

The Fairy Godparents

1,440 words

The baby was not bouncing, nor was it beautiful. It kicked its pudgy feet as it howled, beady eyes screwed up and a trail of slimy snot running down a nose that could charitably be referred to as little, but definitely not ickle.

“Charming thing, isn’t it?” The woman said, turning her nose up at the smell before standing and smoothing out her skirt. “Is it always like this?”

She was tall, or rather she looked tall, whilst somehow remaining not a whisker over five feet in height. Her long dark hair was tied up in a severe bun, aside from two stray wisps which fell onto an aquiline face that looked not a day over thirty five. She beheld the child, her startling blue eyes narrowing as a grimace marred her features.

“So far as I can tell, yes.” The man replied, languidly reclining on a cheap wooden chair that was neither sturdy nor comfortable. The glass tumbler in his hand was in danger of spilling its contents onto a discolored carpet of questionable quality, before he brought it to his smirking mouth and sipped the mahogany liquid. A long, ornamented jacket that could have been plucked from the eighteenth century spilled out behind him. The man was not looking at the child, he was staring at the grubby artex ceiling and stroking the dark stubble on his sharp chin. At first glance his eyes seemed hazel, but inside the iris flames of darkest red and gold sparked and flickered.

“I thought it would be more.. you know..” she waved her perfectly manicured hands around in the air.

“Cute? Adorable? Fluffy?” The man supplied without looking up, disheveled hair flopping behind him.

“Portentous.” She narrowed her eyes at the man. “Gideon, are you even taking this seriously?”

“Of course I am, Rose!” Gideon stood suddenly and walked over to the wailing child, rubbing its belly and making cooing noises at it.

Rose sighed and took the chair, her impractical heels clacking as she walked. Sitting down she started rubbing both sides of her head.

“I can’t believe we’ve waited nearly fifteen hundred years for a Convergence and I’ve been stuck with YOU when it finally comes!”

The man didn’t look up. “You know this really is the ugliest baby I think I’ve ever seen.” He stopped rubbing the child’s belly as it ceased crying just long enough to be sick on his hand. “Does that count as a portent do you think?” He smiled over at Rose.

She just rolled her eyes and stared daggers back, her lips pursed disapprovingly and one eyebrow arched scathingly at the foppish man.

Gideon whistled as he wiped the sick off his embroidered velvet sleeve with a nearby baby-grow, trying not to look Rose in the eye. “How long has it been since we last worked together?” He asked.

“Not long enough.” Rose snapped back.

“Oh come on, if we’re going to be stuck together for the next sixteen years we might as well be civil.”

Rose’s eyes narrowed again, pulsating in anger. “Civil?” She almost spat the words. “After London?”

He stopped wiping and smiled. “Honestly Rose, you can’t still be angry over that?”

“You burned the whole city down! I don’t know why I even bother.” She

stood up and paced the tiny room, scrunching up her face as she looked at the child, who by now had stopped crying and was gurgling, spit bubbles mixing with the snot trail.

“You nearly burned me alive and you can’t even say sorry, Gideon.”

“Oh I knew you’d get out. You’re far too clever to let yourself get caught by a few flames.” He stepped up behind her and placed a long fingered hand on her shoulder.

“Gideon?” Rose asked, her voice turning soft.

“Yes, Rose?” he replied, turning her so their eyes met. He could see flecks of his own tawny brown reflected in her deep blue, like specks of gold atop an ocean.

She smiled then, pulling him down to her and whispering in his ear.

“If you don’t take your hands off me this instant I will disembowel you and leave you for the mortals to find.”

Gideon jerked back reflexively.

“As it’s clear we’re stuck together until this **thing** grows up I suggest we keep business strictly professional.” Rose had turned her back to him again.

Gideon straightened his long coat and ran a pale hand through his dark hair. “If that’s what you want.”

Silence passed between them then, long and awkward, broken only by some rather obscene sounds emanating from the child.

“Shouldn’t one of the parents be coming along round about now to fix that?” Gideon asked.

“I very much doubt it.” Rose’s lip curled up so that one of her incisors showed.

“Oh.” Gideon searched for where he’d left his tumbler earlier and picked it up. “Was that absolutely necessary?”

“No, but it is tradition.”

“Honestly Rose it’s a bit tacky isn’t it? At what point does tradition become a tired trope?”

With precise movements and delicate fingers Rose adjusted her bun.

“If they have parents there’s a much higher chance that they won’t manifest, you know that. Or you would if you ever listened.”

“I thought that was the point of a Convergence? That we were guaranteed a manifestation.” Gideon said, glancing around for where he had left the whiskey bottle.

“Don’t be smart with me.”

Gideon knelt by the baby’s cot and reached under, standing up triumphantly with the bottle in hand before pouring out another glass.

“I’m saying it might be novel to just let nature take it’s course for once.”

Rose turned on him, exasperated. “You do what you like. I’m going to do my job.”

“Oh alright, shall we set the terms then?” Gideon drained the tumbler and walked up beside Rose and the baby.

“Finally.”

“Usual deal?”

Rose nodded. “Within a year and a day after manifestation, their soul to be given freely by any means attainable.”

Gideon smirked. “And the stakes?”

“The winner holds The Balance until the next Convergence.”

“That all sounds agreeable to me. Have your lot already signed off on it?”

“They’ve given me autonomy on this.”

Gideon whistled. “Wow, that’s quite some responsibility.” He returned to staring at the child, by now asleep. “What about a Return Clause?”

Rose scoffed. “Do you really want to take the risk?”

Drawing himself up Gideon pulled on his long leather overcoat, tails twirling behind him. “What’s life without a challenge?”

Rose rolled her eyes. “Your arrogance is astounding. Only one Convergant ever even considered embracing their divinity, and the mortals put iron through his hands and feet to stop him. Why would this time be any different?”

Gideon drained his glass and winked at her.

“I’ve got a good feeling about this one.”

“That’s it?! You’d gamble everything on a feeling?”

“You need to have more faith. Things always work out in the end.”

“Oh, do they?” She grinned, baring the tips of her sharp teeth once more. “What about Knossos?”

“Wow. I can’t believe you’d bring that up.”

“For once Gideon, just admit you’re wrong.”

“I almost pulled it off.”

“Tell that to the people of Ugarit, or Troy, or Harran, or Pyre...”

“Oh come on, it wasn’t that bad...”

“It was over three hundred years before they discovered how to write again!”

“Maybe so, but this time I know it will work.”

A soft laughter peeled from Rose’s lips, though it held no mirth. “Fine, it’s your burial.” She smiled at him. “I look forward to speeding it along.”

“We have a concord?” He asked, holding out his hand.

“So mote it be!” Rose reached out and grasped it.

“So mote it be.” As their hands clasped ghostly vines burst forth, wrapping around their forearms and burning a runic symbol into their wrists before evaporating like mist.

Rose walked over to the door, twisted the crooked handle and opened it. “Gideon?”

He turned to look at her, shaking his arm a little where the newly formed symbol burned.

“You’re going to lose, and I’m going to enjoy it.” With that she spun on her heel and faded out of existence, leaving the door ajar.

From somewhere out in the corridor Gideon heard a woman scream, then start wailing.

He sighed, turning away from the child. As panicked feet pounded up the stairs towards the bedroom he took one last look at the sleeping baby and began to fade.

“Well, here we go again. I’ll see you soon, little one.”