



Ding Dong Demon Ditch

By Jason Levine

Before I get to the story, a little introduction and credit where credit is due. There's a forum on Reddit where people post prompts to get people writing. This subreddit is aptly named Writing Prompts. On November 30, 2017, I saw [the following prompt](#) by "actually_crazy_irl" and it got my creative juices bubbling:

[Summoning a supernatural entity and then running before it manifests becomes the new teenager craze. All the cool kids are ding-dong ditching demons.](#)

A story started forming in my head of a freelancer demon summoned by some kids who ditched him. That day, I had to have an MRI. As I laid in the very enclosed tomb... I mean, tube, unable to move, with loud noises surrounding me, I was perfectly calm. Partly because I found the noises interesting and keeping my eyes closed kept me from being claustrophobic. However, part of my calmness was that I was able to mentally escape from that tight space and soar with

the demon as he hunted down those who wronged him. So thank you, actually_crazy_irl, for helping me keep my sanity.

And now, here's my new short story, "Ding Dong Demon Ditch":

Image by [kerttu](#) from [Pixabay](#)

I am the Dreaded Demon Gustravistach, Slayer of Men, Shredder of Skin, Devourer of Spleens. For short, you can call me Gus. Yes, I know it's not as fear inducing a name as my full moniker, but trust me when I say that men cower before me even when I go by my shorter name. None tend to laugh when confronted with a seven foot tall demon sporting six sharp horns, three sharp claws on each hand, and three sharp talons on each foot. I'll spare you a full description. I don't want you running in terror before I even get my story underway.

I'm a freelance demon. Some demons prefer the steady work that comes with being part of a demon army. My buddy Fregacious does that. His head demon assigns him projects to perform. The usual: Bring pestilence to a town. Slay a dozen people. Act as a lawyer for a large corporation. In exchange for the constant work, Fregacious gets to keep a small portion of the souls he reaps.

That's not what I do, though. As a freelancer, I get summoned by a mortal who wants something. I grant them their desire and in exchange they help me reap some souls. It's slower business, but I'm my own boss and get to keep every single soul I collect.

For thousands of years, this has been steady work. Souls never expire so I've amassed quite a collection to torture. Unfortunately, there seems to be a trend among mortal juveniles nowadays that's just plain annoying. They call it "ding ding demon ditch."

Take what just happened last week, for example.

I was just settling into a nice, hot bath. No, not water. I never touch the stuff. I superheat some souls with lava, add some brimstone and fire, and soak for awhile. The heat really relaxes the muscles and the screams of the souls in their eternal torment is really soothing.

Of course, at that moment, a portal appears. Someone was trying to summon me. I could have just ignored it - let the mortals think they got the incantation wrong - but I have professional pride. So I got out of my bath, tossed on a loincloth, and entered the portal.

On the other side were the usual accoutrements: A pentagram drawn in red chalk, candles lit in various spots, and a giant chunk of raw meat. In old days, it would be a freshly slaughtered goat, but not everyone has ready access to goats nowadays. You've got to change with the times. The one thing that was missing were the mortals. I heard the sound of receding footsteps and laughter.

"Not this again," I said.

Now, the Association of Freelance Rokurokubi, Alps, Incubi, and Demons has rules for this sort of thing. I was in a foul mood and would have loved to rampage through the city, destroying all mortals in my path, but AFRAID would have had my head. The paperwork alone would have taken me a century to complete. You don't mess with demon lawyers, trust me.

What I was allowed to do was take my revenge on the mortals - though it had to be non-lethal. I might not have had the pleasure of ripping them to shreds and dragging their souls back for eternal torture, but I was going to get some fun out of this situation. I sniffed the air. Five mortals tainted by the stench of magic. It wouldn't take me long to track them down.

The first one I tracked down easily. He was very overweight and couldn't run fast. Why is there always one kid like this in every group? In any event, he shrieked in horror when he saw me. I grabbed his foot with one hand and used my powerful wings to lift us into the air. It was cute how he pawed the concrete as if that would save him.

I don't want to brag, but one of my specialties is a form of "soul sight." That's when you see the mortal's soul. I can see their likes, dislikes, and greatest fears. This kid was really afraid of snakes. I held him over a dumpster and blasted the inside with my free hand. Instantly, it was filled with wriggling snakes.

I would have loved to have made them venomous, but rules are rules. It didn't matter, though. He was still afraid of them no matter what. The mortal screamed in terror as I dropped him inside and shut the lid. I placed a heavy weight atop the lid to keep him from getting out quickly. One final touch was an enchantment that would turn all of the snakes into garbage if the lid was lifted. Can't leave any traces that I was here. AFRAID rules, you know.

The second and third mortals (a male and a female) I caught up with were running through a crowd. The male saw me first, soaring above the crowd's heads as he looked behind him. The other mortals didn't see me though. Selective Camouflage is an easy trick. It's pretty much Demonology 101.

I flew past them and the male pulled the female to his left. Herding humans is so easy sometimes. They ran into an alleyway and I peered into the male's soul. This one feared the dark. Seriously. Don't most mortals lose that fear after infancy or something?

In any case, darkness it's pretty much right after Selective Camouflage in simplicity. I didn't just make him think he was in perpetual darkness, though. That'd be too easy. No, I made him see shapes and shadows whirling through the darkness. I also blocked out his hearing so he couldn't hear anyone helping him. Maybe those shapes were friends, maybe they were more demons. He'll never know.

The female was afraid of death. Well, I wasn't going to kill her - AFRAID rules and all - but I could give her a taste of death that she'd remember the rest of her mortal life. Grabbing her shoulder with one hand, I plunged my other claw into her abdomen. Instead, of pulling out her small intestines, though, I pulled out her soul.

Now, usually removing a mortal's soul is fatal. As I didn't want to kill her - well, I WANTED to kill her, but you know what I mean - I kept a small portion of her soul connected to her body. Instead of dying, her eyes rolled back into her head, her mouth drooped open, and her body went slack. This was a very risky move. Pulling the soul too far out or keeping it like this for too long would kill this mortal. I had mastered this technique over hundreds of years of torturing mortals, though.

I kept her soul mostly out of her body for three point two seconds. Then I plunged it back into her body. She took a deep breath and her eyes went wide. I released my grip on her shoulder and she collapsed to the ground. There would be no physical signs of what I did, but she would remember the feeling of her soul being pulled from her body for the rest of her life.

The fourth mortal disgusted me - which is saying something considering I'm a demon. An hour after I began my hunt, I found him with a group of people beating up another mortal. Peering into his soul, I could see why. He despised people based on the color of their epidermis.

Now you might think demons love racists because... well, because we're demons. The truth is, though, that demons never judge each other by physical attributes. A friend of mine, Brutorhizz, is yellow with insectoid eyes. Then there's Slythack. She has green skin, a long tail, and no legs. Let me tell you, if you were a mortal facing any of them, their skin color would be the least of your concerns. No, we demons don't judge each other by the color of our skin, but by what's inside - and by that, I mean how loudly mortals scream when we disembowel them. Not to brag, but I'm the second loudest disemboweler in my group. (Slythack takes first prize there.)

Anyway, I could see this guy hated people with different color skin. A little Selective Camouflage and human herding and I got him by himself. The foolish mortal tried bargaining with me. Said he'd do whatever I wanted if I just left him alone. I growled at him and placed an enchantment on his eyes. Then I left.

Well, I made him think I left, but I followed him as he tried to rejoin his group. As his friends turned around, he shrieked in horror. I had made it so that he would see anyone like him - the people he didn't hate - as horrible demons. For as long as the enchantment held, the only humans he would see would be the ones he was prejudiced against.

Flying over the city, I sniffed the air. I could already feel the pull beginning that would drag me back to the demon world. I needed to make this quick. I found the last human in a small domicile - I think they call it an apartment.

I passed through the window and landed in the only room that apartment had. A second after I rematerialized, glowing shackles appeared around my wrists.

“Gotcha,” I heard a mortal yell. “Bet you didn’t expect the Binding Chains of Bendoria.”

“Oh, great,” I thought. “A magician.”

Magicians were always pesky creatures. Capturing demons and thinking they could use our powers with no repercussions. Merlin once caught me and used me for a whole month before I escaped. Luckily for me, magicians of this era were much weaker than the ones of ages past. I pulled my arms apart and shattered the mystical chains. Their glow faded as they fell to the ground until they disappeared entirely.

“Keep back,” the would be magician cried. “Bakurum!”

A shield of pure energy formed between us. I touched it and felt it repelling my demon essence.

“Impressed?” the magician asked.

“Hardly,” I said. “A Bakurum shield is easy to conjure, but hard to make strong.”

With that, I scraped my claws against the mystic shield. It dissolved away. The magician began to speak another enchantment, but I grabbed him by his windpipe.

“I’m curious, mortal. How did you learn enchantments like this?”

“My great-grandfather was a great and powerful wizard,” the mortal managed to croak out. “He was The Wizard Harold.”

I peered into the mortal's soul. Sure enough, there was wizard blood there. It was watered down, for sure, but there. Still, even with a lifetime of training he wouldn't have been able to conjure more than the most basic of spells. While I was examining his soul, I discovered something. I placed the mortal on the ground and released his throat.

“You summoned me expecting me to enact vengeance on your fellow mortals.”

“Yeah I did. Those other guys picked on me, ignored me, and treated me like dirt. I wanted revenge.”

I want sure what I wanted to do more: slap my forehead or rip off his.

“Then why ditch me? Why not summon me by yourself and have me grant you power over your foes? That's how this usually goes.”

“Yeah, right. I'm not naive. After you've had your fun, you'd drag me back to the underworld with you.”

I sighed. Humans always thought we lived underground for some reason. I considered correcting him, but decided to stay on topic instead.

“So instead you thought you'd use a ditch as a loophole to get revenge while keeping your soul safe.”

"You've got it,* the magician said, crossing his arms. "Anything you do to me will be temporary. I've lived a life of daily torment, so do your worst."

I considered taking him up on his offer. Oh the things I could do to him. I could leave him wishing for his old "torments" back. Instead, I laughed.

"You've got guts, mortal. Not only that, but a firm grasp of loopholes. You'd make a fine demon lawyer one day."

"You really think so?" the mortal asked.

"I really do," I said. "It's a shame really."

With that, I ripped his soul from his body, kept it out for three point two seconds, and then shoved it back in. As the mortal curled on the floor in terror, I began to walk away.

"Think of it as a gift, mortal," I said. "Compared to the horror I just showed you, the torments your fellow mortals impart will seem like nothing. Now I'll take my leave. With luck, we'll get the chance to meet again. Your soul would scream nicely in my lava fire bath."

With a flash of fire and brimstone, I opened a portal and headed back to the demon world and my lava bath. I had a lot of stress to work out and the thought of screaming souls in eternal torment sounded fantastic.