

## Necromancy

My hands trembled over the text scrawled on yellowed pages. Moonlight caught each squiggle and incomprehensible pen stroke as I squinted line by line. Thin, horizontal shadows ran along each wall of the hotel room. I lost myself in the wallpaper, a kaleidoscopic design from the 1970s, perhaps even earlier. I sat at a desk at the edge of the room on a chair that ached my back as I portioned myself a mighty shot of vodka. I coughed as it went down.

Hands steadied, I invoked the powers within me and stood amongst the spirits of all the murderer's victims—beautiful women of all races and ethnic backgrounds. In the void of whiteness, the spirits laid gentle hands over my body and I returned to the hotel room with new knowledge. My investigation was near to an end.

A massive shadow overtook the room and everything in it: the two twin beds, the hula girl lamp, the beige carpet peppered with multicolored stains.

I started as someone knocked on the door. I shoved the book into its case—an old dark-colored thing made of lead and placed my hand upon the case. I spoke to it and the curtains swayed as the lock on the case clicked.

Another knock.

“Who's there?” I called out.

“It’s me,” someone said. I gripped the amulet around my neck as I approached and opened the door. The silhouette of a man stood before me. The aroma of Old Spice deodorant filled the room. Desperado.

“You shouldn’t be here,” I said.

“I can help you solve this,” he said. His soft hands met mine and I let go of the amulet.

I sighed and waved my hand into the air. The hula lamp flicked on and the blinds shut themselves. I backed into the room and let the man enter. He shut the door behind him and fell into my arms. His muscles bulged with every inhale and exhale as he pressed against me. He whispered into my ear.

“I had a vision.”

I escaped his embrace. He gazed down upon me as I took several steps back. He reached for my cheek, but I raised my hand in protest. Shadows outlined his disappointment.

“Even so,” I said. “It could kill you, Eddie.”

“Just let me help.”

I turned from him and seated myself onto the bed next to the hula girl lamp. She wore a grass skirt and coconut bra. She held a ukulele in her arms and smiled through bright red lipstick.

Eddie sat across from me on the other bed, his blue eyes piercing in the light. He smiled and ran his long fingers through his ginger hair. His chest rose with every breath and accentuated his well-formed pectorals.

“Let me help.”

I shook my head and averted his gaze. Red blotches dotted the floor among other stains of cyan and magenta. Eddie reached for the case out of my periphery. I stood and grabbed the case. He recoiled.

“You should go,” I said. “You don’t belong here.”

“I forgot. *Only a necromancer can touch the book.*”

He towered over me and held my cheeks in his hands. I grew flush and lowered his hands away from me. I reached the door and opened it.

“We’re not those people anymore,” I said. “Please leave.”

He lowered his head in defeat. I caught moonlight and starry sky as Eddie shuffled in my direction and finally stood in the doorway. He turned to me. I gripped the doorknob in my right hand, the case in my left.

“You’ll regret this.”

“No, I won’t.”

Eddie tried to protest, but I spoke into the room and chanted an incantation passed down to me through generations. Eddie’s deepest fear materialized before us, the spirit of a pale-skinned girl of average height and dark hair.

“She’s already told me about the things you’ve done, about the other girls.”

Eddie’s neck veins bulged and his face turned red. He clinched his perfect white teeth. I stepped a few feet back and clutched the amulet. Eddie spoke into the air and summoned an athame to his hands. He raised it into the air before lunging at me.

The girl I had summoned, the spirit of Eddie’s first victim, faded through me and became a great white energy. My amulet cooled against my chest as it absorbed Eddie’s attack. The spirit named Amelia turned to me, nodded, and vanished. I returned my gaze to Eddie.

“You’re frozen,” I said.

Eddie couldn't say anything. He stood before me as a rigid human statue holding an athame with bulged eyes and enlarged neck veins. I picked up my bag off the desk and stuffed the vodka bottle into it.

All the other things, the pages of evidence I had gathered on Eddie, I left behind. DNA samples, testimonies from neighbors and friends, crime scene photos— lay on the bed for all to see.

As I passed by Eddie, I said, "I was never going to be your next victim. I guess I should have told you that from the beginning."

Police cars approached from a distance, sirens and flashes of red and blue lights. By the time they got out of their cars, I hugged the shadows and watched as they removed Eddie's rigid body from the hotel room.

Case closed.