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It was cold, the sky a dull gray seeping into her eyes making her feel the weight of what she was going to do heavy in her chest, Arianne could remember this much. She could remember hearing the snow crunch beneath her boots as she walked to the lake with Lanie trailing not too far behind her. She could remember staring at the barren trees circling the park and the smooth icy exterior of the frozen waters. She could remember Lanie questioning their little excursion, how she had to beg for the two of them to venture out into the snow to see if the lake was frozen over or not when she already held that answer. She could remember anticipation clouding her mind as she reached her destination. The bridge. And that's where her mind became blurry, she knew what she had done, but she tried to block it from her memories. She wanted desperately to forget. She had led Lanie to the center of the bridge that hovered over the center of the lake, bringing her to the edge of the hole created by several missing planks. She had made sure Lanie was in front of her, distracted by the sight of the slightly frozen over lake, when she removed the knife. Stabbing Lanie proved easier than she thought it would be, that wasn't what she needed to forget. It was the look on Lanie's face when she turned in shock, the face that Arianne had then pushed into the cold black waters. But most of all, she wanted to forget the screams.

Of course as soon as it had happened she had run for help, feigning that Lanie had tripped and fallen into the lake, while crying and acting hysteric. No one had questioned her too much, after all what was there to suspect? Who would have thought a loose rusty nail would snag

Lanie's pants sending her tumbling into the hole in the bridge; it was what Arianne was betting on.

In the days that followed Arianne felt the guilt on her shoulders and some regret for her actions, but not as much as she felt the immense relief that had flooded her body as soon as Lanie's head had disappeared beneath the surface. She tried not to think about what she had done much, tried to convince herself that it was necessary, because after all it was. She couldn't be blamed for wanting to save herself she rationalized. She had waited as long as she could before carrying out the deed, given Lanie longer than she should have to live.

It had been a week since the accident and the community was still grieving, forcing Arianne to play the role of a teary eyed best friend, saying all the things people expected of her, listening to all the saddened whispers coursing through the halls.

"She was so young, only 17..."

"I can't imagine how her family is feeling.."

"Poor Arianne..."

She had to try to hide her laughter, poor Arianne indeed she thought.

When she returned home that night she pulled a dark wooden box from underneath her bed extracting a single piece of paper. It was thin and light as air with a silver sheen to its surface and bold black words looking heavy against the fragile paper. She traced over the bottom where she had signed her name in a deep red that stood out above all else. Some might marvel over the strange dark red colored signature, the ink used such a vivid color. But Arianne knew the truth; it wasn't ink at all, but her own blood. Arianne had done something terrible, something to warrant

her signing away her life in her own blood in a binding contract. Arianne had sold her soul to the devil.

Most people wouldn't believe it, how exactly one year ago while she was cutting through her neighborhood woods on her way home she had stumbled upon a mysterious stranger. He was tall and dressed in a crisp all black suit. He hid most of his face behind his wide black bowler, but underneath it all Arianne could tell he was impossibly handsome. And something about him made her want to come closer, even while her mind rang out warning signals about strangers in the woods; she just had to talk to him. He introduced himself as Beelzebub, a name that brought chills to her arms although she couldn't place its importance. He had told her he could give her everything she ever wanted, and all she had to do was sign this little contract. She would find luck she never knew existed, life would become entirely too easy as she breezed through school with amazing grades, and most of all she would be incredibly beautiful. She would be perfect. When he produced the crisp piece of paper out of thin air she had grabbed it out of his hands before he even had a chance to say anything.

"But wait dear, everything comes with a price. Don't be too quick to forget that." He smirked as he spoke. "You get this life, but when you're time is up, the devil will come to collect one soul."

"My soul?" she whispered softly.

"No not necessarily, it just has to be one soul of..." He chose his words carefully before continuing "value. Yes that's right one soul of value."

Arianne took a deep breath.

"Well my dear? Have you made up your mind? It is all worth it for you?"

Even though Arianne hesitated, she knew the answer to his question. She signed the contract and while her blood was still wet on the paper Beelzebub had gripped her hand in tight handshake.

“So we have a deal?”

Arianne gulped before replying with a silent nod of her head.

“You have exactly one year.” The man had said with a devilish grin that brought goose bumps to her skin. He winked at her before snapping his fingers and disappearing.

The next morning when she awoke and looked in the mirror, she couldn't believe what she saw, how different she looked; she seemed to shine from within herself. And after that night she never came down from her high, dancing through everything as if all her life was a game; one she was extraordinarily winning.

Now she sat in her darkened room staring into the mirror, looking over the beautiful features that shaped her face, the way her hair fell in a perfect wave across her shoulders, the smooth porcelain of her skin. Was it really worth this? A voice from deep within her asked. But it was quickly silenced. Yes, Arianne knew it had to be, anything was worth this perfection.

She startled as she heard the doorbell ring downstairs. She made her way down to open the door to reveal Beelzebub staring back at her.

“Hello Arianne,” He smiled as he greeted her. “I've come to collect your payment.” Arianne's heart thumped in her chest as a panic set into her. “But...But... I've already paid.”

“Not to the terms of the contract.”

“I...I... I gave you what you wanted, one soul of value.” She stammered out.

“Oh Arianne,” he tisked, “Read your contracts more carefully before you sign them next time. It says one soul of value, a soul of value to the devil.” She felt the air rush out of her and she couldn’t speak.

“And the devil,” he continued “doesn’t want poor little Lanie’s soul, He wants your soul.”

“No, No.” she spit out shaking her head in denial.

“Oh, but dear yes, you must pay what you owe.”

“But...but you tricked me!” Arianne yelled.

“Oh of course I tricked you.” He laughingly replied “I don’t work in any other way.”

“You can’t have me! You can’t take me! I won’t let you!” She screamed out hysterical.

He just laughed a wicked gleam in his eyes that she hadn’t noticed before.

“I want to talk to the devil! He’s in charge! You can’t do this!” she continued to cry out. He just laughed even harder.

“Oh, but darling you already are.” She one look at his demonic grin and saw for the first time the complete darkness that shrouded his eyes making them appear black as the cold lake’s waters. She slammed the door as hard as she could, putting the deadbolt in place and throwing her body against it.

“It’s fine if you’d like to play it this way Arianne. You’ve made this more difficult than it has to be, but your contract doesn’t officially expire until midnight. I’ll be back then to collect your soul, willing or not.” He laughed a chilling and icy laugh that made her skin crawl as she leaned against the door trembling as she listening to his footsteps fall away.

He was gone. She raced up the stairs in a blind panic pulling the contract out from her hiding place. She read it over and over again, studying every single word. The panic continued to build inside of her when she realized there was no way out. She dropped onto her bed staring out her window. The night was black as it stared back at her making her feel uneasy as if she was being watched. She could hear the distant rumbling of thunder that drew closer with every second that ticked towards midnight.

The rain started at 11:30 and the only sound in the entire house was her breathing and the thud of the rain against the roof.

Arianne watched as the rain turned into a downpour and the wind blew the trees backwards. She saw the numbers on her digital clock flip to 12:00. She held her breath.

The numbers flipped to 12:01. She let out her breath. And then lightning flashed and a crack of thunder shook the house. The lights flickered and then went out completely. Arianne sat in complete darkness as the storm shook her to her core.

That was when she first heard the scratching. Someone was scratching at her front door; it soon turned into violent clawing as she heard the door swing open crashing into the wall. Arianne covered her mouth as she shook, pulling her knees into her chest. She heard a girl laugh downstairs. Heavy footsteps fell across the floor below, making their way to the stairs. “Arianne?” a chillingly familiar voice called out. No, no, no, Arianne shook her head back and forth, no, it wasn’t real, it couldn’t be real.

“Oh Arianne, haven’t you missed me?” The voice called out laughing again. Arianne began to shake back and forth as hysterical tears rolled down her face. She could hear the voice calling

out to her as the sounds of the creaking stairs echoed throughout the house. “Ari?” the voice called out from behind her door “Why won’t you let me in? Don’t you want to see me Ari?”

“NO!” she screamed “You’re not real! This can’t be happening!” her words dissolved into hysterical sobs as fear clenched around her heart. The house was silent, the storm seeming to let up with no sounds of thunder or cracks of lightning; Arianne stared into the darkness of her room, jumping at all the shadows she saw. Maybe this was a dream. It had to be, this couldn’t be happening to her. She let out a deep breathe trying to rationalize with herself.

And then a crack of thunder roared out shaking the house at the exact same moment that the door to Arianne’s room swang open. She let loose a bloodcurdling scream that rang out into the night as the figure in her doorway was briefly illuminated by the flash of lightning that filled her room.

The figure of Lanie stood in her doorway smiling at her.

With each flash of lightning Arianne saw the grotesque figure approach her.

She dripped water across the floor from her knotted hair and tattered clothes. Her skin was ghostly white with a sinister gray tinge to it. Mold and black dirt caked her body and clothes, and every inch of her skin seemed to be crawling, like she was trying to break free from it all. But worst of all Arianne couldn’t keep herself from staring at her face. It had decayed almost beyond recognition, where her eyes should have been were empty, blackened sockets. Looking into them Arianne thought she could see death and all that it brought. It was as if Lanie had emerged straight from the bottom of the lake.

She took several steps into the room as Arianne backed into the corner. Blood started to drip from Lanie’s empty eye sockets

Arianne continued to scream as Lanie approached her.

“Oh Arianne,” She said “I hope it was worth it.”