

Dark Box

A ring at the doorbell woke me up from my sleep, annoyance already coming over my exhausted brain.

“Go away,” I groaned into my pillow as I turned over, ignoring the jerk interrupting my sleep.

The bell rang again; the button held down much longer this time. Determined to get me out of my bed. After throwing a tantrum in my bed, I get up and grab my robe as I head downstairs to answer the door. I looked out the peephole. No one was there.

“Damn kids,” I mutter to myself while heading upstairs.

I only made it halfway when there was a slow, hard knock at the door stopping me in my tracks. I sped back toward the door, switched the light on and open the door with a tired fury. Again, there wasn't anyone there. Instead, there was a box, small and fragile looking. I couldn't take my eyes off it. It captivated me. I rushed and grabbed the box, locking the door behind me. I rushed to the living room, sitting down on the couch with the box in my hands.

It was *beautiful*: gold with intricate designs carved around it, with foreign lettering along the sides. I traced my fingers along the sides, looking for a way to open it when a hand shot out from next to me, keeping my hand still and denying me.

“Before you do that,” a voice began, “be certain this is something your heart truly desires.”

I followed the arm with my eyes to find a figure sitting beside me with no face. It had a body and a head, but for the front, it was blank.

The voice continued, “you summoned me here with your silent cries of despair. I am here to give you what you truly desire.”

“I-I do not understand what you’re talking about,” I stammered.

“I believe you do.”

Images flowed into my head. Crying myself to sleep at night. Being ignored by everyone. Husband absent at night while I stay awake waiting. Childhood memories of hurt. Dragging the kn-

My voice trembled, “Stop it!”

But the voice continued, “Yes. I’ve watched you for years writhing in your agony; waiting for sweet release. Here I am giving it to you. There is a price, however.”

I scoffed, “Obviously. Not that I am considering this bullshit, but let’s say that this will be as easy as it sounds. What’s the price?”

The figure grew silent. A dense, foreboding silence. The figure raised his hands in the air, gesturing the surrounding room.

“Everything. This house. Your Family and friends. Everything that you have an attachment to; I want it all to do with as I please. Will I harm them? Help? Or maybe just leave them be, always wondering where you are?”

“You’re kidding me.”

“I am not,” he said flatly. The figure places his hand on top of my grip on the box. Soft tendrils of smoke run up my arm and into my eyes.

A gasp escapes my lips as a feeling of euphoria washed over me. I haven’t felt this happy, this *alive* in years! A hysterical, and a slightly off-putting laugh escapes my lips, but the feeling fades away just as quickly when the creature removes his hand.

He slowly rises from his seat to stand in front of me, hand held out gesturing to the box, "you can have that and much more for as long as you live. A feeling of wholeness that everyone else around you spend their miniscule lifespans chasing and never seeing come to fruition. I give that to you now."

Twirling the box in my fingers, I whisper, “What kind of person would that make me?”

A tear falls down my cheek, punctuating my question.

Something sounding like a laugh escapes the form as he responds, “human. Simply human.”

I hold my hand out, prompting this thing to give me some space as I stand up. Tears blur my vision as I take in this creature’s words. Desperation overflowed from me like lava: slow and thick. I nod. Although the guilt I felt in that moment was unbearable, *it’d be worth it*. My shaking hand ran its fingers along the sides of the box. *Click*.

“Mom?” I heard a familiar voice say. I see my child standing in the hallway; scared.

I vanish.