

The Diviner

by Eric Ellis

A small, yellow-skinned goblin greeted the two men when they entered the shop. By greeted, I mean he glanced up from his divining and scowled before returning to his ritual. The men browsed the shop, drunkenly trying to appear surreptitious. The shop was dimly lit with candles that hovered between dusty bookshelves. Scrolls and books lined the walls to the ceiling where the shadows concealed the cobwebbed rafters. One man knocked over a stack of parchment and snickered. The other laughed silently and stumbled to the ground, trying to pick them up. From the back of the shop, the goblin cleared his throat.

One of the men shushed the other as they haphazardly shuffled the parchment back into a pile next to a bookshelf. They continued to look around and one of them noticed a small rack of spectacles and tried on a pair. He looked in the mirror and made a face before calling to his friend. They howled with laughter and the second man tried on a pair. He giggled and burped as he scanned the shop with the eyeglasses. Then he held his hand out in front of him and took slow, calculated (for a drunken man) steps. He'd taken one step too far because on his next footfall, he found the tail of the goblin's familiar. The cat screeched and began clawing furiously at the man's trousers. Startled, the man yelped and shook his leg as he tried to free himself from the fiend. The man lost his balance and fell over, knocking over a stack of books while the other watched with uproarious laughter.

The goblin appeared from behind a bookshelf and calmly pulled his familiar off of the frantic drunkard. He cleared his throat and said:

"Can I help you gentlemen?"

The man on the ground gathered himself and stood, brushing the fur off his blouse.

"Sorry, sir, we was just browsin' my friend here accidentally footed your pussy," said the other man.

He gracefully set the spectacles down on the counter behind him.

The goblin cleared his throat.

“Unless there is something I can help you with, you gentlemen can leave.”

“Wait—what are you doing over there?” asked one of the men.

The other man who had previously noticed the eyeglasses was now peering into the goblin’s divining pool. He reached out a finger to break the surface of the water but was stopped with a harsh slap to the wrist.

“Don’t touch that, you idiot!” said the goblin.

The man’s expression changed from inquisitive to lugubrious as he rubbed his wrist where the goblin slapped him. The goblin returned to his seat behind the divining pool.

“I am—well, I was—doing a ritual to see into the future,” said the goblin, in his guttural voice.

The men gathered before the table and gazed into the pool.

“Really? What kinda stuff do you see?”

The goblin took a deep breath and added a cloudy liquid to the pool and inhaled the smoke from the reaction in another deep breath. The men waited.

“I see...”

“What? What do you see?”

“Outside, a second from now, a woman drops an earring and loses it in the cobblestone,” he said.

Before the goblin was finished, the two men stumbled over each other out of the shop and into the street. The goblin stood atop his chair so he could peek over the top of the bookshelves and out the window where the two men were flattened by a speeding lorry.

Gasps and cries erupted outside the shop and the goblin calmly went back to his divining as his familiar brushed up against one of the table legs and purred.