

Haunted Pendant

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11 August 2020

The man ran as fast as he could, racing through the trees, the evil cackling still ringing in his ears. He turned to look over his shoulder, and it echoed afresh through the woods from all around.

“Run, run, run as fast as you can,” the voice mocked. “You can’t escape me, your new, personal bogey man, hahaHaHaHA!!”

The man opened his mouth to reply, but the world spun as a root yanked his feet out from under him and the dirt rushed to greet his face with a sharp thud. He pushed himself up and spun onto his back, looking wildly around. “Leave me alone,” he cried, peering into the shadows. The breeze blew and branches shifted all about, making it impossible to discern which shadows concealed harmless motion, and which harboured this malevolent spirit.

The voice chuckled. “Oh, but I can’t very well do that, can I, *my new host*.”

A shiver ran down the man’s spine. Scrambling to his feet, he resumed sprinting through the trees, lungs burning and blood pounding in his ears, but not loudly enough to drown out the echoing, mocking cackling. He continued for several minutes until he reached a clearing and a house. *Finally, home.*

“Ah, your cabin in the woods,” said the voice. The man nearly jumped out of his skin. “Well, it’s a nice change from that market, but still . . .”

The man stumbled out of the trees and up to the porch, and thrust his hand into his pocket, emptying its contents. He passed the gold pendant he’d bought into his free hand and bashed the key against the lock, fumbling until it went in. He hurried inside, locking the door behind him, and slumped to his knees, panting with his forehead against the cold wood.

“Did you not listen?” sighed the voice. This time, it did not echo, the sound much clearer and closer. “You can go nowhere without me now.”

The man’s eyes went wide as he spun around, eyes darting around the cabin. A sliver of moonlight streamed in through the window, dust swirling through it, but nothing else revealed itself, and he could hear nothing over the thumping of his heart in his chest and his ragged breaths.

The last thing he remembered before pain pierced his chest were the words, “You’re mine now,” and a cold, mocking cackle ringing in his ears.

The man blocked the beam of moonlight, the dust vanishing back into the darkness. He looped the cord around his neck, the pendant sliding free of his chest before bouncing to a rest on it, blood glistening in the moonlight. His lips twisted into a grin, and then uttered in a voice foreign to them, “Ah, much better.”