

Shannon Elroy yawned widely when her relief arrived to take over for the day shift.

Her body ached. She had been working third shift at the bank tower downtown for almost three months, but she had not yet convinced her body to accept night for day.

The fact was —as she told herself many times —she was getting too old for this shit. She was no longer as adaptable as she had been —back when she was in the Service and her shift of duty varied from day to day. Now, out in the real world, where she sought the kind of normalcy everyone else seemed to have, the twisted hours she worked were annoying and kept her from reassimilating herself into society as a normal person. To approach that, her various biological clocks demanded a more regular cycle.

Her relief, Stan Cork, was only twenty-two or so. He could still screw around with his body rhythms without too much anguish or ill effects. He was also a silly kind of kid, still more adolescent than adult, and didn't take anything very seriously.

At twenty-eight, Shannon felt ages older than Cork. She didn't look any older, despite her strained, odd hours, but she felt it inside, where it counted. She had learned to put on a good front for the few people who saw her, applying fresh makeup no matter how shitty she was feeling, wearing a crisp, clean uniform, pinning her badge exactly perpendicular to the button of her left shirt pocket, and minding her posture, never allowing herself to slump into what she felt, never letting any of what was going on inside her show on the outside.

It was quite an accomplishment to look good in the Jones & Malone Security Company uniforms. They were plain dark brown, with short sleeved shirts and trousers —for both men and women —with cheap-looking plastic buttons. They were also made of one-hundred percent pure polyester which was not even finished to resemble wool or any other natural fiber. People could tell the uniforms were synthetic from half a block away, Shannon imagined, and that often made her feel self-conscious. Polyester was, after all, the cloth of the lower classes, the cheap grade, petroleum-based fabric that marked the division between the classy and the classless. Its only virtue was that it never needed ironing. But among its many disadvantages were a tendency to snag easily and the awful heat sometimes generated by the body clothed in it. Shannon often felt like she was sitting inside a plastic bag in her uniform, especially under the hot lights in the bank's lobby, which burned twenty-four hours a day.

At least she didn't have to wear a damn tie —not on this assignment, anyway.

Cork came up to the security desk, leering, as usual, as if everything was a joke. He had a wide face with a sprinkle of freckles over the bridge of his nose and stray specks of them on his cheeks; his hair was the color of red Indian corn kernels, and with the stuff he put on it —some kind of styling gel the smell of which reminded Shannon of embalming fluid —it seemed more like a lacquered wig rather than real hair. He was tall and thin, his frame not yet having acquired any real masculine attributes. It didn't seem possible he would ever be fully mature, either physically or mentally.

Cork was, as Shannon often told others, a dork.

"Morning," Cork said, licking his lips with a lewd sparkle in his eye.

A dork like him couldn't have any balls, Shannon often thought. Cork the Dork, the ball-less rent-a-cop.

A summary. A job description.

The lip-licking, she knew, was the prelude to some sexist and/or sexual remark (it was hard to tell the difference sometimes) which would be the Dork's way of hinting how much he would like to see much more of her.

Which was quite understandable. Just about any man who met Shannon wanted her. She was an attractive woman, taller than average, with a wonderfully complex and overt sexuality which she tried to suppress, usually unsuccessfully. Her breasts were not large, but rounded and firm with a still youthful bounce; her hips were disproportionately wider than her torso, but the effect of that was even more sexuality, akin to that of the sirens of the old fifties' movies, like Marilyn Monroe or Sophia Loren. Such hips, complemented by long, muscular thighs, were an invitation for the entire male universe. She could be both a mother and lover to mankind if she ever chose to.

Her eyes were magic blue, arresting, the lids suggestive of an oriental slant. Her hair was naturally medium blonde, wavy and long. Her face was oval with a small pointy chin but a wide mouth and full lips behind which hid slightly irregular but very white teeth. Her skin was very pale but, under closer scrutiny, revealed an underlying Mediterranean or Hispanic cast, though she claimed Indian blood in her lineage accounted for the tint. Her bright pink nipples seemed to bely that explanation, however, but since few had ever seen them, she rarely had to argue over her racial heritage.

"Morning," Shannon replied flatly to the Dork with a disapproving glance.

Cork's leer became more pronounced.

Without looking back, Shannon reached behind her for her thermos and the canvas bag in which she kept various necessities. "What's that shit-eating grin on your face for?"

"You're out of uniform," he said.

"What the fuck you mean?"

Shannon had learned to punctuate her language with *fuck*, *motherfucker*, and other obscenities while in the Service. She no longer noticed she used such words more often than most other women did, and if she did notice, she would not have cared. She rarely went anywhere where niceties of language were observed, except her mother's house, where even "damn" was considered improper language.

"Your top button is unbuttoned." Cork grinned.

Shannon glanced down at her shirt and saw that the top button had come undone again, which happened with this particular shirt just about everytime she moved; the buttonhole was too large and she hadn't had time to mend it. Many of the shit-brown uniforms were getting old, threadbare and loose, and they

needed replacement, but the company was too damn cheap to order new uniforms.

"So what?"

"I think your pink-nosed puppies may get out."

Shannon frowned and looked down again. Now she realized Cork was leering because the shirt was not only unbuttoned, it was half open, and her deep cleavage and the lacey edge of her black bra were showing just enough for a clown like him to act half-stupid.

Shannon pulled her shirt together, shifted the button in place and glared at Cork. "You get your jollies looking down a woman's shirt?"

"Maybe."

"Well, you didn't see fucking anything."

"Hey, I've seen a lot more than that, anyhow."

She stood up behind the desk and pulled on her leather jacket, which had been draped over the back of the chair. "I think you're a virgin and you probably whack off at night watching Madonna videos." She picked up her thermos and bag and stepped away from the desk.

"Who doesn't?"

Cork slid easily into the chair and set a Styrofoam cup of coffee from the Burger King around the corner at his elbow. He was never ruffled by Shannon's tough act and considered their interchanges a game, though Shannon sometimes seem to take things a bit more seriously than he did, which made it even more fun to tease her whenever possible.

"Thanks for warming the chair for me," he said, shifting on the seat and smiling.

Shannon shook her head. "You dick."

"Hey, don't be so uptight. You take everything too serious."

"Your problem is you're not serious enough."

Cork smiled widely. "I can be serious about some things."

"Like what?"

"Like showing a woman a good time."

"I don't want to hear about it."

"You might be surprised, Shannon."

"Not by you I wouldn't. I'd know *exactly* what would happen. Nothing."

Cork's smile remained in place. He didn't reply. He was done playing for the moment. It was time to get to work. He glanced down at her paperwork as he always did when he came on duty. "Anything happen last night I should know about?"

Shannon hefted her bag on her shoulder and started towards the back door. "Nothing I didn't write down," she answered wearily. "Just another long, dull, quiet night. A couple of workaholics came in and went up to twenty, then left. That was the highlight of the night's festivities."

"Check," he said and started filling out the top of his own duty report for the day.

Shannon paused at the back door, glancing down the lobby as the first of the morning crowd of office workers came in through one of the revolving doors. Now she leered.

"Forgot to tell you, dude -- you're out of uniform too."

"I am?"

"Your barn door's open, chump."

Cork cast his eyes to his fly, his face reddening. It was not unzipped.

"Made you look!" Shannon said and bounced out the door, wiggling her ass just enough to be sassy.

She loved to get the last word in.

08:36:

Shannon arrived at her apartment after having stopped for a Sausage McMuffin at the McDonald's on Michigan, which she had half consumed before she hit the door. She was still chewing as she stopped just inside and dropped her bag. She tossed her thermos on the sofa, peeled out of the uniform, undid her bra and dropped it. She sat on the floor, resting her back against the sofa and rubbing under her breasts

when the bra had bound her, as she finished her breakfast, revelling in the freedom of not being in uniform and not having to be presentable or polite for anyone.

In the hierarchy of respect among the staff of property managers, maintenance men, and clerks, a security guard was not shit -- hardly a notch above the cleaning people who came in to swab the toilets at night. Yet a guard was expected to be perfect and friendly and helpful and all those other Boy Scout things.

But in reality a security guard a nobody —a non-entity most people looked on with disdain.

The pay sucked too —five bucks an hour, no pay for holidays, and overtime only when you went over 40 hours, even if you worked a double shift two days in a row. And, of course, there were no fringe benefits of any kind.

Actually, Shannon was just a babysitter for the building. She didn't even wear a sidearm.

So it was a job with no respect, poor pay and crappy uniforms. There was absolutely nothing to recommend it —except that it was the first job Shannon had applied for in the last six months where the company was willing to hire her, and she needed the money, small as it was.

Jobs of of any kind were hard to come by in the present economy. More and more companies were laying people off, shutting down plants, and companies that advertised even bad jobs were swamped with applicants. A person had to take what was available —and be glad of having that.

What frustrated Shannon the most was that she knew she was much better than the job. Her training in the Service had provided her with many skills, none of which were being used in her security job. She had applied for the city police force, but it was two months before they could even schedule a written test, and she had her application in at the County Sheriff's office, but nothing had come of that so far, either.

She was stuck where she was, with no real hope of change in the near future.

She sighed, rubbed her mouth with a McDonald's napkin and tilted her head back to stare at the ceiling. There was a brown stain just above her which seemed sometimes to change shape. Right now it was as unmoving as her own life.

She closed her eyes and fell asleep quickly, succumbing to the cumulative exhaustion of working all night three nights in a row. [Return to Top](#)

Tuesday, 20 November:

09:03

One of the elevators was stuck on the twenty-third floor of the bank tower.

That was not an unusual occurrence. The elevators had been installed by the company that had submitted the lowest bid, Luxem, and Luxem had cut corners in order to meet the bid. That meant using circuit boards in the electronics that didn't perform exactly according to the specifications the architects had written in the building plans. Luxem got away with this simply because few inspectors couldn't tell one circuit board from another.

Usually, the non-specification equipment presented no real problems, because the traffic in the building was such that the elevators rarely had to perform in any way out of the ordinary. Occasionally, however, there were more people using the elevators than normally, and the electronic control system first went haywire, then eventually overheated and rebelled, leaving at least one elevator sitting somewhere.

This morning was different. The traffic was normal -- if anything lighter than usual. The elevator car -- number six in the bank that served the lower floors -- had simply stopped for no apparent reason.

A troubleshooter was called. And in less than an hour Otis Travers, a technician from Luxem, arrived to check the situation. He knew how Luxem had used cheap electronics in the elevators and always patched them the best he could. And since Luxem charged two-hundred dollars an hour for emergency service, the company was gradually getting the money back they considered they had lost on the low bid.

Such was the way of American business, and everyone accepted it, even the management company that operated the bank tower. No one saw anything unethical about this. Certainly not Otis. He was paid well, and his job was usually simple, requiring him either to replace a circuit board, or reset the system.

But when he arrived this morning, he could not discover any malfunctioning circuits. Usually the trouble was located in the circuit boards above the elevators -- on the twenty-fourth floor for the low rise cars -- but Otis' test meter detected no faults of any kind -- which meant Otis would have to get into car six and test the on-board electronics.

He was a short, balding man, pushing sixty, who had been working on elevators for over thirty years. He had taken courses in electronics to keep up with all the new developments in technology. He wore a crisp green uniform with his name on his left pocket and rushed about to sustain the illusion that repairing elevators required such great concentration that he couldn't be bothered.

He hated elusive problems such as car six presented today. He expected to come to the tower, unplug a circuit board and plug in another, then hide out or pretend to be doing something for at least two hours -- the minimum amount Luxem had declared it wanted to collect for any service call. It was supposed to be easy and usually was.

Otis sighed heavily. Just to make sure it wasn't a mechanical problem, he inspected the gears and cables above car six, and saw no signs of malfunction. So he picked up his red tool box and went down the stairwell to the twenty-third floor where car six awaited his ministrations.

He stood in front of the elevator, muttering unintelligible curses as he fished a special key from his tools. The key was actually a rod with a joint in it, which, when inserted in the round hole high up on the elevator door, allowed it to be opened manually. This was the only way Otis could gain entry to the elevator. He popped the odd key in the hole, twisted, and pulled the doors apart.

The electronics were more screwed up than Otis had anticipated. The main panel indicated that car six was on the twenty-third floor, but in reality it was someplace else. Glancing down the shaft apprehensively, he didn't see the car. It was too dark to make anything out.

This had happened before and Otis had merely closed the doors and checked each floor until he found where the elevator was hiding. However, the doors wouldn't close.

Otis gulped. It wouldn't do to leave the doors open. What if a tenant came along and tripped? There would be a big time lawsuit.

He tugged at the metal doors again. They were supposed to shut easily and to lock safely in place with little effort.

Otis was sweating now. And becoming angry.

He grasped the left door with both hands and pulled with all his strength.

At that instant, he felt something warm wrap around his legs. He looked down but saw nothing. It was probably air coming up through the shaft.

The warmth became substantial, like an arm. It squeezed his legs together, pulled and jerked Otis away into the shaft.

Otis screamed as he fell, but the sound of it was lost among the noise of the other elevators suddenly moving up and down, their cables screeching as they wound around the massive gears at the tops of the shafts.

It almost seemed deliberate -- the way the elevators were moving to cover up Otis' scream.

He had just enough time to notice that before he reached the bottom of the shaft and was impaled on a huge spring intended to act as a brake.

He didn't suffer, for he had died milliseconds before he hit the spring. His heart had exploded in his chest.

Seconds passed as blood oozed out of Otis' broken body, spiralling sown the spring to splat on the concrete below. No one came. No one had heard or noticed anything.

The elevators stopped moving, becoming silent.

The doors on the twenty-third floor shut quietly on their own, and elevator six resumed normal operation.

[Return to Top](#)

Tower of Evil, Chapter Three

Tuesday, 20 November:

14:23

Shannon's eyelids popped open.

A dog was barking down in the court outside her window, and though she normally slept through any kind of daytime racket, she had been startled awake by its yapping.

Her eyeballs felt like they had been rubbed with sandpaper.

"Christ on a crutch," she mumbled, bending her head back to stretch and limber up he neck. The nylon of the sofa cover felt scratchy now, and she got to her feet, wincing with the effort. "Goddamn dog."

She grimaced as she tasted leftover grit from her breakfast in her mouth, and bile burned the back of her throat. Working the graveyard shift screwed up all the body's systems, playing special hell with digestion. It seemed her stomach was always growling, grumbling or burning. She gulped back the bile and went over to the window.

Shannon peeked through the blinds at the courtyard below. The animal making all the noise was a big mongrel, part German Shepherd probably, barking at a cat in one of the stubby, barren maple trees in the middle of the yard. The cat was safely perched several feet above the dog, its tail twitching with displeasure as it watched the mongrel make a fool of itself. Cats knew dogs couldn't climb trees, but dogs were apparently too stupid to realize cats were aware of this fact and so refused to be intimidated.

Shannon turned from the window, deciding she didn't have the energy to go down and chase the dog away. Someone would come along and do it eventually. Or it would get tired. Or the cat would jump on it and claw its nose. She needed more sleep -- deep sleep, the kind that rested the body and refreshed

aching bones and tired flesh -- the kind of sleep she craved but rarely enjoyed.

She shambled wearily across her small apartment and entered the bathroom. She opened the medicine cabinet and took down a large bottle of Roloids, opened it and popped half a dozen tablets, chewing and swallowing them quickly to kill the acid in her stomach. Then she brushed her teeth and considered taking a shower. No, that would wake her up too much. She could live with her own stink until she had to go back to work.

She stripped off the rest of her clothes, leaving them in a pile near the toilet, which she used and flushed, then went to her bedroom and climbed on the bed. She crawled under the covers, lay on her side and pulled a pillow over her head to muffle the sound of the dog.

She yawned and shut her eyes, watching colors converge and patterns dance on the insides of her eyelids. It was like looking through a kaleidoscope. Gradually the patterns and colors were replaced by velvety black, and she tried not to think of anything, encouraging sleep to come soon.

Fifteen minutes later, Shannon sat up as if struck by electricity. She couldn't sleep.

Her body screamed with exhaustion, and her brain was mush, but she just couldn't let go and relax.

It was going to be one of those terrible days when she would have to push herself to near physical collapse before she slept. That kind of day happened often to people who worked all night. The body demanded day rhythms occasionally, even if it was exhausted. The adrenalin kicked in and a person got so hyper even a short nap was impossible.

"Damn it," Shannon moaned. Suddenly she felt uncomfortable, mostly sticky and smelly. She rolled out of bed and returned to the bathroom to take the shower she had denied herself before.

She stepped into the tub, pulled the shower curtain closed and turned the water on as hot as she could take it, until steam was billowing all around her. She closed her eyes and ducked her head under the shower, reveling in the pleasurable sensation of hot water soaking her hair and running down her body. After a few seconds, she grabbed the soap and lathered herself, scrubbing vigorously until her flesh was almost red. Then she rinsed herself and turned the water off. She stood in the shower for a moment, allowing the lingering steam to permeate her sinuses.

Stepping out, she took a pink towel from the rack and rubbed her body dry. She brushed her teeth again, seeing only a vague image of herself in the steamed-up mirror.

She felt marginally better, so she put on a robe and went out to the kitchenette to fix her lunch. On her way, she noticed the dog had finally stopped barking.

Maybe she ought to try going to sleep again.

Her stomach's growling was insistent, however. She made a sandwich of bologna and cheese on wheat bread, and ate it with a glass of milk, followed by a handful of Oreos. Then she made herself a cup of tea and lounged on the sofa to watch TV. Oprah was on, and the show featured a trio of Satan worshippers pitted against three born-again Christians. There was a great deal of name-calling and lively comments from the audience.

Shannon yawned. All this talk of Satan reminded her of her childhood, when her mother warned her concerning all the possible ways Satan might get into her heart. As a young girl, she had taken what her mother told her seriously, but when she reached eighteen and went off on her own, she soon decided blaming Satan for one's own actions was a cop-out people used because they wouldn't accept responsibility for what they did on their own.

She followed no accepted religion now. Traditional religious beliefs bored her, because they seemed designed mainly to take the fun out of life. Don't drink. Don't smoke. Don't have sex without love -- or procreation. To Shannon's analytical mind, none of that made sense.

Why had God bothered to give men and women senses if they weren't meant to enjoy them?

Shannon changed channels and watched a couple of music videos on MTV, one of them a new video by Michael Jackson she hadn't seen. It was pretty good, and she liked Michael's music, as well as most modern music, except for heavy metal. The other video was an ancient one by Billy Idol with him singing on top of a tall building as zombies climbed up after him. The visuals had nothing to do with the lyrics of the song, as happened so often in videos. It was just flash and glitter.

Shannon scanned the other cable channels and found nothing that interested her.

Her eyelids felt heavy again. She switched the TV off and made her way back to the bedroom, flopping on the bed quickly, luxuriating in the softness of the pillow against her head. Sweet sleep was imminent now; she was sure of it. All she had to do was let it happen.

Three minutes later the phone rang. Shannon's mind was halfway down a well, crawling towards unconsciousness. Let the answering machine get it, she told herself. Nothing was more important than sleep.

The phone rang three, then four times.

The answering machine didn't come on.

The phone rang a fifth time.

"Fuck!" Shannon screamed and jumped out of bed. She ran to the phone in the living room and picked it up. "Hello!"

"Shannon, honey..."

It was her mother.

"What do you want, Mom?"

"Don't talk to me in that tone of voice, Shannon. I'm just calling to see if you're okay."

"I *was* okay until the phone rang. I was almost asleep."

"It's almost five o'clock. Why would you be sleeping in the afternoon anyhow?"

Shannon rolled her eyes towards the ceiling. Day people just didn't understand. "I work all night, Mom. When do you think I get my sleep?"

"You've had plenty of time to sleep."

"I couldn't get to sleep until just now."

"Well, if you're going to be snippy, I don't want to talk to you."

"Fine."

"But you could come and visit me a little more often."

Shannon sighed. Why did her mother insist on laying the old guilt trip on her every time they talked? She was a grown woman -- she didn't need to see her mommy every day of her life.

"All right, Mom. I'll come to see you this weekend. I promise. We'll go shopping or something," Shannon said, hoping to cut the conversation short.

"What about church?" Mrs. Elroy refused to accept her daughter's disdain for religion, considering it a temporary aberration.

"I work on Sunday."

"You could still go to church. Your sister always goes."

"That's Linda, not me." Her younger sister was always so perfect. Probably still a virgin at nineteen.

"You *should* go..." Mrs. Elroy pressed.

"I don't want to, and you know it." "You need something to hold your life together, honey. Christ is the answer."

Shannon resisted the impulse to say, "What's the question?" as she had done a couple of times with her mother, causing her to lecture her daughter for hours. Instead, she said, "Maybe. Maybe I'll make it someday. When I'm not so tired."

"This Sunday?"

"I don't know. Don't push me."

"You're getting snippy again."

"I'll call you tomorrow."

"You be careful down at that bank. The TV says there's going to be a big snow tonight."

"I can take care of myself. All right? I'm a grown-up. Now let me go back to sleep."

"See you Saturday?"

"Yeah, sure."

Shannon hung up, disgusted. Now she was wide awake again. She glanced at the clock. She had only about six hours left before she had to go to work again.

"What a bummer."

She went to the window and glanced out. The sky was darkening and little wisps of snow were already swirling in the air. She turned and went to the answering machine, which was set up on a table next to the sofa. The red light that indicated it was on was not lit. She bent down and saw the cord had come loose from the machine and pushed it back in. The machine lit up, the tape wound then rewound and the red light began to blink.

"No more phone calls," she vowed.

She made herself a bowl of chicken noodle soup and watched more television, getting through reruns of

Night Court and *Murphy Brown* before her eyes started aching again.

She leaned back on the sofa, her eyelids drooping until she was watching *Quantum Leap* through a fuzzy-edged slit. She didn't get through the first fifteen minutes.

From a great distance, there was an annoying buzz. Like a fly caught in a Coke bottle. Or an angry wasp.

Shannon's eyes barely opened.

The TV was off, though she didn't remember turning it off herself.

She grunted and shifted her body. The distant buzz persisted.

She rolled on her back and stared up at the ceiling through her eyelashes. The brown stain up there seemed to be moving. She squinted and tried to focus on it, but it wouldn't become sharp in her vision. It was becoming something vaguely recognizable, like a face -- like a demonic Satan face that seemed to open its mouth, revealing brown-stained fangs.

Satan was out to get her!

Shannon yelped involuntarily and sat up, her eyes now wide open. She glanced at the stain on the ceiling again and it was the same as always -- just a shapeless spot.

The buzzing she recognized now. It was the alarm in her bedroom, set for ten o'clock -- 22:00 -- as designated in the military time-keeping the company used.

Time to get ready for work.

"Goddamn great," she said. Now that it was time to go to work, she was really sleepy.

The bed called out to her, and she considered phoning in sick -- but she had done that already too often -- on short notice -- that she could lose her job if she did it again. Besides, she reminded herself, she needed the money. She was slowly saving up the down payment for a different car, because her old Ford Fairlane had over a hundred-thousand miles on it and needed just about every part on it replaced.

She yawned widely, sat up, and cursed, then hustled herself off to the bathroom for another shower before she got dressed.

Christ, it was going to be a long night!

[Return to Top](#)

End of Sample chapters of *Tower of Evil* by James Kisner.

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