

My God, It's Full of Stars

I'm busy working on the results of my reader survey, but the *One Thing* section responses gave me some really interesting stuff. It's prompted me to look at some more interaction with y'all. This week, we've got:

1. Questions, and how to ask 'em.
2. More space opera!
3. A reminder on the Urban Fantasy promo that ends in **two days**.

Onward, friend.

How to ask me a question

I've created this thing:

[Put Me To The Question](#)

It's a simple web form that will allow you to ask me a question. Anonymously, if you so desire; while a bunch of you write to me, a bunch more of you have stranger danger.

I get it. If you've got a burning question you think I can answer, hit me up with it. You can also email me (just reply to this!) and magic will probably happen. Maybe. Sometimes.



More space opera!

Speaking of questions, one of the things y'all asked in the survey looked a little like this:

Give me more 'space opera'

It's like you're reading my mind. The trilogy I'm working on right this very moment is about the crew of the *Tyche*. The *Tyche*, well she's a small freighter, mothballed after the war; the trilogy is best described as "Firefly meets Starship Troopers." I thought I would show you a little bit about the writing process for this series through a scene. This is actually *two versions of the same scene*. Us writers dick

around with things like this all the time, seeing which one is more authentic for the people we're telling the story about.

Super rough stuff, first draft material. I'd love it if you let me know which one you liked and why. The two characters we have are Grace Gushiken, a kind of grifter who can sense emotions, and Nathan Chevell, the captain of the *Tyche*.

Version 1: Romance

Grace knocked on Nate's cabin. Hard, with the hilt of her sword, *clang-clang-clang*.

Nate opened it, eyes befuddled, shirt half open. "Wha..?"

"You," said Grace, "owe me a story. About a sword, and where it came from. I gave you my story, and now you need to give me yours."

"I ... sleeping," said Nate.

"You can sleep later," said Grace.

"I'm the captain," said Nate, almost hopefully.

She pushed past him into the room, saw the sword. Nate had placed it on top of the chest she'd stolen it from what felt like weeks ago, but was only hours. *He hasn't put it away. He hasn't hidden it again.* She pointed at it. "Tell me."

"It's better if I show you," said Nate, standing still at the doorway for a second. She could see the metal of his hand resting against the sill. He sighed, walked next to her, and said, "Tell me what you see."

Grace looked at him, felt *concern/not-trust/friend/trust* coming from him. "You're wondering if you can trust me."

"Yes," said Nate. "I'm becoming more sure though." He reached for the sword, his flesh hand closing around the hilt.

He vanished.

She gaped. He was still *there*, right in front of her, but his mind had gone quiet, like it didn't exist. Like he was dead. He held the sword up. "Now tell me what you see."

"You're ... not *there*." She reached a hand out to touch him. Her fingers found his chest. *Solid. Real.* "What *is* it?"

"Doesn't have a name," he said, not moving her fingers. Just holding the sword between them. "At least, I don't think so. There weren't many made. Maybe just one."

"It ... hides you?"

"I don't know," said Nate. "I guess that's it. A part of it, anyway. But it also makes it so that the Intelligencers can't fuck with my head." He tapped the side of his head with his metal hand. "When you're holding this sword, you're really free. Free of any outside influence. It's why I think ... I think I know I can trust you."

"What?" she said.

"Because of how I feel when I'm not holding it. It's the same as how I feel now." He leaned in, kissed her on the lips.

She was surprised. Not because a man kissing her was a foreign concept, but because she hadn't seen it coming. Hadn't felt it, like she'd feel everything else other humans did around her. It had left her flat footed, startled into immobility.

Then she kissed him back. Closed her eyes, leaned into it.

They pulled apart. He smiled. She raised a hand, touching her lips. "I—"

"I feel the same," said Nate, "with the sword as without."

No. This couldn't be happening. She'd kissed him back. She hadn't initiated it. She was so used to being in control, in knowing what people were thinking, what they were going to do. *No. You can't ... you can't let them in. Not like this.* Because if they got in like this, she'd be defenseless. She'd be naked in front of all of them, this ship of fools, and it would ruin her.

She was running, out of Nate's cabin, down the metal deck plating, and sliding down the rails of the ladder. Trying to find somewhere dark, and quiet. Somewhere she couldn't see his face, or feel the touch of his lips. She heard him shouting after her, but she ignored it.

She needed to go. She needed to find somewhere she could be in control again.

Version 2: Friendship

Grace knocked on Nate's cabin. Hard, with the hilt of her sword, *clang-clang-clang*.

Nate opened it, eyes befuddled, shirt half open. "Wha..?"

"You," said Grace, "owe me a story. About a sword, and where it came from. I gave you my story, and now you need to give me yours."

"I ... sleeping," said Nate.

"You can sleep later," said Grace.

"I'm the captain," said Nate, almost hopefully.

She pushed past him into the room, saw the sword. Nate had placed it on top of the chest she'd stolen it from what felt like weeks ago, but was only hours. *He hasn't put it away. He hasn't hidden it again.* She pointed at it. "Tell me."

"It's better if I show you," said Nate, standing still at the doorway for a second. She could see the metal of his hand resting against the sill. He sighed, walked next to her, and said, "Tell me what you see."

Grace looked at him, felt *concern/not-trust/friend/trust* coming from him. "You're wondering if you can trust me."

"Yes," said Nate. "I'm becoming more sure though." He reached for the sword, his flesh hand closing around the hilt.

He vanished.

She gaped. He was still *there*, right in front of her, but his mind had gone quiet, like it didn't exist. Like he was dead. He held the sword up. "Now tell me what you see."

"You're ... not *there*." She reached a hand out to touch him. Her fingers found his chest. *Solid. Real.* "What *is* it?"

"Doesn't have a name," he said, not moving her fingers. She pulled them back, of a sudden, like they'd been burned. This feeling of *someone* without the *someone* was ... alien. Magical.

Wonderful.

Nate was still holding the sword between them. "At least, I don't think it has a name. There weren't many made. Maybe just one."

"It ... hides you?" Grace wanted to touch him again, for the thrill of not feeling the endless cascade of human emotions that always came with it. She reached out a hand, cautious, tentative, to lay her fingers against his arm. *Nothing.* Nothing traveled that physical link, other than the warmth of another human, out here on the edge of the hard black.

"I don't know," said Nate. Oblivious, she guessed, to the wonder she felt. If he could feel what she was feeling, he would see it as *grateful/thankful/joy*. But he never would, so she would just have to enjoy it alone. Like all other people were alone. For as long as it lasted. Nate was still speaking, and she tried to focus, removing her hand again. "I guess that's it. A part of it, anyway. But it also makes it so that the Intelligencers can't fuck with my mind." He tapped the side of his head with his metal hand. "When you're holding this sword, you're really free. Free of any outside influence. It's why I think ... I think I know I can trust you."

"What?" she said.

"Because of how I feel when I'm not holding it. It's the same as how I feel now." He touched her chin. "I feel like I can trust you, Grace Gushiken."

"You can?" she said, the feeling of his fingers without the curse of another person's emotions a wonder, a revelation.

"Yeah." His face was open, and she suspected without the sword, his heart would

be too. *You are on the edge of something marvelous. A rare, curious thing: this man wants to trust you. Really wants to, so you need to make it right. You need to be worthy of it.* “Yeah, I think so.”

She folded his hand in hers, then pulled him down beside her on the edge of the bed. Not some wanton display, but carefully, like his hand was made of snowflakes and all around was fire. “I guess I don’t know,” she said. “I guess I want you to. I guess I don’t know why. I guess ... I guess I don’t deserve it.”

He sighed. “None of us deserve it. We’ve all done,” and here, his eyes flicked towards the chest at the end of his bed, “terrible things. The trick, as near as I can work out, is to stop doing terrible things when you realize.”

She frowned, looking down at his hand, in hers. It was the metal one, and she hadn’t considered that when she’d taken it. Just grabbed on to him, wanting to make it all real. Realized she didn’t care that he had a metal hand, despite what her father would have said. He would have called Nate *half a man* and dismissed him, like he’d always dismissed her. Always thought of her as a *mongrel* and a *failure*. She looked at the sword he held, then the sword she held, and laughed.

“What?” said Nate. “I’ve got to admit, this is weird. We’re sitting in a bed holding hands, but ... well, it’s weird.” But he didn’t pull away from her.

“I was just wondering,” she said. “What it would be like. Sex.”

“Oh,” said Nate, then, “*oh.*”

“Not that I want that,” said Grace, although she might have still been lying to herself. It wasn’t everyday a man followed her into a den of horrible monsters. That showed *dedication*. “It’s that, it would be different. Without knowing. What you were feeling.” She smiled through the cascade of her hair. “And then I laughed, because I thought of you holding a sword during sex.” She wanted to take that back as soon as she’d said it, because she should have said *thought of someone holding a sword*, but she’d said *you*, and maybe that was the deeper truth. And then she realized she’d basically said she was having a sex fantasy about Nate, so she said, “Not that I think about you having sex. With anybody. I’m going to stop talking now.”

“I ... literally don’t know what to say to that,” he said. “I don’t know what we’re supposed to do here. Uncharted waters, Grace.” His voice was low, soft. “I don’t know what you want. I don’t really know ... I don’t know what I want.”

“You want me to stop lying,” said Grace. “To you.”

“Hell,” said Nate. “I don’t give two shits. What I want is for *you* to decide.”

“Okay,” said Grace. Still sitting there in the quiet of his cabin. Then she laughed, and didn’t know why. “Okay.”



Last Call: Urban Fantasy Books

Man, this promo has been pop-u-lar. There seems to be a need for urban fantasy in your lives. This one ends on June 30, which (depeding on timezones and the movement of celestial bodies) is in **two days**.

Hop to it if you haven't checked it out for more free reads:

<https://books.bookfunnel.com/urbanfantasybooks>

Until next time :)

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