

YOUR LIFE OR MINE

Foreword:

There are worlds within our world if you know where to look. Some people are tuned in to these other worlds by the magic of their souls. Sometimes a ritual will open the door. The Indian used peyote. Certain drugs break the walls separating the other universes though the effects of the drugs impair the ability to interact with what you encounter there. Perhaps the best way is to travel with a guide.

How you say? Well let me show you, sit back, relax, turn the page and follow me. This is just one world, the world of Macia. It's the combined creation of the Goddess and the Horned God. More about them in a minute. This is a land of strange beings that war over domination. The Fae live here, Demons, Witches, Humans, and a new breed...Vampyres. The vampyre were created by Demons but they lost control of them, and now the vampyre threaten to eclipse this world.

Ah yes, I promised to tell you more about the Goddess and Horned God. The Goddess and Horned God were once lovers and created this world together, to keep themselves amused. But as all lovers, they have their little spats...and the Goddess had grown tired of the Horned God's incessant demands. They both took lovers from their created world but the Horned God became jealous, and decided to wreck the creation, without letting the Goddess know what he was up to.

So he told one of the Demon Lords that ruled the Seven Hells how to create a creature that drinks blood, and has the potential of being immortal like the Goddess and Horned God. Which brings us to the adventures of Rem. Created from the combined souls of a wolf and a tiger. Well loved by the Goddess. As we find him, he is a bounty hunter and a sellsword, working for his liege lord, Azael.

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Chapter 1: Making A Living The Old Hard Way

Rem didn't need a lot, a loner, he made his living collecting bounties, and in hiring out as a sell-sword. In his early thirties, he was unmarried, self reliant, and had no intention of settling down. He never knew his family. They were killed in a raid on his village when he was just a babe. He had been taken in and raised by an old man the rest of the villagers believed to be a warlock.

His hair was black as a raven's wing and his face gaunt and beardless, burnt dark brown by the sun. The ladies all hungered for him, but his heart was like a cold stone, and none could hold his interest for more than a few days. By his own admission, he was a hard man... and more than once had he been on the wrong side of the King's laws. A long scar ran down the left side of his face giving him a most sinister and distinguishing look.

He rode in silence as he had done all day, as he had done for untold days. Rem was not a big man, maybe 150 pounds, but he was lithe and supple, with a strength that belied his slim profile. Not a man of many words, his eyes usually said enough.....try me and die. Few could look into those cold grey orbs smoldering under heavy lids, and not look away. Who wants to really stare Death down!

Another cold camp tonight, his man was close ahead, maybe within a mile. Rem reined in a short while after dark beside a small creek and unsaddled the paint. After a brief but filling supper of deer jerky and creek water he stretched out full length on the ground close to where the little paint was tethered, sword handle resting against the side of his right hand. Tomorrow should end this hunt and he would have the big man's head in his saddlebag. He'd have to ride hard back to Azael's castle to collect his money before mother nature could ruin the features, and cheat him out of his purse. A small orange twinkle caught his eye, maybe the gods favored him. He buckled on his sword, "Adder" named for the very skin that the handle was crafted from.

The blade was made from obsidian and metal, forged in one of the Seven Hells the demon came from that Rem had killed, to obtain this weapon of magical design. The sword always stayed razor sharp, and Rem had found nothing that would withstand Adder's stroke, wood nor iron nor stone. Only luck had saved Rem that day, the demon had slipped and went wide with his stroke...Rem didn't.

Walking quietly, rolling the heel of his soft skinned boot to the toe. Rem eased through the underbrush until he came within sight of the small fire. What Rem mistook for a boulder turned out to be the big man himself, Gar, in all his massive seven foot frame, warming himself over the tiny fire of peat moss. Before Gar's chestnut stallion could snort and give him away, Rem stepped into the small clearing and stood, sizing Gar up.

"You and I have business" Rem said low but clear. Gar jumped to his feet and looked directly to Rem drawing his sword and coming up. " Who sent you," he growled.

"Don't matter much, all that matters is the price on your head," Rem replied.

He moved quick for a big man, covering the distance in an instant, sword overhead howling like a Banshee, he swung in a slicing arc. Rem whirled left and met the Giant's blow with Adder, knocking it wide then following back with a vicious swing. Gar barely caught it, and Rem whirled back with a blow that took Gar's head and sent it rolling down the hill. The hulk that had been Gar spewed blood out the severed neck then toppled to the ground with a heavy thud.

Rem emptied Gar's saddlebags, taking what little he could use, then walked down the hill and collected his grisly prize. Stowing the head in one side of the bags, he saddled the chestnut and led him up the hill to the paint. Saddling the paint he tied the chestnut to the saddlehorn, climbed up, and rode back in the direction he had come. Keeping the paint at a trot ate up the miles in the darkness. For the next day and a half he rode unmolested, weariness finally making him stop beside the river Thenn, two days ride from Azael's.

The spell was cast. Too late to call it back now, it winged its way like an arrow straight to the target and like a flare, the King's Maester burst into flames before the astonished eyes of hundreds. Mael, the blond, short, but well-proportioned witch issuing the dart, slumped and eyes rolling white, collapsed into the grass. The spell had drained all her physical strength if not her psychic. Give her a minute, she'll be fine, the old coven master grumbled as a half score witches ran to her. Takes power he muttered with pride looking at his unconscious protege. That'll give them something to remember us by! Safely stowing their sister in one of the oxdrawn wagons, the small caravan turned toward the mountain trail and moved on.

Rem caught a couple of nice rainbow trout and enjoyed his first hot meal in days. He thought of Gar and placed a large rock in the opposite side of the bags, and tying a grass rope around the middle, submerged it in the cold water. "That'll keep you pretty", He chuckled. He awoke mid afternoon and broke camp. Retrieving the bags, Rem saddled up and pushed on.

On the outskirts of Castle Azael a crowd was gathering for the weekly cockfights. People came from miles away to bet their meager savings and enjoy the camaraderie. Vendors hawked their wares as children ran to and fro. The noise reached a deafening pitch as the first contestants, a green legged red bird, against a spangle with white legs. Final bets were placed and the racket died in an instant, as the two birds were billed, and the handlers took each back to their respective scorelines.

The two birds stood eyeing each other, sizing one another up, neck feathers stretched out like umbrellas. Heads bobbing, eyes darting, they broke towards each other...simultaneously flying up, each trying to top the other and gain an advantage. The crowd went wild as they met in midair, legs and wings churning so fast it was almost impossible to follow with the naked eye. They bounced back off each other, and touched down lightly several feet apart. Starting for each other again on a run, the red suddenly stopped mid-stride, spewing a puddle of blood and gently fell over. A second later the Spangle reached him, and pummeled the corpse, knocking it into the spectators lining the pit.

The handlers retrieved the pair. The Spangles owner held him high, circling the pit and grinning from ear to ear. Money changed hands and the next pair was brought in. Rem pushed through the outside of the crowd to find the old man he had bet and get his payment, no small sum, as the red had been heavily favored and large odds were given. Spying the old man beside one of the vendors, Rem walked up.

"The Goddess was looking out for you today!" Baan grumbled, as he counted out Rem's gold.

Rem gave a seldom seen grin, and replied, "When is She not?" He carefully folded the leather bag holding his winnings and tucked it in an inner pocket of the long leather coat he wore, worn in most places to the color and consistency of suede. Striding over to the upper side of the main pit, he scanned the feathered warriors...looking for that certain aura that spoke "winner". As he walked through the birds, a familiar tickling feeling crept up the back of his neck. Somewhere in the crowd, a demon was watching him.

Instinctively his hand moved to the pommel of Adder. Counting on his instincts, Rem forced himself not to scan the crowd for the demon, dangerous to look them in the eye, they mess with your mind and by the time you break their gaze...it's too late. The tickling feeling grew to a burning sensation and Rem knew the devil was close, just not close enough. A shrill laugh exploded behind him and Rem whirled around, careful not to look too far up.

"Greetings traveller, nice sword you have. If not mistaken and I never am, it once belonged to my cousin!" The demon growled. "You have our taint in your blood just to be able to carry it."

"Come and claim it then," came Rem's quick reply.

"Not today traveller, I have other business, but I won't forget you later," The demon

rasped.

"Nor I you, I have your feel and you won't get this close next time," Rem warned in a low voice.

The demon threw his head back, and laughed that shrill laugh. "I like you traveller, you have balls, later then!" And as quick as he had come, he was gone. Rem felt the muscles loosen that he had unconsciously tensed. Fear was not capable in him, but wariness was a way of life. The birds forgotten, he headed for the paint tied beyond the crowd.

Chapter 2: Job Perks

Far ahead up the mountain, Verlak, the demon rode a black warhorse with white marble like eyes. He rode at a fast canter, yellow eyes straight ahead. He knew exactly where he was headed as he crossed the gap, and started down into the valley below. His flaring elongated nostrils picking up the faint odor of witches along the trail. His forked tongue licked his lips expectantly...as he mused on the prospect of firm witch flesh. And Verlak was not a flesh eater, oh no, his intentions were carnal in nature, with plenty of experience to back them up.

He was young as demons go, only a thousand and some odd years. He was still young enough to remember being cast out of Faerie...and the agony of his gossamer wings burning off as he changed forms. "When my chance comes, they will all pay!" He thought malevolently. "I'll rip their wings off and gouge out their beautiful black eyes with my thumbs. Their shrieks will be heard from the Seven Hells to the Goddess's Gardens! I will kill them all if I get the chance," He mused sourly. He was no fool though, and he knew Fae were tough...an even match for even the oldest battle-hardened demons.

His cousin Seph was an old demon...but that wiry mortal, Rem had killed him in a fair fight. Granted, Seph was high on toadstools but a fair fight nonetheless, given a demons magical gaze and vastly superior strength...not to mention the superior swords every demon who walked above the Seven Hells carried. "Not just luck, Verlak thought,

"He must have caught the Goddess's eye."

The further he rode, the stronger the intoxicating smell of witches assailed his yearning nostrils. Close enough now that he began to salivate. The big black stallion stretched his gait in a direct reaction to the big demon's mindset. Verlak grinned, showing his pointed teeth...patting the stallion's neck they galloped into the night.

Rem rode onto the drawbridge and reined up at the guards, "Tell Azael I'm here," he muttered, and trotted on to the stables giving the pail over to the stable boy. "Corral the chestnut, I think he's Azael's anyway!" He told the boy, tossing him a gold coin. Throwing the bags over his shoulder with Gar's grinning death head inside, he sauntered toward the west entrance door and into Azael's home. He knew his way, and walked past the kitchens and down the corridor to Azael's study. A fire was burning in the hearth giving a flickering light to the room.

Rem dropped his bags beside the massive desk sitting in front of a wall of scrolls and books, reaching over twenty feet in height. He poured himself a snifter of pear brandy from the crystal decanter sitting on the weathered oak desk and walked over to the hearth. A mousy brunette serving girl came into the room and informed him Azael was seeing to business in the dungeon, and would join him soon, and asked if he would beg his pardon and let Dayn know if he required anything.

Rem studied Dayn with a hooded gaze. Young, probably early twenties, not pretty in features but sensual. Rem felt a stirring in his leather jerkins.

Dayn looked up shyly and caught Rem's gaze perusing her hindmost feature. Turning blood red, she stammered, "Follow me and I'll show you to your quarters." Rem picked his bags up with one hand slinging them over his shoulder still carrying his brandy, and without taking his eyes off Dayn's backside, followed her down another corridor then up a winding set of stone steps to a large room containing a lavish bed, candlebrae, and a round oak tub filled with steaming water.

Rem kicked the door shut with his heel and dropping the bags, pushed the bolt shut. Dayn wheeled around, then ashen faced backed slowly toward the wall. "Oh no, no!" she choked out. Rem gave her the full extent of his powerful gaze, lust burning in his grey eyes.

He slowly walked toward her and she returned his gaze, with a bunny seeing the wolf look. "Oh no, no," she breathed, as he reached her and put both hands on the wall on either side of her head, only a matter of inches separating them...and part of Rem was

well on the way to closing that gap!

Dayn opened her mouth to protest but Rem sealed it with his lips. Her lips parted involuntarily and Rem's tongue slid into her mouth, and teased her tongue with his. "Unnnghhh!" she moaned as his body pressed against hers and his rough hands pulled her to him and slid her bodice down.

She felt the length and hardness of him against her as he moved one leg between hers, forcing hers apart. He backed up for one second, sliding his coat off and pulling his rough spun shirt over his head. Her knees felt like water as he pulled her to him, her soft warm breasts squashing against his hard muscled chest. Kissing her deeply he tugged at her skirt and small clothes. She shivered as the cool air gave testimony to her nakedness.

Rem's hands found her bottom and gently squeezing, picked her up and carried her to the bed. His tongue left her mouth and explored her neck and behind her ears, one hand coming up to squeeze and fondle her right breast as the other crept around her bottom and found her wet center. She arched backwards, treacherous legs spreading wide...failing her mind's command to stay closed. Rem knelt and slid his hands under both cheeks, thumbs gently holding her thighs open. Dayn gave into passion as Rem licked the inside of her thighs.. stopping just below her dewey mound.

Her skin felt like it was on fire, and inarticulate words and sounds came from her mouth and throat she heard, but didn't even realize was her. That burning glow began deep in her belly, and when Rem finally probed her with his tongue...she erupted in a powerful earth shattering orgasm. Clawing at the covers and pulling his hair, her eyes rolled to the back of her skull. As she was spasming on the mattress, he kicked off his boots, jerked off his breeches, and thrust himself into her full length. She came again...violently clamping him in her soft wet vise, her juices wetting half the bed. Rem shut his eyes tight and thought about anything but, as she squeezed and clamped and tried to pull more of him in.

When her strength gave out he eased backward and rested with just the tip of himself in her. Her eyes flew open pleading, and he slammed into her again holding himself all the way inside. Her legs locked around his lower back as he gently stroked back and forth then slammed away again but hammering for several minutes before changing strides again. She was tossed on the sea of lust as sensation after sensation pounded her. Rem felt the electric explosion coming and pounded for all he was worth till she cried out and gripped him so tight that he exploded in a gush. Grunting and panting he collapsed on top of her, their juices mingling with their sweat.

Both panting, he started to roll off her, but her legs locked him in place. Her eyes opened and this time they held a softness and longing that he could feel deep in his soul. She was his now, they said. They lay like that for a while, until cramping muscles forced them to move. She wrapped her arms around Rem's neck and snuggled her face into his neck and shoulder. Rem lay on his back contented with the soft feel of her woman flesh against him. "I could get used to this." He thought, but then reason took over...and he knew that he couldn't have her. She'd never survive the life he lived...but it was nice to dream.

She had fallen asleep. Rem gently eased out from under her and climbed into the oak tub, the water freezing cold now. He bathed and dressed, picked up his bags and stole quietly out closing the big door softly behind him. He had an appetite now and made his way toward the kitchen. The sound of soft voices stopped him and he strained to hear.

It was Azael talking to someone Rem didn't know. "The King has decreed that we kill them all! Fifty gold pieces for each witches head, one hundred for each warlock. Can you imagine what we could do with riches like that? I could buy over half the kingdom on just two covens! Besides, it's the only way to stop this new plague that has come down on us from the north!"

Rem stole past the room the voices were coming from and moved on to the kitchen where a plump, kindly looking servant woman prepared him a meal of leftover boar and quail. Rem washed it down with some excellent red wine then strolled down to Azael's study. Azael was alone and Rem entered. "Rem, good to see you lad," Azael beamed! "Did you finish our business?"

Rem tossed the bag holding Gar's head on the desk. Azael was a large man, built like a stone pile, slightly round features with a large nose and mouth, but small piggish eyes that had a feral look to them. Friendly when it suited him...and violent when it didn't, Azael was a force to be reckoned with.

He had always liked Rem though, due in part to the fact that they had a profitable arrangement. Rem had only shown up once without getting his man. And that was due to the fact that the man in question had stumbled into a Faerie meeting, and when they were done with him...there was nothing left to collect on.

Azael had paid Rem half the bounty anyway. He figured a sell sword with money in his pocket was a happy sell sword, and ones like Rem were too valuable to lose. Most drank their money up and gambled it away, but he never saw Rem in the taverns...unless there was someone there he was after. He didn't know what Rem did with his money and being a clever man, he didn't ask.

Azael looked in the bag, then sat back and ran a hand over his wide bald skull. He opened a drawer on the desk and tossed Rem a bag half full of coin. "Count it if you want, but I have to go take care of some things. You know your way around," Azael said as he rose and took his leave. Rem weighed the bag in a practiced hand, then shoved it in beside the other one.

Rem had always felt uncomfortable sleeping indoors, but the thought of Dayn's warm round ass and those perky breasts, drew him back up to the room he had left earlier. She was still sleeping so he quietly undressed, and slid in behind her and into her. He slid himself back and forth at a slow pace at first, then pounded away. Dayn twisted over on to her belly then raised her buttocks to give him full access. Her small perky breasts were swinging back and forth, in a carnal dance for lovers, as they climaxed again. Exhausted they lay together entwined, and fell asleep.

When Rem awakened the next morning she was gone, but her scent lingered. He lay there for a bit and savored it. A heavy-set blond chamber maid, in her late fifties but still attractive, came in with two wooden buckets of steaming water. She poured them in the tub and nodded to Rem, eyes darting to the bulge he made in the sheet.

Rem grinned, threw back the sheet, and got to his feet. The maid froze in her tracks and Rem padded over to her naked, and taking her right hand, placed it on him. She stood stock still for a minute, then stroked. Rem reached up under her skirt and rubbed. He stripped her down and pulled her to the tub, bending her over it. She moaned softly. Stepping into the tub he pulled her in and they relaxed together soaking until the water went cold.

"By the Seven Hells and the Lady that was good!" Rem told her. She said nothing but wrapped her arms around him, squashing those big breasts against him, and kissing him long and full. Then she quickly dressed and scampered off. "By the Goddess, I could get used to this!" He thought, and a plan started to form in his mind. He thought about what he had overheard about the Kings decree, and gathered his belongings. Walking past the kitchens, he walked to the stable and saddled the paint. Without looking back he rode out.

Mael felt better now after some rest and a meal, her magic flowed strong within her like a second heart beat. As the wagons came into a small clearing close to a bend in the Thenn, the coven-master called for a stop. The witches set about preparing for the coming night, casting a protection spell around the circled wagons.

Her sisters in craft, usually gave her a wide berth(they knew the awesome power and unpredictability in a virgin witch), but tonight they were jovial and kind, in appreciation of her ridding them of the Maester(a powerful warlock in his own right) and spoiling the Kings plan of burning a few of them to absorb their powers. The evening meal was prepared and the Goddess thanked for her love and bounty, and they all sat around the open fire and chatted.

The old coven master was preoccupied and sat to himself, talking to the spirits of a couple of natives that had been killed here long ago. Mael made small talk, then excused herself to go lie down. The old coven master spoke to her as she passed, and she stopped to listen to what he had to say.

"Your power will be needed very soon my child, a great evil is bearing down on us even as we speak. It will take all of us to defeat it, but you especially...even though you are the most vulnerable. The spirits say we may not succeed and if we don't, you should sacrifice your own life to keep you with the Goddess. I don't mean to frighten you, I just want you to be aware my child! We may not be enough to stop this warrior from the Seven Hells. He has every intention of killing us and taking our power for his own. But you he will rape and torture to extract your power and then he will turn you into what he is!" The old man exclaimed. " May the Goddess protect us and give us what we need, Blessed be!" he added.

"How long do we have," she asked gently.

"I don't know", The old man replied glumly.

Mael thought it over, her pretty features scrunched in a frown, then smiled and patted the weary old mans hand. "Trust her, as you taught me." she softly said. Letting go of his hand she started toward her wagon and bed. "Blessed be." she said over her shoulder.

"Blessed be." said the old coven master. Curled up in her bed in the privacy of her wagon, adrenaline turned to lust, and Mael stroked her little nub until she came...quietly...so as not to disturb the others, and dropped off to slumber.

Chapter 4: The Lovely Fae

Joab strode the Mound, he was pissed. A young Faerie, jet black hair matching his glistening black eyes, long eyelashes, pointed ears (he was Seelie), and delicate almost feminine features, on a six foot powerfully muscled frame. Joab was beautiful and he knew it.

He had been with most of the Mound, male and female alike, until he caught the UnSeelie Queen's attention and she had ordered him to her bed. Not that Joab minded fucking the Queen and all the perks that went with it, but the monogamy the Queen demanded was just too much for Joab to handle. She required it from all her bodyguards, not just Joab.

Joab wondered if the other guards felt like he did, but he never got the chance to find out. Nia, one of the Queen's handmaidens had caught his eye. After a couple of secretive trysts they had been caught by the Queen, fucking like rabbits in one of the royal gardens. Nia was immediately put to death, her head adorned a stake outside the mound even now. But Joab was given a choice, death or a quest to bring back a sword that the Queen prized. Not being the loyal type, Joab had chosen to try and recover the sword.

So now he was searching the Mound for his best friend Rikel, a smaller version of Joab but with bright yellow hair, not blonde, but bright yellow. Joab was pissed for a number of reasons, Nia, the fact that he had to leave the Mound, the likely possibility he might be killed in this quest, and the fact he couldn't find Rikel.

After searching the main part of the Mound...he found Rikel with a young Faerie male named Jerel. "Come on," Joab pouted. "We don't have time to play!"

At last Jerel grunted and released, Rikel stood up, wiped his chin, licked his fingers, sighed, and said, "What's the hurry, you in a rush to go get yourself killed? If you are, I'm sure the Queen will accommodate you!" Rikel loved sex, any kind, and he was ill with Joab for rushing him. But how could he stay mad at someone so pretty, so he kissed Jerel passionately and headed out with Joab.

Going to the Armory they picked up Rikel's bow and his small short sword, Joab already had his sword secured on his back in a leather sheaf and he couldn't hit a tree at five paces, so instead of a bow he opted for a beautifully engraved hatchet instead. Weapons stowed, they walked up and out of the mound through the magical boundary that kept the Mound invisible to un-wanted guests.

Verlak slowed the stallion, scratching it behind the ear. His sharp yellow eyes could make out a pinpoint of flame in the distance. The smell of witches was so strong in his nostrils now, that he sported a huge erection, and shifted uneasily in his saddle. His forked tongue darted out...picking up scent and separate flavor molecules in the slight breeze blowing in the pre dawn night. He scratched himself with his long hooked claws and sighed. Nudging the stallion on, he rode almost to the edge of the clearing and sat on the stallion, while watching the sleeping camp. He dreamed of the power that would soon be his...and the prospect of blood and gluttonous rapage! He scanned the forest floor around him and sighed deeply, "Why was there never any toadstools?"

Joab and Rikel rode side by side, Rikel chattering like a chipmunk, mile after mile. The Queen had been generous with the mounts, Rikel rode a beautiful grey mare, and a chestnut gelding with three white socks carried Joab.

They followed the Kings Road, and had a long way to go on the pig trail that led to the village of the man who had obtained the Demon Sword. The Queen wanted it bad! One of her lovers had been a demon...and she knew full well the power held in one of their swords! He had killed three of her best in duels, before having to leave to fight in a demon war he had never come back from.

Joab suspected the Queen was overly sentimental, but never ever would he had mentioned it to her. She had a warrior killed for just saying the demons name. And Joab knew he was on thin ice with her anyway.

Damn Rikel and his incessant blathering! "I ought to stop and fill that mouth of his with something he can't talk past! Tempting though it was Joab wanted to put distance

between them and the Mound just in case the Queen changed her mind, so he rode on. Plenty of time for that tonight. Rikel babbled on, and Joab rode lost in his own thoughts.

Chapter 5: Lustful Things

Rem rode toward the mountain, climbing a steep path then, veered off into the woods to an ancient alter few beings knew about, mortal or otherwise. The ancient stone alter stood in a little clearing. The branches of the trees made a hole, that when the moon was full, it shone full down on the stone and lit the clearing. A ring of mushrooms grew in a large circle, outlining the clearing.

Rem tied the paint to a tree then carefully stepped over the mushrooms and into the clearing. He had brought from his saddlebags everything he needed to perform this ritual. He carefully laid out the ingredients, lit his candles, walked around and around his circle widdershins, invoking protection. After welcoming the spirits, he strode to the stone in the center. Pulling Adder, he sliced his left hand being careful to drain the blood into the hollow in the top of the stone, and not spill a drop on the ground. Then binding the cut with a piece of leather, he prayed to the Goddess.

He prayed for strength and success, but mainly he prayed to meet the woman that would love him and allow him to give up this dangerous, solitary lifestyle... in favor of a more peaceful existence. After praying, he walked the circle again, releasing the spirits playing mute testimony to his desires. Rem buried a portion of his coin inside the circle as an offering to the Goddess, then put the rest of it away to take home to his hiding spot.

Years ago as a young lad, Rem had found a cave hidden by a hollow tree while hunting rabbits. Sheer luck had led him there, spying the rabbit dashing into the hole. Rem had followed him into the hole in the hollow tree (just big enough to wriggle through) and found the entrance to this remarkable cave. There were three entrances Rem found, the one he had found initially, another through a side tunnel leading to a hole in the river bank that from the river looked like a ground hog den. And one through another tunnel, leading upward at a slope for a long distance, opening beside and partially under, a large boulder.

The cave was approximately thirty feet long and twelve foot wide, tall enough Rem could stand, albeit having to crouch to do so. Over the years Rem had built a larder and dug out a four foot by four foot hiding hole in the floor, complete with door, and covered it with a bearskin rug.

This was Rem's bank, and over the years he added to it, amassing a small fortune. The rest of his money, other than what he used for weapons and supplies, all went here to finance his dreams one day.

He had various weapons secured in a locker he had built on one wall. A small altar of stone to pray to the Goddess, encased with woven grapevine, sat in the middle of the cave. The larder was filled with enough non perishables to hold out for months if the need arose.

A bed Rem built from oak timber, complimented the wall adjacent to the weapons locker. Rem had used this cozy hideout several times before to lay low, while the Kings assassins had hunted him...living in comparable ease, while they had endured the harsh mountain elements. This was the place Rem headed now, to deposit his winnings and earnings. He mounted the paint and rode.

Outside the witches camp, Verlak concealed himself, after tying the stallion deeper in the woods to avoid detection. He crawled up beside a blowdown and waited, waiting for the moment the witches would break camp and drop the circle of protection. He would be ready to attack from the rear in a blinding assault, using demon speed and cunning to cut the witches down before they knew he was there.

He rubbed his immense member and chuckled to himself in anticipation. If luck was in his favor, he would be a force to be reckoned with soon. The power he would absorb from this many witches... especially one who could kill from a distance, would assure him favor with the ruling Lords of the Seven Hells...Maybe he would even challenge one of them for their holdings and title! Then he could provoke an all out war with the Faerie...and exterminate them all.

Verlak hated the Faerie with a passion. He had once been a Seelie of noble birth. Living a life of ease and comfort, he married a beautiful UnSeelie Faerie, moving into the UnSeelie mound and was elected as liason between Seelie and Unseelie courts. When the Seelie and UnSeelie Faeries split apart and declared war on each other, Verlak remained with his young bride in the UnSeelie Mound.

He had no idea she was cheating on him with one of the Queens body guards and that they were secretly plotting against him. They spread the rumor that Verlak was a spy for the Seelie...and setting up an elaborate scheme, convinced the Queen. A powerful sorcerer was visiting the Mound on business with the UnSeelie. Verlak was seized and brought before the Queen...who had the Sorcerer condemn Verlak to the Seven Hells, changing him into a demon.

There he remained for hundreds of years, forced to do menial tasks for the other demons, ridiculed, kicked, and beaten...until Verlak became a fighter...clawing and kicking his way into position. Another demon admired the pluck of the ex-Faerie, and proclaimed him "cousin", giving him a position in the Enforcers...the demons who got to travel earth and perform various tasks for the Seven Lords.

Verlak swore vengeance on the whole Faerie race and vowed to exterminate them all one day. His hatred of them knew no bounds and he would kill them on sight. Verlak had learned from another demon that if you burn a witch, and inhale the smoke from the burning corpse, you gained a portion of their powers...also if you ate their raw flesh. But the most effective way(you captured around two thirds compared to roughly half their power this way) was to drink their blood.

It gave you their power with the added benefit of leaving them alive to torture! After the blood drinking, they were but human mortals...stripped of magic. The other thing Verlak learned from an old demon, long gone back to the dirt was...that if you drank their blood then cut yourself, and fed them the mixture of witches blood and demon blood...you created a new kind of demon. One that craved human blood, was immortal except for decapitation or extreme dismemberment, or curiously, succumbed to a stake of ash driven through the heart.

These creatures mimicked human form but were vastly superior in strength, had acute nocturnal vision, could think for themselves and were abnormally clever, but were allergic to sunlight; and would smoulder and burst into flames if exposed to it for very long. Only a couple of demons knew this secret making of hybrid demons and 'Vampyres', as they were called, were few in number.

But what Verlak dearly loved about them...was the fact that they were drawn to Faeries...like a hummingbird to nectar! Faerie blood intoxicated them and addicted them! They would feed voraciously on the hapless Faerie, then rip them to pieces in an orgy of drunken violence.

What Verlak didn't know...was that the vampyre could reproduce themselves...by giving a victim blood from their veins, as long as the victim was still alive. Verlak planned on

creating his own army of these creatures...and setting them loose on the Faerie. He had already secretly assassinated the only two other demons who knew this method, and had tried to recruit their undead minions...with partial success...but most of the vampyres would only serve the master who had created them...so he killed all he could, but a handful had escaped.

They were a powerful nighttime weapon, but daylight found them useless, sleeping, and even when awakened...sluggish and unresponsive...Unless you looked them in the eye, they had the demons mind controlling gaze. The more powerful the vampire...the more powerful his gaze worked. So this would be the start of Verlak's army to rid the world of Faerie, and if the humans were collateral damage...then so be it!

Rem reigned in the paint and turned into a small opening beside the river. The soil was soft and sandy and would make a nice soft bed. He made camp, ate some jerky and settled down for the night. The full moon shining her silver beams on him through the treetops made him thank the Goddess, and he shut his eyes to sleep.

He awoke to the feel of his neck burning like a stove, and his scar itching like he had rubbed poison sumac on it. Instincts kicked in...and Rem snatched Adder up, leaping to his feet, twisting! A human looking form flashed by him, narrowly missing him...so fast he had no time to swing! Quickly he leapt to the center of the clearing where the moonlight was the brightest.

"Hand yourself over now...and I'll make it painless!" the dark figure hissed from the shadowy edge of the clearing.

Rem laughed. Careful not to meet those flaming eyes, he replied, "I'm going to make it very painful for you. You mistake the wolf for the sheep!"

"The only wolf here is me," The stranger hissed, turning his head and opening his mouth to show Rem his long fangs, "Come here little lamb!" He sprang, rushing for Rem.

But Rem was seasoned in untold battles, and ready for just such a move. He twirled and swung as the stranger charged, taking the right arm off cleanly as the demon hurtled past. ""See, I hope it hurts like Hell!" Rem growled between clenched teeth readying himself for the next rush.

The Vampyre 'was' hurting like Hell itself, and furious to boot...but he had a new respect for Rem, and circled warily. This went on for what seemed like ages until finally the

Vampyre knew he had blown his chance...and was not going to get another! He flashed fang at Rem, then said," When you least expect it I will come back and make you suffer for my arm...I will find you!"

Rem smiled and said softly,"You better hope not,demon!" "

"My name is Ferik. Fear me! " the demon shot over his shoulder as he dissapeared.

"Don't think so!" Rem chuckled , but stifled it when he thought about how close he had come. Best not get to cocky...he had seen a lot of men bite the dirt that way. Caution was the order of the day. He slept in fits the rest of the night, alert now for any danger.

Chapter 6: Bewitched

At first the two coven of vampires didn't know what to do. They were used to having their demons order them about. A few decided to stay together, and formed a single coven, electing one of their own to lead, a powerful vampire...one of the oldest among them.

He was Vlad, a natural leader and organizer. He was tall, with wavy brown hair and a sadistic streak a mile wide if you got on his bad side. The other vampires, five males and three females, scattered, becoming rogues. Vlad was smart and knew for them to stay together as a unit, they needed a place they could defend...so he sent two males out to find suitable places, kept the rest with him and followed the river bank.

One of the males, Ferik, came back with a report of a castle to the south that would do...and he came back minus an arm. When pressed about it, he finally admitted a mortal had hacked it off with a great sword. This gave the other vampires great merriment...and they tormented Ferik unmercifully. This made him sullen and angry, vowing vengeance on the man with the scar.

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