

Grimoire

Chapter 1

Jake took his time walking home from school, intentionally taking the longest winding route he could think of.

Right now, life at home was a mess. His father was gone most of the time, pretending he had to work extra hours when it was painfully obvious to everyone that he was having an affair. His mother was in denial, taking all of her anger and hurt out on her children - mostly Jake - rather than facing the truth head-on. And his sister...

Well, there was nothing wrong with her, per say. She wasn't acting like a bitch or anything. If anything, the atmosphere in the house had brought them closer together.

And that was exactly the problem.

Having a crush on his sister was not okay. No matter how stunningly beautiful she was, no matter how cute her smile was when she was thanking him for being so nice and sweet to her.

Jake shook his head. Best not to think about it.

Instead, he turned his attention, all of his thoughts, to his walk home. He could take a detour to a local marketplace - that would definitely slow his journey home. And maybe there'd be something he could buy there.

Only he didn't any money to spend.

The Pit, then.

He didn't know exactly what they'd been trying to build there; a skyscraper, a factory, or a corporate headquarters. A big-ass construction, that was for sure. Whatever had been the plan, it was never finished. Barely even started, really.

They'd dug out the ground, for foundations and a few levels of underground parking probably. And then they'd stopped.

That was a year or two ago, and nothing had changed. Right there, on the outskirts of town, was what everyone called the 'Pit'. A hole in the ground surrounded by metal fencing.

No-one ever went there.

The place was spooky, eerily quiet and hauntingly abandoned.

Anyone brave enough to climb the fence would get a good look at how deserted the place was. Abandoned construction materials strewn about everywhere, rubble and dust and dirt. Anything and everything of value had been scavenged long ago, leaving just the dead husk of a construction site.

Weeds grew in abundance, little bushes of life in an otherwise barren place.

Jake liked it here. Enjoying the solitude.

Here, he didn't have to worry about his mother scolding him for every little thing he didn't do. Here, he didn't have to worry about popping a boner every time he saw his sister around. Here, he could relax and rest without having to deal with the cluster-fuck of bullshit at home.

Carefully, he descended the slope of the Pit, climbing down as best he could without slipping and getting himself covered in dirt and grime. The last thing he needed was his mother bitching about being dirty again.

He headed to his usual spot, a tube of concrete piping that he could sit comfortably inside, and pulled a book from his school bag.

Reading might not be as action-packed fun as killing things in a video game but, here in this place, it felt right. Reading spooky stories in a spooky place was thrilling in its own way.

Mom's gonna be pissed I'm late again, he thought to himself

So what? She'd have been pissed anyway.

He'd been reading for about an hour when something caught his attention, a little movement in the corner of his eye.

There was an old woman in the Pit. A really old woman.

Bright white hair, wrinkles clearly visible even at a distance. She was short, back stooped, walking in a slow shuffle.

What in the world was an old woman doing here?

She was carrying a black bag about the size of her own torso, held it tight to her chest as she looked around the deserted are.

Where he was, hidden in his concrete shelter, cloaked in shadow, the old woman had no chance of seeing him.

Satisfied that she was alone, the old woman fell to her knees, placing her bag aside. Bizarrely, she began clawing at the ground with her bare hands.

Jake watched on, bewildered, as the old woman dug a hole in the soft earth.

Minutes passed, the old woman's hole getting ever bigger.

And then she stopped.

She picked up the black bag, pushed it down into the hole she'd made, began shovelling the dirt back on top of it with her hands vigorously.

When she was done, the woman flattened the earth there, attempting to make it appear undisturbed. She cast her eyes about again, looking for any sign of life.

And then she left.

Jake watched her go, curious and amused.

What was all that about?

What was in the bag that the woman had taking such measures to hide it? Illegal drugs being dropped off for someone else to pick up later? Seemed unlikely. Human body parts from a murder she'd committed? Even more unlikely.

Money? Valuables?

Now there was a thought.

Jake waited several minutes after the old woman disappeared before climbing out of his hiding spot. Without hesitation, he went to investigate.

Nothing interesting ever happened around here. The town was boring and lifeless.

This, what he'd just seen, was a mystery begging to be solved.

He dug up the black bag, opened it up.

Inside was another bag.

And inside that, was another.

Odd. But interesting. He opened that bag, found himself with even more questions than he'd just answered.

Inside was an old book.

It looked ancient. Clean, unblemished, but ageless all the same.

The book was like something out of a museum, with it's red leather cover, golden etchings. The paper looked sharp, glinting in the afternoon light. It was bound shut by an expensive-looking gold and silver clasp.

On the cover of the tome read the book's title:

The Undying's Grimoire of Body, Mind and Soul.

English, plain old modern English. That was odd. With a book looking this old, Jake would have been expecting at least a 'Ye Olde' somewhere in the title.

The grimoire was clasped shut.

He wanted to open it, read its contents and figure out why the old woman had buried it. But something stopped him. It was getting late, and dark. In his bedroom, illuminated by his desk's lamp, he could examine the tome properly.

So, instead of unclasping it, he slipped the book into his backpack and started his

journey home, bracing himself for his mother's inevitable raving.

"What time do you call this?!" Jake's mother spat, glaring. "Where the hell have you been?"

He made up some excuse; he'd been at a friend's house and lost track of time. He apologised, tried not to look her in the eye.

The next few minutes passed in a flurry of his mother's anger. She berated him, calling him names; lazy, stupid, selfish. She lectured him on this and that, venting all her personal problems onto him. And, when she was done ranting, she sent him to his room without dinner.

He did as he was told, tossing his school bag onto his bed and slumping down at his desk.

Bitch.

It'd been like this for months. Her refusing to accept the reality that her husband was cheating on her, instead taking all her frustrations out on Jake and Jess. It was dumb. The whole situation was beyond stupid.

Why was his father even having an affair in the first place?

It wasn't like his mother wasn't attractive. She wasn't even forty yet, still fit and lean after having two children. Wavy dark brown hair, grey eyes, full lips. Busty. If she hadn't been such a bitch to him recently, Jake might well have developed a hormone-riddled crush on her instead of Jess.

His thoughts were interrupted by a light tapping on his bedroom door.

"Come in," he said, suppressing a sigh.

Speak of the devil.

The door opened slowly, revealing his younger sister. She slipped inside, shutting the door behind herself.

Fuck, she's beautiful.

Bright blonde hair, like their father. Grey eyes, like their mother. Only her eyes were bright, full of life, ghostly pretty. Her hair was long, falling over her shoulders and down her back. She had their mother's full lips, though lacked her bust. Jess wasn't quite flat-chested, just more on the small side. But what she lacked in chest, she made up for in ass.

Like him, she was still in her school uniform. Only where he had a pair of bland black trousers, she had a knee-length skirt and socks.

What he wouldn't give to see what she was wearing under that skirt.

Jess smiled at him; a warm, sympathetic smile.

"Are you okay?" She asked, voice kind and soft. "I overheard Mom shouting at you..."

"I'm fine," Jake said, avoiding eye-contact.

Jess was silent for an awkward moment.

"So, where were you?" She said at last, sounding genuinely curious.

"Nowhere," he answered, a little too fast. Embarrassed, face red, his mind raced for a way to get her out of his room. "I have a lot of homework to do, so..."

"Oh," Jess said, sounding disappointed. A moment later, she was smiling again.

"Okay. Well, see you later!"

Jake watched her go, eyes drifting to her bottom by themselves. Why, of all people, did he have to have an infatuation with his own sister? Why did she have to be so fucking attractive?

Alone in his room, unlikely to be interrupted, Jake retrieved the odd book he'd found from his school bag, placing it neatly on his desk and examining it once more.

A grimoire. A book of magic.

He undid the clasp, opened the front cover to look inside.

And was met with a blank page. Yellow and old and utterly devoid of text or decoration.

He carefully flipped to the next page, which turned out to also be blank. The one after that too.

Anticlimactic, to say the least.

Surely they can't all be blank, right? Jake mused.

He opened the grimoire to a random page close to the book's middle, snatched his hand away wincing.

Fuck, he swore silently, looking down at his now stinging fingertip. A small red line had appeared there, a droplet of blood swelling from the thin paper-cut.

Just my luck.

He looked down at the grimoire, the open page, with a pang of guilt. A little smudge of blood had stained the paper, bleeding into the material and pooling outwards. Only, as he continued to watch, the blood kept moving, shifting towards the very top and centre of the page. And there, the red took shape in the form of letters. A single, blood-red word.

"Memory," Jake said the word aloud, not quite believing what his eyes were seeing.

It wasn't possible. How could his blood move through the paper like that? Were there somehow channels inside the sheet for the blood to follow?

Was there more hidden writing?

He looked down at his finger again, at the droplet of blood clinging to the tiny cut on his fingertip.

Tentatively, knowing he might well be about to ruin the page for good, he pressed bleeding fingertip to paper.

Pain. A sharp, stinging pain. His fingertip screamed at him to pull his finger away, relieve the pressure he was putting on the already painful cut. But he refused, watching the small bloodstain intently.

As before, the blood pooled, spread out and flowed into the shape of letters. Only there was more blood this time, and many more letters revealed. The stinging in his finger turned into a burning pain, unpleasant but bearable.

Slowly, the page filled with text. Paragraph after paragraph, all in thin cursive and all crimson red.

When the whole page seemed done, all the text revealed, Jake pulled his finger away, instinctively putting the burning fingertip into his mouth to ease the painful sensation. He glanced down at the small smudge of left-over blood, watched as it flowed up the page title, making the letters a little bolder.

He read it, curious and amazed.

Mind: Stick of Broken Memory. Followed by detailed instructions on exactly what the 'Stick of Broken Memory' was, what it did, and how to make one from scratch.

A magical construct with the purpose of erasing a person's recent memories of another. Or straight up erasing someone's recent memory in its entirety.

Jake read the whole page three times, flipping it over to see if there was anything written on the other side of the paper sheet. There wasn't.

The items he'd need to make one were all relatively easy to obtain. And the process sounded simple enough. He doubted it would work, but there was no harm in trying, was there?

It would be more fun than doing homework, at least.

He rose from his desk, began roaming his house and garden for the spell ingredients.

First was a wooden twig, the stick itself. His garden housed a fairly large tree, complete with tiny tree-house. Finding a branch the right size - ten inches or so - wasn't difficult. The grimoire instructions said to harden the stick over a flame, so Jake stole a box

of matches from the kitchen and stowed them away in his pocket for later.

While in the kitchen, he got another ingredient. Honey. The recipe didn't call for much, but he took the whole bottle all the same, as well as a spoon to spread it.

Next was hair. He needed hair of both people - the one who would forget, and the one who would be forgotten. For that, he went to one of the house's two bathrooms. The one Jess used in the morning before school. Inside, he found a hairbrush knotted and tangled with long, blonde hair. He took a few strands.

Everything else he needed was already in his room. A length of string, paper, a pencil, his own hair. He headed back there, feeling his heart pounding hard in his chest.

It wasn't going to work, he knew.

As weird and amazing as the blood-to-words trick had been, he doubted it was actually magic. Just clever design. The book, the language it was written in, was modern. It looked old, sure, but looks could be deceiving. Likely, the whole this was just some elaborate hoax of some kind.

That didn't explain why the old woman had been burying it at the Pit, sure. But, on the other hand, why would she get rid of it like that if the grimoire was legit?

Still, it was fun and interesting to try. So he followed the instructions written down.

Harden the stick over an open flame. It took most of the matches burning out before Jake considered the random stick flame-hardened enough. Next, write the names of both people, the one who was to forget and the one who they'd forget, onto two small pieces of paper. If he wanted Jess to lose all memories, rather than just her memories of him, he could put her name on both instead. He went with the first option, writing his sister's name on one piece of paper and his on the other.

Next was the use the honey as an adhesive, glueing the two bits of paper on either ends of the stick. After that, he tied a length of his sister's hair around her name and a length of his own hair around his. And, last but not least, he attached the string to the stick.

This was, the grimoire said, the risky part. How the string was tied would decide which person lost memories of the other, and for how long. He tied the knots on either end as described, wrapping the length of the string around the hardened wood a single time. One wrap meant six minutes, two for twelve. And on it went in multiples of six.

When he was done, he looked down at the thing wide-eyed.

The brown stick had turned black as he's hardened it, giving it a distinctly dark and ominous appearance. It certainly looked like something a witch or voodoo priest might make.

According to the book, when he snapped the stick, the spell would activate. For him, that meant Jess losing all memories of him from the six minutes before the stick broke. In theory, he could run into her room, grope her ass, and run back out. If he broke the stick within six minutes, she'd forget he'd ever done it.

Of course, he wasn't actually going to do that.

The spell wouldn't work, and running into his sister's room to fondle her probably wouldn't go down well.

Still, he had to test it.

He gave it a little thought, how he could logically test the spell. He'd come this far, the effort would be wasted if he didn't see it all the way through.

Finally Jake rose to his feet, setting the stick down on his desk. He walked to his bedroom door, opened it. He walked down the hallway to his sister's bedroom, tapped lightly on the wood and waited silently, heart racing.

Why was he so nervous? She was his sister. He shouldn't be this nervous and awkward at just the prospect of talking to her!

Jess opened the door, smiled when she saw him standing there.

"Hi," Jake said, voice braking ever so slightly. "Can I borrow a pencil please?"

Jess nodded her head, still smiling. "Sure."

She backed away from her door, walking over to her school bag where it sat next to her pink-coloured bed. She bent over, searching through it. Jake couldn't help but stare at her ass.

A few seconds later, she returned to the doorway, holding a pencil out to him. "Could you give it back when you're done? It's my last one."

Jake nodded, thanking her quietly.

He headed back to his room, to his desk where the blackened stick was waiting. Without hesitation, he picked it up, a hand on each end, and snapped the twig in two.

And went back to his sister's bedroom door.

He paused before knocking, knowing he was about to make a fool of himself. But it couldn't be helped. He tapped the door, waited.

It opened, revealing a smiling Jess.

"Yes?" She asked, beautiful eyes on him.

"Can I borrow a pencil please?" He asked, face hot.

There and then, he expected her to remind him that she'd just given him one. To berate him for being stupid, like their mother did. Or at least to lose her smile, look at him like he was being odd, strange.

Instead he nodded her head.

"Sure," Jess said, smile never faltering. "One sec."

She turned, walked over to her bag. Jake watched her with an open mouth this time, not even stopping to stare at her ass as she bent over to search her school bag.

It worked? How was that possible?

What?

After a minute searching, she looked up at him, frowning. And he thought for a moment that he was caught. But then she sighed, walked over to him. And apologised.

"I can't find it, sorry," Jess said, looking genuinely sympathetic. "I must have lost it somehow."

"No problem," Jake replied, mind reeling.

"Sorry," Jess said again as he stepped away, walked back to his room, dazed and confused and awestruck.

Back in his room, he read the book's cover over and over again.

The Undying's Grimoire of Body, Mind and Soul.

It worked. The spell inside it, still written in the crimson red of Jake's blood, worked.

One page. A random page from the middle of the grimoire. And it worked. That wasn't possible, it couldn't be. And yet it was. Jess didn't remember lending him her pencil. The spell worked exactly as the grimoire said it would.

He looked at the book with new eyes, eyes open to possibility.

It was a bulky book, hundreds of pages.

He'd seen one at random, and it contained a spell powerful enough to erase another person's memories. What about all the others, those hundreds of blank pages the grimoire possessed?

They couldn't all possess hidden spells, could they?

They couldn't all have spells as powerful as the Stick of Broken Memory, could they?

Only one way to find out, Jake found himself thinking.