

The
Beatryce
Prophecy

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BEATRYCE
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For
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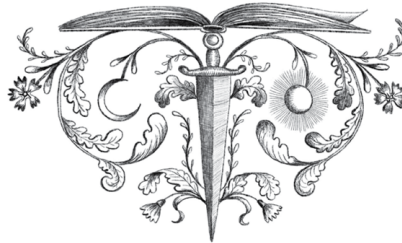
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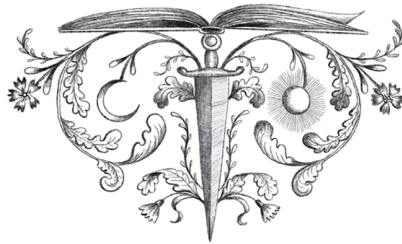
It is written in the Chronicles of Sorrowing
that one day there will come a child
who will unseat a king.
The prophecy states that this child will be a girl.

Because of this,
the prophecy has long been ignored.





**BOOK
THE
FIRST**



Answelica was a goat with teeth that were the mirror of her soul—large, sharp, and uncompromising.

One of the goat's favorite games was to lull the monks of the Order of the Chronicles of Sorrowing into a sense of complacency by arranging her features in a benign and indifferent expression.

For weeks, she would bite no one.

When approached, she would merely stare into the distance as if she were considering something profound. And then, when the brothers had relaxed their guard, thinking that perhaps, somehow, Answelica had changed, the goat would come from behind and butt them in the backside as hard as she was able.

She was very strong, and she had a very hard head. Because of this, the goat was able to send the monks flying great distances through the air.

When they landed, she bit them.

She was a goat who formed peculiar and inexplicable antipathies, taking an intense dislike to certain individuals. She would stalk a particular brother, waiting for him in the purple shadow of a building, and then she would leap out and make an unholy noise that sounded like the scream of a demon.

The monk—terrified, undone—would scream, too.

The monk and the goat would then engage in a duet of screaming until the goat was satisfied and trotted away looking beatific, leaving behind her a trembling, weeping monk.

The brothers of the Order of the Chronicles of Sorrowing would have liked to butcher her, but they were afraid of the ghost of Answelica.

The monks agreed among themselves that the ghost of the goat would surely be more vicious and determined, more impossible to outwit, than the flesh-and-blood goat.

How would she seek her revenge from the afterworld?

It beggared the imagination to consider what the ghost goat would do.
And so she lived.
Which is just as well.
Which is, in fact, wonderful.
Because without the goat, Beatryce surely would have died.
And then where would we be?

Chapter Two

All of this took place during a time of war.

Sadly, this does not distinguish it from any other time; it was always a time of war.

Brother Edik was the one who found her.

The world that morning was coated in a layer of hoarfrost, and the brother was late to the task of feeding Answelica because he had stood for too long admiring the light of the rising sun shining on the blades of grass and the branches of the trees.

The whole world seemed lit from within.

“Surely, it is evidence of something,” Brother Edik said aloud. “Surely, such beauty means something.”

He stood and looked at the world until the cold made his hands ache and he came at last to his senses.

He trembled as he entered the barn, certain that Answelica—displeased at his lateness—was already plotting against him. But he was surprised to find the goat asleep, her legs folded beneath her, her back to him.

What new ploy was this?

Brother Edik cleared his throat. He put down the bucket. Still, the goat did not move. He stepped closer. He gasped.

His mind was playing tricks on him.

Or rather it was his eye playing tricks—his left eye, which would not stay quiet and still, but rolled around in his head, looking for something it had yet to find.

“Some demon occupies that eye,” Brother Edik’s father had said, “and that demon has made its way into your mind as well.”

And now, in the early-morning gloom of the barn, Brother Edik’s wandering eye, his strange mind, was seeing a goat with two heads.

“Have mercy upon us,” whispered Brother Edik.

Answelica with one head was already more than the brothers could bear. How could they live with the goat if she had two heads and two sets of teeth?

She would upend the order of the universe. She would put the king from his castle. Answelica with two heads would be a creature capable of ruling the world.

The brother took a tentative step forward. He squinted and saw that the other head belonged to a child curled up beside the goat.

Brother Edik let out a sigh of relief.

And then a new wave of terror engulfed him when he realized that the child had hold of one of the goat's ears.