

## Prophecy

Sabrina had accepted the Devil into her life a year before when she finally requested his help.

Sabrina had met him on a dry Michigan winter Thursday when she sat on a stool at the bar closest to home. It has become her regular haunt, all Thursdays all the time, one of the most pathetic evenings to be at the bar alone. She had also taken to flirting with the bartender. She excused herself from this cheaterous flirtation figuring that if it mattered to her boyfriend, her whereabouts and whatabouts, that he would be with her on Thursdays. At least some of the time. She had been dating, Simon for a year when she started to drink over their relationship.

The night she had met the Devil, the jukebox had started to play a song, sort of bluesy, one of those artists she felt like she should know, but didn't, when the legend of Robert Johnson entered her mind. She wondered just how one got to meet the Devil, how one gets the opportunity to sell his soul. She wondered if it worked something like getting on a TV game show, first showing up, then lots of luck.

She looked up and saw the epitome of swarthy masculinity with a glint in his eye that set her aflame. Before she convinced herself it weren't possible, she knew she had met him. She beckoned him over.

“So that's all it takes, huh? An innocent musing? This is way more efficient than Craigslist,”

“Sabrina, give me some credit. I've had nearly an eternity to perfect my skills.”

“Right,” Sabrina said drinking from her tequila sunrise, alarmed that he knew her name, though it made perfect sense.

“Are you looking for a bargain?” the Devil asked her.

“No offense, I wouldn’t sell anything to you without a third-party appraisal,” Sabrina said.

“Very clever girl,” the Devil said to her looking her up and down.

She felt his gaze. Not in the way you normally feel when someone is looking at you too hard, like a roving fiery blush. His stare felt like snails traversing her body quickly, leaving a trail of slime. It was mind-breaking, as snails can’t sprint. She wiped at her arm, a viscous jelly transferring to her fingers.

“Slime?” She asked looking at him in disgust. Then she wiped her hand on a bar napkin, then her jeans. She sniffed at her fingertips finding a scent vaguely reminiscent of Swisher Sweets.

“Baby, I like to mark my territory. Be glad you’re not pregnant.”

He stopped to evaluate her hips. This time his examination felt like a swirling inside of her like a tornado, or toilet bowl water preparing for its centripetal descent into the waste water treatment system.

“Stop doing that.” Sabrina said.

“Feisty. I like that. You’re like a tiger.” the Devil said to her. “So, tell me, why aren’t you afraid of me.”

“I’d have to believe in the soul. Or the afterlife,” Sabrina said.

“You want something though,” the Devil murmured.

“I do,” Sabrina said, “Don’t we all?”

“I do,” the Devil mused, “I like those words coming from your lips.”

Sabrina looked at him in disbelief.

“It’d be crazier to marry you than to sell you my soul. Then you’d get it all.

Everything. And for what?”

Sabrina’s body started to tingle as if she had been dipped in a bath of Vicks rub.

“And stop that!” Sabrina said.

The Devil smiled, his eyes flashing with mischief.

“Sabrina. I am a patient man. One day you will need me. I will deliver. Trust me on this.”

“Trust you.” Sabrina repeated. When she looked toward him again he had disappeared.

It was with her third cocktail that she remembered her initial encounter with the Devil from a year ago. Knowledge, she thought, providing knowledge is sort of his specialty, isn’t it? When she felt a warm gel on the side of her face, she knew he was back.

Before she even looked up, she reached for a napkin. As she wiped her cheek, she said, “Did you *have* to do that?”

“Oh, Sabrina. Give an old man a thrill. Think of it as a hello kiss?”

“You could have asked first,” Sabrina said, running her hand over her de-slimed face.

“I don’t ask, Sabrina; I do. I understand that you have a question for me.”

“Yes.”

“Another word that sounds like it was made for your lips. What will you give me?” the Devil asked.

“What do you want? I’m guessing a gift card for iTunes won’t do it.” Sabrina said. “Can’t we just say I owe you one? But not one soul...you know, insurance.”

He slimed her face and neck. She wiped them.

“Just this one thing?” Sabrina asked him staring right into his eyes which, in turn, gleamed with interest.

“This one thing? It always starts at this one thing, but usually it goes much further,” the Devil said.

It did not escape her that he licked the corner of his mouth like a diner preparing to devour a feast.

“I just want to know more about my relationship with Simon. I want to know what he’s thinking. About me, about us.”

“And you need me for this? Why don’t you just ask him?” the Devil asked.

“Ha!” she said, watching him shake his head at her.

“I can deliver anything. But what I need from you is a choice. Would you like to be inside of his head for a day, or would you like to see seven days of dreams?”

“Seven days of dreams,” she answered, quickly and definitively, as if she were selecting a side dish at Applebee’s.

He stared at her, unabashedly sizing her up. She felt as if a dozen warm water snakes jumped out of the water to swirl up and down her body writhing over her making as much contact as they could between her skin and their scales.

You realize, however, that you are choosing between lucent thoughts and those of the subconscious. Interpretation is not provided. I want to make sure that you understand the terms,” the Devil explained.

“Seven days is better than one. Besides, if he doesn’t dream about me at least once...”

“Are you sure?” the Devil asked.

“Yes,” Sabrina answered, “as sure as death.”

He extended his hand toward her, “Ready to shake on it?”

“Yes.” she said, and shook his hand. When she released his hand, she discovered that he had evaporated.

That night, her sleep, usually a haven of sumptuous rest and regeneration, was a mashup of disturbing sights and sounds. It was like a music video from the Marilyn Manson era; there were snakes and cats and goats all anthropomorphized and tricky. She dreamt of riddles and labyrinths. She walked through fog and bumped into funhouse mirrors. Her nightscape, aggressively misshapen, eagerly sucked the soul from her sleep.

Groggy from being chewed upon for hours by these warped dreams, Sabrina hit the snooze button. Seven minutes later she hit it again when she noticed that the Devil had crawled into the bed beside her.

“Jesus Christ!”

“Oh, Sabrina, I’m disappointed,” the Devil said reminding her of the Cheshire cat.

“Sorry,” she mumbled.

“I have something for you,” he said.

He reached under the sheets and commenced fumbling.

She looked at him in the bed beside her and wondered whether she would be expected to surrender sex to him. Briefly, she thought he was sexy in that non-typical Rahm Emmanuel way.

He pulled from beneath the covers, a flash drive.

“Your wish is my command, Sabrina.”

“It hasn’t been seven days.”

“You mortals are so uncreative, and not very explicit. I didn’t say that I would give you seven dreams starting with yesterday. I didn’t even tell you they’d be consecutive. But I have here everything you need. If you believe me.”

In the time it took her to find her glasses, get the computer started and pour herself a drink, Sabrina was ready to face her future. When she double clicked on the removable drive, she found a single file. She double clicked again and watched the movie.

Before she finished wondering how the Devil could record a dream onto a flash drive, she began to sweat. Then she felt the slime crawling slowly down the back of her neck and down her back. Eager for answers, she didn’t take the time to wash it away. She sipped her drink and felt the burn as the drink descended her esophagus. She started to experience the dream.

She saw herself in Simon’s apartment cooking for him, happily when the door opened. He entered with his best friend. Then Sabrina saw herself cooking for Simon and his friend and an apartment full of people. She was covered in sweat slick and shiny glistening brightly, almost aglow. She saw the kitchen growing right around her, and the floor became dirty beneath her. Food piled up around her as guests, none of them familiar

to her poked their heads into the kitchen to ask her how it was going, not caring, then their laughing drunken laughs. She wondered where Simon was. She continued to cook for him. An alarm went off. She went to the oven where a very large casserole was waiting to be removed. She pulled it from the oven, then dropped it once she felt she didn't have hot pads. The glass dish shattered and covered the floor with its contents which now looked like blood and chopped organs steaming and staring resentfully toward her. She fell to the floor wanting to put it all together when Simon appeared. He began to yell at her. Then, he picked up a handful of the mess on the floor and flung it toward her.

For the first time he spoke, "No child of mine will have such a worthless mother!"

He then grabbed at the base of her neck and pushed her face toward the broken glass and chunky redness on the floor. "Now fix it. Just fix it. This is your problem. Fix it."

She felt herself implode as she finished watching the file, as she calculated price of a second favor.