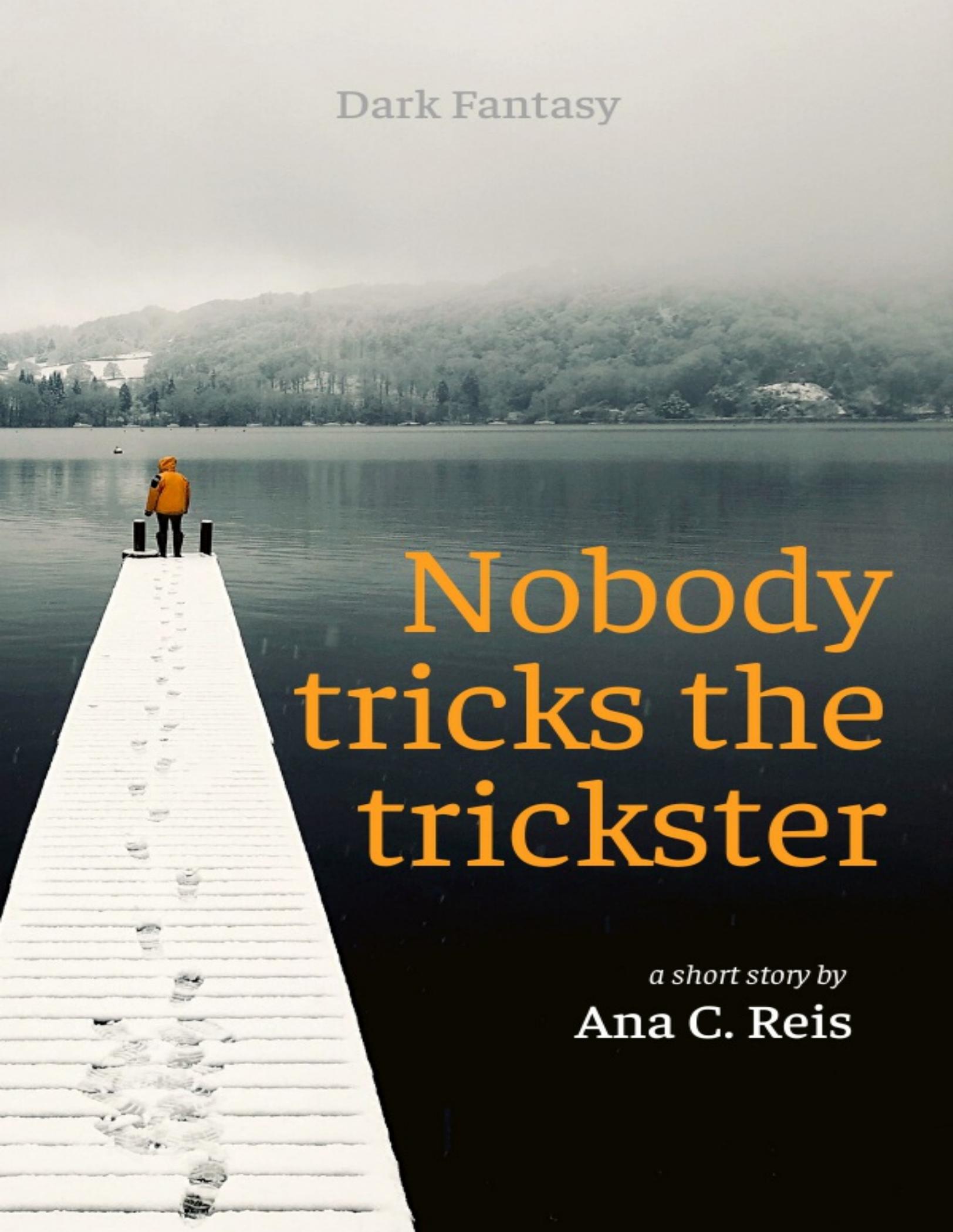


Dark Fantasy

A person wearing a bright yellow jacket and dark pants stands at the end of a long, narrow wooden pier that extends from the foreground into a calm, misty lake. The pier is covered in a layer of snow, and a series of footprints leads from the foreground towards the person. In the background, a large, forested hill rises under a heavy, grey sky. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somewhat somber.

# Nobody tricks the trickster

*a short story by*  
**Ana C. Reis**

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**Short story**

# **Nobody Tricks the Trickster**



**by**

**Ana C. Reis**

# Copyright



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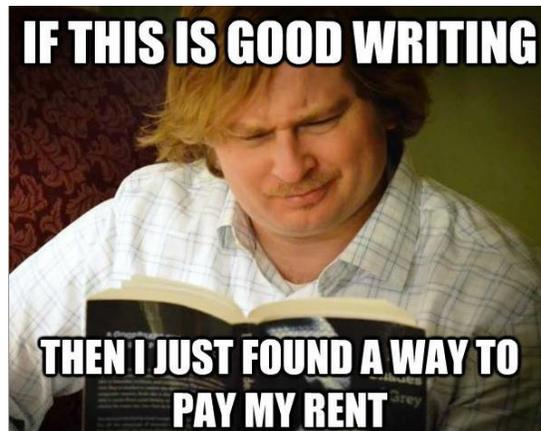
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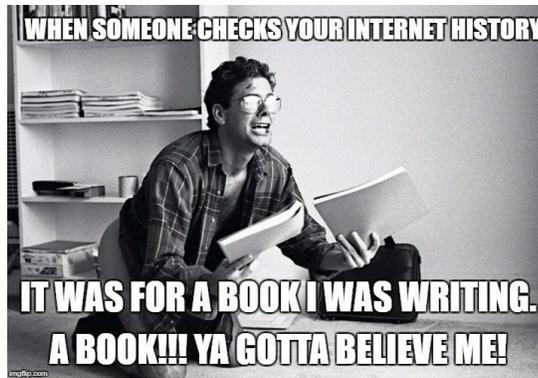


A very special and heartfelt thank you to my brother. Without you, this story wouldn't be half as good and clear as it turned out to be! Thank you for your infinite patience and for always being ready to read and comment my lousy second drafts!



(what he's thinking when he's reading my lousy drafts)

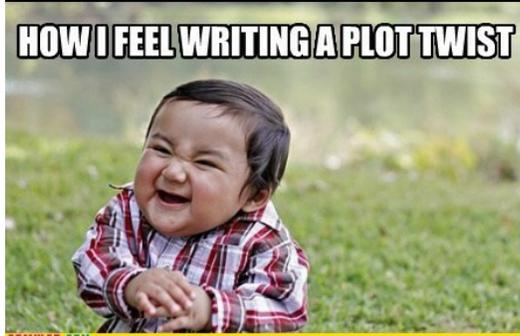
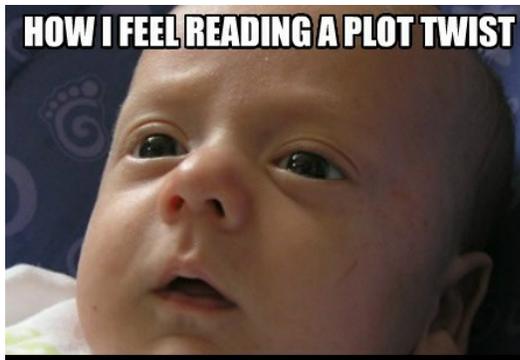
A special thank you to A. R. Costa from [@travelling.by.book](https://www.instagram.com/travelling.by.book). You gave me that special courage I needed to carry on with the publication of this short story! I'm not as good as you are at choosing memes, but here's one for you (we writers are definitely weird creatures):



My gratitude to MJ from the awesome [Book Nerd Reviews](#) and [BookSymbiosis](#) for their amazingly accurate last minute revisions! Without them, too many commas and important words would be missing from this text, and many more lives would have been lost!



And finally to the **#bookstagram** community: you guys rock my world!



(who'll understand this one at the end! Bahahaha - evil laughter)

# Part I



I locked the door behind me and wrapped my scarf around my mouth.

Cold had never affected me in the same way it affected humans, but pretending that it did, gave me a fleeting sense of belonging and, most of all, it muffled the worried shouts of fishermen and dockworkers echoing through the thick fog.

They were only trying to get their boats safely back to the harbor. But those shouts and the fog reminded of other nights filled with terrors and made the talisman around my neck feel heavier than it should.

I hurried through the docks trying to leave my grim thoughts behind me, and I suddenly remembered the first time Adam and I had walked on these wooden steps.

Less than a year had passed since we arrived at this town, the longest we had stayed in a single place. We had been outsiders then, as much as we were outsiders now. In a town where everyone had the same stern face, black hair, and tanned skin, we stood out like two ill-dressed clowns in a fancy Parisian cabaret. Adam's pale skin covered by tattoos that spread from the tip of his fingers to his left cheek and my brown skin covered by faint scars marked us as an odd pair.

We arrived on those annoying summer months, canned between dozens of clueless and excited tourists. We had joined those oblivious creatures when they invaded the mysterious fish market and pretended to marvel at the big tunas and giant squids.

And then we had watched as they flooded the restaurants with insane appetites and pointless conversations.

After one week our noisy companions had been restored to civilization. To the townsfolk's dismay, Adam and I decided to stay.

We endured the long winter months and even learned to appreciate them.

This far north, the winters were long and quiet, broken only by the occasional packs of idiots trying to conquer the deep black sea. Today's freshly arrived idiots were probably huddled at the town's bar. Even the town's tenacious fishermen wouldn't risk a fishing trip in these treacherous waters without a clear sky.

The small and strange town was carved in rocky hills. We only had access to a lousy tiny harbor so crammed up with boats that I had difficulty remembering that it was our only way in and out of this place.

The rocky hills turned the bleak place into a voluntary prison. Fishing, cooking, and drinking were our only forms of entertainment. We were connected to civilization but isolated from it. Yet none of us wanted to leave.

It was a bleak town devoid of color and magic. For Adam and I, it was a perfect place to bury our fears.

## Part II



The high season was almost upon us. My heart wrecked every time I remembered that the narrow and slippery streets would only be this quiet for a few more weeks.

I liked the quiet, the cold and the hardness of these people. Their distrust had given me the courage I needed to wake up and drag my ass back to work every day. And after decades of running, hiding and fearing, I needed to be constantly reminded of what courage felt like. Because at this point, I felt I could almost forget it.

My footsteps were devoured by the wet wood under my feet, but I could still hear the sound of metal sliding and crashing into the ground, as other waiters closed their restaurants for the day.

These humans were no fools. There was something slick and vicious about this fog. It crept into our bones and stayed there giving us dry chills and fresh unnamed terrors.

It was her voice that woke me from my stupor. I couldn't understand the words. But there was a weight to them that pierced through the thick fog like butter that had stayed too long in the sun.

“Hoi Hoi Sally,” I said.

“Hoi Lau, it's a bit late to be wandering around, don't ya think?” she replied and the colors grew more vivid around her. “Did that hoarder made you close the restaurant again?”

“Not exactly,” I said. “He just took off as soon as the fog came down.”

“I see... Wait here,” she said and then she turned her back to me

disappearing through the entrance to the fishmonger's guild. There was a mischievous look on her face that made her seem younger than the grey that came peeking through her fierce red hair.

In less than a minute Sally returned holding a dark package that she dropped on my arms with a wink.

"Sally, I can't," I started.

"Shush," she said grabbing me by the arm and pulling me away from the entrance. "Ya idiot, don't ya go saying silly things where the wrong people can hear ya. This is for ya and that kid. On Monday I'll pay a visit to Jeff, that hoarder should give ya the raise you deserve."

I could only nod and hug her. There was something about Sally that almost made me forget my hatred of humans and physical contact. I was almost sure she could sense my discomfort, and that she enjoyed messing with me.

"Now," she said pulling me away gently. "Get out of here before those stinky fishmongers see ya..."

I walked away with a light smile hanging around my lips. I knew the trouble Sally would face if the other fishmongers caught her helping us. I smiled despite of it.

Sally had been there the day Adam and I had first laid our eyes upon this strange land. Her bright red hair had been shining violently through the morning mist. A hair that marked her as an outsider in a town that was constantly wary of vivid colors. Maybe that was why she always made sure that we were well fed and that we were not forgotten.

I held the package closer and the smell of grilled fish and lemon reached my nostrils. Sally's specialty. My stomach started to growl.

## Part III



Adam would be waiting for me at the top of the hill, oblivious to the bizarre fog that covered the town.

It took me only a few minutes to reach the hilltop, but the fog had mutated into something else by then. It reminded of the times witches knew how to bind clouds and cast them into the ground to conceal their mischiefs from mortal eyes.

When I entered the gardens I could only see his silhouette through the thick fog. I sighed. He was sitting in the same old bench with his chin resting on his hand and his eyes contemplating the white night.

“You’re late,” he said without looking.

I ignored his bitter tone and threw him the package Sally had given me earlier.

“You know,” I said sitting by his side and digging into my backpack for the can of soda I had smuggled from Jeff’s. “You’re nothing but an arrogant brat who can’t even find a proper job in this damned town... you should thank me for bringing you dinner.”

“Lau...” he started without taking his greedy eyes from the food. “We both know what happened the last time I tried to find a job...”

I laughed bitterly. All I could remember was the policewoman’s face as I tried persuading her to let us go.

Adam wanted to kill her there and then. But I still feared that using our powers in this world would attract the wrong kind of attention. The kind of attention that would lead her back to us. Her and the hatred she dragged behind her like an eternal and vengeful storm.

“What was the name of that town?” Adam’s voice asked piercing through my memories.

“I can’t remember,” I confessed after a while.

“It’s been too long,” he said. “We can’t keep running like cowards.”

“We’re not ready to face her, Adam...”

He made a sound that rasped the surface of my skin like sandpaper. It sounded like despair. But I never got the chance to ask him about it, because at that moment we both felt the old phone vibrating in my backpack.

I stopped drinking. Adam didn’t even stir in his seat but I could see his jaw tensing in anticipation.

In seconds my hands were on the two Kunai I’d been concealing on my waist.

There was a shadow approaching in the fog. Its silhouette becoming sharper by the moment. I felt the old and familiar rush of adrenaline rushing through my veins. My mind was racing, but my body remembered what to do. So I raised from my seat and sheltered Adam from the approaching shadow.

The smell reached us first.

Pepper, cinnamon, and dirt. It was nauseating and familiar.

What was it doing here? I hadn’t been close to one of these creatures in centuries. How the hell did it elude my protection spells? Was I so weak?

I stared at Adam whispering a silent question. Did he let it through?

Adam just shook his head.

No matter how many times I saw one, I had never gotten used to these creatures. I knew they would respect the Treaty my kin had used to bind them with blood, bone, and magic.

Adam and I were rogue witches, outcasts, exiled, meant to be killed by others of our kin, but the Treaty would still protect us. Or at least I hoped it would.

I couldn't shake the discomfort that crept into my stomach. These creatures corrupted the definition of supernatural. Whenever I was around them I would feel as if the air itself became tainted with their foul magic.

Even when my brothers and sisters had not been trying to kill me, I'd always made sure I didn't have to face one of them alone.

In vain, I tried recalling how they looked like but the faint memories kept slipping from my mind. A moment later the thing was bursting through the wisps of fog.

It looked more human and frail than I remembered. Maybe this one was younger than the ones I'd seen in the past. But then again, my memory hadn't been working properly in a long, long time.

Its appearance was as nauseating as its smell. A dark cloak covered most of its body leaving only a crooked nose and dirty nine-fingered hands in plain sight.

"Hoi hoi," I said and I could feel its smell burning through my throat as I spoke.

"Oh... oh yes..." said the newcomer, its clothes dripping wet. "You're here... good... that's good... very good."

"Is there something we can do for you?" I asked.

It lingered for a moment at the edge of the fog, its cloak disturbed by a strange wind. And then it stretched its dirty hand towards me and started to

scream.

Its scream pierced through my skull and ranged against my body. But in a moment, time stopped and Adam was standing next to me.

He rolled up his sleeve with a swift movement revealing his mark and the newcomer fell to its knees.

“My Lord,” it said, covering the hooded head with its hands. I could feel a tingling sensation in my belly where my mark had been before.

“I give you my word,” Adam said. “We will respect the Treaty if you respect it too. Now tell us what you want.”

There was kindness and pity in Adam’s voice, but still, the dark figure didn’t move. It just stood there, trembling in the white night.

Adam pushed closer to it, apparently immune to its overwhelming smell. He touched its shoulders intoning a soft chant that sent peaceful waves through my spine. I felt my adrenaline rush receding, but my hands gripped the Kunai more strongly than before.

The spell seemed to work and the demon’s shoulders stopped trembling.

But it was only when Adam stepped back that it dared to face us again. It started by telling us that it had been sent to deliver a message. And we found ourselves walking through the wet streets of the fishermen’s town with a demon leading us into the unknown.

Adam had picked up his dinner again after the creature uttered us to follow it. On the surface, he seemed confident, but I could see there was a calculating look in his eyes and I could sense a tension growing around him. Like a thunderstorm, waiting to strike.

When the newcomer was at a safe distance I ventured: “This is dangerous.”

“I know,” Adam said before drowning into a heavy silence once again.

He must have seen the look of despair on my face, because then he added: “I still can’t sleep at night, Lau...” he said, looking away from me.

“Me neither,” I added. “But we did what needed to be done. And I don’t regret it.”

He looked at me as if he was seeing me for the first time.

“Maybe,” he said. “But look where it has gotten us. We’re weak and pathetic. Sometimes I wonder if we didn’t just manage to piss off the strongest witch that has ever lived by killing her favorite daughter.”

In silence, I chewed the words I wanted to say.

“How long do you think we have?” He continued. “Sometimes I feel like she’s just playing with us. Torturing us. Waiting to see if madness will eat us alive.”

There were words I wanted to say but they escaped my mind before I had the chance to utter them. Adam cast me a hard look before walking away.

I could still feel the edge of his despair clinging to the air around me.

We walked for a good half an hour before the cloaked figure came into a halt.

He lingered there unmoving for a while. I would sense its discomfort. Was the demon afraid?

“Well?” Adam asked impatiently.

The visitor nodded and then it simply vanished, engulfed by the fog.

“What now?” I asked, but I could see that Adam was already lost in his thoughts.

Adam closed his eyes before finally saying: “The demon is just standing on the fourth floor,” he muttered. “Waiting for us.”

“I don’t like this, Adam.”

“There’s no one else in the house. There’s no immediate danger, scout the other floors, I’ll go on ahead.”

He entered the building without waiting for my reply, his shoulders straight and hands curled in a fist. But I could see his left arm had begun shaking as soon as we crossed the doorstep. Was it fear or excitement? With Adam, I could never know.

The atmosphere was filled with the smell of decaying wood. The smell of a house being devoured by the dark poisonous mold that was always trying to seize the town for itself.

The ceiling hung low, making the house uncomfortably warm and wet.

I stepped in waiting for some kind of revelation, but all of my senses captured only silence and the smell of mold devouring the old wood. The rest of the house was like a wooden corpse – quiet, rotten and still. After a few moments, I realized that I could no longer hear Adam’s footsteps. So I cursed and hurried up the steps. He could be reckless in the face of danger.

There had been a hint of despair in his voice lately. And I knew despair would push him into stupidity. So I rushed, and I crashed into Adam as I reached the fourth floor.

His body was tense. And despite his small stature, it felt like hitting a rock. The shock almost threw me down the stairs and I had to struggle for balance while avoiding the moldy walls. The mold wouldn’t kill me, but it would blur my senses, and today I had the feeling I would need them sharp.

After regaining my balance I tried touching Adam. His skin was cold and I could see his eyes wide open reflecting the madness and the panic within.

As I reached for my battered phone, I felt my stomach clenching. I had infused the stupid device with my decaying magic so many decades ago. I was glad it was still working, but I was afraid of what I was going to find.

I couldn't remember the last time Adam had been so scared. Not even when we fought the witch we meant to kill, had he looked so pale and fragile. I sheltered him from the dark, dark room and raised my phone.

The room was immediately flooded by a faint light. The first thing I saw was the bright red hair drowning in a pool of dark blood. The demon was lingering over her body, his arms stretched in our direction.

I didn't have time to think or to wait for Adam's approval. Sally was lying in a pool of blood and a filthy demon was standing in my way. I dropped the phone and reached for both Kunai as I launched into the air. The demon filched and retreated into the darkness.

It was strong but stupid without its master. In such a small space I only needed to follow my nose. I screamed as my blades pierced the sickening flesh and the acidic blood drenched my clothing. I impaled it against the wall and turned my face as it opened its mouth to unleash a putrid breath on me.

My eyes were watery and my hands were burning from the blood, but I forced myself to move closer. I had to suppress an urge to gag as I pressed my body against it. It was the only way to keep it still.

I drove my Kunai deeper and put both hands on its face. The nausea was overwhelming.

Its skin felt like slime under my hands, its red eyes were glimmering with rage and its dark teeth kept trying to bite into my skin.

"You cannot," it said. "It is forbidden."

"Watch me," I answered in a rage.

In a moment its hand jerked free. And I had no time to dodge the blow. The nine-fingered hand crushed into my left temple causing the world to flash in pain and sent me flying across the room.

Half of my face was covered by dark mold and acidic blood. The demon was already grabbing the second Kunai. I wouldn't be able to catch it again, not like this.

My hand reached the heavy talisman around my neck then. And before I had time to think, I lifted my head, broke the talisman in my hands and let the dark liquid run down my throat. A few drops were all I needed.

The thick liquid touched my lips and sent shock waves rippling through my body. With the shock came the metallic taste and a sweetness I had almost forgotten.

My senses mutated then. As if no time had passed since the days I would walk holding my head high. And with the pride came the anger, the hatred, and the power, and I jumped across the room hitting the creature in the face with a strength my muscles had almost forgotten.

I could sense the creature's confusion amid its glorious pain. And I laughed then and my laugh sounded terrible to my ears. My hands moved freely hitting the demon over and over again as if I was unloading a heavy and putrid burden. When my anger cooled down and the demon was barely moving, I uttered the final words of my spell.

You see, you can't kill a demon. You have to destroy it. As soon as I uttered the last word, its body started jerking uncontrollably.

"Lau!" Adam screamed behind me regaining his voice.

I was lost in my madness but I still felt Adam's tiny hand grabbing me and pushing me away from the demon. My vision starting to blur.

Adam's voice pierced through the darkness as the world exploded in light. His voice kept me awake as the world dissolved around me and filled my

bones with pain.

In the afterglow, I could see Adam's tiny body standing in front of me with open arms. He had protected us from the acidic blast.

"You idiot," he shouted without turning to face me. But I could hear the fear and sadness in his voice.

My vision became muddy then. Suddenly it was too much, the blood, the filth, Sally's corpse lying on the floor. My legs failed me and the next thing I knew I was leaning against the wall spilling the night's meal into the moldy floor.

Then it started the worst of it.

How many decades had passed since I let myself starve? How long had I deprived myself of the tainted power carried by human blood? My body started convulsing as I fell into the pool of vomit. I could hear Adam's voice whispering in my ears.

And then everything went black.

# Part IV



I woke up later feeling like my head had been plucked off my neck and stitched back together by untrained hands.

I forced my body to move. It had been too long since I last relied on the power of human blood. A few drops and my body was already screaming for more. I remembered when I drank blood every day and then I remembered how she used to control me with it. So I recited the mantra Adam had created for me, so I could always find my way back to the light.

I don't know how long I'd stayed there. But my legs were dormant by the time I tried standing up. Reluctantly, I looked up, checking my surroundings. Sally's body laid unmoving at the center of the room and Adam was nowhere in sight.

I got closer to the corpse and knelt next to it. I touched Sally's hair carefully and suddenly felt warm tears filling my eyes. The tears felt salty and foreign, I couldn't remember the last time I had cried.

"Oh, Sally..." I said closing her open eyes.

Her face was a mask of pain and disgust. It had not been a peaceful death. She was wearing the same clothes and clutching a fish-gutting knife on her right hand. Someone or something had grabbed her after our brief talk.

It was difficult to believe the demon had done it. Apart from an ugly wound on her left temple, there were no other wounds. No demon would have killed its prey so surgically. It meant the demon had not been alone, and that Adam was probably looking for its master.

But Sally was the piece of the puzzle that didn't seem to fit. What was she doing here? There was no drop of magic running in her blood, and she would not be able to summon a demon without it.

That's when I noticed that there was too much blood on the floor. This couldn't all be Sally's. I dipped the tip of my finger into the blood on the floor and put it in my mouth. For a moment, the metallic taste overwhelmed me once more.

I could almost lose myself. As the thirst intensified, I tried to remember why I had refused to use that source of power. I tried to remember how the witch we'd tried to kill had made me a slave with that power alone. But the taste was overwhelming my conscience.

I could sense it at my feet tingling with a vicious power that was mine for the taking. In a brief reprise from my folly, I grabbed my Kunai and let it bite my skin.

Pain. It was the fastest way I could use to bring myself back from the edge. As pain infused my body with a renewed consciousness, something far more useful flooded me – information.

This blood belonged to Sally. It had her usual smell. But I could taste two other blood types in the mixture.

The other two were definitely not human. And one of them was mine.

My mind was racing. And I felt my heart pounding wildly in my chest.

What the hell was my blood doing in this mess?

I looked around trying to find signs of witchcraft but I saw none. That was when I remembered. I hadn't once looked at the ceiling. I picked up the phone, and it dripped blood as I raised it over my head with a trembling hand.

The ceiling was covered in demonic filth, but there was something underneath it. Something I knew too well.

The eye. The symbol Adam had tattooed on his arm. The symbol the cursed witch had ripped off my flesh so many decades ago. It was huge and I

couldn't see its edges. But I had seen this symbol before, so I knew, deep into the shadows, I would find the edges of a 13-point star.

But something was terrifying about it. The eye was closed. Which meant that this was a gate and that someone had gotten through.

I rushed outside feeling nauseated and almost slipped in my vomit.

When I reached the entrance of the building, I saw the heavy fog waiting outside.

It was red.

# Part V



I went back to the harbor racing like a madwoman as I cried Adam's name in vain.

The town seemed strangely empty and silent. I kept running until something made me trip and fall. Only then I noticed the countless dark shapes lying on the floor and the fresh blood on my hands.

As my eyes adjusted to the moonlight, I started noticing other corpses on the floor. Their broken bodies positioned at odd angles creating a path of death and destruction. I cursed. I had seen this power before.

And then I realized, the demon had been a distraction. Someone powerful had crossed that gate. Powerful enough to drag a demon with her. Powerful enough to elude my weak spells and to sense the presence of other witches in this town.

This witch had used the demon as a distraction, so she could feed on the town and restore the power that had been drained from her during the Crossing.

Unfortunately, there were only two witches that were strong enough to do this. And, hopefully, one of them would be long dead.

The docks were only a few steps away when I heard someone laughing. I had to urge my legs to keep moving. And that's when I found them.

Adam with his hands closed into a fist and... her. Her laughter was spreading through the docks like wildfire and the wind danced with it.

I knew what would happen next. She had never been a patient woman. So I ran as quickly as I could, but she reached Adam first.

Adam had tried to cast a spell, but in a swift blow she cut his right arm, and he fell into a pool of his own blood.

I turned to attack the moving shadow and felt a pressure on my chest. I couldn't breathe.

"Silly child," she said licking the tip of her blade dripping with blood.

"You..." I managed as I clenched my teeth.

"Lau, is that how you greet your mother? I'm disappointed." She said laughing.

I tried to start an incantation to free myself from Lilith's bond.

"Honestly, my dear..." She said. "Stop doing that. Do you really wish to fight me like this?" She said touching the place where my mark had been.

She grabbed my jaw and made me look into her green eyes.

"Haven't you miss me?" She said with a sick smile.

My voice spoke despite my fear. But instead of words, a scream came out.

That's when I heard Adam's gentle voice freeing from my bonds.

I took advantage of Lilith's surprise and attacked her with a swift blow. Her smile had vanished. But she dodged it easily and sent me flying across the harbor.

"I won't kill you, darling. Not yet, at least..." she said with a smile on her lips that never reached her eyes. And then she moved away from me to face Adam. "You, on the other hand, I can't make such promises."

I tried screaming, but my mouth wouldn't open and my legs wouldn't move. A familiar panic was swelling on my chest. After decades of running, it was if that feeling had never truly vanished from the back of my mind. I

could feel Lilith's fresh hatred filling the air and my stomach clutched as I remembered the weight of Adam's tiny body on my arms as we made our hurried escape on that cursed night so many decades again.

I had never felt more powerless than I felt now. Was I so weak without Lilith's blessing? My arms were shaking uncontrollably. I tried casting spells, cursing, and grabbing anything so I could start moving again.

But nothing worked. All those decades of hiding had made me weak. I started to laugh and my laughter turned into a sob as Lilith dragged Adam by the hair to the edge of the docks. He was barely conscious, with blood dripping from where his arm had been. She seemed amused as she strolled effortlessly through the harbor.

She pushed him over the edge into the dark treacherous sea. I screamed in panic and pain.

Was this it?

I felt cheated. I had saved Adam from certain death and he had saved me from a life of slavery.

We had tried running. Waiting for Adam to regain his strength.

Without notice, the tears started dropping.

"Sweet child," Lilith said touching my cheeks with tenderness. "All will be well. All will be forgiven. You have only to return to me... I could make it all go away, darling. I could devour those memories that haunt you. I could make you powerful again."

I spat on her face. And she stared at me pretending to feel insulted.

"Is that your answer? Well, well..." she said.

I felt a pressure on my left leg as if an invisible tourniquet was biting into my skin. Only too late I realized what she was doing. I suppressed a gag and

braced myself for the pain. If I lost consciousness, she would win.

I looked down in time to see my leg being severed above the knee. I could hear myself screaming in pain. But my mind was focused on keeping me awake.

“I guess you won’t be needing that then,” she said.

I struggled to remain conscious but my vision was becoming a blur. Lilith’s hands were on my face again.

“Lau...” she said. “You have to remember who you were. My beautiful and proud daughter. Come back to me. We can be a family again.”

She drank the tears that fell recklessly from my eyes. And I felt my soul giving in to her. I felt my will cracking under her gaze.

“Just say the words, Lau, and I will make you glorious once again.”

My mouth opened against my will, but I didn’t have time to answer. The next thing I saw was Adam diving one of my Kunai into Lilith’s neck and throwing her away from us.

I almost slipped into unconsciousness then, but Adam was already chanting some spell to stop my bleeding.

“Lau, stay with me,” he said hugging me.

“Why...?” I tried.

“Why I came back?” he asked and I nodded.

“We’re a team,” he said with a smile dancing on his eyes.

“Yes,” I answered finally remembering why I’d helped him on that night. And why I had dragged his weak body with me when Lilith and my sister had almost killed us.

I touched his cheek with bloodied hands. “You must live, Adam.”

He grabbed my hand then. “You know that’s not how this story is supposed to end.”

“We can’t defeat Lilith,” he said standing up. “There’s only one way out of this my friend.”

I nodded.

“Are you strong enough to summon Him?” he asked.

“Yes...” I said. “But Adam, I won’t be able to control Him. Not like this.”

“I know,” he said.

I stared at his bloodied face, old beyond his years and I nodded.

“Let’s do this,” I said.

Lilith was already fully recovered from Adam’s attack and she was staring at us from the opposite side of the harbor.

“You stupid child.” she hissed as she started fusing with the wind.

“Lau! Now!” Adam cried.

I joined my hands and closed my eyes. I found it in the darkness of my soul. The fragile thread that linked me to the monster I had bound with my magic so many centuries ago. I would unleash it today, for the first and last time.

I opened my eyes and said the words.

Adam stretched his remaining arm and jumped grabbing Lilith’s shadow in midair. What followed was a blur as Lilith tried to shake Adam’s grip. I

could only see the panic reflected in her eyes.

I screamed wildly. And the earth started to shake.

“Now, Adam!” I said as a giant shadow emerged from the ocean.

The creature roared into the night dissipating the surrounding fog. His scream reverberated through my body filling me with long and forgotten hope. I screamed with it as its terrible arms spun recklessly in the air. Adam jumped right into his mouth dragging Lilith with him.

The last thing I saw was his smile and a silent “thank you” slipping from his lips.

I broke the summoning and in a moment, only the silent crashing of waves remained.

I cried then, my warm and salt pain tearing me from the inside. And when I had no more tears to cry, my conscience slipped away.

# Part VI



It was already morning by the time I woke up.

A sweet, gentle breeze was playing with my hair and the cold winter sun was flooding my vision with light.

I felt weightless and then I remembered. The night's terrors came rushing into my mind and I suppressed a sob.

Sally and Adam were dead. And I was all alone.

I used whatever strength remained to drag myself back into a seating position. I could see the tiny harbor from here. It was long gone. The creature had ripped all boats into pieces. There was no way out of this damned town.

A laugh escaped my lips. I survived. But I would die in this dead city. I could almost feel my wound starting to infect.

This time I coughed spitting blood on the floor.

That's when I heard someone clapping behind me. I froze.

"I must say," a female voice sounded behind me. "I'm impressed!"

I realized that I knew that voice.

"You've seen better days, kiddo," she said using a different accent and a different voice, one that had become so familiar to me.

She came into my field of vision and made a dramatic bow before sitting across from me.

She laughed sweetly when she saw the confusion reflected in my eyes. Her

clothes soaked with blood. Her disheveled hair made her look like a madwoman and, despite the stains of blood, I could see that it was as bright and red as it had ever been.

“I must say,” she repeated using the familiar voice. “I never thought you would have the guts to sacrifice Adam. After all you’ve been through.”

“Why, Sally?” I asked through pursed lips.

“Well darling, because I can. You see, I’ve been trying to steal the crown for myself for so many centuries. Our mother is a fool. But she’s a powerful fool.”

As she spoke her shape started dissolving. In a moment her large figure thinned, her red hair turned black, and her wrinkles receded, revealing a smooth brown skin below.

“You’re dead!” I screamed, she looked younger than I remembered.

“Am I?” she said. “You thought you’d kill me? I have to admit you did surprise me that night. I never expected you had the willpower to murder your dear big sister. But then again, madness and greed do run in the family.”

“What do you want?” I said through clenched teeth.

“What do I want?” she said while pretending to think and then she laughed. “I want nothing dear. You and Adam proved to be quite useful. You gave me the ideal excuse to disappear, hide and plan our little family reunion. What?” She paused as she noticed the look of disbelief splashed across my face. “Do you think you arrived in this town by accident?”

I felt numb. How could I have been so stupid?

“Oh...” she said as if she was reading my thoughts. “Don’t fret, little sister. It will all be over soon.”

“How...?” I started.

“How you never saw past my illusion? It’s easy, dear. Sally was real, I just borrowed her skin.”

I wanted to throw up.

“Oh my,” she said, rising from the floor. “Lilith was too soft on you. I always told her so, but she never listened. Now you must forgive me, little sister, I need to prepare our mother’s welcome party. You know how she dreads waiting, and you know how hard she is to kill. I’m really sorry, Lau, but today I cannot stick around and play.”

With a swift movement of her hand, I felt my throat being split open. And I gagged in my own blood.

“You see, dear sister,” she said leaning so close I could smell the flowers and blood on her breath. “In this world, the trickster is king.”

**THE END**

# About



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