

# Rise of the Fey

- Excerpt -

**Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**

**Thessalonians 2:3-4**

## CHAPTER 1

“Dear Lord, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishment, but most of all because I have offended Thee my Lord, Who is all good and deserving of my love.

“Though frankly, between you and me, I don’t see how I could be blamed for what my parents have done. Come to think of it, you do have a tendency to hold grudges, or you wouldn’t have punished all of mankind because Adam and Eve happened to disobey you that one time...

“So let’s strike a deal: If you’re willing to discard my past, I’ll be more than glad to overlook yours. And I promise to be really, really good from now on. After I’ve made Arthur pay for being a lying, scheming, good-for-nothing prat, that is. Thank you. Amen.”

I sign myself then let out a heavy breath as I slump back down onto the freezing floor.

“Psha!” a voice utters in the darkness, making me jump. “That ain’t gonna make a slick of a difference. He hasn’t listened to the Watchers’ endless mumblings for millennia. A minute of your whiny self isn’t gonna make a ripple in the Almighty’s conscience.”

“W-Who are you?” I ask, my voice shaking. I didn’t see anyone else in the split second it took for Irene to throw me in jail. “Are you a...a ghost?”

My eyes dart about uselessly. Half-Fey or not, I still can’t see without light. I hear someone expectorate and wince as a fat, wet glob lands on my arm.

"There's no such thing as ghosts," the disembodied voice says. "And I'm hurt you wouldn't remember me. We had such a lovely time together—hoppy beer followed by a romantic boat ride on the lake. It was great till your brother cut me up and you disfigured me."

I cringe away from the venomous tone. There's only one who would fit that description, and it happens to be the only Fey in the world who has every right to rip my heart out.

"Nibs?"

"In the flesh," the clurichaun says, "or what's left of it."

He shifts around and I hear the sound of clinking chains. I let myself relax a little—at least he can't attack me in here.

"Say," Nibs says, "you wouldn't happen to have some aqua vita<sup>1</sup> on you by any chance?"

"Some what?"

"No, I thought not."

A long stretch of awkward silence settles between us, punctuated by the occasional dry cough.

"That jerk isn't my brother, you know," I finally say, feeling my breath steaming in the air.

"Arthur's a traitor. He lied to me, manipulated me, tried to—"

"Who cares what he is?" Nibs cuts me off. "He ought to be skinned alive."

"Couldn't agree with you more on that one," I say.

"You too, for that matter," Nibs adds.

"Right," I say, my discomfort spiking again. "So how long have you been in here for?"

His restraints scrape softly against the wall as he shrugs. "Days, months, years? Does it really matter? I'm probably going to be stuck in here for the rest of my eternal life. Unless..."

"Unless?" I ask, my ears perking up. Could it be he knows a way to get out of here, or someone who might help us escape?

"Unless your fake brother finds my last ogham and affixes me to one of his noisome devices," Nibs says. "Or kills me outright."

"Your other ogham?" I ask stupidly. "I thought you guys only had one."

"Some of us can split our oghams," Nibs retorts nasally as if he's digging his nostrils for boogers.

"Though it hasn't done much for me except prolong the torture."

"Oh." I let my chin fall back onto my chest in disappointment. If a full-blooded Fey can't get out of here, I have no hope of making it out alive either.

I think back to my last moments of freedom, a few hours ago. Despite all my warnings, Carman, the wickedest witch of the west, is back from the dead to wreak havoc all over the globe in her frenzy for vengeance.

And after meeting her, being locked away down here might not be such a bad thing after all. It's not like we parted on friendly terms her and I, considering I'm somewhat responsible for her son's death, and may or may not have thwarted her attempt to kill Arthur and Lance. I wonder if she'll believe me if I tell her that last one was a mistake I'm not likely to make again? Probably not.

Might as well make myself comfortable in this damp, cold, smelly, dirty tomb of mine....

I sit up suddenly, my stomach spasming.

"Don't worry," Nibs says, matter-of-fact. "Any bug you may have felt crawling on you is just a trick of your imagination."

I crouch against the wall, all muscles tense, forcing myself to breathe through my nose.

"Seriously," Nibs adds, more alert. "This place is as good as airtight—anything that tries to crawl in or out without going through the door the proper way gets zapped."

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<sup>1</sup> Alcoholic beverage.

Tears spring to my eyes with the effort of self-restraint. I whimper. “I-I have to pee,” I breathe, biting on my lower lip as the full extent of being left to rot in this cell finally hits me.



I stop yelling, my breath coming out in rough gasps, my fists laying useless at my sides, stinging from having beat on the iron door for hours.

No one's come.

No one's coming.

This is worse than being locked up in the prayer room by Sister Marie-Clémence; worse than my week stuck inside Irene's house.

“Oh good,” Nibs says with a sneer. “I thought you'd never stop.”

I sigh, looking sightlessly at my hands. “You'd think being Fey would be useful,” I say bitterly. “Like allow me to open doors or something.”

Nibs spits loudly and I hear a fat glob of phlegm hit the wall inches from me. “You're dumber than I remember. This place is lined with iron, no Fey can get out.”

“Right,” I say. “Iron's a no-no with you guys.”

Nibs chuckles. “With you too now, though you're lucky your human blood prevents you from feeling any pain at its touch.”

I slump back down as the last embers of hope die out inside me, leaving a black hole in their stead—Jesus's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was nothing compared to this.

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” I mutter, remembering the verses from the Bible that Sister Marie-Clémence liked to recite whenever she was exasperated, which had been a daily occurrence with me. If only she could see me now. I sigh. “I'm going to die and I don't even know a thing about my real parents.”

“Could you please stop with all the moping and whining?” Nibs asks. “It's already bad enough that I have to stay chained to this wall for the foreseeable future.”

“Saint George's balls!” I say, irritated. “Why can't you just let me pray in peace?”

Nibs lets out a disgusted snort. “You should pray to Carman instead. The sooner she gets her ass here, the sooner she can kill all those knights off and free us.”

I shudder at the demon witch's mention. If Carman comes over, then my death is going to come sooner rather than later. Besides, why would she bother coming to this rat hole when she's got a whole world to conquer? Unless Nibs knows something I don't. . .

Before I know it, I'm back on my feet, heading for Nibs when I trip over his chain and fall, smacking my head against the wall.

Nibs's laugh rings out just inches from me. “Why so worked up?” he asks. “Think about it. The knights are the ones who put you down. And what for? Did you do anything to hurt them? No. Though between you and me if they hadn't been so brainless themselves they would've locked you in here sooner. They would've prevented this mess, not that I'm complaining since—”

“Shhh!” I say, accidentally slapping him in the face.

He snarls and I snatch my hand away.

“I think I heard something,” I whisper.

“Doubtful,” Nibs says, “very doubtful. This place is about a hundred feet below ground, so unless—”

But he shuts up when a keening howl pierces our cell's walls. The hairs at the back of my neck stand up. Despite it being muffled, I would recognize that sound anywhere.

“The banshee,” I whisper, huddling instinctively closer to the clurichaun.

Nibs’s chains rattle as if he’s just shook his head. “Again, very doubtful. Banshees would not dare get this close to humans, and to a place crawling with knights even less so.”

Again, the guttural, inhuman cry reaches my ears. “She’s here for me,” I say, my mouth dry. “I killed her master, she wants revenge!”

The banshee worked for Dean. Dear, sweet Dean whose care of me over the years turned out to be only a façade for his true intent: To harvest my blood, needed to free his mother Carman.

I feel the palm of my left hand where the cut he made has closed back up, leaving a puckered scar behind.

The minutes tick by, marked by the banshee’s mournful cries.

“Why is she even sad?” I ask, resentful at the recollection of Dean’s betrayal. “He didn’t even treat her well. In fact, he was going to kill her to complete the warding circle!”

“Sometimes being treated like shit is better than never having your existence acknowledged.”

“It was a rhetorical question,” I snap, not wanting to feel pity for Dean’s hired killer.

I dig my knuckles into my eyes in an effort to get rid of the vision of Dean’s pale face as the ground of Island Park slowly drew him under, eating him up like it did his other eleven victims. Not once did his eyes waver from my face, not even when the earth finally closed over him.

Tears well up, hot against my frozen hands. “I hope all the demons in hell are torturing you right now,” I hiccup, more angry at myself for missing him than at anything else. “I hope they’re tearing your eyes out and pulling your teeth out, and ripping your hair out, and cutting you to shreds, and...” I let my voice trail off—I’ve really got to work on better curses.

“Has anyone ever told you how overly dramatic you are?” Nibs asks, and I sniff back my tears in mild embarrassment. “If you ask me, there’s no hell worse than being stuck here with—”

“Shh,” I cut him off again. “Someone’s coming!”

“Yes, yes,” Nibs says complacently, “we’ve already established the fact that our little friend is—”

He breaks off as the muted thumping of boots on stone grows louder, drawing near, then stops. I hear a key being inserted into the lock and the door to our cell is wrenched open.

I close my eyes at the sudden, blinding light.

“Urgh, it reeks in here!” a man says.

I shy away from the deep voice, trying to cover my bare legs with my muddy skirt. My teary gaze falls on Nibs’s prostrated form and I hold back a gasp. Half his face looks like it’s been burnt with acid, a mesh pattern tracing his temple and the top of his left cheek. I swallow with difficulty as I match the pattern burned into his face to that of the iron threads in my coat.

“Morgan?”

I blink up through the curtain of greasy hair that’s fallen over my face as Arthur steps inside.

“Dear God, Morgan, what’s happened to you?”

“You locked me up,” I say through gritted teeth. “I thought that was rather obvious.”

“It wasn’t...” He pauses. “But it’s just been a few hours!”

“You mean days,” I say, alarmed. I can’t possibly have lost track of time that much, can I? Or is that a side effect from being locked up in total obscurity?

“I mean hours,” Arthur repeats, more gently, “and you already look like a mess.”

“Yeah, and your sweetie’s gone batshit crazy to boot,” Nibs says, voicing my fear. “But isn’t that why you put her in here for?”

Arthur glances at the clurichaun with obvious disgust. “Why have they been put together?” he asks, his voice cold. “I want Morgan moved to another cell, one with light and away from—”

“Can’t, sir,” the guard says, his eyes narrowed with revulsion. “Orders.”

“Don’t bother,” I tell Arthur before he can argue back. I lick my dry lips. “Nothing you do or say is going to change the fact that you betrayed me.”

Arthur flinches. “I didn’t mean for this to happen,” he says so low I barely hear him over Nibs’s loud, rattling breathing. “I will get you out of here, you need to believe me. This is all...temporary.”

Eyes pleading, Arthur leans down and slowly brushes my hair out from my face, his fingers lingering on my cheek. I can’t resist the temptation and bite him, my teeth sinking into his flesh. He cries out but I hold on until the guard kicks me in the gut.

“You’ll pay for that, demon!” the man says, his next kick landing on my sternum and knocking the air out of my lungs.

“Enough!” Arthur says, his voice striving for composure. “I won’t have the prisoner injured before her trial.”

“I hope your hand gets infected and you lose it,” I cough. Then the other shoe drops. “Trial? What trial?”

“The one that will determine whether you should be put down or not,” the guard says, looking like he’s straining not to hit me again.

“Put me down?” I repeat, my insides knotting with fear.

My eyes flicker to the door left wide open behind them. This is my chance. I smile at the guard, goading him to attack me again. In this confined space, he can’t use his sword, and I’ve learned enough from Master Ywain to bring the larger man down long enough to flee.

Arthur must have sensed my desire, for he moves into my field of vision before the guard can come at me.

“I just came to let you know that you are to be tried in a week and a day,” he says. “The trial will be held before members of both KORT and the Board, at Terce<sup>2</sup>.” He leans forward, enough so the guard can’t hear him, but far enough from my deadly dentition. “And drop the crazy act. I need you to make a good impression on everyone if I want to get you out of here.”

I squint up at him, too surprised to come up with a snarky repartee. He can’t be serious. It was my understanding that Irene—his own mother—wanted nothing better than to see me eviscerated. So what’s he doing here telling me he wants to set me free?

Arthur straightens up, gives me a pointed look then heads back out.

The guard snorts in disbelief. “Don’t know why he bothered,” he mutters. “You aren’t better than a feral dog.”

And before I can get over my surprise, he kicks me again. I double over in pain, gasping, a wave of warmth spreading down my legs. The heavy iron door squeals back shut, cutting off all light and any hope I had of escaping.

The tears I’ve barely been holding come pouring out in raking sobs.

“There she goes again,” Nibs says, sounding defeated. “Why are you overreacting again? At least you’ve got a chance to make it out alive.”

I cry even harder. “I-It’s not th-that,” I say, burning with humiliation. “I just p-peed myself.”

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<sup>2</sup> Canonical hour: mid-morning (around 9 a.m.).