

The Ilk

Depression is very much a real thing, a severe one. When encountering such a person, many will exchange some slightly beneficial, yet not helpful, tidbits. He does not understand why society treats it as taboo to even mention its accursed name nor speak of it. What Mauricio did not imagine, is it breathing in flesh and bone, its emaciated physique dwarfing his six foot stature. Proud of its sudden attention, it flashed him a Cheshire cat grin, a set of blackened crocodile teeth protruded out of its rotting gums. In its place of eyes, orbs of white flame met his already dilating eyes. In contrast to its eyes, it was its skin or there lack of, no amount of light could reflect on that biped. It raised a talon to carve on the wall, etching a single word. No...a name. A pressure formed in his cranium when suppressing the urge to emanate its name. Whatever it was, that instinct was not of his own. His mouth was forced open, and his tongue was put to work to word out *NEF*—a melodic set of drumming on wood and shout of '*Pizza Delivery!*' broke his spell. He was greeted with an empty living room, its carved name the only imprints of its existence.

After several, back-to-back doctor visits and prescribed with stronger medications, he was ultimately prescribed with olanzapine to treat his chronic hallucinations. He was not a fan of legal drugs even as highly addicting olanzapine was rumored to be. The monster had frequent visits for its daily torment to the point where it made itself a home, causing physical inflictions upon him for any time of the day or night. For the refusal of pronouncing its name, he referred to it as *the ilk*. It helps that the olanzapine slowly ceases the ilk's existence, serenity overthrows chaos' rule.

Days grew into months, no sightings of the ilk had occurred and life seemed to be bright, depression was no longer an inconvenience. As Mauricio was beginning to settle into normalcy, the ilk had returned out of thin air. Its teeth sunk into his left shoulder, halting his progress on a tomato mid cut. Like barbed wire, it dragged skin and small clumps of meat as it withdrew; blood soaking through his clothing within milliseconds. He spun on his feet and dug the kitchen knife into its abdomen, drawing a spray of thick, black viscous. An ear-piercing screech of pain as it doubled over. He broke a sprint, heavy footfalls were gaining on him. When the door handle was on arms' reach, he ripped the door open and slammed back shut. There was a thunderous impact, followed by a wood splintering. He remained slumped against the wall, alone with his pessimistic thoughts and sounds of inhaling and exhaling echoing across the hallway as the light gradually drifted away from his vision.

Mauricio was awoken from the rhythmic sounds of the heartbeat monitor, doctor and nurses going on errands to attend to his needs and the needs of others. The authorities were involved and there were questions about his injuries and his old inflictions. To not suspect insanity, he took his time to make up about his former friend, now stalker causing his inflictions and was afraid to speak out against him. Most of his days, relatives and friends visited with floral bouquets and get-better-soon cards, enlightening his demeanor. Bedridden, the nurses would often read out of his cards to him. The nurse pulled out another card from the envelope for the umpteenth time and began reading aloud:

We hope you rest well enough, o' despaired one. The fun had not ended, yet.

~ *Nefas*

As the literation ended, choking sounds were emitted by the nurse, frothing from the mouth. Collapsing face first on the floor, convulsing. An iceberg had reached the bottom of his stomach, his heart accelerated to the verge where Mauricio felt that it would explode out of his cavity. The skin of the dead nurse flaked off, spilling out organs and fat dyed with crimson. The flesh and bone of the corpse decomposed and bubbled, dissolving into a familiar, viscous. Morphing into the vantablack form of the ilk.

"I know what concept you are." Uttered Mauricio. "But, what are you in reality?" Nefas emitted sounds of amusement, its chest quaking in a irregular, staccato rhythm.

"I am the harvester of your thoughts and the darkest depths of your mind. I am the inherited sins of humanity and ever since the day your people considered yourselves sentient. I am called by many names—demon, beast, harbinger, monster, and includes your personification of myself: the ilk. I am what the gods called...

Forbidden."

There was acceptance in the mortal's eyes. Nefas took it as a good sign to creep upon the gatch bed and tower over the defeated Mauricio. Its maw hovering centimeters away his succulent, tender jugular.

"I don't want to suffer anymore." Mauricio broke down, excessive globs of lacrimal fluid rolled down on his face. "I beg of you, take me, Nefas."

With a confirmation of its namesake, it tore, dragging a severed windpipe, jugular, and a voice box. Smacking its blood-coated lips as it witnessed Mauricio enacting a quiet scream, blood gushing out of exposed neck. His muscles tensed up, then slowly relaxed, becoming unresponsive. There were many names to savor as it cannot restrain itself to be satisfied, its mouth watering. Gazing upon another despaired one to the neighboring room, was a middle-aged woman grieving for his husband, its next appetizer.

*"Analesia...it sounds **delicious**."*