

THE CHOSEN ONE

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Installment Two:

Corinne murmured in her sleep, her hair sliding softly across the pillow as she moved restlessly. She is here, thought Corinne. How did she get in? She wondered. How does she always get in? Corinne's dream self began to feel panic set in. She was in her room, but it was distorted somehow, the edges blurred. There was girl, a woman really, only she was much shorter than Corinne. She didn't know her, but this woman was always here, always in her dreams. Her back was to the open window, and her knife glinted in the moonlight. How did she get in? Corinne cast her eyes wildly about for a way to escape, as the woman stood there, smiling softly at her. She had auburn hair. Suddenly the scene changed with sickening swiftness, causing Corinne's eyes to water and her hands to grab for something to balance her. The scene settled. The room was darker now. The woman with the auburn hair was gone. It was twilight outside, and Corinne hadn't turned any lights on. She wondered why that was. As she started away from her bed and towards the desk across the room, Corinne heard a hiss. She froze. "Careful," said a hoarse whisper. Was it talking to her? "Careful with 'at one. She's on the Path, 'at one is," the voice continued. Corinne looked down at her feet. "Naw, not 'AT Path, ta udder one— Careful," it repeated, "she's one o' them Christ Followers she is— look at 'at necklace she got on." Corinne grasped the delicate cross she always wore. It had been her mother's. Now she heard shifting and creaking, coming from the closet. Corinne slowly slid one foot backwards, towards the bed. "Yeah, gotta be real careful-like with one o' them," a new voice agreed. Their voices are awful, Corinne thought in distaste, like nails on a chalkboard. And the closet! Why did it have to be the closet?? She wondered in despair. She bit her lip. Her left hand retained its grip on the necklace as her right groped frantically for the bed. She was moving so slowly, she was almost stopped. She hated feeling helpless, but what could she use as a weapon against who knew what? The door squeaked ever so slightly as it inched open. Corinne gulped. "Accept the gift," someone whispered in her right ear. She gasped at the sudden close proximity, jerking backwards, and lashing her right arm out as if to strike at something. There was no one there. There was a quick shuffle shuffle shuffle sound from the closet again, making Corinne whip her head back around the other way. It was moving towards her in the dark! Corinne turned swiftly, tripping on something that shouldn't have been there and was

falling...falling...falling... Corinne sat straight up in bed, panting and wide awake. Her shoulder length hair was damp with sweat, her mouth dry as cotton. She swung her legs over the side of the bed, tumbling for the bedside lamp switch. She leaned her elbows on her knees, putting her head in her hands. The dreams were coming more frequently now. Her therapist told her to concentrate on the feelings that the dreams elicited, not so much on the content of the dream itself. Well, there was that woman. She felt, not afraid, but intimidated and wary. Who the heck was she? And what was her significance? She must be symbolic of something or someone else in my life, Corinne reasoned. The voices coming from the Closet had scared her. She darted a quick look at her closet; it was firmly closed. And the other voice, the third one, it had startled her, seemingly coming out of thin air. Accept the gift? Corinne wondered. From who? What gift? She sighed heavily.

A breeze blew gently across her skin. Corinne shivered as goosebumps traveled up her bare arms. This sleeveless nightgown is really too thin for Fall, she thought idly. She heard a muffled thump, and the soft whirr as her window shade went up. Corinne stared in the direction of her window. There was a silhouette there, of someone perched on her windowsill! She scrambled frantically back into bed, so that her back was pressed firmly against her head board. Her knees she drew up to her chest, which felt like it was going to release her painfully pounding heart at any moment. The whole time, the silhouette sat, unmoving. Most of its weight on its bent left leg, it had its right arm propped casually on its other knee. The wind stirred again, and Corinne could see that the head was not bald, as she had originally thought, but instead, the hair was pulled back severely into a braid. It slid forward over the woman's shoulder with the force of the wind. She swayed slightly. Such a little woman, to fit on my window sill, Corinne thought wonderingly. It's her! She realized with a jolt, it's the woman from my dream.

"Well," drawled the shadow, "aren't you going to invite me in?" Her voice was deep and sultry. Corinne hadn't expected it to be for some reason. She hopped down from the window sill. She stood with her feet apart and her hands on her hips at the foot of the bed. She suddenly looked like a giant. She was halfway exposed by the moonlight filtering in through the window. Corinne could see that her face was sharply angled, but not in an unattractive way. Her eyes were so green. She flicked her braid neatly over her shoulder.

"You!" Corinne blurted out.

"You shouldn't leave your windows open at night you know," she continued, "Someone could very easily get in," she pointed out.

"But I'm on the second floor!" Corinne exclaimed. Then she clapped a hand over her mouth in horror as she realized she had just snapped at an armed woman who could get into second story windows.

"First rule: never assume," the woman replied. "And that is the first of many lessons, Chosen One."

"Ummm, I'm sorry, but you seem to have the wrong girl. Maybe you jumped into the wrong window. How did you get up here anyway?" She dared to lean forward slightly, craning her head towards the window. Her eyes searched for a ladder, but she couldn't see anything like that. The woman raised one delicately arched eyebrow.

"Blanchfield, Corinne? Approximately five foot six, light brown hair, grey eyes? No parents to speak of. Ron and Amy Winter, foster parents? That's you, isn't it?" she asked, continuing as if Corinne hadn't spoken.

Corinne's eyes were as round as saucers. She felt the sheet she had had been clutching slip a little as she stared.

"What do you want?" she whispered. The woman shrugged. "How 'bout first, we introduce ourselves, and then we talk for a while?"

"Well, you seem to know me pretty darn well! And as to talking, I don't know about that," Corinne said suspiciously. "Why should I? You just broke into my foster parent's home, and I am supposed to talk

to you as if you are a reasonable person? How do I know you're not crazy? Or that you're not going to hurt me?"

"Lots of questions. Why don't we just start with the basics? Hmmm?" the woman asked. "My name is Gwendolyn Falcor, daughter of Lom, heir to Aurora." She paused. "But you, Chosen, can call me Gwen," she added.

"Daughter of? Heir to? Where are YOU from?" Corinne asked, "and you can call me Cory," she added begrudgingly.

"I'm from the other side of the Gate. Suffice it to say, it's a long story. Let's start with why I am here," she said, moving forward as if to sit on the bed.

"No offense, but I'd rather you didn't," Corinne said, holding up her hands palms out, and shaking her head. Gwen shrugged again and crossed the room in three quick strides to grab the desk chair. She situated herself at the foot of the bed, with the chair turned around so she could sit on it backwards.

"Well, I suppose I should begin at the beginning," began Gwen with a sigh.

To be continued in the next issue.

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CREATIVE CORNER

The Dream Eater

His long pink snout,
Accents his fuzzy green ears—
He sucks up your nightmares
And chomps on your fears.

Put him in your sock drawer,
And when you're fast asleep—
He gobbles up those monsters,
Whether they hop, slither or creep.

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