

Lou's Evil Books

The title is neither ironic, nor humorous. Lou sells evil books -- specifically, grimoires and black magic tomes. He doesn't care if that bothers people, as long as it doesn't translate into them trying to burn down his shop. He's not selling to *them*.

Who is he selling to? Well, a lot of anonymous customers. They typically show up at his shop muffled up in scarves and greatcoats, regardless of the weather. Most of them speak at least rudimentary English, always with an accent that is not so much 'odd' as it is 'unique.' They all have shopping lists, ranging from books Lou keeps in stock, to ones that take some connections to acquire. Oh, and they never pay in cash or credit. It's always gold, of standard purity, but never with markings Lou can decipher. *Officially*, all of this is as much a mystery to Lou as anyone else.

Unofficially? Lou is absolutely aware that he's selling Forbidden Books to demons, irruptors, Elder Races, whatever you want to call them. The names don't matter. They're evil things, buying evil tomes. None of that's important. What's *important* is that they have gold bars, and he has grimoires, and he's happy to trade one for the other.

What's *a*lso important is that Lou doesn't have to care in the slightest. First off, the books in question? Total and complete nonsense, with all the magical power of tissue paper. The spells don't work, the rituals do nothing, the spirits and dark gods described by the text are imaginary. Lou doesn't sell a single text that can actually do anything *in this universe*. Not for any moral reason, mind you. He only does it because this is the universe which he lives in, and Lou does not defecate where he sleeps and eats.

As for the gold? Lou is meticulous about reporting his income. He takes the gold, gets it converted into cash, and scrupulously pays all appropriate taxes. With the markup for gold the way it is, he can easily afford to -- besides, Lou doesn't mess with the federal government. Given how much money he's cutting the government in for, they find it sensible to not mess with him right back.

Before you ask: if there are any good-aligned occult or magical societies out there, they are absolutely *appalled* that Lou is in business. There's just not much they can do about it. The travails of other dimensions are not their concern, Lou is carefully not doing anything illegal *here*, and he's not personally magical himself. They can't really hope to get away with random acts of vigilantism, either. A standard gold bar currently sells for over half a million dollars, and Lou does about ten sales of that kind per

week. Governments *do* notice when a quarter of a billion dollars in yearly taxable income suddenly disappears without warning. Lou may not be a Fortune 500 company all on his lonesome, but he has all the influence and power money can legally buy. Which is to say, a lot. Lots of money, too.

...Oh, if he's so rich, then why is he still selling these books? Because Lou is a horrible man, who enjoys the thought that he's doing horrible things to people who he'll never meet. That's almost as much fun for him as knowing that there's nothing anybody can do about it legally. And that part is really, *really* fun for him.

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