

Two hours later he came in. His name was Joel Gedallion and he was not the stuff of fairy tale romance.

Daisy's mind was adrift in the midst of a skeleton ball. Cinderella had been so excited to go, but the gateway to the palace was a portal to a demon world, and corpses and half-undone creatures whirled around her. It was flashes of dark purples and moonglow, and moaning violins, and Cinderella, shamed, looked down and saw a snake twining up her leg. Daze's fingers gripped the pen and transcribed what she saw but she was unaware of the rest of her body as Cinderella stood frozen, the snake having now wound up to rest its head on her shoulder and look into the poor girl's face. It cleared its throat. It – what? Daze marked it out. The snake darted out its tongue to smell Cinderella's cheek, and the light lick if it was almost a kiss. The snake twisted forward to get a closer look at its prize.

The snake cleared its throat again.

This didn't make sense. It already had Cinderella's attention. Daze scratched out the line and shook her head as Cinderella crumbled and the purple moonglow world faded into gray sidewalk. Daze looked at her watch – morning was long over. Time to go home. Crunching up her napkin around the long-empty cup, she collected her things, tossed the cup, and left the café.