

Thin Walls

By C. Jade Wyton

Raymond, trapped in an orb of torment, must live out every terrible thing he ever inflicted on his wife, Genevieve. After more than 5,000 years of this torture the orb is now in possession of one of Genevieve's descendant... and as Raymond suffers, an evil little creature continually tries to weasel into the bag he's kept in to add to his misery.

Content warning for imprisonment, and mentions of abuse, child abuse, forced marriage, and domestic violence.

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The walls holding Raymond in his timeless prison were growing thinner every day, and thusly, the outside world was growing ever-louder. He always heard that satyr talking, now. About everything. Usually, it was accompanied by the voice of a member of Genevieve's family— Her new family. In that devastated city, *Weltaron*.

At first, he had wanted to judge them. But the more he learnt about the things they had been through, the more exhausted he became at the idea of trying to hate them.

He missed the days he spent on Samara's belt. The day she had found him, buried in the rubble of that crumbling old tower, was the day he had finally felt a little bit like a *person* again.

He loved his daughter. Even if she wanted nothing to do with him, he loved her more than he had ever loved anything else in the world.

And he was so incredibly *proud* of the woman she had become.

She had been the one good thing that had come from his marriage to that— That....

*That poor, gullible woman he had once been married to.*

And to discover Sachem had ended Samara's second chance at life had been another devastating blow, amongst a thousand others.

Raymond had trusted that old man's advice, once. Noted his instructions down and followed them well... and it had lead him to this hell. And he knew, as that vulture hissed and squawked about Genevieve's ongoing torture, that he deserved it.

Another whisper from the animal met his ears, this one describing what Genevieve's daughter, Wonda, and that other Jones cousin had accused Sachem of, and he heaved a sigh.

It wasn't Sachem's actions *alone* that had driven Genevieve to do what she had done. No. Raymond knew his own hand had pushed her, too.

It made his skin crawl to admit....

Had he ever been so bad? Surely, his actions were not as cruel to her as the ones she suffered now with that fey creature?

He closed his eyes, a memory stinging his skin; his own fist, laying a blow into

Genevieve's shoulder as she went on and on and on and *on* about a man in the shadows. An otherworldly creature stalking her through the night. Waking her from her sleep in their shared bed with a rambling scream that never seemed to end; depriving him of his own rest for the sixth night that week and losing his temper in his exhaustion as he tried *anything* to shut her up.

Unbearable insanity, he's thought at the time.

Haunting truth, he knew now.

He laid his head against the rough, papery wall and let another tear roll down his cheek.

He never bothered to hold back his tears anymore. Nobody could see him cry, in here. And he had long stopped worrying about his masculinity.

*He regretted laying that blow....*

A hard TAP TAP TAP pecked at the prison, echoing painfully in Raymond's ears as his entire world shook.

'*Get your head out of Cirrus' things!*' the voice of another of Genevieve's daughters, Maggie, scolded from outside the orb— Getting just that littlest bit louder as a sloughing wet *splap* sounded and the wall thinned; yet another page of Genevieve's memories slipping away.

Maggie gave a mumble and Raymond heard her *attempt* to preserve the paper, but it was apparently not salvageable. Especially not with the vulture desperately begging to eat it.

It almost made Raymond laugh to hear the commotion. He was reminded of a night where Samara had been particularly stubborn and had refused to let her mother bathe her....

The tiny hint of a smile fell from Raymond's lips as he remembered how that had ended.

*His blow against Samara had been with an open hand, unlike the one he had laid on Genevieve. But neither had truly deserved his impatience.*

Again, Raymond's eyes closed, and he let out a long, long sigh as another tear fell and another of the magical memories bit him like an angry dog.

*He walked down the aisle of a church to meet himself, horrible and bone-chilling anxiety gripping him as hard as he gripped Exodus' arm. He saw his eyes as he looked down his own nose; so cold and unpleasant. And he felt that desperate urge to run. To hide. To get away.... But it was followed by resolve. Love for people that barely loved him back. The knowledge that this sacrifice would save the family.*

*The speaking of vows, and then the most miserable and listless consummation from both sides.*

He shuddered at the feeling of his own hands, and though he remembered how much he had *also* hated that night, he had never realised how truly hopeless it had felt from her perspective.

He had thought she'd offered herself to be wed— That she had wanted to take advantage of the Axemender's wealth and marry out of poverty and into an easy life.... But with every memory he saw, he became more and more aware that she had been stepping into her own living nightmare.

He rubbed his eyes, groaning, and flopped onto his side as another page fell from the walls of his cell to be grabbed by the vulture and salvaged by the tabaxi.

A slur Raymond had never even conceived of was hurled at the girl, though she seemed unbothered as the vulture stuck its head back into Raymond's personal space and hissed more miserable words.

*'She gave up struggling!' the creature hissed. 'She let the blows be laid into her without a fight! She finally broke! It took five thousand years, but the master finally broke her!'*

A wicked chuckle escaped the bird, and Raymond growled and covered his ears, desperately trying to drown out the bird.

*'She's as submissive as a bitch should be, now! Hopeless! Deliciously hopeless! And soon, she will be nothing—'*

The creature cut off with a squawk, its voice suddenly yanked away as that Jones cousin started loudly scolding it.

The last that Raymond heard of the animal before it was carried too far for him to make out was a string of homophobic slurs that the cousin simply agreed to without fuss.

But the humour of the man's agreement with the bird did nothing to soothe Raymond's guilt.

*Gods, he sounds just like Exodus*, Raymond couldn't help but think it as the cousin returned and spoke in a softer tone to the tabaxi. *It was like hearing his ghost....*

A shudder escaped him. He still didn't know what happened to Exodus. But from what he had overheard over his years on Samara's hip, it sounded brutal....

More voices joined the cousin and the tabaxi, and Raymond realised that the party was gathering for their dinner.

Raymond gave another sigh, thinking of the satyr again.... Cirrus, his name was. Right? He was a mystic. Capable of communicating even through this horrid orb?

Not that he ever really did so. And who could blame him? The last conversation they'd had, Raymond hadn't been....

He groaned again and rubbed his eyes.

He'd blamed Genevieve for their trouble conceiving, and Cirrus had rightfully told him off for it.

Still... he reached out, even knowing there was a significant chance he would either go unheard or be outright ignored by the man as he laughed with his friends.

But he had to *try* to say *something*, didn't he?

As Wonda mentioned, gently but with resolve, that they *would* save Genevieve, he knew he had to *try*....

A deep breath, and Raymond thought with everything he had within him, desperately reaching out to Cirrus in hopes he would be heard, whispering the words alongside the thought just in case it somehow strengthened his reach:

*'I wish I could help.... She doesn't deserve this.'*

—END—

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