

Winters Demon
& other poems

Winters Demon
& other poems

Victor Venhuizen

Author: Victor Venhuizen
Cover design: Victor Venhuizen
Illustrations: Jan-Hendrik Venhuizen (page 11, 49 & 61)
Victor Venhuizen (page 81 & 95)
ISBN: 9789402143065
© Victor Venhuizen

Contents

The Old Man and the Boy <i>(prologue to Winters Demon)</i>	7
Winters Demon	11
The Old man and the Boy continued <i>(epilogue to Winters Demon)</i>	42
A Litany of Love	44
A Christmas Tale	49
Couch	57
The Sea	61
Two Young to Die	68
Our Worlds	80
Just us Two	82
Specular Stalker	84
To Bed!	93
The End	96

The Old Man and the Boy

Prologue to Winters Demon

Both were sitting by the fire as oft they'd done before. In silence, mostly silence. He never said anything that wasn't worth saying. Even now.

Outside, the wind was howling and cinders leaped up as the Boy threw another log onto the fire.

When he sat back down, he looked at the Old man for a while before saying: "You know, I'll be coming of age tomorrow. Finally, a man..."

The last he said with a shrug.

"Don't suppose you'll hold true to your word?"

The Old man slowly raised his head. Two remarkably keen eyes peered out from under his grey, bushy eyebrows. For a long time, they sat like this, observing each other. The Boy was young but strong in mind and body. The man was simply old. Well, thought the Boy, not just old. He looked ancient, sitting there. Half bend, leaning on a long wooden staff as if he was expecting to fall over any second. Oh yes, any second now...

The man leaned back a little. He closed his eyes and slowly took a long, deep breath. "Winter is coming", he said.

The Boy never knew what to make of his strange remarks. Winter had, in fact, just turned to Spring. And though at night the cold still persisted, flowers had already begun to bloom.

Before the Boy could respond however, the man got up. He walked across the room and halted at the only window that looked out towards the fields. There was nothing much to see, just a stone well in the midst of a vast, desolate field.

“Do you know why I took you in, all those years ago? I admit that I quickly grew fond of you but it wasn’t out of kindness.”

The Boy did not know how to answer. The Old man had never been one for soft words. He sighed and turned away from the outside world, dark and uninviting. Instead, he moved to a huge chest from which he withdrew a book, black and leather-bound.

“It was necessity, really”, he said, while carefully sitting back down.

At this point, the Old man seemed to be talking more to himself than to his companion. A trait that comes with age and a desire to speak to the wisest person in the room.

The Boy observed him as he was sitting there, tenderly caressing the cracked leather as if inspecting it by touch.

At long last, the book had seemed to pass his inspection when the Old man cleared his throat and said: “A necessity, yes. One to whom the charge may be passed. Long had I waited for providence to deliver you and long was your training.”

“What training?”, said the Boy, “all you’ve ever done is tell me fairy tales and myths!”

The corner of his mouth twitched slightly upward as he replied: "Fairy tales, no. Myths, perhaps. Though you may not have noticed, I have indeed guided you these past years. In fact, I have given you all my knowledge... My wisdom and, alas, my curse."

"But none of it, none of the stories will make sense until the final legend is revealed. So now, my dear Boy, comes the final hour. Comes time of legend and icy truth."

"Now, with my last breath, will I hold true to my word!"

The Boy simply did not know what to make of all this yet he found himself steadily inching forward, eager to listen as the Old man carefully opened the book and the Long Tale of Darkness began...

