

The Ferryman's Lament

by C. A. Fulwell

Would you say you're a good person? Are you good at what you do? Really? Even after... that? You know what I mean— you know what you did.

I am Charon: I am good at what I do. Day in, day out, I ferry the dead across the waters of the Styx on their way to the Underworld; I have never lost a single soul, never been away from my post. Does this make me 'good'? I don't really give a shit, to be quite honest with you. I'm a god. I'm not going anywhere. I haven't so much as nipped out for a coffee or a quick pint in thousands of years. Hardcore, right?

You people, you've forgotten... We old gods are still running the show, and when you get to my boat you wail and beg and ask the same stupid questions people have always asked. It never changes what happens next: off we pop to the Underworld so Hades can judge you. I know, right? Brown trousers time.

Ah, Hades... 'The Unseen'. God of the Underworld. He Who Must Not Be Pissed Off. Invincible, telekinetic, shapeshifting- the whole nine yards. He's a pretty good boss, to be honest, firm but fair in the old performance reviews, generally leaves me to my own devices as I paddle up and down the river- it's a peaceful life.

Anyway- yesterday: not a good day. There I was, tearing through the water, when I heard, 'Oi! Paddle-cock!' I full-on jumped. I'll level with you- I don't think I've ever actually jumped before. I'm not keen on it.

In any case, for some dumb reason, I jumped and I dropped my damn paddle. Shit! I am a ferryman, right? Not just any old ferryman, *the* fucking ferryman, bringing the dead to face judgement and continuing the cycle of what has always been and will always be. I literally cannot do my job or fulfil destiny without my paddle. And because of some noisy little asshole running his mouth, I was just standing there on the boat, drifting around like some dickless demigod.

Before I could work out what sort of retribution I would ask Hades to inflict upon this prick, he called out again, 'Sorry about that, mate! Let me help you out.'

I wasn't far from the shore, so when a rope flew through the acrid fog and landed at my feet, I muttered various curses and let him pull me in- dignified, it was not.

So, there I was, one foot out of the boat, wondering where I could get another bloody paddle at this time of night, and about to rip into this guy, when there was a great big fuck-off thunderclap. The fog cleared, and the guy was gone- replaced by none other than Hades, with my soggy paddle in his hand and a pretty shitty look on his face.

Between you and me, I'm not looking forward to next week's performance review. Fuck's sake.