

72 cases of the Blackhearts Detective Agency

By Aarne Uotila

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Chapter 1

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, 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 mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's Ida. She is in a hurry. I furrow my brow. It sounds bad. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Brewer library.

I walk to Brewer library. I frown. I go in. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. 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 I can see large claw marks covering the library. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the wraith. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I should be able to bind the demon to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monstrosity. 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 start to second guess my plan. The demon 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 hesitate. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to get it together. 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 focus. It hits me like a steel stallion. 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. 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 start to second guess my plan. The monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the demon and crash into a side room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I freeze. I find myself trapped in a small room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. 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. I really need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. 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 supposed to break its anchoring like this? 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't

get paid. My only reward is the gratitude of Ida. 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. Life goes on. I step into the fog.

Chapter 2

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. Fast. I look back at the note from Louise. I feel my body tense. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the grocery store.

I walk to Chattoway grocery store. I hesitate. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted grocery store always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the monstrosity won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a safe. I look around. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the grocery store. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I should be able to bind the creature to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the swarm. 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 creature 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.

My jaw clenches. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Okay, I need to concentrate. Right. 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. 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 creature drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The swarm crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I tremble. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to concentrate. I consider the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to focus. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

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 laughter 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? 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.

I smile. 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, Louise 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's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I fade into the city.

Chapter 3

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. Fast. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Claude. My fists clench. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Stanbury law firm again.

I walk to the law firm. I furrow my brow. I go in. The air is heavy with the sweat and dust of a thousand wasted man-hours. I snap out of it. Time for work; the tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I look around. Curious symbols mar the law firm and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. Obviously the wraith 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 need a plan, though. 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 when the wraith 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 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. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My gut sinks. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. What now? I consider the situation. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the tricky devil to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil 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. How am I supposed to break its anchoring 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 monster hot on my tail. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I frown. I run like a madman, scrambling over a filing cabinet. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, got to work this out. What do I do now? 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 think. The realization hits me like the end of a bad weekend. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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? I fake out the wraith 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Claude pays me the appropriate fee. 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. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the sunrise.

Chapter 4

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 look back at the telegram from Gladys. My fists clench. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Strain balloon terminal again.

I stop outside the balloon terminal. I grit my teeth. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted balloon terminal always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a radio tower. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and curious symbols mar the balloon terminal. Obviously the wraith 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the tricky devil 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 when the wraith pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The wraith 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.

My jaw clenches. I find myself without my gear. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to get it together. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I steady my breath. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the wraith 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. I try and destroy an anchor, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the monstrosity fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the wraith behind me.

I tremble. I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to think. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I could bind it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a belligerent badger. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the demon and sidestep 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.

I grin. 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, Gladys 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 know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the city.

Chapter 5

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. Ernest enters my office and lays out his problems. I furrow my brow. It sounds bad. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Cole morgue.

I walk to the morgue. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted morgue always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a paper shredder. I examine my surroundings. The morgue stands in suspiciously good condition and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the monstrosity 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 when the tricky devil pounces on me. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The demon disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. The abomination pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

My jaw clenches. I find myself without my gear. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a moody Monday. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the abomination.

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 abomination appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. The abomination disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The monster pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I grit my teeth. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to breathe and think. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to stop and think. Right. 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. 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 abomination drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the tricky devil and sidestep 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Ernest 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 sunrise.

Chapter 6

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. Herman steps in the door and tells me his problems. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Sinnett library.

I stop outside Sinnett library. 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; the creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a bookshelf. I examine the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the library 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. Still, I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

I reach 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 the brute appears. 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'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I freeze. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach 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. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The brute punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I find myself locked into a side room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. What now? I look around. My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Just concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the creature 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. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic talons and sidestep it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the creature! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not snuffed out. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Herman 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 has to be done. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and fade into the city.

Chapter 7

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. A letter arrives from Irene. My gut sinks. 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 library.

I arrive at Gonzales library. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted library 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 bookshelf. I examine my surroundings. The library stands in suspiciously good condition and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. 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. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The monstrosity disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The creature pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My jaw clenches. I find myself without my gear. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to focus. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to think. Right. I have a plan. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monstrosity. 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 creature creates multiple illusionary copies of itself, leaving me wondering which is the original. I run wildly through the illusions, the tricky devil hot on my tail. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the monstrosity behind me.

My gut sinks. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bookshelf. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Just get it together. The realization hits me like a mad melody. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the tricky devil and sidestep it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the demon! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the thing 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 has to be done. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 8

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. I dig up the telegram from Daniel. My grip tightens. It sounds bad. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the park.

I stop outside the park. 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. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The abomination won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a statue. I consider the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and the park 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. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I reach for my tools. 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 demon attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The monster smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the abomination fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could bind it? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a rampaging rhino. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The abomination 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? The thing's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The monster maims my back with its stinger. My back hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I freeze. I check my back. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to think. Right. I should be able to bind the brute 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 demon. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monster appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I dodge its gigantic claws 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.

I smile. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the abomination 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 fog.

Chapter 9

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, desperately. I dig up the letter from Louis. I hesitate. 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 garden.

I walk 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. I snap out of it. Time for work; the creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I examine the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the ground and the garden stands in suspiciously good condition. Obviously the tricky devil 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 need a plan, though. I have to first weaken the monster 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 creature 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. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My gut sinks. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I consider the situation. 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 might be able to overload the thing 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 creature drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The monster 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.

I bite my lip. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm not room temperature 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. Just focus. Okay, I think I got it. 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 thing 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? I fake out the monster 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not room temperature. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Louis 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. Another day, another job. I step into the city.

Chapter 10

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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Arthur. 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 the graveyard.

I walk up to the graveyard. My gut sinks. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted graveyard always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a statue. I look around. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and hundreds of tiny holes dot the graveyard. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. 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. 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 when the thing pounces on me. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. 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 furrow my brow. I find myself locked into a side room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. 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. The realization hits me like a crazed cultist. I have to weaken the place that anchors the swarm to our world.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the demon from its anchor points. 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 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 creature fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

My jaw clenches. I weave and scramble, knocking over a statue. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Just think. The realization 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 take the electric brand from my pocket. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The monstrosity 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 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. However, Arthur 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 disappear into the fog.

Chapter 11

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. Annie enters my office and explains her problems. I feel a cold sweat coming on.

Already it seems like a tough case. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the hardware store.

I walk to the hardware store. I crack the lock quietly and step through. 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; the brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a safe. I consider the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the hardware store 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. Still, I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the brute.

I reach 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. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The demon cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The thing cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I look around. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to think. It hits me like a hurling hammer. I should be able to bind the demon to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the brute. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The brute crushes the only viable receptacle with its fist. The brute cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I frown. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I look around. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to breathe and think. Right. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The creature 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 dodge its gigantic tail 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not croaked. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I don't get paid. However, Annie now owes me one. Well, I still need to get that window 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. Another day, another job. I fade into the fog.

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Michael enters my office and tells me 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 park.

I take a cab to the park. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought

of a haunted park always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the park 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. Still, I need a plan. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. 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 start to second guess my plan. The brute crushes the only viable receptacle with its tail. The wraith cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I reel. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm not worm food yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I look around. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to breathe and think. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. 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? The monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the monstrosity fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I grit my teeth. I run like a madman, scrambling over a statue. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. Right. I need to concentrate. It hits me like a freight train. I could drain the power from the demon 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 when the wraith pounces on me. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. However, Michael 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

Chapter 13

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. Fast. Carrie steps in the door and tells me her problems. I reel. It sounds bad. I don't savour the idea of visiting Seymour library again.

I stop outside Seymour library. I hesitate. I go in. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. Blackish ichor is

pooled on the floor and I can see large claw marks covering the library. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the abomination. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I should be able to bind the brute to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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? The monstrosity 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 feel my body tense. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to get it together. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the abomination.

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 abomination appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The brute punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my shoulder, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I tremble. I check my shoulder. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe and think. What can I do with this? 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 concentrate. Right. I could drain the power from the thing 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 when 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 stinger and step back 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.

I grin. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Carrie 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 14

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. 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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Lewis. He sounds hopeless. My gut sinks. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the hardware store.

I walk to the hardware store. I feel my body tense. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted hardware store always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and hundreds of tiny holes dot the hardware store. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will

sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I reach for my tools. This has got to work. 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 demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The monster carries 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. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I grit my teeth. I check my foot. It doesn't look too good. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What do I do now? I look around. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the monstrosity.

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 the swarm appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. The creature crawls all over the wiring, making sparks fly. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the swarm fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I bite my lip. I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to focus. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could bind it? I don't think I can do this. Okay, I need to focus. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the monstrosity if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when 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. I slide under a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. 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.

I relax. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't get paid. However, Lewis now owes me one. Maybe I can get he to help me with the 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

Chapter 15

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, desperately. Ray comes to my office and explains his problems. I frown. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Down park again.

I arrive at the park. I bite my lip. I cross the fence. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a statue. I examine my surroundings. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the park and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I might be able to overload the wraith if

I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach 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? 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. The demon cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I reel. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to focus. Right. 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 wraith 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 demon 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 fists clench. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to work this out. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. 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. I start to second guess my plan. I strafe around a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the ground. 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not worm food. But that was way too close. At least Ray 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 fade into the sunrise.

Chapter 16

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like 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. A telegram arrives from Katherine. My gut sinks. It sounds bad. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the bar.

I walk to the bar. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted bar always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a jukebox. I consider the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the floor 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. Still, I need a plan. I might be able to overload the monster if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my tools. This has got 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. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The brute 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 grit my teeth. I find myself locked into a side room. 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? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to focus. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach 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 the monstrosity attacks. It's bigger than I thought. 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 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 the monstrosity behind me.

I furrow my brow. I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, got to think. What now? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Oh this is just hopeless. Just breathe and think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the thing 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. The brute 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 beak 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the creature 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 hail a cab and fade into the night.

Chapter 17

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. The phone rings. It's Elmer. He is in a hurry. I frown. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Hyem morgue.

I stop outside the morgue. My grip tightens. I step inside. The stench of death floats in the air like a persistent miasma. I snap out of it. Time for work; the wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a desk. I examine the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and I can see large claw marks covering the morgue. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the wraith attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The brute'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 feel a cold sweat coming on. I find myself locked into a side room. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Just breathe and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the brute with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon 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? The brute's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The brute maims my chest with its stinger. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I reel. I check my chest. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to get it together. 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 tools. 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. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic jaws 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.

I smile. 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, Elmer 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. Just another day in the life. I fade into the night.

Chapter 18

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my stomach. 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. I look back at the telegram from Francis. I reel. It sounds bad. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Whipple morgue.

I stop outside the morgue. I reel. I step inside. The air is heavy with the sweat and dust of a thousand wasted man-hours. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a coffin. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and curious symbols mar the morgue. 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the demon 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 when the monster pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The wraith disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The thing pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my

equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I hesitate. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, I need to breathe and think. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Just think. Right. I have to first weaken the tricky devil 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. 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 hit the wraith with all my might but my attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. I run wildly through the illusions, the tricky devil hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

My jaw clenches. I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to stop and think. 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. Just get it together. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster 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 wraith attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the monster 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.

I grin. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the monster haunting the world. My stomach 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 fade into the fog.

Chapter 19

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. I look back at the note from Benjamin. I tremble. Already it seems like a tough case. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Kenward mill.

I walk to Kenward mill. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted mill always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a control panel. I consider the situation. Curious symbols mar the mill and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. 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 need a plan, though. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I steady my breath. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the monstrosity 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. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The tricky devil 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 furrow my brow. I find myself trapped in a small room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to concentrate. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to breathe and think. It hits me like a freight train. 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 wraith drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. The monstrosity roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I furrow my brow. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. I really need to focus. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind the tricky devil to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monster. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monstrosity appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the demon 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still breathing. But that was way too close. I don't get paid. 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'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 20

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. David steps in the door and explains his problems. I frown. It sounds bad. I don't savour the idea of visiting the factory again.

I take a cab to the factory. I tremble. I step inside. Heavy metal machines, though still, are a sign of the relentless march of industry. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I consider the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and the factory stands in suspiciously good condition. The demon 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the tricky devil.

I clear some space for the circle. This has 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. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. The tricky devil cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The wraith cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from the thing if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the tricky devil pounces on me. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. I try and drain the wraith, but find the grounding is all wrong. The tricky devil is not even phased. The wraith cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I hesitate. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Could work. If I get lucky. Just stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the wraith with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon shows itself and I start to second guess a full-on assault. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the monstrosity and jump over 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm still sharp. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least David 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. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

Chapter 21

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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Olive. She sounds urgent. 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 the power plant.

I walk up to the power plant. My jaw clenches. I go 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; the swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the power plant and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I reach for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the swarm from its anchor points. 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 supposed to break its anchoring like this? The thing covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the swarm fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the swarm behind me.

I feel my body tense. I weave and scramble, knocking over a control panel. Well, it could be worse.

Okay, got to focus. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to breathe and think. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from the monstrosity if I can ground it.

I reach 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. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The wraith 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.

My gut sinks. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it 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 the monstrosity to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. 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. Can anything even hold something that powerful? 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Olive 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the rain.

Chapter 22

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. Fast. I look back at the letter from Jesse. I hesitate. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Jordan grocery store.

I take a cab to the grocery store. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the grocery store and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I might be able to overload the swarm 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 monster drawing near. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The wraith covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the wraith fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the wraith behind me.

I freeze. I run like a madman, scrambling over a counter. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to

think. I examine the situation. What now? My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to stop and think. 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 demon.

I reach 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 wraith appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I start to second guess my plan. 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 hesitate. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm not liquidated yet. Okay, I need to think. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Just stop and think. Right. I could drain the power from the monster if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the demon pounces on me. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I jump over a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. 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.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't get paid. However, Jesse now owes me one. Maybe I'll call in my favor to help fix the roof. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and fade into the sunrise.

Chapter 23

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel the familiar craving for opium. 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. Elsie enters my office and tells me her problems. I grit my teeth. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the crypt.

I arrive at Godwin crypt. My grip tightens. I step inside. The stench of death floats in the air like a persistent miasma. I snap out of it. Time for work; the tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a sarcophagus. I look around. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and the crypt stands in suspiciously good condition. 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 need a plan, though. 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. 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 thing drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The monstrosity disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the monster fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I grit my teeth. I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. I really need to breathe and think. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the abomination.

I reach for my tools. 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The demon cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The thing cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I hesitate. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I look around. My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind the abomination to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I fake out the tricky devil 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.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. In any case, Elsie 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 has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the city.

Chapter 24

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. The phone rings. It's Willie. He sounds hopeless. 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 Gedge morgue.

I arrive at the morgue. I frown. I step inside. The stench of death floats in the air like a persistent miasma. I snap out of it. Time for work; the demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a desk. I consider the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and curious symbols mar the morgue. 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 need a plan, though. I should be able to bind the monster to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. 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? The demon 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.

My grip tightens. I find myself without my gear. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to focus. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to breathe and 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 the thing from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud screech 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? The demon flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I fly through the air and land on my stomach, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I grit my teeth. I check my stomach. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the monstrosity 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 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 fake out the monster 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.

I relax. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. 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 someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 25

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel a pain in my stomach. 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. The phone rings. It's Charlie. He is in a hurry. I freeze. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Mast college again.

I arrive at Mast college. My fists clench. I step inside. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I look around. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the college. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to first weaken the demon with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. 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? The monstrosity covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the swarm fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I feel my body tense. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bookshelf. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What now? Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Just work this out. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the swarm to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the thing from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the swarm attacks. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. 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'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I reel. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to stop and think. I consider the situation. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to work this out. Right. I might be able to overload the abomination 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 swarm drawing near. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I jump over 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Charlie pays me the appropriate fee. Maybe I'll use the money to go get my stomach 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the rain.

Chapter 26

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. I dig up the letter from Roy. I reel. It doesn't seem good. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Patterson crypt.

I take a cab to the crypt. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted crypt always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I examine my surroundings. The crypt stands in suspiciously good condition and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the tricky devil if I can ground it.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I grab a piece of copper cord and connect it to a void anchor. 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 don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The thing 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 run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the thing behind me.

I reel. I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, got to stop and think. What now? I look around. Maybe I could bind it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. 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 monster.

I reach 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 wraith appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. 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 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 the wraith behind me.

I tremble. I weave and scramble, knocking over a sarcophagus. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to breathe and think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. 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 work this out. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the wraith to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the thing 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? I fake out the wraith 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.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Roy 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 someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Another day, another job. I step into the fog.

Chapter 27

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. I dig up the note from Edith. 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 power plant.

I walk up to the power plant. I bite my lip. I step inside. 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; the monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I examine my surroundings. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the power plant and small rusted flakes cover the floor. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I should be able to bind the creature to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This is my last chance. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monstrosity. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the swarm 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 decide to retreat and take off running, with the thing fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the creature behind me.

I hesitate. I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to stop and think. I examine 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 get it together. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the creature to our world.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the thing from its anchor points. 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 the swarm fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I feel my body tense. I run like a madman, scrambling over a control panel. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I examine my surroundings. My options seem hopeless. How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to focus. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the thing if I can ground it.

I steady my breath. 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 when the swarm pounces on me. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not snuffed out. But that was way too close. I get no monetary compensation. My only reward is the gratitude of Edith. This should go nicely towards my heating 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 disappear into the city.

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. And I need it fast. I look back at the telegram from Paul. I feel a cold sweat coming on. It sounds bad. I don't savour the idea of visiting Devitt nightclub again.

I take a cab to the nightclub. I tremble. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted nightclub always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a billiard table. I consider the situation. The nightclub stands in suspiciously good condition and small rusted flakes cover the dancefloor. 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I begin drawing a large circle on the dancefloor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the monstrosity appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The creature cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The tricky devil cracks the dancefloor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I bite my lip. I grope around in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe and think. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to breathe and think. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the creature attacks. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. 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. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I bite my lip. I find myself without my gear. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, got to stop and think. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? No, that won't work. Right. I need to stop and think. Right. 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. This is my last chance. 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. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the thing and strafe around it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the demon! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. At least Paul 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 it's the only thing I'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the night.

Chapter 29

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. 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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. Lawrence comes to my office and tells me his problems. I grit my teeth. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the general store again.

I arrive at Ford general store. My fists clench. 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 monstrosity won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a safe. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the general store stands in suspiciously good condition. 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 need a plan, though. I should be able to bind the demon to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the wraith. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the tricky devil appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The wraith 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.

My grip tightens. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to think. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the thing.

I clear some space for the circle. I need this to 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The monstrosity 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.

I freeze. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to breathe and think. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to breathe and think. Right. I could drain the power from the monster if I can ground it.

I steady my breath. 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 when the demon 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 the wraith 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Lawrence pays me the appropriate fee. 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. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the sunrise.

Chapter 30

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, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. The phone rings. It's Susie. She sounds hopeless. I tremble. It sounds bad. I don't savour the idea of visiting Hawk law firm again.

I arrive at 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. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a paper shredder. I consider the situation. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and hundreds of tiny holes dot the law firm. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I could drain the power from the thing 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 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 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. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the swarm fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the demon behind me.

I reel. I run like a madman, scrambling over a filing cabinet. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to stop and think. What can I do with this? I look around. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? I don't think I can do this. I really need to work this out. It hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind the swarm to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The monstrosity sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The abomination maims my leg with its tentacle. My leg hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I frown. I check my leg. It doesn't look too good. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower

it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. 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 the monstrosity.

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 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 going to finish the circle like this? I strafe around 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.

I smile. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Susie pays me the appropriate fee. 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 know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 31

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. A note arrives from Maggie. I reel. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Chavez morgue.

I arrive at Chavez morgue. I tremble. I go in. The stench of death floats in the air like a persistent miasma. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monstrosity won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a coffin. I consider the situation. Curious symbols mar the morgue and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. The demon 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 need a plan, though. I have to weaken the place that anchors the wraith to our world.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the thing from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the thing attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. 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. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I reel. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I examine my surroundings. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to get it together. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I clear some space for the circle. This is my last chance. 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The thing cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the thing fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the tricky devil behind me.

My jaw clenches. I run like a madman, scrambling over a filing cabinet. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to concentrate. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could bind it? I don't think I can do this. Just get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind the wraith

to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the tricky devil appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I fake out the wraith 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.

I relax. 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, Maggie 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'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 rain.

Chapter 32

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. 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. I look back at the telegram from Herbert. 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 Bryant library.

I arrive at Bryant library. I freeze. 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 monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The library is totally trashed 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. Still, I need a plan. I could drain the power from the creature if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the brute pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The thing punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My fists clench. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? My options seem hopeless. Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to work this out. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the demon to our world.

I reach for my tools. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the demon 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. I start to second guess my plan. I try and destroy an anchor, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. I run wildly through the illusions, the brute hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

I hesitate. I weave and scramble, knocking over a bookshelf. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to work this out. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to focus. 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 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 demon appears. It's bigger than I thought.

I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic pseudopod 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not croaked. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Herbert 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 pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the fog.

Chapter 33

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. Fast. A letter arrives from Blanche. I bite my lip. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the crypt.

I walk to the crypt. I frown. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted crypt always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The crypt stands in suspiciously good condition and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. 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 need a plan, though. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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 abomination drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? 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.

My grip tightens. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm not resting in peace yet. Okay, got to concentrate. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to get it together. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the abomination to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the abomination attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The monster 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.

My fists clench. I find myself without my gear. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, I need to focus. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could bind it? I don't think I can do this. Just work this out. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the abomination.

I clear some space for the circle. I need this 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the demon 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the abomination haunting the world. 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'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and step into the night.

Chapter 34

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job, desperately. Ruby enters my office and tells me her problems. My jaw clenches. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the courthouse again.

I walk to Gonzales courthouse. I bite my lip. I go in. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. I snap out of it. Time for work; the thing won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the courthouse and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the wraith. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I could drain the power from the wraith 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 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 don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The wraith punches me right through a plaster wall. I fly through the air and land on my foot, busting it. My foot hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I frown. I check my foot. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Could work. If I get lucky. Just focus. It hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. 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 monster attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The thing flings 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. My back hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I grit my teeth. I check my back. It doesn't look too good. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. 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. Right. I need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I reach 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 the demon appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic beak 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.

I grin. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Ruby pays me the appropriate fee. 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the sunrise.

Chapter 35

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. Martha 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 nightclub.

I take a cab to Owens nightclub. I bite my lip. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted nightclub always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I look around. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and curious symbols mar the nightclub. 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 need a plan, though. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the thing. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the tricky devil appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The wraith crushes the only viable receptacle with its fist. 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 the tricky devil behind me.

I furrow my brow. I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Could work. If I get lucky. Just think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The demon 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 hit the monster with all my might. It only makes it angrier. The demon cracks the dancefloor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

My jaw clenches. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? No, that won't work. Okay, I need to stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the tricky devil.

I reach 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 tricky devil appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I fake out the wraith 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not cashed in. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no money out of this. However, Martha 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. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

Chapter 36

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 look back at the note from Clarence. I reel. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the crypt again.

I take a cab to the crypt. My fists clench. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted crypt always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a coffin. I look around. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the crypt and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I could drain the power from the wraith if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when 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. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel my body tense. I grope around in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to breathe and think. Okay, I think I got it. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

I reach for my tools. 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. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. 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 bite my lip. I find myself locked into a side room. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to stop and think. How do I deal 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 concentrate. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monster. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the swarm appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I duck under 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.

I grin. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Clarence compensates me for my troubles. Maybe I'll use the money to go get my chest

checked. 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the city.

Chapter 37

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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Walter. He sounds urgent. I furrow my brow. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting the balloon terminal again.

I arrive at Highmore 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. 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 my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the balloon terminal and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the brute. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the wraith.

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 the monstrosity appears. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The wraith cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The monstrosity cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I reel. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. What now? I look around. My options seem hopeless. How am I supposed to do this? I really need to think. 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. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The wraith roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. 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 furrow my brow. I weave and scramble, knocking over a radio tower. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to concentrate. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the demon to our world.

I locate the anchor points. 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 wraith attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic tentacle 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not sleeping the big sleep. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Walter 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 know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I disappear into the rain.

Chapter 38

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. And I need it fast. I look back at the telegram from Mabel. I hesitate. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Hawk general store.

I take a cab to the general store. I furrow my brow. 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; the monstrosity won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I look around. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and the general store 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 need a plan, though. I have to first weaken the tricky devil 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. The monster 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. The monster 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.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? I don't think I can do this. I really need to work this out. Right. I could drain the power from the monstrosity 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 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 creature disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The creature pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

I tremble. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. How do I deal 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? Okay, I need to think. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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. 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 the thing and sidestep it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the creature! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I grin. 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 Mabel. 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 39

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. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Sarah. She sounds urgent. I tremble. 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 Chattoway balloon terminal.

I walk to the balloon terminal. I frown. 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. The monstrosity won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I examine the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and hundreds of tiny holes dot the balloon terminal. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the swarm.

I reach 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 laughter 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 demon covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My grip tightens. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bench. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to stop and 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. Just work this out. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload the swarm if I can connect it to the power grid.

I steady my breath. This is my last chance. 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. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The abomination 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.

I furrow my brow. My head spins as I try to regain control. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. I really need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to first weaken the swarm 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. The abomination 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 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.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not sleeping the big sleep. But that didn't at all go according to plan. 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 has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the fog.

Chapter 40

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, 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 Daisy. She is in a hurry. I freeze. 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 college.

I stop outside the college. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted college 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 windowsill. I look around. The college stands in suspiciously good condition and blackish ichor is pooled on the floor. Obviously the abomination 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 need a plan, though. 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. The monstrosity 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 hit the monstrosity with all my might but my attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. I run wildly through the illusions, the monstrosity hot on my tail. I'm in deep trouble.

My jaw clenches. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bookshelf. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe and think. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Just focus. Right. I might be able to overload the demon 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. 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 start to second guess my plan. The demon roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I bite my lip. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm not croaked yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? No, that won't work. Just work this out. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monster. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monster appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? I fake out the thing and step back 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the abomination 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 it has to be done. Oh well. Life goes on. I hail a cab and fade into the night.

Chapter 41

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Rosa enters my office and explains her problems. I tremble. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Kidd bar again.

I walk up to Kidd bar. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm 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 abomination won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I look around. Curious symbols mar the bar and blackish ichor is pooled on the floor. 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 need a plan, though. I have to first weaken the tricky devil with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. 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 tricky devil with all my might. It only makes it angrier. 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 the thing behind me.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I weave and scramble, knocking over a jukebox. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? No, that won't work. Right. I need to work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the tricky devil 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 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 try and drain the abomination, but find the grounding is all wrong. The tricky devil is not even phased. The demon cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

My jaw clenches. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. 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. The wire sizzles as a tell-tale sign of the monster drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the monster and slide under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the monstrosity! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Rosa 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'm even remotely good at. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the night.

Chapter 42

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. And I need it fast. I look back at the telegram from Jack. I reel. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting the library again.

I walk up to Marshall library. I frown. I step inside. Tens of thousands of words stare at me from the bookshelves, bound in crumbling leather. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the library. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I might be able to overload the abomination if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my tools. This has got to 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 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 arm, busting it. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel my body tense. I check my arm. It doesn't look too good. At least I'm not out of business yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I look around. What do I do now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to focus. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from the demon 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 when the abomination 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 covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. 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 the swarm behind me.

My fists clench. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bookshelf. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Right. I need to stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will 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 demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I strafe around 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not cashed in. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Jack 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. Life goes on. I hail a cab and step into the rain.

Chapter 43

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'm throwing darts at the lord mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's Viola. She sounds hopeless. I grit my teeth. Already it seems like a tough case. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Jordan library.

I walk up to the library. 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 demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I look around. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and hundreds of tiny holes dot the library. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to first weaken the monstrosity with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The thing 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. 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 freeze. I find myself locked into a side room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What now? I examine my surroundings. 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 get it together. Right. I have a plan. 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 the abomination. 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 covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the demon fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I frown. I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just work this out. The realization hits me like a freight train. I might be able to overload the abomination 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 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 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 the demon! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I grin. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. My only reward is the gratitude of Viola. 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. Another day, another job. I disappear into the city.

Chapter 44

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. Wind howls through the broken door. 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. A telegram arrives from Clyde. My gut sinks. Already it seems like a tough case. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Mast factory.

I walk up to the factory. My grip tightens. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted factory always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I look around. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and I can see large claw marks covering the factory. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the thing. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the brute.

I reach for my tools. I need this 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. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I start to second guess my plan. The monster cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The monster cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My jaw clenches. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? Just stop and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the demon 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 monster drawing near. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? 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 frown. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What do I do now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Oh this is just hopeless. Just think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach for my tools. This is my last chance. I prepare myself for unmooring the demon from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the demon attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic nails 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not sleeping the big sleep. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I don't get paid. My only reward is the gratitude of Clyde. Well, I still need to get that door 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. Another day, another job. I fade into the fog.

Chapter 45

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. Fast. Dorothy steps in the door and explains her problems. My jaw clenches. 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 library.

I take a cab to the library. I furrow my brow. 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 brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the library and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I should be able to bind the brute to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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 monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the thing and crash into a side room. I tumble across the floor and crumble into a heap.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I find myself locked into a side room. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to think. I look around. What now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really 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 brute.

I reach for my tools. I need this 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. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The demon's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The wraith maims my stomach with its nails. My stomach hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I grit my teeth. I check my stomach. It's bad. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to get it together. It hits me like a freight train. I could drain the power from the wraith 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 when the wraith 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 beak 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.

I smile. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was way too close. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the demon 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 fade into the fog.

Chapter 46

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's 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. Fast. The phone rings. It's Josephine. I hesitate. 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 metro station.

I walk to Younger metro station. I reel. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted metro station always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The abomination won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I look around. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and the metro station stands in suspiciously good condition. Obviously the tricky devil 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the tricky devil.

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 monster appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I start to second guess my plan. The unfinished circle breaks as the demon jumps at me and scrapes the floor with its claws. The abomination maims my leg with its nails. My leg hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I bite my lip. I check my leg. It's bad. 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 destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Oh this is just hopeless. Just concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I should be able to bind the monster to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the abomination. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monstrosity appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The demon disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the tricky devil fast behind me. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bench. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to focus. Right. I could drain the power from the demon if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the abomination pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the monstrosity 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I get no money out of this. My only reward is the gratitude of Josephine. 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 hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

Chapter 47

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. I look back at the letter from Effie. My jaw clenches. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Baldwin garden again.

I take a cab to the 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 creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a statue. I examine my surroundings. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the garden is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the demon. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach for my tools. 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 the brute attacks. I didn't consider it would be this strong. 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. The illusions fade and I notice my pockets are empty. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

My jaw clenches. I find myself without my gear. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to breathe and think. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? No, that won't work. I really need to focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. 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. The monster 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 the monstrosity with all my might. It only makes it angrier. The demon cracks the ground underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. No, that won't work. Just work this out. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the creature 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 screech 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? I dodge its gigantic tentacle and strafe around it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the creature! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I grin. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was way too close. At least Effie pays me the appropriate fee. 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 know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and fade into the fog.

Chapter 48

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. Wind howls through the broken door. 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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Lee. He sounds urgent. My gut sinks. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Reynolds train station again.

I stop outside Reynolds train station. My gut sinks. I go 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 tricky devil won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a bench. I look around. Curious symbols mar the train station and small rusted flakes cover the floor. Obviously the creature 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 need a plan, though. I have to first weaken the demon 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. 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. The creature 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 tremble. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to stop and think. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? How am I supposed to do this? Just breathe and think. The realization hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind the tricky devil to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. This has got to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monster. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the creature appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The creature sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The demon maims my hand with its stinger. I'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I check my hand. It's bad. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to work this out. I consider the situation. What 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 get it together. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. This has got to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the creature attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the monster and strafe around 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Lee pays me the appropriate fee. At least the money should help fix the door. 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 disappear into the fog.

Chapter 49

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, desperately. The phone rings. It's Hazel. 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 law firm.

I take a cab to the law firm. I inspect the lock. Basic model. A few minutes work. I'm in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted law firm always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monstrosity won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a paper shredder. I consider the situation. Thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the law firm and faint whispers emanate from dark corners. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to first weaken the wraith 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 incessant buzzing drives me insane. I start to second guess my plan. 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 bite my lip. I check my shoulder. It doesn't look too good. At least I'm still alive. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? How am I supposed to do this? Just stop and think. It hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. 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. The wraith sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The wraith maims my back with its stinger. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My jaw clenches. I check my back. It's bad. At least I'm not snuffed out yet. Okay, got to get it together. What can I do with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? Could work. If I get lucky. Just focus. The realization hits me like a freight train. I might be able to overload the swarm 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. I hear it too late. A loud screech 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? 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 the thing! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that was way too close. I don't get paid. 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 someone has to do it. Might as well be me. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 50

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. And I need it fast. Andrew enters my office and lays out his problems. I freeze. 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 nightclub.

I walk up to the nightclub. I bite my lip. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted nightclub always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. 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 nightclub. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I might be able to overload the swarm if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach 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 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 demon covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. 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 the wraith behind me.

My fists clench. I run like a madman, scrambling over a counter. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? 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 stop and think. Okay, I think I got it. 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 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 wraith appears. 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. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I bite my lip. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to think. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to work this out. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monster to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the swarm from its anchor points. I hear it too late. A loud howl comes from behind me and chills me to the bone. 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that was way too close. I get no money out of this. At least there's one less the wraith 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 fog.

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, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Harold comes to my office and explains his problems. I tremble. 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 walk to Kim 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; the brute won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a counter. I examine my surroundings. I can see large claw marks covering the general store and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I could drain the power from the demon 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 haven't even tested the grounding when the monster pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The brute disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. The monster pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I'm in deep trouble.

I freeze. I find myself without my gear. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I examine my surroundings. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to think. Right. I have a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the monstrosity.

I steady my breath. 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 thing appears. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the brute and crash into a side room. I'm in deep trouble.

My jaw clenches. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? I examine 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 get it together. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the wraith 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've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the wraith attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic beak 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.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the wraith 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. Life goes on. I disappear into the fog.

Chapter 52

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, I don't

exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. Peter comes to my office and tells me 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 Halbard train station.

I arrive at the train station. My jaw clenches. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted train station always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a radio tower. I look around. Curious symbols mar the train station and the air smells of traces of copper or iron. 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

I reach 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. 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 the demon fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to evade the thing behind me.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, I need to think. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to focus. Right. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The creature 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 feel my body tense. I weave and scramble, knocking over a bench. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to breathe and think. I examine the situation. What do I do now? My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to breathe and think. It 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 pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil 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. I fake out the tricky devil 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Peter 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 pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the rain.

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, desperately. I'm throwing darts at the lord barrister's picture when the phone rings. It's Will. He is in a hurry. I tremble. 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 up to the train station. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I step inside. The station seems so empty. Only a few homeless people shuffle slowly around the vicinity, lending the place a destitute atmosphere. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The swarm won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a bench. I examine my surroundings. Hundreds of tiny holes dot the train station and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I should be able to bind the monstrosity to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the monster. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the demon appears. The incessant buzzing drives me insane. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The wraith crushes the only viable receptacle with its stinger. The wraith cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I frown. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to think. I examine my surroundings. What can I do with this? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to focus. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the thing.

I clear some space for the circle. 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 demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The demon covers all light sources in the room, leaving it in darkness. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the wraith fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I feel my body tense. I run like a madman, scrambling over a bench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to work this out. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. 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 raise my fists. This is my last chance. 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? 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.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. At least Will pays me the appropriate fee. 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 know how to do. Oh well. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the night.

Chapter 54

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. I look back at the telegram from Rose. I reel. Already it seems like a tough case. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the factory.

I stop outside the factory. I crack the lock quietly and step through. Heavy metal machines, though still, are a sign of the relentless march of industry. I snap out of it. Time for work; the abomination won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a windowsill. I consider the situation. The factory stands in suspiciously good condition and a faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place. 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 need a plan, though. I should be able to bind the abomination 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 tricky devil. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The abomination crushes the only viable receptacle with its fist. The tricky devil cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel my body tense. I stumble in the dark. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to get it together. How do I deal with this? I look around. My options seem hopeless. No, that won't work. Right. I need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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 abomination drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? 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.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? No, that won't work. Right. I need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a freight train. I have to weaken the place that anchors the tricky devil to our world.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the thing from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the monstrosity attacks. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the abomination 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still breathing. But that was way too close. In any case, Rose now owes me one. I'll have her refill my stash. 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and disappear into the sunrise.

Chapter 55

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, desperately. The phone rings. It's Richard. He sounds hopeless. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the nightclub.

I stop outside Kaylock nightclub. I crack the lock quietly and step through. The place smells of dried alcohol, vomit and blood. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a billiard table. I consider the situation. Small rusted flakes cover the floor and the nightclub is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monstrosity. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the creature.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I begin drawing a large circle on the dancefloor. I haven't even finished the first layer of the circle when the creature appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The demon punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the dancefloor and crumble into a heap.

I freeze. I find myself trapped in a small room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to work this out. The realization hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind the brute to this vessel.

I steady my breath. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the creature. 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 monster crushes the only viable receptacle with its stinger. The brute cracks the dancefloor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

My fists clench. I stumble in the dark. 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? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just focus. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the creature to our world.

I locate the anchor points. I pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the brute from its anchor points. 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 supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic talons 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.

I relax. 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. My only reward is the gratitude of Richard. 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 has to be done. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I hail a cab and disappear into the city.

Chapter 56

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. I feel a pain in my stomach. 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. A letter arrives from Eva. My jaw clenches. Already it seems like a tough case. I don't savour the idea of visiting Wickes factory again.

I walk to Wickes factory. My fists clench. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted factory always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a workbench. I consider the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and the factory is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the brute. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the wraith to our world.

I reach for my tools. 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 thing attacks. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I try and destroy an anchor, only to discover that it is merely an illusion. 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 demon behind me.

I tremble. I weave and scramble, knocking over a control panel. At least I'm not six feet under yet. Okay, got to think. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to focus. Right. I have a plan. 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 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 wraith drawing near. I didn't consider it would be this strong. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The thing maims my hand with its jaws. I'm in deep trouble.

I furrow my brow. I check my hand. It doesn't look too good. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to concentrate. How do I deal with this? I look around. Maybe it will just go away on its own? One can only hope. Could work. If I get lucky. I really need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. I could drain the power from the wraith if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the monstrosity pounces on me. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. I dodge its gigantic talons 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not snuffed out. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Eva compensates me for my troubles. Maybe I'll use the money to go get my stomach checked. 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 57

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. I look back at the note from Myrtle. I furrow my brow. It sounds bad. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Younger train station.

I take a cab to Younger 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. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The tricky devil won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and curious symbols mar the train station. 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the thing.

I reach for my tools. This has 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The tricky devil cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The wraith cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I tremble. I grope around in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. I really need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the tricky devil 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 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 don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. The demon 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 grip tightens. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, I need to stop and think. I look around. What can I do with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? No, that won't work. Right. I need to get it together. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the monstrosity if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach 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 the monster 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 jump over 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not out of business. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Myrtle 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 step into the night.

Chapter 58

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. And I need it fast. I dig up the telegram from Albert. I tremble. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Whiston nightclub again.

I take a cab 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 wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a stool. I look around. The nightclub is totally trashed and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. It seems to be a violent but not too clever. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the wraith from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the brute attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? The wraith's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the monstrosity and crash into a side room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

My gut sinks. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, I need to think. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Right. I need to concentrate. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the brute 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. The brute 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. The demon punches me right through a plaster wall. I'm tossed inside a small room. I tumble across the dancefloor and crumble into a heap.

My jaw clenches. I find myself locked into a side room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. What now? I consider the situation. My options seem hopeless. All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just focus. It hits me like a freight train. 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 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. 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.

I relax. 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, Albert 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. Just another day in the life. I fade into the sunrise.

Chapter 59

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. Fast. Maude steps in the door and tells me her problems. My gut sinks. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Devitt graveyard again.

I stop outside the graveyard. I tremble. I step inside. A sad crop of trees surround me, whispering of the dark things they've seen. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a sarcophagus. I examine my surroundings. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic

surfaces and the graveyard stands in suspiciously good condition. 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 need a plan, though. I should be able to bind the wraith to this vessel.

I fish out a suitable receptacle from my pockets. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the tricky devil. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the wraith appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The monster crushes the only viable receptacle with its tentacle. The tricky devil cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I can't see anything in this darkness.

I feel my body tense. I grope around in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to stop and think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the wraith with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. I need this 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? I hit the wraith with all my might but my attack just whiffs through the illusionary copy. I run wildly through the illusions, the monster hot on my tail. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I bite my lip. I weave and scramble, knocking over the floor. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to concentrate. 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. Okay, I need to focus. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the monstrosity 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 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 fake out the tricky devil 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not resting in peace. But that was way too close. At least Maude pays me the appropriate fee. 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 know how to do. Oh well. Another day, another job. I disappear into the fog.

Chapter 60

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. Fast. I look back at the telegram from Lena. I furrow my brow. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the library.

I stop outside the library. I furrow my brow. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted library 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 windowsill. I consider the situation. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the library is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the thing.

Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I could drain the power from the demon 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 when the creature 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 creature disappears into the shadows when it sees the drain I'm holding. The creature pounces and then retreats, leaving me confused until I notice my equipment is gone. I double-check my pockets. Yep. All empty.

My gut sinks. Facing a demon with no gear. Great. At least I'm not cashed in yet. Okay, I need to concentrate. I examine my surroundings. What now? Maybe I could bind it? Could work. If I get lucky. Okay, I need to think. Right. I have a plan. I might be able to overload the brute 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. 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. Is this even enough to overload 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 feel my body tense. I grope around in the dark. At least I'm still kicking. Okay, got to breathe and think. What now? I examine my surroundings. My options seem hopeless. Oh this is just hopeless. Just 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 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. It's bigger than I thought. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still alive. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Lena 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and step into the fog.

Chapter 61

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. Vera steps in the door and tells me her problems. I frown. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. I don't savour the idea of visiting Bryant general store again.

I stop outside Bryant general store. My grip tightens. I go in. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on the floor. I look around. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and curious symbols mar the general store. The creature 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the thing if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the monster pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I try and drain the monstrosity, but find the grounding is all wrong. The tricky devil is not even phased. 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 the monstrosity behind me.

I bite my lip. I weave and scramble, knocking over a windowsill. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to get it together. I examine my surroundings. What do I do now? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? How am I supposed to do this? Okay, I need to stop and think. Right. I have a plan. 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. 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 tricky devil drawing near. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? The creature roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I'm in deep trouble.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I consider the situation. What now? Maybe I could bind it? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just breathe and think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I steady my breath. 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 monstrosity attacks. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the tricky devil 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still breathing. But that was way too close. In any case, Vera compensates me for my troubles. Maybe I'll use the money to go get my shoulder checked. 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 disappear into the night.

Chapter 62

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. Frederick steps in the door and lays out his problems. I bite my lip. Already it seems like a tough case. He really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to Hopkin courthouse.

I walk up to Hopkin courthouse. I grit my teeth. I step inside. Here the coroners of justice dissect and diagnose the corpse of law. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a filing cabinet. I examine the situation. The courthouse is totally trashed and blackish ichor is pooled on 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. Still, I need a plan. I have to first weaken the monstrosity 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 abomination 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? The brute's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. The abomination maims my shoulder with its nails. My shoulder hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

I bite my lip. I check my shoulder. It's bad. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to stop and think. 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. Right. I need to think. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I could drain the power from the brute if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when 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. I try and drain the thing, but find the grounding is all wrong. The abomination is not even phased. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the abomination fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I freeze. I weave and scramble, knocking over a safe. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I could try and improvise a containment circle and trap it? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I steady my breath. 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 the brute attacks. It's bigger than I thought. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I dodge its gigantic claws 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.

I relax. Now I can tend to my injuries. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. I get no monetary compensation. My only reward is the gratitude of Frederick. 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. Just another day in the life. I fade into the sunrise.

Chapter 63

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I look back at the letter from Fred. I grit my teeth. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Sinnett crypt again.

I walk up to the crypt. I bite my lip. 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 coffin. I consider the situation. Blackish ichor is pooled on the floor and thousands of tiny tracks criss-cross across all imaginable surfaces of the crypt. This must be the work of a swarm of demons. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the monstrosity to our world.

I reach for my tools. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the abomination 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? 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 hesitate. I find myself locked into a side room. At least I'm still alive and kicking. Okay, got to breathe and think. What now? I look around. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. I really need to stop and think. It hits me like a freight train. I should be able to bind the demon to this vessel.

I fashion a makeshift receptacle from scrap. I need this to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the demon. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the thing appears. The demonic swarm covers all the walls and even the ceiling. Can anything even hold something that powerful? The swarm sees the vessel, pounces at me in a blind rage. The demon maims my shoulder with its jaws. My shoulder hurts like the dickens. I check my injury.

My gut sinks. I check my shoulder. It's bad. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, got to think. How do I deal with this? I look around. My options seem hopeless. How am I supposed to do this? Just concentrate. Right. I could drain the power from the thing if I can ground it.

I reach 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 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. I step back a wave of demonic critters and it crashes into the floor. 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.

I smile. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that was way too close. At least Fred pays me the appropriate fee. I hope my poker buddies take credit. 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 sunrise.

Chapter 64

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. There's no place like home. I feel the familiar craving for opium. 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. I dig up the letter from Dora. I feel a cold sweat coming on. It doesn't seem good. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Simmons mill.

I stop outside the mill. I crack the lock quietly and step through. Heavy metal machines, though still, are a sign of the relentless march of industry. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The demon won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a workbench. I consider the situation. A faint smell of formaldehyde lingers in the place and hundreds of tiny holes dot the mill. It's obvious we're dealing with a demonic swarm. The problem is containing them all. I don't think nobody will sing my praises if I only get rid of some of it. I need a plan. I could drain the power from the demon if I can ground it.

I reach 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 when the abomination 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. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still sharp. Okay, I need to work this out. I look around. What do I do now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Just work this out. The realization hits me like a ton of bricks. I have to first weaken the thing with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I raise my fists. This is my last chance. 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'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The monster 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.

I freeze. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, got to focus. What do I do now? I consider the situation. Maybe I could overload it with electricity? I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to concentrate. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the monstrosity.

I reach 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 the thing appears. 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 complete the circle and it's trapped within! I quickly perform the rite while it's contained and send it screeching back to hell.

I relax. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Dora now owes me one. I feel the familiar crawl of deprivation. My stash is still empty. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Another day, another job. I fade into the city.

Chapter 65

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. The sink 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. Howard steps in the door and explains his problems. My fists clench. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting Beechworth graveyard again.

I arrive at Beechworth graveyard. I feel my body tense. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted graveyard always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a sarcophagus. I examine the situation. Tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces and curious symbols mar the graveyard. 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 need a plan, though. I could drain the power from the wraith 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 haven't even tested the grounding when the wraith pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I try and drain the demon, but find the grounding is all wrong. The monster is not even phased. 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 the demon behind me.

I frown. I run like a madman, scrambling over a sarcophagus. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to

concentrate. What do I do now? I examine the situation. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Could work. If I get lucky. Right. I need to think. Okay, I think I got it. I have to first weaken the monster with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach for my tools. This has got 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The monstrosity disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. I decide to retreat and take off running, with the tricky devil fast behind me. I'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I run like a madman, scrambling over a tombstone. At least I'm not feeding the worms yet. Okay, got to think. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to work this out. Right. 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. 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 monster drawing near. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. I fake out the thing and jump over 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm still alive. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Howard compensates me for my troubles. At least the money should help fix the sink. 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 sunrise.

Chapter 66

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. I'm throwing darts at the lord mayor's picture when the phone rings. It's Gertrude. She sounds hopeless. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I feel like this one is going to be a hard one. She will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for Whiston power plant.

I walk to Whiston power plant. I frown. I go 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; the wraith won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a workbench. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and I can see large claw marks covering the power plant. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monster. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need a plan. I have to first weaken the brute 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. I didn't consider it would be this strong. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The monster'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'm in deep trouble.

I tremble. I run like a madman, scrambling over a workbench. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to focus. What now? I consider the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? Oh this is

just hopeless. Okay, I need to focus. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the demon 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. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The wraith smashes the wall, making sparks fly from the exposed wiring. The electric shocks short the lights and the room is plunged into darkness. I'm in deep trouble.

My fists clench. I stumble in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to work this out. I consider the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? Oh this is just hopeless. Okay, I need to breathe and think. It hits me like a ton of bricks. I might be able to overload the brute if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach 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. It's bigger than I thought. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I dodge its gigantic beak and slide under it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the wraith! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not croaked. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Gertrude 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 step into the sunrise.

Chapter 67

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Fast. I look back at the letter from Julia. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. She really needs my help. I guess I don't have a choice. I'm going to the metro station.

I stop outside Ramos metro station. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted metro station always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; the thing won't catch itself. I set my bag up on a bench. I examine the situation. Faint whispers emanate from dark corners and curious symbols mar the metro station. Obviously the tricky devil 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 need a plan, though. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I locate the anchor points. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil 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. I start to second guess my plan. The demon flings me through the door before I have a chance to finish unmooring it. I'm tossed inside a small room. This hasn't gone at all according to plan.

I feel a cold sweat coming on. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, got to think. 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. I really need to get it together. It hits me like a freight train. 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. 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The tricky devil disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. 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 the wraith behind me.

I bite my lip. I run like a madman, scrambling over the floor. At least I'm not dead yet. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. What do I do now? Maybe I could bind it? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to work this out. Right. I might be able to overload the tricky devil if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach for my tools. This has got 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. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? I fake out the thing and duck under 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.

I grin. Well, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. But that didn't at all go according to plan. I don't get paid. My only reward is the gratitude of Julia. 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 know how to do. Oh well. Just another day in the life. I step into the rain.

Chapter 68

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. It's not perfect but it's home. The roof 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. The silence is broken by the ringing of the telephone. It's Oscar. He sounds urgent. I freeze. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the morgue again.

I walk up to the morgue. My fists clench. I step inside. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted morgue always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The creature won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I consider the situation. I can see large claw marks covering the morgue 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. Still, I need a plan. I should be able to bind the thing to this vessel.

I reach for my tools. This has to work. I begin preparing the receptacle to hold the creature. I've barely finished preparing the receptacle when the monster appears. It's bigger than I thought. I start to second guess my plan. The monstrosity's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. I wrestle with the monster and crash into a side room. I'm in deep trouble.

I reel. I find myself trapped in a small room. At least I'm still breathing. Okay, I need to work this out. I examine the situation. How do I deal with this? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? I don't think I can do this. Okay, 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 take the electric brand from my pocket. This has got to work. I take a stance and ready myself for an assault. The creature 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? The demon's hind muscles flex as it charges straight at me. 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 the brute behind me.

I feel my body tense. I run like a madman, scrambling over a windowsill. At least I'm not sleeping the big sleep yet. Okay, got to think. What can I do with this? I consider the situation. 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 freight train. I might be able to overload the brute if I can connect it to the power grid.

I reach 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 howl 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 jaws and jump over it. I block its attack with the live wire and electricity courses through the creature! It screeches and pulses as the energy overloads it, exploding it in a burst of static electricity.

I relax. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that was not what I would call an ideal execution. In any case, Oscar compensates me for my troubles. At least the money should help fix the roof. 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 fade into the night.

Chapter 69

The Blackhearts Detective Agency. No place like home. The door 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. Alfred steps in the door and explains his problems. I furrow my brow. It doesn't seem good. I don't savour the idea of visiting the grocery store again.

I arrive at the grocery store. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I can almost hear the cash register ringing, as full of itself as it is money. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a safe. I examine my surroundings. The air smells of traces of copper or iron and the grocery store 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 need a plan, though. I have to first weaken the creature with an electric assault before I can properly banish it.

I reach 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. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. I'm supposed to beat something that powerful? Really? The monstrosity disappears into the shadows. I hear it snickering. The thing appears from the shadows, cracking my head and leaving me seeing stars. I fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

I bite my lip. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I consider the situation. Maybe I could bind it? How am I supposed to do this? I really need to stop and 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 tricky devil.

I clear some space for the circle. 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. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I start to second guess my plan. The thing cracks my circle in half, erasing all hope of using it to destroy it. The tricky devil cracks the floor underneath me and I'm plunged into the darkness below. I'm in deep trouble.

I grit my teeth. I grope around in the dark. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to focus. I examine the situation. What can I do with this? Maybe I could overload it with electricity? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to concentrate. Right. I have a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the tricky devil to our world.

I reach for my tools. I need this to work. I prepare myself for unmooring the tricky devil 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. How am I supposed to break its anchoring like this? I fake out the monster 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.

I smile. Well, at least I'm not liquidated. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Alfred compensates me for my troubles. At least the money should help fix the door. Sometimes I wonder why the hell am I even doing this job? I suppose it has to be done. Oh well. Another day, another job. I fade into the sunrise.

Chapter 70

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, I don't exactly have a lot of cash at hand. I need a job. Floyd steps in the door 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 Reynolds police station.

I arrive at the police station. I freeze. I go in. The air is heavy with the sweat and dust of a thousand wasted man-hours. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The monster won't catch itself. I set my bag up on the floor. I consider the situation. The police station is totally trashed and blackish ichor is pooled on 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. Still, I need a plan. I have to weaken the place that anchors the thing to our world.

I steady my breath. Time to kick some demon ass. I prepare myself for unmooring the abomination from its anchor points. I've managed to destroy all anchors but one when the brute 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 get a shock from the stray electricity that leaves my head reeling. I'm in deep trouble.

I furrow my brow. My head spins as I try to regain control. At least I'm still alive. Okay, I need to think. I examine the situation. What now? Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? I don't think I can do this. I really need to breathe and think. Right. I have a plan. 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. 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 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 fall down on the floor and reel in pain.

My gut sinks. I'm rolling on the floor, holding my head between my hands. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to get it together. What now? I examine the situation. Maybe I could drain it of its power somehow? 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 the thing.

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. It's bigger than I thought. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic fist 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that was way too close. I don't get paid. At least there's one less the demon 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's the only thing I know how to do. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the rain.

Chapter 71

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, a detective's pay is not exactly luxurious. I need a job. And I need it fast. Samuel steps in the door and tells me his problems. My grip tightens. Already it seems like a tough case. He will owe me after this. I get ready to leave for the archive.

I walk to Sheills archive. I feel a cold sweat coming on. I go in. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted archive always gives me the creeps. Okay, enough waxing poetic. The thing won't catch itself. I open my bag and set it up on a windowsill. I look around. The archive stands in suspiciously good condition and tiny arcs of electricity dance on all metallic surfaces. The wraith 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 need a plan, though. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the demon.

I steady my breath. 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 monstrosity appears. A mad electric giggle echoes inside my brain. How am I going to finish the circle like this? The wraith 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 feel my body tense. I find myself without my gear. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to breathe and think. How do I deal with this? I examine the situation. My options seem hopeless. I don't think I can do this. Right. I need to concentrate. Okay, I think I got it. I might be able to overload the tricky devil 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. 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? The wraith roars and my wire starts throwing sparks around the room. I

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

My grip tightens. My head spins as I try to regain control. Well, it could be worse. Okay, I need to get it together. I look around. What now? Maybe I could destroy the loci anchoring it to this world? All of my options at this point just seem bleak. Okay, I need to breathe and think. Okay, I think I got it. I could drain the power from the monstrosity if I can ground it.

I connect a piece of wire to a piece of plumbing. That should be grounded properly now. 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 when the wraith pounces on me. Phantoms dance at the edges of my vision. I don't even know if I've grounded the drain correctly. I fake out the tricky devil 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.

I smile. 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, Samuel now owes me one. This should go nicely towards my electricity 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. Another day, another job. I hail a cab and fade into the rain.

Chapter 72

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, 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 Earl. 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 Graham metro station.

I walk to the metro station. I crack the lock quietly and step through. I don't know why, but the thought of a haunted metro station always gives me the creeps. I snap out of it. Time for work; 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 the metro station is totally trashed. The scene suggests a not-too-bright the monstrosity. Shouldn't be too hard. It's all about the brains, after all. Still, I need 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. 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. Is this even enough to overload something that powerful? 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 grit my teeth. I find myself trapped in a small room. Well, it could be worse. Okay, got to concentrate. What do I do now? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I could bind it? No, that won't work. I really need to work this out. Right. I have to weaken the place that anchors the brute to our world.

I reach for my tools. I pray that this will work. I prepare myself for unmooring the wraith from its anchor points. 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 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 the brute fast behind me. I run and swerve as I desperately think of some way to

evade the monstrosity behind me.

I hesitate. I weave and scramble, knocking over a luggage cart. At least I'm not room temperature yet. Okay, got to focus. How do I deal with this? I examine my surroundings. Maybe I can try to overpower it somehow? Oh this is just hopeless. Right. I need to focus. Right. All I need to do is set up a barrier circle so I can contain the brute.

I reach for my tools. 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. I didn't consider it would be this strong. How am I going to finish the circle like this? I dodge its gigantic pseudopod 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.

I relax. Well, at least I'm still alive and kicking. But that didn't at all go according to plan. In any case, Earl 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 pays the bills. Except when it doesn't. Oh well. Life goes on. I step into the city.