

Approx. 1664

Tempt The Devil

Chapter 1

By
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There was a story passed house to house in the swamp before any of us were born. It was a warning and it was brief.

“ Don ’t brush your hair at dawn with a drawn window or you ’ll tempt the Devil.”

That was it.

In the 1960s, the state’s mainland real estate brokers began developing the area, they took full advantage of the recent developments being made by the city in order to incorporate the area. The company was Atwood & Hamilton LLC. They were less dubious than the energy company and the lumber mill. BlytheSouth, the telephone company was paying people out of their pieces of property. There were some that were all too happy to take the money and move somewhere more desirable than the swamp. It wasn’t that some people didn’t find it to be a fair offer, *which was still true*... many found it offensive to offer such a measly amount for land that had been attached to their name since the beginning of their time. There were some households that didn’t get the offer at all. They simply skipped those homes and dared not even wander in those sullen marshes framed by ancient weeping willows. To those that stayed, regardless of rhyme or reason, BlytheSouth was going to build around them, and kindly let the remaining residents of the swamp know that.

The earth was disturbed, willow trees five times as wide as a horse, were ripped up and used as timber for new constructions. The marshes became a slick and oily iron wasteland. Radio towers and phone lines were erected right over cemeteries and graveyards; The ground was soiled and the earth undone. The wildlife suffered, if not mourned their sudden new existence with their ailing human neighbors. Thankfully, the rest of the river’s waterways weren’t affected by the waste of the new developments in the swamp. Or maybe it was to their damnation, furthering their isolation them making their ruin invisible to sympathetic eyes.

The construction workers had a hard time getting in and out of the swamp; they also had to travel long hours and distances. When there was a need there were the *vultures*, Atwood & Hamilton LLC. They swooped in and re-cultivated land that the power company couldn’t use. They scavenged and poured perfume on piss and created housing for their counterparts’ employees, with housing came the need for recreation and respite from the cruel labor. Bars and trade stations were built. Trouble typically had a way of brewing when alcohol was involved.

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There wasn't too much left to the imagination when it came to how the elders came about such a quick omen given the new developments disturbing and outright destroying the natural order of the swamp.

There were strangers and outsiders in the quagmire and their presence wasn't appreciated or needed. There wasn't an actual devil or demon that the elders warned about. It was the unwelcome and the unwanted that they were warning of. The first report would lead one to believe otherwise.

Early morning, Samatha Waterston, 18 years old, and presumed dead by her 19th birthday. April 1965. The Revere D Erbane Port Authority, Michael Clayton, reported in his assessment that Samatha Waterston was abducted by a drunken BlytheSouth electrician and wireframer, Beauregard Willis after his nightshift. Mr. Clayton arrested Willis on the docks during a gulf storm and in a drunken stupor on the pier.

The official report filed stated that Mr. Willis had admitted to the abduction of the young Ms. Waterston from the early morning of the 20th of July 1964. As to the manner of how the confession was received; he did so willingly. Mr. Clayton described Willis as sobbing into the storm unburdening himself from the torment.

“Aye, I took the young thing! I took her! It wasn't me though! My mind wasn't my own. It was shaded and mute to the world. To this WORLD, YOU SEE! My mind was taken to a place unseen by our own. It took me behind the eyes of the swamp. The black heart where sound cannot be made, a place where dreams ended and the soul is transformed. It was there at the edge of Beyond, the Devil with his spiked wings that scrapped the ground and luscious lips, took me! And it made me take that girl.”

Willis then attempted to leap off the pier into the gulf storm, however, he was subdued by Micheal Clayton. Beauregard Willis would not see a fair trial or the next night. The two men were not alone on the pier. A fellow fisherman, Jeremiah Watkins overheard the conversation despite the raging storm. Mr. Watkins ran through the swamp knocking on every door along the way to the Waterston's stilted house. By the time, the

eldest of the Waterston's women came to the door, there was already a mob behind Jeremiah that could smell blood through the downpouring rain.

The mob marched ahead of the mother and grandmother of the Samatha while her father and grandfather lead the march down to the piers. There wasn't any hope that backup from the local sheriff's office would come in time as the storm had taken down trees and powerlines up the road. The swamp was completely blocked off to the mainland Michael Clayton was a family man when he wasn't attending the ports and the docks. He wanted to return to his family and would rather suffer at the hands of the storm than at the hands of an angry mob. He defended, that someone needed to recount exactly what happened. So Clayton stepped aside as Reverend and Junior Waterston, Samatha's Grandfather and father, respectively, approached. Junior held a shotgun while the Reverend held the black book.

"You ought better come with us, stranger." The Reverend raised his voice through the thunder and the rain and over the sneers of the swamp people behind him.

"Handle your business here! FOR THE GODS TO SEE, for the demons-" Willis shouted out as his back was up against the railing of the pier. It was the only thing between him and the raging sea coiling at the whims of the storm.

"Is that your excuse? **Demons?** The Devil made you do it?" crossed Junior snarling in the storm. His father stretched out his hand to keep him and his shotgun from advancing further on the culprit. "The Devil made you take my little girl?!" The storm's fury carried on as the drama unfolded. The smaller ships were rocking closer to the dock, One wave surge and the kayaks and row boats would be shattered against the pier.

"And that same Devil will make you take ME! But he won't let you. They won't let you have me, not you. Not the Reverend there, and not that mob of folk. I'm already gone! THEY GOT ME, AHHHHH!"

Willis bellowed into the night, shrieking he started to punch himself repeatedly. Junior went on the advance to retrieve the culprit of his daughter's disappearance, when suddenly, from the dark sky above, one wet, silent spear-like spike came. The crowd fell silent as the rain continued to pour down on the scene. No one said a word except for the

small gasp uttered by a young child with a torch of her own... The spike landed just before Mr. Willis separating him from Junior.

This is where the report and the story begin to veer into fantasy and why Michael Clayton was discharged from duty even though the mob collaborated on his story.

Mr. Willis continued to scream out in fear and delirium. He stared up into the voided sky and could see nothing save for the rain and the flashes of lightning overhead. In rapid succession, one after the other, spikes rained down on Mr. Willis, skewing his flesh and core; effectively nailing him down to the wooden planks of the pier. The blackened spears shot through his body haphazardly, one struck his wrist severing his hand clean off. Willis howled like a wounded animal begging and writhing in the rain to be put out of his misery.

Mr. Clayton stated that when the lightning struck a man could be seen some 20 or 30 yards away. Standing on stilts in the water in the madness of the storm. The man in the water was standing on multiple stilts at once, hoisting himself above the water. When lightning struck again, Clayton saw a pale ghastly face staring at them all with a smile. A grin impossibly ear to ear, his smile was bright and pearly white just like the con men that had been ravaging the swamp for the months prior. It wasn't the impossibly distant charismatic yet hungry smile that put Clayton on edge... It was the eyes of the Devil, or storm demon in the water. He dared to even call them eyes at all. The eyes burned in the rain and wind and looked as if they might have been the source of the howling wind; if he weren't of sound mind. Mr. Clayton along with those who gathered to detain Mr. Willis all reported that there was a cacophony of whispers that grew louder just before descending down came a large claw. A hand; the devil's hand came down from the storm and tore Beauregard Willis from the pier along with the spikes and planks then processed to yeet the shrieking an into the gulf. With the next lightning strike, the devil jolted into the night sky disappearing from view.

There was no recovery of Mr. Willis's body, the storm later that night ravaged the pier destroying any evidence that there was an altercation let alone a supernatural event that had taken place. After the outlandish report from Mr. Clayton, he was duly put on indefinite administrative leave.

A fantastical report from the past presents itself as a round map for our dare starting March 31, 1984...