

BIF: Bind, Interrogate, Fuck
Chapter 4: The Research Archives
By Draconicon

Lunch came and went, and Magnus was the first to excuse himself from the table. As much as his scent said otherwise, his needs drew him towards the libraries and record rooms of the agency, and the alligator knew that he'd have to postpone his fun for another time. Giving his goodbyes, he left the cafeteria and followed one of the many hallways to his assigned database.

All Speakers were assigned their own area of expertise. Some of them were assigned a study of the demonic and monstrous languages, just in case the enemy came to this world without the ability to speak. Some were assigned studies of the biology of the monsters, allowing the agency to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

He was a bit...different.

Magnus paused in mid-step, leaning one scaly hand on the wall as he felt a small surge inside of him. The alligator pushed down at the presence in the back of his mind, shaking his head twice before getting his balance back.

“No.”

He pushed the presence down again, shaking his head.

“No. This isn't your body any longer. It's mine.”

There was a strangled, almost shrieking sound in the back of his head, but it was muted in short order. The demon's will was stronger than the mind that rested beneath him.

When the shrieking and screaming was gone, Magnus shook his head. It was part of the deal, but he was never entirely keen that he had to share a body. Well...sharing wasn't quite the right word.

Demons and monsters, as a general rule, needed a body to hold themselves together when they reached this plane. Their normal forms were too loosely bound, expansive in order to channel the power that they had, for their bodies to hold together here in a more physical world.

Only the most powerful were able to flit about without a body for long, and even he wasn't that strong.

BIF had offered him a deal. The body of a prisoner that was already on death row. The prisoner got to live a bit longer, and he got to enjoy living his life on this plane in service to the organization. It wasn't a bad deal, as such things went.

He just wished that he didn't have to listen to the whining in the back of his skull as often as he did.

It didn't take long to reach the database he was assigned to. The steel door blocking it off from the corridor opened at a touch, a slight current of electricity running through his fingers and out through his soles. It carried his bio-signature with it, and the door opened.

Computer consoles hummed in the center of the room as drones – specially designed ones with a feather-light touch and impeccable aerial stabilizers – whizzed from one side of the room to the other. They carried scrolls on platforms, as well as old books, ancient texts, and more.

Nobody acknowledged him as he came in, same as always. Even from here, he could see that most of them had the glazed-over look that one got when they were reading the magical texts. It tended to pull at one's mind, draining one's ability to observe the outside world.

Shaking his head, Magnus clapped his hands, and every one of the dozen Speakers in the room jumped.

“Alright, people. Admin wants everything we have on this Alek guy. Any leads?” he asked.

The other Speakers looked at each other for a moment before one – a runt of a badger – stepped out of the cluster around the computers.

“Uh, maybe a bit. Hybrid, yes?”

“Shark and dragon, and possibly a bit more,” Magnus confirmed. “Did that narrow it down to anything?”

“Well, maybe. We're thinking – well, hoping at least – that it's something like this.”

Loew, the badger, gestured at the book that he'd been reading. The text was under a microscope, the readout of which was on the computer. Standard procedure, that; Magnus wasn't so bothered by it, but mortals tended to have an issue reading magical books. Transposing the letters onto a digital screen got around the worst of it, but it was still risky for them.

But not for the alligator. He leaned in, dragging his fingers along the lines.

“The flood will be heralded by three threes. By he who is natured three; by she who is taken thrice; and by the IT given thrice,” he read. “That’s...vague.”

“But it does talk about someone that is a trybrid, if you read it that way,” Loew said. “And if it’s right...”

“If it’s right, then we have another prophecy that we need to foil on our hands.”

If he’s right. The old books were filled with prophecies, most of them garbled words of people that had never actually meant to foretell anything at all. Magnus had read through one that had ostensibly been meant for him, claiming that he would conquer the world through raw hedonism.

In reality, it had been said by someone that wanted him to do that in the past and had been bragging in a drunken state in a tavern about summoning Magnus for that purpose. The alligator remembered ending that particular relationship very quickly when he realized what the mortal had wanted.

And it took forever to convince Rumiir that was all that was, he thought, shaking his head. *Wonder if this is another piece of rubbish...*

Still, if it was accurate, and there would be three harbingers for something, then it was worth looking into.

“Anything else?” the alligator demon asked.

“Well...”

“Yes? What is it?”

“It might be nothing...”

“Rumiir wants everything.” He leaned back against the research table, arching an eyebrow. “So, even if it’s a maybe, let me hear it.”

“There’s rumors of something along the Dragon Peaks.”

“...The Dragon Peaks. What kind of rumors?”

“Well, that’s the thing.” The badger rubbed the back of his head. “It’s a mix of rumbling in the trees and stuff. One of our outposts picked up something that’s almost like elemental speech, except it’s more mixed than that. More than just earth or air.”

Which, in the demon’s experience, meant dragons. And not the anthro kind, but the really powerful, potentially nasty feral kind. He groaned, rubbing his head as he imagined *that* particular mess starting up again.

“Do we have any recordings?”

“A few, but we’re not done translating them.”

“Get them on a flash drive. I’ll take them with me.”

As his subordinates hurried to do as they were told, Speaker Magnus rubbed his forehead. The possibility of *that* region flaring up again...

BIF had a number of different contracts and contacts through the world. Sometimes, the monsters that they found were too powerful to force a deal with, and sometimes, they were benevolent enough that mortals and monsters could sort of make an accommodation with one another.

The dragons were more of the former than the latter, and while it had been before his time, he knew that Rumiir had earned his Administrator status by solving the problem. Solving it before it could get any bloodier than it had.

Dragons were elemental creatures rather than spiritual ones. They didn’t inhabit living beings, but rather the elements themselves, possessing a gust of wind or an avalanche, a rushing river or a thundering storm. They took the world as their bodies, and they lost none of their power by doing so, unlike a demon or most monsters.

If they’re getting upset by something, we need to know what it is.

The badger returned with a flash drive, and Magnus tucked it into his shirt pockets. Giving orders to keep working on the translation, and to deploy a few of the Speakers to the Dragon Peaks to try and find out what was going on, the alligator demon left the room and made his way to the elevators.

He didn’t look forward to this, but if he didn’t pass this on, he would be in more trouble than he wanted to think about.

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Rumiir sat with his aides in his office, having just finished a phone call to the higher ups. The blue dragon folded his hands together, tapping his fingertips to one another as he took a few deep breaths.

“You would think...that they would understand by now.”

His aides said nothing, merely keeping to their position in the shadows as he leaned forward, looking over his hands at the floor.

“You would think that they’d understand that our operations are a great deal more hit and miss than their standard agency.”

Hit and miss. That was putting it mildly. While their methods of detecting monsters and spirits had improved dramatically in the past few iterations of the procedure booklet, time was never on their side. They could only wait so long before going after a potential danger without risking the lives and souls of everyone in the immediate area, and he, for one, was not willing to risk an entire village, or more, for the sake of a little indignity.

Yes, it meant that there were a few points where the nature of the agency was at risk of coming out.

Yes, it meant that the politicians that were aware of their existence had to work harder to make sure that they stayed secret.

But it was worth it if it saved everyone that could be saved. It was *worth* it.

He took a deep breath, then a second one, before sitting upright.

“Send a message back to Washington tomorrow. Tell them that we will abide by their ruling. However, make sure that they understand that they will be the ones to bear the fallout if something preventable occurs.”

“Yes, sir,” one of the shaded silhouettes at the back of the room responded.

Rumiir shook his head, leaning back against the tall, curved chair that held his console. He reached down to the left arm, strumming scaled fingers over it. A hologram of the hallway outside popped up, revealing a mostly-empty corridor. Mostly. The alligator that was striding out of the elevator was a moderate surprise.

I thought I had him tasked with investigating Alek...

It didn’t matter, in the long run. They had a dozen or more people on that already, and if Magnus thought something was important, then he was probably right.

“You are dismissed,” the blue dragon muttered.

As the aides disappeared, some of them literally fading out of existence, the dragon Administrator straightened his suit and tie. It was a bit uncomfortable, but his higher-ups insisted that he wear something that made him look more...official. More presentable. More...normal. It wasn’t right, but it was what he had to do.

Just like he had to make sure that Washington - as their biggest financial backer - understood that there were certain lines that he couldn’t back down from.

By the time that he was done cleaning himself up, Magnus was at the door. Rumiir let him in before he could knock, then relaxed back into his chair once more.

“Do you have something for me?”

“Nothing about Alek.”

“Then you must have something of even more importance, or you would still be looking into that hybrid.”

“Probably trybrid, actually, but that’s not the point.”

Trybrid. Well, not a term that he had encountered before, but from what he’d heard from the Fuckers and Hunters, it fit with what they were finding out. He’d need to speak with Nat before long, talk to the lizard about how the spirit was settling into him, and what he had been able to figure out from it.

Making the mental notes to get that done, he gestured for Magnus to continue, and the alligator passed over a flash drive. The blue dragon arched an eyeridge.

“What’s this?”

“A recording from the Dragon Peaks.”

“...Do they know?” he asked. “They demanded no listening devices.”

“No translation on it yet, unfortunately, so I can’t tell you if there is or isn’t. But it doesn’t sound particularly happy.”

Happy. If there was a happy dragon on this plane with its elemental body, he would be beyond astonished. That said, one knew when a dragon was merely disgruntled and when it was angry, and he trusted Magnus to know the difference. Just as he knew the reason that Magnus had brought him the recording was to see if he could translate it.

He plugged it into the arm of his chair, tapping a few buttons before leaning his head back. The speakers on either side clicked on, and the rumbling sounds filled his ears.

Rumiir closed his eyes, the blue dragon’s fingers curling into fists as the deep roar of crashing rocks fought with the hissing shriek of wind cutting through them. The burbling crack of water on stone joined in, a new voice amidst the other two. Then another, and another, brought in by the lightning and the rain and the soft crackle-snap of wood and bark separating from each other.

They were not voices such as normal ears could understand, but he knew the tongue. He’d heard it often enough.

*Breaking world,
Snapping shields,
Tails curled
Weapons wield
Break and smash
Hide and wait
World will crash
World will break.*

It was a horrible song of destruction, carried on voices that could speak of little else. Rumiir listened through it several times, waiting to see if it changed at all, but it never did.

After stopping the recording, he leaned forward again, one hand rubbing his earholes as he held the flash drive out with the other. Magnus took it, tucking it away as the blue dragon shook the words out of his head.

“Anything?” the Speaker asked.

“Destruction. Mostly destruction, both fear of it and trying to convince one another to cause it.”

“You know, I was hoping for something a little less...bleak.”

“It’s not decided yet,” Rumiir said, shaking his head. “Dragons are slow to come to a decision on anything. Whatever they’re concerned about -”

“Concerned? Dragons can be *concerned*?”

“Yes. Yes, they can.” The blue dragon folded his hands together, looking over his fingers at the demon. “And anything that concerns a dragon is worth everyone else panicking over. But we are not going to panic, are we?”

“...No, sir.”

“Good. You’ve already dispatched Speakers to the Dragons Peaks?”

“Of course. There was little else I could do.”

“Brief them on the way. Say that their mission is based off of a good-will gesture. Suggest that BIF is open to renegotiating their treaty with us.”

Magnus stared at him, and for good reason. The treaty that BIF had with the dragons was not one that they had earned easily. There were several handfuls of terms in the treaty that the dragons would be eager to get out of, but BIF had stood firm on all of them for the entirety of their arrangement.

It was a sign of how desperate they were, and how much trouble they'd be in if the dragons found out that there were listening devices planted around the range, spying on the conversation of every dragon there.

“When you're done with that, call Alys and Dresnath in.”

“Can I invoke your name for that? They're on vacation, and -”

“Whatever it takes. Just get them here. I want to make sure that we're at full capability for what's coming.”

“Alright. I can do that.”

“And remember, Magnus.” Rumiir narrowed his eyes. “You might be riding in someone else's body, but that doesn't make you safe if this all goes pear-shaped. If I think you're slacking off because you believe you can just leave us all behind...”

He didn't have to complete the threat. There were many tools open to BIF agents for dealing with demons. Even ones that they had deals with.

The silence stretched on even when Magnus turned to leave. Rumiir watched him go, then turned in his chair, facing into the darkness.

It was time to find what was scaring his feral brethren so much.

The End