

The Demon of Ivalo

Thanks and dedications:

To Mom and Dad. To Fabián, that awesome friend I have the luck to have. To my Coursera teachers: Brando Skyhorse, Amy Bloom, Amity Gaige and Salvatore Scibona, whose advice and lessons made me improve my writing. And to all my Coursera peers, who have given me feedback and critiques, as in this story as in the ones I submitted in the previous courses. This story is for each and every single one of you, guys.

Note of the author:

The rights of the quotes go to their respective owners. The Warhofs town is as fictitious as the story.

How can you mend a broken heart?
Or how can you stop the rain from falling down?
How can you stop the sun from shining?
-Bee Gees, How Can You Mend a Broken Heart (song)

Wake up, Andrea. You can't stay in bed forever. However much it hurts, you have to get out of the bed and face your problems. Your problems with Clarissa Morgan,

your girlfriend who cheated on you with her best friend: Jesse Cranston. It's as if you had, "If we are in a relationship, please cheat on me," written on your forehead. It's not the first time you are going through this pain. But, it still hurts as if it were.

You sit in the bed of that hotel in Warhofg, a little Finlander village close to the Ivalo mountain. The mornings are cold, gloomy and grey, just how you like them. They remind you of your childhood, that seems so long ago. Centuries, maybe. Who knows? You don't care about anything right now, anyway. You (and your partner, Dexter Hall) have been sent by the old Axl, your adoptive father, to hunt down a terrible demon who has been terrorizing people in the villages close to the Ivalo mountain, especially Warhofg. Everything was going fine until you realized Clarissa's affair with Jesse. And then, your whole world shattered. No matter how many demons you killed, or how many other hunters said goodbye. She had always been your weakness... And your strength.

You had always done your best to be a good girlfriend, but that never seemed to be enough. Clarissa still had sex with him, knowing you were away, hunting a blood-thirsty beast that liked to rip off the skin of the bodies of its victims and hang it on the tree branches like they were clothes left to the sun to dry. Clarissa never stopped Jesse. She felt she didn't have to, that you would never find out. So, instead, she opened her mouth to receive his tongue and with her pale and beautiful hands tore the clothes from both of them. You weren't there. You didn't see it. But, you knew. That's how she liked to have sex. Slow, deep tongue kisses, soft at first, until she was ripping off every piece of the other person's clothing, so then she would push her partner to the bed, to start the "action," as she called it.

Remember the ugliest part? When she had called you yesterday, and you realized something was going on. Yes, she knew she had done wrong in not stopping Jesse and cheating on you, but she didn't seem to regret it. She said she was sorry, but deep inside she wasn't. She'd liked it. All the ones before her had, too. None had really been sorry. None of them.

You, crying and with a shattered heart, ended the call right there, ignoring her for the rest of the day. You then went to the town's only shop to buy some alcohol, something Clarissa hated because her mother had been an alcoholic. You couldn't even touch the beer. It reminded you of her. Of her, and your exes. A club Clarissa would soon join.

'Welcome, Clary! So, tell us, how did you cheat on her? And how did she find out? Come on, take a seat. We have time. Tell us everything. Oh! And please tell Jesse to come, we would love to meet him too.'

Those words sounded in your head, making fun of you. You ended up buying some chocolate ice cream. Again. It used to make you feel better, at least for a while. Unlike the beer, the ice cream wouldn't cause you a painful hangover if you used too much of it.

'I have important business tomorrow. Once that demon's dead I'm gonna deal with Clarissa. I'm gonna break up with her. If I give her another chance, she's gonna cheat on me again. Like Sophie did. Being cheated on twice by the same person is enough for me.' Those are your current thoughts. Nobody blames you.

Hunting demons used to help you deal with the pain. Once you were more calm, you had that conversation with your "couple". A short conversation that it was just you breaking up with her and telling her that you wanted your stuff back ASAP, and refusing to give her another chance.

You, with your heart hurting as if it was being slowly crushed by some cruel and cold iron hand, cross the room and take a shower. You always act the same after a cheat. Ice cream, sleep, hot shower, Netflix marathon, demon hunting and beer and pizza to end it all. It wasn't a very effective ritual, but it still kept your mind busy.

"You are like a dryer, Andy." your friend Shyle used to say, trying to comfort you whenever you were sad, while she drew circles in the air with one of her fingers.

"You always act the same over and over again. You should try doing something new!" You could imagine her big sweet smile as she said it.

"Am I a bad girlfriend? Or is it just that every time I choose the wrong people to fall in love with?" This question has been rolling around in your mind over and over since the third cheat; Annie. She cheated on you with her own brother. Gross. But at least that had made Rin, Shyle's sister, invite you for some drinks at her bar.

Next step would be blocking her from every social media, but this time was different. You both weren't in the same city. Not even in the same continent! She was still in Australia, probably with Jesse, and you were in Finland, on the other side of the world. Cutting off everything wouldn't be a problem if you were close. She would give you your stuff back, and everything would be over. But it wasn't the case. You would have to deal with that heartache all the way back home and maybe a few more days while you both met and gave each other's stuff back. Well... That was what would happen if you survived this hunt.

You aren't afraid of death, and, if you are honest, you aren't even sure you want to survive this time. Clarissa would probably feel terrible, and you would be free of this pain that had arrived to torment you again, like a bully does at school with his/her favorite victim. And now you aren't sure you are able to get through this cycle again. You run to the shower, like you could escape from your pain by running into that fancy bathroom. Another reminder of Clarissa. She really loved fancy stuff. Even her favourite perfume had a fancy name, one in french you could never spell. But that hadn't stopped you from asking Beth, another of your friends, to help you buy it for Clary's next birthday. Now you guess you will have to cancel it.

Naked, vulnerable, you feel the shower's gentle beads of warm water comfort your body, but they can't heal your pain. Nothing can.

Once you dress up with your warm black leather combat suit, you go to the kitchen to prepare your breakfast. There's not much food left. Only some bacon, onions, some mozzarella grated cheese, some bread and enough coffee beans for just one cup. Great. You decide to make a sandwich after you mentally insult Clarissa. Her, Jesse, and both's sex need.

You put the skillet over the fire, add some oil, and put the long, red strips of bacon on it. While your favorite kind of meat starts frying at the hiss of the oil in the skillet, you take out one of the remaining onions, and with one of the knives that was already in the kitchen when you arrived, you start cutting it in slices, putting it with

the bacon, which you turn around to keep it from burning.

Your phone rings. It seems like you got a new message. Probably from her. Again.

What the hell? There's nothing in it! Oh. You get it. In this chatting application that works somehow like Whatsapp, the user can choose the color in which he/she types (yours is cerulean), and this joker types in white. This joker seems to be Dexter. You, angry, highlight the text so you can read it. Under a black rectangular cape, the words show themselves like a bear that's leaving its cave after hibernating the whole winter. If you are gonna be angry with someone, it should be Clarissa. Not the guy you would probably die with today.

"Ms. Everett." said Dexter's text message. You could hear his voice spelling your name burlesque. He knew you hated being called "Ms. Everett".

"The fuck?" you answer.

"Relax, An! It's just a joke. :P Are you ready? Because I am."

"Yes, I am. Did you eat clown for breakfast? I'm not for jokes, Dex. Come pick me up. I just wanna end this once and for all." Your words, written in cerulean over the white field, for a moment they seem to smile back at you, like making fun of your situation and your weakness.

"Take it easy, ma'am! :/ I hope you slept well and ate good, because you're gonna need that energy. And don't think about Clarissa. You're an awesome and a (I say this as a friend, to be clear) hot girl that will someday find a girl to love you as you deserve. Have you seen how Frannie looks at you? If you return from this mission victorious you'll be the coolest hunter of all! I'm pretty sure that Frannie won't be able to resist your charming personality and black as obsidian hair anymore, and Clarissa will wriggle out of repentance for wasting her chance to be with you. ;)"

"Yeah, yeah, however the fuck. Just pick me up soon or I'll walk all the fucking way to the motherfucking Ivalo mountain myself. And you know I'm not joking." You take the bacon and onion slices out of the skillet and put them between two slices of bread. You decide to keep the cheese for supper. You imagine a dish of spaghetti with that grated cheese and tomato sauce. Your stomach roars in answer.

You take a bite of the sandwich. Delicious! You truly love bacon, and the fried slices of onion remind you of your favorite hamburger, whose name you don't want to remember now. Another reminder of Clarissa.

You add the small amount of BBQ sauce that's left to the sandwich, increasing its tasty flavor. And the coffee seems to be ready. Nothing like a hot and sour cup of dark coffee on a cold winter morning in Finland.

It seems Dexter has replied. Take a look.

"Ok, ok. Calm the fuck down, ma'am. I'm on the way. Be ready. This isn't gonna be easy."

"It's not supposed to be easy. If hunting that bastard was easy other hunters would have killed it years ago. Or even that group of soviets that ran into it during World War II could've killed it instead of being reduced to bloody meat pieces. But well. I still don't get why the old Axl sent only the two of us to hunt such a powerful demon."

"He said we are his best students."

"Yeah, I know. But... Why didn't he sent more hunters with us?"

“Are you scared, An?”

“Not scared. It’s just that I’m... Kinda nervous, you know? I don’t want my skin to be ripped off and put in the tree branches.” You keep eating. Faster this time. You eat fast when you are nervous.

“Oh, don’t worry! :D We’ll be ok! We’re trained hunters, we have holy weapons and we are two, and that bastard is just one. And don’t come with the soviets again. They were not trained to face demons. Your beautiful pale skin will be safe. ;)”

“Well... Thanks, Dex. How’s Rita?” you write, trying to change the subject. The sandwich has disappeared. “Has she taken this good?”

“Oh, hell no. You know how much she worries every time I go hunting. I’ve told her billions of times that I’ll be ok and that I will return the same night alive and well to make love with her and play with the kids, but as many times as I’ve done exactly that, both she and the kids keep worrying. :/”

“Well you couldn’t expect less. They’re your family.”

“We shouldn’t be talking about families after you just broke up with Clarissa. :/”

“Don’t worry. I’m ok.”

“Are you sure? We can contact the old Axl and tell him you’re not able to hunt right now for personal reasons. He will understand. He knows you better than anyone.”

That was the last thing you needed now. You imagine people’s sarcastic and despective comments: ‘Hey everybody! Look! It’s the girl that got cheated on and couldn’t kill the demon of Ivalo and got the whole Warhofg village killed! Let’s give her a medal for stupidity!’

“And let that fucker keep ripping the villagers’ skin off? No, thank you. We’ll kill that bastard today.”

“Ok. I’m on my way. Be ready.”

“Will be.”

And the chat ended there.

The silence in the kitchen was cold and quite creepy. You can’t help but feel watched. Like someone... Or something, is watching you from outside. From the distant frozen woods. Waiting for you. You slap yourself smoothly to make those thoughts go away. But they don’t.

You realize, suddenly, that your cup of coffee has disappeared. You catch yourself wishing you had more food. So you open the refrigerator, looking for some dessert. You find the remaining chocolate ice cream behind the bag of grated cheese. You think for a while that you should keep it for the night, but you end up deciding that it’ll be better to eat it now. Just in case. You always wanted your last meal to include chocolate ice cream.

Another message arrives to your cell phone while you are finishing the barrel. Dark pink letters. It was from the last person you wanted to see right now.

“Andy! Please! It was a mistake! Please forgive me!! I was drunk and I feel like shit right now!! It won’t happen again!! I’m begging you!! Please forgive me!!!! I love you!! Please forgive me!!”

You decide to not answer. Sophie said exactly the same words, you forgave her, and two weeks later she was cheating on you again. It wouldn’t happen again. Like

Poe's raven would say: "Nevermore!"

Dexter arrived half an hour after you finished chatting with him. You had already finished the remaining chocolate ice cream. He was in a white all terrain car with a threatening air, dressed in a black leather combat suit designed specially for cold temperatures, just like yours. He had his knives and swords close to him, next to his legs, and his shotgun in the back seat with other powerful guns, like UZIs or machine guns, all neatly arranged in a box that covered the entire backseat.

The street (and every surface) was covered with a white layer of snow, the cold made its way to your bones, the wind howled in the sleeping town like a giant and spectral wolf, while the Ivalo mountain and the other mountains it had at both of its sides looked like the frozen fangs of some lovecraftian creature. The day looks like it's promising even lower temperatures and/or a snow storm later.

You just hope it doesn't happen while you are hunting. You approach the car after closing the door of the room you rented at that hotel, where you left the cheese you decided to eat at supper with the spaghetti, and your cellphone, which started vibrating (you had deactivated the sound) once you were out, indicating Clarissa was calling you.

The snow was covering the ground, the roofs of the buildings, the trees' branches and the mountains. A cold and howling air came down from the mighty mountains, dragging lots of snowflakes with it, and shook your black hair. It's so strong that for a while you feel you are gonna fall down on the snow. And then Dex would probably laugh, get out of the car, and help you to get up.

You open the door of the backseat, and put your guns and swords over Dexter's box, but you decide to keep your knives with you. Just in case you can't reach the guns or swords for some reason. Then you take the passenger seat, at Dexter's right side. Your brown haired friend starts the all terrain car, and drives in the direction of the mountains. He remains silent for a while, allowing you to remember your days as a little girl in Australia with the old Axl, especially a trip in which you got to see the kangaroos, koalas and dingos in their natural habitat.

You remember how a five years old Andrea looked fascinated through the window how the black '67 chevy impala of the old Axl left behind the trees and buildings at a speed that would seem as fast as light speed for such a young girl. The old Axl, not that old back then, was driving and smiling with a white smile that countered his black skin.

"Are we gonna see the kangaroos, daddy?" you asked your adoptive father, really excited.

"Yes we are, sweetheart." he answered with one of his sweet smiles while caressing your hair. "But first we're gonna go for some pancakes. How does that sound?"

"Great!! I love pancakes, daddy!" You remember how, suddenly, you opened your eyes in excitement. "And the koalas? Can I hug a koala?"

"Yes, you can, Andy." he said.

"Thanks, daddy!! I love you!!"

"I love you too, honey."

It had been a great day. Maybe the best of your life. And you barely remember it. Not because you don't want to, because it had been twenty years ago. Dexter keeps driving through the frozen street, making the horn sound so that a fox, in the middle of the street, would step aside. The animal quickly runs back into the frozen forest while Dexter's car keeps moving above the street covered in snow, leaving the Warhofg village behind.

"Do you think we'll get to see a bear or a lynx?" Dexter asks with his eyes fixed on the street.

"I hope we don't. The last thing we need to face is another danger besides the skinner demon." You would really hate to kill an animal, especially on that cold and depressing day.

"They don't attack unless they feel threatened."

"Or hungry or they see you close to their cubs."

"Now that I have kids I kinda understand that last part, you know?" Dex says with a warm smile on his face. "Once you have a son or a daughter the last thing you wanna see next to them are strangers. You become paranoid. Suddenly, everything, or almost everything, seems like a danger for them. You'll see that what I'm saying is true once you have kids of your own."

"I'm a lesbian, Dex. I can't have sex with a man, and less get pregnant. It's not that I can't, it's just that... I don't want to."

"I never said you should. You can always adopt." Dexter takes his eyes off the road to stare at you. "There are thousands of kids who just want a home and parents to love. I'm sure you would be a great mother. You more than anybody knows that a single parent can raise a child perfectly."

You know what he's talking about. The old Axl had taken care of you by his own since you were a newborn baby. First, he told you that he had found you at the doors of the Sidney demon hunters' headquarter in a basket on a stormy day as a newborn baby, but once you were old enough to understand the truth, he told you that he had been a close friend with your mother, your biological mother, and that he had taken care of you because she was running away from dangerous people. These people would kill both her and you because your dead father had been a really bad man who killed a lot of people (that was all that the old Axl said about him, and that was all you wanted and needed to know) Dangerous people were hunting down all your father's remaining family in some kind of revenge for his crimes, even if he had died at Skye, a scottish island, not long after you were born. So your mother decided to hide you with the old Axl to protect you from that bad people, while she kept running away. She was probably dead by now.

"Yeah, but... I don't know. I don't feel ready to take care of somebody else, especially a child." you say, with your voice full of melancholy.

"It's perfectly understandable. You're only 25. You're still very young. I, on the other hand, will turn 45 next february."

"Oh, come on. You're not old, Dex."

"I am, An. The life expectancy of hunters is really low. Most of us die in our 20's and 30's. In fact, if you pay attention at the headquarters, you won't see anybody age or

older, except of course the old Axl, who's 78." Dexter paused. "People like Axl and me are really rare, especially among hunters." he exhales, like tired. "I just hope to survive this mission, so I can see my family again. Once this is over, I'll retire. Axl has been offering me retirement since I turned 38, but I still felt like I had enough energy to clean the world from that fucking entities. But now... I feel like I've done my part, you know?"

You keep silent. Not because you don't want to talk to him, but because you had no answer for that. Both of you have your eyes focused on the frozen and white rode in front of you.

"Rin could be an awesome hunting partner." he continues, after a long and uncomfortable silence. "Or Shyle or Mindy. Even Frannie! Imagine coming to a place like this but instead of sleeping alone you have her to warm your bed and to talk and share the food. It doesn't sound that bad if you ask me."

'I didn't ask you, Dex.' you think, entering what the old Axl called your 'grumpy mode'. You wanted to remain silent, but the words came out of your mouth before you could even process them.

"I don't want to replace you, Dex. Both Rin and Shyle hunt together, Mindy hasn't done anything but work at Rin's bar for five years, and Frannie... I don't know." you stare at your partner. "Is she good at hunting?"

"'Good'? She's awesome, An! Watching her is like having a visual orgasm."

"You just say that because she's hot."

"Well... Yes, but she's awesome at hunting. Remember that day you were sick and I went to Hobart with her to hunt a demon that ate children at the sewers? I would probably be dead if it weren't for Fran." You remember that day. You were really sick, so Dex was sent with Frannie White to deal with that children eater demon, and both returned to be washed in glory. "Fran is everything Clarissa isn't."

"Too soon, Dex."

"Sorry. But still... I think you just chose the wrong girl. Again."

"Fuck you."

The silence makes itself present again. Dex keeps driving.

"So... What are you planning to do once we return to Sidney?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"An, you must. At least to unburden. It's not a good idea to go hunting down that fucker with all those feelings messing around in your mind."

You keep silent for a while. Your heart is aching again, and you feel tears showing up in your eyes.

"I'm gonna break up with her. Once I get to the headquarter, everything between me and her will be over." a tear falls from one of your eyes. You feel weak, but also a little relieved. Maybe this is what you need. Maybe you just need to let yourself go. Maybe... You just need to cry. "Frannie could be hot, amazing and everything I could ask for, but now I'm not searching for anything. All this fucking shit involving Clarissa is still pretty fresh. Maybe I'll try to flirt with Fran once I get over this situation."

'And if we become a couple, she'll cheat on me.' you think, sadly. You remove your tears and take a deep breath. That makes you feel a bit better.

"Let's change the topic." Dex says in a comforting tone. "You'll never guess who I ran into yesterday after I arrived at the hotel I'm staying at."

"Who did you run into?"

"Yamy!"

"No way!" you say, amazed to find Yamy Goldsmith in a place like Finland.

"Oh, yeah."

"I thought she was hunting at that abandoned asylum in Scotland."

"Yeah, she was, but she said she hadn't found anything so she took a little vacation here in Finland with permission of the old Axl. She says she'll return to Sidney next week. I hope we go with her."

"So do I." you say, and Dex stares at you. Yamy is also a good friend. Seeing her would probably help dealing with the pain. Well, if you both survive to see her.

"But well. I think that we will defeat that bastard. We are well trained and if the old Axl trusts such a dangerous task to just us it means that..."

"WATCH OUT!!!!!" you yell, pointing to the tall, corpse-like, slender figure in the middle of the road, which in half a second was being rolled over by the car. The vehicle's front glass shattered, becoming nothing more than a big, complex spider web. The impact makes the car roll, pushing the figure away, and then it falls over the frozen hill that was at the left side of the street.

You feel like a hamster locked in a cage that has just been thrown from the sixth floor as the car falls and rolls over the snow, the stone and the ice, the windows breaking into a million tiny, sharp crystals, some weapons get out, and the car keeps falling until you hit a big stone, at the entrance of the forest.

"D-dex?" you call to your friend. You see you both are upside down and blood falls from your faces in the places the crystals cut your skin.

He's dead.

"Fuck..." you swear, while searching for something sharp to free you from the car's belt, that now is pressed over your body like an anaconda would do with its prey.

The knives are lost. Or at least you can't find them. Maybe they are somewhere in the snow outside, like most of Dexter's guns.

You find Dexter's razor blade, shining with the sun's light, nailed dangerously close to your left thigh. Then you realize another blade is nailed in your left kidney.

"Fucking... Hell..." you swear, while taking the blade out of your body in the middle of an agonizing pain, to then cut the belt with the same blade you got stabbed with.

A scratching sound comes from outside. You swear again, while the scratching sound keeps slowly approaching the front window, which is completely shattered. You swear again. With Dexter dead, you're gonna have to deal with whatever is outside by yourself.

The thing keeps scratching, and the bloody blade shines as if it was smiling to you like if it knew it just, literally, saved your skin. Or maybe not.

A burning pain hits your right leg when you try to move. It's bleeding. And broken. You won't be able to fight with an injury that serious, but you can at least put some resistance, but if you kill whatever is outside you're also exposed to the extremely low temperatures of the Finlander winter, and in the middle of nowhere. If that thing

doesn't kill you, the cruelty of the ice and the snow will. Somebody, maybe Mindy, had told you that dying by cold was a really unpainful death, like falling asleep, as if she had died like that in her past life. You smile and laugh softly.

"I guess this is it," you say, as you get out of the car. Memories, both dark and bright, show up in your mind.

That trip to Costa Rica when you were sixteen, when you met Dex in Maine six years ago, your first drink, your first girlfriend, your first time having sex, all the laughs with your friends, when you hugged that koala twenty years ago after watching some kangaroos and dingos... And how you met Clarissa.

"So. What does a girl have to do to get your number?" she had asked, while resting her arm over one of the tall wood chairs of the main bar of the demon hunters' headquarter: 'Rin's Happy Place'.

The title was an irony, as your friend Shyle said, because her sister Rin was really grumpy, and she barely smiled, so she thought it would be funny to give the bar an ironic title. Or even a more ironic subtitle: 'Where even Rin is happy.'

You had always grinned when you read it. And now, with your leg broken, and the freezing snow turning scarlet on contact with your blood, it still makes you grin.

"Ask for it," you had answered, with a flirty smile drawn on your face. "But not before some conversation, or maybe asking my name first or inviting me for a drink."

"Fine." she said with a smile. "Mindy. Two beers please." she said to Miranda, the bartender and another friend of you, and returned her sight to you. "I'm Clarissa. Clarissa Morgan. But you can just call me 'Clary'." she smiled.

Her perfect teeth, as white as pearls, shone with the lamps of the headquarter's main bar. Her hazel eyes were unique in the universe, like her hair, as red as fire.

"I'm Andrea. Andrea Everett. Nice to meet you, Clary." Your spilled blood was making contact with Dexter's. In some time it would be frozen.

"Nice to meet you too, Andrea." you gave her a flirting smile while Miranda gave you the beers, after winking one of her black eyes at you, a smile of complicity drawn on her face.

Once you get the superior half of your body to the extremely cold snow after a true calvary, the tall, corpse-looking, slender figure takes you by the neck, and violently picks you up, cutting your respiration and making the blade fall from your hand. It looked like a wendigo.

You're face to face with the demon of Ivalo. It roars at your face. More than a roar; it's a squeal. It's breath smells like rotten meat. Like hundreds of corpses rotting together. It's milky eyes stare into yours. You never thought the last thing you would see would be that thing's dead eyes. You dedicate it a half smile, full of resignation.

"Suck... My... Vagina..." you say, and then spit blood on the demon's face, and it's frozen hands, even colder than ice, with claws long and sharp as butchering knives, begin to strangle you, to crush your neck with the same facility it would have crushed an egg, sending you away from the world in which you had suffered so much, causing your arms and legs fall, useless. Causing you to close your eyes, forever this time. Causing you to take your last breath in that cold and deadly Finlander mountain, at the hands of an entity that belonged to a kind of beings you had sworn

to kill, or die trying. Causing you to receive death as if it were an old friend you had
not seen in years.
Now, finally, after decades of it, your pain is over.