

Chapter 77. The Haunting of Amy

“Vesper’s infernum!” Phearus cursed at the Sub. “You are useless to me! Infernum!”

When Phearus attempted to mingle with the Sub in order to link to its language source, it wasn’t long before he began to feel ill due to genetic incompatibility. Phearus was an engineer, but it didn’t take a master geneticist to figure that out.

This was an unfortunate constraint, he quickly surmised. “It can’t be an inside job.” Phearus laughed at his humor, but his hatred of the Subs grew exponentially.

They are so inferior and impotent, and this encounter proves how substandard they are! Fortunately, that will eventually be to my advantage. When it comes time to take over this world, they will be like sitting ducks. Phearus had to look to the bright side.

For now, Phearus also had to be patient. *The traitor will become complacent and will show itself in time. All prey animals are the same in that respect. It can’t stay in the hole forever. It has to come out for sustenance soon enough.* That was at least some measure of consolation to Phearus.

Accordingly, Phearus kept a vigilant watch over the vacant lot, but boredom soon set in, and eventually, Amy would become the target of his aggression.

Amy was scared straight after her encounter with Phearus. She dumped the bottles of Grey Goose. She put the bottle of Xanax high on a kitchen shelf. She opened up the draperies to let the sunshine in and opened the windows to filter fresh, clean air through the rooms. She got dressed in actual clothes. She cleaned the house, all the dishes were washed and put away, the pile of junk mail went into the recycle bin, and the trash was put out to the curb. Eventually, Kayla started to return her calls. All the while, Amy steadily convinced herself that the whole thing was just a bad dream brought on by stress.

Amy’s new hobby became HSN, the Home Shopping Network. It was the best thing since sliced bread. She ordered new furniture for every room in the house. She replaced every ware

possible: tableware, porcelainware, stemware, flatware, glassware, stoneware, ovenware, bakeware, and cookware. She bought clothes, shoes, jewelry, beauty products, electronics, and fitness equipment. She was addicted.

She leased a new Mercedes-Benz E350, went to church every Sunday, and sang louder than any other. She walked gracefully with her head held high, in stunning, vibrantly colored outfits; she wore expensive perfume and expertly applied makeup. She laughed and conducted blithe small talk. She exuded the very meaning of carefree.

Until one Sunday at church, when something on the bulletin board caught her eye. It was the wedding announcement of one Karl Miller to one Heather Martinez. The happy day would be Saturday, November 12, 2015, roughly in two months' time. It had only been two months since the divorce.

Devastated, Amy drove straight to Cork 'n' Bottle, where she purchased two bottles of Grey Goose, Rose's Sweet Lime Juice, and a carton of Marlboros.

Back at home, Amy was both furious and profoundly hurt as she fired up a smoke and chased two Xanax with a freshly made gimlet. "Nobody even had the courtesy to tell me. Not even Kayla. No, I had to see it on the rectory wall! Like a vagrant! They are the real monsters." Tears welled up in her eyes. She mixed another gimlet. "Fuck this shit!"

Amy went online and started shopping for a vacation. An hour later, she had decided on a two-week stay in Cabo San Lucas, followed by an extended stay in the Hawaiian Islands. Who knows, maybe she would move there.

After booking flights and lodgings, she emailed Kayla.

Kayla Dear,

I leave the day after tomorrow for an extended vacation south. I'll be gone for at least four months. I'm sure you'll do fine without me for a little while. If you need anything, go see your dad. If I don't come back, I'll be sure to let you know.

—*Your Mother*

Then Amy discontinued the weekly automatic cash transfers to Kayla's account, discontinued the payments to her credit cards, and discontinued her car and insurance payments. "Let's see how she likes that." The internal guilt trip that urged her to overindulge her daughter had just come to an abrupt end. She followed up with a call to the bank, making the statement that under no circumstances would Kayla Miller be receiving any financial transactions from her account.

Finally, she went to the US Post Office site and ordered her mail to be held.

As she finished the flurry of activity, the sun was dipping below the mountains. Amy changed into comfortable sweats and fluffy footies. In the kitchen, she absently began unloading the dishwasher. Amy was thinking that she wasn't even going to pack anything. She would buy everything she needed as she went along.

Amy reached into the utensil basket and cut her finger on a sharp blade. "Shit! God damn it! God damn all of you!" Amy retracted the knife and threw it at the wall, along with a fine spray of her blood. Hurling expletives, she ripped the utensil basket out and whipped it onto the dining room table, smashing delicate place settings. She hurled one dish at a time from the dishwasher into the dining room while screaming obscenities, which woke Phearus, who was having his own private meltdown.

As Amy heard the telltale creaking and moaning of wood and froze stiff, Phearus oozed down through the ceiling directly behind Amy, whose arm hair now stood on end.

Amy turned slowly and saw the dark thing towering over her. She opened her mouth to scream but immediately felt pressure, and nothing came out. It lifted her to hang in the air and shouted at her in its harsh-sounding language.

“What is your problem, Sub? My entire planet is dead! My world is gone, and my race is extinct because of a traitor that you Subs are harboring! I was plucked out of euphoria and unceremoniously deposited on this infernal heap of horse shit! I am a thousand light-years from everything I knew and loved, on a puny, polluted, orbiting mass of trash overrun with you filthy little rodents. So, what exactly is your main issue? You diseased runt! What is the main malfunction up here?” Phearus poked at her forehead and heard splashing on the floor as the Sub’s bladder let go. “Pathetic!” Phearus tossed the Sub, and it hit the floor like a sack of potatoes.

Phearus watched as the Sub started to crawl toward the exit. He brought his foot down on its back hard and held it there.

“Where do you think you’re going? You’re not going anywhere!” Phearus locked the house tighter than a snare and covered all the windows and doors while boring a hole in its head with a long finger. He injected a vision, the vision of his dead world—burning, poisonous, desolate, lifeless. Next, Phearus injected the death screams of his entire race. “Think about that for a while!”

“Ramasli otome zad neko vribeme.”

With the dark thing and its grip on her finally gone, Amy gasped loudly and pulled herself into the corner of the foyer.

It was Lucifer himself! He showed her hell, where she was going to go when she died. She couldn’t get the image out of her head, and the screams of the damned souls were still echoing in her ears. Amy was going to hell, where Satan himself would personally torture her for all eternity, but not before she endured living hell. Amy wept silently, afraid any noise would bring back the devil.

In shock, Amy eventually crawled into the half bath in the hallway and curled up next to the commode, only to be pulled out days later and planted on the ceiling in the living room when Satan returned.

Amy was on the ceiling for what seemed like an eternity. When Satan finally came back, he laughed at her while she was flat on the ceiling and barked evil words at her.

“You stupid Sub—two days you’ve been up there, and all the while, you are free to come down of your own volition.” Phearus laughed heartily, mocking her whimpering noises before departing.

When she finally urinated, the urine ran down between her legs and onto the ceiling instead of streaming to the floor. Amy started to crawl to the wall, then down the wall to the floor, where she leaped up, emitting a hoarse scream, and stumbled to the front door.

Amy realized she was screaming and stifled herself, looking around for the Devil.

The door was firmly closed. She could not open the dead bolt or turn the doorknob. The mail slot would not budge. She couldn’t open the back door either. Amy tried opening windows to no avail, and the glass on all the windows looked like it was covered in a hard winter’s frost. There was no electricity in the house, and her cell phone had no signal.

Amy tried to climb the stairs to the second floor, but she soon felt weighed down by atmospheres of gravity and had to descend back to the first floor.

Amy decided to risk the noise and break the living room window with a fire iron. The fire iron bounced off the frosted-looking glass. The reverse blunt force sent the fire iron sailing into the far wall with a loud crash. Amy silently danced around gingerly, tucking her hands under her arms because the palms had absorbed much of the impact and stung severely.

While she was hopping around with sore hands, ironically, Amy stepped on a shard of broken glass from her earlier tirade. She fell down immediately, wincing and stifling a scream.

With a muddled cry, she pulled out the shard. Bright-red blood poured out of the wound and turned her fluffy white footie to crimson.

She crawled into the hall bathroom, shut and locked the door behind her, and tended to her wound with antibacterial spray, wound sealant, and gauze wrapping by candlelight.

Finally, she took a drink of water from the sink, only to cry it out immediately.

There was no way out. Amy was losing her mind. She thought she was losing her mind before Satan came to take up residence in her home. She hadn't known to what levels the depravity could actually sink to. Scared beyond imagination, Amy stayed huddled in the hall bathroom like a prey animal. Every so often, she would sneak into the kitchen to steal something to eat.

Unfortunately, a silly door lock was no match for the devil. When Satan would visit, he would drag her out and torture her.

On one occasion when the devil came for her, Amy held a crucifix forward to ward the evil away. He snatched it from her and observed it, turning it over before tossing it aside.

“As you wish.”

The devil proceeded to drag Amy from the bathroom by her hair, then pinned her to the wall in the hallway in the same position as the crucified Christ.

During a conscious spell while pinned to the wall, Amy tried to pray in a raspy voice, “Hell Mary . . .” Amy knew those weren't the right words and started over. “Hell Mary . . . I can't get the words out!” Her jaw felt like it was being restricted with bubble gum. Amy let out a demented snicker and figured she might as well go with whatever gibberish was manifested. “Hell Mary, full of disgrace! The Lord forsakes thee. Blasted art thou amongst creation, and blasted is the rotten fruit of thy wretched womb, Jackass. Mother of the Godless, damn us all to living hell!” Amy laughed in ecstasy and wailed in agony.

The devil would keep her pinned to the wall or the ceiling for two days at a time, at random intervals. At other times, he hung her by her hair or made her crawl on all fours while kicking her down every so often.

During what would be Amy's last kitchen excursion, she heard the wood start to moan and scurried for the hall. The closet was closer, so in she dashed. Amy tripped on a row of boots and shoes on her way to the back of the closet. She went down hard on something in the far corner. Amy pulled a box out from under her and felt the catches. She opened the box and pulled out a revolver. Amy touched the grip and ran her fingers along the snub nose in the darkness of the closet.

When the closet door flew open, all the coats were instantly sucked out.

"Look at you. You look just like a little groundhog hiding from the big bad wolf inside a rotted old tree trunk."

Amy held the gun up with two shaking hands, which matched pace with her shaking body.

"Go ahead. Your primitive projectile weapons are useless on me. Go ahead and do it. Do it!"

Amy fired. The bullet disintegrated when it came in contact with Satan.

Amy held the gun to her head next and shut her eyes, squeezing out the tears that were hovering there.

"Ooh, the show just got a lot more interesting. Go on, little groundhog; blow your diseased brains out! Come on, what are you waiting for? Do it before I kick you to death!"

Amy pulled the trigger and heard a click. The devil laughed hysterically.

"You sad, sorry Sub. You can't even exterminate yourself with any proficiency." Phearus reached down and put a finger to its forehead.

"Kill them all."

Amy couldn't understand the words but felt the futility and the hatred being injected. Then the devil took his leave of her completely.

Amy heard the front door open as he departed. The lights went on in the house as she stepped out into the hall. Crisp night air flowed through the open door onto Amy's pale face. She breathed gulps of air like she was at a much higher altitude.

With the loss of her mind now complete, Amy said, "If I'm going to hell, I'm taking Linda and Heather with me." Her voice was lifeless.

Amy fished the box out of the closet and found five more bullets, which she deposited into the chamber of the .38.

She felt oddly disconnected as she drove to Linda's house. She knew she was going to kill Linda and felt nothing, nothing but the necessity of it, the certainty of it, which compelled her forward.

Amy stopped the car short of the property, stepped out, and began walking with a slight limp. She was still in fluffy footies, one stained dark red. She was almost to the front yard of the house when a huge white wolf appeared at the tree line to the right of her. It was the biggest wolf she had ever seen. Amy stopped dead in her tracks and held her breath.

His eyes glowed in the dark. The wolf crouched, pinned his ears back, peeled his lips back to reveal daggerlike teeth, and growled even more menacingly than the devil himself.

As Amy crept backward to her car door, the growling wolf slowly kept pace along the tree line, ensuring her retreat.

Once inside her car, she took her eyes off the wolf in the trees for a second while she fumbled for the push-button ignition. When Amy looked back up, the wolf was gone.

Amy decided to go for Heather. As she pulled up to Karl's house, Heather bounced down the driveway to her car, got in, backed out of the driveway, and drove down the road directly in front of her. Amy followed behind Heather all the way to the Walmart Supercenter.

Amy stopped her car in the thoroughfare to watch Heather pull her car into a parking space. She put her car in park, stepped out, and limped to Heather as she exited her car. Amy lifted her arm and shot Heather in the head at point-blank range. Heather went down immediately, dead—a fountain of blood gushing from her head.

Amy, with a fine spray of blood spatter on her face, vaguely heard a scream as she climbed back into her car and calmly left the scene. She drove straight home and went to her second-floor bedroom, which she was unable to get to just hours before, gun still in hand. She sat on the bed for a while, rocking back and forth, softly crying and moaning, with a framed photo of her family taken years before the trouble started.

It wasn't long before she heard the police sirens, then saw the pulsing red and blue lights coming through the bedroom window.

Amy slowly raised the revolver to her temple, and as the police rushed into the house, she pulled the trigger.

Linda would get a call two hours later from Tristan, who gave her the news about Amy's murder-suicide rampage—just one week before what was supposed to be Heather's wedding day—not knowing about any wedding date or that she had been the first name on Amy's list.

Jaclyn Hernandez, who had secretly placed the fake wedding announcement on the rectory bulletin board as a prank just moments before Amy would pass by because she had called her Jackie, on purpose, one too many times, and removed it just after being viewed by Amy, would never tell anybody what she had done.

Phearus had again drifted up to straddle the stratosphere and the mesosphere on the dark side of the planet. He wanted to blast the vacant lot but couldn't, not without knowing what was there and what would happen. It could be a trap for him. The energetics could be a lure to get him into the trap. The traitor could be safe, clear on the other side of the planet, as far as he knew.

Phearus was deep in contemplation when he caught a sense of something below in a very dark area of the continent he hovered over. As he focused on the location, he thought he heard something familiar. Phearus decided to investigate.