



THE DEATH-DEFYING DOCTOR MIRAGE

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■ The story so far...



Doctor Mirage talks to the dead...but the only spirit she couldn't reach was her late husband, Hwen.

Today, Shan Fong-Mirage was haunted and raw. Reluctantly, Mirage agreed to a lucrative freelance job, in order to save the beloved home she shared with Hwen. A billionaire named Linton March asked Mirage to sever the binding that tethered him to a powerful, otherworldly creature kept prisoner in his basement. Mirage was about to refuse the shady job, when the prisoner told her, telepathically, that if she accepted, she could seek the spirit of Li Hwen Mirage in the underworld.

Mirage filled her coat pockets with objects of spiritual power, performed an arcane rite, stepped outside her physical body, and crossed an astral doorway from her home office into the world beyond ours. But she didn't know March had friends. Sixty-five years ago, March and four other men murdered a group of fugitive Nazi occultists, and performed a ritual to steal from them the binding that enslaved this powerful creature to their will. The enchantment gave the five power, wealth, and long lives—but March wanted to cut the rest of them out.

On the other side, Mirage discovered that the wall separating our world from the beyond was crumbling—torn to pieces by irresponsible magic users like March, who compel their prisoner to rip power from the other world without repairing the rift.

Should the wall crumble any further, a demon named Ivros stands ready with an invading army. A complicit Ivros was the tyrant demon that five warlocks once tried to bring to our world, but their ritual failed, and they ensnared the prisoner instead—a peaceful, benevolent being.

In the physical world, March's team of occultists abducted Shan's unconscious body from her home, unleashing a destructive wave of enchanted wards and defenses, to no avail. But within the worlds of the dead, Shan met the Pale Mistress, a capricious deity who held Hwen's spirit in her sway. The Pale Mistress allowed Shan to take Hwen's revived spirit and retrieve an item she wanted back—a magic staff imbued with the spirits of the dead at sea—but only on the condition that they should return it to her immediately. Break the promise, and Hwen would be destroyed.

Staff in hand, Shan and Hwen witnessed the breach between worlds about to open...and through it, they could see March's company about to kill Shan's body in a ritual to reinforce their power. If Shan and Hwen went through together to save her life and seal the breach, their promise would be broken and Hwen would die. If they kept their promise and went together to the Pale Mistress, Shan would be murdered, the breach would tear, and demons would conquer the world. Shan and Hwen's only option...say goodbye, and separate forever...

THE SCRIM
BETWEEN THE
WORLD OF FLESH
AND THE PLANES
OF ENVIOUS SPIRIT...
TATTERED OVER
CENTURIES.

ITS
MOMENT
HAS
COME.

"DEVASTATION
WAITS NO LONGER."

"THIS. THIS IS
MY DOING..."

"...AND
THAT OF MY
CAPTORS."

DON'T DO THIS!
YOU CAN'T JUST
INVENT A NEW RITUAL
AND HOPE YOU'VE GOT
IT RIGHT!

IT'S BEEN
MODIFIED BEFORE--
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO
DISCOVERED THAT,
MARCH.

"SHOULD
THEY IN THEIR
IGNORANCE
PULL THE FINAL
THREAD..."

NOW SHUT
UP. WE'VE GOT
WORK TO DO,
CLEANING UP
YOUR MESS.

THD

NH--!

...UNSPEAKABLE
MISERY. THE PLANE
OF LIFE NO MORE THAN A
BLOODY TROUGH AS THE
SKIES BOIL AWAY.

THERE
CAN-MUST BE
SACRIFICE.

WILL-SHALL
THERE BE
SACRIFICE...?



"...and when-how?"

ARE YOU READY?
I'M NOT READY.

ME NEITHER.
BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
GO STRAIGHT FOR THE BREACH.
I'LL COVER YOU.



PROMISE ME YOU WON'T LOOK BACK.

HWEN.
PROMISES ARE FOR CON ARTISTS,
REMEMBER?

I'LL FIND YOU.
WHEN I--WHENEVER--
I DIE... I'LL FIND YOU.



THE WALL HAS TO BE RESTORED,
SHAN.

THERE WON'T BE A ME TO FIND.

I NEED TO PRETEND I DON'T KNOW THAT.

THERE COULD BE--
YOU COULD GET YOUR STAFF TO THE PALE MISTRESS...



THERE'S FIVE YEARS' WORTH OF DROWNED SPIRITS IN THIS--THAT'S A LOT OF POWER.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED ALL OF IT. TAKE YOUR HALF AND GO.

MY HALF? I CAN'T MAKE THAT THING WORK! I NEVER COULD!



YOU CAN. JUST REMEMBER WHO I AM. AND WHO YOU ARE...









"...IF MARCH'S
COHORT
KILLS YOU!"

THESE SAME
FIVE TOGETHER IN
DOMINION OVER THE
POWER BOUND...



DON'T SEE
WHY WE'RE KEEPING
MARCH ALIVE AT
THIS POINT.

THERE HAVE
TO BE FIVE. IF WE
HAD MORE TIME
I'D HAVE PROPOSED
BRINGING SOMEONE
NEW IN.

...MADE
ONE BY THE
BLOOD...



...SPILT OF OUR
BROTHER...



...DO SEVER
THIS VESSEL,
COMMITTING
IT TO OUR
PURPOSE...

...HN...