

Beads of sweat roll down Delia's temple as she fidgets in her seat, fiddling with her fingers in anxiety. The cafe was bustling, dozens of patrons talking among themselves, yet she still didn't feel safe from it.

"Can I take your order, ma'am?" a waiter asks, flipping open a notepad.

Delia slowly turns her head to face him, only to gasp audibly and recoil back, the man's face that of an owl. She faces away hurriedly as he takes a step back himself, perplexed by her unusual reaction.

"Ma'am, are you *alright*?" he asks softly.

Looking back up at him, the pounding in her chest eases, his face human again.

"I'm fine, I- I'll just have something light, thank you," she breathes.

The waiter nods. "Right away, ma'am."

She rests her arms down on the table in front of her and lays her head on them, her mind bouncing all over the place. She had to get away from it, away from its presence. Her foot taps restly in rhythm as she tries to keep herself preoccupied from her thoughts, waiting for her meal to arrive. Delia feels a chill travel down her spine as another tapping sound joins her percussion, her leg going stiff and stopping its rhythm. She turns to the window beside her, fear pulsing through her as the owl stares at her unwaveringly, continuously tapping at the glass. Holding her chest, she can feel her heart pounding again, panic taking its course once more.

"Your meal, ma'am," the waiter says in the middle of her fear, presenting a plate of food in front of her. "*Souffle*."

"T-*Thanks*," she manages to stammer, mustering a weak smile as he walks away.

Through her shaking fingers, she picks up a spoon, digging into the fluffy dish, therapeutically chewing to ease her tensed mind. Pulling her spoon up, she freezes, dropping it onto the floor as Delia stares at the small mouse that'd found itself in her meal. Sickness joins her concoction of emotions as she rushes out the cafe, leaving the rodent laying poised upward on the floor.

"*Keepittogetherkeepittogether*," she murmurs to herself as she enters the empty streets of the town square, oddly not a soul in sight.

She tightens her grip on her arm as she sighs, reprimanding herself for her panic attack back in the cafe. Perhaps she was overreacting to it all and there really was nothing to fear. She begins the lonely walk back home, the streets lit calmly by lamps scattered along the path. The peace in her was short lived, however, as something, or rather, someone catches her attention along the rooftops.

"*Oh, no*," she whispers to herself, stopping in her tracks and slowly backing up. "*No, no, no...*"

A brown-haired woman stands at the ledge of the rooftop, bearing no clothes but rather covered by brown and speckled feathers. Her face was obscured by a mask, resembling that of an owl and decorated with spider-like eyes. She coils her sharp blackened hands and tilts her head sideways, staring ominously at Delia.

“*Oh God*,” Delia stammers, turning heel and breaking into a sprint.

She doesn't turn back as she runs through the streets desperately, aimlessly turning into alleyways to throw off her pursuer. She runs out into a street, panting, stopping to catch her breath. Looking around, she observed that it'd rained the day before and had left many puddles scattered along the street. Unbeknownst to her, however, it only endangered her more as a darkened hand reaches out of the puddle grabbing her ankle as its claws sink into her skin. Unable to hold in her fear anymore, she screams, tearing away the talon and running through the streets once more. The hunt was on, Delia desperate to escape the phantom that'd haunted her for as long as she could remember. Memories of old flash by as she continues to run, her gasps of desperation falling to the deaf ears of the street.

She turns around on the spot, desperately trying to find the owl lady. “Where *are* you?” she pants, tinges of fear in her voice.

“Wherever you go, I'll *always* be there,” a voice reflecting her own purs through the street, Delia unable to locate the source of it.

The only thing she knew was to run, soft but haunting hoots filling the street as she flees the minefield of puddles, weaving between all the talons reaching out to grab and pull her down.

“You can't hide forever,” the voice sings maliciously as Delia starts to navigate through the maze of alleyways, a sharp breeze following her.

She doesn't look back, not even for a second as she dashes through the tight alleyways, ducking and vaulting over anything in her way, fear driving her. Her eyes widen as she comes sliding to a stop, brick and mortar blocking her escape. She swears under her breath, though her anger is outweighed by the anxiety stabbing at her heart. Knowing she had no other choice, she raises her fists, ready to fight off the owl lady. What she hadn't accounted for was the mirror behind her, her reflection manifesting the phantom she was trying so desperately to escape from. Delia notices her hunter, panicking and kicking the mirror, multiple cracks stemming out from the point of impact. It doesn't seem to stop the owl lady, however, as she crawls out of the mirror, her limbs positioned dementedly as she crawls up towards a petrified Delia.

“You can *never* escape me, Delia,” she says softly, almost as if she were trying to soothe Delia. Before she can bolt away again, she feels a sharp pain in her chest, looking down to find the owl lady's talons stuck in her heart. “*Ever*.”

A violent tug is felt by Delia as she slumps onto her knees and rolls onto her side, tears streaming down her eyes. The owl lady was nowhere to be seen as her cries echo throughout the alleyways. She was helpless, as no matter what she did, no matter how hard she tried to get away from her demons, the phantom always took her toll.