

Fictober 2022: Constant-Dream Edition

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Fictober 2022: Constant-Dream Edition

by [RubyRoo_Proper](#)

Summary

A small handful of ficlets and oneshots from Tumblr's Fictober prompts. (Because I have neither the time nor energy to do all of them.)

Notes

First of all, I was going to do all of them, but realized that was putting too much stress on myself to get them all done in time and be happy with them, especially since my job uses up so much time these days, so I picked quality of quantity.

Second, I knew this installment for day 2 is a couple days late. Saturday was... hectic. So, better late than never.

Nobody Warned You about Me?

Of course Dream knew of the Laughing Magicians. The line that confounded mortal and immortal alike for over a millennia. Their exploits graced the infinite shelves of his library, and the frustrations brought by their actions recreated time and again in the dreams of those they dealt with.

His older brother still rued the well-meaning and naïve gift he'd bestowed upon them, and tried his best to create checks and balances to it.

And even if given the choice to do so, Dream would never forget the great favor done to him by Lady Johanna over two-hundred years before encountering her descendant and namesake, the retrieval of something held dearer to his heart than even his tools. But getting her to do it hadn't been simple.

The Lord of the Dreaming knew as well as anyone that a Constantine was best kept at arm's length, and dealt with as little as possible (something Britain's royal family was either incapable or unwilling to learn).

And yet he found himself here, pretending he hadn't seen the politely skeptical look on Lucienne's face, and the more blatant disbelief on Matthew and Mervyn's (the latter muttering something about yelling at brick walls).

To Constantine's credit, returning home to the sight of him standing in the middle of her cluttered flat didn't startle her (he suspected little did), but instead elicited annoyance and perhaps reluctant amusement.

"I suppose waiting in the bloody hall is too much to ask of you."

"I thought to spare you questions from the neighbors." He explained.

"Like hell you were." She snorted as she carried her bag of groceries to the kitchenette and (unbelievably) started putting them away. "Is this a social call, or did you lose something again?"

"Your expertise would prove beneficial to this matter."

"In other words, 'Please, please help me Constantine, even though asking is beneath my dignity as a royal arsel'." She said this in some approximation of his voice of such exaggerated quality that could only be intentional.

"This is a matter wherein your line of work overlaps with my realm."

She faced him fully for a moment. "Let me guess, something to do with incubi or succubi, if not both?"

He nodded.

Constantine raised her eyebrows before returning to her cupboards. “Must be livening things up at your place.”

He frowned. “I don’t suffer lightly those who use my realm or subjects to harm humanity.”

“Well neither do I, to be honest.” She concluded with the end of her chore, stepping out to stand before him with arms crossed. “And we both know I rarely am.”

“What?”

“Honest.”

He ignored this comment, and began the same speech he’d given another Johanna Constantine many lifetimes and one imprisonment ago. “I cannot pay you in gold or anything of monetary value...”

“Can you give dreams that comfort people?” She interrupted.

Once again, this woman had caught him off-guard and *not* done what he’d expected. “I... create them to serve every purpose.”

The woman sobered noticeably. “And if I requested you give them to someone?”

Her lack of hesitation was rather concerning. However, it reminded him of her associate, and the vicar’s troubling nights, peppered with great sadness, the face of a little boy, and occasional violence.

“The Reverend Erica has suffered a great loss, has she not?” He asked her to confirm, gentling his voice a touch.

“Your sister hasn’t told you?”

“No.” Though he’d promised Death and himself that he’d make an effort to speak with her more often, he didn’t want to meddle in her job unless she invited him to witness it.

Constantine cleared her throat. “Her nephew was stabbed to death. A mugging gone wrong.”

Ah.

“He seemed like a great kid. They were pretty close.”

Perhaps that also explained why Constantine had been dreaming of her young niece more often than she was prone. But he thought it wise not to bring this up yet.

“I am sorry for her loss. And I assure you, his passing moments were greeted by a kind face and words of sympathy.”

“Was it?” She asked, with sharp skepticism.

“Death is the kindest of the family.”

“Not exactly setting the bar high, is it?”

“She is... more loving to me than I deserve.”

He’d learned much. A glimpse of humility would do wonders where pride and rank failed.

Still, she squinted at him, a bit guarded.

“Your request should be a small matter.” Dream told her.

A dimple appeared in her left cheek. “Asking for my help *twice* within the same year? That’s cutting it close.”

He tilted his head in a silent bid for her to elaborate.

“Nobody warned you about me?” Humor and bitterness in equal measure.

“*You* have, certainly.”

Her mouth twitched, and he considered it a small victory. “It’s dangerous business, working with me. And not because of the demons.”

“I know.” He murmured, gaze holding hers.

Constantine stood there for all of ten minutes, trying to read between the lines.

She then returned to the kitchenette to pour herself a glass of whiskey before plunking down on her sofa.

“Tell me all the details, and then I’ll decide.” She told him before taking a generous sip.

Not an unreasonable request.

“An incubus has been taking the form of famous film actors to beguile their admirers.”

“So? Nothing new about that.”

“But it has been gaining more ground than usual. It’s been using the form and voice of some actor with a possible connection to Arthur Conan Doyle and a probably misspelled name...”

She almost choked on a sip of whiskey as she doubled over in laughter. Clearly there was a reference there he hadn’t yet understood.

“If you are quite finished...”

“A fucking incubus has been masquerading as Benedict Cumber-whatsit?”

“I don’t believe that is his actual name.”

For some reason this made her laugh again. And, for some reason, he couldn't find it in himself to be too bothered.

Do You Remember?

Chapter Summary

Fictober prompt Day four.

Chapter Notes

Not my best effort still, but it's serviceable.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“How are you keeping?”

Johanna squinted at him. “Why?”

The man shrugged his thin shoulders. “I wish to know how you’ve been.”

She scoffed. “I have no fucking idea. Ask the nurses.”

“I did. They said you’re doing well, physically.”

“Mentally?”

“They express admiration at your fortitude, but worry for your emotional state.”

“Not really their business, is it?” She peered at him through her bifocals. “Or yours, for that matter.”

Johanna felt like she should know him. Which meant she probably did, but the bastard was being oblique. He’d just dropped in her room as if it were his own and started asking the same questions everyone always asked.

At least, she was pretty sure they did.

“Is my presence a bother?” He, asked, expression softening a touch.

“Less so than most.” She settled more comfortably in her chair. “Might as well go ahead and stay, whoever you are.”

There was a curl of amusement in the corner of his mouth. "My name is Dream." He responded succinctly.

"Sounds very... alternative. Your parents into New Age shit, or something like that."

His smile grew a fraction. "There is nothing 'new' about them."

She looked out the window at the manicured lawns, dotted by the occasional old bat hobbling with a cane or being pushed in a wheelchair.

She was pretty sure she hated this place. "They'd be in good company, here."

He followed her gaze. "Indeed."

"You a friend of my niece's? She visits often." Or so she'd been told, and had no reason to believe otherwise.

"No, I am a friend of yours." He told her, softly.

"Really?"

"For many years now."

She took off her glasses and wiped the lenses. "How'd we meet?"

"You had a precious possession of mine in your keeping. I interrupted an exorcism you were performing in order to ask for its whereabouts, and you still managed to send a powerful demon back to hell and give me the brushoff."

She chuckled. "You've got balls, Bruv. What was it you were after?"

He paused a moment. "Enchanted sand."

Sand... sand...

A tune floated through her mind. "Mister Sandman..."

The man whose name she'd already managed to forget leaned forward intently. "Yes?"

She tried to cling onto the partly-formed thought. "Was there... music playing, when we met?"

"No."

"Never mind, then."

She didn't even wonder how she could remember that stupid song, but not this character sitting before her, speaking in riddles and looking like he spent most of his young life sucking on lemons. He was a gorgeous bastard, she had to admit. With that jawline and that voice, if she were forty years younger...

“Did you ever get it back? The... sand, did you say?”

His eyes locked on hers. “Yes, I got my sand back.”

“When was this?”

“Over forty years ago.”

It took a moment. “Wait... *forty*? What, were you a fucking toddler or something? Or do you just have really good genes?” The man didn’t look a day older than thirty-six. Of course, even with her glasses she couldn’t make out many details.

“I am not human.” He stated simply.

That wasn’t terribly surprising, considering what she could remember of her past profession. Johanna believed she’d encountered stranger things. “What the hell are you then? Are you going to have me guess like some sadist?”

He took a deep breath through his nose, glancing toward the doorway as if to make sure nobody was in earshot.

“I am the personification of the entire universe’s dreams. Dream is not merely my name, but my nature. I am one of the Endless, the third to be born. I am the Sandman, whose sand you’d managed to acquire.”

Dreams. Sand. Sandman. Gran’s stories...

A wellspring of emotions bubbled up. She immediately put a lid on it and bestowed him with her most burning glare.

“Is this how you get your kicks, then? Telling insane batshit stories to senile old biddies who can barely remember their own names and see how much utter bollocks you can get them to believe?”

He didn’t look terribly surprised at this, but didn’t fly into denial. Merely looked grave.

“Believe me or not, that is your choice. Only know that you helped me in a very dark time, and I’ll not forget it as long as I am existing.”

Half of her felt like this wasn’t complete insanity, but the other half remained stubborn that he was having her on. “And what did I get out of it?”

“Your nights were haunted by a nightmare. A memory you longed to release. In payment for your help, I barred it from you.”

That did sound a bit familiar. “And then what? We just... hung out a few times after that?”

Something flashed through his face too quick to name. “Many times. Mostly in my realm.”

She raised her eyebrows. “Your realm?”

“The Dreaming.”

“Oh, of course.” She snorted. “And I suppose we still do meet up in your ‘realm’.”

“Yes.”

“Then why did you bother coming to see me while I’m awake?”

His expression grew very intense as he reached for her hand, his own cool and soft. “Because I promised I would, when you first came to live here.”

She rolled her eyes, but didn’t pull her hand from his. “I’ll probably forget all about this by dinner.”

“You remember better in the Dreaming.”

“I suppose everything must be just Jim Dandy in your goddamn realm then.” She snapped at him.

He actually laughed faintly. “No. Merely different.”

She was already feeling exhausted, and told him without any real fire, “Oh just fuck off, why don’t you.”

He continued to look amused. “Very well, Johanna. I will see you presently.”

The man stood and, before she could make any more sharp comments, kissed her forehead, then left the room before she could recover her wits.

“Bloody wanker.” She mumbled, trying to ignore the tug in her chest.

“

*... When you have finished your message, hang up or press 1 for more options. *BEEP**”

“Chas, Jo here. Still waiting and freezing my ass off in fucking Inverness. If you don’t want me to throw your boney ass into the deepest bowels of Hell... and you know I could if I got the notion... pick up your damn phone. Thanks.”

She hung up, watching her words go up in vapor and trying to keep her teeth from chattering. Spring in Scotland beat any winter she’d spent south of Hadrian’s wall in terms of soul-chilling freeze. If only...

“Jo?” A man’s voice called right behind her. American, judging from the accent.

“Yeah, the hell do you w...?” She turned and saw nobody there. Nothing but a raven looking up from the sidewalk.

Wait...

“Christ!” he ruffled his feathers. “This place is worse than North Dakota!”

Johanna blinked. “... Matthew.”

“Sorry to interrupt whatever the hell you were doing. But you looked pretty miserable. Just came by to let you know the Boss is on his way. Now ‘scuse me, there are warmer places I need to be.” He took off like a shot.

After he faded in the distance, she took stock of her surroundings. Everything was out of focus, the people nondescript and doing nothing but wandering around.

The Inverness case. A house owned by an occultist near the shore of Loch Ness. She’d had to go clean up some idiot’s mess...

Johanna felt her face, fingers sliding over smooth, firm skin. The hair blowing around her face was brown.

The memories were coming back in a steady stream. The ones that always eluded her in the Waking. Including those of this happening before, every time she saw him in the Dreaming.

A smile pulled at her mouth.

Suddenly the icy wet landscape melted into warmth, gold, and green. The woods not far from her Gran’s house, where she formed the few happy memories from her childhood. Her thick layers became simple shorts and an airy blouse.

An elegant hand swept her hair from her neck to bestow a soft kiss on her nape. “Do you remember?”

She hummed, pretending to think it over. “Nope. Lost it all by supper, like I said.”

His arms wrapped around her from behind and pulled her close. “Then I shall remind you again. As many times as you require.” He murmured low in her ear.

“Enjoy it while it lasts. Soon I’ll die in my sleep and end up like Matthew.”

“Only if you wish it, Johanna Constantine.”

She leaned into him. “Maybe if you convinced me not to...”

Chapter End Notes

next installments will hopefully be better in quality. In the meantime, loved the image of Dream visiting a much older Johanna in a retirement home and still being very much in love, whether she remembers him or not.

Yes. No. I don't know.

Chapter Summary

Fictober prompt day 14

Chapter Notes

I'm floored by the positive response to the previous chapter. Here is one considerably more lighthearted.

“Bartender, some more Talisker, if you will.”

The tender looked askance at Constantine’s glass, emptied for the fifth (if not sixth) time.
“You sure about that?”

“Wouldn’t have fucking asked if I wasn’t now, would I?” She retorted, smiling sweetly.

The man looked imploringly at Dream, who said nothing. Just continued to nurse his glass of mastika. He was *not* going to tell this woman what she could or couldn’t consume.

With the shake of his head, the bartender held up one finger. “One more, then I’m cutting you off.”

“Coward.” She snorted while sliding her glass forward.

“Is your goal to completely forget your own name?” Dream asked after the whiskey was poured.

She took a large sip. “Been a rough few weeks, Morph. Let me wallow a bit.”

Morph.

“If that name is too difficult to pronounce in your current state I have others you may use at your leisure.”

“Oh?” She grinned impishly. “Like... Krackle? Onus? Durm?” As if her capability of speech was that far gone.

He refused to be baited, merely reminding her, “Do what you will. Just bear in mind the morrow.”

She made a face. “You always talk like yer’ in a damn Sh... Shakespeare play.”

“I met him, once.”

“Of course you did. You see ev... ever-one’s dreams.” She took another generous gulp of whiskey.

“I met him in the Waking, as a youth. He was known as Shaxberd then, and had not the skills to fulfill his ambitions.”

She didn’t appear to be really listening, staring at some spot on the wall.

“Constantine...”

“Call me Jo.”

“I will not.” He stated crisply.

“Loosen up, oh King of Dreams,” she smirked and reached over to flick one of his coat buttons. “Don’t think I’ve ever seen you without this.”

She was starting to sound like his favorite sibling. To keep her from pestering he removed his coat and folded it across his lap.

“Hm.” She tilted her head and plucked at his shirt sleeve.

Dream caught the barkeeper’s attention. “Some water, if you please.”

It was served in a glass that he handed to his companion. “Drink.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Scuse me?”

“It will lessen your discomfort in the morning.”

She chuckled and accepted the glass, taking a swallow. “Lookit’ you, being all caring and shit.”

“You are frequently in a foul mood.” He pointed out. “I see no harm in preventing it from getting worse.”

She snorted. “God, you’re like a... a cat.”

“Oh?”

“A wet, grumpy cat.”

The corner of his mouth ticked upward. “You flatter me.”

“It’s true.” She insisted. “All aloof and...” Constantine rotated her hand in a vague gesture. “... Arsehole-ish. Trying to look sleek and elegant and... and pretending you don’t want attention of affection, but you obviously do.”

“Truly?” He humored her.

“And really, stupidly fucking adorable in spite of it all.”

Dream’s smile shrank. “Pardon?”

The bartender suddenly developed a very affected-sounding cough.

“You heard me.” Constantine replied with a self-satisfied grin.

He could only stare at her like some dunce.

This was... new for him. He’d known for some time she was attracted to him, having been accidentally summoned by a few of her more sensual dreams, and told himself he thought nothing of it.

But... *adorable*?

She laughed. “Oh the look on your face...”

Was the woman speaking in jest? “Take care what you say, lest you regret it in the morning.” He warned her sternly.

“There you go again.” There was a rueful note in her laugh this time. “So annoying... and also fucking cute. Why d’you do this to me.” She knocked back the rest of her drink.

“How...” He cursed the faint waver in his voice. “How can something be both?”

Constantine grinned, eyes shining and cheeks flushed. “You’ve been ‘round way longer than I have, Guv. You tell me.”

He leaned forward, eyes narrowed. “Do you say this with the purpose of causing me vexation?”

“Yes.” She sounded not quite sure. “No. I... I don’t know. Not *completely*?”

Why? Why did this woman continue to bewilder and frustrate him?

“Has nobody called you cute before?” She asked, distractedly plucking at his sleeve again.

Perhaps Calliope had inferred such sentiments before their marriage began to sour, as had Death when feeling fondly exasperated at him.

“Not in those exact words, no.”

“No wonder yer’ in a tiff.” She snickered. “Afraid I’ll ruin your reputation as an ice-cold bastard.”

“Have you been described as such, Constantine?”

She rolled her eyes. “Way more than I’d like.”

“You find it irksome, do you not?”

“S’not the same thing, Dream.” She glared at him. “You have no trouble being taken seriously. For a woman, especially a woman like me, it’s annoying and disruptive as fuck.”

He nodded. “True. The comparison is a poor one.”

“No shit.”

She scrunched her nose a bit.

And Dream... well, he could scarcely resist.

“Though, if I must be honest, I don’t find such sentiments about you unjustified.”

She squinted at him “Eh?”

He lowered his voice. “I would think you fit the adjective far more than I ever could.”

She made a face, then laughed. “Fuck, I’m drunker than I thought. I could’ve sworn you said...”

“I did.”

She peered up at him. “You... Dream of the fucking Endless... are saying I’m *cute*?”

He didn’t bother suppressing a grin. The shoe, as mortals said, was on the other foot.

“Yer’ skating on thin ice, Bruv.” She declared, reaching for her glass and then glaring at it when she remembered it was empty.

“Do I continue to surprise you, Johanna Constantine?” He asked.

She gave a crooked smile. “I know I can still surprise *you*, that’s for damn sure.”

He certainly couldn’t deny that.

“Perhaps it’s time we took you home.” He suggested when she spilled some water on her trousers.

“Why?” She demanded. “Am I embarrassing you?”

“I’m more concerned with you embarrassing yourself.”

She scoffed. “Don’t care about that.”

“And you look like you may fall asleep any moment.” He was *not* going to carry her back to her flat, even if he used his sand to cut the trip short.

“Spoilsport.”

“And yet you find me endearing.” He pointed out smugly.

“You know I have shit taste.”

“Perhaps I’ll reassess that evaluation.”

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