

## Retribution

Ruby Razor sits in her family's pew. Her silver predator's eyes bore into my soul. I feel the heat of their rage spreading through my chest. Each puncture stabs my jaw with pain. She was the Jezebel who preyed on my young innocence.

She condemns my purity with her vindictiveness. The church refused to allow her remains the refuge of its blessings when she was killed. Her ghost defies the living by its presence here within a sanctuary as a demon escaped from the underworld.

The gray gauze of her sleeve brushes my arm as we carry her brother's coffin down the aisle. I respond to her touch as a man to a woman and am ashamed of my body. She knows my torment and smiles at my disgrace. She places Razor's death at my door like her own in an accident I refuse to remember.

I'm without blame. They brought it on themselves by their own actions, not mine. He had no right to question my judgement as to how to conduct the affairs of the church. He died of a heart attack when he allowed anger to override his common sense and stepped in front of my car.

I stagger when the interminable internment ceases and the crowd opens before me in recognition of a man who has performed his duty.

She is waiting for me in my car. Her slate-colored eyes on my neck send icy steams of sweat down my back. I must get home where I'll be safe from her vengeance. I will not acknowledge this trespasser from hell who has invaded the present to torture me.

The steering wheel of the car jumps as a tire bounces off the curb at the entrance to my driveway. I escape from the piercing hatred of her eyes to the backdoor.

The phone is ringing as I struggle to insert the key in the lock. A cold hand covers mine. I shrink with repulsion at the feel of death that invades my being. Her touch is like wet skin freezing to a block of ice. I slam the door and shoot the dead bolt. The phone shrills in my ear.

"Who are you?"

"You are an idiot. I didn't run over your dog."

I bang down the receiver. The phone rings again. To silence it I rip the cord from the wall. That woman's vulgarity on the phone has given me indigestion.

Ruby's evil spirit clouds my window; searing my soul with the shroud of her damnation.

Why am I doing on the floor?

I grope for the leg of a chair to pull myself up, but my arm is numb and falls limp to my side.

A vise is gripping my chest. The pain is squeezing the breath from me.  
The harlot stands above me. She is smiling as she hands me the phone.  
The dirge of Razor's funeral pounds in my ears as I dial 9 ... 1 ...