

Dimlit Metamorphoses

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*A fallen chandelier, stretching its candle-lit limbs
On the crimson carpet. The bride's white gown
Painted red, floral patterns pierced and slashed
Withered corpses decorate the desolate ballroom.*

*A shining blade, announcing a forgotten ceremony
Insides stick out on its end, extending forward
Like a squirming tentacle, reaching farther out
He looks up at the clouds with his final breath.*

*A golden pendant falling from the blinding sky
Caught midair, glinting in the opal sunlight
Her broken heart, bleeding on the stone pavement
The pocket knife grows bright on a cold summer day.*

*A dangling rope, hanging from the wooden ceiling
Looped around, ending up into a thick noose
Dark hair flows, white limbs pointing downward
A body is suspended in eternal stasis.*

*Collecting pints of dripping blood
All arches of fate.*

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Lights out. Power's out. Darkness envelops the room. The only specks of glow enter from behind gilt window panes, where the unfeeling moon stands, shining its dim light over, illuminating the twisted viscera that lays bare on the kitchen counter. Blood spurts out, dyeing the wooden cupboards in ominous red. Intestines drip down. Undiscernable organs shatter on the floor, where they turn into mush at the end of the table's tall legs, muddying the pale-burgundy ground. Dark liquid oozes from them, extending like bursting veins through the margins of the ceramic tiles. A piece of fresh meat flops over and plummets down, merging with the writhing, pulsating mass of flesh that threatens to conquer the lower side of the apartment.

The fridge door is half open, giving way to an unsightly rot that is brewing inside. The cupboards are scratched, their handles half-eaten by rust. A slimy substance is dripping from the ceiling. A shattered light bulb impales the air, its coiled filament dysfunctional, no power flowing through. Broken china inhabits a lonely corner of the area. The black-wine walls are coated in ruby writing. Help me. Free me. Where is god? Undecipherable scribbling. Emptiness. Perhaps this is hell.

The beast stands calmly in the middle of the bloody havoc. Moonlight forges a warm tapestry filled with stardust out of

its dark fur. Two even horns extend out of its head, glinting and throwing short fragments of light around. Sitting below, in a pair, are two flopped ears. Its snout points over to the window. It seems not to notice the gruelling scenery, nor does it seem to mind the gaping hole encroaching upon its chest, imposing emptiness where its heart should lay beating.

Ghostly smoke floats into the void, shimmering under the moon's gaze. It exits out of a silver kettle, like a genie leaving its bottle and filling the room with its otherworldly presence. The tea is done, the brewing process finished. The beast reaches out to the gas stove and turns the blue heat off. Two wet cinnamon sticks float to the top, whereupon they are taken out and gently tucked aside among the all-consuming mass of flesh that is slowly making its way over to the window. A wiggling tentacle reaches out to the kettle. Unphased, the beast unsheathes a damascus blade and cuts it off in one clean swipe, before returning to the issue of tea.

In the little space that has not yet been corrupted, a delicate teacup is placed down by the handle and filled with dark-amber liquid. It stands as the pinnacle of culinary ambition in an otherwise desolate kitchen space. With surprising gallantry, the beast lifts it back up and takes a sip. Bittersweet. Another sip. Umami. Another sip. The nectar of gods. Another. Another. The beast sips air. It pauses. Its snout is wet with cinnamon extract. The empty cup goes back down, where it is left as a porcelain offering to the seemingly-sentient flesh god.

Satisfied with the drink, the beast heads out of the area, de-

scending into the darkness. Soon enough, a faint candle-like light reveals itself. The beast is holding a shabby gas lamp in its left arm. The darkness takes a step back, dissipating around it. The light becomes a focal point, it distorts the air and casts wild phantoms over the scribbled walls. With the lamp's guidance, the beast takes a few steps forward, opens a hard wooden door and crosses into another chamber.

There is no sign of the rot to be found. Up above, another light bulb hanging from a greyish wire, unpowered. On the sides, unscathed white walls, turned yellow by the warm light that clashes onto them. Down below, a solid bed frame supporting two mattresses covered in untainted, white sheets, with two pillows propped up at the top side. At each horizontal end of the bed, a black nightstand holding books of various shapes and sizes. The space is an unassuming, perfectly ordinary, if not sterile bedroom.

The beast makes its way around the bed and opens another sliding wooden door. On the other side rests a modest wardrobe. It is filled with dark, formal clothes. Dress shirts occupy the upper compartments, black dress trousers the middle, with dress shoes being tucked in the lower side. The beast enters and closes the door behind it. Some minutes pass, interrupted only by the swishing of fabric and the echoes of shoes tapping the floor.

At last, the beast emerges in slow, fancy steps, clad in its shadowy robes and wearing a neat bow tie around its neck. The hole in its chest is covered by glimmering buttons, the fur

on its limbs hidden inside butler gloves. Carrying its swaying lamp by the chain, it appears as the image of an occult priest spreading bright incense in its surroundings. With its outfit complete, the beast traces its steps back into the main area, where it ignores the ever-transforming mound of flesh and takes a sharp turn for the room adjacent to the previous.

Light bounces out of its glass cage. It hits a wall-mounted mirror, summoning flying projections all over the newly entered enclosure. The walls are tiled with a dizzying, waving pattern. The space is occupied by objects and appliances typical of a bathroom, all in various states of disrepair. Curled up balls of fur threaten to clog the sink, a shallow hole surrounded by small jars and utensils. A large crack runs through the undersized bathtub. By the looks of it, there is likely no running water. Mostly empty shelves decorate the other side. The room as a whole seems to be generally out of use.

The beast steps in front of the half-shattered mirror and holds the lamp up to its head. It peers into its dark reflection, its soft outline, its bright starry eyes. With the other hand, it grabs a tiny pair of scissors, and lifts it to where the light shines. The beast then proceeds to trim the overgrown fur on its neck and face, strand by strand, patch by patch, until it is all even and dandy.

Standing back into the main room, well-dressed and pampered, the beast puts down its watchful lamp and makes one final preparation. It reaches into the unlit corner of a cupboard laying beyond the threshold of the imposing masses of

flesh, and pulls out a frail bottle. Perfume. Vanilla-flavored, with a floral touch. Applied on the neck and the outer side of the drooping ears, it scents the fur with a vast bouquet of aromas.

The golden key rotates slowly. It makes a click as it unlocks the door. The beast walks out, leaving the decay of the old apartment behind, leaving it all to be consumed and rotted away. It no longer serves any purpose after all. Another click resonates throughout the stairway as the door is locked. The key heads into the dress trouser's warm right pocket. The area below is unlit. Holding onto the cold handrail, the descent is slow and deliberate, as if the beast were counting each stair, keeping a tally. All is silent in the rundown apartment complex, multiplying the impact of its careful steps tenfold.

They cease, and sound ceases once the beast reaches large, metallic the front door. Breathe in. Breathe out. The bow tie stands centered. The gloves stay firmly on. It is time to go outside.



Tall streetlamps shine like sunken stars against the darkened sky, enveloping the road in sterile light. The cold cement glitters at the touch, revealing rough crevices and ruptures, signs of the uneven passing of time. Monotone trees stand arranged from one end of the path to the other, heading beyond where the eye can see. Their black-green leaves glisten, swaying and

blooming in the gentle nighttime breeze, and marking soft shadows on the pavement below, where rogue patches of muddled grass sprout and lay in wait.

The soundscape is empty, save for distant humming and the wary song of nightly birds that rest on top of the poles and in curved rows on jet-black low-voltage cables. There are no passers-by to be filling the void with their hurried steps, the hour is too late. Once every few quints of imagined heart beats, a distant car or train horn can be made out, piercing the long silence. Then everything returns back to stasis and the bickering of birdfolk.

Stepping out into the light, the blinded beast cowers and covers its face with an arm. The door shuts loudly behind it. A flock of birds flees, feathers blown out and falling onto the ground, flying outward in a symmetrical pattern. The beast lowers its gaze and gradually adjusts to the outside atmosphere. Then it looks up and around. Cloudless sky. Dilapidated buildings surrounding the area, all empty and devoid of life. Swirling curtains all closed, pulled shut. Cracks in the walls, starting up above and going all the way down. Sharp blades of grass gathered around, threatening to impale the sight.

Between the bundles of muddy foliage and amidst the darkness and dim despair lay an untouched white lily of the valley, with its fragile, bell-shaped flowers staring into the earth, mourning. Noticing it at the edge of its gaze, the beast crouches over and gently plucks its stem out of the patch,

picking the plant up and pressing it into the vacuum of its previously empty left pocket. A trinket of good luck to be carried into the unknown, distant lands that lay past this lonely street. The beast gets back up, now better prepared for the journey.

Both to the left and also to its right, the mirrored trees extend out into the beyond. The beast rolls an imaginary die. It fuzzes in and out of view and stutters midair, before falling down and resting on a velvet tapestry, with the mind's eye side facing upward. The beast's coiled horns turn leftward together with its head, and the rest of the body soon follows. It walks along the path in slow steps, with a hand reaching out to the harsh wall on its side.

With such languid pace, the walk seems nigh eternal. Dire apartment buildings, weathered tree trunks with sagging leaves, cold columns of light harboring scorched veins with electrical current buzzing, flowing through. The same arrangements repeat over and again in the beast's narrow field of vision, until they all merge into a somber background of undulating greens and greys and whites painted over the pitch black sky.

The beast keeps pacing forward until some vague, strobing lights can be made out in the distance. With each step, they come closer, and closer again. The sounds and sights of civilization reach closer until, at last, the pattern is broken and the street opens up and dives into a busy main road. Holding its breath steady, the beast steps forward into the disturbance,

leaving the dreary yet calming silence of its home behind.



A commotion of flashing light erupts on the street as four-wheeled metal gargoyles take a passage over four infinite lanes in a wild yet rhythmic sequence. Black smoke rushes out of their elongated exhaust pipes. Red and amber signals flicker out of their steel wombs like ground-level fireworks. Strong headlights march on in a blur at dangerous speeds. A high beam hits the beast, penetrating through its half-closed eyelids and forcing it to recoil in fear. The main road is a horrifying spectacle, eviscerating the senses with ever-increasing sensations. Lights. Noises. Panic. The beast takes cover behind a rogue electrical box, with its furry head laying in its fabric-covered hands.

The sidewalk is full of unknown, unidentifiable faces. All sorts of disheveled, shabbily dressed bodies walk aimlessly, some alone, others in chit-chattering groups, at times almost clashing with one another before adjusting their course at the last fraction of a second. Harsh, quick steps echo all around the beast's shivering, hollow body. With its ears fluttering and its hands trembling in fear, it is holding its maw tightly shut so as to not let out a murderous shriek.

Loud noise. Blinding light. All is melting into an unbearable puddle of raw intensity. It cannot be handled anymore. Why is everyone here? Where is everyone going? The rushing

and the swishing and the wobbling comes in strong waves from all directions. It cannot be handled any longer. The beast gets up with its legs shaking, off balance, and runs, rushes away in whatever direction it can manage, bumping into strange figures and tripping and falling and getting up and running again.

Red lights turn green and a violent, thunderous cloud of vehicles explodes on the pavement, leaving a mess of purple-black tire marks behind. Clamping its ears with both hands, the beast unknowingly dashes into an intersection. Jarring mechanical shouts erupt from its sides, interlaced with the sounds of sharp brakes being pushed down with force. The beast hurls itself across to the other side at the increasing protest of everyone and everything that surrounds itself. There is no place to hide and, with every breath, the lungs are being filled with intoxicating fumes. The eyes are too dry to wetten the ground with salt-filled tears. The beast scrambles forward, losing its breath and sight and everything else, until only the noise of horrendous, brutal machines remains to be parsed as an unending assault to its sense of hearing that, for some reason, remains intact despite all attempts at its suppression.

Finally, amidst the unceasing chaos, after passing by uncountable shopping areas and stands and diners and parking lots, a corner of hope shows up on the beast's left side, indicated by a soft melody of chimes and conspicuously welcoming light. Dropping its hands and galloping faster than ever

before, the beast hastily reaches a small crevice, leading to a seemingly abandoned pathway. Without any second thought, it heads through, abandoning the horrid uproar of the main road and returning to a gentler atmosphere.



Temperature turns around as warm light encapsulates the area, fossilizing it as though it were an insect caught in amber. The glare and noise turn into the incandescence of old-fashioned lampposts and a low buzz and murmur of the distant city and chitin-veined wings. A purple haze corrupts the trees, swallowing their golden leaves. Still puddles of muddied water hide between harshly cut stone slabs, their outlines turned into faint halos. A lost moth makes endless circles around a lamp. Everything is quiet and contemplative. A place forgotten by time.

The beast walks along the path, observing its surroundings with a wandering gaze. Lines of tree story buildings make for an oddly comfortable enclosure. Many lights are on, and many windows open. White curtains punctured with holes and decorated with floral patterns drape out like peeled ghost skin. From within emerges a harmony of sounds typical of daily life. A frying pan being placed on the stove top. The discreet yet high-pitched yell of a kettle filled with boiling water. Clothes being washed in the sink and left to dry. Gentle steps on laminated floors. Wooden cupboards being shut and

opened.

Fireflies glisten and glow like miniature light bulbs propelled by translucent blades. They fly in dazzling motions, revealing the way to a half-open door on the right side of the road. One lands on the beast's snout and buzzes warmly with its slender antennae shaking, transmitting odd signals in morse code, as the beast makes its way toward the unlocked apartment building, which appears now to be their place of origin.

A large swarm of flutterers rushes out as the beast enters. The interior is bathed in amber twinkles and phosphorescence, and the stairway is large and luxurious, boasting tall wooden steps and a hard wood balustrade. The doors, one on each side of every floor, are embellished with interweaving carvings and ancient-looking. The air is redolent of dust and pressed petals.

The beast climbs up to the final floor. Light creeps out from behind the door on the left-hand path. Someone must be inside. Gathering its courage, the beast reaches up and gently knocks thrice. Then it waits. Faint steps can be heard from the other side. A key sliding in and twisting. A soft metallic sigh. The handle turning.

The door opens.



Lights on. Power flows through. Bright auras bloom from ev-

ery corner of the lavish guestroom. Ornate light bulbs and crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling. All manners of lamps and fixtures, some as long as the walls, others resting on solid wooden cubes or on the laminated floor, pollute the atmosphere with warm hues. Seven lit wax candles stand like tall pillars in the center of a mahogany table. For reasons that cannot be expressed, this place feels like home.

A tall woman wearing an empty perfect-white porcelain mask as a face appears amidst the flood of radiance, casting a velvet shadow in front of herself. She is dressed in a long, red gown, with matching satin gloves, contrasted by the lush pale-saffron hair that unfurls on her sides. The beast hurries inside and closes the door at her command, then waits in place as its eyes with constricted pupils adjust to the nature of the torching chamber.

Various golden instruments and contraptions lay on the shelves. Half-filled, oddly-shaped bottles. Spheres struck by miniature spears, rotating with constancy around the axis. A set of slender chimes and bells. Clocks and round pocket watches, all stuck showing the same time of twelve at night. A sceptre with a gleaming globe attached at its end. A wide lance. An orrery of an unknown solar system. They are all shining and their forms are blending into one another under the light.

The woman takes the beast's hand and leads it to a large, dark crimson sofa occupying the area around the table, whereupon it motions the beast to sit down and make itself

comfortable. The beast obliges. The woman then brings out a white vase and a large, gilt jewelry box, and proceeds to arrange them on the table. The objects have a strange, whimsical quality to them.

The beast takes the pure white lily of the valley out of its left pocket and gently places it inside the vase. Its pale green stem reaches to the water as it sprouts and looks up. The moon grins through a large window. The air is tranquil. The golden key follows, out of the beast's right pocket. It makes a click as it rotates. A perfect fit with the locking mechanism of the box, which springs open upon the action.

A small vial with blood-tinted liquid lays inside, sheltered between red cushions. The woman picks it up with a faint smile painted on her face. She connects it to the end of another aureate apparatus that she's been holding with her left arm, an odd amalgamation of tubes and pipes. She then takes the flower out of the vase and presses it into the entrance of a medieval-looking alchemy set. It passes through a collection of coiled tubes and boiling jars before ending up in another, identical vial, as perfectly translucent ooze, which is then fitted into the opposing slot of the machine.

The beast lays down on its back and carefully unbuttons its shadowy dress shirt. Dark fur sprouts out. The gaping hole in its chest is rendered visible. The woman comes closer and looks attentively. Moments pass. She reaches with her right hand and touches the stale flesh through the glove. The beast remains motionless. The woman opens up the hole, and fits

the instrument inside. Everything turns blurry as she turns the valve through three full rotations and the substance from the vials drips into the veins. Smoke makes its way out through a small circular opening, like fumes out of a boiling kettle. A clock ticks. Five pistons on each side move with a steady rhythm. Muted pain resonates through the body. Patches of fur bloom out like thousands of microscopic tentacles. The canines grind against each other as the maw stays tightly closed. The eyelids struggle to stay open and eventually succumb.

Light fades and turns to darkness. The senses fade. Everything fades. Only a gentle touch is felt somewhere, its origin point impossible to locate as the body, too, fades away. Everything is overcome by a profound sense of emptiness, and at the same time fullness. Everything is overcome by sleep.



Look, there is an angel, beaming with light, clad in gilt robes and wearing a paradisaical expression on its pale face. It peers back at you and laughs with innocence, waving a hand. The laughter is akin to the soothing song of a hundred doves. Its perfect halo droops to the side, shining brightly, illuminating the empty void like a supergiant heating up the outer space with its final breaths. You can taste the happiness of its smile. It must have been waiting for a long time, waiting for you to show up.

You were falling, but the angel is now carrying you in its embrace, taking you back into the heavens above. Its pure white wings flap up and up in an uninterrupted harmony, shedding thin feathers and stardust. Its soft arms wrap around you and caress you with gentle motions. It is warm, so warm. Your heart beats, your heart warms up, your body is all fuzzy.

The void opens up. A blinding crack extends and wraps around the darkness, engulfing it in light. Angels gather all over, surrounding you. They move in a spiral, in a lulling dance, bearing lost souls in their arms. There may be hundreds, thousands. You can't count them, you feel your mind and your senses slowing down.

You're propelled up into the light until you can no longer trace out the edges of angel wings. The soft breeze brushes over your face. You can feel their presence. They're all gathered here. Everyone's been waiting for you. Your memories fade away as you reach out to them. The angel lets go, and you keep floating on the currents. You don't see them, but you no longer need to. They're all here for you, they're all so close. You reach out again, and a million tiny hands connect with yours, a million hearts beat all in unison with yours. It's all so peaceful. Everything is bliss. Everyone is playing, adventuring on imaginary cotton fluff. All that remains is bliss, forever and ever.

Someone reaches from behind and hugs you tightly. You can't turn around to see them, but you know they're here for you. They reach over to your heart, feeling its slow, even beat-

ing, and you recognize their touch. They whisper something in your ear, and you recognize their voice, without quite making out the syllables or the language that they speak. They take you by the hand, and guide you to a patch of fluffy clouds, where you both lay down and stargaze together. They point up and draw a new constellation out of seven golden stars.

Another hand points at it, retracing the lines. Someone else has joined you, and is resting on your other side. Yes, they're all here. Your heart is safe. You turn sideways to glance over at them. A faint smile is displayed on their face. You close your eyes, and smile back. Then you get up, and head out to explore the sky. They follow you closely, whispering about everything and nothing and all is beautiful and everlasting.

You can rest now. You are safe. The journey is over, the journey has just begun. Words no longer have any use. Words are just for play. It is time to rest.