

Staring back at him in the mirror above the small washbasin was the reflection of a man with grey skin, which was deeply lined with wrinkles. Most of his face was hidden in the shadow created by the hooded garment that he wore.

Tate blinked and found that only the familiar sight of his own visage now gazed back at him. Had he imagined it?

Tate moved on into the buffet car; casting a cursory glance around him as he continued through to the next coach.

It felt cooler in this carriage.

Half way down the aisle, Tate stopped to look out of a window. He found to his frustration that there was nothing outside but the same gloomy emptiness.

Carrying on up the aisle and into the next carriage, Tate abruptly stopped. A further drop in temperature immediately crept over him. And it was darker in here. Tate couldn't see the door at the other end of the carriage. It was as if the gloom outside was slowly oozing its way in and swallowing up everything it came into contact with. For what seemed like an eternity he stood still, considering whether to proceed or not.

The sudden sound of laughter startled Tate. A deep, glutinous reverberation that seemed to echo hollowly. At first Tate couldn't see anyone but then a figure, dressed entirely from head to toe in a grey cloak, was moving toward him. Only the man's hands and the lower half of his face was revealed. The same man that Tate saw in the mirror a few minutes ago!

“Who are you?” Tate asked running appraising eyes up and down the newcomer. Then as an afterthought, “*What* are you?”

“I am the demon Hallomarr,” came the reply.

“I don't believe in demons!” Tate retorted.

“And yet you are here, in this place, as am I,” said Hallomarr.

“In this place?” Tate repeated. “I don't even know where ‘this place’ is! Or, for that matter, what the hell I'm doing here. And where did everyone go?”

“Only the essence of your being is here. Your soul, if you prefer. The outside world, however, remains constant. Uninterrupted.” Hallomarr explained.

Tate asked, “So...I'm dreaming?”

"You are not slumbering. Think of an egg that has been opened and the yolk inside removed." Hallomarr laughed malevolently at his comparison.

Tate closed his eyes and shook his head, muttering to himself, "I don't believe this."

Hallomarr raised his left arm until it was fully outstretched. He then lifted his hand so that the palm was facing Tate. Tate suddenly experienced the sensation of being hit by an icy cold blast of air. He opened his eyes and found that he was no longer on the train...

...He was in a forest. Tate was watching a memory from the past. Hallomarr's past. Images appeared across the screen of Tate's mind:

At least thirty men crowded together about ten yards in front of Hallomarr. A few carried double-barrel shotguns but most had knives. One of the men stepped forward, raised his shotgun and fired two shots directly at Hallomarr's chest. Both shots found their target. Hallomarr stared impassively at him. Blood began running out of the man's eyes and nose and he opened his mouth to scream but was dead before his body hit the ground.

Hallomarr turned his head to look at another of his would-be assailants. The man was carrying a knife in one hand, which he suddenly felt compelled to insert into his own eye. So he did just that.

The other men fled in terror. Within moments, Tate had witnessed Hallomarr inflict similar fates on those who were unsuccessful in evading him.

The memory faded and others took its place. Each showed similar acts of wanton destruction. Each more terrifying than the last. Hallomarr tortured and mutilated men and women completely indiscriminately and for no reason other than he enjoyed causing suffering.

Hallomarr was unstoppable. Weapons were useless against him and anyone brave (or foolish) enough to stand in his way, paid for it with their lives. He would reign in this world forever, it would seem. Until...

...Hallomarr was standing with his back against a barn door. Eight men stood in a loose semi-circle around him. The men were all standing with their eyes closed and their arms criss-crossed across their chests, fists clenched. Each man had a tattoo of an eye painted on the knuckle of his left hand.

The men chanted in unison. *Ad locus terribilis expellimus. We banish you to a terrible place. Ad locus terribilis expellimus. We banish you to a terrible place.*

Hallomarr felt pain. Excruciating pain. He fell to his knees and clasped his hands to the sides of his head. Looking up into the night sky he screamed. Then...darkness.

Tate found himself back in the train carriage. His head was reeling.

“I don’t understand what all this has to do with me,” Tate said.

“The man you killed tonight was the last of the eight who exiled me. He swore an oath to protect your world and thus prevent me from re-entering it. Now that he is no more...” Hallomarr allowed the sentence to trail off.

Tate frowned. The man he killed tonight was perhaps forty years old. The events that led to Hallomarr’s banishment happened a long time ago. Tate wasn’t sure exactly how long ago but it was a sufficient length of time to convince him of one thing: “It can’t be the same man. It’s not possible,” he said to Hallomarr.

Hallomarr sighed. “Ah! Be certain he, and he alone, used powerful magics to send me here. He used them to prolong his own life and deny me mine. He need only recite an ancient spell on the same day every year to keep me imprisoned here. Powerless.”

“Why not just simply bring *him* here instead of me?” Tate asked.

Hallomarr could scarcely hide the contempt in his voice when he said, “It is the eye. The eye protects him as long as he wears its mark.”

“But if you *are* now free then why are you still here?” Tate asked.

Hallomarr smiled at Tate. “And how do you think that I will re-enter *your* world when I am disembodied in *this* world? I have no body of my own and would need a vacant one to inhabit.”

And with that, Hallomarr moved towards Tate.

The full realisation of Hallomarr’s intention hit Tate like a thunderbolt. He had seen what Hallomarr was capable of. If such a Power were unleashed on the world again... Tate resolved to prevent Hallomarr from using his body as a ‘way out’. He tried to move but found to his horror that he could not.

Some unseen force prevented him.

Hallomarr was now inches away from Tate. He took one final step forward, passed *through* Tate and disappeared. Tate instantly felt cold like nothing he had ever experienced in his life. His body started to shake uncontrollably. Everything around him turned to darkness.

Fate, it would appear, had an ironic sense of humour.

“Nooooo!” Tate shouted defiantly.

But no one heard him. And no one would. Ever.