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Legacy The Forgotten Story

“To dominate is power. Power fueled by more power will ultimately burn out and lead to downfall.”

— Élie Fey

The Connection

Oxford, England
Autumn, 1792

Jasper Landcross's illness had gotten worse. The three-year-old had been coughing up blood for weeks. His parents prayed to God for a cure. Their prayers were answered, but not by the god they'd beseeched.

When the sick little boy was alone inside the family's tent, Temenitis, the Pegaeae nymph, visited him. She stroked his sweat-drenched hair and sang sweet lullabies to him. The boy wouldn't die from the clot in his lungs, for his thread insisted he live a long life. Even so, his suffering would hound him for the rest of his days.

Very rarely did Temenitis visit the family she'd started when she gave birth to her son. She'd had her demon slave throw him to the mortals 140 years ago. But curiosity and boredom prompted her to check in on the family from time to time.

Honestly, she thought they could have done better for themselves than to have become mere Gypsies, considering where they had come from. They had been wanderers ever since her son crossed into England. Sometimes, when visiting this nomadic troupe, Temenitis would observe those other than her descendants, such as the young enchantress named Élie Fey, who had recently found herself with child by a forest elf after the Gypsies traveled through the Netherlands. She was due to give birth in the spring.

Keeping track of these earthbound mortals gave the 600-year-old nymph something to do other than dance and sing the same old songs. Nymphs were free spirits, but their world and lifestyle were very small. Having a Trickster offering sex in exchange for his Cambion demon had been the most thrilling moment in her entire existence. She didn't even have any need for the demon, but the way the Trickster had lusted for her, turning down other bids for the demon in order to offer the creature to her, was exciting. Having Thooranu as a servant had proved entertaining enough, especially as he pandered to her every whim, trying to win her favor so she'd set him free.

Jasper coughed and wheezed, clutching his violin. Temenitis decided to call for help.

"Jack Pack," she whispered with eyes closed. "Please, come to me."

Not a moment later, a voice uttered her name from behind. "Temenitis."

She smiled, but dropped it when she rose and peered over her shoulder. "Hello, Jack Pack."

"I go by Njáll these days. After trading Thooranu off, it was best to change the name that he knows me by."

Temenitis snorted. "Afraid Thooranu might find freedom and seek revenge?"

"A demon, even a half-demon such as Thooranu, is deadly and not to be trifled with. Is he clever enough to take on a Trickster god like me? Not likely. No, I just don't want to risk him ending up in the hands of any of my enemies, that they might use him against me."

"Perhaps you should have put more thought into such possibilities before capturing a demon."

"You got rid of him fairly quickly."

She shrugged. "I became bored with him. I bore easily."

He wrapped his arms around her from behind and cupped her breasts. “Do you? I know something sssstttstimulating we can do.”

The Trickster was crafty, indeed. He emitted her favorite scent, roman chamomile, while his hands were busy caressing over all the sensual places of her body. Before her passion got the better of her, she remembered her reason for calling him.

“Stop it,” she demanded, breaking away and turning to him. “There is a child present.”

His beautiful and slightly feminine face was as she remembered it. He wore a wide-collared, red velvet coat adorned with lovely patterns, a leather vest, a kilt, and tall black boots. He had no hat, and his dark hair was pulled neatly back.

Njáll studied sleeping Jasper, who shivered from his sickness. The child could neither see nor hear them at the moment, for they did not wish for him to notice them.

“Him?” He pointed to Jasper. “Not that it matters, but we can go somewhere else more private, if you so desire.”

“This child is of our bloodline and is in need of help.”

Again, he looked at the boy, only much longer this time.

“So?” he replied at length. “People fall ill all the time.”

“I want him well. I want him cured. You are able to do this.”

He clasped his hands behind him. “Are we negotiating?”

She returned her focus to the child. It wasn't that she really cared about him, but her instincts tugged at her, telling her something very special would come from him. To find out what, she needed first to play her cards right with the Trickster.

“I know what you desire, Njáll, and you know I do not give myself over easily. I simply ask for the sake of our family. Please.”

He considered her a moment.

“I'm going to let you in on a little secret, Temenitis. When I first saw you, I believed my eyes would never again fall upon the sight of anyone more beautiful. And they haven't.”

“Stop trying to charm me, Trickster,” she warned. “It will not work.”

“I'm not,” he declared sincerely. “I speak the truth.”

Their surroundings vanished. The only thing that existed was the god and the nymph.

“I remember how you looked, sitting on the rock by the water.”

He pinched the edges of the gown resting on her shoulders and pulled them slowly until the clothing slid free and down her body.

His eyes danced greedily over her naked form. “You were just like this, every firm muscle, every hair visible.”

Njáll skimmed a hand down her arm to her hip.

“Every inch of you,” he went on huskily, “exposed for me to see. I have never forgotten it. Temenitis, you are not the same as your sisters. You have a tasteful mind that *lusts* for more.”

She strained to not lose herself to him. His touch only made it more difficult. She found herself yearning to kiss him.

“I shall do this,” he abruptly declared, releasing her.

She staggered a bit before realizing she was again clothed and both of them were in the tent. It took her a few moments to return her focus to the source of this entire meeting.

“You will?” she said.

He went to the boy and knelt by the blankets where he lay sleeping.

“Yes.” He placed a hand on Jasper’s chest just above where the clot sat inside his lungs. Njáll turned to her with a mischievous grin. “Perhaps you might call on me again someday.”

Temenitis did her best to hold down the corners of her lips before they formed a smile.

“Done,” he announced, standing. “He is cured.”

“And he’ll live normally?”

“As normally as someone who has a god and a nymph as their ancestors can, I suppose.” He gently grasped her chin. “Call on me anytime you wish. Farewell.”

He vanished and she was alone. She looked at Jasper, who now slept in complete harmony within his own body.

* * *

In the spring, Temenitis found the troupe in the Netherlands. They had found shelter in an abandoned house that appeared to sit on the water. The young enchantress, Élie Fey, had gone into labor. Temenitis was there, watching. She was curious about what a half-elf child would look like. Would it have pointy ears?

After many painful hours, the girl child arrived.

“Nona,” the mother cooed as she held her daughter.

Seeing the tender moment almost made Temenitis yearn to become a mother again. This time around, though, she would raise the child instead of getting rid of it. Then again, she might grow bored with it and if that happened, things would go very badly for the child. She needed a purpose, though. Being a nymph was utterly dull. Why could she not be born into something with more power, like the new mother?

“Can I see her?” Jasper Landcross asked.

The mother and the midwife looked at him.

“*Oui, bien sûr, jeune homme,*” Élie granted. “Come say hello.”

The boy walked over, carrying his violin. He stood beside Élie so he could see the babe clearly. A charge rose in the room. The elevation of energy made gooseflesh spread over Temenitis’s skin. Her interests piqued and she watched intently as Jasper reached out and gently touched Nona on the head. The babe made a tiny noise. The children were drawn to one another, Temenitis sensed. There was some sort of connection between them. What could draw two children, brand new to the world, together?

“Can I play her a song, Élie?” the sweet boy asked.

The mother nodded. “I think she would enjoy that.”

Jasper set his violin under his chin. He rested the bow on the strings and played. For a three-year-old, he played the stringed instrument very well. An inherited trait he’d received from Temenitis’s own son, no doubt.

What was this strange connection?

The Teller of Forgotten Tales suddenly came to the forefront of her mind. The ancient one who roamed the known universe, telling stories—sometimes dangerous ones. He told them from underneath his magical tarpaulin, which kept anyone outside of it from hearing such tales, and then stole the memories of the stories from his audience once they’d left from under it. The last time she’d seen him, he’d told her a story, now lost to her, save for the title.

“I sense it. We’re meant to be together. Do you not recognize it, as well?”

Those words were spoken by the Trickster on the day of their first encounter. They echoed in her head. Temenitis had also felt it. There *was* a reason for why everything had occurred, her own pregnancy with her son and her coming to Jasper when he was seriously ill. Many impossible things have happened. Yes, of course, impossible things did happen, and it was proving true enough at this moment.

* * *

“You called, my lady?” Njáll said, appearing to her where she stood under the palm trees on a remote Caribbean island.

“I have a request. One that I’m willing to pay for.”

Njáll became highly intrigued. “Is that so? What is this request?”

“Tell me a story. ‘The Story of the Priest.’”

He gaped at that. “How do you know that story?”

“I know it not. I’ve forgotten it. You do, though, don’t you?”

“I do.”

She came close to him, and already she felt the heat of desire rising in him.

“Tell it to me,” she ordered, kneeling in front of him and unbuckling his belt.

The moment her lips touched him, he was hers. He told her the story, and she listened. As it carried on, she realized what she had at her fingertips. It was the bloodline within each of the children, Jasper and Nona, a privileged legacy bestowed upon them by their parents and ancestors. What might come of it wasn’t impossible; in fact, half of the work was already done. She needed a plan.

When the tale ended, she brought him to his climax.

“I shall call on you soon,” she told him.

“I eagerly look forward to it,” he said breathlessly.

It took a while for her to sort out her plan. She knew there would be trials and tribulations along the way, but the more thought she put into every detail, the easier the obstacles would be to overcome. Or, so she hoped.

After mapping everything out, it was time to wait for the right year to call for the Trickster once again.

On the mountaintop where the mist thickened around the peak, he again came to her. “What do you wish of me now?”

“I want to die and be reincarnated as an enchantress. I have found a woman to birth me. She is a hermit living in the woods. She is to be attacked by a huntsman. Kill me and bring me back, but make certain I have all my memories of my previous life.”

Her request took him aback.

“May I ask why you desire this, Temenitis?”

She had no qualms telling him what she’d found out and about her plan, for she had no doubt she would need his help again.

“Interesting,” he mused. “And, do you fully understand the rules—rules that even *I* cannot break? Although your blood tie with the mortals will be severed, neither you nor I can harm the family if you wish to succeed.”

“I have a plan for everything, Njáll. This is the closest the bloodlines of these beings have ever been since their destruction. I still need to alter the courses of these people’s lives, and as a witch, I can do so.”

She suspected the Trickster held affection toward her. It was why she resisted him, and her instincts to do so had proven their worth. It was about the only useful talent a nymph had—the art of seduction. When it came down to trusting him, however, she had little choice, for he was all she had.

“I will give myself to you, Njáll.”

“Is that so?”

“We shall create a natural disaster,” she promised.

His eyes flickered with lust. “Then, my lady, I am happy to oblige you. When do you wish to start this new existence?”

“Right after I’m dead.”

He nodded. “Very well.”

For hours, they fucked like primitive beasts that had only moments to live.

When Njáll was just about to arrive, Temenitis screamed, “Kill me! Do it now!”

The pressure around her neck made her eyes bulge. He choked the life out of her as he soared over his crowning point. His savage scream of pleasure and his killing of her was enough to form what people later stated was an orography effect, which caused flooding in Lynmouth, England.

Temenitis felt her soul slip away, and as the light of the world dimmed, she heard the Trickster sobbing.

Chapter One

The Visions

The Hawaiian Islands
Summer, 1850

The rain from the night before had washed up loads of kelp and seaweed. The waves had also brought up a dead and mangled sea turtle. Evidence of a shark attack. Despite the storm, the lobster traps had stayed in place, and two of them had even caught a few.

Pierce Landcross swam deep into the clear water and unhooked the trap doors. He grabbed one lobster at a time and shoved them into the sack he held. He had become accustomed to holding his breath for extended periods of time. Once he had the lobsters secure, he reset the wooden traps and headed up. He took the warm tropical air into his lungs as he broke through the surface of the water. He swam for shore until his feet found the seafloor.

Pierce rather enjoyed the ocean, whether it was diving for lobsters or only going in for a swim. He'd become a true fish since arriving on the island of Maui.

Seven years ago, Chief Sea Wind, captain of the *Ekta* and her crew of Sea Warriors, brought him, his new bride, Taisia, his parents, Nona and Jasper, and his grandmother, Élie Fey, over from England and to the islands. When they'd arrived, Taisia was nearly five months pregnant.

The long time at sea was due largely because the Apaches had dropped anchor in Sonora, Mexico. The detour was an adventure all on its own. The scar on Pierce's upper back, where an arrowhead had penetrated his shoulder blade, was as a testament to that. Nevertheless, they'd made it to the islands and now lived a perfect life together under the sun.

Pierce headed up the white sandy beach toward the area close to a surfing village where the indigenous people of Maui resided. In order to be able to live in such a secluded area—virtually untouched by the outside world—Pierce and his family had needed permission from the village leader, a man named Ailani. His name meant *high chief*. It turned out Chief Sea Wind was mates with the Hawaiian chief who'd granted the Landcross family permission to stay.

As Pierce drew closer to home, he spied his daughter, Galina, digging in the sand. When she noticed him, she abandoned her work to greet him.

“Daddy!” she called with arms outstretched.

She always greeted him with such affection whenever he returned. He smiled as he watched her run toward him, her wavy golden-brown hair bouncing with her movements. Her pigment was a cross between his fair and Taisia's dark skin tone. She had beautiful cognac eyes the same as her mother's, and a smile inherited from her father. The same went for her twin brother, Joaquin, named after Pierce's late older brother.

Pierce lifted his daughter and carried her as he walked. She was growing heavier.

“Oi! What have we been feeding you, child?” he asked.

“Lobster!” she hollered, hurting his ears.

For being so small, she had a very loud voice.

“Lobster, eh? We might have to limit your intake, then. Don't want you getting too big.”

“Yes, we do, Daddy. I'm going to grow to be as big as a giant!”

“A giant? Why would you want to be that big?”

“To stop Joaquin and Lydia from taking my toys. And whenever they do, I can say . . .” She dropped her voice. “. . . *fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of a quarter of an Englishman!*”

Pierce cocked his head back, laughing. How he adored his children’s wit.

“Aye,” he said, putting her down. “I’m sure that’ll keep ’em both from playing with your toys without asking.”

Galina skipped ahead of him. She, like her siblings, had lived her entire life on the sand, and she was therefore well equipped to the trek. Although Pierce had been used to it for a while, he preferred stepping on solid ground more often.

Galina reached the hole she was digging before and resumed her work.

“Where are you digging to, my love?” he asked, walking by her.

She scooped a large handful of sand and tossed it out. “To China!”

“Fantastic.”

Pierce headed up to his and Taisia’s hut. It was shaded by tall palm trees, the same as his parents’ and grandmother’s houses, only yards away. The huts, resembling small cabins, were constructed from black wood found deep in the forest. The one-story place had started out as a two bedroom, living room, and kitchen area before it grew into three bedrooms when Taisia was expecting Lydia. With the help of the Sea Warriors, the family managed to build the original three huts in only a matter of days. Since then, the Landcross family had decorated the area with homemade chimes and glass lamps dangling from the trees. Jasper had fixed up the old birdhouse he’d brought with him from the Netherlands and now had it hanging from his porch. There always seemed to be a bird living in it. Near Pierce’s home was a fire pit carved out from the ground with a hammock strung up nearby.

As he approached the steps leading up to the front porch, his son called to him. “Hi, Daddy!”

Pierce stopped and searched around until he found the young boy way up in their only heliotrope tree. The boy laughed.

“Ello, Joaquin,” called Pierce, hiding his fear of just how high the boy had climbed this time. He’d started to hate that these trees had been introduced to the Hawaiian Islands. “Can you spot Jupiter from there?”

“Maybe,” Joaquin quipped, lifting himself up onto another branch.

Joaquin loved climbing trees, much like Pierce had when he was a tyke. As a child, Pierce had also gotten into loads of trouble, which his son also mimicked successfully. Pierce reckoned karma had finally arrived to bite him on the arse with this one.

“I caught some lobster,” he announced, trying to coax the boy down. “Wanna look?”

“I want to see how high I can go,” the lad stated, grabbing hold of the next branch up.

That wasn’t what Pierce wanted to hear from his six-year-old. Joaquin again hoisted himself up onto another windy limb, causing Pierce’s heart rate to quicken.

“Er, son,” he began saying as he took hold of the tree trunk to climb up after him, “maybe you should try climbing higher a few years from now, eh?”

“Joaquin!” Taisia yelled so loudly it frightened Marco Polo the cockatoo sitting on his perch on the front porch. “Get down right now!”

The fact she was shouting at him in Russian only amplified the boy’s fear. It always scared Pierce.

Joaquin's eyes grew very wide and he began clambering down. Pierce waited anxiously for the lad to come close enough to grab him. When he came to within reaching distance, Pierce pulled him away from the tree.

"Stop being such a nervous Nellie, Pierce," Taisia quipped in English. "You know he climbs that tree nearly every day now."

Pierce did, indeed, yet it did nothing to curb his worry. He had a very visual mind, and he could clearly envision the lad falling and cracking his head open on the way down.

Goddammit, he had turned into his mother!

After setting his son down, Pierce held up the sack. "Got us some lobster for tonight."

Taisia smiled at him. That dazzling smile he could never grow tired of. They had experienced so much together, more than most couples had in fifty years of marriage. And they'd made it through all right. Better than all right. They were healthy and living in one of the most beautiful places in the world. They had their safety, and most importantly, they had each other. So many bountiful gifts that Pierce never believed he would ever have.

"We'll have them with papaya and red pineapples," Taisia suggested. "I'll go pick the papaya with the children in a little while."

"Grand," Pierce said, stepping up the stairs toward her. "I'm going to the falls to wash up." He wrapped his arm around her and pulled her close. "Maybe you ought to leave the demons with Mum and Dad and come join me instead, eh?"

He kissed her. A long, loving kiss he only wanted to share with her.

"Ah, gross!" Joaquin shrieked, breaking the mood. "Kissing is disgusting!"

Sometimes, Pierce wished it were still only the two of them.

He grunted with frustration and roared loudly at his son. The boy ran off, screaming, pretending to be frightened. With him gone, Pierce again pulled his wife close.

"As we were," he said, about to go in for another kiss when someone latched onto his leg.

"Daddy!" came the voice of none other than Lydia.

He looked down at the little toddler who had hugged him like a koala hugging a tree.

"Ello, Angelfish," he greeted her.

Lydia was truly a daddy's girl. She was his shadow, who usually followed him everywhere. It was only because she'd been asleep when he'd left to fetch the lobster that he'd even gone alone. He enjoyed her company, chatting his ear off about the dreams she'd had or asking him questions such as where do belches come from and why did the moon follow her? His little Angelfish was the light in his soul.

She noted the sack in his hand. "You went without me?"

Pierce dropped it to lift her up into his arms and hug her tightly.

"Sorry, love. Accompany me next time?"

"All right," she said, pulling away. "Daddy, I have a question. If a cat is standing on a pillar, does that make it a caterpillar?"

Both he and Taisia laughed.

"I reckon it does," he answered.

Pierce fed the sheep inside their pens, fed the free-range chickens, and then Marco Polo, the back-talking cockatoo.

"It's about time. About time!" the bird squawked at him.

Taisia had taught the bird to say that during feedings in order to mess with him.

"Shut it," Pierce grumbled at the bird.

With the family occupied, Pierce followed the narrow, worn trail. The falls weren't nearly the tallest on the island. In fact, the cliffs made for safe jumping, which Pierce had done many times. But it was breathtaking, all the same. After he cleaned up with the soap bartered from the marketplace, he dressed and headed for home. He admired his surroundings as he normally did when cutting through the thick forest. He loved it here. The plants and animals—even the insects. He loved every bit of it. He made a point of always appreciating what he had and where he lived, for it was only by sheer luck, and through a lot of help, that he was alive to have any of it.

As he lost himself to the scenery, his bare feet no longer felt the rugged trail. He felt hardwood instead. The tropical landscape began blending into another atmosphere until it had vanished completely. The forest had become a pier with the smell of dead fish and grease oil in the cold air. Buildings consumed the trees and black smog smeared over the crystal-clear sky.

Pierce stopped dead in his tracks. What surrounded him couldn't be real, though it looked and felt very much so. The air was muggy and as sticky as syrup. The day was late. The sun was tucked behind the buildings of a city he'd never seen before. A tall white structure with three towers stood out amongst the buildings. At the pier, there were many ships and boats of all sorts—sailboats, tall mast ships, and many fishing boats. A large riverboat drifted down a wide river. There were people onboard, and a band played music on the deck.

Pierce went from being alone to being surrounded by sailors, fishermen, whores, and thugs. No one noticed him. He stood like a phantom amongst these strangers who were carrying on with their business, completely unaware of him.

“Bloody hell,” he gasped.

He saw a sign that read *Sieur de LaSalle Wharf*. The sign appeared aged, with a jagged crack halfway down the middle. He heard every sound—the seagulls chattering on the rocky shore, the conversations between sailors. He could even smell the tobacco from their corn cob pipes. A man was reading a *Times-Picayune* newspaper with a headline about a house fire in New Orleans.

New Orleans?

There was a commotion coming from a throng down the dock. Curious, Pierce went over to see. It wasn't long before he spied something familiar in this unfamiliar place. Apache symbols were painted on the sails and the vessel itself, but it was the large fans that helped him identify the old Spanish galleon.

The *Ekta* was anchored near the pier.

What was she doing in New Orleans? Then he spotted the crew.

The Sea Warriors were being led down the ramp in shackles. A pair of long, thick chains linked all the prisoners' manacles together, keeping the whole lot locked with each other. The crowd of bystanders were screaming at them, calling them horrible names and throwing rotten food and anything else they could find at them. Chief Sea Wind and his wife, Waves of Strength, walked ahead of the imprisoned crew. They were being guarded by men wearing red bands around their arms.

Vigilantes.

The Sea Warriors were marched through the aggressive crowd and toward the city. Pierce moved in closer. He bumped into people who, although he physically touched them, acted as if nothing had happened.

“Chief!” Pierce called as he approached. “Chief Sea Wind!”

He came to the edge of the crowd and rushed to catch up to the line of prisoners. He was able to get alongside them. Some were bruised and bleeding from a struggle.

“Chief!” Pierce hollered again, rushing toward the front.

Nobody, not even the vigilantes walking beside the line with their rifles, took any notice of him. As Pierce neared the chief, he spotted Sees Beyond.

“Sees!” Pierce gasped, slowing down. “Christ, can you hear me?”

She didn’t answer. She only kept her steady shuffle along the dock.

“Sees!” he yelled, grabbing her by the arm.

When he did, the world around him blew away like leaves in high wind.

Pierce blinked.

He was back in the forest and holding onto a bamboo tree. He let go of it and darted his eyes about, trying to understand what he’d seen.

“What the fuckin’ hell just happened?”

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