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For Lisa

My better half

Chapter 1

Doctor Hugo Marks scurried along the street clutching the leather satchel to his chest, checking left to right to see if anyone was following him.

Someone, *or more accurately something,* was following him. The creature used the dark to camouflage his gargoyle-like features. The thick leathery wings beat silently lifting him over the rooftops.

Marks was a pioneering scientist in the field of genetic manipulation. His latest project was a genome that, when injected, repaired any damaged cell in a body. The hopes were that this discovery would lead to cures of diseases across the board. However Marks had soon realised that certain factions wanted the serum to be kept from the general public and be made available to those that could afford it. Others, such as The Chimera Institute, simply wanted the serum for themselves. The Institute was in

fact a legit front for The Organisation, a covert group with aims of world domination.

Tonight they would use any means necessary to take the genome.

***

Seven months earlier and Jordan Storm sat in the alley watching as the creature devoured some poor druggie.

He pulled the collar of his coat up around his neck. This was certainly a weird one. Storm had been offered one million dollars to 'baby-sit' this freak. Jordan listened to the sickening sound of flesh being ripped from the body.

Apparently this thing had once been a man who had 'volunteered' for a series of experiments. Storm was sure that this bloke wouldn't have agreed to be turned in to this though.

He peered down the alley. The creature was hungrily gulping down its prey, blood

dripping from its fangs and down the tusks on its chin. Its huge wings were folded behind its back. The thing wore ragged trousers as if they were the last remnant of the man he had once been.

Jordan shuddered, this wasn't his usual type of gig but he had mortgage payments to make and he could quite happily pack up and move back in to the city after all this was over.

Hazard City was the place to be and Storm could use the money to open up some offices and hire himself out as a bounty hunter or bodyguard. He would do whatever anyone needed him to do really as long as the pay was good.

Jordan had once worked for The Organisation and he had a feeling that they had a hand in this monster before him but he didn't really want to know the details.

He had moved on from The Organisation after a bungled mission that left his colleague, Tania Hyde, dead. Normally no one left The Organisation under their own steam but the knowledge Storm possessed had proved too valuable to dispose of. So

The Organisation had let him off the leash on the strict understanding that if they came calling he did what was asked without question.

He had done just that for the past two years, a little investigating here, the odd murder there and a substantial amount would be wired to his offshore account within moments of him confirming the deed had been done.

Jordan walked casually down the alley towards the creature. It lifted its head and snarled at the man approaching.

"Ok Dracboy time to go bye bye!" Storm whispered. He flicked his visor down over his eyes and lit the 'glow-stick'. The appliance fizzed into life surrounded by a green light. Jordan swung the stick and smashed the creature across the jaw; the creature shook where it stood for a second before crumpling in to a heap before Jordan.

The man kicked the thing where it lay to make sure it was unconscious before lifting it in to the back of the van. He slammed the doors firmly shut.

Storm walked round to the remains of the victim and removed a vial from his pocket. He undid the stopper and poured the purple liquid over the body from top to bottom. The liquid seeped into the bloody mess and within seconds a gaseous cloud enveloped the body. The remains began to dissolve and a minute later all that could be seen was a black smudge on the ground.

Storm flipped his visor back up and headed over to the van. He slipped in through the driver side door and silently pulled away from the alley.

***

A few weeks later and the creature sat quietly on the edge of the graveyard. Storm watched from the shadows. The thing looked like a giant grey gargoyle sat there on the grass. It had stopped feeding on the city's down and outs and now it came here every night. The thing would sit for hours before dragging itself to its feet and skulking around the graveyard.

Jordan had an idea what it was looking for and he preyed for the moment that it discovered it. That day would mean that Storm could be off to spend his money.

The night was cool with a light wind. The tips of the creature's wings fluttered in the breeze.

Jordan could see the humanity creeping back into the monster. Its eyes showed remorse, sorrow and anger for the atrocities it had committed. It seemed repulsed by its urges to eat a living being and it now stuck to snacking on stray cats, rats and other vermin.

A couple of nights back Storm hadn't even had to knock the thing out. It had trudged back to the van and climbed in on its own accord. Sitting in the back of the van Storm could hear it whispering over and over in a gruff voice "I remember."

The thing stood and staggered among the gravestones. It reached its destination and collapsed on its knees. Staring at the words on the stone it threw its arms up into the air with tears streaming down its face and again shouted. "I remember!!!"

Jordan watched as the thing beat its wings and lifted into the night. Breathing a sigh of relief he pulled out his cell phone and pressed the speed dial. The phone rang once at the other end before being answered with a *hello*.

"Your boy just got his memories back." Jordan said.

"Thank you, your money will be in your account within five minutes." The voice replied and cut the connection.

***

Storm headed back to his home to pack. The place wasn't exactly *The Ritz* but it had been his corner of the world to hide in and he would miss it.

Still with one million dollars in the bank surely he could find somewhere in Hazard that would fit the bill.

He checked his watch the whiz-tube would be leaving in an hour.

Jordan gave one last glance over the old place before he closed the door. Tomorrow he would start a new life.

Chapter 2

Hugo Marks entered the squalid little hotel and gingerly tip toed his way past the horrid little man on the reception desk. Marks was used to the finer things in life, the hotels he usually frequented were of a much more client friendly service. The fat little man in the string vest fast asleep at the desk was a disgusting parasite that charged far too much for the filthy room and dealt with complaints by throwing his guests out on to the street with a flea in their ear.

Still Marks had to be careful; his grip tightened on the satchel as a couple walked past him on the stairs.

The man was dressed in black studded leathers and his hair was a bright red Mohican-style. His girlfriend wore a short denim skirt and a skimpy t -shirt tied in a knot at her mid-riff.

“Wotcha staring at Gramps? The man asked referring to the older man’s white hair and beard.

Marks looked away and hurried past as the couple laughed and carried on their way down.

On his floor Marks crept past the adjoining room, not wanting to disturb his neighbour.

He slid his key into the lock and opened the door to his room. Fumbling with the light switch he was suddenly aware of something cold pressed against his head.

“Leave the light off and step into the room.” A voice said.

Marks gasped but did as he was told, stepping further into the room.

The man in the shadows came forward he wore a black combat suit, boots, fingerless gloves and had a patch over his left eye.

The gun was pointed at Marks as the man quickly glanced up and down the hall and closed the door.

The man strode forward and gave a wicked smile.

“Ok Doc hand over the case.”

“And if I don’t?” Marks replied his fingers turning red as he gripped on to the case for dear life.

“Well I’d like to say no one has to get hurt but the thing is I have to take you out whether you co-operate or not so I don’t care if you put up a fight really.”

Marks shoulders slumped.

Suddenly the main window imploded, both men turned as glass and wood flew into the room.

A large grey figure came soaring through the window and a huge clawed foot kicked the gun from the attacker’s hand.

The man with the eye-patch gritted his teeth and swung round to face the interloper.

“Grimoire!” he snarled.

“Deadwood.” The creature acknowledged with a guttural growl.

Deadwood reached out for his gun but Grimoire slammed a foot onto his hand probably breaking a couple of fingers by the man's response.

Marks stood gawping at the figure before him.

"Doctor Marks believe me I'm here to help you." Grimoire said.

"Look at him!" Deadwood spat through gritted teeth. "Does he look like the kind of thing that wants to help?"

Marks shrank back, flattening him self against the wall obviously terrified.

Deadwood seized the opportunity to jump to his feet and within a flash he had pulled his spare pistol and was across the room grabbing the Doctor by the neck.

Grimoire roared and the smell washed over the two men causing them to wince.

"Actually he is one of the good guys. He's just in a bad guy's body." Deadwood said to Marks indicating towards Grimoire with the pistol.

Marks struggled to try and break Deadwood's grip but the man held tighter.

"Ok so I'm going to take this case." Deadwood pulled the satchel from Marks' hands. Grimoire strained as if ready to pounce. The muscles in his leathery hide bulged under the skin.

"Ah ah ah!" Deadwood grinned and jammed the pistol harder into the doctor's head.

The men made their way to the window as Grimoire watched through narrowed eyes.

"So long Ryan." Shouted Deadwood as he pushed Marks towards Grimoire; and pulled off a couple of shots before disappearing into the night.

Grimoire moved to give chase but Marks gave a groan and slumped forward. Blood trickled down his arm and onto the hotel carpet.

The creature moved to grab the man.

"Take it easy." Grimoire growled.

"I'll be..fine..just shock…setting in." Marks managed to stammer out. "I took the

liberty of injecting myself with the genome when I first discovered it, sort of an unofficial test subject."

"Glad to hear it, I was hoping that I might make use of your discovery to help me too." Grimoire said, his eyes looking suddenly full of sorrow.

"The man called you Ryan." Marks managed trying to sit up.

"Ryan Winters *was* my name. It's a long story." Grimoire rumbled. "I don't have time to tell it now. I have to get that case back."

"I will be fine honestly, do what you have to."

Grimoire stormed to the window and spreading his wings he lifted out into the darkness.

Chapter 3

Ryan Winters lay in the hospital bed. Nurse Abigail Hogan tucked the covers around him and smiled.

"That's better." She said.

A junior doctor opened the door and upon seeing the nurse he smiled.

"Hey gorgeous."

"Hey yourself." She replied.

The young man made his way over to the nurse and grabbed her bottom firmly.

"Stop it John." She whispered, trying to remove the hand.

"Why? This fella isn't going to be telling anyone anything. He's got about forty eight hours to live if that."

Winters had an aggressive stomach cancer that seemed determined to end his life prematurely.

The couple began to kiss but suddenly realized that they were being watched. A man stood in the door; he wore black and had a patch over an eye.

"Don't let me stop you." He said looking Abigail up and down.

"Excuse me who are you?" the young doctor asked trying to defend his girlfriend.

"I'm the grim reaper, here to claim him." Deadwood replied pointing at the figure in the bed.

"I must ask you to leave before I call security." John bravely answered.

"Oh you got guts kid." Deadwood moved over to the man and swinging a leg he brought John crashing to the floor. Deadwood was inches away from Abigail and he threw out a hand running it up a white stocking leg.

"Nice, always had a thing for nurses." He rasped. He licked his lips and the girl wrinkled her nose in disgust but stayed quiet, unable to breathe.

Another man entered the room; he was older with white hair and was wearing an expensive Italian designer suit.

"Knock it off Deadwood." The man spoke with authority.

Deadwood stood nodding his respect to his boss.

"You can go." The man in the suit said dismissing John and Abigail with a wave of his hand. Not waiting to be told twice the couple ran from the room.

"It looks like we have ourselves a subject."

The door opened again and another doctor came in.

"I didn't think you would be doing this through the day!" he shouted.

"Relax we'll be out of here in a moment." Deadwood replied. "And lower your voice."

Deadwood took out an envelope and handed it to the doctor.

Within moments Deadwood, his boss and the man in the bed were gone.

In a darkened room the figures in black robes fought for a position round the man on the bed.

The sound of chanting rose louder and louder from the figures. At the bottom of the bed a man dressed in a bright gold and red robe read from a book in a language that seemed alien to human ears.

Winters managed to open his eyes for a second but thought he was either still dreaming or had died and gone to hell. He slipped back into un-consciousness.

Outside the room Deadwood shuddered.

When he had been told that the Cult of Corson were going to use Winters as a vessel he had actually felt sorry for the man.

The idea was that the High Priest would call forth Corson using the man as a gateway to the mortal realm.

The Demon King would then be free to roam the Earth and extinguish the plague that was humans.

Of course there were those that would gladly give up their fellow man for a share of the spoils.

The Organisation had aligned with the Cult of Corson after reading private files left by Adolph Hitler. Apparently he too had tried to call forth Corson during the Second World War but had been unsuccessful. It was only once every one hundred years, give or take a decade; that someone was born who could translate the ancient writings.

The High Priest standing at the end of the bed had been found on a mountain in Tibet. He had sat, waiting to be summoned as it had been foretold in the scrolls of the elders handed down through the generations.

It was then only a matter of finding the right subject, a man with no family and an envelope full of money to a doctor up to his eyeballs in gambling debts provided everything The Organisation needed.

As the chanting grew Deadwood decided it was time for him to head to the nearest bar for a beer or five. He shivered and quickly made his way down the corridor.

The High Priest continued to speak in the ancient language that had died out long before humans had set foot on the Earth.

He picked up a large pot at the end of the bed. It contained a thick paste that was a rusty red in colour. The man removed what looked like a bone from the pot and, throwing back the covers from the man on the bed, he began to draw a symbol on Ryan's chest.

As he spoke a wind seemed to howl through the room, the other robed figures seemed to be hitting their stride as the chanting picked up pace and they swung from side to side.

Ryan's body began to shake violently on the bed, his arms flailing in the air.

The symbol on his chest began to give off an eerie glow. Lightning flashed around the room making the hooded cult followers jump.

A terrific blast of energy shot from the bed and surrounded the chanting crowd.

Ryan's body began to change.

He shouted and squealed in agony as his skeleton and skin took on a new shape. Tusks sprouted from his chin and something poked through the skin on his back.

The crowd fell to their knees in worship and the High Priest's face lit with delight at the impending arrival of his master.

An unearthly sound filled the air; it was the howling of hellhounds. The sound of bones cracking could be heard as Ryan's frame took on its new appearance.

A swirling vortex of red appeared in the corner of the room and the High Priest could see an army of demons in battle dress ready to transcend the barrier and attack.

Many of the hooded followers had worked themselves up into such frenzy that they were now lying exhausted on the floor. One follower seemed to be having a change of heart though as he stood; pulling a knife from his robe, he lunged for the High Priest and stabbed the man through his heart. The others pounced on him and over powered the assailant.

The damage was done however. The High Priest was sprawled across the bottom of the bed quite clearly dead.

The Cult of Corson members were angry with the man who had halted their ceremony and they tore his robes from him to show the body underneath.

The figure was naked, save for underwear, but he had a tattoo of the cross of Christ emblazoned across his chest. He was happy to die safe in the knowledge that he stopped Corson from entering the world.

The vortex began to disappear and the winds and howls dropped as the connection to Hell was severed.

All that was left was the body on the bed; it was no longer Ryan Winters or Corson.

When Deadwood and his crew showed up they had a nasty mess to clean up.

As they entered the room the smell of fresh blood nearly made them vomit. The creature had gone berserk and slaughtered everyone in the room; leaving limbs and heads severed from their previous owners.

The demon sat in the corner, eyes flashing with anger it roared at the men before him.

“Shut yer yap!” Deadwood shouted back and whacked the thing with a device that shocked the creature into sleep.

The Doctors concurred that because the ceremony had not been completed Corson had not fully passed through to our dimension. There seemed to be a fight for control of the body between what was left of Ryan and the part of Corson that had made it through.

Although this was not what The Organisation had originally planned it did still work to their advantage.

“Make the call to Storm.” The man in the suit said.

“But boss, I can….”

“I need you here with me Deadwood, make the call.” The man demanded.

“Yes sir.” replied Deadwood.

Chapter 4

Grimoire hung in the night sky searching for the fleeing Deadwood.

Several blocks down the black-clad figure moved with purpose, jumping from rooftop to rooftop. With a beat of his mighty wings the creature thrust forward and was soon circling the man from above.

"Forget it!" Deadwood shouted. "The sample is ours. There's no going back for you my friend."

"Friend? That's one thing you and I will never be." retorted Grimoire.

"I'm crushed." Deadwood mocked and continued his run across the roof.

Grimoire alighted and landed the on corner of the roof. He took several quick strides and was soon only a few steps away from Deadwood.

Deadwood pulled a gun, this one was much bigger than the pistol he had held to Marks' head.

"Not another move."

The creature froze where he was. Grimoire knew he had a thick hide but he wasn't sure it could stop bullets or whatever this contraption fired.

"What are you trying to achieve Grim?" Deadwood asked.

"Redemption." Grimoire replied sincerely.

This caused the man to bellow with laughter. The sound reverberated through the night.

"That's a good one. I really don't think there's a place for you in Heaven."

"I have done terrible things but it was not by my hand." Grimoire replied.

The man snorted. "Yeah well when I first entered that room and saw all those body parts they were ripped apart by your hands." Deadwood shot back.

"Just hand over the sample and you can live to fight another day."

This infuriated Deadwood and the man shot forward as if to throw a punch at the creature before him.

Grimoire darted to his left and a fist narrowly missed connecting with his head but caught him slightly in the eye causing a sharp pain in the socket.

Grimoire snarled and a guttural roar grew in his throat. Before he could act Deadwood was on the ground and shoving both feet heavily into the demon's stomach. Grimoire doubled in agony as he found himself fighting for breath. Deadwood made use of the situation by grabbing the horns on the beasts head and pulling him off his feet. Despite his lean build the man was surprisingly strong and Grimoire felt himself sailing through the air with some speed.

Deadwood reached for the case that he dropped and pulled himself up into a fighting stance all in one move.

"You think you're a hero? Heroes don't eat people Ryan."

“Ryan Winters is dead.” Grimoire shot back. “You and your Organisation made sure of that.”

“We gave you the chance to extend your life.” Deadwood replied.

“It cost me my humanity.” Grimoire snapped and hurled himself at Deadwood.

The man soared over the edge of the building and clattered onto the fire escape below.

Deadwood winced as he tried to stand. The fall had broken a bone a bone in his leg he was sure.

He grimaced at the effort but he steadily began to descend the fire escape. He glanced upwards looking for the next attack from Grimoire.

The creature peered over the edge and the light caught the fury in his eyes.

Deadwood realised that he needed to put some distance between him and Grimoire before the demon lost control and it decided that the man was lunch.

Deadwood reached the end of the fire escape, he heard the wings of his aggressor fluttering in the light breeze and he dropped the last ten feet. He squealed with pain as his feet hit the ground but he was into a run within seconds.

Grimoire tried to keep to the shadows so as not to give away his position.

Deadwood fished around in a pocket in his suit. He pulled out a cell phone but as he looked down to punch in the number the device disappeared; snatched away by the creature pursuing him.

"Damn it!" Deadwood screamed. "Even if you take the serum there's no way your 'condition' can be reversed. You are what you are. Accept it."

"I don't have to accept anything." The winged monster dropped from the sky and grabbed the man roughly by his shoulders. It lifted him off his shoulders and hurled him into a wall. The impact caused the man to howl as the brick bit into his skin.

Grimoire noticed that the case was attached to his belt by a clip. The beast reached for it

but the man brought up his knee and caught Grimoire squarely in the chest. It seemed to catch the beast off guard and he staggered backwards.

Deadwood swung his pistol and it struck Grimoire on the side of his head, cutting the thick hide. Dark red blood trickled down his face.

"You should just work with us Grim. You can't lead a normal life anymore. Let us find you a place you belong."

"I have somewhere I belong. Here in this city. Keeping the people safe from the likes of you."

"You ate these people or did you forget that!" Deadwood sniggered.

"I can only do the decent thing and try and make amends." Grimoire replied.

"Well that's ok then. You probably ate someone's mother, sister, daughter, father, brother or son but they will sleep better at night knowing there is a freak like you looking out for them."

Deadwood glanced down the alley looking for a way out but Grimoire wasn't about to let him out of here that easily.

Overhead he saw lights in the distance and Deadwood grinned.

"That will be the cavalry." He said. Sure enough Grimoire made out the high-tech helicopter as it approached. The blades whispered silently so as not to draw attention to itself.

A searchlight hit the alley and settled on Deadwood. A ladder dropped from the side and two men trained their large taser weapons on Grimoire.

"This is your last chance to come with me." Deadwood said.

"I'll pass."

Deadwood grabbed the ladder as it came nearer and he heaved himself upwards.

For a second the men with the weapons were distracted and Grimoire vanished into the dark.

"Where did he go?" one asked.

"I dunno."

As the helicopter started to lift Deadwood could see another 'copter in the sky.

"Come on get out of here it's the cops."

"Freeze! Police!" barked a bullhorn from the police chopper.

The other helicopter was lifting up and away as a police searchlight settled on Deadwood.

From out of nowhere Grimoire appeared. The creature used his shoulder to ram Deadwood and the man was so taken aback that he let go of the ladder.

Grimoire watched as the man tumbled downwards. The beast flexed his wings and swooped to catch the man but his timing was off.

Deadwood crashed through the glass roof of a trendy bar. As the glass rained down on the patrons of the bar Grimoire dropped from the sky.

He landed with a *thump* as people ran screaming.

The bartender stood with mouth agape at the scene before him.

Deadwood lay in the middle of the floor. A large shard of glass stuck through his chest. The man held the glass upright and looked at his reflection.

Blood soaked the floor. Grimoire loomed over the dying man.

Deadwood began to giggle.

"It looks like you failed again hero. I'm going to be another ghost to add to the faces that haunt your dreams."

The monster grabbed the glass shard and yanked it from the man's chest.

"Arrggghhhhh!"

"No you don't pal. I'm not letting you off that easy." Grimoire replied.

The creature grabbed the satchel still clipped to Deadwood's belt. It clicked the locks and removed the syringe.

"What are you going to do?" Deadwood asked looking worried.

The monster grinned, his fangs jutting out of his mouth.

"Don't do what I think you're going to do." Deadwood pleaded.

“I can’t let your bosses get their hands on this. If Doctor Marks has any sense he will be long gone. He will destroy his research and disappear.

Deadwood shouted angrily. “They will kill me and you know it.”

“That’s the beauty of it. You would give your life for The Organisation. I wonder how your priorities will change when they come for you.”

The demon bent towards Deadwood and the man spat at Grimoire’s face.

The action caused him to bleed heavily from his wound and Deadwood’s eyes rolled up into his head as he gagged on the blood spilling into his lungs.

Grimoire looked at the needle in his hand; he could use it on himself and leave the man to die.

The creature knew it wouldn’t do that though. It already had the blood of many on its hands and wanted no more.

Grimoire jabbed the syringe into Deadwood’s neck and pressed down.

The man shook viciously on the floor as the serum began to run through his veins.

Grimoire stood and watched Deadwood as the blood began to quickly congeal on his chest.

Within moments the man was propping himself up with his elbows and staring at the winged figure standing to the side of him.

"You just signed your death warrant."

Grimoire laughed. It sounded like a stone being rubbed along sandpaper.

"I will hunt you down and clip your wings. How would you survive if you couldn't fly?" Deadwood snarled.

"I think you will have enough to worry about." Grimoire whispered. "That was the last sample. If The Organisation find that out then I think they will have no problem in cutting you apart to decipher its secrets."

Deadwood winced. He knew that was the truth.

Some of the patrons that had been hiding behind tables began to poke their noses out to see what was happening.

This was the last place that Grimoire needed to be. It stood and spread its wings blocking the light; just in case anyone tried to take a photograph on their cell phone.

"You will rue this day for the rest of your life Grimoire." Deadwood snapped pulling himself to his feet. He still felt a little shaky but that was to be expected, a moment earlier he had been at death's door.

Grimoire grabbed a bottle of beer that had been left on the bar and took a swig.

"You're right I probably will."

The creature exited the bar. He could hear the copters looking for Deadwood and it would only be a matter of moments before they zeroed in on where he had landed.

Grimoire decided to use his legs for once and he sprinted for cover. The powerful legs pumped like pistons and he covered some distance in no time at all.

The shadows proved his ally in times of need and this was certainly one of those times.

Chapter 5

Grimoire returned to the hotel but the place was crawling with cops and Marks was nowhere to be seen.

The beast flapped up into the air and headed for the cemetery. It was his home now; among the dead.

Grimoire swooped down over the church spire and into the grounds of the graveyard.

The monster found a spot back among the old graves and sat down heavily. It suddenly felt very weary. Within moments the creature was asleep for the first time in many months.

***

Jordan Storm threw down the photo on his desk. He looked over his shiny new office. The sleek silver design of the desks had

impressed him. The office was situated in the middle of a large skyscraper in Hazard City.

Storm had a lovely view of the harbour. He envied the people on the luxury yachts down there. Maybe if he worked solid for another few years he would have enough to get himself one.

The man in the photo stared back at him.

There was no way Storm was going to find this one alive. If his sources were right, and of course he knew they were, then some giant bat creature had been killing the city vagrants for food.

As luck would have it someone actually missed this bloke. A woman had come to him all teary -eyed and told him a tale of how her husband had disappeared after battling drug addiction.

Storm was a sucker for a weeping dame and so he had taken the case on a no -find no-fee policy.

The phone rang and Storm answered.

"Storm Investigations."

“It’s me.” The voice on the other end said.

Storm became suddenly business- like. He sat up in his chair.

“I’m listening.”

The man told Storm everything he needed to know and then asked if he was willing to take on the job.

“And what are the rates of pay?” Storm asked.

“The usual, except I will double it if you can manage to bring him in alive.” The voice replied.

“Consider it done.” Jordan answered.

He put the phone down and smiled.

Maybe that yacht will be mine much sooner than I thought.

Jordan stood up and put the photo away back in the file.

The lady would have to wait; this was his priority now, unless she could come up with some serious cash, which he very much doubted.

Grimoire was awoken by the sound of bird. The winged beast stretched and felt almost human. It was amazing what a good sleep could do for you.

The beast's attention became aware of a vehicle approaching in the distance. Grimoire slunk back behind the mausoleum he had been using as cover. The car pulled up to a stop and a man climbed out with a younger woman. The man was carrying a bunch of flowers. He had a long coat on and the collar was pulled up around the bottom of his face and a tweed fedora hat perched on his head.

The younger woman was probably the old guy's daughter Grimoire thought watching the couple pick their way slowly through the graveyard. They seemed to be looking at all the graves. The man would shake his head and they moved to the next.

What are they looking for? Grimoire thought.

He gasped as the couple stopped. They were standing at the grave of Ryan Winters. The man placed the flowers and took an envelope from his pocket. He secured the envelope with a stone to the plinth of the

grave. Standing the old man looked around and Grimoire spotted who it was.

Hugo Marks smiled and nodded but didn't make any attempt to draw the attention of the younger woman to what he had seen.

The couple made their way back to the car and left. Grimoire made his way over to the grave and snatched up the envelope.

The name on the front read *Grimoire* in neat handwriting.

Grimoire smiled and retreated to read the message.

***

My Friend

Thank you for helping me and for ensuring that the sample did not fall into the hands of The Organisation. I do not know what I would have done had they been allowed to take it and carry out diabolical research. I had created the sample in the hopes that man could cure disease.

I have decided to destroy my research and I am going to move away with my daughter and her family.

Please do not give up hope I may be able to help you at some point in the future.

Remember it is not that a person looks human that makes them so. It is their actions and beliefs.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Hugo Marks

Grimoire felt a tear roll down his cheek. He was crying? That was a human emotion; perhaps he had been wrong Ryan Winters wasn't totally dead.

He smiled and folded the letter back up and placed it back into the envelope.

Deadwood stood at the departure gate and checked the times.

His flight would be leaving in approximately thirty minutes. Then he would be living out his days in India. It wasn't his first choice but he decided that it was probably not somewhere that The Organisation would come looking for him.

He was wearing a smart business suit and black shades to cover his eye.

Deadwood sat down and unfolded his paper. There had been no mention of anything that had happened in the city a few nights earlier.

Who was going to believe a story about a giant winged demon anyway?

Deadwood decided he needed a drink so he stood up and headed over to the drinks kiosk. He ordered a cola and took a few sips.

He had given the area a quick recon and was satisfied that he was not being watched so he was starting to relax a little. After all he would be out of here shortly.

Deadwood decided to head to the bathroom before boarding. He made his way across the check-in lounge.

He pushed open the door. It seemed deserted apart from a janitor with a mop and cart at the other end of the room. He had his back turned to Deadwood and didn't even seem to know the man was there.

Deadwood made his way to a cubicle but just as he was about to close the door it slammed open and into his face. The black plastic shades cracked and fell away.

The janitor entered the cubicle and cracked Deadwood across the face. He fell down dazed but looking back up he recognised the face of Storm.

The man pulled straps from his pocket. He kicked Deadwood a couple of times and then pulled out a chloroform rag. He clamped it over Deadwood's mouth and held the man down as he kicked to free himself. Seconds later the bound and gagged body was secured in the cart and Jordan walked through the airport whistling.

Grimoire sat on the top of the old gothic building. He could hide among the gargoyles and he felt quite at home.

He looked up and felt the sun's rays on his face.

For the first time he felt that he had a life to look forward to.

Afterword:

Grimoire – A textbook of magic spells. It typically contains the secrets to producing amulets and talismans but also contains text to summon supernatural entities such as angels and demons. The end of the word rhymes with noir for those not in the know.

Grim originally appeared as Agent Icarus in Rabid issue 1. Before going on to his own stories in To Cut a Long Story Short and Fallen Angel. I decided to rename him Grimoire for this story and took elements from all his previous appearances.

For those of you that have read Southpaw Smith Round One you will have noticed that The Organisation is mentioned in this book. It will all come together eventually.

Scott Claringbold July 2010

Other books by this author:

Southpaw Smith: Round One. From Transmooky Press available to order from lulu.com

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