

[This work of unabashedly surrealist fiction is incomplete. Take it for what you will.]

My Demon
by Jeremy Kings

On the day that I met my demon, I was exploring an art museum. As I gazed at the many pictures hung neatly on the walls, I tried to comprehend the optical tricks within the surreal images, finding people inside of vases inside of people, but the only things revealed to me were nonexistent curved shapes on flat surfaces. Then I found one that was unlike the others. As I stared blankly at its empty frame, slightly askew, I was unable to move and I began to feel pain in my feet. I had become the painting itself. In the museum, my demon was staring back at me and I asked him to let me out, but it had begun to rain and we slipped out of the paintings, out of the building, off the edge of space.

As I plunged deep, I saw my demon falling slowly with me. He smiled and told me that I should swim deeper, but my intuition said to get away from him. I swam upward and finally reached the surface, nearly drowning as my breath was stolen away by the new sight of an alien landscape. I crawled up onto what seemed to be volcanic rock, gleaming residue from some ancient eruption of the mountain, one of countless many, on whose base I stood. My wide eyes took it all in, first the endless array of rock crags, then the sky and the gigantic sphere of purple gases that seemed to nearly fill it. I looked around, but saw no sign of my demon and yet, I could not escape the feeling that he was still there. He was at once elusive and pervasive. Then the planet in the sky seemed, impossibly, to grow even larger and I realized with a shock that this was in fact my demon. I tried to run, but as he grew, my demon enveloped everything. Purple tendrils of smoke began to wrap themselves around me and I held my breath, not wanting to inhale them. My molecules held their collective breath, as well, a little too long in fact, and passed out, losing their chemical bonds. I dissolved into a gooey puddle and my demon mopped me up, then wrung me out onto a simple wooden chair, where I managed to find some degree of solidarity again.

I sat at a small table, facing myself. On the table was a chess board, and it was clear from the way the pieces were laid out that I had myself in a checkmate; there was no way that I could win, no way I could lose. I knew that this had to be the work of my demon. And yet I sat there, pondering my next move. I grew old and decrepit and had to take off my skin and remove my muscles and organs – they were getting uncomfortable. Then I said to myself, “Now this is just

silly. Why should a pile of old bones be playing chess?" He replied, "Do you have anything better to do?" He had a point, but all the same, I needed to take a break. As I got up to stretch, I realized that there was nothing holding me together, so I collapsed.

Having nothing to hold onto, my mind wandered off. My demon took this opportunity to fashion me into a stadium while I wasn't looking. The newly crafted arena was packed with thoughts and dreams, all roaring with excitement – this was going to be a good fight. One of them came up to me and asked what the prize was for this match. "Inquiring minds want to know," it told me. I pointed toward the steel cage suspended in the air above. A friend of mine, whom I hated, had been kidnapped by my demon and it was my intention to set him free. Then, on the opposite side of the arena, the gates burst open and out charged a huge and menacing bull. "Are you ready?" he growled. "Of course not," I replied, "Let's go." As he stampeded towards me, gaining more and more momentum, I contemplated and, in a moment of inspiration, unfurled a poster of Rita Hayworth, hoping to distract him, but my demon turned into a dragon.

Terror filled me as I gazed upward at the beast, huge and terrible, awesome and beautiful. We fought for days on end, using everything we had in our arsenal, from shields made of steel to brilliant blue butterflies. I waved a gun at him, but my demon claimed diplomatic immunity. I flung a bottle of hot sauce, but it was no match for his plaid lumberjack shirt. I even planned a complex sting operation with the L.A.P.D. to take him out, but it was cancelled due to inclement weather.

As I stood there in the arena, contemplating my next move, beads of sweat dripped down my face. They had a green hue. (I had been drinking Gatorade between rounds.) My demon had become the sun and was bearing down on me with so much heat that I felt like melting, but I resisted the urge. He had a glint in his eye that said he knew something that I didn't, but I didn't much care what it was; I just wanted to end the struggle and get on with my life. I had to find a way to end the battle between us or I would go mad, but it seemed like I had already tried everything, apart from a few things that were bound to fail, such as bribing him with airplane peanuts. Perhaps I was trying too hard. If I wanted it to end, why not just end it? And so I did. I let loose a roar of unbridled ferocity, grabbed my demon with my bare hands, and stuffed him into an empty beer jug from Destihl.

Then the crowd went wild, literally. I was nearly trampled as animals came pouring out of the stands. I tried to count them, but a brief analysis of the situation informed me that it would be

mathematically impossible and that I should just get out of the way. The enormous hooves of an elephant flattened me into a pancake and I was nearly eaten, but I managed to escape by adding more yeast and rising to the occasion. As I dashed out of the stadium into the desert, the doors closed behind me; I was trapped. I decided that being a pancake wasn't particularly useful in a desert, so I returned to normal. I began looking for an oasis, but realized that while water would be useful, what I really needed was shelter from the cold, there being no sun to give warmth.