

The Goddess Luisa Divine

That night, I dreamt again. I sat up on a vast desert, black dunes rippling off into infinity, beneath a sky buzzing with static. There, on the horizon, a shape approached, a deep and regal blue. And as it approached, it materialized into a woman in an elegant and crafted blue dress. Her hands were false, as if put on only for my benefit. A blur enveloped her from behind, and where her head should have been was a large seed. As she approached, I realized she was moving much faster than I'd first thought, and before I could fully cringe, she was on me, stopping just short of knocking me down. The blur behind her took shape, and fanned out into a halo of insect wings.

The large seed about her shoulders cracked and flopped open, and a many-petaled flower unfolded not seen in this world within human memory. Its pedals quivered and waved in patterns more likely seen in a cephalopod than a flower. And right at the center, a burning, glowing portal where her face should be. Entranced, I stood up on tip-toe and peered in, but just as quickly leapt back and scabbled away, for that portal enticed me to immolation.

The portal closed and a woman's face radiating calm and benevolence took its place.

"I am the Goddess Luisa Divine."

"But," I said, "you don't look like yourself."

“The dream realm is adjacent to the god realm,” said the Goddess Luisa Divine.

“Even the merest mortal skirts the lands of the gods when she dreams. Here, I may present myself in my true aspect.”

My mentor’s mentor.

“I taught Ismael, and gave him my Divine bookshop, who in turn taught you, and passed the same down to you.”

“I haven’t practiced in years,” I said.

The Goddess drifted down and knelt. Her rich blue dress spread out around her like a pond, its tiny gentle waves lapping at my feet. I knelt and pressed my hand into the fabric up to the wrist, and nearly tumbled into the deeper, darker realms therein.

“Mira,” said the Goddess, “not too much too fast.”

I pulled my hand back and looked up to her. “What is this? What’s happening to me?”

The Goddess settled deeper in her pond, and bobbed there.

“Where is Ismael,” I asked about my own mentor in life and magic.

“Dearest little Witch,” said the Goddess, “Ismael was mortal.”

Of course, I’d known this. I was with Ismael in his last days, when the cancer left him

a hollowed out husk. But I'd hoped he'd made it to heaven, or somehow figured out how to exist after death and haunt me in my bookshop.

The Goddess continued: "He lives in the place all mortals go to when they die. Now, he is a shade, devoid of the man he was on Earth, as it is with all humans."

"I want to see him," I said.

"Impossible," said the Goddess Luisa Divine. "The dead seek one thing only: a return to life. Getting too close only draws them back to what they can never have again. You know this to be true because I speak to you now with *Truth*."

"*Truth*?"

"One of the First Ten Spells Hekate gave your kind, child," said the Goddess. "You and I at the same, but we are also different. I descend from the Thriae, forever desired by gods and men alike, for our power of divination."

"You can see the future?"

"I can *Journey* there."

"What?"

"You too have *Journeyed* child. You'd spoken a word of *Power*. You've performed more spells than you understand. This is how I found you and why I came, because of what you are."

“What am I?”

“You, child, are a soldier. A soldier in Hekate’s army.”

“Army?”

The Goddess loomed terrible over me. The waters of her dress foamed and tossed, as if a storm brewed there. Her divine flower flared, then swooped down and enveloped me. The Goddess Luisa Divine brought her face close to mine, and through her eyes, I glimpsed the universe outside our own. She spoke and her voice tugged at the very atoms of my being. “Great danger surrounds you, child.”