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The Sign

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The Sign

Brian Duffy

Astrid finally located Virgo in the late August sky. As she fleshed her out in her mind's eye, she noticed what looked like an arrow piercing what would be the heart of the virgin. The contrails of the high altitude jet glowed pink along with the clouds that laced the jagged silhouette of the mountains across the bay.

The tide was exceptionally low. It created a murky, glistening palate for the half-moon that glowed brighter as the twilight faded. Starfish, jellyfish, anemone, barnacles, bull-kelp, and a small octopus, all flashed images to Astrid as if she were in a liminal sleep, heading into an R.E.M state.

She wanted to see something. Something to guide her, show her what to do next. Every home she grew up in had a religion or no religion, but for her they all had a belief in some sort of magic, the occult.

The Fundamentalists always told her to watch for the presence of Jesus in all things. The Jewish couple had their Seders, Kaddishim, and the cabala to help them to predict the future. The Catholics had their sacraments, consecrations, transfigurations, and rituals. The Unitarians introduced her to Jung. And the agnostics were the most superstitious: auras, astrology, astral projection, the I-Ching, the tarot, and Edgar Cayce. Nothing was what it seemed. Everything held hidden meanings, messages. You just had to open yourself up to the possibilities. Learn to see.

Seeing a compass point and an actor's surname led her to the west coast. A bear and a wolf at the zoo; a husky that stared at her with one brown eye and one gray eye; and finally a dream that showed yellow stars on a field of blue – the big dipper- the Alaska flag! She naturally needed to follow the course that was laid out for her.

Alaska had magic in excess and people who lived in the magic. But there were others who would not acknowledge when the obvious was starting them in the face.

Stephen was that way. It seemed ridiculous because of his Intuit and Athabaskan background. Astrid knew Native-Americans had magic all throughout their culture and Stephen was in denial. He couldn't see magic in himself or her. He was foolish to deny the world that way, to deny love.

He had the same eyes as the husky. He told her she shouldn't believe such bullshit, and anyone who did was a "fucking idiot."

Astrid looked at the virgin in the sky; the arrow was now barely visible. As the moon ascended, the outline of the constellation became difficult to make out.

The water receded further. She followed. The moon shimmered on the small waves and danced all around her on the damp slithering sea-things. She followed the sea, and waited for a sign.