

A SCIENTIFICK RECLUSE (Edgar Eakins)

"I never want to die," your sister told you once. She had just finished reading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. "If I die, make me a Frankenstein body. A beautiful one, with pale skin scarred like spiderwebs and shiny dark doll's hair. I want to live forever, Edgar."

Three weeks later, she killed herself.

In the bedroom next to yours she'd slept with a boy who'd climbed up to the balcony to get her. Alexander Clay was his name -- he had a deceptively gentle mouth -- and the next morning your parents had found her in bed, lying there, sticky with semen and sweat, missing a maidenhead. News of the affair had already travelled clear across town.

Your father raged and called her a whore. Your mother wept and blamed books for it all. You went to Lily with all the righteous rage of a little brother betrayed. "Alexander Clay ruined you."

She'd turned away from you tearfully, then turned away from everyone, and the next day a copper came by and said she'd thrown herself off the London Bridge. Her body was never found.

You built a new one.

It took years to find snips of pale skin from fresh cadavers and doll's hair as glossy as Lily would like it, quality enough that it wouldn't break and curl in your preservatives. You became an expert in preserving dead bodies, an accidental magician, searching for ways of raising the dead -- the sister you'd killed with your careless words. You would give her the Frankenstein body she said she wanted, once, long ago.

You've finally found a potion you think will get the job done -- your studies of the occult point to a fabled potion that doesn't work just on the freshly killed, but can summon a soul from anywhere and house it in a new body. The potion can be found, your research tells you, in the fabled Cave of Elixir, a cache of the world's most potent potions said to be created by King Solomon himself. The Cave is said to house only a single draught of this potion, enough only for the man who drinks it to give new life to a single soul, but one draught will be enough for you. You just need to bring back Lily.

The haphazard searching of an accidental magician took years to reveal the Cave's location. Unfortunately, two others stumbled upon the location the same time you did. One is Vesper Von Eternity, an Englishwoman whose adventures in India have been extensively chronicled by pulp magazines. You know next to nothing about her except what the magazines say, but if she's truly stared down tigers, she could be a good ally -- unless she's also looking for resurrection.

The other person who found the cave you're less willing to give the benefit of the doubt.

Alexander Clay is immortal. You've been tracking his escapades for thirteen years, ever since he slept with your sister. By now it's clear that he never ages. He's escaped assassinations and accidents unscathed, even as those close by him fall. Given your sister's predilections, you can't begrudge the existence of immortality -- but you can begrudge it to Alexander, who's been petty and destructive in his use of it. Lily, it appears, was nothing very special. Clay makes a game of seducing young women. He seems to take a particular, purely sadistic pleasure in bedding the sort of lady who afterwards will be considered 'ruined'; the only activity he approaches with quite as much enthusiasm is the seduction of naive young men, who are afterwards inevitably disgraced.

When you hate people you don't want to kill them. When you hate people you want to hurt them.

You want to hurt Alexander Clay as much as his immortality will allow.

Your desire to hurt Clay is intricate and cold. He deprived you of the one person you ever loved; if he ever had a loved one, you'd wish the same on him. You want to find his weaknesses, you want to drive the knife in, you want to hurt him like he hurt you. Whatever he wants in the Cave of Elixir, you want him not to find it. If he holds anything dear, you want to take it away from him.

There's a potion that kills in the Cave of Elixir. It can kill even immortals, they say.

If Clay fears death, perhaps you will kill him.

You very much hope he doesn't fear death.

(Killing is quick. Killing is easy. You want him to hurt, and hurt, and hurt.)



SPECIALS:

The Vessel: You've carried Lily's body -- or, rather, the stitched-together homunculus that will be Lily's body -- into the Cave with you. This homunculus is sufficiently large that its presence in the Cave is public knowledge. You must announce what you're carrying, and describe it, as soon as you enter the scene. Once you find the resurrection potion, you may seat Lily's soul in the homunculus.

The Scientifick Method: One of the potions in the Cave of Elixir is supposed to kill whomever drinks it. You'd rather not drink that potion. To avoid any mishap, you've brought with you an eyedropper and three white mice. You may feed a mouse trace amounts of any potion, via eyedropper, to see what effect it has.

One drop, enough for a mouse, is trivial. After you feed a mouse from a phial, there will still be enough potion in that phial for a person to drink and feel an effect.

As far as you know, the mouse will only be able to observably detect the death potion.

Giving an eyedropper-sized amount of of potion to a person will have no effect.

