

You'll most likely spy him out the corner of your eye, grim face overlooking a mug of some cocktail so black it may as well be tar. His features will appear gaunt, almost like he hasn't had a wink of sleep in months, but he likes to peel away the ruse when he's hooked you. Like a seasoned sailor baiting fish, he flashes you a wry smile and a wink; downing his drink before you can even blink. By now you've either been staring at him long enough to question his ghostlike presence, or you're already taking the first steps towards him. Nobody leaves, nobody he doesn't want to that is. Nobody pays him mind, some even refuse to acknowledge his presence altogether. As if they know all too well the tales of strangers getting more than bargained for from nosing around where they shan't be. If you're not already wrapped around his little finger at that point he must've taken a liking to you. Sadly you're not much better off that way than being on his bad side.

Up close he looks just as gnarled and worn as an old withered oak, his greying hide wrinkled and scarred, one eye socket black and empty as his soul. Old and bony fingers clutch the glass he was once nursing tightly, at this point you've been hooked, you have a nagging feeling in the back of your mind to leave. Like a primal fear of ancestors past, tying your stomach in knots and leaving your heart racing. But you're frozen solid, caught like a prey before it's predator as he spins you a yarn about his past, lies plain as day coming from anyone else, however he had possessed a tongue gilded of silver.

As his yellowed teeth clatter and his black stained tongue waggles, the mirage surrounding him fades away, wrinkled old hide melting away to reveal charred bones, like a dream fading from a waking mind. That same wry smile returns to his face as his smooth and aged skull seems to bend around reality. Contorting into an all too wide cheshire grin, he cackles a breathless cacophony of laughter. Finally caught in his little trap, you stare fixated as his black as pitch sockets flare to life. A wisp of flame will have shown itself now and taken place of his eyes. Yet, despite all this, nobody but you is paying attention. Having seized you, the spectre beckons for the bartender or bar hand to refill his empty pint. No matter what bar, no matter where you are, the bottle will always be in plain sight yet never noticed before. Always bottom shelf on the far right with a label worn away by time. The liquid inside unnaturally slick and smooth with a fetid stench.

His voice rattles and creaks like old wood as he offers up a deal. Breathless words evaporating into the air like steam. His attitude is a little flirtatious in nature with the ladies, while almost brotherly with the men. His deal is always the same. Your wish granted thing with no strings attached, but in return you must keep him company for the night. It's at this point you're left with a choice, an honest to god choice of your own volition.

It'd be smart to just leave, leave and never return. However nobody ever does, the offer too sweet to pass up. He's demonstrated that not everything is as it seems, and he clearly isn't bluffing about being able to give you your one wish. So you agree to the terms, with an icy cold handshake the pact is sealed. His plan has been set into motion and his expression stretches and distorts like ripples through a reflection. His smile growing wider than before as his bones creak and squeal in agony. As your gaze on him falters and the world slips into a melting haze, you feel as though all time has just flown by and that this was all but a dream. You'll wake up in a cold sweat in your own bed, at your own home. You might try to convince yourself that it really was all but a figment of your sleeping mind. Your imagination turned against you in some twisted way that only the mind can concoct.

Regardless of what you do, go back to sleep or stay wide awake, you'll receive a delivery come sunrise. It starts with a card and a rose, the rose wilted and petals grey. The card however, is pristine and free of pen nor pencil. That is until moments later; when the message is swept across the card's surface out of nowhere. Charred numbers singed to the soft cardboard of the card, a date and time and nothing more. The date can range anywhere from a week to a hundred years after. In the end it won't matter, you won't be seen nor missed after that date. Like you'd just vanished from existence, never there to begin with. Carrabas always remembers, and I reluctantly do too, every last poor soul. Whatever happens that night before it all begins is between the pact members however, and only the pact members. Whatever you may have asked in return, it will find you with that card, no matter what it is.

Of course, there's always the chance he'll take a liking to you, and come morning you might be traveling a different road than those who fail to tickle his fancy.

*Singing a different tune too ...*