

AND A PLAGUE

UPON MARY

by

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Clyde looked down at the back of the tarot cards he had shuffled. "Christ," he thought, "am I really doin' this?"

The large cards nuzzled against his palm, and he could feel an energy that was not of his world. His unease intensified as he breathed the oppressive, incense laden air. Feeling trapped in the dim room, Clyde had an overwhelming desire to flee. But it was too late, he had come with purpose, and he was determined to see it through. As Clyde looked across the wide desk, sky-washed eyes impassively returned his gaze.

"Look, Artemas," he said, "I want you to give it to me straight, ok? If Mary's screwin' around, I want to know... I got to know."

"Yes... I'll tell it as it is," responded a soft voice.

Clyde was glad to hand back the cards, and he strained forward as the first one was turned over. It revealed a tower that was being struck by lightning. The top of the tower was shattered, and two people were falling to the earth. Fire mingled with blood was raining down from a dark and malevolent heaven. Clyde shuddered.

"Clyde, I see tension in your marriage. This tension isn't new, it's been there for some time, and there are two kingdoms in conflict, you... and Mary. You two are no longer one... and you've grown apart. I'm afraid that the energies are not good."

"Yeh, I know... Things haven't been goin' too good for a couple of years now... Then, 'bout six months ago I noticed a change in Mary..." He stopped.

"What change?"

"She became... became sort of happy. But, shit! It wasn't with me."

Artemas turned over the next card. It revealed two lovers embracing under a golden sun that shed multicoloured energy. Love, hope, and happiness radiated from the lovers, and adding to the joy was a border of bright colourful flowers.

"Yes, it appears that Mary has someone else in her life... a lover," continued Artemas slowly and deliberately. "He entered her life sometime during the last six months... The energy is very positive, and..."

"Shit!" interrupted Clyde. "The f...ing slut! I knew it! I could feel it! And it's still, bloody well, going on, isn't it... ISN'T IT?"

"Yes," said Artemas, as he turned over the next card. "It's still going on."

The new card revealed the Devil, complete with hooves, horns, and tail. In one hand he held the broken sword of the usurper, and in the other was a rope that was tied around the necks of two subjects. The card oozed evil, bestiality, bondage, restriction, and defilement. The devil squatted on an altar, and the two vassals were in an attitude of dominated subjection.

"This card is not a good omen. It indicates that... in your marriage, there has been violence and domination..." Artemas paused, and with a piercing eye, continued, "A domineering male influence is the source of violence... and a passive female influence is the recipient... Could that male be you, Clyde? And could that female be Mary?"

Clyde became uncomfortable, and concentrated on something under the desk. He took a few moments to respond...

"Ok," he finally blurted. "Where I come from, we like our woman to know their place... see? I've never thumped Mary without good reason. And sometimes she needs it... so she's reminded of who she is. I don't like her wanderin' about, so I make sure she stays at home where she belongs... I give her all she needs. Christ, I've given her a good home with lots of comfort..."

His eyebrows puckered as he wrestled with a new and difficult thought. "It's strange," he said slowly, "she's never been keen on sex, or that sort of thing. And sometimes I've had to assert my rights... You know how it is... The funny thing is, we've never had any kids."

Further thoughts tore into his brain, and his face reddened as he demanded, "Can you describe the bastard that's been messing around with my woman?"

Artemas turned over the fourth card. It revealed a magician standing at a table. There were magical tools on the table, an earth pentacle, a water chalice, a fire wand, and an air dagger. Also, there were dice and gaming pieces, and a mandrake leaf protruded from in a leather bag signifying higher vision and spirit understanding.

"Clyde, I'm afraid that the man who is involved with Mary is very powerful, and he won't be easy to defeat... Surrounding him is a cloak of mystery, power, and invisibility. His identity is hidden, and you wouldn't recognize him, even if you're both in the same room."

"Hell!" said Clyde. "It's all that bitch's fault. I've been too soft on her... What she needs is a good dose of my fist." He shook his head slowly, "I knew it was all wrong when I married her. She's really played me for a sucker... God! How I've sweated for her... And for what? ...I'll tell you for what, so she can screw around, that's for what. Well, she's finished," he said emphatically, "and she's never goin' to do it again... an' that's for sure."

Clyde looked at Artemas with burning black eyes, and furtively leaned forward, "Can you give me a curse, or something, that I can get rid of her... permanently?"

"How permanently?"

"I mean really permanently... like dead permanently?"

"Yes, I can," said Artemas. "But you must be sure that you really want to... For once such a curse is released, there's no stopping it..."

"Ok... Ok..."

"Also, you must be sure that you hate the person enough to destroy them. If you don't generate enough hate, the curse could return and destroy you."

"Hate? Oh yeh, I hate her alright... I hate the bitch to hell. Give me the strongest curse you've got."

Artemas turned over the fifth card... Death, in the form of a skeleton with a scythe, was revealed. And the reaper was bringing home an abundant harvest. There were bones scattered everywhere, and no one could escape, and all were falling before him, men, women, and children.

"Clyde, the strongest curse that I can give you is the curse of death..."

"Can anyone find out?" interrupted Clyde.

"No... the victim will simply have heart failure..."

"How long does it take to work?"

"Immediately..."

"How much?"

"Nothing... There's no charge for exorcisms, or curses... If you want the curse, I'll give you the instructions, and equipment... But remember, you must execute it yourself... And I warn you... you and you alone will be responsible for your actions."

"Ok... ok... I hear you... So, what do I have to do?"

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It was after six and dark when Clyde arrived home. His presence was announced by the front door closing with a slam.

"Who's that? ...Is that you, Clyde?" Mary's voice fluttered nervously down the stairs.

"Yes," he called back curtly. "I'll see you later... I've got somethin' I need to do... in the study. An' I don't want to be disturbed... Ok?"

Without waiting for a reply, he entered the study, and firmly closed the door.

"Good," he murmured, as he saw the fire glowing in the large grate. "You've played right into my hands, bitch. Come on whore... come and get yours... Time to pay the piper!"

Clyde thrust his hand deep into his jacket pocket, and took out a small brown paper package. Squatting on his hams in front of the fire, he carefully teased open the brown layers. His left hand slipped into the paper womb, and brought forth a small black-wax doll of about three inches long. The doll felt heavy and oily to his touch, and an evil force seemed to be contained within the figure. Clyde shuddered as the heavy scent of frankincense, lemon-grass, and mugwort wafted up from the thing.

He screwed up the brown paper, and threw it into the fire. With his right hand, Clyde felt along his lapel for the nine long pins that Artemas had given him. He carefully took out the pins, and laid them on the floor.

Taking the first pin, Clyde viciously thrust it into the crown of the doll's head. Taking the second and third pins, he forced them into the doll's eyes. He heeded Artemas' warning, and was careful that none of the pins touched each other. He was surprised at the ease with which they pierced the wax. As they went in, he felt dark anger within him, and with hate welling up like congealing black blood he snarled, "May your head be crushed, and your eyes burst. And may death strike you down."

Clyde jabbed the fourth, fifth, and sixth pins into the doll's breasts and reproductive area, and spat, "May you rot with cancer and pox, and may death strike you down."

With the seventh and eighth pins, Clyde laterally transfixated the dolls arms and legs, and hissed, "May you be bound by this curse, that you can never escape, and may death strike you down."

Clyde took the ninth pin, and summoning all of his living hate, he drove it through the dolls heart. As the steel tore through the soft wax there was a loud thump on the ceiling above... something had fallen on the bedroom floor.

Clyde sneered, and with a malevolent voice, he said, "With this final pin, through the heart, die! Die! DIE!"

And with his head swimming, he threw the doll into the fire's glowing embers, and breathlessly, with a hissing voice, he invoked, "I commit this curse to the flames of consummation, that it be established and sealed forever. I, Clyde, curse you in birth! I curse you in life! And I curse you in death! Thus it is, and thus shall it be..."

Slowly standing up, he rested his head against the mantelpiece, and he sneered. He watched with satisfaction as the flames licked the small black body with hot tongues. The doll relaxed, and a feeling of euphoria spread over Clyde. At last! It was finished! and he knew he'd won... The feeling grew stronger, and the room began to swim...

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The bedroom door swung open slowly, and Mary started back in terror.

"Oh!" she cried. "It's you! You gave me such a fright. I thought... I thought it was him... Is it over?"

"Yes... it's over," responded a soft voice.

She looked into sky-washed eyes, and whispered, "He kept hurting me. I couldn't take any more."

"I know."

"Earlier, I dropped my suitcase, and I thought he might suspect. I was so scared that he'd hurt me again."

"He won't hurt you again... ever... I promise."

"Do I go down... you know, down to make sure?"

"No... there's no need. Your husband has suffered a fatal heart attack and lies dead on his study floor. It appears to have been caused by the shock of his wife leaving him."

Mary's eyes questioned the voice.

"Don't worry," continued the voice, "it was quick, and he didn't suffer. He just dropped down dead..." The voice paused, then continued, "Are you packed? It's time to leave."

"Oh!" gasped Mary. "what'll we do? They'll find..."

"There's nothing to find," soothed the voice. "Even after a careful search, the only things they'll find are a few pins in the ashes."

"But I've killed him..."

"No you haven't," said Artemas pulling her close to him. "Never say that. Clyde killed himself with his own evil. Remember, he tried to curse you... and that which he projected at you simply came back on him. Never, ever, forget that."

"Is it true?"

Artemas smiled secretly, and whispered, "Yes, it is. When Clyde was thrusting the pins into the doll, he was actually thrusting them into his own black heart... He never stood a chance."

"Oh, Artemas, I love you, and you've made me so happy these past few months, I..."

"Hush, my darling," whispered the soft voice. "I love you so much, and now we're together... forever."

His lips smothered any further resistance. Then he whispered, "Come... it's time to go."

Artemas picked up the suitcase from the bed, and gently guided Mary to the door. As she left, her hand automatically switched off the light, and she quietly closed the bedroom door for the last time...

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