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Phantoms

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Kelvin Bueckert

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1

Devil in a Bottle

“Wake up! Time to die!” I reach over and shake my female passenger from her drunken slumber.

She looks panicked as she awakens. She seems to be trying to convince herself that I am only an alcoholic vision.

Oh well, I can still compliment myself on the fact that I am quite a clever driver. Maybe it is fate rewarding my long imprisonment.

I can even drive with one hand on the wheel. I have to. I need to be prepared to subdue my unwilling passenger if necessary.

“What are you doing?” Brenda screams as the sight of my destination becomes clear even in her hazy state of mind.

I twist the wheel of the station wagon suddenly and the car veers crazily over the road. I laugh, feeling the madness in my voice and loving it.

The highway is all downhill from here. Every inch of it is lined with evergreen trees, and at the bottom, our destination. The hairpin curve is guarded by a weak and soon to be proven ineffective guardrail.

Brenda’s face pales as I push down on the gas pedal.

The added fuel increases our rate of descent until the speedometer is hovering as far to the right as it can go.

“Stop it! Stop! You’re mad! You’ll kill us both!” She screams again in her high-pitched, typically female soprano. It is a pathetic little voice to enjoy the rush of speed too.

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“Mad am I?” I jeer. “Look at me misses, take a good look and tell me who’s mad.”

She attacks with a drunken lunge. I parry the blow easily.

Her station wagon smells like mothballs. I hate that. It was probably dust stirred up by the speed, but I don’t care. I know what I hate.

“Around the corner and across the bend lies the journey’s end.” I cackle as Brenda attempts to focus her glassy eyes on my shadowy figure.

She doesn’t say much, she is speechless actually. But then, what can be said in her situation? Very little. Not that it matters, soon she’ll be silenced forever and I will be free...

Brenda, the butterfly collector, the almost perfect environmentalist, will soon become one with the nature she loves so much.

The curve looms large through the windshield. An old cracked, windshield I notice as I crank the wheel toward her doom. The glass is just as ugly as the rest of this wretched wagon. The world will be a better place without it.

We are airborne, hurtling over the edge, off the mountainside highway. The sight below us is a beautiful postcard forest scene. It looks a lot like the forest where I had been captured once upon a time.

You might say that I had become a genie in a bottle. The main difference between a genie and me is that I only grant my own wishes.

I drift upward and out of the open car window.

The car, like her scream, seems to hover in the air for a split second, and then it plummets rapidly downward toward the waiting trees.

I can feel myself being yanked down before the car finally hits the ground.

The vehicle explodes in a brilliant orange fireball that contrasts nicely with the early morning mist that hovers over the snow-covered forest.

As Brenda dies, I bounce upward like a suddenly released balloon. I am finally and completely free, my work is complete.

Brenda was an unfortunate fool to drink the alcohol that I was preserved in. But drunkenness does that to people. They seem to crave alcohol and anything else in a bottle.

I had plenty of time to watch human behavior after all.

I know their ways.

DEVIL IN A BOTTLE

My essence had been preserved in the liquid. A spirit-like cloud to fog minds that needed relief from reality. I didn't harm my hosts as long as I remained sitting on the shelf with my friends.

Drink by drink my essence would become part of the unwary alcoholic. Even though we remain two separate beings, we are cursed to remain at each other's side until death.

Tonight the annual drunken Christmas party had made Brenda a bit too daring and a bit too thirsty. How unfortunate that she opened my bottle and let me escape into her.

She almost tripped me too, that sly little minx. Luckily for me, my spirit had not yet totally possessed her. I was still able to escape her grip in the end.

I must say, I enjoyed myself though. I needed that freedom. I needed to drive. Yet as I watch Brenda's flaming car I am consumed with one thought.

I need another bottle. Even the pain of captivity was worth it. I need the rush of release followed by the thrill of the road. The experience makes even a brief period of captivity seem worthwhile.

It is all part of the game of spirits.

I shift my shapes and colors to make myself look beautiful, to make you want me. I can be whatever you want me to be. Why? Because I want you to chase me, and if you're lucky, you will catch me.

There is no need to be afraid. I am only a harmless butterfly. What could I do to you?

Finish Your Plate

Much thought has gone
so little has come
regarding the hunger
of our grinning glutton
before the table simply
crowded with pork
pieces set to raging
wriggling worms
tickling the belly
while writhing within
growing fat with consumption
yes much thought has gone
from the empty head
smirking upon the skeleton

Mind Games

The haunted

imagination is a prisoner
tempting the beast alone
tantalized by her visual poems
consumed as the barrier grows blurry
and the ghost rises through the monitor
oh, these spectral pleasures groan
silhouetted among synaptic gravestones
a ball bounces through the darkness
the naked skull of the viewer
thrown, finding home
littered among scattered bones

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Wraith

Sometimes

after midnight

an innocent child

imagined fantasy

somewhere

after growing

jaded

releasing

every lust hidden

in this adult prison

her skin baited

my brain unfettered to roam

as a black shadowed ghost

I am unseen here

wicked in the world I called my home

Love in a Cold Place

You can't love in a cold place
when all there is in one existing
is latent evil
festering like scabs of an open picked wound
a paper sword
a pistol ball in the gut
weakened mortal skin
fragile human bones
across to the bed
a stake to the heart
fluffing ashes in the coffin
dusting winds
wild
immortal is just a fast passing thought
was where once is
stuffy and airless this room
shivering with lack of presence
brooding stone carvings
flickering candles and white drawn curtains
loving the black caped crusader
only in the warm coming darkness

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waiting for it
feeling trepidation of light
after it passes
arise
exist
tempting
lips
curling fingernails
wrapping hands
snapping spine
oh monster
the doors you can't resist
when light is frozen to the handles
and snow fills the cracks and exit

6

Communication Downfall

Dancing on the outside
on the edge of visible horizon
she waits
encased in flaming atmosphere
working machinations of science
where his presence envelopes the helium
a weight as heavy as suffocation
two articles of machina
empty as clockwork
but driven in instruction
revolving in shooting arcs
one inside this dying world orbit
one within the gaseous orb
speed like intertwining pendulum
ricochet from one side
to the crystal bell of warning
bleeping whose beats per measure are increasing
like an impending supernova
malfunction
divorce harms even the marriage of machines
in action versus inaction

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the communication downfall
like the antenna that ripped away
resulting in contact broken
crackling the mutual sequence code
wobbling the flow, warping the paths
engines revolt against the dissolution
so far too late
lost all guided motivation
he and her spiral in opposite direction
down into the consuming light
becoming one in rapid combustion
quickly divided into fractions
corrupted by the splitting of an atom
a whirlwind from within
or from without, as was the object of their study
for them the relationship faded
just before the glowing red planet imploded
two lost satellites via drunken communication
never really finding meaning in their exploration

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The Twin Nature

Once

worth diamonds
now only
worth the time
it takes to escape from
oh the lie
that lies inside
an antique frame
that moonlit mirror
watching prideful eyes
waver
between bloody hunger
vanity
and whispered confession
soon the night will walk
in deadly cadence
wearing a designer suit
and matching cufflinks
charming
at the Halloween party
waiting like a gentleman

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