

Wayward Son

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My first Hellboy fanfic. Takes place after the story "Box Full of Evil", but before the Epilogue. Hellboy thinks over the events of the past few hours... and he doesn't like what he finds.

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1 - Wayward Son

He had been clean over an hour ago, but Hellboy continued to scrub at his chest, arms, legs, and tail. The mud from the tiny moat outside the Guarino castle had washed down the shower drain, but Hellboy was still dirty. He would always be dirty. He braced himself against the wall with his left hand and rubbed slow, soapless circles around his chest with his right. He stared at the wall in front of him, but looked beyond it, into the events of the past evening.

As soon as he and Abe had arrived at the shambling Guarino estate he had had a bad feeling about the place. He had been there with his father, Trevor Bruttonholm, before Guarino had purchased it. The place hadn't been any more welcoming in 1969 than it was in 1996. In fact, it had grown much worse, and far more foreboding. Hellboy was glad Abe had gone with him; the place gave him the creeps.

Knocking didn't seem like it would matter, especially if the Count and Countess had opened the little box. But Hellboy gave the knocker a resounding "boom" and the door swung inward. Hesitating briefly on the threshold, Hellboy entered first with Abe close behind him. They wandered into an open study and found what they had dreaded; the box had been opened and was empty.

Abe was examining the small tin container when Hellboy spotted movement in a dark corner of the room. It was a chimpanzee and it had somehow managed to get hold of a gun. Before either of them knew what was happening, before Hellboy could get to his friend and shove him out of the way, the chimp fired the weapon, hitting Abe in the chest. His legs finally getting the message to move, Hellboy approached the armed chimp, but was frozen in place when a voice from yet another shadowed corner whispered three words, "Anungun Rama".

A soft knock on the bathroom door flung Hellboy back into the present. He stared at the door, willing whoever was on the other side to go away. After a few moments, as he turned his head back to the shower wall in front of him and began rubbing his already red skin raw, another knock followed. "What," Hellboy practically growled.

"You've been in there a long time," Kate called, "You okay?"

"I'm fine," he lied, "I got real dirty out there. I'll be done soon."

Another silence followed and he resumed his futile efforts to cleanse himself of what he had experienced. "If you want to talk, I'll be here, okay?" Kate said, the concern evident in her voice.

"Yeah, sure," he said absentmindedly.

He waited for several minutes, listening for any sounds that Kate might still be outside. Finally, he leaned forward and rested his head against the wall, his horn stubs making a soft "tick" sound. The burning stream of water flowed down his back and along his tail. He stared at his cloven feet and his mind made

its' way back to Castle Guarino.

Igor Bromhead stepped out of the shadows; a small, ugly demon crouched beside him, whispering to him excitedly. Hellboy had been surprised to see Bromhead—he was in prison last he'd heard. But there he stood, in a monk's robe and with the image of Saint Dunstan around his neck. And he continued to say things; words that kept Hellboy from moving. He spoke words that brought Hellboy to his knees; words that *did* something to him. Hellboy had only felt such things once before in his life, and not that long ago.

As Bromhead spoke, Hellboy was thrust backward, still on the floor, still unable to move of his own accord. More words flew from Bromhead's lips and fire sprang up around Hellboy, from *inside* of him. The fire billowed out of his mouth, but didn't burn him. He tasted smoke and brimstone and his vision wavered. As he was engulfed by the fire that didn't set him ablaze, he felt his horns growing back. A wave of panic fell over him, but he couldn't do anything to stop Bromhead from speaking. He couldn't move and he couldn't stop the terrifying feeling of power that was welling up and out of him.

That was the worst part; the intense power he felt. It was as though he were growing, but stayed the same size. He could feel something inside of him struggling to get out, something monstrous, something hungry. And he knew, without thinking about it, that it was an inseparable part of him. Nothing he could ever do would make that feeling go away; not now that it was brought so fully to the surface. Nothing would be able to quell it, to take it out of him. He would always have that power within in.

He was staring up at the ceiling, his mouth hanging open, the fire still snaking out in small tendrils. He couldn't see the ceiling, he couldn't see anything. But he felt the fire take form above him. He could see in his mind the small crown that materialized out of the smoke and flames. He could feel the amazing, unsettling power that golden coronet represented.

He had been told his purpose before—by Hecate in Romania. Something similar had been done to him there. Similar, but not nearly as intense; not nearly as encompassing as what he was feeling at that moment. He had retained his ability to move, to think clearly in Romania. The power he felt then, rising within him, hadn't been awakened completely. It was still half asleep. But kneeling on the floor in the castle of Count Guarino, that power was more awake than asleep. It was aware and it wanted out.

Hellboy shook his head and his present surroundings swam into focus. He was still looking at his feet, but the water that swirled around them was a rosy pink. He stopped his right hand from scratching at his chest and held it up before him. Blood dripped off his stone fingers and splattered into the cloudy water. He blinked droplets of hot water out of his eyes and lowered his hand into the shower's spray. Pushing off the wall, he flexed his left arm and wiggled the feeling back into his fingers. He placed his right hand against the stall and lifted his head through the steaming liquid. He leaned back enough to let the water hit his chest; hissing through clenched teeth as his wounds were burned. The vortex of used water momentarily turned bright red, then faded to pink as it was swept away.

He closed his eyes and let his head drop backwards, forcing himself to return to the house of Guarino. After the crown had formed above his head, he heard the little demon speak, but his words sounded as though they were far away. Hellboy tried to move, to flex his arms, to see through his open eyes. He felt someone approach and suddenly the power that wanted so desperately to get out, was gone. He slumped forward, in relief, exhaustion, and—though it hurt to admit it—with a sense of loss, of emptiness. His vision cleared a little and he heard the demon conversing with Bromhead. He saw a shape approach

him and the next thing he felt was pain. A sharp, smashing pain that rained down on him relentlessly and from every angle. He cried out, but the beating didn't stop. It was a very long time before he grew accustomed to the pain. Through eyes now hazed with blood, he could see he was on the floor. He could see the vague shape of Bromhead, and he could see another, larger demon in the room. But on that demon's head was a tiny crown; a crown that seemed very familiar.

He closed his eyes as he heard Bromhead and the demon talking. He wanted to sleep; he felt so tired, vacant, and useless. He heard the demon mention his own stone hand, and then he drifted off in an exhausted sleep. That was when he heard the other voices; the all too familiar voices. One of them belonged to the Daoine Sidh with whom he'd conversed decades ago to get back a baby for a Scottish couple. The other two didn't have faces, but he'd heard their voices in Romania, telling him he had to accept his destiny or die. He wondered where he was, and what they wanted with him now.

It was then that the little Daoine Sidh asked him his name. He thought for several moments, then settled on the last thing he'd heard clearly.

"Anung un Rama," he whispered. The name left a cold feeling in his throat.

"Phaa," said the man, disgusted, "That's just words, boy. What do they mean?"

He tried to think, but he couldn't come up with an answer. They were just words to him; he had no idea what 'Anung un Rama' meant, nor even from what language it was.

"I don't know," he admitted quietly.

"Anung un Rama," the little man told him, "World Destroyer. The Great Beast."

"And upon his brow is set a crown of fire," came the deep, gruff voice of another man. It was one of the beings that spoke to him in Romania.

"Is that who you are?" asked a female voice.

"I...", he trailed off, not sure how he should answer.

He thought about what he'd been told. He lay on the cold floor, not able to see and in great pain. A picture of the large demon with the crown on his head flashed through his mind, then.

"No," he replied, feeling his strength returning slowly.

"Well then, boy," said the Daoine Sidh matter-of-factly, "It's not your name, is it?"

He was silent, struggling to feel something other than pain.

"Is it?!" demanded the little man.

His words were so resounding, so shocking in their intensity that he was thrust awake. He opened his eyes and stared up at the demon with the crown- *his* crown. In the demon's hand was a hot, glowing

sword. He locked eyes with the demon.

"What do you think you're gonna do with that sword?" Hellboy asked him, "Better put it away before you hurt yourself."

The demon stepped back in surprise, his grip on the sword loosening. Bromhead yelled that he shouldn't be able to move; the demon told him to shut up. Hellboy got to his feet, feeling his strength and, best of all, his will, returning to him. He leveled his stone fist at the demon, determined to stop him and though he'd never admit it outside of himself- get his power back.

A loud "crack" brought him back into the present. Hellboy blinked rapidly and looked at the wall; his stone fist was clenched tightly and buried in a hole under the showerhead. He slowly pulled his hand out of the crumbling plaster and tile and opened his fist. He looked at the hole and bit his lip. It was time to get out of the shower. It was time to get moving. It was time to forget.

He reached down and turned the water off. He opened the door and stepped onto the bath mat. Shaking his head, he grabbed a beige towel off the rack to his left and draped it over his head. Rubbing vigorously, he dried himself and put a clean pair of black shorts on. Tossing the towel over the stall door, he left the bathroom. He walked down the corridor and to his makeshift room at the BPRD branch in Scotland. He grabbed another coat off the rack near his door and slipped it on while searching for another pair of boots. Not finding any immediately, he resolved to just leave without them; he didn't need shoes anyway.

He pulled his hair into its usual samurai bun, made his way out of the building with no interruption and hailed a taxi. He instructed the driver to take him to the airport. Upon his arrival, he exited the cab and tossed a handful of money into the front seat. He turned up the collar on his coat and walked through the airport. At the luggage counter, he bought a ticket to England. The plane would leave in half an hour. Hellboy found a seat near the window in the terminal and looked out on the cold, dreary morning. He had a lot of forgetting to do and knew the perfect place to clear his head.

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