



## In the Mind of Revenge

**Liv Hadden**

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*The line between justice and vengeance is sometimes blurred in this brilliant debut novel full of intricate characterizations.*

Liv Hadden introduces a disturbing, compelling protagonist and delves into the damaged mind of a murderer in the first installment of her planned series, *In the Mind of Revenge: Book One of The Shamed*.

After suffering years upon years of bullying and abuse, primarily for refusing to conform to gender roles, Shame is ultimately tortured, violated, viciously mutilated, and left for dead. Waking from a two-year coma, Shame finds that the scars run deep, both inside and outside, and a newfound will to live is fueled solely by a desire for vengeance. Shame accepts the darkness inside, thrives on it, and even warns, "By all accounts, I should be considered a villain. You may think I have selflessness in my heart; I do not." The actions Shame takes upon release from the hospital are ruthless and horrific enough to support the claim.

*In the Mind of Revenge* is raw and honest, and a spectacular in-depth character study. The first-person narrative serves the story well, conveying Shame's inner thoughts and feelings effectually, through every depraved, brutal act and every unacknowledged, unwanted grasp for humanity. Shame (whose gender is, quite effectively, never revealed) claims a cold, dark soul beyond redemption; however, the glimmers of occasional compassion (particularly toward Juice Box, a young man who inexplicably idolizes Shame) hint at the possibility that Shame may not be thoroughly cold-hearted. Supporting characters, from the vibrant, ever-optimistic Juice Box to kind, nurturing Margaret, are well realized and ultimately provide Shame a glimpse into other ways to look at life and deal with victimization. As a result, Shame's insistence on a black-and-white, good-or-evil worldview is continuously challenged.

While the stellar characterization stands out most prominently, the story itself is fast-paced and emotionally compelling. Scenes of vicious, brutal acts are shocking and graphic, but necessary to convey the state of Shame's mind. The subtle changes in Shame's self-view and overall outlook toward humanity, both because of and despite those acts, explore themes of victimization, retribution, redemption, and compassion. The story puts the reader in the mind of someone who is both victim and villain, where the line between justice and vengeance is sometimes blurred, and compassion and pity share the page with disgust and horror.

Liv Hadden's skillful storytelling and intricate characterization results in a brilliant debut novel that ends with an exciting cliffhanger. *In the Mind of Revenge* is a compelling introduction to what is sure to be a thrilling series.

JEANNINE CHARTIER HANSCOM (May 3, 2016)

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