

The Black Magician

By K. E. Ward

When Sam was a teenager, he was gifted his first deck of Tarot cards. He thought they were strange-looking. They were black on the back and on the edges. The back side of the cards were all printed with a triquetra—a symbol he had recognized from his Christian upbringing to symbolize the Trinity of God.

But on the front side of the cards, he saw the Fool, the Magician, The High Priestess, The Empress, the Emperor, and the Hierophant, and then more. There were seventy-eight cards in all, starting with the Major Arcana of twenty-two cards and moving forward to the Minor Arcana of fifty-six cards. He looked through them all, admiring their pictures and their card names. He began to realize that the pictures were scenarios, and he guessed that they all meant something.

A classmate, a guy, had given them to him. They used to joke around and play Magic: The Gathering with each other. But he never knew that this guy liked Tarot cards, too.

Well, he found out that day. But he took them home and placed them on his bureau. He looked at the full deck for a long time. They were larger than playing cards, the stack thicker. He stared at them, and then he walked over and picked them up again.

They felt smooth in his hands. He liked them. Without looking at the manual, he started to shuffle them. And shuffle them and shuffle them.

Finally, he took a card out and examined it. It was the Three of Cups. Fascinated, he looked into the manual and discovered what it meant. It meant joy, celebration, and friendship.

He liked it. But he did not touch the cards for years.

When he was eighteen years old, he picked up the stack of Tarot cards again. And what he noticed was that it had collected some dust, even though the cards inside were cleaner than the top one. He brushed off the dust with his finger, and opened the deck again to cut it.

But when he began to shuffle them, he heard a knock on the door. "Sam?" someone asked.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"It's your friend, Christopher."

"I can't talk right now. Can we do this another time?"

He said okay and went away. But then there was a second interruption. His smartphone rang. "Hello?" he answered.

"Sam, this is Mary, I just want to tell you that the chess club is not meeting today."

"Thanks, Mary. I'll be sure not to show up."

So then a third interruption happened. And it was his mother. His mother came into his room and said, "Sam, I can't stand this anymore, but you've been in your room far too much today. Christopher just told me you didn't want to see him. Why can't you spend some time with a friend, for once? I am concerned that you are withdrawing from your social life."

"Mother, that's not true. I spend time with my friends all the time. It's just that I'm tired today. Will you please let me rest and talk to you later?"

"I can't take this anymore, but I'll let you sleep as long as you promise to call Christopher when you wake up."

"I promise, I promise," he said. And so she left.

And then a fourth interruption happened, but this time it was the Tarot cards.

They now had a voice which called out to him. "Sam, we need you. Please pick up the Tarot cards and play around with them. Please use them to help us. I'll show you how to do it if only you'll pick them up."

So he picked them up, but this time he didn't shuffle them. He picked one card out of the deck and it was the Ace of Cups. "What does it mean?" he asked.

"You need to read between the lines of the card meanings. The card meaning is pure love, the beginning of love, and the beginning of a powerful love."

"How do I read between the lines?"

"How is love beginning?"

"I don't know." And the reading was over. He put the card back, put the deck back on the dresser, and went about his day.

The next morning he met with Christopher and his friend, Mary. The three of them went to Mary's house and they talked about math and chess.

Sam couldn't stop thinking about the Tarot cards. What did they all mean? How could the voice come out of the cards? Was this magic, or was it some kind of psychotic break?

So he went to this bookstore he knew about downtown. It was called, "The Crescent Moon." He had never been there before, but rumor had it that it was an Occult store. He went inside, and he saw lots and lots of books, along with various strange gifts.

"Hello, is there anything in particular you are looking for today?" said the woman behind the cash register. She was odd-looking. She wore dangly earrings, a multicolored sweater, and a scarf around her hair. She looked like a gypsy. He noticed, however, a quartz crystal hanging around her neck.

"No," he said. "I think I'd just like to look."

So he browsed through the books and chose a few of them: a book about Tarot meanings, one about colors of magic, and an astrology anthology.

He took them home and studied them. He thought to himself that it was going to take him a long time to learn all the meanings to the cards, which got to be a long list. He was fascinated by the different types of magic, from red to green and white and black. He read about candle magic and anointing the candles. He looked through the astrology book, but wasn't as impressed with it.

Over the course of the next couple of years, he learned about how to use the Tarot cards, magic spells, runes, numerology, astrology, psychic abilities, people who claimed to be able to speak to people beyond the grave and give past life and angel readings, readings about the future, palmistry,

meditation, out-of-body experiences, astral projection, and magical powers.

But what struck him was that all of these books were beginner how-to books. He wanted something more advanced. And he found them in the Golden Dawn books.

Now, he was a little frightened of some of their topics, specifically in disrespect of Christianity. But he tried to give them the benefit of the doubt. He now owned Aleister Crowley's Thoth deck, and he used them quite frequently.

He wondered what magic powers could be used for. He looked up the definition of magic: "1 a: the use of means (such as charms or spells) believed to have supernatural power over natural forces. b: magic rites or incantations. 2 a: an extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural source. b: something that seems to cast a spell." He also found one definition as: "Using physical objects to manipulate the elements."

He began to follow the instructions in one book for a magical spell. Reading the pages of the book, he lifted up a small dagger he had purchased from The Crescent Moon, and chanted, "Magic, magic, come to me. Show me what is meant to be.

Show me pictures I can see. Magic, magic, come to me. So mote it be."

And then a puff of gray smoke appeared in the air, from out of nowhere. Inside of the puff of smoke he could begin to see objects. The first object was a sparkling crystal ball. The second object was a long, wooden wand. The third object was a pentacle. And the fourth object was a brass cup. He asked, "What does it mean?"

And a low, female voice answered him. "It is meant to be. These are magical tools you must buy. I will show you how to use them. They will hold power for you beyond your childhood dreams."

Sam put magic aside for a few months. He forgot about it. He went about his day, found a job working at a popular bookstore, called, My Heart Books, also downtown, and was saving up for an apartment of his own. Despite his parents' disappointment, he had decided not to go off to college. He did not think he could make it through school. After all, he hadn't been the best high school student. He thought it would be a waste of money and effort, just to fail.

Almost a year passed. He studied more and more of the Golden Dawn books, and picked up various books about Occult religions, philosophy, theology, and psychology. He decided that his theory on religion and magic was that belief in a God was a good thing, but that there was nothing wrong with changing the course of events with the use of magic. How else would anyone receive the answer to prayer, unless we cooperate with a God to achieve it? He found like-minded friends from the Occult bookstore. They would get together for coffee and discuss their readings. They would talk about spells they were casting and how it had changed their lives for the better. Sam was well aware of the connotations of black magic, which were that it was evil and in defiance of a God, but Sam saw irony in this kind of magic. He chose this kind of magic as his own. He told his new friends what he had decided.

"I chose to be a black magician," he said.

"Oh, so you've chosen the dark arts."

"Yes, but it's not what you think."

"Really? I would take caution with that. Not everyone would see the irony in it."

"I know what I am doing," he said. "I haven't spent years of my life studying without learning a thing or two about magic."

And so they approved. They left the coffee meeting and wished him well.

A few more months went by. Sam was now known as, "The Black Magician," to his like-minded friends. It had been three years since he had begun to study black magic. He carried a small deck of Tarot cards with him everywhere he went. He remembered to practice his power every day during times when he was alone. He checked back with his friends periodically and they told him they thought he was doing alright. He kept a journal of his magic and magical spells.

One day on his job at the bookstore, a beautiful young woman came into the store. The bell on the top of the door tinkled as she entered. She had long, jet-black hair, and brown eyes tinged with streaks of green. "Hello. Welcome to My Heart Books. Is there anything I can help you with?"

And the young woman came up to the counter and said, "I'm looking for a good love story."

"Well," he said. "Let me just recommend a few titles. If you're interested in famous plays, we have William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. If you are looking for a novel, an excellent classic is, *Jane Eyre*. If you are looking for popular romance, we also have a romance section of our bookstore."

"No," she said. "I already know about *Romeo and Juliet* and *Jane Eyre*. I do not read popular romance novels. Do you have any other classics besides *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*?"

"We also have *Villette*, also by Charlotte Brontë. It is one of her lesser-known works."

"It sounds interesting. Let me look at the back." So he brought her to the bookshelf, pulled it out, and gave it to her.

"I'll give you a moment to decide," he said.

He thought to himself that she was a very attractive woman. She was not tall, nor was she petite. She had a thin, yet curvaceous figure. He liked her large eyes and classic Roman nose. He liked the purse of her lips, which were covered with pink lipstick.

A few more people came through the door. All three of them declined help and wanted just to look. After several minutes, the young woman came back. "I'll buy it," she said.

He was nervous, but he said it anyway, "What is your name?"

She looked up at him and said, "Jasper."

Jasper? He thought. *Was that a magical name?* So he tested her. He said, "Is that your real name?" and winked at her.

She laughed and batted her eyelashes. "Of course," she said. "My parents named me that after the color of my eyes."

And Sam immediately fell in love with her. "Can I give you my number?" he asked. "I'd love to get together with you sometime."

She visibly blushed and smiled, but after a second, she looked up at him again and said, "Sure."

They took out their smartphones and exchanged names and numbers.

"Sam," she said. "I'll be sure to give you a call." And that was it. She left.

That night he put thoughts of Jasper away for the time being and thought about the Tarot cards and magic again. He wondered if he was becoming mentally ill.

But magic was a popular hobby. Many people believed in its power. There was nothing mentally ill about a belief in supernatural powers. And his life was going well. He had met a sweet girl today.

He heard his cell phone ring. His ringtone was the music of a harp. It was Jasper. He raced to pick it up. "Hello?" he asked.

"Sam?" she said.

"Jasper, I'm so glad you called."

"Sam, I meant to tell you before that I like you. I'd like to get to know you more. Shall we plan to meet sometime soon? I'd really like something more than a friendship."

Sam was pleased. "Of course, Jasper. Perhaps we can meet at a little café outside of my apartment building. They serve great club sandwiches and flavored iced tea."

"Tomorrow? Maybe around noon?"

"Yes, I'm free for lunch."

"Then it's settled." And they hung up.

The next day, while he was waiting for Jasper, his cell phone rang again. It was a blocked number. "Hello?" he answered.

There was nothing but static on the other end. He thought he heard a low, male voice speaking, but it could have just been his imagination. So, after a few moments, he hung up. It was an unnerving call. Still annoyed, he took a few deep breaths, and then looked at his watch.

It was almost twelve-thirty. She had not shown up. He picked up his phone again and tapped the call button. It rang and rang. When she didn't answer, he cut the connection. He figured she stood him up because she didn't truly like him.

He went back home and moped, feeling sorry for himself. But then he busied himself with magic. He shuffled a few of his Tarot decks and gave himself Celtic Cross readings. Each time, the readings came out negative. "Nine of Swords." "Ten of Swords." "Five of Cups." And "The Tower." These were the outcome cards of the Celtic Cross spreads.

He took his black, wooden bowl and poured water into it. He used it as a scrying bowl. He looked into it and saw nothing but dark smoke and doom.

That night, he tried to call Jasper again, but there was no answer. Was this a subtle brush-off? How was he supposed to

know? Was it that she simply chose not to answer because she never wanted to see him again? He set out his scrying bowl, crystal ball, scrying mirror, dagger, pentacle, wand, brass cup, and a Tarot deck.

He centered himself and started the ceremony. He drew a protection circle around him. He raised his dagger and said, "As above, so below." Then he called up the, "four corners," using the angel names of Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Uriel. Then, drawing a pentacle, he casted a spell to find out what happened to Jasper.

A deep, male voice called, "Jasper is not safe. You must go and find her. She is in a dark, enclosed place. Rescue her, Sam. Her life depends on it."

So then he reversed the pentacle, thanked the angels, and reversed the protection circle. He laid down his dagger and sat down on his bed.

Next, he took his scrying bowl and filled it with water. He touched the water with his finger. "Where is she?" he asked.

He saw a dim outline of a female figure, which he realized was her. She appeared to be in darkness, as the male voice had told her during his spell casting. He saw her from the back. She looked frightened. But he could not make out where she was. He

vaguely sensed that she sensed he was watching her, so he put the bowl aside.

But then he used his scrying mirror, and immediately he saw her face from the front. "Sam!" she called out to him, before he could say anything to her. "Please help me. I don't know where I am. Two men kidnapped me. They took my belongings, my phone, my keys, and my wallet, and then they left me here. But I was unconscious when they took me here. I don't know where I am," she repeated.

"Jasper," he said. I can find you. Just wait for me."

Then he took another mirror and placed it in the back of the scrying mirror. It was as though he were in a dressing room, with endless reflections of the mirrors and himself surrounding him. He then spoke to Jasper again, and it was like she was standing in the same room. "Can you see me?" he asked.

"I can see you perfectly well," she said.

"I can see you, too," Sam said. "But where are we?"

"It is a room. There are four walls, a ceiling, a floor, and one door, but it is locked. There is no furniture and there are no windows. I don't know how to get out. To rest I have to sit on the floor. And I'm so hungry, and so thirsty."

"Be brave," Sam said. "I see the room you are in, and you are right: there is not much here. Let me see what I can do for you. I will find you, I promise."

So then he took away the mirrors and appeared to be in his apartment again.

It was then that he notified the police she was missing.

But days went by, and there was no word from her. The police did not once get in touch with him. He saw her face everywhere, but she was not there. He was not scrying; it was all in his imagination, haunting him. It was like she was trying to talk to him but couldn't.

So, three nights later, he got out his black scrying mirror again. This time, he looked into it to see if she was in the same place. But she was not. She was in a darker place now. No longer was she in a room but somewhere without light. She was huddled on the ground, appearing to keep herself warm. She also looked like she was tired and crying.

He tried to talk to her. "Jasper, Jasper," he said. But she could not answer him this time.

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