

I CALLED THE DEVIL.

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I CALLED THE DEVIL AND THE DEVIL DID COME. That was the name above the phone number on the bathroom stall, so I figured it was safe to call him the devil, or one of a sort.

He showed up at my house, a dark leather slick covering all of his figure. He didn't take it off. He didn't look amused, occupying most of the door-frame while I beckoned him in. He merely stood there and stared over my head, looking at the inside of my apartment. His hair was frazzled by the rain, slicked to the sides of his gaunt face.

I said to the devil, "Devil do you like drums? Do you like cigarettes, dominoes, rum?" So eager I was to know everything about him, if only he'd come inside and let me talk endlessly and ask my questions without pause.

He said only; "Sundown, Sundays, Christmas," before turning away and leaving. I went to call out for him again, though he had already melted into the shadows that gathered coyly at his feet whilst he had been walking down the stairs.

****Call #74****

I called the devil and he rose up from the ground this time, the shadows in my meager dwelling converging into a figure on the wooden floor. He stood up, glowing at me sternly. His hands brushed off the suit he wore today.

With an almighty huff the devil said, "Quit! I can't be bothered! You better handle your shit!"

He paused, standing in the middle of the room, where he regarded me and my dumbfounded face. A wry smirk impishly made an attempt at his lips, though the devil kept an impassive countenance. He slicked back his hair and rolled his jaw. He looked reptilian; sharp, acute angles composing his visage, though his voice had the heft of a train. "Keep about your wits man, keep about your wits!"

His eyes flared with an ominous flame, his warning coming sternly my way. I stumbled to sit on the couch, gawking at him in awe. The lingering scent of cinnamon dulls my mind, but my hands fumble and find a journal, shitty pen ditched for a loyal pencil.

"Know yourself and who you came in with..." His chest heaves with a sigh, thumbs slipping under his pinched lapels.

I have to settle my jumping fingers. They obey; they always do in times of stress, and I thank them every time for their servitude. They write his advice with bumpy, bubbly letters that bulge out of the neat, lined borders. I look up to regard him, the sound of his Oxfords on my wooden floor makes my heart kick up. My thoughts started to drift, become rash and antsy.

Those enrapturing hues bored into my being. He could see the panic in my person as it bled into my present essence. Perhaps to save me some embarrassment, he cleared his throat, approaching as he spoke.

"Can I sit down?" He's already pinched his pant legs up a few inches and has sat next to me, knowing my mind has already said "yes."

"I've been hustling all day," he says, head leaning back and body slowly succumbing to the captivating pull of my couch. He chuckles, a lazy hand waving around. Something glitters on his cuff.

"I can't even count how many souls I've made off the same deal you're on." My throat tightens. *Right, the deal.*

He turns his head, eyes opening and fixating upon me. I suddenly felt unsafe, like a meal left out in the open.

"Remember," he began, "the devil ain't a friend to no one."

There was a pause as he read my face, even though I turned it away from him and looked solely to my journal. "But fun, true," he filled in the silence with what he read from me,

the thought arising straight from my internal id.

He pushed himself up and dusted himself off, the mortal debris from my squishy couch hanging on his corporeal form. The devil swept back his hair again and after taking two paces away from me, submerged into the floor. The shadows that had all vanished upon his arrival suddenly came back in suppressing waves and I was alone in my apartment again.

****Call #258****

I called the devil and the devil didn't even show up at first.

He sounded groggy on the phone, voice muffled and being cut off by the sound of rustling fabric.

"Hey, why you been calling this late? It's like 2 a.m.," a thunderous yawn interrupts his flow of speech. I can hear him get up, the noise coming through the phone nestled against my right ear tells me he's no longer laying down. I've woken him up for the night.

"...and the bars all close at 10 in hell, that's a rule I made," he adds in a surly mutter. The voice is suddenly by my left ear. There's some warm figure next to me on the couch. His presence, though startling, is welcomed. I sigh and drop my phone off to the side, glad to look over and see that blasé face scanning my distraught features. The brevity of the action causes my heart to swelter; his eyes already surveying elsewhere as he begins to speak again.

"Anyway," he pulls the blankets from my lap and lays a decent portion on top himself. I know he's cold; he's only wearing a set of linen pajama pants, and it's frigid so far above ground. The cold-blooded fiend picks up our conversation, always bet-

ter than I at keeping a topic going.

“You say you’re too busy saving everybody else to save yourself, and you don’t want no help,” his eyebrows loft in my direction. He knows I see the irony of it; he’s reading it from my mind right this second. His eyes have that amber sheen to them.

“Oh well,” he says with a shrug. I stew in the silence, waiting for him to say more. He drinks in my unease and displeasure, my anxiety making the air around us sultry.

The grin of a Cheshire Cat takes hold of him as he offers more insight, leaning forward towards my small work-table. One long digit reaches out to lightly touch the corner of my journal, “That’s the story to tell.”

He bobs his head once at me in an indicative manner as my fingers pull open my notebook. The pencil is wedged in between the pages, worn down to a fraction of its former stature after so much use.

I get busy writing, so engrossed in the act that I don’t even know when he leaves. The chill that creeps over me pulls me, eventually, from my flow. I look up to spot the empty space next to me, teeth automatically preening my lower lip and mind churning with unwholesome thoughts. *Even the devil needs time alone sometimes.*

I write until I forget he’s gone, and I feel... better. I figure I might be able to fall asleep tonight without calling the devil again.

*(This piece’s dialogue comes from the song “It’s Called: Freefall” by Rainbow Kitten Surprise.) **