

## The New York Times bestselling author returns to the world of *Serpent & Dove*

*The Scarlet Veil* is a dark and thrilling vampire romance set in the world of Shelby Mahurin's bestselling series *Serpent & Dove*. Six months have passed since Célie took her sacred vows and joined the ranks of the Chasseurs as their first huntswoman. With her fiancé, Jean Luc, as captain, she is determined to find her foothold in her new role and help protect Belterra. But whispers from her past still haunt her, and a new evil is rising – one that Célie herself must vanquish, unless she falls prey to the darkness...

### 'I'd always wanted to write about vampires' Shelby Mahurin introduces *The Scarlet Veil*



**THE SCARLET VEIL**  
Shelby Mahurin  
28th September  
£14.99 HB  
9780008582456  
Electric Monkey

#### READ IT FIRST!

We have proof copies of *The Scarlet Veil* available for booksellers. For details of how to request one, please see the inside back cover.

When I finished *Gods & Monsters*, I swore to myself that it'd be the last book set in the *Serpent & Dove* universe. I loved the world, of course – and I loved the characters even more – but between writing under deadline and battling internal pressure to deliver a satisfying conclusion, I thought I needed a break from Lou and company. Separation. I thought I could love them from afar as I started drafting a totally new project... and this is where the voice overlay narrator says, 'She thought wrong.'

I've offered personalised copies of my books through my local indie bookstore since *Blood & Honey*. After signing that last copy of *Gods & Monsters* and driving home on the last day of my pre-order campaign – I think two days before *G&M* released – the reality of leaving this world behind hit me like a bag of bricks. Lou and Reid changed my life. Over the last four years, I'd heard their voices in my head more than those of my friends and family. And now I was supposed to just... never think of them again? Bursting into tears at the thought, I called my critique partner, who gently and patiently told me that it didn't need to be goodbye. Lou and Reid might've finally found their happily ever after – and Coco, Beau, and Ansel too – but there was one character who hadn't.

The entire premise of *The Scarlet Veil* fell into place with her next five words: 'What about Célie... with vampires?'

It made immediate sense. I'd always wanted to write about vampires. *Twilight*, *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* had always been favourites of mine, and in that thirty-minute phone call, they also became inspiration. Because of course vampires existed in the *Serpent & Dove* universe; they'd always existed, older and thus cleverer than other paranormal creatures. Of course, they would've lived in secrecy – so what happens when their victims' bodies start littering the streets of Belterra? What happens if Célie, desperate to prove herself as the first female Chasseur, vows to stop them?

What happens if someone more sinister than even a vampire sets his sights on Célie?

We plotted most of *The Scarlet Veil* between tears and excited shrieks in the next several minutes, and we didn't look back from there. Over the next year, Célie's story grew into much more than I'd ever imagined. It's a story about vampires, yes, but it's also a story about grief and mental illness, softness and strength, and the ties that bind us together. *Serpent & Dove* readers will appreciate Célie's emotional journey – as well as her slow-burn romance with a vampire king – while laughing alongside an ensemble cast of new and old characters. And if some readers haven't met Lou and Reid, I hope they'll enjoy those things too – especially the isle of Requiem, where cats can speak and ghosts recite Shakespeare. *The Scarlet Veil* is equal parts serious and silly, filled with all my favourite things, and I hope readers love it as much as I do.

Did I mention there's only one coffin?



#### HARPERINSIDER READS

### The first meeting with Michal An excerpt from *The Scarlet Veil*



#### CONNECT WITH SHELBY

Shelby Mahurin grew up on a small farm in rural Indiana, where sticks became wands and cows became dragons. Her rampant imagination didn't fade with age, so she continues to play make-believe every day – with words now instead of cows.  
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"I—" I blink again, struggling to keep pace with the uncanny woman. "My apologies, mademoiselle." When she continues to simply stare, however—those protuberant eyes entirely too intent upon my face—I cast about for something else to say. Anything else to say. I need just a few more moments before Lou and the others arrive. "Er, please forgive my ignorance, but you aren't anything like I expected."

"Really? And what did you expect?"

My brows furrow. "To be completely honest, I don't know. Cruelty? A general air of malevolence? You have killed five people."

"Oh, she's killed many more than that," another voice—that voice—interjects, and I nearly leap from my skin, squeaking and whirling to face the figure directly behind me.

Him.

The cold man.

He stands entirely too close—too silent—watching me with a derisive smirk. Cheeks flushing, I clutch my chest and try to speak without gasping, without betraying the sudden spike of my pulse. "H-How long have you been standing there?"

When he laughs, it is low and dangerous. "Long enough."

"Yes, well, it's quite rude to—to—" The words quickly wither on my tongue, however. Though it is rude to conceal one's presence amongst company, it is altogether ruder to knock a defenceless woman unconscious and drag her into one's foul den of iniquity. This man has done both. For all his refinery, he seems to have missed a few crucial lessons in etiquette. "Why am I here?" I ask instead. "Are you planning to exsanguinate me like Babette and the others?"

"Perhaps." Clasp his hands behind his back, he circles me with predatory grace. The candlelight paints his stark colours—the white of his



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skin, the silver of his hair, the black of his coat—almost golden. It does nothing to soften him, however. His eyes could draw blood as they lock with mine. “Did you tell your little friend about the roses?”

“Why do you want to know?”

“You should answer him,” Odessa says from her perch on the ebony box. “My cousin grows quite tedious if he doesn’t get his way.”

The man’s black eyes cut to hers. “A family trait, I’m sure.”

“No need to be prickly, darling.”

When at last he halts in front of me, I lift my face, pretending to be obstinate when in reality, I cannot look away. I have never met a person with features so fine, so feral.

Still, unease skitters down my spine as he tucks a single finger beneath my chin. “Who—who are you?” I ask.

“I am much more interested in who you are, pet.”

With a dramatic sigh, Odessa slides from the lid of her box. “Really, cousin, you should be more specific in the future. I followed your instruction to the letter.” She lifts three fingers revealing black nails, long and wickedly sharp. An onyx gem glitters on her knuckle, connected by a fine silver chain to the bracelet on her wrist. “Black hair, crimson cloak, companion of La Dame des Sorcières. She meets all three criteria—and she certainly smells like a Dame Rouge—but . . .” Her plum lips purse as together, the two regard me with what looks absurdly like suspicion. “She bears no scars.”

There is that word again—scars. And did Odessa say I smell like a Dame Rouge? How could I possibly—

Realization swoops low and swift in my stomach—sickening—as the pieces click into place, but I fight to keep my expression impassive, keenly aware of their scrutiny. Keenly aware that I’m still wearing Coco’s cloak.

I am not the only companion of La Dame des Sorcières with black hair.

On the wings of that realization comes another, equally chilling: The other one had whole constellations of them— she carved all twelve stars of the Woodwoose onto her left foot. These people knew Babette. They knew her intimately enough to see her bare feet, to remember the configuration of her scars. They killed her. Certainty swells in my chest. They killed her, and now—now they’re after Coco. Curiously, the knowledge doesn’t make my heart pound or my hands tremble like it should. No. It straightens my spine, and I jerk away from the man’s touch.

They will not have Coco.

Not if I can help it.

“Is that so?” Despite my best efforts, his grip tightens on my chin, and he tilts my face back and forth in search of scars, his gaze touching my eyes, my cheekbones, my lips, my throat. His jaw hardens at the last. “What is your name?” he finally asks, and his voice is softer now. Sinister. I know better than to ignore him. My instincts tingle all over again, warning me to remain still, warning me that this man is more than he seems.

When I swallow hard, stalling, considering my response, his eyes track

the movement. “Why do you want to know?”  
I finally ask.

“That isn’t an answer, pet.”

“That isn’t either.”

Lip curling in displeasure, he releases my chin, but all relief shrivels when instead he crouches before me, his eyes directly in line with my own. I do my best to ignore the way his forearms rest against his knees, the way his fingers lace together as he considers me. Deceptively casual. His hands are large, and I know firsthand how strong they are.

He could crush my throat in a second. As if reading my thoughts, he murmurs, “This will be much more pleasant if you play nicely.”

I repeat his own words. “And if I refuse?”

“Unlike you, I do possess the means to force your acquiescence.” He chuckles darkly. “Again, however—they won’t be pleasant, and they won’t be polite.” When still I say nothing—locking my jaw—his eyes narrow. His knee brushes my shin, and even that slight touch bolts up my spine, lifting the hair on my neck. In this position, almost kneeling at my feet, he should look submissive, perhaps reverent, yet he couldn’t be more in control. He leans closer. “Shall I tell you exactly what I intend to do to you?”

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