

DEAD BY DAYLIGHT: TRIAL OF THE SHAPE

Dying streams of sunlight filtered in through cracks in the wooden shed. He stood inside the structure without making a sound as the sun set rapidly below the horizon. It was time again for another trial. The Shape purposely turned his head to glance at the other three killers.

The inane cackling emanating from his left belonged to a most unusual man. With his eyes and mouth both pried open with the aid of a metal device, the Doctor's face was stuck in a twisted grin. He tapped a thick metal spear against his outstretched palm. Sharpened to a point and adorned with a dozen smaller spikes around the length, the spear had been used countless times to inflict agony upon anyone unlucky enough to encounter him. The Doctor set his maniacal gaze upon the Shape. In response, the Shape gradually tipped his head and stared back at him. The Doctor abruptly returned to looking outside.

"Careful with that one, Myers," said a low voice in the corner of the room. "He isn't as nice as me," he rasped as he stepped partly into view, his homemade glove of razor sharp claws glistening in the light. "Though I am sometimes known for being a little hot under the collar," the Nightmare said, his face hidden in the shadows of his dingy brown fedora. He carefully scraped his metal claws together. "Stay out of my way." The Shape was unfazed.

The low humming of a chainsaw radiated from his right. Even though his face was heavily obscured by scar tissue, his golden eyes still glowed in the darkness. Armed with a chainsaw in his left hand and a cattle hammer in his right, the Hillbilly was a most formidable killer. He gave the chainsaw a quick rev as a warning. The Shape narrowed his eyes ever so slightly.

As the last streams of daylight disappeared and gave way to everlasting night, something spoke to them. "The hunt begins. Give me your sacrifices." The unnervingly dark voice seemed to come from all directions. "There are four. Do not let the meat escape.

Failure will be punished.” As it said that, the doors opened up and all four killers stepped onto the field.

It was a hellish landscape of tattered barns, rotting trees, and mutilated animals. Walls shoddily constructed from decaying bricks were set up at random distances throughout the field. At the center of the arena was a huge black tree with a drawn and quartered pig hanging from it. An unnaturally thick fog filled the area.

“Just like home, eh, Billy?” the Nightmare sneered. The Hillbilly growled in response. As everyone else sprinted across the field in a mad search for survivors, the Shape walked purposely towards the nearest barn.

As he entered the rundown structure, he found himself staring at a dozen tall stacks of hay. Dim lights hung haphazardly from the roof, casting eerie shadows across the blood-stained walls. His right hand tightened around his butcher knife as he walked past the first stack of hay, his eyes darting across the walls and floor. He moved forward and found one of the crude power generators between two other hay stacks. The four light bulbs attached to it flickered, a sign they had been touched recently.

The Shape stepped away from the generator and immersed himself fully in the shadows. His breathing slowed to an almost deathly quiet. Almost as if on cue, he heard the faint shuffling of feet. An older man wearing a grey tuxedo peeked carefully around the hay stacks before he approached the generator.

“Maybe today’s your lucky day, Ace,” he breathed as he reached into the machine and fiddled around with the interior. A bloodcurdling scream filled the air. Ace paused for a moment, seeming to debate if he should stop or keep going. The color drained from his face as he realized he was not alone.

Before Ace could sprint away, the Shape was already on him and plunged the knife through his back once, twice, three times. As the man collapsed to the floor, the Shape stared at the blood dripping from his knife as if he were admiring his work.

With little effort, the Shape slung the dying man over his shoulder and marched towards a dangling meat hook. Ace weakly shouted as the hook pierced through his shoulder blade and out his torso. The Shape tipped his head ever so slightly as shadowy spider-esque limbs crawled down from the wretched sky above and wrapped themselves around the man. He was gone within moments. Off in the distance, he heard the scream of another survivor. This would be a short hunt.

The Shape wandered through the fields, gangly stalks of rotten corn and thick fog obstructed his view. He stepped carefully around them, his senses on high alert. An errant breath, a broken branch, or a closing door were all he needed to hear to find them. He paused as he saw a pair of crows fly into the sky. They had been disturbed by a survivor.

The Shape was in pursuit within moments. Pools of blood lit the way like a holiday tree. This survivor was fast. They'd gone into a part of the field filled with hay stacks and stone walls. The distorted echoing of wooden pallets slamming into the dirt filled the air. With one powerful blow, he shattered the pallets in half and kept after his prey. He raised his knife as he rounded another dilapidated farm house. He stopped.

Sitting on the ground with her back against the cellar door was Laurie Strode. A pool of blood formed where she sat as she held her left hand against a gash in her side. She pulled a strand of her coffee colored hair out of her face, her fierce eyes burning with fire as she said, "Go ahead, Michael. Do it."

The Shape's hand clenched tighter around his knife, but he did not move. Once upon a time, she was his sister. That never stopped him from trying to kill her before, but why now did he hesitate?

She spit on the ground as her sky blue shirt grew ever darker. “Come on, Michael. What are you waiting for? Do it!” she screamed.

“She’s mine!” The Shape turned towards the voice to see the Doctor racing towards them, his bloody spear held in the air. “Mine, mine, mine!” he cackled.

Without warning, the Shape clamped his hand around the Doctor’s throat and lifted him straight into the air. The butcher knife plunged upwards just beneath the Doctor’s rib cage. Blood spurted from his mouth as he dropped the spear. Before he could retaliate, the Shape withdrew the knife and shoved it deep into his torso. The tip of the blade stuck out just between the Doctor’s shoulder blades. His eyes went dull as his corpse hit the ground. The Shape turned back to Laurie, a look of surprise and confusion on her face.

The revving of a chainsaw broke the silence as the Hillbilly came sprinting towards him. With no hesitation, the Shape stood directly in the Hillbilly’s path. The man growled as he swung the chainsaw wildly from side to side. The Shape tipped his head slightly. The Hillbilly swung. The Shape stepped to the side, the saw barely nicking his shoulder, and shoved him forward. Unable to control his fall, the Hillbilly fell on top of his chainsaw. He screamed only for a moment before the serrated blades tore through his neck and severed his head from his body.

He returned his focus to Laurie. She had fallen asleep on the ground. Suddenly, her crumpled body raised itself into the air. “This one’s mine, Myers. Better luck next time,” said a low voice as her body floated through the air. The Shape seized her wrist. “I said she’s mine! Let her go,” said the disembodied voice. The Shape held tighter. “Don’t say I didn’t warn ya.”

The Shape’s eyes darted all around. He wasn’t sure what had happened. A thick white fog permeated the entire landscape. He could move, but he felt somehow slower and less coordinated. Laurie’s body collapsed to the ground in front of him. Metal claws scraped

together. "I warned you, son, not to get in my way," the Nightmare said as he slashed the Shape across the face, ripping out chunks of his mask and gashing open his cheek.

His face felt like a fire had been lit on it. It was a sensation he hadn't experienced in a very long time. He dully noticed the blood running down his neck and into his mechanic's coveralls. The Nightmare's demonic scarlet and yellow eyes shined wildly as he motioned for the Shape to attack him. He grinned as he said, "Come at me, bro." The Shape swung, but the Nightmare was gone in a puff of smoke. His chuckling echoed throughout the land. "You're in my world now."

Everything seemed to blur together for a moment. "Does this look familiar?" The Shape staggered back. He was no longer on farmland, but on a residential street. A nearby street sign read Lampkin Lane. He was home. "I thought you would like a nice trip down memory lane," the Nightmare sneered. The Shape looked to his right and saw an old two-story house. Most of the windows were boarded up. A lone carved pumpkin with a smile on its face sat on the door step, a single flame flickering from within. "Who says you can't go home again?" Suddenly, the Shape felt a searing pain in his spine. Metal claws protruded slightly from his chest.

The Shape dropped to his knees as the Nightmare reappeared behind him. Blood coated the inside of his mask. "All you had to do was stay out of my way, Myers," the Nightmare said as he knelt beside him. "Guess I'm gonna have four sacrifices this time, eh?" The Shape reached for his knife only for it to melt into the ground. "Ooh! Too slow!" the Nightmare laughed. "So what are you gonna do now?"

Like a bolt of lightning, the Shape whipped around and wrapped both his hands around the Nightmare's skull. The Nightmare gasped and tried to teleport, but he was stuck in the Shape's hold. He shouted as the Shape dug his thumbs through his eye sockets, arms quivering as he used every last bit of force he could muster. The Shape stopped only once he

heard a sickening crunch. As the dream world disappeared and the field returned, the Shape remained on the ground. Laurie was gone.

“I am displeased,” said the omnipresent voice. Reality started to disappear in a crackle of flaming embers. The Shape held his gaze on the night sky until everything went black and he found himself in the wooden shed once again. His pain was gone. Dying streams of sunlight filtered in through cracks in the shed. The Shape stood quietly as he looked around the room at the next batch of killers for the trial.

A woman wearing a rabbit’s half-mask stared back at him, an unnerving lullaby coming from her throat. Beside her was another woman in an old World War II nurse’s outfit. Her face was completely obscured beneath layers of gauze.

Heavy breathing came from the right of the Shape. He turned to look at the last killer for this trial. This was someone he hadn’t seen before. Slightly taller than himself, the man was nothing short of beastly. His tattered black jacket ripped at the seams. A long, blood-stained machete rested in his hand. His face was completely covered by a dirty yellowed hockey mask with three crimson slashes around the eyes. Their gazes met. Neither man backed down. Beneath his mask, the Shape smiled.