



THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

A Tale of Horror

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Never tupt with the Devil, my friend. There's a cost. Don't believe me, ask Simon.

The river was deep but narrow. The gorge walls were high and steep. The village was on one side, but the best grazing land was on the other. This meant Simon had to walk upstream to cross at the ford, driving his cows all the way. He was a lonely fellow. His brothers and sisters had all died of the plague years back. His father had gone off to the wars ... never to be heard of again. His mother thereafter died of a broken heart. Or at least some people claimed such when they found her broken body at the base of the gorge. So, none were left but Simon. When others of the village were off carousing, Simon was still walking his cattle home after dusk. He ate and he slept and then it was time to walk the cattle back to the pasture.

On the far side of the river where a group of columns around which his cattle grazed. They rose to the sky like stones in the churchyard. Some say it was once a monastery. But there are those who lay claim to the notion it was something far older and more sinister.

Simon was a good-looking lad, on this all the young girls of the village could agree. His face could have made Michelangelo cry, for it would put the statue of David to shame. Many were the young girls who swooned and dreamed to be in his arms at night. Simon didn't even have time for church on Sunday morn. Cows can be unforgiving in this way. Try as they might, the lad had even less time for any of the village girls. For Simon, each day was the same. Until he met her.

She was on the far side of the river, by the columns, waiting for Simon as his cattle grazed. She was tall with jet black hair and eyes. Eyes which seemed like two polished stars in the night sky. She wore high leather boots and ... well ... she wore them well. She wore them exceptionally well. Thoughts stirred in Simon's mind which had not resided there before. And he approached her, Simon expected her to disappear like the morning mist, such was her beauty. But he had to have a closer look.

She stayed, her unblemished alabaster skin bathed in the noonday light. A figure beyond compare. Slowly a smile crept over Simon's boyish face. "Are you lost?"

She grinned. Simon had seen a grin like hers before. The young rascal Tommy always had the same look. Whenever the bully boy caught a helpless fly. It might have made Simon nervous, but he was distracted with other thoughts. "My name's Simon. I live in the village across the way," he pointed across the gorge. "You're not from around here. I'd remember laying eyes on the likes of you."

Her voice was like a sing-song of birds and choirs. "My name's Lucifer."

He snickered. "Like the Devil?"

She stood proudly and elegantly, a sight to be seen. "One and the same."

Simon gave her a nod. "I thought the Devil a man."

"What makes you think the Devil's a man?"

"The story of the garden ... and the apple," Simon responded with a shy look about him.

She took a regal pose. One which gave her assets even more appeal. "Twas a snake which gave Eve the apple. Neither man nor woman. Is it not so?"

Simon blinked. "True enough."

The girl calling herself Lucifer reclined on a grassy rise. "Come," she called delightfully, "lay by my side."

He hesitated. "I would, true enough, but the cows would wander off if I don't look after them."

Her smile was unabated. "Do they look to be in a wandering mood?" she asked shyly.

Simon glanced about. The cattle stood in a ring about them, slowly eating the grass. They were close, but not disturbingly handy. When one turned its head to move on, a new tuft of grass sprang up before it, tempting beyond measure. "Come," she said, "I will make you as content as these animals in the field."

So, Simon tupt with the Devil. I can't say I blame him. If you'd seen the Devil on this day, I'd have thought less of you if you walked away. Unless, of course, the next day they made you a saint. But Simon was no saint. He was just a man, like any man ... and he had spent his life alone.

Now the Devil is pleasing to the eyes and a pleasurable company to be sure, but she's an impatient creature. She had no desire to click her heels while Simon walked the cattle back and forth. So, she built him a fine stone bridge across the gorge. She did it all in one night. Now Simon could cross the bridge with his herd. And lay cradled in Lucifer's ... in her healthy ... arms ... as the cattle went about their business.

Now Simon was back in the village before dusk and all the village girls took note. They flocked to him like birds before an open bag of seed abandoned upon the road. If you don't believe Lucifer was jealous, go and read a book. The likes of you will not be understanding what happened next.

One the next day, Simon crossed as before. There stood Lucifer, her boots shining. But this time she held a long gleaming sword in her hand. She took both of Simon's legs that day. She also proceeded to change his looks ... and not for the better.

The ladies of the village now give him a wide berth. He's lonelier than before. Lighthouse keepers have a busier community life. Lucifer is gone, the meadow lies empty. Only her memory and the columns remain. The bridge is still there. Simon and his cows still cross it. The cattle on their legs and Simon in a cart pulled by a goat.

Some say he calls the goat Lucy ... but I've never asked.