



Mapping the Human Soul

The Mind's Eye

divergentEntity

The Mind's Eye caters to two very different kinds of customers.

The first kind consists of the Lord of the Rings nuts and Harry Potter fans. These are people who wander in here looking for a quiet place to pick up a book and read it. I wouldn't blame them, the shop's pretty legit. We have stone walls, warm lighting provided by candles and a fireplace, and some other mainstream fantasy doodads here and there. These people come here to escape reality and immerse themselves in a world filled with dragons, magic, wizards, and adventure.

Then we have what I like to call Customers. With a capital C.

Every few days I get the occasional weirdo asking for someone to exorcise a demon from their attic, or to help conjure up some archfiend from the Nth dimension, or to go over some ward schematics, or even aid them in their quest to hunt down a rogue werewolf that was terrorizing people downtown. I usually stop listening about a sentence in when I figure they are here to talk to the glorious, and apparently illustrious, Taios Stard.

Which isn't me, if you haven't guessed. Nope, I'm the typical boring university student with a crazy high tuition which will put me on the streets if I don't cough up enough Benjamins. I also happen to be on the search for a new job. Trust me, if your occupational hazards include death by lasers, implosion, lasers followed up by implosion, and/or the optional mind-rape, you would also be reconsidering your career options.

This is why when the entrance swings opens and the woman steps through in front of me; Instinct and Reason throw themselves at the judge begging him to see the situation his way.

"Your honor," Instinct starts, "The last time we told a Customer that Taios is upstairs we had to throw ourselves out of an exploding bookstore. That was two days ago."

Reason steps in, "Oh come now, we don't even know if she's a Customer or a customer."

Instinct stares at Reason, "You're kidding right? Look at blondie here, she's blind. In a bookstore. She's wearing robes. In the twenty-first century. Your earphones are starting to spew out static. She's a Customer."

The judge nods to himself, "I'm inclined to agree."

Reason shakes his head, "Your honor. It should not come as a surprise when I say that there are absolutely no other jobs available that would support our further education and well-being. We have not received any of our calls back yet."

"Maybe that is because our current employer is sabotaging our attempts to find a new job." Instinct argues, "Whenever we've asked he would mumble something about the economy."

Reason waves the comments away, "Be that as it may, consider our financial status. Nothing else pays \$166.70 a day. We need this job

and keeping it means that we treat our customers well and tell them where Taios is if they ask for him.”

The judge frowns, “That is true.” Then he straightens up, “The United Dysandro Funds are about to file bankruptcy. We need the money. We do the job.”

Instinct sighs, “Well, shit.”

I look over the woman in front of me as I palmed the iron nail I keep in my pocket for these occasions, just in time to see her pale cloudy eyes pulse a deep emerald.

“*Oculus Mentis.*” She whispers.

Have you ever been punched really hard in the face? One of those messy, solid punches that crushes your nose and pounds the rest of the force right through your head? That was what having mystery woman’s mental link spear into my head felt like. I’d imagine that this would be significantly less painful had I not been firmly holding an iron nail in my hand. Said hand was screaming “What the hell are you doing?!” and begging me to drop the scorching piece of metal but it was either that or be completely defenseless against what was next to come.

“YOU WILL TELL ONLY THE TRUTH.” The compulsion slams into my head. The nail is lava now.

Seemingly satisfied the blind lady looks at me expectantly, or she would’ve if her eyes weren’t pressed shut.

“Do you have any information on the Blackwire incident?” She demands.

“I have no idea what you are talking about.” I answer in what I hope sounds like a convincing deadpan zombie tone. I watch enough TV to know that’s what people sound like while they’re being mind controlled.

Looking back now I was proud of myself for staying so calm. What I really wanted to do was bolt out the back door without looking back screaming at the top of my lungs, but if her magic was strong enough to slam through some of the protection my iron nail was supposed to give me I would need to play along; meaning I was supposed to be her mind slave and that requires me to be no less than stoic.

“Have you come by any strange books or questionable material?” She asks slowly.

“Many.” I decided to fish. “Is there a specific book you’re looking for?”

She hesitates slightly, “The Grimoire of the Lamb.”

“I’m sorry, but I haven’t heard of that before. Is there anything else you’re looking for?”

“Do you have anything else on necromancy?”

“Maybe, but I’ll have to look around.”

“How long will that take?”

“Give me ten minutes ma’am.”

She nodded and I steadily head up the stairs, past my room and into Taios’ study. I throw the burning-hot nail into one corner of the room and then proceeded to freak out.

Okay let me explain. The Blackwire incident. Some hopeless romantic wanted to resurrect his dead girlfriend with no research or reference material other than a really old book filled with dark secret magic written by a renegade wizard who was executed a couple of centuries ago, which was probably not the most smartest move one could do. Not only did the idiot manage to resurrect her; but he also woke up a couple of cemeteries worth of corpses. Overnight, downtown experienced its first ever zombie apocalypse. The clean-up wasn’t pretty and I’m still not quite sure how they managed to cover it up, but the guy was eventually caught and the book was confiscated.

Normally with incidents like these, the magical SWAT team sweeps in and executes the guy after a ‘trial’. The Order of the Radiant Dawn doesn’t pull punches when it comes to breaking any of what Taios calls ‘Golden Rules’. It’s how they keep their secret society well-ordered and structured. In this case though, the guy was completely homebrewed. He had no idea there were other people capable of casting magic, let alone police it. That, and the fact that

the book compelled you to use it, allowed the guy to walk away from the mess. Lucky him.

If you haven’t pieced it together yet, the tome of ultimate dark magic is the Grimoire of the Lamb. How Taios got his hands on it and why he’s still even keeping it is beyond me. What I do know is this: no one was supposed to know he had it and that the whole Grimoire was in total violation of Golden Rule #3: Thou shalt not raise the dead.

I have no idea why Mystery Woman was looking for the Grimoire, I can only guess what she even wanted to do with it. Nothing good can come out of a tainted book that wants to be used.

So that leaves me with next to nothing to work with. I am totally and utterly outclassed. I also have less than ten minutes to think of something.

Damn it Taios, of all days to be away why today?

‘Have you come by any strange books or questionable material?’ Almost every freaking other day! I flip open Taios’ chest and pull out a random book. ‘Black Magic for Morons’. It would have to do for now. It’s not like she’s going to be able to read it right away anyways.

I feel an alien presence seep into my head.

You think that by giving her a book remotely relevant to her query will satisfy her?

I glare at the newly cemented section of the wall. Taios said that the wards he put up would mask the Grimoire's presence from the world, but I can hear it just fine whenever I'm in his room.

"This is all your fault, just so you know." I mutter through gritted teeth. "I don't see you coming up with any brilliant ideas."

We can erase her from the world. You know I can give you the power to do it.

"Yeah, like I said. Brilliant ideas." I close the chest and start for the door.

So you will resort to trickery and hope for a satisfactory outcome? You know that your efforts are in vain. She will find out that you have deceived her and she will return. I can show you how to enter her own mind. You can do whatever you want with her.

"You're so full of shit, it's not even funny." I reach for the doorknob.

It takes a liar to know a liar.

I pause.

After all, isn't that what you do best? Lie? Lie to your family. Lie to your friends. Lie to yourself. Take those lies away, and what do you have?

"Like—"

Those lies were paid by in blood. Blood of your family. Blood of your friends. Soon, your blood will pay its due.

A moment passes. I glare at the wall again, I wonder if magical tomes were flammable?

I see that you have made up your mind. But take heed, soon all of your sins will catch up to you. All the lies and all the lives...

Black Magic for Morons in hand, I exit Taios' study and slam the door behind me.

All those lies and all those lives are going to have to wait.