

Neal Akatsuka

manuscript disposable

Unexpected

“What a shit hole.”

Alex grimaced at the ragtag collection of hovels that lay scattered around the crescent lake.

When he had unfurled the thin sliver of parchment embossed with the wax seal of the Guild of Hunters last week, his hands trembled with excitement for his first assignment as a full-fledged journeyman. He had imagined the glory to be obtained by saving the people of Belfer from whatever supernatural mishap they were plagued with. But after trekking through ten miles of marshland to reach the isolated village, he began to regret the whole journey. His had long lost his travelling cape in the murky waters and left himself exposed to the bites and buzzes of the ferocious insects in the area. And his remaining clothes were drenched in a combination of sweat and bog water that exuded an odor likely to kill an ogre.

He slapped a tickling at his cheek, and when he drew back his hand, found the sticky remains of yet another mosquito.

“Lovely. Well, the sooner this is over, the sooner I can get the hell out of here.”

He wiped his hands on his soiled pants, gathered his belongings, and proceeded down the trail that led to the lake.

When he arrived in the village square, if one could call the muddy clearing a square, he glanced around and decided the largest of the shacks, barely held together with a handful of rusty nails, must be the house of the village chief.

He knocked and was soon greeted by a man whose face was splattered with mud.

“Mister Goodwitch?”

“Yes, I believe you contacted the Guild of Hunters to deal with a problem?”

“Oh yes, please come in. I was beginning to wonder if my request had ever been received. It has been a few months you see and the problem has escalated significantly.”

“Certainly. Please tell me more about it,” said Alex. He stepped through the doorway and looked around the house. Light streamed through the slats in the walls, illuminating the scantily furnished single large room. Seeing no chair, he simply turned to face the old man.

“Several months ago, we noticed that several men in the village had begun to get sick. We called in a doctor from the neighboring village, but he said that nothing was physically wrong with them. But several of them have already died, you see, so we began to suspect unnatural causes and called on the Guild. Since then, three of the original five men have deteriorated and died.”

“Curious. Very curious.”

“Indeed. We would appreciate any help you could provide.”

“Of course. Could you let me talk to the families of the men?”

“Certainly. But you must be tired from your long journey. Surely you would like to rest? We can pay a visit to the men tomorrow.”

“Thank you, I am much obliged.”

[I am currently stuck at this point and not quite sure where to take it. I envision this as a story about a journeyman monster hunter hired by the village to investigate the mysterious deaths of several men in the village. Alex eventually concludes that a succubus has been haunting the village and takes steps to remove it. However, he eventually discovered it is not a succubus, but rather an incubus. As he investigates further, he learns it is the spirit of the spurned lover of the chief, who was condemned and murdered by the villagers and now seeks revenge upon them all.]

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