F. J. Bergmann - Blessing the Wind

“You *asked* for it?” His fists slowly clenched and unclenched.

“Yeah!” She stood with her feet apart, braced. Her eyes glittered. “What I’ve been wishing for … for months and months. Wishing on candles. Wishing on first stars and all that crap.

“*Why*, Barrett? You could have looked it up; petitioned one of the Libraries, or asked someone. You didn’t even use a mirror!”

“*You* told me the mirrors were no protection.” Her tone was venomous. “And I *did* ask someone.”

“You asked one of *them*.” His voice flattened.

Wisps of hair wafted to either side of her neck in the air currents from the enormous, dark-patterned wings slowly opening and closing behind her, bright deltas netted with tributaries of shadow.

“You’re just jealous!” The hard glitter in her eyes had become brimming tears. “You and all the other *adults* …” Her face became a caricature of maternal solicitude. “Barr-ee, don’t look for Blessings—you might find one. Barr-ee, don’t talk about the Blesséd, or they might come.” Her eyes narrowed. “But they never came for any of *you*, did they?”

“No one *wanted* them to come! Barrett, you heard the stories.… How could you—anyone—want such a thing?”

She was openly sobbing now. “Then why do you call them Blesséd?”

He was silent for a moment. “It’s because people were afraid, Barry. Don’t you understand? It’s just superstition. They thought it was a sort of protection. Like they used to call fairies ‘Good Folk’; or the Furies, the ‘Kindly Ones.’”

The wings hesitated, just for a moment, then resumed their slow stroke. “Are you afraid of *me?*”

“You have to go, Barrett.”

“Are. You. Afraid. Of me. *Say* it!” Her voice rose into a shriek.

“Not for me. For the other children.” The droop in his shoulders, as if weighted down by an invisible, inescapable burden, seemed to drag down the corners of his mouth.

“I— I’ll cut them off!” She looked around behind her wildly from side to side, as if trying to read directions or authorization in a language imprinted on the mottled feathers. But her nails were already starting to lengthen, taking on a metallic darkness.

Far overhead, so high that they were only pinpricks of despair distorting in and out of visibility, a squadron of them was waiting for her, lazily spiraling in the gyre of winds.

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