

THE GIRL WITH A THOUSAND FACES

“Part underworld crime investigation, part love letter to Kowloon, part heartbreak and myth, Dean’s book is bound to be an immediate classic.”

Hannah Kaner, No.1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *The Fallen Gods* trilogy

“Will tear out your heart and heal it in the same breath... Combining the very real horrors of Hong Kong’s occupation with one family’s female rage and trauma, the story twists and turns with as many faces as the eponymous girl herself.”

Eliza Chan, No.1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *Fathomfolk*

“Gripped me from the start and refused to let go. This book has everything— intriguing characters, vividly-depicted settings, thrilling action and adventure... Confirms Sunyi Dean as one of the most interesting voices in genre fiction.”

Gareth Brown, *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *The Book of Doors*

“*The Girl with a Thousand Faces* contends with all manner of ghosts, and beautifully examines the nature of grief, rage, and all that must be put to rest in order to truly live.”

Olivie Blake, No.1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of the *Atlas* series

“Astonishing and clever, unfolding in layers that cross time and space and identities. Dean has crafted a tale that explores—with wisdom and empathy—the devastating effects of conflict and the ghosts it leaves behind.”

Andrea Stewart, *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *The Drowning Empire* series

“A heart-rending ghost story that masterfully examines the brutalities of trauma and war. This story held me in its spectral thrall, and I can’t recommend it enough.”

Alexis Henderson, author of *The Year of the Witching* and *An Academy for Liars*

“The fantastical and historical come together in a skillfully woven narrative filled with vengeful ghosts, grief, and intergenerational trauma.”

Monika Kim, *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *The Eyes Are the Best Part*

“Sunyi Dean returns with a complex, time-twisting, and intensely vivid tale of grief and redemption in historical Hong Kong—with ghosts! I loved it.”

Nick Binge, bestselling author of *Ascension*

ALSO BY SUNYI DEAN

The Book Eaters

**THE GIRL
WITH A
THOUSAND
FACES**

SUNYI DEAN



HarperVoyager
An imprint of
HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd
1 London Bridge Street
London SE1 9GF

www.harpercollins.co.uk

HarperCollinsPublishers
Macken House,
39/40 Mayor Street Upper,
Dublin 1, D01 C9W8
Ireland

First published by HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd 2026

1

Copyright © Sunyi Dean 2026

Sunyi Dean asserts the moral right to
be identified as the author of this work.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-0-00-847949-7 (HB)

ISBN: 978-0-00-847950-3 (TPB)

This novel is entirely a work of fiction.

The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are
the work of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to
actual persons, living or dead, events or localities is
entirely coincidental.

Printed and bound in the UK using 100% renewable electricity by CPI Group (UK) Ltd

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted,
in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior
written permission of the publishers.

Without limiting the exclusive rights of any author, contributor or the publisher of this
publication, any unauthorized use of this publication to train generative artificial intelligence (AI)
technologies is expressly prohibited. HarperCollins also exercise their rights under Article 4(3)
of the Digital Single Market Directive 2019/790 and expressly reserve this publication from
the text and data mining exception.



My grandmother, Poon Kingfar, was never taught to read or write. Born over one hundred years ago in rural Shanghai, she was a quiet hero who survived two world wars, great deprivation, and the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. She worked to ensure that her children and grandchildren had the chance to learn, travel, and gain education—opportunities that she herself never had.

This book is dedicated to every woman who could not tell their own story, because the world did not give them a voice.

Pronunciation Guide

Bao: Like the bun. He is named after food.

Cha chaan teng: tsah TSAHN taang

Chan, Mercy: Chann, MER-see. The Canto/English version of Chen Mei Chi.

Chen, Mei Chi: Chinn, Mei-Chee. Chen is a Hakka dialect surname, which is often translated as “Chan” in the Cantonese dialect.

Chiu, Wing Yun: CHEW, wing-yuhnn

Dai pai dong: die pie dohng. A type of open-air stall in Hong Kong, selling street food.

Guanyin: GWAN-yeen/KWAN-yeen. The more widely known Mandarin name of the Goddess of Mercy.

Gweilo: GWAI-low/KWAI-low. Literally “ghost man,” although it is sometimes translated as “foreign devil” or “white ghost,” because that arguably better portrays the context in which it was coined. Although derogatory in origin, its contextual meaning has softened considerably in modern times.

Kowloon: Kow-LOON. A large district in Hong Kong, within which Kowloon Walled City is located.

Kwun Yam: KWUN-yumm/Gwun-yumm. The Cantonese translation for Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy. Similar to Kit Ling, the “k” consonant is slightly devoiced.

Leung Lau Yik: Lung Lao-Yick

Maogui: MAO gwey. Literally, “cat-ghost.”

Ng Chungpo: Ing CHUNG-poe

Poon Li Fan: Poon Lee-FAHN

Qun Kwa: Choon KWAH. Literally, “skirt + jacket.” Refers to a type of two-piece wedding suit, traditionally worn by brides in Southern China.

Shek Ham Chau: Shek Hahm Chow. The literal meaning is Stone Shrine Island, but it has broadly been interpreted as Stone Temple Island.

Sung Daiyu: Sung DIE-Yuu. Traditionally, Chinese women keep their own name when getting married, but Daiyu chose to buck that by adopting her new husband’s surname, Sung, in an effort to erase her own past.

Sung Ho Tung: Sung Hoe-Tung

Sung Siu Yin: Sung SIEU (to rhyme with lieu) Yehn

Tsang, Kit Ling: Szaang GEET-Ling/KEET-Ling. Similar to Kwun Yam, the first consonant of “k” is devoiced, and sounds more like “g” to native speakers of English.

For more detailed information on my decisions regarding naming conventions, spelling conventions, and other details, please see the Author’s Note in the back of the book.

PROLOGUE

Do you like ghost stories, little sister?

Sit down, get comfortable. You haven't heard this one before.

PART ONE

1

MADAM GHOST TALKER

August 20, 1975

Late afternoon, and the Walled City was a fleshy soup. Human pedestrians slicked past each other in narrow alleys, bodies filmed with sweat. Sad-faced ghosts peered out from corners or hovered on filthy eaves. Steam rose from mildewed gutters, suffusing both living and dead alike.

In among the shifting crowd, Mercy Chan paused at a crossroads, peering down the different alleys and struggling to recall the directions that her boss had given her not an hour before. The district was a maze, even for those who knew it well.

Should have written the directions down, she thought sourly. It was too hot to remember things that weren't written down.

Every part of Kowloon was layered in shade, but the lack of sunlight brought no relief. The lower levels in particular were full of machineries and factories; they built up heat, like an oven. Mercy was trying not to bake in that dark oven. She tugged at the soggy neck of her plain linen shirt, peeling it from her skin in an attempt to create a little air circulation. But there was no air to circulate, only humidity.

She was supposed to be wearing a triad jacket—white and green, Cobra Lily's colors, patterned in a snakeskin brocade—but she *could not* be bothered with long sleeves in this heat. Besides, Bao didn't like her jacket, wouldn't sit on her shoulder when she wore it. Even less incentive to ever put it on.

Since she'd chosen a regular sleeveless vest, the ghost cat had deigned to accompany her, compacting himself into a white, fluffy-looking bundle of fur. He nestled between the crook of her neck and shoulder, emanating a tiny radius of chilly air. A long tail curled over her upper arm in languid rest. It was a good, safe comfort to know he was there.

Bao opened one bright-red eye, stretched out a claw, and raked her collarbone lightly.

"Stop that!" Clearly, she'd stood in one place too long for his liking. "If you get bored so easily, why do you come with me?"

The ghost cat yawned.

“Some use you are,” she said, affectionate. “Be a good little hunter and find this rogue spirit for me, since you’re in such a hurry.”

Nose twitching, he leaped from her shoulder and began drifting serenely above the sweat-soaked masses. A few people flinched, but most ignored him, recognizing that he was no threat. Main streets like this one were guarded carefully by triad exorcists, and the only ghosts who traveled along it openly were those—like Bao—who had special exemption.

Mercy, who could not float eerily through the air, began shoving her way through the crowd after him. The sooner she got this done, the sooner she could get back to the fan-cooled bliss of her own flat. And have a damn bath.

Kowloon was as much vertical as it was horizontal. She was currently about three levels up on the east side, walking through a warren of noodle-thin “roads” made of metal sheets laid across pipes and struts. Five-foot-nothing and she still had to duck in places beneath low-hanging signs or protruding construction.

Directly beneath her sandaled feet was another street, or possibly the interior of someone’s house. She could hear people moving about on all sides: above, below, around her, for several streets up and down and extending to the sides, pierced with loud clangs from the metalworking shops on the ground level.

Bao appeared to be heading for a particular flat one level up. She could just see it from here. The windows were boarded but an unearthly light seeped from the cracks, visible in the city’s perpetual semidarkness.

“Good job,” she said.

Bao flicked his tail and darted ahead of her. He led her off the main road, up a rickety staircase and down a short alleyway that was devoid of light. Garbage crusted the gutters while rusted, irregularly spaced doorframes sank into the surrounding concrete. Her job never took her to friendly places.

He floated across a narrow gap between buildings; Mercy jumped it with practiced ease. At the end of the alleyway was a pair of doors, almost next to each other. Judging by the number etched into its frame and the eerie light seeping through the cracks, the left door was the one she wanted.

Unfortunately, someone had secured it shut with a chain and a padlock.

“No easy way through there,” she said to the cat. “Perhaps the neighbors can be of help.”

Bao leaped up to sit on her shoulder and curled into an indifferent lump, as if to reply, *I did my bit; the rest is your problem now*. Which was perfectly true.

She approached the unlocked door. Nobody answered her knock, so she simply pushed it open.

Dilapidation greeted her. A stove, a couch, a folding table, two plastic stools, and a broken TV all crowded for space against one wall, while a narrow pallet took up the opposite side. There was no toilet, no closet, just a few unwashed dishes, and clothes of dubious hygiene in a pile. Like most homes, this one sat in semidarkness; electricity was expensive in Kowloon, and unreliable.

On the far side, two men sat hunched over a small dining table, talking intently in low voices. They looked to be in their early twenties—young enough to be her sons, if she'd had children. One of them bore a rat tattoo winding around his neck, cheaply done and the ink bleeding across lines. The other wore a series of thin gold bracelets on his wrist. Both looked up as she entered.

"Cobra Lily sent me," Mercy said, when they continued to stare at her in silence. "I hear the place next to yours has an exceptional ghost problem."

"We are the ones who called on Cobra Lily." Rat Tattoo rubbed his nose and added guardedly, "You are the exorcist?" His disbelieving gaze took in this early-fifties woman, stocky frame draped in a washed-worn shirt and battered shorts. The broken flip-flops on her feet and the fuzzy cat on her shoulder. The smattering of cheap tattoos on her skin.

"Ghost talker," she corrected, cheerfully. "Not exorcist."

His scowl deepened. "Even worse! We pay our dues, we pay them on time, and Cobra Lily sends some . . . middle-aged shopkeeper? What are you going to do, gossip it to death?"

Bao chose that moment to open those red, red eyes.

There was an intake of breath from both men, the shared recognition of a ghost cat. Maogui were no laughing matter.

For the first time, Rat Tattoo seemed to notice the branching lightning scar that ran from Mercy's shoulder to her wrist, and his forehead creased in uneasy alarm. His hand drifted to the watermelon chopper that hung from his belt.

"Don't you dare draw that knife! And I am here for what I can do, not for how I look," Mercy said sharply. Middle-aged shopkeeper, indeed! Young people had no respect these days. "Do you want my help, or not? Hungry Ghost Festival is just around the corner."

The men exchanged glances, clearly absorbing her warning. Ghosts were already a pain at the best of times, but during Ghost Month—and on the nights surrounding the festival in particular—they could be especially dangerous. The veil to the underworld was thinnest, and the dead at their strongest, on those inauspicious days.

"Fine, but you'd better be competent, little auntie," Rat Tattoo said, releasing his chopper grudgingly. He had a strong Mandarin accent, although his

Cantonese was very good. “The old lady died a few days ago. She won’t go away, nor will she let anyone inside for long, and she is violent if disturbed. That’s why we asked Cobra Lily for an exorcist.”

Mercy kept her face still and neutral. Almost everyone who died in the Walled City returned as a ghost, these days. Nothing unusual there; this city was a pit trap for spirits, its energy saturated with years of violence.

But those who died peacefully did not usually linger very long. Even those who died brutally could often be placated by offerings or apologies. Either these men were missing information, or they were hoarding facts.

“How did you know her?” she said. “Are you just neighbors?”

Unease flashed across Rat Tattoo’s face. “She was Ng Chungpo’s grandmother.” He gestured at his bracelet-wearing friend. “He lives here, next to her.”

Chungpo remained silent and drummed his fingers on the tabletop. For someone who had recently lost a grandmother, he didn’t seem very upset. Bored, even.

“I see,” Mercy said, when it became clear the bereaved man had no interest in replying. “How long has she been a concern? Was it you who chained everything shut?”

Her gaze kept straying to Chungpo’s bracelets; they did not seem like the kind of thing a streetwise young man would wear in these parts. She could imagine them having belonged to his dead grandmother, though.

“Few days.” Chungpo spoke at last, picking sullenly at his lip. “She keeps crying and ranting. Won’t talk to anyone. We only boarded up the door because we were afraid.”

Rat Tattoo leaned forward. “Will you banish her?”

“I will certainly speak to her,” Mercy said, carefully. “Can you let me into her place?”

Five minutes later, they stood crowded around as Chungpo jammed a key forcefully into the lock. Loose chain links slithered to the ground in a messy coil.

“Now what?” Rat Tattoo ran his thumb repeatedly over tobacco-stained teeth. “Do we stay here, or—”

“No. Come with me.” Mercy pressed a hand to the peeling wood and gently nudged it open, stepping inside.

With a mutter of swearing, the two young men edged reluctantly after her. A waft of cooler air rolled over them, pleasant relief from the sticky heat outside. Bao leaped down from her shoulder to stand next to her, tail lashing.

This flat was a more cheerful replica of the one she'd just left. A sofa bed in tolerable condition, the walls scrubbed clean, and Buddhist paraphernalia lining rickety wooden shelves. The old lady had been devout; there was a shrine to the wealth god, some small statues, a bowl of fruit left out for hungry spirits. A few ancient newspaper clippings were pinned to the wall, headlines shouting about the end of the war; they were decades old, yellow with age.

On the far side of the room, an elderly woman bent over a charcoal cooker, stirring something in a wok. A dark button-down shirt draped loose over her stooped shoulders, spine humped with age and poor nutrition. She did not look up at their entrance.

The ghost herself.

Quite corporeal, too. If not for the slightly translucent quality of her flesh, the old lady might almost have passed for a living woman. That solidity, and the degree of the coldness in here, suggested a spirit of notable strength.

Or notable anger.

"This is her," Chungpo said. "My dear old Ahma." A hint of irony underpinned the affectionate term.

"No shit." Mercy cleared her throat then said, more loudly and more politely, "Good afternoon, grandmother."

Silence.

"What are you doing?" Rat Tattoo said, in a low hiss. "You are supposed to banish her!"

"She doesn't talk to anyone," Chungpo added. "She won't talk to you, either."

"Shut up, stupid eggs," Mercy told them, then raised her voice again. "Grandmother? Can you hear me? Please answer, if you can."

The men were right to be cynical. Despite having unfinished business, ghosts were not always willing to communicate, and it sounded like they had already tried that here. But ghosts *did* answer to Mercy. Always. She had a way of speaking, of putting force into her words, that seemed to draw their attention.

As usual, it worked. The elderly woman paused in her stirring and partly turned her head.

"Is that you?" Her face was still hidden by a fall of shoulder-length hair, black strands shot thickly with gray. "Aiyah, you were gone so long!"

Another waiting woman, Mercy thought resignedly. There were many kinds of waiting-women ghosts, from wives pining for dead or unfaithful husbands, to mothers wasting away as they hoped for the return of a child, to young girls with broken hearts, and so on. She felt sorry for them, but also annoyed by

them. Bad enough to spend your life waiting on other people; even worse to spend the afterlife doing it, too.

Still, it was the kind of opening she needed.

“Sorry, grandmother.” Mercy took a cautious step forward. “I am just a guest in your home. The person you were waiting for is . . . Actually, who *are* you waiting for?”

Feverescent eyes peered through a veil of monochrome hair. “My grandson. My handsome, clever grandson!”

“Oh? Did he go somewhere?”

“Out.” The ghost seemed to dim briefly, like a faltering candle. “My grandson went . . . out . . . when I got sick. He said he would get a doctor and come right back.”

Chungpo wiped his hands, as if his palms were sweating.

“But he did not come back, did he.” Mercy was swept with a sense of resignation; she suspected where this was going. “Did he leave you here? Alone, and sick?”

“He is coming back.” The ghost shivered. “Very soon. Very soon!”

Cheeks reddening, Chungpo edged back into the shadows.

“Why haven’t you banished her?” Rat Tattoo cut in. Even in this cold room, he was flushed and red, too. “End her suffering! What kind of exorcist are you, anyway?”

“I’m a ghost talker, not an exorcist,” Mercy said, sharply. “Interrupt me again and I’ll bind your spirit to a bedpan.”

She couldn’t really do it, but Rat Tattoo didn’t know that. He blanched and fell silent.

To the old woman, she said, “Listen, grandmother. If your grandson was going to come back, why did he lock and bar the doors?”

“I . . . don’t know.” The ghost finally tilted her head up, and there was nothing horrific or scary about her features. Only a pained sadness in the sunken face. “He took my money when he left. Said it was to pay the doctor.”

Chungpo swore under his breath.

“Fuck a crab,” Mercy said, and sighed. “Grandmother, you are dead. I don’t know if the sickness killed you or starvation did, but either way, the only ‘help’ your grandson gave was to hurry you along and make sure you could not escape death. He waited till you were bedbound, stole your money and your jewelry, and locked you in here to die.” She looked at Chungpo. “Am I right?”

The man glared. Gold bracelets clacked on his wrists as his fists curled.

“No!” The ghost began to cry with black tears, smoke trickling from her

nostrils. “No, he would never!” Long cooking chopsticks dropped from fragile hands and dispersed into ethereal mist. Her body flickered like a television with a bad signal.

Rat Tattoo grabbed Mercy’s shoulder with some force. “If you are accusing us of—”

Bao hissed, fur standing on end. He was only a small ghost, but the sudden noise was enough to make the man release his grip in shock.

“You must have known, in those final moments, what your grandson had done,” Mercy said, stepping sideways to avoid Rat Tattoo’s grasp, still keeping steady eye contact with the elderly lady. “Or you would not be lingering here now, attacking anyone who tries to move you out of this house.”

“No, he would not . . . he . . .” Pallid lips writhed in sudden anger. “How could he leave me like that? His own grandmother. I took *days* to die!”

“Ghosts always have unfinished business,” Mercy said, softening her tone. “Ghosts always want something. What is it you want, grandmother? You can tell me.”

It was true. The dead who returned were not quite who they used to be. Dying damaged the different parts of the soul, and what lingered on was the hurt, the betrayal, the grief. The dead came back because they had unfinished business, always, and ignoring that context was deeply shortsighted. In Mercy’s professional opinion, anyway.

“I want . . .” The ghost shuddered, grew taller and broader. The stick-thin shoulders filled out, broadening with muscle. Ghostly etherealness solidified into weighty spirit-flesh. Her eyes went wide, the red light behind them bright as a beacon. She opened her mouth, jaw unhinging as smoke poured out. “I want justice!”

“Thought so.” Mercy dived for cover behind the rickety sofa-bed.

Rat Tattoo, quick on the uptake, dived to the opposite corner.

Only Chungpo remained, frozen and terrified, crouching in a corner. “Ahma—”

The ghost shrieked and vomited a stream of fire. Everything in front of her melted or caught alight. Mercy, already too hot, felt a fresh raft of sweat break across her skin.

Chungpo screamed and launched himself through the single window, narrowly avoiding a fiery death. He burst through the cheap glass and landed on the eaves just outside. Mercy could no longer see him, but she could hear the frantic slap of his feet as he desperately leaped to another balcony with a crash.

“What did you do!” Rat Tattoo yelled, still cowering. “What the hell, what the hell, what the—”

“*Chungpo!*” the ghost moaned, loudly enough that the picture frames rattled. “*My murderous, ungrateful brat!*”

“Go after him, get your justice!” Mercy called out, hands cupped over her mouth. “You can do it, grandmother!”

The ghost vomited another jet of fire and took off, lithe and fast in death as she had not been in life. She flew through the same window, speeding after Chungpo. Moments later, screams and yells echoed from the streets beyond as terrified pedestrians fled from the spectacle of a red-eyed, fire-breathing old woman.

Even that did not last very long. Chungpo howled, the sound entangled with the roar of his grandmother’s flames. His cries cut off abruptly as death took him. The noise of fire faded to a trickle; her vengeance was satisfied.

The sudden stillness was breathtaking. Bao sat in the center of the quiet room, cleaning perfectly white paws. If he was calm, that meant the danger had passed; the old lady was at rest.

“Job done.” Mercy stood and dusted the ash from her hands, trying vainly to fan some air on her face. It was hot as a metal furnace in here, not helped by the sofa still being on fire. “We did good, little cat.”

“Are you crazy?” Rat Tattoo grabbed her arm, whipping her round so hard it gave her a crick in the neck. “That ghost killed him because of what you said!”

Mercy punched his throat with her free arm. Rat Tattoo wheeled backward, gagging, and tried to draw his watermelon chopper.

In a blink, Bao rippled and grew larger, tiny body burgeoning to the size of a leopard. A bone-white, fluffy-as-a-cloud leopard. He leaped at the startled young man, knocking him to the ground. Enormous, claw-tipped paws pressed stocky shoulders to the floor, heavy with unexpected weight.

Rat Tattoo lay flat, breathing hard from the punch to his throat. Still clutching the chopper.

Mercy drew her own knife and knelt over him, the blade tip pressed to the underside of Rat Tattoo’s chin. “Stop opening your mouth, small son. Stupid things come out every time you do.”

He stared at her, eyes round like teacups. He had rather delicate skin for such a hard man.

“Did you know that some ghosts can change how corporeal they are? Easier for them to do if there is less light.” Mercy prized the watermelon chopper from his hand, examining the blade; it was dull and cheap, notched in four places.

“That is why ghosts in Kowloon are so strong, compared to the ghosts in the rest of Hong Kong. It is always dark here.”

She tossed the cleaver through the ruined wall of the burning flat, into the alleyway beyond. “Bao is particularly strong, because I have been feeding him for years. Not only can he change his size and corporeality, but his bite will fuck you up—whether it is night or day, whether you’re a living human or a dead spirit.”

Bao growled in agreement.

“You murdered Chungpo,” Rat Tattoo said, tightly. “Cobra Lily will not be impressed!”

Mercy laughed. “My boss, whose name is too good for your mouth, doesn’t take kindly to anyone in Kowloon who kills women. Especially one’s own grandmother. Chungpo was already dead no matter what I did, you wooden chicken. I just saved Cobra Lily the hassle of doing it herself. Believe me, she will be happy.”

Rat Tattoo’s eyes swam with insults, but for once, his mouth was silent. He was learning.

“Be glad I don’t mark you down for accessory to his murder. You are not innocent either, are you?” she said, pointedly. “Covering for your friend, lying to—”

Catch him.

The urge. It struck her with blinding force, her hands spasming with that sudden rush of violent desire.

Hold him.

Her knife wobbled against his skin; he swallowed.

Drag him to water and keep him down until his blood is salt and his eyes are food for the fishes—

Mercy breathed in deep, then breathed out slowly again, struggling for control. She mentally counted to ten until the irrational moment passed. That darkness in her, whatever it was, which gave her such unpleasant ideas and whispered to her at night, had no place here.

She didn’t know why those thoughts plagued her relentlessly, only that they did. It was simply a part of herself that she had learned to live with.

Rat Tattoo had not missed the flux of emotions passing across her face, or the dangerous twitching of her hands. He went completely still, like a frightened mouse.

“Whatever, I’m done.” Mercy stood up and put her knife away, trying to conceal the tremor in her limbs. “Bao, let’s go!”

Bao withdrew from the prone man, his form shimmering and compacting down. By the time he reached Mercy's side, he was again the size of a small kitten.

Rat Tattoo scrambled upright, face red from anger and shame. "Fuck you, dog-faced bitch! Fuck your mother, fuck your father and your uncle and your bastard demon cat! May your whole family fall down in the street and get run over!"

"Too late for curses," she said, stepping through the burned door. "I have no family."

His swearing echoed after her all the way down the alley and halfway down the next block. But he didn't actually follow her, and she didn't look back.