My arm was caught between the ground and a set of huge, obsidian talons.

“You see,” the demon spoke haltingly, as if turning each word over in its mouth.

“It was me the whole time,” it said. The demon glanced at me, peering from beneath its hooded garment. It continued, “I broke the vase. I murdered the chauffer. I started the fire at the *Théâtre de Pieds Palmés*.”

The wind picked up, sweeping leaves and the outer leaf of a newspaper through the air. Far below us, the horns of impatient Lorryjacks hooted angrily, muffled by folds of haze. From this height I could make out the *Maisonette* quarter with its glimmering yellow lights. Beyond, the lanterns on distant fishing boats bobbed rhythmically in the harbor. I just needed to buy some more time. On one of the boats, I was sure, *she* was.

I couldn’t bring myself to say anything. The demon was too fearsome, too unearthly. Something about the swirling tendrils of dark smoke whispered ‘speak to me’.

‘Tell me everything.’

‘Tell me where she is. Tell me how to find her.’

If I had opened my mouth, I was sure I would have said everything, generously spilled every secret I had. The demon smiled, widely. In its mouth, the teeth twisted and turned like thousands of tiny fingers.

“If you won’t talk, I’ll kill you.”

It was simple, really.  
If I didn’t talk, it would kill me. If I did talk, it would still kill me.

“I’m absolutely serious.”

*I know.*

Then, it killed me. Not gratuitously, mind you. Not gently. Matter-of-factly, really. One moment, I was alive: A living, breathing human being. Hair, eyes, ears, you know.

The next moment, I was looking down on my body. Blood-soaked white robes, eyes glassy behind the bronze mask. Strange.