



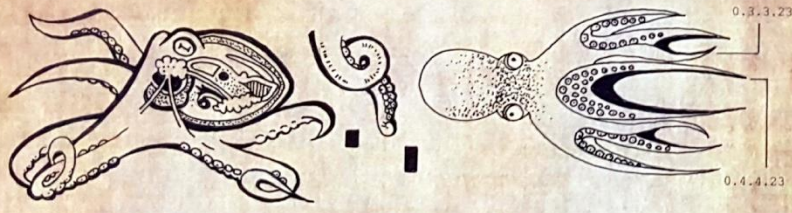
Winnow is a small hamlet on the edge of a peninsula. Comfortable wooden houses sit on winding streets and alleys. Valleys bring rich glacier-formed soil to the area. The people farm and raise cows that wear bells and freely roam the fields. However, it is fishing that sustains the clan who lives here. But there is a mystery here as well. A dark mystery that goes back centuries.



Here, a predator roams the depths of the sea. It could strike at any time and steal a life. It has been known to silently rise to the surface and snatch babies who are playing in the sand along the seaside. Without warning, it sinks whole ships. Even the Vikings will not sail near this peninsula for fear of being attacked and killed.



Over the years, the clan has learned how to make peace and live with the predator that roams the sea, for they have struck a deal. The members of the hamlet have agreed to feed the monster at the same time, every day. In return, the monster will not attack. The people will be free to fish on their boats at any time or play in the sand on the beach, without fear.



As they have been doing for centuries, each day, an assigned male clan member goes to a high cliff with a sacrifice. The sacrifice could be a pig, a cow, a criminal, or even someone who wandered unknowingly into Winnow, an unlucky stranger. The monster will rise silently from the depths to receive his gift.



Fred was assigned many times to feed the monster. His wife, Alice, was curious about the beast and asked to see it again and again. Fred's reply was always the same, only males were allowed to see and feed the monster. It was the centuries old custom written in an ancient tome. But one day, Fred gave in and allowed Alice to accompany him to feed the monster. The monster was smitten with Alice, and asked for her to be his meal instead of the pig that Fred had brought on his cart. Fred replied that he would rather not waste the pig, and would return the next day only with his wife on the cart. The monster accepted this. Of course, Fred did not want to feed his wife to the monster! That night, he went to every cow that the clan owned, and removed their cowbell. He had a cart full of bells that made an awful clanging, but that is exactly what he wanted.



The next day, Fred took the cart full of bells, and his wife to the cliff. The monster's head slowly appeared out of the water, mouth open, ready to devour Alice. Instead of pushing Alice over the cliff, Fred dumped the cart full of bells into the monster's mouth! Down they went inside the beast where they remain to this day. The monster can now be heard approaching, giving plenty of warning to those who live in the small hamlet and beyond.

