

## 72 cases of the Blackhearts Detective Agency

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<https://github.com/NaNoGenMo/2016/issues/111>

### Chapter 1

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Effie. She is in a hurry. I bite my lip. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Wakefield archive.

I walk to Wakefield archive. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a paper shredder. I examine the situation. The archive is totally trashed and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The brute smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I'm in deep trouble.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I tremble. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to focus. Right. I could drain the power from the abomination if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The monster smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a desk. My fists clench. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. Right. I need to work this out. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I prepare myself for unmooring the monster from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic pseudopod and duck under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at the archive should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. It doesn't pay. At least there's one less the thing haunting the

world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

## Chapter 2

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. Unpaid heating bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Willie steps in the door and explains his problems. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the grocery store.

I take a cab to the grocery store. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted grocery store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a safe. I examine the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the grocery store. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The thing covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the thing fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a counter. I reel. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to focus. It hits me like a belligerent badger. I might be able to overload the demon if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the swarm drawing near. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself locked into a side room. My gut sinks. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? No, that won't work. Right. I need to concentrate. Right. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I sidestep a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The grocery store is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But

that was way too close. In any case, Willie now owes me one. This should go nicely towards my heating bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the sunrise.

### Chapter 3

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. A letter arrives from Lewis. I furrow my brow. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the garden.

I take a cab to the garden. I crack the lock quietly and step through. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the ground. I look around. I can see large claw marks covering the garden and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. It's bigger than I thought. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The wraith crushes the only viable receptacle with its fist. The wraith cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a rampaging rhino. I could drain the power from the brute if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the wraith pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The brute's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I weave and scramble, knocking over the ground. I freeze. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to breathe. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic tentacle and slide under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The garden is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the thing haunting the world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good

at. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the night.

## Chapter 4

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Martha. She sounds urgent. My gut sinks. It sounds bad. I don't savour the idea of visiting the general store again.

I walk up to the general store. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted general store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monstrosity won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the general store stands in suspiciously good condition. Obviously it is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the monster appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. It cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to concentrate. It hits me like the end of a bad weekend. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I try and drain it, but find the grounding is all wrong. The creature is not even phased. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I stumble in the dark. I feel a cold sweat coming on. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, got to focus. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the tricky devil drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the monstrosity and step back it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the thing! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The situation at the general store should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Martha compensates me for my troubles. I hope my bookies take credit. Sometimes I wonder why the hell

am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the rain.

## Chapter 5

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. I look back at the telegram from Arthur. Sigh. It doesn't seem good. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Ramos hardware store.

I walk to Ramos hardware store. I frown. I step inside. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the hardware store and small rusted flakes cover the floor. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the creature from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monster attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It carries me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I fly through the air and land on my back, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I check my back. It doesn't look too good. My jaw clenches. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to work this out. Right. I have a plan. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The creature covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the creature fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. I feel my body tense. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to think. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to think. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the swarm appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I duck under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

Ramos hardware store quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not worm food. But that was way too close. It doesn't pay. At least there's one less it haunting the world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the fog.

## Chapter 6

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's David. He sounds urgent. I tremble. It sounds bad. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the hardware store.

I walk up to Ashmore hardware store. I feel my body tense. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted hardware store always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the hardware store and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. Time to kick some demon ass. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? It crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I'm in deep trouble.

I stumble in the dark. My grip tightens. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to focus. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my foot, busting it. My foot hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my foot. It doesn't look too good. I feel my body tense. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. I really need to concentrate. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at Ashmore hardware store should be under control now. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, David now owes me one. I'll make he make me dinner. It's the least he can do. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

## Chapter 7

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. Unpaid electricity bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. A note arrives from Eugene. I bite my lip. It sounds bad. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Whitlock nightclub.

I walk up to the nightclub. I crack the lock quietly and step through. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The abomination won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a billiard table. I look around. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and hundreds of tiny holes dot the nightclub. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my foot, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I check my foot. It's bad. I tremble. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Just breathe. The realization hits me like a steel stallion. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The abomination crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. I frown. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. My options seem hopeless. How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to concentrate. Right. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I slide under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

Whitlock nightclub is opened for business soon after. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the abomination haunting the world. This should go nicely towards my electricity bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 8

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. Unpaid bank bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord captain's picture when the phone rings. It's Elmer. He sounds hopeless. I freeze. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the factory.

I arrive at Beechworth factory. I raise an eyebrow. I go in. Heavy metal machines though still, show signs of the relentless march of industry. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the factory. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I zap the swarm, but it only slows it down for a second before the power fails and sparks fly from the wires as a fuse busts broken. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monster behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. Sigh. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my hand, busting it. My hand hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my hand. It doesn't look too good. I furrow my brow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? I look around. My options seem hopeless. No, that won't work. Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a moody Monday. I have to first weaken the thing with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The swarm shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I slide under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

Beechworth factory is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Elmer now owes me one. This should go nicely towards my bank bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose



it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

## Chapter 9

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my back. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Samuel steps in the door and lays out his problems. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Whiston nightclub.

I stop outside Whiston nightclub. I reel. I step inside. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I look around. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and the nightclub is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the brute appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. It sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The abomination maims my chest with its claws. My chest hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my chest. It's bad. I grit my teeth. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, got to think. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Right. I need to work this out. It hits me like a crazed cultist. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the monstrosity from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The brute's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the thing and crash into a side room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I hesitate. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to concentrate. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a mad melody. I could drain the power from the monster if I can ground it.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I dodge its gigantic tail and strafe around it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

Whiston nightclub quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not six feet under. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. However, Samuel now owes me one. Maybe he can help me get my back checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the city.

## Chapter 10

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job, desperately. Harold enters my office and lays out his problems. I reel. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Whittock library again.

I take a cab to Whittock library. I hesitate. I step inside. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. I snap out of it. Time for work. The demon won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I consider the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the library and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. It punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my foot, busting it. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my foot. It's bad. I grit my teeth. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to breathe. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. It punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my leg, busting it. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my leg. It doesn't look too good. My grip tightens. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. Just focus. It hits me like a hurling hammer. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the brute appears. It's bigger than I thought. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I dodge its gigantic beak and sidestep it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The library is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Harold compensates me for my troubles. Now I can fill my larder again. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the city.

## Chapter 11

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job, desperately. The phone rings. It's Myrtle. She sounds urgent. My jaw clenches. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the mill.

I stop outside the mill. I grit my teeth. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted mill always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a control panel. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and I can see large claw marks covering the mill. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the wraith. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the monstrosity pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. It punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my chest, busting it. My chest hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my chest. It doesn't look too good. I freeze. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to work this out. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. I really need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the thing.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The monster punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I frown. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, got to focus. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to stop and think. Right. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic tail and duck under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the brute! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

Cole mill quickly gets up on its feet. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less the monster haunting the world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

## Chapter 12

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I look back at the letter from Lawrence. I grit my teeth. Already it seems like

a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Halbard nightclub.

I walk to the nightclub. I feel my body tense. I step inside. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a stool. I examine the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the nightclub and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I might be able to overload the monster if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the thing drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? Its hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. It maims my shoulder with its talons. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my shoulder. It doesn't look too good. I grit my teeth. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. I really need to concentrate. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the abomination to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the monstrosity from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the brute attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I hesitate. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to focus. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the abomination if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I dodge its gigantic beak and slide under it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

The situation at Halbard nightclub should be under control now. Well, at least I'm still alive. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Lawrence now owes me one. I'll make he make me dinner. It's the least he can do. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the rain.

## Chapter 13

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. Charlie enters my office and lays out his problems. I grit my teeth. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the courthouse.

I arrive at Jordan courthouse. I raise an eyebrow. I go in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work. The monstrosity won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and hundreds of tiny holes dot the courthouse. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I should be able to bind the demon to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The swarm covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the monster fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a safe. Sigh. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to get it together. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the swarm if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I hesitate. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, got to get it together. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to breathe. Right. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I sidestep a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The situation at Jordan courthouse should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not snuffed out. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. My only reward is the gratitude of Charlie. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

## Chapter 14

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. My poker buddies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's Jesse. He sounds hopeless. I tremble. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Hopkin bar again.

I walk up to Hopkin bar. I crack the lock quietly and step through. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a jukebox. I look around. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the bar and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I try and destroy an anchor, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. I run wildly through the illusions, the wraith hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a stool. I tremble. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to think. It hits me like a freight train. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the thing.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The swarm crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Sigh. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, I need to focus. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Just breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the demon if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the wraith drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I strafe around a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The bar quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Jesse compensates me for my troubles. I hope my poker buddies take credit. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 15

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. Unpaid heating bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. I dig up the note from Sadie. I reel. It sounds bad. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Whittock crypt.

I take a cab to the crypt. I raise an eyebrow. I step inside. The stench of death floats in the air like a

persistent miasma. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I consider the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and hundreds of tiny holes dot the crypt. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken the creature with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The swarm shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? It crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I'm in deep trouble.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I grit my teeth. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. I really need to breathe. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The monstrosity crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I tremble. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to focus. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. I really need to stop and think. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the creature from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I sidestep a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

Whittock crypt quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not worm food. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Sadie now owes me one. Maybe I can get she to help me with the heating bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the city.

## Chapter 16

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. A letter arrives from Walter. I furrow my brow. Already it seems like a tough case. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Strong speakeasy.

I walk to Strong speakeasy. I crack the lock quietly and step through. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a jukebox. I examine my surroundings. The speakeasy stands in suspiciously good

condition and small rusted flakes cover the floor. Obviously it is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I might be able to overload the creature if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the thing drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The demon disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The creature appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I'm in deep trouble.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I tremble. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I examine my surroundings. What now? My options seem hopeless. No, that won't work. I really need to breathe. Right. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The creature disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. It appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the monster from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the thing attacks. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the thing and sidestep it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at Strong speakeasy should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. My only reward is the gratitude of Walter. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 17

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Annie. She sounds hopeless. I grit my teeth. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the grocery store.

I take a cab to Kidd grocery store. I raise an eyebrow. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted grocery store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I consider the situation. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and the grocery store stands in suspiciously good condition. Obviously the monster is



more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. The tricky devil flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. I feel my body tense. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the demon.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The thing creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a counter. My gut sinks. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to think. Right. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I fake out the monstrosity and step back it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The situation at the grocery store should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. At least there's one less the tricky devil haunting the world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 18

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my chest. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I dig up the telegram from Katherine. I tremble. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the balloon terminal.

I walk up to Wraith balloon terminal. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The abomination won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a radio tower. I examine my surroundings. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and the balloon terminal stands in suspiciously good condition. The thing must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity

for real thought. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the abomination appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It crushes the only viable receptacle with its nails. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the abomination fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a bench. I tremble. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to stop and think. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the demon.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The monstrosity cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monstrosity behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a luggage cart. I furrow my brow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. What can I do with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and strafe around it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

Wraith balloon terminal quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not worm food. But that didn't at all go according to plan. It doesn't pay. However, Katherine now owes me one. My chest still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

## Chapter 19

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my back. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Irene. She is in a hurry. I furrow my brow. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Ellis garden.

I take a cab to Ellis garden. I crack the lock quietly and step through. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I consider the situation. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the garden and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The thing carries me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. I feel a cold sweat coming on. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Just think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The wraith covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. I furrow my brow. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Just concentrate. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. Time to kick some demon ass. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the ground. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The situation at the garden should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. However, Irene now owes me one. My back still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the sunrise.

## Chapter 20

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel the familiar craving for painkillers. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Sarah enters my office and explains her problems. I freeze. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the park.

I take a cab to Down park. I reel. I cross the fence. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a statue. I examine the situation. Curious symbols mar the park and small rusted flakes cover the ground. It must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I going to finish the circle like this? It cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. It cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. I grit my teeth. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. I really need to focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The demon creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, it hot on my tail. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. My fists clench. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could bind it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to think. Right. I have a plan. I should be able to bind the creature to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the tricky devil and duck under it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The park is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. My only reward is the gratitude of Sarah. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 21

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. The plumbing could use a little work. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. The phone rings. It's Carrie. I feel my body tense. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the police station.

I walk up to the police station. I raise an eyebrow. I go in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a safe. I consider the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the police station. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I try and destroy an anchor, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I'm in deep trouble.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. I furrow my brow. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to stop and think. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. I wrestle with it and crash into a side room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself locked into a side room. My fists clench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. Okay, I need to think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The monster shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I slide under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The situation at Sinnett police station should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. It doesn't pay. At least there's one less it haunting the world. Well, I still need to get that plumbing fixed. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the city.

## Chapter 22

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Ruby steps in the door and lays out her problems. I grit my teeth. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting the train station again.

I walk to Godwin train station. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. The station seems so empty. Only a few homeless people shuffle slowly around the vicinity, lending the place a destitute atmosphere. I snap out of it. Time for work. The brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a bench. I look around. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and I can see large claw marks covering the train station. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monstrosity. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone.

I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The brute's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the brute behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. I hesitate. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, got to breathe. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the demon to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monster attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I grit my teeth. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to work this out. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from the thing if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. I need this to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I dodge its gigantic nails and duck under it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

Godwin train station is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. At least Ruby pays me the appropriate fee. Now I can fill my larder again. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the city.

## Chapter 23

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. Unpaid heating bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. I look back at the telegram from Floyd. I hesitate. It sounds bad. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the graveyard.

I stop outside Hyem graveyard. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and curious symbols mar the graveyard. Obviously the monster is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, the demon hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a sarcophagus. My fists clench. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the monstrosity if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I try and drain it, but find the grounding is all wrong. It is not even phased. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. I frown. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, got to think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. Right. I need to get it together. It hits me like a freight train. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The wraith shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and strafe around it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The situation at the graveyard should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. However, Floyd now owes me one. Maybe I can get he to help me with the heating bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I step into the fog.

## Chapter 24

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my hand. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. I look back at the letter from Clarence. I grit my teeth. Already it seems like a tough case. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the general store.

I arrive at the general store. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted general store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a counter. I consider the situation. The general store stands in suspiciously good condition and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. The tricky devil must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the thing attacks. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The creature creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, it hot on my tail. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. I frown. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? No, that won't work. Just think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the tricky devil with all my might but my attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. I run wildly through the illusions, it hot on my tail. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the creature behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind the monster to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I fake out the creature and jump over it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The situation at the general store should be under control now. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. My only reward is the gratitude of Clarence. My hand still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 25

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pain in my leg. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job, desperately. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Lydia. She sounds hopeless. My grip tightens. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Stevens graveyard.

I walk to the graveyard. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a sarcophagus. I look around. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and curious symbols mar the graveyard. Obviously the thing is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The tricky devil disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. It pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.



I find myself without my gear. I reel. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to work this out. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Just think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the demon appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The tricky devil appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I frown. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. What now? I look around. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Just breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the wraith to our world.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and jump over it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at Stevens graveyard should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. My only reward is the gratitude of Lydia. My leg still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I step into the sunrise.

## Chapter 26

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. The phone rings. It's Andrew. I bite my lip. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Halbard factory again.

I arrive at Halbard factory. I feel my body tense. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted factory always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a control panel. I examine my surroundings. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the factory. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I might be able to overload the abomination if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The demon roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I grit my teeth. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. Right. I need to breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the swarm if I can ground it.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the swarm pounces on me. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The monstrosity crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I reel. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to breathe. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to work this out. Right. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The factory is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not sleeping the big sleep. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Andrew pays me the appropriate fee. Now I can fill my larder again. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the sunrise.

## Chapter 27

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel the familiar craving for painkillers. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Earl comes to my office and explains his problems. I grit my teeth. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the balloon terminal.

I walk to the balloon terminal. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a radio tower. I examine the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and I can see large claw marks covering the balloon terminal. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit it with all my might. It only makes it angrier. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I stumble in the dark. My grip tightens. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider

the situation. How do I deal with this? My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the brute.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my back, busting it. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my back. It doesn't look too good. I freeze. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monstrosity. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I dodge its gigantic pseudopod and duck under it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

Gunn balloon terminal quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Earl now owes me one. I'll have he refill my stash. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 28

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. A letter arrives from Fred. I furrow my brow. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the balloon terminal.

I arrive at the balloon terminal. I hesitate. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the balloon terminal is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monster behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. I grit my teeth. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? I don't think I can do this. I really need to work this out. It hits me like a freight train. I might be able to overload the monstrosity if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end

bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. It smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. My grip tightens. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, got to breathe. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to work this out. Right. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I dodge its gigantic nails and duck under it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The balloon terminal quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still breathing. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Fred now owes me one. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 29

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel the familiar craving for laudanum. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. The phone rings. It's Albert. I freeze. It sounds bad. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the bar.

I walk to Hopkin bar. My grip tightens. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a billiard table. I examine the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the bar is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The monster flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the creature fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a counter. My fists clench. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to get it together. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just breathe. Right. I have to first weaken the brute with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the monster with all my might. It only makes it angrier. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I stumble in the dark. My grip tightens. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to breathe. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to breathe. Right. I could drain the power from the monster if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the thing pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic claws and jump over it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

The situation at Hopkin bar should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. However, Albert now owes me one. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 30

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel the familiar craving for painkillers. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. I dig up the note from Richard. I reel. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the speakeasy.

I arrive at the speakeasy. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted speakeasy always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a stool. I examine my surroundings. Curious symbols mar the speakeasy and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. Obviously it is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I might be able to overload the tricky devil if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The monstrosity creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a billiard table. My jaw clenches. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I hit the demon with all my might. It only makes it angrier. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. I feel a cold sweat coming on. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine the situation. My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to work this out. Right. I have a plan. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. I pray that this will work I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the demon and strafe around it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The speakeasy quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. However, Richard now owes me one. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 31

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. My loan shark are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job, desperately. A note arrives from Josephine. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the courthouse.

I arrive at Baldwin courthouse. I furrow my brow. I go in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. The courthouse is totally trashed and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I might be able to overload the thing if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. I need this to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The brute roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I reel. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to focus. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the floor with its claws. I wrestle with the monster and crash into a side room I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself trapped in a small room. My fists clench. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, got to stop and think. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could bind it? All of

my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to focus. Right. I have a plan. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I dodge its gigantic tentacle and sidestep it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

Baldwin courthouse quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. However, Josephine now owes me one. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the night.

## Chapter 32

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Ray steps in the door and lays out his problems. I frown. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the archive.

I walk up to the archive. I feel my body tense. I step inside. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The brute won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a desk. I examine the situation. The archive is totally trashed and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monster. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The thing's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, I need to focus. I look around. What now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to concentrate. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? It's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The brute maims my leg with its stinger. My leg hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my leg. It's bad. I freeze. At least I'm not cashed in yet. Okay, I need to think. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Okay, I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the wraith if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab

a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I dodge its gigantic talons and jump over it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

Lynch archive is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. However, Ray now owes me one. This should negate my debt nicely. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the night.

## Chapter 33

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. The plumbing could use a little work. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Will. He sounds hopeless. My jaw clenches. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting the morgue again.

I walk to Gibson morgue. My gut sinks. I step inside. The stench of death floats in the air like a persistent miasma. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the morgue. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I should be able to bind the monster to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I pray that this will work I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monstrosity appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The wraith sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. I wrestle with it and crash into a side room I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. I feel my body tense. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Could work. If I get lucky. Just focus. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The monster crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a paper shredder. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. Okay, I need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a freight train. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The



demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The situation at the morgue should be under control now. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that was way too close. At least Will pays me the appropriate fee. At least the money should help fix the plumbing. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the city.

## Chapter 34

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel the familiar craving for laudanum. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. A letter arrives from Ernest. I feel my body tense. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the morgue again.

I walk up to Sinnett morgue. My fists clench. I go in. The air is heavy with the sweat and dust of a thousand wasted man-hours. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a paper shredder. I examine the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the morgue. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the swarm from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? How am I supposed to do this? Just stop and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the swarm with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my arm, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I check my arm. It's bad. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to focus. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the thing if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I block its attack

with the live wire and electricity courses through the swarm! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The situation at Sinnett morgue should be under control now. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was way too close. In any case, Ernest compensates me for my troubles. Time to refill that stash. Oh yeah. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 35

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. The sink gurgles and clanks ominously. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Rose steps in the door and lays out her problems. Sigh. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the bar.

I arrive at the bar. I tremble. I go in. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a stool. I look around. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the bar is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the wraith drawing near. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. It smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. I frown. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to focus. Right. I have a plan. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the brute. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monster appears. It's bigger than I thought. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I frown. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I steady my breath. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I dodge its gigantic jaws and strafe around it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

The bar is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Rose now owes me one. Well, I still need to get that sink fixed.

Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the night.

## Chapter 36

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job, desperately. I dig up the telegram from Howard. I reel. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting the mill again.

I take a cab to the mill. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted mill always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The abomination won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a control panel. I consider the situation. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and the mill is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the abomination appears. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the floor with its claws. I wrestle with it and crash into a side room. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself locked into a side room. I reel. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to think. Right. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the abomination. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The abomination crushes the only viable receptacle with its tentacle. The abomination cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I stumble in the dark. I hesitate. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Just get it together. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the monstrosity pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I dodge its gigantic jaws and strafe around it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

The mill quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Howard pays me the appropriate fee. I hope my bookies take credit. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the city.

## Chapter 37

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my back. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Julia enters my office and lays out her problems. I feel my body tense. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the speakeasy.

I stop outside Chavez speakeasy. Sigh. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted speakeasy always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a stool. I consider the situation. The speakeasy stands in suspiciously good condition and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. Obviously the demon is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. I hesitate. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to think. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the demon from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the wraith attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. It flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I'm tossed inside a small room. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I feel my body tense. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to stop and think. Right. I might be able to overload the tricky devil if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the tricky devil drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the wraith and slide under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the monster! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The situation at Chavez speakeasy should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not cashed in. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. My only reward is the gratitude of Julia. My back still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the rain.

## Chapter 38

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my shoulder. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. The phone rings. It's Ellen. She sounds hopeless. My grip tightens. Already it seems like a tough case. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Forge graveyard.

I take a cab to Forge graveyard. My jaw clenches. I go in. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I look around. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and the graveyard is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. It disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the brute fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monstrosity behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I hesitate. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload the abomination if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I zap it, but it only slows it down for a second before the power fails and sparks fly from the wires as a fuse busts broken. The brute cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I stumble in the dark. I frown. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to stop and think. It hits me like a freight train. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic tail and strafe around it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The situation at Forge graveyard should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. However, Ellen now owes me one. Maybe she can help me get my shoulder checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 39

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. Unpaid electricity bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. I'm throwing darts at the lord captain's picture when the phone rings. It's Lena. She sounds urgent. My gut sinks. It sounds bad. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Dosett mill.

I walk to the mill. I bite my lip. I go in. Heavy metal machines though still, show signs of the relentless march of industry. I snap out of it. Time for work. The demon won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a workbench. I examine the situation. Curious symbols mar the mill and blackish ichor is pooled on the floor. Obviously it is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to weaken the place that anchors the abomination to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The demon flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. I bite my lip. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. I really need to work this out. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the thing appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. It disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The tricky devil pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I find myself without my gear. I hesitate. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the abomination if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. I need this to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the abomination pounces on me. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I fake out it and strafe around it. I jab the grounding wire into its eyes. It screeches unbearably and shrinks in size as its power is drained until it disappears with a fizzle.

The mill quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. However, Lena now owes me one. Maybe I can get she to help me with the electricity bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my hand. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Jack comes to my office and explains his problems. I feel a cold sweat coming on. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Alexander park.

I walk to the park. My gut sinks. I cross the fence. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I examine my surroundings. The park stands in suspiciously good condition and blackish ichor is pooled on the ground. The tricky devil must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. I pray that this will work. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The tricky devil creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, the thing hot on my tail. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to focus. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. This has got to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the tricky devil drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The monster disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the thing fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the ground. I freeze. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to think. What now? I look around. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the demon appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the abomination and strafe around it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

Alexander park is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. However, Jack now owes me one. Maybe he can help me get my hand checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

## Chapter 41

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. My poker buddies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a

detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Esther comes to my office and explains her problems. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the police station.

I arrive at Kenward police station. I raise an eyebrow. I step inside. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a desk. I examine the situation. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the police station and small rusted flakes cover the floor. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I could drain the power from the creature if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the demon pounces on me. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I try and drain the creature, but find the grounding is all wrong. The monstrosity is not even phased. The swarm cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. My fists clench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to concentrate. Right. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The swarm covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a paper shredder. I grit my teeth. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to work this out. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the demon.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the monster appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I jump over a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The police station is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Esther now owes me one. This should negate my debt nicely. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 42

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my shoulder. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Claude enters my office and tells me his problems. I grit my teeth. It doesn't seem good. He



really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the park.

I walk up to the park. I crack the lock quietly and step through. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the ground. I consider the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the park and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the brute. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the brute appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? It sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. I wrestle with it and crash into a side room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself trapped outside. I feel my body tense. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Just breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the wraith appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The brute smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I stumble in the dark. I feel a cold sweat coming on. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What do I do now? I consider the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? No, that won't work. I really need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monster attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic fist and duck under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The park is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less it haunting the world. My shoulder still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

## Chapter 43

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. Unpaid heating bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I dig up the telegram from Viola. I feel a cold sweat coming on. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting the bar again.

I stop outside the bar. I raise an eyebrow. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The abomination won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a jukebox. I examine the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and the bar stands in suspiciously good condition. The tricky devil must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The monstrosity creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself without my gear. I bite my lip. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to breathe. I examine the situation. What now? My options seem hopeless. No, that won't work. Just focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the abomination from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the tricky devil attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The abomination flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I feel my body tense. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? No, that won't work. I really need to work this out. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the monster if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the abomination drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and sidestep it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the abomination! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The situation at the bar should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Viola compensates me for my troubles. I can't pay the bills with good intentions though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 44

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. A telegram arrives from Edith. I freeze. It doesn't

seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the grocery store.

I walk to Gonzales grocery store. My gut sinks. I step inside. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. The grocery store is totally trashed and blackish ichor is pooled on the floor. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the abomination with all my might but my attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself without my gear. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to stop and think. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. It smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the brute fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monstrosity behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I freeze. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I look around. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the abomination to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I pray that this will work I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic pseudopod and slide under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The grocery store is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not six feet under. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Edith now owes me one. This should negate my debt nicely. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

## Chapter 45

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. My loan shark are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Gertrude enters my office and lays out her problems. My fists clench. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Forge nightclub.

I walk to the nightclub. I crack the lock quietly and step through. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a billiard table. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the nightclub stands in suspiciously good condition. The thing must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I could drain the power from the monster if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. It disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The monster pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. My jaw clenches. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, got to breathe. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Just stop and think. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload the thing if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the monster drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. It creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, it hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. I bite my lip. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to breathe. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to work this out. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the dancefloor. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I fake out it and jump over it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The situation at the nightclub should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not dead. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the tricky devil haunting the world. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 46

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pain in my shoulder. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. Frederick enters my office and explains his problems. I bite my lip. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Brewer library.

I take a cab to Brewer library. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted library always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I examine my surroundings. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the library is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to weaken the place that anchors the creature to our world.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. My fists clench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Could work. If I get lucky. Just concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. It's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the creature and crash into a side room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself locked into a side room. I reel. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to breathe. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monstrosity. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the brute appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic fist and jump over it. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The situation at Brewer library should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less the monster haunting the world. My shoulder still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the night.

## Chapter 47

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Clyde comes to my office and explains his problems. Sigh. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the courthouse again.

I arrive at Seymour courthouse. My grip tightens. I go in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work. The swarm won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross

across all imaginable surfaces of the courthouse and small rusted flakes cover the floor. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I might be able to overload the creature if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my chest, busting it. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my chest. It doesn't look too good. I frown. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to think. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the creature from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the creature attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. My gut sinks. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I jump over a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The courthouse quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still breathing. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Clyde compensates me for my troubles. Now I can fill my larder again. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I disappear into the city.

## Chapter 48

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. The phone rings. It's Benjamin. My gut sinks. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Ramos general store.

I stop outside Ramos general store. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted general store always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The creature won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the general store is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I might be able to overload it if I can

connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The creature punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my stomach, busting it. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my stomach. It's bad. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? I don't think I can do this. Just focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the creature to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The brute smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monstrosity behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a safe. I feel my body tense. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Just think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the brute.

I clear some space for the circle. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the demon appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic pseudopod and strafe around it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

Ramos general store is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. My only reward is the gratitude of Benjamin. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the city.

## Chapter 49

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. My poker buddies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. I dig up the note from Beatrice. My jaw clenches. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the balloon terminal again.

I walk to Urwin balloon terminal. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I look around. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the balloon terminal and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The swarm crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. My jaw clenches. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Just breathe. Right. I could drain the power from the swarm if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I try and drain the thing, but find the grounding is all wrong. It is not even phased. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the thing fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. I really need to breathe. It hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I sidestep a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I show it the vessel and it is mesmerized by the item! I utter words of power and it is bound screeching into the vessel.

The balloon terminal is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Beatrice compensates me for my troubles. I hope my poker buddies take credit. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 50

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. Unpaid electricity bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Leo enters my office and tells me his problems. I raise an eyebrow. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Younger graveyard again.

I walk up to the graveyard. I furrow my brow. I go in. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a sarcophagus. I examine my surroundings. The graveyard is totally trashed and small rusted flakes cover the floor. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the thing. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. This has to work. I grab a piece of



exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I frown. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to think. I look around. What do I do now? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the brute pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. It punches me right through a plaster wall. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the monster fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a tombstone. I feel my body tense. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic tentacle and slide under it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

Younger graveyard quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Leo compensates me for my troubles. I can't pay the bills with good intentions though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the fog.

## Chapter 51

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel the familiar craving for laudanum. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Elsie comes to my office and lays out her problems. I tremble. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Rowe graveyard.

I arrive at the graveyard. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted graveyard always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a statue. I look around. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and curious symbols mar the graveyard. The monstrosity must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. Phantoms dance at the

edges of my vision. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. I frown. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, got to breathe. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the demon pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The monster disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. It appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Sigh. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, got to focus. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. Right. I need to think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the tricky devil and duck under it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

Rowe graveyard is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the wraith haunting the world. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 52

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. My loan shark are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I dig up the letter from Susie. My fists clench. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Whitlock mill.

I walk up to Whitlock mill. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I go in. Heavy metal machines though still, show signs of the relentless march of industry. I snap out of it. Time for work. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a control panel. I examine the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and the mill stands in suspiciously good condition. Obviously it is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. A mad electric giggle

echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The wraith creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the tricky devil fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over the floor. My gut sinks. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to breathe. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? I don't think I can do this. Just breathe. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the demon with all my might. It only makes it angrier. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. My jaw clenches. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, I need to focus. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. I really need to concentrate. It hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and strafe around it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The situation at the mill should be under control now. Well, at least I'm still alive. But that was way too close. It doesn't pay. My only reward is the gratitude of Susie. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

## Chapter 53

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel the familiar craving for laudanum. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. Francis steps in the door and explains his problems. My jaw clenches. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Devitt graveyard.

I walk to the graveyard. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted graveyard always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The graveyard stands in suspiciously good condition and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. The monster must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I could drain the power from the monstrosity if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone.

Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. It creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. I frown. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I look around. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to breathe. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the thing drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The thing creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

Facing a demon with no gear. Great. I feel my body tense. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to stop and think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to get it together. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the monstrosity from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out it and sidestep it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

Devitt graveyard is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. However, Francis now owes me one. I'll have he refill my stash. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 54

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. Unpaid bank bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Olive enters my office and explains her problems. I bite my lip. It sounds bad. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Kim nightclub.

I arrive at Kim nightclub. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted nightclub always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a billiard table. I examine the situation. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the nightclub and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I pray that this will work I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monster attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. It crawls all over the wiring, making

sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I'm in deep trouble.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I furrow my brow. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. This has got to work. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the creature drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I zap it, but it only slows it down for a second before the power fails and sparks fly from the wires as a fuse busts broken. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I grope around in the dark. Sigh. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to focus. I examine the situation. What now? My options seem hopeless. No, that won't work. Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a freight train. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the swarm.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The nightclub quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less the thing haunting the world. This should go nicely towards my bank bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the rain.

## Chapter 55

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. My bookies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord captain's picture when the phone rings. It's Vera. She sounds urgent. Sigh. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the hardware store.

I walk to Marshall hardware store. I bite my lip. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted hardware store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The hardware store stands in suspiciously good condition and blackish ichor is pooled on the floor. The abomination must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the thing pounces on me. Phantoms dance

at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The tricky devil creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over the floor. I furrow my brow. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, got to concentrate. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the tricky devil to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the demon from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. My grip tightens. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to think. What now? I look around. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Just focus. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I fake out the abomination and strafe around it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

Marshall hardware store is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less it haunting the world. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 56

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pain in my shoulder. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord captain's picture when the phone rings. It's Dora. She sounds urgent. I frown. It sounds bad. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the hardware store.

I walk to the hardware store. I bite my lip. I go in. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. I snap out of it. Time for work. The brute won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a safe. I look around. I can see large claw marks covering the hardware store and small rusted flakes cover the floor. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. I hit it with all my might. It only makes it angrier. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all

according to plan.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a counter. I reel. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to focus. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind the brute to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. I pray that this will work I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The creature sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a counter. I tremble. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the demon if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the brute drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic beak and slide under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The hardware store quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still alive. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no monetary compensation. However, Dora now owes me one. My shoulder still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the rain.

## Chapter 57

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my foot. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. I look back at the telegram from Hazel. I frown. It sounds bad. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the power plant.

I walk up to Strong power plant. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted power plant always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a workbench. I consider the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and the power plant is totally trashed. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the floor with its claws. I wrestle with the monstrosity and crash into a side room I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself trapped in a small room. My jaw clenches. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to

concentrate. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to get it together. It hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The brute smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. My fists clench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic stinger and slide under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

Strong power plant is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not dead. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. It doesn't pay. My only reward is the gratitude of Hazel. My foot still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 58

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. The window could use a little work. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I dig up the telegram from Gladys. My grip tightens. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the bar.

I walk to the bar. I bite my lip. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a stool. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the bar and small rusted flakes cover the floor. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when it appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the floor with its claws. I wrestle with it and crash into a side room I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself locked into a side room. I bite my lip. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Right. I need to focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. I could drain the power from the creature if I can ground it.



I steady my breath. I need this to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The creature's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The monstrosity maims my hand with its claws. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my hand. It's bad. I furrow my brow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the creature with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. It's bigger than I thought. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I dodge its gigantic nails and step back it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The bar quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not croaked. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Gladys now owes me one. Maybe I'll call in my favor to help fix the window. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 59

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Nora. She sounds hopeless. I tremble. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Seymour courthouse.

I walk up to Seymour courthouse. I grit my teeth. I step inside. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a desk. I look around. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the courthouse. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the swarm.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the monstrosity appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The swarm cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I bite my lip. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. Right. I should be able to bind the swarm to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone.

The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The demon sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The wraith maims my leg with its talons. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I check my leg. It's bad. I tremble. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Okay, I need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I duck under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

Seymour courthouse is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Nora now owes me one. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the city.

## Chapter 60

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my back. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Dorothy enters my office and explains her problems. My gut sinks. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the college.

I arrive at Adams college. I bite my lip. I step inside. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a bookshelf. I consider the situation. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the college and small rusted flakes cover the floor. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The demon covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the creature behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a bookshelf. I raise an eyebrow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe. I look around. How do I deal with this? My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to get it together. Right. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The swarm shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the creature with all my might but my

attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to focus. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I jump over a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at the college should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not croaked. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. However, Dorothy now owes me one. Maybe she can help me get my back checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the fog.

## Chapter 61

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. Unpaid heating bills are starting to overflow my desk. I wonder how long it will take before they cut me off entirely. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Paul steps in the door and tells me his problems. I furrow my brow. It doesn't seem good. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the police station.

I arrive at Griffin police station. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. The air is heavy with the sweat and dust of a thousand wasted man-hours. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I examine my surroundings. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the police station. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I steady my breath. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. It shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the abomination with all my might. It only makes it angrier. It cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I stumble in the dark. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to breathe. What now? I look around. My options seem hopeless. How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to work this out. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the monstrosity if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The abomination

roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I hesitate. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine my surroundings. What can I do with this? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. Just focus. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the swarm to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when it attacks. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I strafe around a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The police station is opened for business soon after. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Paul now owes me one. This should go nicely towards my heating bills. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 62

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my leg. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Lucy enters my office and tells me her problems. My gut sinks. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Hayward bar again.

I stop outside the bar. My jaw clenches. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a jukebox. I consider the situation. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the bar and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the swarm.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the wraith appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I fly through the air and land on my shoulder, busting it. My shoulder hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my shoulder. It's bad. My grip tightens. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. Just work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I'm tossed inside a small room. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself locked into a side room. I bite my lip. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Just breathe. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. I duck under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

Hayward bar quickly gets up on its feet. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Lucy compensates me for my troubles. Maybe I'll use the money to go get my leg checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the city.

## Chapter 63

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. Wind howls through the broken roof. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Willie enters my office and explains her problems. Sigh. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the mill.

I walk to Gonzales mill. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. Heavy metal machines though still, show signs of the relentless march of industry. I snap out of it. Time for work. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a workbench. I examine my surroundings. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and hundreds of tiny holes dot the mill. This must be the work of a swarm demon. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The swarm shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? It crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I'm in deep trouble.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. Okay, I need to work this out. Right. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as the swarm pounces on me. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. The monstrosity crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. My gut sinks. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, got to breathe. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to breathe. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I jump over a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The mill is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not six feet under. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no monetary compensation. However, Willie now owes me one. Well, I still need to get that roof fixed. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

## Chapter 64

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel the familiar craving for painkillers. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Laura. My gut sinks. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the general store again.

I take a cab to Owens general store. I tremble. I go in. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. Okay, enough waxing poetic. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a safe. I examine my surroundings. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the general store and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing the whole swarm. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of half the swarm. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I steady my breath. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the thing attacks. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The whirling swarm completely overruns me and I get swept along the tide of demon matter. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. My gut sinks. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Oh this is just hopeless. Just get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the wraith if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This is my last chance. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The thing covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a safe. I freeze. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, got to

think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to focus. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. I slide under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

Owens general store is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Laura pays me the appropriate fee. Time to refill that stash. Oh yeah. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the fog.

## Chapter 65

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. Wind howls through the broken window. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Rosa. She sounds urgent. My grip tightens. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the college.

I walk up to the college. I crack the lock quietly and step through. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The brute won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and I can see large claw marks covering the college. The scene suggests a not-too-bright it. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I pray that this will work I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The wraith punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. Sigh. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? No, that won't work. Just stop and think. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the monster from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I find myself trapped in a small room. I furrow my brow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I

hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I dodge its gigantic tail and slide under it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The college quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less thing haunting the world. Well, I still need to get that window fixed. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the city.

## Chapter 66

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my shoulder. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Alfred comes to my office and tells me his problems. My fists clench. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the garden.

I walk to Reynolds garden. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted garden always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the ground. I examine my surroundings. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and curious symbols mar the garden. Obviously the demon is more cunning than average. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I might be able to overload the tricky devil if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of it drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I zap it, but it only slows it down for a second before the power fails and sparks fly from the wires as a fuse busts broken. The tricky devil cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I grope around in the dark. I frown. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to breathe. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? I don't think I can do this. Just get it together. Right. I have a plan. I should be able to bind the monster to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the creature. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the creature appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. It disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. It appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I bite my lip. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, got to focus. What now? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. Just focus. Right. I have to first weaken the tricky devil with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault.



The tricky devil shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I fake out it and sidestep it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

Reynolds garden is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not worm food. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. My only reward is the gratitude of Alfred. My shoulder still hurts though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 67

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pang of hunger in my stomach. I'd fill my fridge if I could. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Mabel comes to my office and tells me her problems. Sigh. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Chavez general store.

I walk to Chavez general store. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted general store always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a counter. I consider the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and the general store stands in suspiciously good condition. The thing must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. This has to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The tricky devil shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? It disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. It appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I'm in deep trouble.

My head spins as I try to regain control. I raise an eyebrow. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to get it together. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors it to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. It flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I fly through the air and land on my foot, busting it. My foot hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I check my foot. It doesn't look too good. My jaw clenches. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, I need to breathe. I look around. How do I deal with this? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to breathe. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the creature if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to

the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and slide under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the tricky devil! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

The general store is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less the creature haunting the world. Both my stomach and the larder are still empty though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the sunrise.

## Chapter 68

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel a pain in my leg. I think it's infected. I should get it checked out. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Daisy. She sounds urgent. Sigh. Already it seems like a tough case. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the nightclub.

I stop outside the nightclub. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted nightclub always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a stool. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the nightclub and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monstrosity. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the demon appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The wraith's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the brute fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade it behind me.

I run like a madman, scrambling over a counter. I reel. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. I really need to get it together. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. I begin drawing a large circle on the dancefloor. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the dancefloor with its claws. It maims my shoulder with its nails. I'm in deep trouble.

I check my shoulder. It doesn't look too good. I frown. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. What now? I look around. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to think. Right. I might be able to overload the monster if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the monstrosity drawing near. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I dodge its

gigantic tentacle and duck under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through it! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

Blair nightclub quickly gets up on its feet. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Daisy now owes me one. Maybe she can help me get my leg checked. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 69

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. My poker buddies are breathing down my neck about those debts though. I've just gotten my last warning, too. Problem is, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Catherine. I bite my lip. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Jordan speakeasy.

I arrive at the speakeasy. My gut sinks. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted speakeasy always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a stool. I consider the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and I can see large claw marks covering the speakeasy. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the demon. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I have to first weaken it with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The brute punches me right through a plaster wall. I decide to retreat and take off running, with it fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. I reel. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. What now? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. I really need to think. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload it if I can connect it to the power grid.

I grab a loose live wire hanging from the wall by the safe part. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the monster drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The abomination's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the brute and crash into a side room I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. I grit my teeth. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to concentrate. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the abomination attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic talons and step back it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor

binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

The situation at the speakeasy should be under control now. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. It doesn't pay. However, Catherine now owes me one. I'm still neck deep in debt though. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the fog.

## Chapter 70

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. The plumbing gurgles and clanks ominously. It will be bad if I can't get it fixed soon. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. Fast. Ida comes to my office and lays out her problems. I bite my lip. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the law firm.

I walk to the law firm. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a desk. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the law firm stands in suspiciously good condition. The tricky devil must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I might be able to overload the demon if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I grab a piece of exposed wiring, its end bristling with electricity. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? It roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My head spins as I try to regain control. My gut sinks. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could bind it? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to breathe. Right. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. It disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. It appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I tremble. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. I don't think I can do this. I really need to think. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the demon to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring it from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud laughter comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out it and duck under it. I grab the last anchor point with my bare hands. I finally remove the last anchor binding it to our world and send it screeching back to the collective unconscious.

Ford law firm quickly gets up on its feet. Well, at least I'm not feeding the worms. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. However, Ida now owes me one. Well, I still need to get that plumbing fixed. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the rain.

## Chapter 71

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel the familiar craving for opium. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's Maude. She sounds hopeless. I raise an eyebrow. It sounds bad. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the bar.

I stop outside Baldwin bar. I tremble. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a counter. I look around. Curious symbols mar the bar and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. It must be more subtle than your average demon. I should be able to outsmart it, though. After all, demons don't actually possess the capacity for real thought. I should be able to bind the abomination to this vessel.

I reach for my bag for my tools. I pray that this will work I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the abomination. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when it appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The demon disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The abomination appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. My fists clench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to stop and think. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I reach for my bag for my tools. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The thing disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. It pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I'm in deep trouble.

I find myself without my gear. I raise an eyebrow. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, got to stop and think. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? No, that won't work. I really need to focus. It hits me like a freight train. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain it.

I clear some space for the circle. I pray that this will work I begin drawing a large circle on the floor. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I fake out the abomination and step back it. I complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

The situation at Baldwin bar should be under control now. Well, at least I'm not six feet under. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. At least there's one less the monster

haunting the world. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

## Chapter 72

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. I feel the familiar craving for laudanum. My stash is empty and I desperately need some more. Problem is, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. I dig up the note from Oscar. I frown. It doesn't seem good. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the balloon terminal.

I walk to Graham balloon terminal. I raise an eyebrow. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work. It won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a luggage cart. I look around. I can see large claw marks covering the balloon terminal and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. I could drain the power from it if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. This has got to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. I haven't even tested the grounding as it pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. It punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I find myself locked into a side room. I tremble. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. No, that won't work. Okay, I need to stop and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind it to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold it. I hear it too late. A loud screeching howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The monstrosity smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. I grit my teeth. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Right. I need to concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the brute with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I take the electric brand from my pocket. I pray that this will work I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. I hear it too late. A loud screech comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic fist and strafe around it. I smash it between the eyes! It reels in pain. I pummel it again and again until it can't hold itself together any more and disintegrates.

The balloon terminal is opened for business soon after. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. However, Oscar now owes me one. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is till empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just

another day in the life. I disappear into the night.