January 19, 115 PFDoctor Carl Morrow leaned close to the face of hispatient, secured to the

bed with leather straps a quarterinch thick and metal buckles reinforced beyond whatmight

have been necessary for even the most robustand difficult of his patients. For Perdita, they

weresignificantly thicker and stronger than would ever havebeen required. Especially now,

given her comatose statethese past months, unmoving save the subtle tremblingof her lower

lip as she’d gibber incoherently in the vastdepths of her endless dreams.His eyes, just

inches from her flesh, watched a ray ofsunlight fall upon the side of her face and gently

warmher dark skin. “Ooooh,” he whispered in awe as the lineof her forehead and nose took

on the glow spillingthrough the narrow window several feet beyond thebed. He ran his index

finger down her face, between hereyes and along the bridge of her nose, tracing thesunlight

that irradiated her flesh. “Perdita Ortega,” hesaid in a whisper. He had a tendency to

over-annunciatehis words, and small droplets of spittle struck herearlobe and cheek as he

punctuated the sounds. “Somuch rest time,” he said, still gently stroking her facialfeatures

with the tip of his finger. It neared the tip of hernose. “Beauty sleep? Rest for the wicked?”

He chuckled.His finger slid down the base of her nose and across thedepression above her

upper lip. “You’ve had both,dearest. More beautiful than any might desire. Morewicked, too.”

His fingers traced the contour of her lips.“We’re all wicked, aren’t we?” His fingers tapped

theirway back up her face, striking with each word as hequietly said, “The monsters hidden

here,” and with thefinal word he tapped her forehead. “All those littlemonsters trapped in

here. Busy, busy, busy.” All themonsters in here.Time meant nothing to Perdita. To Dr.

Morrow, she hadbeen there for over five months. To her, she had justarrived. The voice of a

boy, a student lost at Kythera,struggled to speak to her again. But she couldn’t hearhim well.

She was floating in a pool of dark water. Justher nose and lips rose above the surface. Her

eyescouldn’t see through the dark substance, turning thelight from above a strange

indigo.“The truth,” she heard the boy say.“Don’t say it,” another voice, even more faint, said

in theindistinct darkness above her.An older voice, conveying wisdom in its words, said,“She

can handle it. It’s why she’s here.”“She’s here because she’s dead.”“They’re all dead.”“No,

not yet. Not dead.”“There’s no escaping Malifaux,” another said as Perditastruggled to lift

herself from the pool, to hear moreclearly.What’s the truth? she asked.“Don’t tell her,” the

distant voice urged. “She’s not ready.Doesn’t know where she is.”“None of them do.”Where

am I?“Dead.”“No she’s not.”“She’s here, isn’t she?”“Not exactly.”“Then where is she?”“I’m

telling you, she’s dead.”What’s the truth?! she managed to scream in thedarkness of her

mind.She couldn’t speak to them the way she wanted to.Didn’t understand where she was or

how she had cometo be there. The voices tried to show her what sheneeded to know, but

they didn’t know how to speak toher, either. They spoke over each other and contradicted

one another. The voice of that young man, a studentthat went to Kythera on an expedition

and neverreturned, his voice was stronger than the others. It roseabove theirs to speak to

her more conversationallyabout what they discovered at Kythera. He explainedwhere she

was. He explained what she was.The others were right. She wasn’t ready for the truth.It’s

not that she didn’t like it. She couldn’t accept it. Hiswords were a revelation to her explaining

what he hadseen at Kythera – what they had all seen. It’s the truththat had driven them mad.

It’s the madness that hadled to them tearing into one another, ripping oneanother’s flesh

right off of their bodies.“The little monsters are dancing in here,” Dr. Morrowwhispered.

“Busy, busy, busy.” He inhaled sharply,smelling her hair. It hadn’t been washed in weeks.

Hedidn’t mind. She was intoxicating. “We all have thosemonsters we try to hide, don’t we

Ms. Ortega? Try tokeep them out of the public eye. Try to keep them underwraps, as it were.

Sometimes our monsters are harderto control than others.”Lucius Matheson stepped out of

the shadow behind thedoctor. He was silent in his movements and when hesaid, “Some

monsters are more palpable than others,”the doctor screeched and knocked his teeth

againstPerdita’s cheek when he jumped. He stood and spun ina movement, and the

Governor’s Secretary wasuncomfortably close. He fidgeted with his lab coat,pulling it taut in

the front and buttoning it severely andquickly. “Some are more real than you realize,” he

addedquietly.Doctor Morrow smiled faintly and laugheduncomfortably. Sternly, Lucius said,

“Leave us.” The doctor didn’t argue,excusing himself without a word. Matheson

loomedabove the comatose body of Perdita, staring intently.“We have need of you,” he said

to her, his voice dry andwispy. He pressed his open fingers down upon her face,spanning

the breadth of her skull. He pressed violently,squeezing painfully. A soulstone was crushed

in his otherhand, the milky white vapors entwining his arm beforehe could redirect its

powerful influence. “Awaken!” hecommanded and his voice boomed.Her eyes snapped

open. The orbs were ashen gray, dull,reflecting no light, though thin bands of silver

andpurple swirled in their depths as if they were dark poolswithout end.Far from the city

where the Red Cage had fallen thosemany months ago, tearing a rift in the fabric

separatingthis world from the aether, releasing the purple wavethat had become known as

The Event and left herasleep to the world, a cry came up from the unexploreddepths of the

hole that stretched for miles beyond thepoint of impact. It was angry and shrill and foreign to

allpeople that had ever walked upon Malifaux’s soil. Thebeast flew out of the pit on wings

that stretched wideon thin membranes of flesh stretched between longboney fingers that

protruded beyond the reptilian inbarbed hooks. Its body stretched longer than a fullgrown

stallion, but it was more like a great panther. Itscreeched again. Though too far away for her

to hear,Perdita jerked upright, pulling at the straps holding herdown.“It’s coming for me,” she

said. Bands of purple and silverswam in the depths of her gray eyes.The creature shrieked

again. Purple and silver bandscrisscrossed through its ashen eyes. It knew where shewas. It

could find her anywhere. With a snap of its wings,it caught a draft, ascending on a course

that led straightfor Perdita.