

Trysting Terror by Micah Kinard

TRYSTING TERROR

Medium undead (The soulmated spirits of two murdered lovers have conjoined in death to make a trysting terror. In desperation to feel each other's warmth again, the trysting terror seeks out and posses living lovers. Stealing the hosts away to to feed their fiery passion in seclusion, the trysting terror ignores all living needs until their host bodies die and they must find a new couple. Only one possessing a piece of the trysting terror's killer(s) can bring an end to its amorous rampage.), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 45 (10d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Cha +9
Skills Deception +9, Perception +7
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Any language they knew in life, understands Any language spoken out of love
Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Star-Crossed Justice. If the trysting terror's attacker does not possess a piece of it's killer(s), the trysting terror cannot be brought below 1 HP, instead it will slip into the ethereal plane and teleport to a safe area 100' away, healing to full health after it's next possession.

Ethereal Sight. The trysting terror can see 60 ft. into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The trysting terror can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Undead Nature. A trysting terror doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep

ACTIONS

Take Your Breath Away. The trysting terror takes a creatures breath away. The creature must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or begin to suffocate. While suffocating in this way, its speed is halved and it can survive for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution modifier (minimum 1 round). During this time, the creature can speak only falteringly. This speech is insufficient for the incantations needed for spells. At the start of its first turn after these rounds, it drops to 0 hit points and is dying, and the spell ends. At the end of each of its turns before reaching 0 hit points by this effect, it can reattempt a Constitution saving throw. On a success, the spell ends.

Crush. Target creature must make a DC 18 Charisma saving throw, taking 38 (7d8+7) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

It Takes Two. The trysting terror may possess two humanoids at once with Possession.

Possession. Possession (Recharge 6): One humanoid that the trysting terror can see within 5 ft. of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the trysting terror; the trysting terror then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The trysting terror now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The trysting terror can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the trysting terror ends it as a bonus action, or the trysting terror is turned or forced out by an effect like the dispel evil and good spell. When the possession ends, the trysting terror reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 ft. of the body. The target is immune to this trysting terror's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Etherealness. The trysting terror enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Obsessed by Ben Orthey

When I sit to think of anything that I could sing for any reason
the reasons don't come easily to me
but with you I find the opposite has always been my problem
when I think of you the reasons run me through
and I imagine it could feel amazing to be named within a sonnet
knowing every word is for your ears
but this one's got a little too much truth in it
and if I'm being honest
it's well beyond the point of being cute
I'm obsessed
with your hair, your arms, your legs, your face, your chest
and how could I forget the way you dress?
every word that passes through your lips
makes me wanna hear the next
I'm obsessed
I've got shrines and dolls in all your likenesses
I've got your body pillow chillin in my bed
all the photos from your wall on Instagram
on the walls inside my head
so when it comes to all the songs that I could sing to sweep
you off your feet
this one's about as bad as it could be
and it might be fine if I retire these lines before they see the light of day
if there's a chance that you would hear them on the breeze
everybody wants to be the subject of such eloquent affections,
overt metaphors and major seventh chords,
but that would be a fleeting comfort fleeing from the sudden realization
it's a little more than you had bargained for

I'm obsessed
with the way you hide your smile when you jest
every move you make I rate a 10
the smoothness of your body and your tan
makes me wanna wear your skin
a little much? exactly, that's what I'm trying to tell you,

I'm obsessed
with your hair, your arms, your legs, your face, your chest
and how could I forget the way you dress?
every word that passes through your lips
makes me wanna hear the next

Safety Romance by Anna

"You...uh...ready?" Matt asks me.

"Yeah," I lie.

I'm lying in my bed, looking up at my boyfriend of two years. Matt is rail-thin, angular, with slight shoulders and nearly iridescent blue eyes. He's one of the few people I know from before the Incident. One of the few I trust.

He lies down on top of me. He's hard, ready to go. I can feel it. My chest burns with the anxiety.

Hot tears well up and I blink them back, hoping Matt won't see my weakness.

I try not to remember the Incident.

I was fourteen. I'd made the mistake of taking the short path back from school close to dark, through the alleyway. There were three boys. I tried to fight back, I swear. It was useless. When they did it, I felt my soul leave my body. I floated above that dirty alleyway and left behind the husk of my body for them to use and abuse, so I didn't have to feel the pain, the humiliation.

That's all I know of sex.

It's been five years now and I should be over it. Hell, I asked Matt for this. I wanted tonight to change things, to heal me. But I feel myself shutting down already. My body is braced against invasion. He's inside me now. He's trying to be gentle. Good god, he's trying. He's failing.

I pull his face down to mine and catch his lips with mine, hoping this will keep my soul from

leaving my body again, like it does when I'm stressed, or during my few attempts at intimacy after the Incident. Why do I have to be like this?

I pull my head back and breathe my soul out. I float up into the air above our bed. My body's still alive of course—breathing, blood flowing through my veins—but I feel nothing. I don't want to feel anything. Just wait it out and let Matt have my body like he wants, like they all want—

"Katie?"

From above, I see Matt grab me by the shoulders, trying to shake me awake. "Katie? You all right? Did you Leave?" When I don't respond, he mutters, "shit. So sorry."

He pulls out of me, gets up and stands up on the bed, reaches out into the air. His fingers brush my essence. "Katie. I'm so sorry. It doesn't have to be tonight. Seriously. Just...just come back, please."

I want to be near him. I want to come back. This time can be different, perhaps.

He cups his hands. My essence settles there. It feels...warm. Safe. I let him kneel back down and tip my essence into my open mouth.

The first thing I feel is my heartbeat.

Then the sheets on my back, then the weight of my limbs, finally the edges of my fingertips. Matt lies on his side next to me.

"I'm sorry," I whisper.

"Don't be."

"Thanks."

For now, I'm secure in my own body. Safe.

The Regular - Shannon

She didn't like coffee shops. Her internet was down and the café across town had a neon sign in the window that read "free wifi". "One London Fog, please." She ordered, her eyes on the menu rather than the man behind the counter. When there was work to be done, she hardly noticed anyone.

He had noticed her, however. She carried a laptop bag so heavy it made her shoulders uneven. Her hair was slicked back in a ponytail so tight it tugged at her scalp. He enthusiastically reached for a paper cup. "Could I get your name?"

"Do you need my name?"

"I suppose I don't need it if you feel like that would violate your confidentiality." He said, chuckling. "Can I get you anything else?"

“No, thank you.” She said, finally allowing herself to look the barista in the eye. He met her coldness with an unexpected warmth. His smiling eyes dug crows’ feet into his young, freckled face. On his apron, stained with coffee grounds, was with a nametag which read “Drew” in permanent marker.

“Alrighty.” said Drew. “One London Fog. The best one of your life. Coming right up.” She reminded herself that someday she’d be a successful lawyer making six figures. Boys whose rent money came from tip jars shouldn’t occupy space in her mind. Yet, as a warm voice called out “London Fog”, one did.

She opened her laptop but couldn’t ignore the turning in her stomach begging for more over-priced drinks in paper cups. “What are you doing in a coffee shop?” She asked him one day, after ordering her usual. The café had become part of her weekly, then daily routine.

“What do you mean?” He asked, dropping a bag of Earl Grey into her cup.

“Not to be forward,” she said, “but you seem so good with people. You could really make it in the business world or doing something...”

“...more important?”

“Maybe? That sounds more harsh than I meant it to...”

“Coffee is where life happens. What could be more important than that?”

“I don’t drink coffee.” “That doesn’t surprise me, Ms. London Fog.” For weeks, those words rang in her mind like church bells, distracting her from her studies and killing her ambition. Her daydreams abandoned scenes of winning court cases in favor of intrusive visions of making coffee alongside a freckle-faced boy with kind eyes and kinder words. The more she fought them, the worse they got. She fantasized about quitting school, hating how happy the thought made her. She imagined a life of financial struggle alongside a tender person whose hands would be frequently empty but always warm. Her mind painted a picture of a smiling baby with freckles on his face calling her mommy.

Drew was stunned by her appearance that morning. Her crooked shoulders were pulled back straight without the weight of a laptop bag. Her hair fell loosely around her collarbones in waves. “I’d like a cappuccino, please.”

“Could I get your name?”

“Marianne.”

Reverie of Flight by Low B

No shadows fall in the sweet morning air. I run my hand along the faded paint and aluminum skin, feeling every ripple, every divot, under my finger tips. Pure excitement courses through

me. Making my way around in a meticulous, practiced, pace, covering every inch. The azure sky is now streaked with shades of pastel pink, and softly glowing orange.

I unlatch the door, the portal to a perfect cocoon of necessary things. Austere, simple, practical. Magical. As the familiar scents swirl around me, my breath slows despite rising excitement. Deep inhale. Hold it... The sharp, rich smell of fuel and asphalt meets decades old cloth seats, plastic, and painted metal all lovingly baked in the Texas sun since before I was born. It takes me all the way back to childhood, enthralled with my Grandfather as he shared the wonder of flight with me.

I pause in the singularity of this experience. The simplicity of this pleasure; the promise of something unreal. My own story now... Exhale Inside the cocoon, I complete a small list of tasks, each one bringing me closer to this modern version of Daedalus' dream.

Finally, everything is set. A brief turn of the key, a sudden shudder, and the morning silence becomes a distant memory. The little craft makes it's first declaration against gravity.

I implore the voice of someone I do not know to grant me passage to the heavens. He sits in his tower, presiding over all his eye can see. Today, he is benevolent and I have my wish. "Four one two," I hear myself through the headphones as I give my response.

I begin the short, bumpy trip on awkward wheels to the end of the runway. Once there, a few more tests, to assure I will return to earth safely. A final request to the benevolent voice. The voice relents. I acknowledge. Brakes off. Push the throttle until it stops and turn into the wind.

The muffled sound in my headphones belies the absolute cacophony as the little craft, in full voice, transforms the cocoon into it's true form as we reach together for the clouds. Alone, I now have audience with the sun as she breaks the horizon, spilling her virgin rays onto the landscape below. We talk for a while, she and I, and speak of our travels until she climbs above me adamant to continue on her own journey. I know my feet must soon return to earth but, my soul lives ever in the blue sky.

May I Have This Dance - Jamison

"May I have this dance?"

The man's wrinkled hand, palm up, was extended towards his bride of 62 years.

He didn't need to ask.

In their many years together her answer had always been the same,

But it wouldn't be right if he didn't pursue her even now.

It wasn't just a pattern, it was a courtesy.

If he learned anything in their time together,
He learned that intimacy does not grow in familiarity but in commitment.

In the other room, the vinyl hummed a tune,
A harmonic and holy hymn.
This moment was never just a dance.
It was joy in mourning, laughter through pain, and harmonious with each step.

There would be a year when their souls would long for another waltz in the kitchen,
While their body's would fail to respond.

In this house, each brick had seen shaking feet take their first steps.
Now they see shaking feet nearing their last.

Many people don't get this long to live, let alone be together happily all this time.
Each moment a treasure, make the most of every opportunity.

She took his tired hand, leaning on it to bring herself carefully out of the chair and rose slowly
to her delicate feet.

Their eyes met and time melted from her face.
For one brief moment, their creaking bones worn with age, transcended the number of their
years.

She looked upon the face of the man she spent her life with,
Certain of her choice as she had ever been.
Still ever charming. Still ever hers. She gave him the same answer she had for 62 years.

"Yes, you certainly may."