

New York Times Bestselling Author of
SHADOW GAME

CHRISTINE
FEEHAN

MIND
GAME

ONLY ONE MAN CAN PROTECT HER...

MIND GAME

Christine Feehan



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*For my beloved sister Mary, with much love.
Hope always shines eternal, even in our darkest hour.
Somehow, you always have known that.*

Be sure to write to Christine at christine@christinefeehan.com to get a FREE exclusive screen saver and join the PRIVATE e-mail list to receive an announcement when Christine's books are released.

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THE GHOSTWALKER CREED

*We are the GhostWalkers, we live in the shadows
The sea, the earth, and the air are our domain
No fallen comrade will be left behind
We are loyalty and honor bound
We are invisible to our enemies and we destroy them
where we find them
We believe in justice and we protect our country and those
unable to protect themselves
What goes unseen, unheard, and unknown are
GhostWalkers
There is honor in the shadows and it is us
We move in complete silence whether in jungle or desert
We walk among our enemy unseen and unheard
Striking without sound and scatter to the winds before
they have knowledge of our existence
We gather information and wait with endless patience for
that perfect moment to deliver swift justice
We are both merciful and merciless
We are relentless and implacable in our resolve
We are the GhostWalkers and the night is ours*

Nox noctis est nostri

CHAPTER

ONE

“She’s obviously not cooperating again,” Dr. Whitney grumbled and scribbled fiercely in his notebook, clearly somewhere between total exasperation and frustration. “Don’t let her have her toys again until she decides to work. I’ve had enough of her nonsense.”

The nurse hesitated. “Doctor, that isn’t a good idea with Dahlia. She can be very. . .” She paused, clearly searching for the right word. “Difficult.”

That caught his attention. He looked up from his papers, the impatience on his face changing to interest. “You’re afraid of her, Milly. She’s four years old, and you’re afraid of her. Why?” There was more than scientific interest in his tone. There was eagerness.

The nurse continued to watch the child through the glass window. The little girl had shiny black hair, thick and long and falling down her back in an unkempt, untidy mass. She sat on the floor rocking back and forth, clutching a small blanket to her and moaning softly. Her eyes were enormous, as black as midnight and as penetrating as steel.

Milly Duboune winced visibly and looked away when the child turned those black, ancient eyes in her direction.

“She can’t see us through the glass,” Dr. Whitney pointed out.

“She knows we’re here.” The nurse dropped her voice to a whisper. “She’s dangerous, Doctor. No one wants to work with her. She won’t let us brush her hair or tell her to go to bed, and we can’t punish her.”

Dr. Whitney lifted an eyebrow, sheer arrogance crossing his face. “You’re all *that* afraid of this child? Why wasn’t I informed?”

Milly hesitated, fear etched on her face. “We knew you’d demand more from her. You have no idea what you’d unleash. You don’t pay any attention to them after you make your demands. She’s in terrible pain. We don’t blame her when she throws her tantrums. Ever since you insisted we separate the children, many are showing signs of extreme discomfort or, as in Dahlia’s case, a high level of pain. She can’t eat or sleep properly. She’s too sensitive to light and sound. She’s losing weight. Her pulse is too rapid, her heart rate up all the time. She cries even in her sleep. Not a child’s cry, but a cry of pain. Nothing we’ve tried has helped.”

“There’s no reason for her to be in pain,” Dr. Whitney snapped. “All of you coddle those children. They have a purpose, a much bigger purpose than you can imagine. Go back in there and tell her if she doesn’t cooperate, I’ll take all of the toys and her blanket away from her.”

“Not her blanket, Dr. Whitney, it’s all she clings to. It’s all the comfort she has.” The nurse shook her head forcefully and stepped back from the window. “If you want that blanket, you go take it away from her yourself.”

Dr. Whitney studied the desperation in the woman’s eyes with clinical detachment. He indicated for the nurse to reenter the room. “See if you can coax her to cooperate. What does she want the most?”

“To be put back in the same room with either Lily or Flame.”

“Iris. The child’s name is Iris, not Flame. Don’t indulge her personality simply because she has red hair. She already is more trouble than she’s worth with that temper of hers. The last thing we want is for Iris and this one,” he indicated the dark-haired little girl, *“to get together. Go tell her she can spend time with Lily if what she does pleases me.”*

Milly took a deep breath and pushed open the door to the small room. The doctor flicked a switch so he could hear the conversation between the nurse and the little girl.

“Dahlia? Look at me, honey,” Milly wheedled. *“I have a surprise for you. Dr. Whitney said if you do something really good for him, you can spend time with Lily. Would you like that? To spend the rest of the evening with Lily?”*

Dahlia clutched the raggedy blanket to her and nodded her head, her eyes solemn. The nurse knelt beside her and reached out her hand to smooth Dahlia’s hair away from her face. Immediately the little girl ducked, clearly unafraid, simply avoiding physical contact with her. Milly sighed and dropped her hand. *“Okay, Dahlia. Try something with one of the balls. See if you can do something with them.”*

Dahlia turned her head and looked directly at the doctor through the one-way glass. *“Why does that man stare at us all the time? What does he want?”* She sounded more adult than child.

“He wants to see if you can do anything special,” the nurse answered.

“I don’t like him.”

“You don’t have to like him, Dahlia. You just have to show him what you can do. You know you have all sorts of wonderful tricks you can do.”

“It hurts when I do them.”

“Where does it hurt?” The nurse glanced at the glass too, a small frown beginning to form.

“In my head. It hurts all the time in my head and I can’t make it go away. Lily and Flame make it go away.”

“Just do something for the doctor and you can spend all evening with Lily.”

Dahlia sat silent for a moment, still rocking, her fingers

curled tightly in the blanket. Behind the one-way glass, Dr. Whitney sucked in his breath and scribbled across the page of his notebook hastily, intrigued by the child's demeanor. She seemed to be weighing the advantages and disadvantages and making a judgment call. Finally she nodded, as if bestowing a great favor on the nurse.

Without further argument, Dahlia placed her tiny hand over one ball and began to make small circles above it. Dr. Whitney leaned close to the glass to study the lines of concentration on her face. The ball began to spin on the floor then rose beneath her palm. She moved the ball along her index finger, keeping it spinning a few inches above the floor in an amazing display of her phenomenal ability to control it with her mind. A second sphere joined the first in the air beneath her hand, both balls spinning madly like tops. The task appeared almost effortless. Dahlia seemed to be concentrating, but not wholly. She glanced at the nurse and then at the glass, looking nearly bored. She held the balls spinning in the air for a minute or two.

Abruptly she let her hand fall, clapping both hands against her head, pressing her palms tightly against her temples. The balls fell to the ground. Her face was pale, white lines around her mouth.

Dr. Whitney swore softly and flicked a second switch. "Have her do it again. This time with as many balls as she can handle. I want the action sustained this time so I can time her."

"She can't, Doctor, she's in pain," Milly protested. "We have to take her to Lily. It's the only thing that will help her."

"She's only saying that so she can get her way. How could Lily or Iris take her pain away? That's just ridiculous, they're children. If she wants to see Lily she can repeat the experiment and try a little harder."

There was a small silence. The little girl's face darkened. Her eyes grew pitch-black. She stared fiercely at the glass. "He's a bad man," she told the nurse. "A very bad man." The glass began to fracture into a fine spider's web. There were at least ten balls of varying size on the floor

near the child. All of them began to spin madly in the air before slamming again and again against the window. Glass fragments broke off and rained onto the floor. Chips flew wildly in the air, until it appeared to be snowing glass.

The nurse screamed and ran from the small room, slamming the door behind her. The walls swelled outward with the terrible rage on the child's face. The door rocked on its hinges. Flames raced up the wall, circled the doorjamb, bright crackling orange and red, spreading like a storm. Everything that could move was picked up from the floor and spun as if in the center of a tornado.

Through it all, Whitney stood watching, mesmerized by the power of her rage. He didn't even move when the glass cut his face and blood ran down into the collar of his immaculate shirt.

Dr. Lily Whitney-Miller snapped off the video and turned to face the small group of men who had been watching the tape with the same mesmerized enthrallment the doctor in the film had exhibited. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. It was always hard to watch her father behaving in such a monstrous fashion. No matter how often she viewed the tapes of his work, she could not equate that man with the one who had been so loving to her. "That, gentlemen, was Dahlia at age four," she announced. "She would be a couple of years younger than me now, and she's the one I believe I've located."

There was an awed silence. "She was that powerful at the age of four? A four-year-old child?" Captain Ryland Miller put his arm around his wife to comfort her, knowing how she felt when she delved into the experiments her father had performed. He stared at the picture of the black-haired child on the screen. "What else do you have on her, Lily?"

"I've found more tapes. These are of a young woman being given advanced training as some kind of field operative. I'm convinced it's Dahlia. My father's code is different in these books, and the subject under training is referred to as *Novelty White*. I didn't understand it at first, but my father

called each of the missing girls he experimented on by the name of a flower. Dahlia is often referred to as a novelty. I think he interchanges the name *Dahlia* with *Novelty* in these experiments. These tapes cover preteen and teen years. She's an exceptional young woman, high IQ, very talented, tremendous psychic ability, but the tapes are difficult to watch because she is wide open to assault from the outside world and no one has taught her how to protect herself."

"How could she possibly exist in the outside world without being taught shields?" one of the men sitting in the shadows asked. Lily turned her head to look at him, sighing as she did so. Nicolas Trevane always seemed to be in the shadows, and he was one of the GhostWalkers who made her nervous. He sat in such stillness he seemed to blend in with his surroundings, yet when he went into action, he exploded, moving so fast he seemed to blur. For part of his childhood he was raised on a reservation with his father's people, and then he spent ten years in Japan with his mother's relatives. His face never seemed to give anything away. His black eyes were flat and cold and frightened her almost as much as the fact that he was a sniper, a renowned marksman capable of the most deadly and secret of missions.

Lily bowed her head to avoid looking into his icy eyes. "I don't know, Nico. I have fewer answers now than I did a few months ago. I'm still having trouble making myself understand how my father could have experimented on children and then again on all of you. As for this poor girl, this child he virtually tortured, if I'm reading these notes correctly, she was eventually trained as a government operative, and I think it's possible they're still using her."

"That's not possible, Lily," Ryland objected. "You saw what happened to us when we tried to operate without an anchor. You said your father had tried using pulses of electricity on all of you. You know the results of that. Brain bleeds, acute pain. Strokes. It just isn't possible. She'd go insane. The experiment Dr. Whitney conducted opened all our brains, leaving us without barriers or our natural filters.

We're grown men, already trained, yet you're talking about a child trying to cope with impossible demands."

"It should have driven her over the edge," Lily agreed. She held up the notebook. "I've discovered a private sanitarium in Louisiana that the Whitney Trust owns. It is run by the Sisters of Mercy. And it has one patient—a young woman." She looked at her husband. "Her name is Dahlia Le Blanc."

"You aren't going to tell me your father bought out a religious organization," Raoul "Gator" Fontenot protested. He hastily crossed himself. "I won't believe nuns could possibly be a part of Whitney's cover-up."

Lily smiled at him. "Actually, Gator, I think the nuns are fictitious, as is the sanitarium. I think it's really a front to hide Dahlia from the world. As the sole director of all the trusts, I was able to dig fairly deep and it seems she's really the only patient, and aside from the Trust picking up all her bills, she has a sizable trust in her own name with regular deposits. The deposits coincide with entries seemingly indicating my father had become suspicious she was being used as an operative for the United States government. Apparently he allowed her to be trained and then when he realized it was too difficult for her, he moved her to the sanitarium and, as always, when things went wrong, he left her without following up." There was an edge of bitterness to her voice. "I think my father tried to create a safe place for her there, just as he created this house for me."

Ryland bent his head to Lily's, his chin rubbing the top of her sable hair. "Your father was a brilliant man, Lily. He had to learn about love, it wasn't shown to him as a child." It was a refrain he reminded her of often since it had come to light that not only had Dr. Whitney experimented on Lily, removing the filters from her brain in order to enhance psychic ability, she wasn't his biological child, as he'd led her to believe, but one of many children he'd "bought" from foreign orphanages.

There was another silence. Tucker Addison whistled softly. He was a tall, stocky man with dark skin, brown eyes,

and an engaging smile. "You did it, Lily. You actually found her. And she's a GhostWalker like all of us."

"Before we get too excited, I think you should watch some of the other training tapes I found. Each of these is labeled *Novelty*." She signaled to her husband to press Play on the machine to start the video running.

Lily found herself holding her breath. She was certain the child Novelty and Dahlia were one and the same. "According to the records, Novelty is eight years old here." The child's hair was thick and as black as a raven's wing. She wore it in a clumsy braid that hung to her waist in a thick rope. Her face was delicate, matching the rest of her, and the thick hair seemed to overpower her. "I'm certain this is the same child. Look at her face. Her eyes are the same." Lily felt the child was hiding from the world behind the mass of silken strands. She looked exotic, her origins Asian. Like all the missing girls, Dr. Whitney had adopted her from a foreign country and brought her to his laboratory to enhance her natural psychic abilities.

In the video, the little girl was on a balance beam. She didn't walk carefully. She didn't even look down. She ran across it as if it was a wide sidewalk instead of a narrow piece of wood. She didn't hesitate at the end of the beam, but did a flip off of it, landing on her feet, still running without breaking stride. She was far too small to leap up and catch the bars over her head, but she didn't seem to notice. She launched herself skyward, her hands outstretched, her small body tucked as she connected with the bars and swung over them with ease.

A collective gasp told Lily the men were all watching. She let the tape play through. All the while the little girl performed amazing skills. At times the child laughed aloud, bringing home to them the fact that she was alone in the room with only the cameras catching her incredible performance. Lily waited for the end of the tape and the reaction it would bring. As many times as she viewed it, she could not believe what she was seeing.

The child went up and over a two-story-high cargo net

and then raced across the floor toward the last obstacle. A cable stretched across the length of the room, sagging in the middle, several feet above ground level. Novelty stared at the cable as she ran, concentration apparent on her face. The cable began to stiffen and by the time she leapt onto the steel wire, it was woven into a thick rope, with no sag whatsoever in the middle, allowing her to run lightly across it to the end and jump off laughing.

There was another silence when Ryland switched off the tape. "Can any of you do that?"

The men shook their heads. "How did she do it?"

"She has to be manipulating energy. We all do it to a much smaller extent," Lily said. "She's able to take it a step further and at little expense to herself. I'm willing to bet that she's generating an antigravitational field to levitate the cable. It could be done by psychokinetically converting the underside of the cable into a superconductor, and applying the Li-Podkletnov technique of spinning the nuclei in the atoms of the underside to generate a sufficiently powerful antigrav field to lift it. And that would explain how she just danced across it *as if she were floating!*" Lily turned to look at the men, her eyes alight with excitement. "She *was* floating! Her own weight was reduced to almost nothing by the same antigrav field."

"Lily." Ryland shook his head. "You're doing it again. Try speaking normal English."

"I'm sorry. I get carried away when I'm excited," Lily admitted. "It's just so incredible. I've been scouring the research literature, and what's amazing to me is that she's doing with her mind what a couple of scientists are only beginning to be able to do in labs: generate antigravity. Only she does it much better, and she seems to be able to generate antigravity whenever she likes. She turns it on and off in a way that the scientists aren't even close to at this point. Plus scientists, and I as well, would give anything to know how she is doing it at room temperature. They currently need to lower the temperature to several *hundred* degrees below zero in order to create their superconductors."

“Antigravity?” Gator echoed, “isn’t that just a little far-fetched?”

“And what we do isn’t?” Nicolas asked.

“Well, actually I thought it was impossible at first, too,” Lily conceded. “But if, like me, you’ve watched these tapes several hundred times, you begin to notice little details. Here, let’s rewind it to where she’s crossing the cable. Now let’s watch it in slow motion. See? Right there when the cable starts to straighten out?” She touched the screen to indicate where they should look. “Look here, at the ceiling above the cable—see that electrical wire connecting the two overhead lights? Look, it’s moved up, about half an inch! Do you see that? And then it falls back right when Dahlia jumps off the other end of the cable. That’s *exactly* what you’d expect to see if there was an antigrav field extending upward from the cable.”

Lily pointed to the image of the young girl frozen on the screen. “Look at her, she’s laughing, not grabbing her head in pain.” She pushed in another tape. “In this one, she moves locks so fast, at first I thought a machine had to be involved.” The tape showed a huge vault with a complex lock system. The bolts slid so fast, the tumblers spun and clicked as if a large pattern was predetermined. The camera had focused completely on the heavy door so that it wasn’t until they heard a child’s laughter as the door swung open that they even realized Dahlia was there, opening locks with her mind.

Lily regarded the men. “Isn’t that incredible? She never even touched the vault. I considered a few theories—clairaudition for one, but I just couldn’t account for the sheer *speed* with which she opened the vault. Finally it hit me. She was directly intuiting and taking pleasure in the state of lowest entropy in the tumbler–lever system of the vault!”

Lily looked so triumphant Ryland hated to crush her joy. “Sweetheart, I’m so excited for you. Really, I am. It’s just that I didn’t understand a damn thing you said.” He looked around the room with a raised eyebrow. The other men shook their heads.

She tapped her finger on the table, frowning. "All right, let's see if I can come up with a way to explain it to you. You know those movies where the burglars put their stethoscope up against the safe as they're turning the dial?"

"Sure," Gator said. "I watch that stuff all the time. They're listening for the tumblers to click into place."

"Not exactly, Gator," Lily corrected. "They're actually listening for a *drop* in the amount of sound. You're hearing clicking with each number you pass, and then you hear just a little *less* clicking when one of the tumblers has fallen into place. That's why I first thought of clairaudition, which as you know, is like clairvoyance, seeing things at a distance in your mind, but this would be hearing things at a distance in your mind."

"But you don't think that's what she's doing?" Nicolas asked.

Lily shook her head. "No, I had to throw that theory out. It doesn't explain her incredible speed. Plus, I found out that the vault in the videotape—like most safes made since the 1960s—has all kinds of safeguards like nylon tumblers and sound baffles that make them pretty much impenetrable from lock-picking of this sort."

"So Dahlia doesn't do it through sound," Nicolas said.

"No, she doesn't," Lily agreed. "I was stumped for a while. But in the middle of the night a much simpler explanation occurred to me; she literally 'feels' each lever falling into place. But there's more. I think she has an emotional distaste for entropy in systems that gives her speed."

"You've lost me again, Lily," Ryland said.

"Sorry. The second law of thermodynamics says that the amount of entropy, or disorder, in the universe, tends to increase unless it is prevented from doing so. You can see the second law in action everywhere. A vase breaks into pieces. You never see a bunch of pieces assemble themselves into a vase. Left to itself, a house always gets dustier, never cleaner. And tumblers, because they're spring-loaded, always spring *out* of place, not into place, when left to themselves. That's the second law of thermodynamics in action—disorder keeps