

# DOROTHY'S FORBIDDEN GRIMOIRE

## Chapter 3: Letter

In the depths of the canyon, the chilling rain gradually subsided. At the site of the massacre, Dorothy sat on the ground, gasping for air as she faced Edrick's corpse. It took her quite some time to calm herself. When she finally stood, albeit shakily, a critical thought suddenly struck her.

'Wait! What about his dogs?'

Remembering Edrick's two hunting dogs, Dorothy tightened her grip on the revolver and scanned her surroundings warily. From what she recalled, the grotesque creatures had only been thrown aside earlier and were unlikely to have died. If they got up to avenge their master, it would be disastrous. Earlier, overwhelmed by the emotions of firing a gun and killing someone for the first time, she had neglected to consider this.

Peering into the dim light, Dorothy located the two hunting dogs. They lay motionless on the riverbank, not far away. There wasn't even the sound of

breathing. They appeared as lifeless as corpses, leaving Dorothy momentarily stunned.

'Dead? That can't be... could just being thrown aside kill them? Could a single-word of Unrelenting Force shout really be this powerful?'

Although the sight of the dead dogs puzzled her, their grotesque and terrifying appearance deterred her from checking further. The lingering question, however, stayed in her mind.

'Forget it for now. I need to figure out what to do next.'

Relieved that the dogs posed no threat, Dorothy exhaled deeply and sat back down. She picked up the fallen black umbrella beside her, opening it to shield herself from the drizzle. Thoughts of how to navigate this unfamiliar world began to crowd her mind.

Having only just crossed over into what seemed like a foreign world reminiscent of the 19th century, and reborn into the body of a girl who should have died in a carriage accident, Dorothy was utterly lost. The new world and new body left her bewildered and unsure of her next steps.

After much deliberation, she decided to continue following the original Dorothy's plan.

'I should go to the city to find Dorothy's brother. He's the closest blood relative I have in this world. Family can always be trusted and relied upon... This was also the girl's final wish.'

Propping her chin on her hand as she sat on the cold, damp stone, Dorothy mulled over her situation. In the original Dorothy's memories, her long-absent brother had been a doting figure during their childhood. Seeking his help seemed like the best course of action. After all, finding a "home" was the first step to stability, no matter where one was.

My clothes are soaked, and I'm freezing... I need to find a place to change.

According to the coachman's words in Dorothy's memories, there should be a town nearby. It was called Vulcan, and following the path the carriage had been traveling would lead there. Surely, if the bandits could find a way to the riverbank, there must be a route back to the main road ahead.

With this thought, Dorothy rested briefly before preparing to move. However, another pressing issue dawned on her: money.

'I'll need money for food and lodging... but I don't have any!'

Dorothy's trip to the city had been arranged by Aunt Hannah, who entrusted the journey to a familiar coach service. The money her brother had sent for the fare and her expenses had already been handed over to the coachman to take care of her. But now, after the tragedy, the other passengers' and coachman's belongings had been gathered as bait to lure the bandits and were now lost in the river along with the carriage.

Realizing this, Dorothy paused. She rubbed her chin and surveyed the scene before finally turning her gaze to Edrick's lifeless body.

'As the bandit leader, he must have some money on him...'

With this in mind, Dorothy grabbed a gas lamp from the ground and ran to the corpse without hesitation. Having already searched the bodies of the other bandits earlier, she was now somewhat accustomed to it and didn't feel as frightened.

Slowly, she began pulling items from Edrick's body: a dagger, a deck of cards, some banknotes, and a keyring.

Dorothy pocketed the useful items, then, feeling she hadn't been thorough enough, meticulously searched him again. This yielded a few coins, some rolled cigarettes, and a matchbox. Just as she thought she was done and considered stripping Edrick's decent-looking suit jacket to sell later, she noticed something unusual.

In the lining of his jacket, her fingers brushed against something. From the feel of it, it seemed to be a stiff paper-like object.

'Something hidden in the lining? If it's hidden like this, it must be valuable! Judging by the feel, could it be a stash of money?'

Dorothy's eyes lit up. She immediately drew her knife and slit open Edrick's clothing, retrieving the object concealed within the lining. Upon examination, she discovered it was not money but two envelopes.

"Envelopes? Are these letters? What kind of letters are so important they need to be carried hidden in the lining of clothing?"

Disappointed that it wasn't money, Dorothy curiously opened one of the envelopes and pulled out a piece of paper. She brought it closer to the gas lamp and examined it under its dim glow.

The paper was filled with neatly written letters, and to her surprise, she realized she could read them.

"Wait a minute... Didn't I sacrifice the original Dorothy's language knowledge in exchange for Dragon Shouts? How can I still understand this?"

Dorothy pondered in astonishment. In her understanding, the knowledge she had sacrificed should have been permanently gone. Why, then, did she still retain it?

"Perhaps... it's because knowledge is fundamentally information, not a physical object. Information can be duplicated, whereas objects cannot. Sacrificing knowledge doesn't mean losing it, teaching someone else doesn't make you forget it. Maybe I didn't 'exchange' my language for Dragon language but rather 'shared' it."

This realization brought her a sense of relief. At least she didn't have to worry about becoming illiterate in this new world.

Feeling much lighter in spirit, Dorothy focused on the letter again. It was written in Prittish, the common language of the Pritt Kingdom where Dorothy now resided. The script was a typical phonetic alphabet.

The letter's contents, however, took her by surprise.

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*To the Esteemed Mr. Edrick,*

*We are honored to have received your correspondence. Based on the description in your letter, we can confirm that the mystic artifact you discovered is known as the Corpse Marionette Ring. It grants the ability to manipulate freshly deceased bodies. Using it to control animal corpses is indeed a wise choice, and we hope it will enable you to carve out even greater influence in Vulcan Town. Of course, we advise you to remain discreet to avoid drawing the attention of the Serenity Bureau or the Church.*

*Regarding your expressed desire to join our society, we are delighted. As a street leader in possession of an mystic artifact, you are certainly qualified to*

*join us. We believe that your standing in Vulcan Town will allow our group's influence to expand further.*

*We welcome your inclusion, but before formally admitting you, we have a small task for you to complete—a test of sorts, one that is quite unique.*

*On the evening of April 8th, a convoy traveling from Purple Hill to Vulcan will pass by. Among the passengers is a girl, approximately thirteen years old, with white hair. Capture her.*

*Please do not misunderstand. Normally, we do not involve newcomers in such abduction tasks. However, this is a special case. The girl is of particular importance to us. While we would typically handle this ourselves, the recent increase in Serenity Bureau activity and the presence of hunter squads in Vulcan makes it unwise for us to act directly.*

*For the sake of caution, we have decided to remain uninvolved, leaving the matter in your capable hands. As long as you handle this task like any ordinary kidnapping, it will remain outside the Bureau's purview. We trust that, with your professionalism and skill, you can execute this operation flawlessly.*

*Naturally, we would not ask you to undertake this test without proper compensation. For this special assignment, we have prepared a reward that is exceptionally generous. It will allow you to make significant strides in the*

*realm of beyond you aspire to and secure a prominent position within our society.*

*If you accept this task, please reply promptly. We believe you will not refuse such a rare opportunity. We look forward to the day when you join us at the same table, sharing the feast and experiencing the marvels granted by the Great Chalice of Blood.*