

MUSIC FADES IN: DESERTED CITY BY KAI ENGEL

BRUSHLAND

Once upon a time, there was a divided city. The reasons for this divide were old, as are the reasons for most divides. Life is nothing without maintaining boundaries against the fear of death. The people of the city, mortal and non-mortal alike, make stories about their world and about their place in it, who belongs and who does not. It was easy, at first...a river is a good excuse for the divide. Makes for an easy explanation for a complex struggle. The stories my people tell themselves are not lies, not quite, but they are still stories.

All cities have stories, and the story of Brushland was no different. After all, the soul of a city must be sustained by its people, and by its stories.

In this city there was a child. She was your average child, with an average family, in an average neighborhood, living through an average childhood. This should come as no surprise, but this child's life wasn't very interesting. Not one for the history books, some would say. But, as most stories do, this one began with a disruption. A break in the idyllic. That's the problem with stories: you need to have something interesting to say or else it might as well not exist. There lies the rub.

Life cannot exist without disruption, without imperfection. Shadows. The worthwhile nature of our lives rests only upon the fickle wheel of change. But, really, would we have it any other way?

Gabrielle Ravenwood...would. Well, if you were to ask her to recount her life story, she would not begin with her average life, her average childhood. No. She would start much later than that.

She would begin the day she first encountered the fae.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

MUSIC FADES IN: REJECTING THE SIRENS BY KAI ENGEL

One day, in the midst of a stream of rather normal days, Gabrielle Ravenwood took a walk in Southside Park. She was told not to walk in the park, of course, it was something that would scandalize her parents. But something drew the child to the river that day. And this, of course, was the beginning of everything.

Well, everything for Gabrielle at least. She did what happens to surprisingly many children her age; she unwittingly stepped into the fae realm.

Now, the only reason she's not still in the fae realm was a stroke of luck. You see, this was near the end of the last Iron War, and most fae weren't paying attention to the old pathways. She thought it was just a trick of her eyes at first. She hadn't listened to her grandmother, the old priestess in the temple up on the north end of the city. She thought of the old woman as nothing more than an out-of-touch bat in a long robe. She would never end up like her grandmother, she thought. She was going to be a world-famous singer.

And so the fae realm materialized around young Gabrielle Ravenwood without a second thought on the part of the child or the realm.

There, Gabrielle managed to wander a bit, drawn to the vibrant sights and sounds of a world beyond her own. Then, she found herself in a clearing. At this point, she was pretty sure something was wrong. She could no longer hear the river. And she loved the river in Southside. It had the most lovely song.

The clearing, on the other hand, was almost completely silent. It was not, however, completely empty.

In the center of the clearing stood a beautiful fae, robed and crowned. Gabrielle couldn't take her eyes off the queen. The gold of the gown and the circlet glinted like starlight over brown skin and black hair that defied gravity. Gabrielle

imagined that simply nothing in all of existence was quite so beautiful, quite so enchanting.

The fae queen soon took notice of the human child in her midst, and did something very few other fae in her position would have ever done before. Most would taunt it, tease it. Maybe kill it, set the dogs on it. Maybe enchant it and laugh as the confused mortal is thrown back into the mortal world hundreds of years into the future.

In years past, the queen would have simply taken the child and figured a changeling to exchange in its stead.

But no. No, Queen Una did none of those things. Instead, she immediately scoffed and told her guard to escort the child back to the mortal realm.

Thus, with very little ceremony, did Gabrielle enter and was promptly kicked out of the fae realm.

A small disruption in the eyes of some, perhaps. But hear me out...some disruptions, like seeds, take root and grow into something larger. If ignored, if rejected, it takes a shade of something darker. Something much more powerful, waiting until the soul grows tired and weak to unleash its influence.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

Some disruptions, left too long in the dark, become shadows.

CUT TO: INTRO MUSIC

LISETTE

Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services. The following entry is for Initiated

SFX: DISTORTION. THE FOLLOWING WORDS ARE TAKEN FROM ACTOR RECORDINGS, LIKE A MIXED CHORUS. "SHADOWS" USES THE SHADOW EFFECT, AND "STORYTELLERS" IS SOLO BY LISETTE.

Witches
Healers

Mediums
Mystics
Artists
Stewards
Shamans
Warriors
Mages
Trouble makers
Shadows
Storytellers

SFX: DISTORTION ENDS.

LISETTE

-only. Case Forty Two: Stories.

FADE IN: The steps of the City Hall. REPORTERS following GABRIELLE RAVENWOOD up the steps as they speak.

FADE IN: HEATH BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

REPORTER 1

High Priestess, is it true that your coven has been consulting with the governor's office on matters of the latest bill? Isn't that a violation of law?

REPORTER 2

High Priestess, what is your account of the Liminal? We've been told that the Coven could push it back any day, but that greater magic would be needed in order for you to do so.

GABRIELLE

Please, I am just here to observe the vote, as is the right of every citizen in this city. Now, if you'll excuse me.

(quietly) Hector, where the hell are you?

REPORTER 1

High Priestess, please, one question: what is the nature of your relationship with Queen Una?

GABRIELLE stops, spins around.

GABRIELLE

What did you just say? What did you just ask me? How dare you insinuate--

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

(chuckles) Oh, how easily you get played. Move along, darling. We have bigger issues at hand.

GABRIELLE keeps walking, leaving the group of reporters behind.

GABRIELLE

That was not funny.

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

Oh, you're just too sensitive. This is what happens when you outsource public relations though. The sharks can smell blood in the water. Hector could have handled that barrage so much better...

GABRIELLE

Yes, well, he isn't here now, is he? Aren't you supposed to know the location of every citizen of Brushland or whatever?

GABRIELLE enters City Hall. Doors close behind her.

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

Only the ones that matter. And right now, Hector does not matter. Only this vote. And the minds of these silly officials are filled with fear. They will comply with our will.

GABRIELLE

Good. Good.

SECURITY

ID please.

Gabrielle pulls out an ID.

SECURITY

For your awareness, guns, knives, weapons both physical and spiritual, are prohibited in City Hall grounds. Thank you. Welcome to City Hall. The chambers are at the end of the East Hall, doors on the left.

GABRIELLE walks down the hallway, where she meets the GOVERNOR halfway.

ZHANG

Oh, High Priestess. I didn't know you were coming in person.

GABRIELLE

Just doing my civic duty.

ZHANG

You know it really isn't necessary for you to--

GABRIELLE

I wouldn't miss it for the world.

ZHANG

Yes. Well. What about the whole low profile thing? I probably shouldn't be seen speaking to you right now.

GABRIELLE

Excuse me?

ZHANG

I mean, there is a lawsuit running through its paces.

GABRIELLE

A lawsuit? What lawsuit?

ZHANG

I...you didn't know? Janelle Grimmer's suit against the bill. Now, granted, she doesn't have the funds to go after us right now. But, you know. No need to add fuel to the fire. I'll see you inside.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

GABRIELLE

Governor Zhang! CHARLES!

The GOVERNOR ignores her, enters the chambers.
GABRIELLE's phone goes off.

Gods, what now! Hector, where the hell have you been?

HECTOR

There's been a bit of an emergency, Gabrielle. It has to do with Janelle's shadowdancing group. I, um...it appears that they have broken through the Coven perimeters.

GABRIELLE

They...they did **what**? No. No, the wards. Where was Michael?! He should be the one dealing with this.

HECTOR

You ah...banished Michael, remember?

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

That mangey Southsider...Well. If you want a job done right, you must do it yourself.

GABRIELLE

But...the vote...

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

No. We need to get back to the coven. The vote will happen with or without us, right? It'll pass. No. We can capture the Grimmer girl doing something illegal, trespassing on our sacred grounds...this lawsuit won't be an issue. We are coming, Hector. Set up the perimeter again, if your incompetence will let you do at least that much. Don't let them escape.

HECTOR

Already done...revered one.

CROSS FADE TO: Inside of the Ritual Room, a stone, circular room with high ceilings and no windows. HECTOR hangs up his phone, and turns to GLORIA, KALILA/SHADOW, and DESIREE.

MUSIC FADES IN: ZIGZAG HEART BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

HECTOR

Alright, that should do it. She...the Sh-...well you better be prepared because whoever

shows up...they're going to be angry and powerful.

SHADOW

Ah, no problem. Been there, done that. You're not the only one who's faced the wrath of the gods before, you know.

HECTOR

The Shadow of Brushland is much more than a High Priestess's wrath.

SHADOW

Oh, I know. I had to hold them off the other day.

HECTOR

You what?

SHADOW

(gloating) Gabrielle didn't tell you?

GLORIA

It's one of the reasons why this is the best idea we have, Hector. Now, help me with this tincture. How are you doing, Kalila?

SHADOW

Oh, you know...

KALILA

Terrified. Still.

SHADOW

That's why I'm in the front seat. For now.

DESIREE

You'll give it back when the time comes, though?

SHADOW

Yeah, yeah. I know my role in all this. Same thing we've done every shadow-dance. Kalila goes on the journey while I stay back and keep the door open. A glorified soul bouncer, that's me.

DESIREE

That's a wild understatement, Kal, and you know it. You can do this.

SHADOW

Such confidence. Wish we had a sliver of that.

DESIREE

What, all that bluster is a facade? Color me surprised.

SHADOW

Ooh, so feisty in the face of impending doom. No wonder she loves you.

DESIREE

Yeah...but does all of her?

SHADOW

I...I can't go there. Not yet.

DESIREE

It's just a question, Kal. It's okay. Really. I love you, all of you. And more importantly, I believe in all of you. I know you're scared. But. I just want you to know I'm here for you.

KALILA

Desiree, I...

SHADOW

Just because you looked like our Animex for a little bit doesn't mean you should get any big ideas.

DESIREE

Ah, so you admit it.

SHADOW

Admit what?

DESIREE

Never mind. Sit still, I need to get this line right.

SHADOW

That tickles.

DESIREE

It wouldn't tickle so much if you just sat still.

GLORIA

It doesn't sound like you two are breathing and grounding over there.

SHADOW

It's just that being in this room again makes me...antsy.

HECTOR

Residual effect from that soul-rending spell of yours, probably. We couldn't quite get the dragon's blood stain out completely. There, you can still see it on the corner of the carpet.

SHADOW

Woops?

MUSIC FADES OUT.

HECTOR

Never mind that. Gloria, have you heard anything from Grimmer yet? Gabrielle is expecting to catch her in the act of breaking in, so she better have taken what she needed and left by now.

GLORIA

I told her to tell me as soon as she arrived at the Library, not once she left the Temple grounds. Heath...*Aphrodite* is supposed to send a signal. Just in case the message gets intercepted.

HECTOR

How long does it take to get a few hairs from an office?

DESIREE

Relax. Aphrodite confirmed Janelle, Chen, and Amad are safe inside the Library. Everyone else is stationed on the corners of the boundary. They are waiting for us.

HECTOR

Did they text you?

DESIREE

No. I was informed by...other means.

HECTOR

Psychic transference? Who taught you that?
What method are you using?

DESIREE

(smug) I'm sorry, that's privileged information.
Not all high knowledge is kept by the Grand
Coven, you know.

HECTOR

Hmm. (back to business) Kalila...Shadow, are
you grounded?

SHADOW

If this fingerpainting is any indication, yes.

HECTOR

That fingerpainting is as much protection as
the Coven--as / can share with you now that
you no longer have a link to our egregore. So.
Be grateful.

SHADOW

Oooh. Grateful is such a strong word.

GLORIA

Shhh. Do you hear that?

QUIET. Then a vibration of a phone.

HECTOR

Oh, sorry, that's me. (pause) It's Gabrielle.

HECTOR picks up the call, and puts on a show.

Hello? Oh, Gabrielle. It's *awful*! They've
ransacked the Temple! I think whoever it was
reached your office. Oh, Gabrielle, the statuary!
Our books!

I'm down in the ritual rooms. I have my wand
and-and ritual knife. I'll do what I can but..I
think they were looking for something. I-I'm not
sure, but I think Kalila was with them. They
went to the room that she used to--

GABRIELLE'S INCOHERENT YELLING heard over the phone.

HANGS UP.

HECTOR

Oh. Well. I think she's on her way.

SHADOW slow claps.

SHADOW

Excellent performance, High Priest. Where's that energy for ritual, though?

HECTOR

I don't need notes on manipulation from you, Shadow.

SHADOW

Oh, but there's always room for growth.

GLORIA

Quiet! She'll be here any moment. I've set the ward of stillness. She shouldn't be able to break it--Hector has tied it to himself. If he doesn't leave, Gabrielle can't leave. Now...one last thing...

GLORIA walks over to where SHADOW/KALILA are sitting and kneels.

GLORIA

One last time. I need to hear it out loud.

SHADOW

Are you sure, Gloria? After all this, I might call it quits.

GLORIA

Be serious. And I need to hear it from Kalila.

KALILA

I'm ready, Gloria. I know the route to take.

GLORIA

Remember, minha gatina. This is not personal.
Gabrielle made it personal, but you do not
have to play into her shadows.

KALILA

I'll remember.

SHADOW

And if she doesn't...I will.

GLORIA

I don't know how much this is worth, but I am
so proud of you. You have grown so much. You
are a fine, wise witch.

KALILA

Gloria--

GLORIA

I believe in you. I believe in *all* of you.

SHADOW

(surprisingly choked up) Oh, don't start or
Kalila will start smudging all this ritual face
paint.

GLORIA

Good luck. Both of you.

Sharp heel footsteps are beginning down the hall. DESIREE
kisses SHADOW/KALILA's head.

DESIREE

The ancestors are with you. And so am I.

KALILA

Desiree...I love you.

DESIREE

I know. (laughs) I love you, too.

GABRIELLE approaches, LOUDER.

MUSIC FADES IN: TWIN SUNS BY DLAY

GABRIELLE

Hector?! Hector! Where are they...is she still here? Where is--

Door flings open. The buzz of a ward activating.

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

Kalila Stormfire.

KALILA

Hello, Gabrielle.

SHADOW OF BRUSHLAND

What is the meaning of this?! You're trying to trick us?

The WARD crackles.

Oh, that's rich. Take down this ward. It can't hold me.

HECTOR

Oh, but it can. It's connected to me.

GABRIELLE

(coughs) You...Hector, what the hell are you doing?

HECTOR

What I should have done a year ago. This nonsense has gone on far enough. Your grief is ripping apart the Coven and this city. You need to let go of the Shadow of Brushland.

GABRIELLE

Oh, so you lure me here and trap me? After all I have done for you, for this Coven? That is what is right? Look at this. Look at this temple. It's a mess. Kalila looks ridiculous. What is that...cardamom oil? The lines are crooked.

What is this supposed to...oh. You want to do a shadow dance? (laughs) You want Stormfire to do a shadow dance with me? That is beyond...are you *serious*?

GLORIA

Deadly serious. This isn't a game, Gabrielle. You've forfeited your right to come willingly, it is

now our responsibility as a community to make sure you cannot do any more harm.

GABRIELLE

So you're making this...this...*disgraced* witch do the work instead? Don't want to get your hands dirty on my soul, Gloria?

KALILA

Perhaps you haven't noticed, but that disgraced witch is still here. And I'm still willing to help you.

GABRIELLE

You? Why do you think I need help from anyone? Particularly from the likes of Kalila Stormfire?

DESIREE

Because we have already helped you. Do you hear them anymore?

MUSIC FADES OUT.

GABRIELLE

(snaps) Hear what?

KALILA

The Shadows.

GABRIELLE

That's...no. They wouldn't abandon me like that. That's--let me out of here.

The doors slam and lock. GABRIELLE pounds her fists on the door and wrestles with the lock. The WARD activates with a SNAP.

(yelps) AH.

LET ME OUT. BRING THEM BACK.

MUSIC FADES IN: TIPTOE TREADLINE BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

GLORIA

You know this is untenable, Gabrielle. The Shadow of Brushland. The Liminal. We will no longer be victims of your refusal to self-reflect.

GABRIELLE

What have you done to them?!

DESIREE

Kalila's Shadow is keeping them at bay, and the collective city--both the mortal and the fae--are shadow-dancing with it. So this is it. Either you decide to get down to business and agree to fix this, or we reveal what you've done.

GABRIELLE

What on Earth do you have to reveal? You have nothing on me.

HECTOR

I gave them the drafts, Gabrielle. Yes. *Those* drafts, and before you start yelling at me again--I know I'll go down with you too. I'm tired. I didn't want the Coven to be a city governing platform too. If I did I would have ran for office. And I could have, to be fair.

GLORIA

You have a choice, like we all do. Either remain asleep to the pain you are causing everyone and yourself, or wake up.

GABRIELLE

I...no. No, why are you doing this? And no one answered my question--why is SHE the one to do it?

KALILA

You know why, Gabrielle. Because me leaving the Coven was too much. So. Here I am. I came back. Maybe not exactly in the way you wanted, but I'm back. And I'm willing to do the work. Are you?

GABRIELLE

You don't know what the hell you're doing. You're too young.

KALILA

When did that ever stop you? You became High Priestess at my age.

GABRIELLE

You don't know anything about what I've been through.

KALILA

No, I don't. So why don't you sit down and tell me?

MUSIC FADES OUT.

PAUSE. No one moves.

HECTOR

If you don't do this Gabrielle, I will use everything in my power to remove you as High Priestess of the Grand Coven.

GABRIELLE

You wouldn't. You couldn't.

HECTOR

You forget that I'm the one who updates our bylaws. I would. And I could.

Pause. And then GABRIELLE slowly walks over and sits across from KALILA.

KALILA

(breathes out) The circle is cast. We are between the worlds. And what happens between the worlds--

EVERYONE

Can affect all the worlds.

TRANCE WARPS.

MUSIC FADE IN: ON THE RIVER BY LOBO LOCO

KALILA

Watch your step.

Stepping through water.

GABRIELLE

Where are we?

KALILA

Your subconscious. Don't tell me you've never been here.

GABRIELLE

It's never looked like this.

KALILA

What did it look like?

WARP. Wind blowing through trees.

GABRIELLE

Like this.

KALILA

I know this place...wait. This is...

GABRIELLE

Under the hill. Yes. I heard you and your friend got lost here. How did that work out for you?

KALILA

Well enough. Why is *this* your subconscious?

GABRIELLE

Never mind that, what do you need me to do here? Meet my personal shadow? Convince it to 'chill out'? This is pointless.

KALILA

Ha.

GABRIELLE

What are you laughing at?

KALILA

Nothing. It's just...all so familiar. Why was it me?

GABRIELLE

Why was what you?

KALILA

The last straw.

GABRIELLE

I'm not even so sure...

KALILA

What do you remember from that day?

WARP to clip from LOST TAPE.

The door CREAKS OPEN.

HECTOR

I know that incense...that's her love spell. Did you know about this, Gloria?! Kalila was explicitly told (that such things were forbidden)--!

GLORIA

(panicked, interrupting Hector) No, I thought she was just...doing trance work. Oh gods. I didn't(woul)--

GABRIELLE

(chilly) She knew the consequences. Love spells are forbidden for a reason. Sit her up. Wake her, I don't care how. And someone get that recording!

GLORIA

(weakly) Oh, Kalila, what have you done?

Pause.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

KALILA

Why are love spells forbidden in the Coven?

GABRIELLE

You know why. They violate consent.

KALILA

But you knew it was a self-love spell. Consent had nothing to do with it.

GABRIELLE

You...you were under my supervision. You and Samuel. You decided that splitting your soul was better than...

KALILA

Staying as I was? Yeah. At that point, yeah, anything was better than where I was.

GABRIELLE

Did I--did the coven mean *nothing* to you?

SHADOW

Oh. So that's what this is about.

MUSIC FADES IN: INSIDE YOUR BODY BY LOBO LOCO.

KALILA

Shadow, no. What are you doing here?

SHADOW

Sorry, Kal. The stuff you two were talking about struck a nerve. Couldn't stay away.

KALILA

Shadow, no, you need to focus. The Shadow of Brushland--

SHADOW

Well I can't exactly do that when Miss High and Mighty over here is provoking us. Me.

GABRIELLE

Is there a problem here?

SHADOW

Actually, there is. You've spent so much time in the Coven. You've basically become the face of it. Even Hector recognizes that, and he's technically at the same level as you. Why is that, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE

I've worked hard to bring the Grand Coven to where it is today.

SHADOW

Oh yes, a bloated, controlling thing. Very proud of that, I'm sure.

KALILA

Shadow, no. That's not--

SHADOW

What is there to be proud of, really? Maybe yes, at one time it was a hallowed center for spiritual development. But somewhere along the way something happened. You happened. You come in, and what? You get sick with power? The camel's back has been broken long before Kalila even moved to Brushland, wasn't it? You just needed an excuse to...have it all.

KALILA

Shadow, stop! This isn't how we do this.

SHADOW

Then what do you propose? This isn't working. Her Shadow hasn't even shown up yet.

KALILA

Don't you get it? This is what Gloria was warning us about. We're playing the part of her shadow.

SHADOW

Oh. Oh. Oops.

KALILA

Yeah, oops. You know what, you're right. This isn't working.

GABRIELLE

(snide) Would you two like a time-out to strategize?

KALILA

I'm not actually talking to you.

Shadow, when did you come in?

SHADOW

I don't know...you said something about not being able to live like you did, that's why you did the spell, she said something about the coven meaning nothing to you.

KALILA

Oh. Right. Okay. Gabrielle, why do you think the coven meant nothing to me? I've never said that. You did.

GABRIELLE

I did?

KALILA

Yes. What makes you think that I didn't care about the coven? That spell was about me and my pain.

GABRIELLE

You split your soul under MY roof.
You left.

KALILA

You kicked me out.

GABRIELLE

Same thing.

KALILA

How is that the same thing?

GABRIELLE

(cold, aloof) Because it's all the same, Kalila. Whether you're High Priestess or a silly little girl running through the realm of the fae, no one ever belongs. You're never accepted, not by anything *pure* or *beautiful*. (DISMISSIVE huff)

The gods leave me. (SHRUG) The fae leave me. (SHRUG) My initiates leave me. It's just the way it is. And, really - what else am I supposed to think when I feel Kalila Stormfire's soul tear itself away from the egregore of the Coven? It's just the same old story.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

(CHUCKLES COLDLY) You want to know why love spells are forbidden? You can never force love, because it doesn't exist.

KALILA

Oh, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

No. No pity. Not from you.

KALILA

Why can't I? You can't demand what I do or do not feel, Gabrielle. You don't have that kind of power. Did you forget you were the one who taught me that? Or maybe...maybe you don't want pity because you might realize that no matter how horrible you are, someone out there might show some kindness to you? Out of basic human decency? Love doesn't have to feel like obedience, you know. Or obsession.

GABRIELLE

What do you know about love? You took my affection, my care for you, and for this Coven, for granted. The Shadow of Brushland came through because of a truth. And that truth is that love does not exist without power. You were too weak to stay with the Coven, to face your mistakes.

KALILA

Yes. I was weak. I was broken down, subsumed by my shadow. But I'm tired of blaming Shadow. I'm tired of blaming myself. I know now that it was just...life. I learned that I needed to be gentler on myself, that my Shadow was just trying to protect me in the only way I knew how. I know that now.

SHADOW

You do? Oh. You do...

KALILA

What is it about my relationship with my Shadow that haunts you, Gabrielle?

GABRIELLE

(muttering) She protects you.

KALILA

What was that?

GABRIELLE

(bitter, more emotion now) My Shadow never protected me. My Shadow only tears at me,

leaves me hollow inside. How could any child withstand such callousness? Such lack of love? The shadow of love isn't hatred, remember? It is apathy. So. I split myself from her a long, long time ago.

KALILA

Wait, how?

SHADOW

A child...You were lost in the fae realm when you were just a girl, weren't you?

GABRIELLE

Nine. I was...I was nine.

KALILA

But why would she leave her Shadow behind there? What happened, Gabrielle?

PAUSE.

SHADOW

That's why you hate Queen Una so much. She did something to you there, didn't she?

MUSIC FADES IN: MORNING BELLS BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

GABRIELLE

(old, pure hatred) She...didn't... do...*anything*! That's the problem. She rejected me. Like I was nothing.

I was nothing to her. And...I couldn't...I couldn't stand the voice in my head telling me I was nothing. So I left it there. I...I left her there...

SHADOW

Kalila. She needs to leave.

KALILA

What?

SHADOW

To the hill. She needs to go to the hill.

KALILA

That doesn't make sense?

SHADOW

It makes perfect sense. Gabrielle, you've been so angry at Queen Una. That's not just from the Shadow of Brushland, is it? It's personal. She was this beautiful thing, and she rejected you. Like you were nothing. What would it feel like if that was just a story?

GABRIELLE

It's not just a story. It's my life. You can't just deny my reality. You started this! And now what? You want to tear down what I've built?! What I've created? The Coven is more powerful than ever. Yes, more powerful than the fae.

SHADOW

Yes, and that's why you put up a permanent barrier to the fae realm. You couldn't bear the fact that she could come and go into your world as she pleased, and you couldn't do the same. Your shadow, the thing you left behind, couldn't do the same.

GABRIELLE

She's better off there.

SHADOW

What if I told you she isn't? That you abandoned her as much as everyone else abandoned you.

GABRIELLE gasps, lightly.

What if I told you there was a way out. To be connected. Accepted. Because if there's anything I've learned...it's that you can't get rid of shadows. Short of, well. What you've done.

What if I said that the fae could take you and you could stay there? With your shadow? With the Fae Queen?

GABRIELLE

I...no. After everything. They wouldn't let me stay there.

SHADOW

Perhaps not as you are now.
But... what you are now isn't necessarily all you
could be.

GABRIELLE

What could I be?

SHADOW

Let go of the Shadow of Brushland, and
embrace the vision of Una--the queen you
always wanted to be. Shadows are strange
that way. Fae shadows are even stranger.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

GABRIELLE

Fae shadows...

SHADOW

A child split between two worlds. Someone
who was taken into the fae realm, but belongs
in neither world. Your double, left behind under
the hill.

PAUSE as the truth comes out.

KALILA

A changeling.

GABRIELLE

I am NOT one of *those*--

SHADOW

No, you aren't. And that's been the problem all
along, hasn't it? That is what you want...isn't it?
All that fear, that disgust...it was all just
jealousy at the end of the day.

GABRIELLE

They were desired by the fae. The
changelings.

SHADOW

Exactly. But... who said a changeling only ever
had to be a half fae/half-human child? And you
wanted to be one. To be desired by the fae.

GABRIELLE

Yes.

SHADOW

So...will you go?

GABRIELLE

My shadow. Do you...?

SHADOW

You know this. You even felt it. Yes. All shadows are connected. Even me. There's an echo. I know yours is there.

GABRIELLE

I...but...the coven...

SHADOW

The Coven will be fine. Look at it this way, you aren't being kicked out at least. You are leaving of your own free will. You are leaving to finally become...yourself.

GABRIELLE

Then. I. Yes. I'll go.

SHADOW

I can take you.

KALILA

Whoa. Whoa, no. That's not what we came here to do. We came here to rejoin Gabrielle's Shadow.

SHADOW

Gabrielle's Shadow is in the fae realm. So. That's where we have to go.

KALILA

But...we can't! If we go, we won't be able to come back!

SHADOW

It's easier to move separately, between the worlds. Don't worry. I can go with her alone. You won't be trapped. But, um.

KALILA

Shadow...

SHADOW

Yeah. About that. The only way I will be able to come back...you can't see the pathway. Only I can. And it's through the Shadow of Brushland.

KALILA

You'll get separated from me! How is this any different from our ritual? From Gabrielle leaving her shadow in the fae realm? I can't do that again! Won't we eventually be right back where we are, except now you and I will be at the center of this mess?!

SHADOW

Kal, I have to take Gabrielle over the divide, to her shadow. It's the only way because I know the way. You don't.

KALILA

What happens if the Shadow of Brushland just...just subsumes you?

SHADOW

Then you'll still have a connection to me through the collective. I feel it already. It's working. The Shadow of Brushland is being reclaimed.

KALILA

This...I wasn't ready for this.

SHADOW

Neither was I, but what choice do I have? You need to get back. Pick up the pieces.

KALILA

How do you know if this will work? That this won't just...just split you from me again?

SHADOW

I feel you now. Like...really feel it. It's...better than before. That's how this works. You have faith in me now. And I, you. I can do this.

KALILA

I can do this.

SHADOW

Well hey. Self-confidence. How about that?

We need to go, Kal. Before the ritual ends and the door closes. Gabrielle, are you ready?

GABRIELLE

Yes. I want to go to the Hill. I want to see it outside of my dreams. My nightmares.

Door creaks open.

SHADOW

After you, then.

FOOTSTEPS AS THEY WALK TO THE DOOR.
GABRIELLE STOPS RIGHT IN FRONT OF IT. LOOKS BACK.

GABRIELLE

Kalila. For what it's worth. Tell Hector I'm sorry. I'm letting go of power. For once.

MUSIC FADES IN: HEAVENSTILL BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

GABRIELLE steps through the door. Door closes.

KALILA

Shadow? Shadow, where are you?

SHADOW

I'm right here. I'm close to the other side, but you should still be able to hear me.

KALILA

Why can't I see you?

SHADOW

It's...strange. I can still see you, but I see. So much more. Oh. OH. It's so much bigger. I nearly forgot what this felt like.

KALILA

What *what* feels like?

SHADOW

The collective unconscious. Oh. *Oh*, it feels like *home*.

KALILA

Shadow...no...please don't leave. I need you.

SHADOW

Oh, Kalila. You can't get rid of me that easily. I'm here. I'm always here. Here's your gift, asshole. Me. Returned. Just...a little bit changed. A little more like you. Us. Me.

KALILA

Am I ever going to hear you like this again?

SHADOW

Oh, you think you're getting out of shadow dancing? Hell no! It will be just as much work to get anything more out of me the next time around. You know what Gloria says.

KALILA

Shadow work never ends.

SHADOW

There it is. See you around, Kal.

KALILA

Shadow? I'm sorry, for not valuing you as much as I should have. Thank you. For everything. And...and, aw screw it. I love you. I do.

SHADOW

Self-confidence AND self-love? In this economy?

I guess it's more likely than you think.

SHADOW laughs, delighted, and then...TRANCE WARP.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

FADE IN: OUR FINGERS COLD BY BLUE DOT SESSIONS

OCTAVIE

One year after the sudden and bizarre disappearance of High Priestess Gabrielle Ravenwood only hours after the scheduled vote at City Hall, the questionable legacy of her leadership has officially been closed.

Janelle Grimmer, along with a number of other advocacy organizations in the region, have decided to rescind their suits as soon as Governor Zhang vetoed the bill that would criminalize certain kinds of magic used by the general public. Opponents of the bill have said it would have given the Grand Coven de facto magick supremacy in the city. Well, it looks like the bill is dead in the water.

I am here with three very special guests to help shed light on where Brushland is at after a tumultuous time.

King Finvarra, of the fae realm.

FINVARRA

A pleasure to speak with you again, Miss Thomas.

OCTAVIE

Glad to have you. Janelle Grimmer, community organizer and co-owner of the magick shop Grimmer & Daughters.

JANELLE

Thanks for having me.

OCTAVIE

Great to have you on the show again, Janelle. And...well, I'm so sorry. I know your addition was a little last minute. What is your title, again?

BRUSHLAND

It's alright. My titles tend to shift...even I forget who I am sometimes. I think you can just consider me...hmm. The soul of the city? Just call me Brushland.

OCTAVIE

Right. Brushland. Thank you all for joining me. In such unusual times, sometimes you have to interview unusual people. Or various spirits, gods, and other non-human beings, I guess. I wanted to talk to you all a little bit more about how the Liminal receded. There are rumors that Spirit of the Brushland River has returned, and that was what caused the disbursement. Others are speculating that this is the result of some backroom deals with the Grand Coven and the Governor's office to remove the iron bars inlaid through the middle of the city. Can you all clarify what, exactly, has happened?

FINVARRA

I think I can provide a little more insight on the Liminal. First of all, the Liminal only receded on a...hmm, marginal level. The magick that has always been in Brushland remains.

But yes, High Priest Hector Ivory has been more willing to negotiate with myself and Queen Una. With the iron bars removed, the spirit of the Brushland River was able to revive herself and come back to...well, if not back to normal, at least a new equilibrium. Everyone wins!

OCTAVIE

Southside appears to have returned to normal, and there's an indication that changelings will be able to return to Brushland. Activist organizations like De Justicia and Grimmer & Daughters are working with the government to open the borders to those formally considered "unregistered". Janelle, you are still working on Southside community issues, correct?

JANELLE

Yes, Aphrodite and I have been working with a number of pantheons and spirits to coordinate a more...holistic approach to community shadow work.

OCTAVIE

So the gods *have* returned? It's not just you and the West African pantheon working directly with citizens of Brushland, anymore?

JANELLE

Correct. The um...absence of other gods and more powerful non-human spirits took a toll on all of us, I won't deny that. But it was necessary. They couldn't get involved in something so, well. Personal.

OCTAVIE

Was the Shadow of Brushland the thing that kept them away?

BRUSHLAND

In a way. The Grand Coven has always been a driving center for soul work in my city. When that is corrupted, I am corrupted. When the story is that only one power can remain in power--that projection rides all the way up to the top. To me. So, yes. I was subsumed by my reflection--my shadow. It's one of the reasons why it is so important for the people of the city to grow and be aware of their own impact.

OCTAVIE

Do you have any comments on politics, then? Considering the latest scandal of embezzlement in Zhang's administration, it is likely that the Governor will accept the proposal to open the city's borders to unregistered changelings and undocumented immigrants again.

BRUSHLAND

The polis, the citizen body, has to make the decision on their own. I am simply the story of the city, the soul of the city. I am not necessarily their guide or their god. But I am the embodiment of their best collective selves. That's all we can hope for. At least for now.

OCTAVIE

I think you're right. Well, that's all we have for now.

Finvarra. Janelle. Brushland. Thank you again for speaking with me. This is Octavie Thomas, for Borderlands podcast. Tune in next time--

MUSIC FADES OUT.

FADE IN: KALILA at her desk, recording. There is some movement in the background as AMAD AND CHEN pack their things.

KALILA

Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services.
The following entry is for initiated witches only.

DOOR OPENS as AMAD AND CHEN begin to walk out.

Oh, Amad, before you and Chen go!

AMAD

Yeah? What's up?

DOOR CLOSSES.

KALILA

When you transcribe this please organize the files on the Stormfire *business* cloud, not Eldritch's. You know how he gets.

AMAD

You got it, HP.

KALILA

Ugh, what did I tell you about calling me that?

AMAD

To not. But you are my high priestess, now. Technically.

KALILA

You've got Chen saying it, too.

CHEN

You're about to be mine, too.

KALILA

Only once you finish your capital C Challenge.

CHEN

(groans) What does that even mean?! It's the same thing as the Capital M Mystery?

AMAD

(smug) You'll find out soon enough. Even I know you're close to completing your Challenge.

CHEN

Fine, fine. C'mon, let's get to Grimmer and Daughters with these herb packets before they close.

AMAD

See ya later, Kalila!

AMAD and CHEN open the door, and close it behind them.

MUSIC FADES IN: EARLY RISING BY DLAY

KALILA

Anyway, today's date is May 1st. Beltane. The flowers are blooming, and I am terrified. It means that I'm only a week out from moving. I mean, I know I'm not going far. But. I liked this little basement studio apartment. Not a lot of room, but lots of memories...

What am I doing? Oh, right. An update on my series of fae magick lessons with Clarence. He's learned a lot, and it's been really helpful to have someone who has come back from the hill to help teach us. The liminal has receded, but that doesn't mean fae magick has gone away completely. In fact, Mrs. Gonzalez wanted to learn plant language. She was worried that her ability to speak to her ferns would go away with the removal of the Liminal.

Clarence and I decided to host a neighborhood workshop, to transition. Yes, it's harder to tap into that energy when you're not completely saturated with it. But it's still there. Magick is always there. All the time.

Speaking of, I had another...incident. Not as bad as it could have been. It was actually kind of silly. I thought I saw Samuel at the corner grocer. Which, he never even liked. So, why would he even go. But. I...I acted out a little bit. Poor Chen got the brunt of it when she asked

me about her upcoming initiation, but I managed to calm down and own my projection.

So, yeah. My shadow has certainly not left. I'm just...it comes through a little differently. I'm a little more aware.

I guess that's all you can ask for. Shadow work never ends, right?

So, if that's the lesson for this supplemental. I guess I can talk a little more on Shadow work before I go. I have to meet Desiree for their gallery reopening. The front room looks really really good, by the way. I've been meaning to tell them that they are completely brilliant, and that I am so lucky to be their partner.

I may. Um. Have a certain special gift for them. I'll wait until after the party, maybe tomorrow. Or...or tonight when it's just the two of us. I don't want to distract from their big event, but I think it's time. And, well, from our last conversation, Aphrodite has given her blessing.

So. Yeah. I guess we're doing this. Ha.

Oh right. Shadow work.

Gloria keeps reminding me about that. How important it is to tap into my light places too, to grow myself instead of just dig into the dark places. Aphrodite, too.

That love goddess is really shmoozing her way back into my life. I mean, it's different. No doubt. I think our relationship is...clearer, now? I don't know. It's like. I used to be so into the pretty traditional--leave an offering, invoke her when making love spells kind of patron/patronee relationship.

Now it's...I think it's more--helpful? My association with Aphrodite is more grounded, meaningful. My practices, my potions, my remedies...they're stronger because I'm stronger, more confident because now I know why I can be confident. They heal more because there's a little bit more love in there. A

bit more empathy. A bit more desire for the fullness of life.

Okay. So. Yeah. Aphrodite and I have reconciled. Don't make a big deal about it. Or, okay. Maybe I did. Make a deal about it. With a lot more denial and shouting and crying than usual because I am nothing if not stubborn. And, yes, I hold grudges like no other. But, eventually I realized I need her in my life. And my reluctance was more based out of fear--fear of truly considering what it meant to feel love. I need a power that I know loves me deeply, and has a knowledge of the concept of love that is...unimaginable. Eternal. Infinite. And she can remind me I am allowed to be a romantic, over-indulgent sap as well.

Guess I can't put a lid on my own dramatic tendencies anymore.

I know I'm human. I feel it, more than I ever have before. With my clients, it seems like...like I can see the shape of their own humanity a little more clearly, too. With a little more kindness. As a healer, it's so important for me to heal myself, to know my own wounds, to then go deeper into helping others heal theirs. I'm no savior, I am no more magickal than they are. I am no more powerful than my initiates, either. I...by reclaiming my shadow, I remove my own obstacles. And I am less prone to placing my obstacles in front of others.

Here's what I've learned.

Shadows hold the best of what being human can unfold.

Shadows remind us of life, of being aligned with life. In its messy, beautiful, painful glory.

There will always be another dance on the horizon, another challenge, another turn within and transformation without.

On and on and on. Endless.

I want to meet it whenever I can, with open
arms to my own heart, bursting with love in all
my selves.

MUSIC FADES OUT.

Deep breath. Exhale.

End Session.

OUTRO MUSIC FADES IN.

Kalila Stormfire's Economical Magick Services is written and
produced by Lisette Alvarez in conjunction with Stormfire
Productions LLC.

GABRIEL: This season's scripts were edited by Gabriel
Urbina.

LISETTE: Kalila Stormfire and her Shadow were played by
Lisette Alvarez.

(Actor credits)

Zayn Tiam: Desiree Onasis

Chris Magilton: Hector Ivory

Whitney Johnson: Gabrielle Ravenwood/Shadow of
Brushland

Forenza Audio: Gloria Sausa

Sam Raethr Nguyen: Samuel Argent/Governor Zhang

Karim Kronfli: Clarence Twinner

Alex Christian: King Finvarra

Anairis Quinones: Queen Una/Janelle Grimmer

Sena Bryer: Aphrodite/Heather Lovely

AJ Beckles: Amad Khan

Anjali Kunapaneni: Nadia Pillai

Bree Page: Cixin Chen

David Rheinstrom: Eldritch

Sarah Rhea Werner: Nala

Ian DePriest: Victor Kumari

Marguerite Croft: Octavie Thomas

Caroline Mincks: Charlie

Cole Burkhardt: Kai

David Hanna: Michael

Natalie VanSistant: Pamela

Estefania Velez: Josephina

Nic Folson: Hassan

Chris Colon: Juan

Syirin Said: Farrah

Sheila Morris: The Storyteller/The City of Brushland

LISETTE: The theme music for Kalila is Fairitale by Ondrosik. Other music sourced from FreeMusicArchive and the ritual music is used with permission from Batala, T Thorne Coyle, M Macha Nightmare, and Katrina Messenger.

SARAH: This season's sound design was done by Sarah Buchynski.

OUTRO MUSIC FADES OUT.

LISETTE END CREDITS:

Hey everyone. Lisette Alvarez here, for some final thoughts. Because you know, after three years I think I deserve it! I've said it before and I'll say it again. This show has changed my life. I have fallen in love with this medium, its fandom, its creators, and its magick.

When I started this show, it was meant to be a little piece of catharsis for my own path in soul work, in shadow work. I didn't imagine that others would connect so deeply to the story, to the characters, to the lessons I desperately was trying to learn myself. I am deeply grateful to have people who are holding space in my art and who have made it their own.

There are many, many people I want to thank who made this show possible.

First, my cast. These are the people who have breathed life into so many of the characters who would have otherwise never existed. They all are incredible talents, and I am so grateful to have had the chance to work with them.

To thank Sarah, my sound designer for the last two seasons. She has skyrocketed the depth and quality of the world of Kalila Stormfire and I am forever thankful that she joined the team.

Gabriel Urbina, who took this last season and pushed me to become a better storyteller. His work was part of what inspired me to create audio drama in the first place, so I am thrilled to have worked with him for this, my final season.

I want to thank my Script Consultants: Idris Grey, Ashley Mitchell, and D. B. Wansel.

Kristina Lakeway, who created an amazing piece of podcast cover art.

Of course, I must also thank Katrina Messenger, who as my teacher, mentor, and high priestess -- continues to challenge me and provide guidance on my path as a witch and a storyteller. She help me cement a deep respect for the sacred nature of my work and she has held space for me to explore my dark and light places. I am honored and proud to be her student.

I want to thank my family and friends, of blood and bond, who have boosted me and cheered me on. To my parents and siblings, who put up with my dramatics and are still proud of me. To the audio drama community, those I got to meet at podcast conventions and who I've met online. Thank you for being an unending web of support, kindness, and love.

I want to thank Danny, my partner, for reminding me I continuously outperform and who loves me, all of me, including my shadows.

Finally, I want thank you for connecting with this story, this very special story. I will always hold Kalila in my heart. She is a part of me, she has taught me things I never knew about myself, and she was a vessel of my own healing. I am grateful for her, too.

Though Kalila's story is over, my storytelling is not. You will be able to find more of my work within Stormfire Productions. I hope to see you with each new story as it comes.

In the meantime, be kind and stay magickal.

With that, this story has come to its end. I'll leave you with one final gift though, from the goddess of love herself.

SOUND FADES IN: OCEAN WAVES.

APHRODITE:

Well, that was something, wasn't it, my dears?
And yet we made it, past the final scene.
There's just one question left, as it appears,
That of "Why, goddess, did you intervene?"

Was it to save a city's shadow, locked,
Past enmity twixt humans and the fae?
Or play as Eros, golden arrow nocked,
To pair Kalila and her Desiree?

It matters none, for truth's not borne of plot,
But rather all the messages thereof.

If from our story nothing else was caught,
We hope it be to give thyself thy love.

And so I, Aphrodite, bless you all.
May life taste sweet until its curtain call.

OCEAN WAVES FADE OUT.

FIN.