

The Book of Muse: The Reluctant Author II

by Michael Camarata

Author stared down in disbelief and awe at what he held in his hands. Never had he expected to find such a treasure when he had wandered into this little eclectic bookstore—called, coincidentally enough, “The Little Eclectic Bookstore”—in this backwoods dimension. Lightly running his fingers over the coarse, leathery exterior of the book, Author traced the raised red lettering which read:

The Book of Muse

Legend had it that each chapter within was inked with the blood of the great horror writers of all times—Stoker, Shelly (Mary, not Percy), Poe, Lovecraft, King and Barker—extracted from them within minutes of their demise by unknown time-hopping agents of the book’s unknown creator. It was said that something of these writers’ creative gifts resided still within their coagulated blood, and that any writer who read the lines written therein would be imbued with these gifts for writing horror.

Here at last, thought Author, was his chance to rise above the slush piles and rejection lists to become a real, published, writer! No more fruitless hours spent pondering over dead-end plot lines. No more fumbling through poorly constructed sentences that

seemed to barely hold together. No more wasted time spent combing through seemingly endless thesaurus pages only to find that the perfect word for the situation had never existed in the first place. With this book at his side, Author could write the greatest tales of horror ever written!

That was, of course, if the legends were true. And if this was indeed the one true copy of the book, which Author had no reason to doubt.

At a mere 5,000.00 squid (approximately \$2,000.00 American), the book was a steal!

Glancing around, Author saw that from his current position he was completely cut off from the view of the proprietor's desk by a large mound of books that awaited a position along the overburdened book shelves. Despite the prominent sign hung by rust covered chains from exposed ceiling rafters, which read "Open Books only at the Manager's Approval," Author decided to take a peak.

The thick hide groaned and popped as Author pried open the ancient manuscript's cover. There on the first page, in dark red lettering, it read:

*To my dearest Candy,
for all the tales you've told me over the
years, I offer you this token of my affection.*

Below, Author could make out a hint of more writing: A copyright notice; A disclaimer. The harder Author tried to make sense of the words, the more blurred and illegible they seemed to become.

No. Author saw now that this was no trick of the light, or his eyes. The writing was blurring. Long dried blood uncoagulated before his eyes, seeping through the thick, pulp fibers of the page and spreading together into an indecipherable smear.

He flipped the page, and saw more of the same. On the next, the same. As he turned the pages, they began to grow brittle and to crack. Suddenly the entire contents, from cover to cover, slipped from their bindings in a puff of smoke and ash,

clouding the air and drifting to the floor to mingle with the cockroaches and dust bunnies.

Author flipped the cover shut and set it neatly back upon the shelf where he had found it. Walking briskly, yet calmly, through the isles, he carefully avoided eye contact with the store's manager. Only when he heard the familiar jingle of the bell, telling him that the store's door had closed safely behind him, did Author manage to release his breath.

Back in his own dimension, Author sat on the edge of his bed and relayed the story to the dragon Genevive.

"And did you expect otherwise?" She asked when he finished.

Genevive was a dragon of few words. Clear. Succinct. Author would find no conciliation from her for his own stupidity, and she was not afraid of letting him know it.

"How was I supposed to know what would happen?" Author asked.

"Does not anyone versed in the legend remember the words of warning? 'Only a published writer may look within its pages,'" she recited. "For the talents are not to be wasted on some banana-head who doesn't know the tip of a pencil from its eraser end."

"Oh yea," said Author. "I forgot about that part. Oh well. I suppose it will eventually turn up again. Isn't that always the way with these sorts of things?"

And so, worn out by the day's events, Author curled up on the bed and drifted off to sleep.

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Originally Self Published in Tales of the Reluctant Author: Christmas, 1993

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