

## Daughter of Iblis

by Shedrick Pittman-Hassett

My how you thrash! There is some life in you yet, child of Abraham. Be still. Be restful. You do not have much time left; you may as well go peacefully.

You look at me with such reproachful eyes! It was not I who took your life. You look upon my sharpened teeth and my cloven hooves and you don't believe me. I am a monster and you are a victim, yes? It is so easy for you to believe it is so.

Do you remember those men you met in the desert, so far from the soldiers that patrol your city? You came to sell their weapons; the ones the invaders brought from the west. Your friends set the explosive on the road; you looted the corpses and threw the bodies away where no one would know they were missing, where no one could find their meat. Then, as you tried to profit from your efforts, your new friends took your guns and then put a knife in your side and left you bleeding. It's nearly all gone now, the hot blood, like water leaking from a worn and wasted skin into the parched earth.

No, pitiful man, do not worry; your blood is much too warm for me. It is not nearly rich enough, yet. I am patient and I will wait until it has cooled and refined before I come to you. And by then, you will not care. Your pain will be done.

Help you? No, I'm afraid it's far too late for that. Besides, it is not our way to interfere in the affairs of mortals. And I am hungry, so hungry, and to have fresh meat is a rare gift. No, I will wait.

You dare look upon me with disgust? Poor mortals, you never understand the truth until you see the light of heaven draw away from you. The deaths of your brethren

put food in your mouth as surely as your death will put food into mine. When the flesh finally grows cold and the soul departs into the hands of *Ar-Rahim*, the merciful God, the body will return to dust. Such a waste. Your flesh will sustain me, for a time at least. It is a blessing for which I truly thank you.

Shush, mortal. Calm yourself. Go into the gates of heaven with peace in your heart, not hatred. You cringe at my deformities and gag upon the sweet smell of rot upon my breath. Your lip curls. Your eyes smolder. You find me abominable. It would be laughable were it not so pathetic.

I and my sisters are scavengers; we do not kill to eat, or for profit, or for sport. Can *your* kind claim as much? All of my kin are sisters, born of the spirit of our Father; we cannot lust. Our only sin of the flesh is that of consumption, not consummation. The lusts of your kind have robbed the earth of its riches, driven your tribes to war, and consumed your souls with perversions on a scale that make the *djinn* themselves envious. We sustain ourselves on the flesh of the dead while you consume the lives of your own brethren.

I am the *ghouleh*, a daughter of Iblis. Of despair. The despair you have brought to the earth begat me. I simply feed upon the meat that you bring to the slaughterhouse.

So I wait. And watch. As I always have. Until the light of heaven fades from your eyes and the fires of hunger ignite in mine.

Ah, that's better. Finally your flesh grows cold and your blood runs thin. Your pain is finally over, my friend. Soon you will be fit for the *eid*. *As-Salāmu `Alayka*.