

Fish and Holy Water

Sample Chapter

STRANGELY TWISTED
TWISTED SHORT STORIES
VOL 1: DARK & FISHY
RGAUSTIN

Kindle Edition

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Fish and Holy Water

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“All the fish who think the worm’s got no hook in it, usually end up in the frying pan.” Malcolm X

Mothballs, baby powder, and farts mushroom through the house. The smell, otherwise known as whore perfume, is my mother’s. She’s singing and dancing and cussing at me about being a party-pooper while I’m trying to do my homework: algebra, my worse subject. Concentration is out of the question, but she’ll be gone soon; I can tell by her slurred words that the bottle is almost empty.

She peeks into my room only long enough to tell me to wash the dishes before I go to bed. When I don’t answer, she slams first my bedroom door then the front door. I hurry out to crack a window to keep from puking from the smell. Then I go back to my bedroom and despite my Protestant faith, I take rosary in hand to pray for her miserable soul and my own for hating her so. My biggest fear in life is following her straight to hell.

I don’t know what time she comes home or if she brings some old fool back with her for a night of fornication. Although I have never met my father, she still does, as do I, bear his surname: Morvar.

The next day I’m up with the first buzz of my alarm, not that my delay would wake her. A stampede of wild elephants wouldn’t do as much. I remove the chair hooked under my doorknob that prevents unwelcome deviants that the whore brings home from crawling into my bed. Then I head for the shower.

My Lord. She’s disrobed from the hallway to the bathroom... bread crumbs of the tramp... that her daughter must follow and of course, stow away the shame. I pick up her shiny blue dress intending to toss it in the hamper when I see the front is covered in dark crimson streaks.

“Oh, she’s done it now,” I mumble, and God forgive my wicked soul, but my next thought is to let her be dead in her bed or rotting in the middle of the living room floor. I drop the dress and go in search of the body.

The torso I recognize as hers is in bed snoring so loudly I think a train might just bust out of the gaping mouth. It certainly smelled like one was on the way. I was about to leave her to her pending hangover awakening— the only kind of awakening she knows, when she moved an arm and I see her fingers and cuticles encrusted with dried blood. Jesus, my Lord and Savior, what has she done? It doesn’t occur to me that the blood is anyone’s but hers.

That night, my wayward mother lay on the sofa nursing her toxic body. Other than to order me to fix her soup and walk all the way to the store in the dark evening hours to fetch her saltines, she didn’t speak. Oddly enough, this peculiar state goes on for the rest of the week.

I had of course, been praying fervently for God Almighty to intervene and save her sorry soul from the liquid demons that possessed her and at this particular point, I had high hopes.

By the end of the week, she was almost presentable and had actually done some housework; truly a miracle in itself. So I let myself believe the Lord had heard my many prayers. He had not.

By Friday night, when I thought mother and daughter might share a meal and a movie, the whore perfume filled the house again. She was once more singing, dancing, and calling me foul names— clear signs of Satan's dark veil.

The next morning proved worst than her last debauchery. The living room had been transformed into a bacchanal: wine bottles, broken glass, food half-eaten and smashed, and his and her clothing and shoes heaped together in flagrant reproach. As I looked closer at the sinners' mayhem, I saw it— blood. Too much blood for a mere cut from a broken wine glass. Blood that formed a tell-tale trail to her bedroom.

Jesus, my Lord and Savior, when will the sins of this abominable sinner end? When I didn't get an answer, I dressed quickly and left the house. I didn't want to know what was going on behind that closed door. I just hoped it would sort itself out before my return.

I had prayed for the harlot all my few years on God's earth and it hadn't done a bit of good. I'd said many, many Hail Marys for wishing a tragic fate upon her. But then why wouldn't I wish as much?

I had no social life, having to hide my pitiful existence from classmates and our misfit family members long since dispelled by choice or her deeds. Of course, all who knew me knew of her; her being too vociferous to squirrel away. The whole town knew the vixen Claire Morvar and her poor little girl Sara Jane; but did one show up on my doorstep intent on my deliverance? Hardly.

I'd wasted a perfectly good Saturday engaged in my mother's infidel plight, waiting 'til dark to return home. As the week prior, there she was on the sofa nursing her inner wounds; no external wounds were obvious and the living room had been cleared of all evidence. Whoever had followed her home and left his attire on the floor, had fled with all testament of his corruption— or at least I hoped that was his outcome.

Once again, the entire week went by with my mother becoming almost presentable and our house seeming more a home than a no-tell by-the-hour motel. Lord, how much I prayed each day. She even promised a meal at the kitchen table and a movie on Friday night, my choice.

I returned from school with such high hopes, patsy that I was. I knew when I reached the door and heard the music blasting that there'd be no Disney evening for me.

That's when I made my fatal decision.

I waited in my bedroom, door ajar. I could see the front door from the edge of my bed where I sat dressed entirely in black from knit cap to hiking boots. She yelled at me to clean up the f-ing mess, her mess, and slammed the door.

It was eight o'clock and the street lights were flickering; they did that in our part of town. She'd long ago ran her car into a concrete pole so she, as I, was on foot. I followed carefully some distance behind, although that hardly necessary as she was in her most senseless state.

She staggered right to Mack's Tavern on Drago Street. Reluctantly, I huddled down at the side of the building next to overflowing garbage bins rustled by rats. The day's brutal heat had descended into thick protoplasm, wet and sugary sick. An exhaust fan clanked overhead wafting a composite of grease soaked chicken, onions, sausage, and fried squid up my nostrils. As nauseating as they all were, my empty stomach pleaded.

I'd brought a book along to pass the time but by one o'clock, my body and mind abandoned my efforts. If it was not for her oh so familiar, earsplitting, tangled, and crude slurs, I might have slept right through her exit from Mack's. She was all over a fat, bald idiot who was groping her top and bottom.

My head was cloudy, my body stiff and sticky and reeking of gutter stench. I followed them without much effort for my concealment. A 747 could have flown within an inch of their septic heads and barely registered.

We were a couple of blocks from home and I was chastising myself for wasting such a wonderful evening, when the two nitwits got into a slap-happy brawl. After someone yelled from an apartment window for them to shut the f-up or they were calling the police, my mother's prize beau called her a *farkin' bibtch* and headed the opposite direction.

My mother just stood there staring after him. For a brief moment, I felt sorry for her: drunk, alone, sinful, and clueless. I was tempted to go to her, take her arm, and lead her home when she turned and went in the direction of Votch Park, also known as Virus Park.

Perhaps it was the pity I felt for her or my empty stomach or hazy mind, but I followed. I had no intention of crossing the park's barriers— iron bars that were an honorable but pointless attempt to keep the scum of the earth out. Still, I was determined to discover whatever web of iniquity she was weaving. By the time we reached the park entrance, she was no longer adrift on a crooked trail. I reasoned the exercise was doing her some good.

She went straight in and towards the Shadows; tall, lanky Shadows who huddled around a fire; a fire foolishly built by these morons on a hot summer night. Toxic morons fueled by cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, and whores. If empty wine bottles and condoms were a viable commodity, the neighborhood would be richer than Solomon times two.

I moved around the outer edges of the park and had a perfect view of my mother. In less time than it would take to say *nice to meet you*, she was walking away with one of the Shadows. I don't know why I followed. God knows I knew what they were going to be doing and truly, I didn't want to witness such wickedness; but follow I did, even though it meant entering the park.

They walked to the pond called the cesspool— called that for good reason. They shared a cigarette and started groping each other. I huddled by a tree, my knees to my chest praying for Mother Mary to save the harlot's wretched soul. Soon they were on the ground rolling around, moaning and... growling.

I can't count the number of men my mother had taken to her bedroom over the years or the vile sounds I'd heard through her closed door, but not once had I heard her growl. At first I thought it was the Shadow, but clearly it was her and he was fighting like a lunatic to get away.

They were in full warrior battle. The Shadow not much bigger than my mother, but determined to be rid of her. He swung wildly with angry fists. She brought him down on his back with strength she didn't possess by God's will. He kicked haphazardly while struggling to pull up his pants, now bunched about his feet— a clear disadvantage.

It was almost comical until she pounced on his manly member, and his demented screams echoed through the park so loud that crows abandoned their trees. She came straight up with his organ projecting from her mouth and her arms raised fully into the air, apparently giving praise to her demon god. The Shadow was curled in a heap, both hands between his legs, crying and pleading to my God and hers. When I looked back at my mother, it was obvious she was eating her plunder as one might gnaw on a juicy pickle.

The Shadow was still curled tight while trying to scoot away, making gains of only an inch or two. With each whimper, life drained from his bloody, pillaged torso. Despite his perverse existence, I felt pity for his soul and for a second, I thought about running to his aid.

That's why I missed seeing her leap on him so that she could devour other protruding parts until his whimpers went silent. When they did, she rolled him to the pond, stepped into the sludge and garbage, and pulled him farther and farther in until they both disappeared.

All the way home, I prayed for her merciless soul. I was sure she'd gone straight to hell and just as well. What better place? Still I prayed for her and the Shadow too. When she didn't come home the next day or the day after, I felt, well... blessed. I figured I had a month, six at the most, before welfare workers showed up on my doorstep to take me out of the only home I'd ever known. I was not so lucky.

On day sixth of my own deliverance, the whore resurrected. The first words out of her foul mouth were about my late arrival; I'd hung out after school begging for money. She offered no explanation and looked none the worse, despite her post presumed putrefaction.

Now here we were, another Friday night upon us and her acting like nothing had happened and she'd not missed a single minute of mother-daughter time. No, she was just her usual hateful and briefly sober self; assuredly though, nothing was the same. Before me, in my home, was a demon guided by Lucifer himself.

I tip-toed around her all the evening. Early the next day, I made a mad dash to the Church of the Holy Cross over on Buffet Street. As a Protestant, I had no knowledge of the place, but this was no job for a pious pastor. This situation demanded the Catholics.

I entered Holy Cross and sat in a back pew watching a priest and a small boy in a long alb praying at the foot of a giant statue of the Mother Mary. They swayed together, apparently hearing singing angels that moved the boy to tears. When they finished and the kid ran off, I made a beeline to the priest. I'd seen it done in movies, so I made a cross sign over my chest and told him I needed help.

He seemed a little flustered, but Father Jaeger kindly offered his warm, moist hand and I took it as if it would keep me from falling to the depths of hell. He listened earnestly, nodding gently in all the right places.

With my conscious cleared of my mother's sins and my soul lifted by her anticipated redemption, he granted my plea to come to our house for an exorcism. I assured him that no one was safe until he did and he agreed to stop by that evening. I left him to tend to another altar boy who was waiting obediently at the feet of Mother Mary.

As before, my heathen mother had taken to the sofa to nurse her toxic wounds, but something was different this time around. She looked... better, stronger, even slightly sane, which she had never been in all my years. I knew then that her evil was waxing.

Father Jaeger arrived on time and asked to speak to the whore alone. Not knowing anything more about the practice of exorcism than the movie itself, I figured it was a necessary component of the ritual.

An hour later, I sneaked out of my room and found the pair comfortably enjoying a movie, popcorn, and a bottle of Chianti. At first I was outraged. Then I realized the priest was to be her next victim, and me her remiss accomplice. Horrified, I hurried him off with a story about a call I'd received from an altar boy who needed him at the Church. He could not have bolted more urgently.

My mother's power was multiplying far faster than I feared. With the Chianti barely skimming the bottom of the bottle, I knew her taste for blood was near. The Father, the Son, Mother Mary, and a priest could not stop her, what could?

No sooner had I asked than it was answered.

It surely would be tragic if you did not engage in magic. It was barely a whisper; still real enough for me to look around for the orator—there was no one.

*No ordinary magic will do this day,
Time is right for a spell,
Cast crosses and rosaries away,
Pray not eternity in hell,
Lift up your feet of clay.*

Chills strengthen my spine. The words of gods unknown had spoken to me. But could they be trusted? Desperation makes poor decisions. "I know only one God," I answered.

Its roots of evil demand an upheaval, came the cheery reply.

With that I had to agree. What choice did I have? She'd found more alcohol, she'd slurred my name in vain, time was running out. She'd be fixing her face next and stalking her prey soon.

It took me only a few clicks to find a spell on the internet. While she sang from the bathroom, I slipped out the back door and ran all the way to the meat market.

"Fish hearts and livers," I ordered, as if they were my daily fare.

I set a single piece of charcoal on the back step, drenched it in the harlot's hairspray, and struck a match, then two and three. Finally, it smoked and I lay the gruesome fish organs on the gray ash. I wrote my mother's name on a slip of paper and burnt it with the still slimy, putrid entrails. I gagged as I invoked my spell into the smoke.

"By the power of the Lord Almighty, I command the demon possessing the body of Claire Morvar to surface now and leave her body for all eternity. In the name of Jesus, who is the light of the world and exposes all darkness, come out now!"

And into thee, into thee, into... the wind echoed.

* * *

"Where are you off to, darling daughter?"

"Just meeting some friends at the park," I said, kissing my sweet mother on the cheek.

"Don't be late getting home and please dear, don't go down Buffet Street."

"Why's that?" I asked with a smile.

"They still haven't caught the maniac who murdered Father Jaeger."

"Sounds like he got what he deserved. Guess he should have kept it in his robe."

"Sara Jane Morvar! Mind your mouth. Please, don't let the man's wicked ways into your heart. Trust that the good Lord will punish him for his sins. It is not our place to judge, but to pray for his soul.... Is that all you're having for dinner?"

"I just love pickles," I laughed. "But I'll get something from the vendor at the park. He has some really juicy meatballs."

Thanks for Reading

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Get all 9 stories in Strangely Twisted

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Nothing is as it appears in these 9 twisted tales. Things are all a bit off, puzzling, dubious... fishy, in fact. Before you get all full of yourself, try to be who you aren't, deny the demon inside you or the ones you wish to take advantage of or ignore your duties to others, supernatural or other worldly, learn a little something from those who tried to do the same and failed.

Volume 1 has foul language, some sexual reference, a monster, demons, gods, goddesses, a witch, a warlock, a ghost, a priest, hell, magic, humor, and cannibalism properly served. Great bedtime quick reads for the strangely twisted.

Fish and Holy Water. Pious teen's mom is a murdering scarlet woman. Sara Jane would do anything to save the harlot's worthless soul. When the Father, the Son, Mother Mary, and a priest can't get the job done, it's time for some putrid magic, or so she thinks.

Baby Soft Dreams. Oh yes to be young again, oh yeah right. Jackie's got an old lady's face, body, and bad attitude. Then she gets a new client and an even bigger problem.

The Imp. This one is personal. Every short story horror book needs a monster, this one is mine... for real.

Old Lady on Hitch Hill. Tommy and Wyatt are best friends and petty burglars. The old lady has lots of cash, no one that gives a rat's a** about her, and one more thing the boys never even considered.

Spirits of Hartshorn. Pam has a few regrets in her life and too much mind-altering chemicals up her nose from the Helan-Glenn Ammonia Factory. The mixture is combustible.

Witch Balls. A glassblower just wants to make pretty glass things, but her new neighbor thinks his balls are big enough to shatter her reality.

Time's Up. Kathryn's husband and daughter are gone; missing according to the police. The Detective makes his move then the Order is received.

The Car. Mike's a good old guy mechanic until he buys the she-demon who's looking for revenge.

The Empress of Eberhard. This medieval tale was inspired by a portrait of the 17th-century pig-faced Dutch woman Tannakin Skinker (image in the book and all over the web). It's tasty.

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About the Author

I grew up in Southern California watching the Twilight Zone, Outer Limits, everything Alfred Hitchcock, and the rest of the '60's wacky horror shows that fed my brain a reptilian feast. Now I live in a suburb of Seattle and spend my time trying to create a little terror in a world gone mad.

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