

Antidote

A short story by Matthew Tansek

“There is only one cure in the whole of the earth,” The owl said from its perch atop the great ticking grandfather clock on the eastern wall of the study. “And you know what that means don’t you?”

“Silence,” I said rubbing the stinging pain out of my hand and beginning to search the room, “wooden owls have never talked to me before, so don’t you start.”

The old study was quite spacious in size but overloaded with objects, and my panic stricken mind rushed me to the first of the great iron tables in the room. On it lay sprawling suspension models of the celestial orbs and the solar system, and my mind raced through mythology to think of a connection.

“The trap was not crafted to keep those forbidden from entering.” said the owl, “it is a test.”

“And am I to believe your words apparition? Would you not rejoice in my demise?”

“The poisonous leaf is eaten by the worm.”

I looked at the great clock and the infuriating feathered imp at its crest. “You speak nonsense, and a dying man can spare no second.”

Abandoning the table my eyes then ran along the countless spines of books that lined the walls sorrowing at the quantity.

“The worm in turn is eaten by the spider.” said the owl.

“Perhaps the antidote has already been prepared.” I said ignoring the cryptic words of the owl and coming to the next desk. this one covered in many stoppered vials and alchemical equipment.

“And the spider by the snake.” said the owl.

The setting sun shone pink through the bleary leaded windows and by it's light I could discern no labels or markings on the vials. “I may poison myself twice or three fold drinking such mysteries.” I said, my head swimming and my heart racing.

“And the snake by the scorpion. By this the Gu is made.” said the owl.

“Your babbling grows tiresome devil,” I said moving to the great ledge at the base of the window. “I shall die at least in the rays of the sun.”

My eyes then examined the great pyramidal terrarium on the ledge before me, and saw within it a great glistening scorpion.

“So you have found it, the concentration of deathbringers.” said the owl.

“What good does it do me? Poison is not undone by a second dose. Only Mithradates would not be so doomed.” I said slumping to the floor beneath the window. “May God smite this accursed place from the Earth.”

Then my toxin riddled mind struck on something the owl had said when I first entered. *There is only one cure in the whole of the earth!*

I crawled with burning joints to the first iron table and hooking the celestial model with my hand pulled it crashing to the floor. The sundered blue glass of our world revealed truth to my hope, and in fumbling fingers I grasped the antidote that was within the Earth.