

MISREAD



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The peregrine lay dying at Romanuss' feet, struggling to flap its broken wings, turning, turning in a circle, clawing at the ground, bloody beak snapping.

"You did not have to kill it," Malmus said, looking with sorrow upon the once beautiful falcon.

Rammenuss did not hear him. He stared at the message the falcon had delivered on a strip of parchment. "Orandere entered the Temple of Dagroth at first light."

Rammenuss crumpled the note into a tiny ball, and tossed it to the ground next to the dying falcon, then he raised a foot and crushed the bird's tiny head.

"Blast the Gods!" Rammenuss said. "Once more, to be bested, once more to be denied the power I need for revenge?"

"Perhaps all is not lost," Malmus said. "Perhaps you might yet reach the Grail first. We ride all night, we..."

Rammenuss slapped Malmus across the mouth. "Silence! There is no hope."

"Perhaps there is hope."

Rammenuss turned and placed his hand on the hilt of his sword as he regarded a woman, nude beneath her cloak, her skin a light green. "Come no closer," he said. "Name yourself."

"I am Honna, the forest witch, and I could fly you to Dagroth in a mere hour."

"A witch?" Rammenuss' eyes narrowed. He did not trust witches, nor sorcerers, nor any who dabbled in the arcane. Every instinct told him to



send this witch away. But she had spoken his heart's desire. Could she, indeed, fly him to Dagroth? It might give him a chance to seize the grail and exact his revenge on Orandere. "And what is your price? My soul?"

"I ask only two things," Honna said. "First, that you give Orandere exactly what he deserves. Second..." and now she let her robe slip from her shoulders revealing a lithesome young body. "That you lay with me and give me your seed."

The sight of Honna's naked flesh drove Rammenuss mad with desire, and drove all concerns from his fevered mind. He took her, hard, like she was the last woman he would ever have.



Chapter Two



The wind whistled about Rammenuss' ears as he flew across the sky, thighs clasped tightly around the hard, wooden rod of the witch's broom. His terror of heights helped distract him from how foolish he felt wearing the witch's hat Honna had insisted he needed to control the broom he clasped so firmly between his legs.

They circled now above the Temple of Dagroth, cold and gray under the light of the full moon. Off to the East, Rammenuss could see the fires of Orandere's camp, and make out the shadows of his men.

"Have they already seized the relic and returned to camp?" Rammenuss shouted, his hopes fading.

"No!" Honna said, cackling. "By my sorcerous sight, I do look within the temple and see the Grail still upon its pedestal. The last door remains sealed!"

"Then let us land."

The two flew down on the side opposite Orandere's encampment. They entered the temple to a vision of horrors. Many men, bearing the mark of Orandere, lay dead, their limbs and faces horribly twisted. About them also lay strewn the shattered forms of the undead, skeletons and zombies, burned and beaten and slashed.

"The smell is most sickening," Rammenuss said, covering his nose.

"It is fortunate Orandere cleared these creatures from your path," Honna said.

"Most ironic, indeed," Rammenuss said as they descended the stairs toward the last door. "My enemy has sewn the seed of his own demise."

They came to the last door, a slab of stone engraven in the letters of an ancient tongue, the tongue of the ancient ones. "I know these words," Honna said. "And I can open the door." She raised her hands and began to chant.

Rammenuss's suspicions rose once more. The witch, he felt certain, had some dark motive and purpose. She had proven entirely too helpful and asked far too little. His hand went to the dagger in his belt, and he thought to slay her as soon as the door was open.

As Honna chanted, the stone began to sink into the ground, grinding as it dropped, and Rammenuss' eyes went wide as he gazed upon the room beyond! The Grail rested upon a pedestal in the middle of the room, glowing with eldritch energy, a silvery stream poured from the ceiling and into the cup, the water overflowing and pouring over the sides. Beyond, he saw the engravings on the wall, the very same he'd seen copied onto a scroll, the one he'd found on the corpse of a treasure hunter lying in the forest.

The same short message, in four different languages, only the last of which he could read. He had studied the language of the Lost Empire in school and though he hadn't been the best of students, he warranted now he'd been good enough. It read: Whosoever drinks from the Grail of Dagroth may raise an army invincible."

He began to draw his dagger, meaning to plunge it into the back of the witch and through her heart, but then he heard a shout from above.

"Someone has breached the central chamber!"

"They must not claim the grail," he heard Orandere shout, and then the stomping of iron shod boots coming down the stairs.

"Hurry!" Honna shouted. "You must drink from the cup before Orandere arrives!"

Rammenuss charged into the room, all thoughts of slaying the witch forgotten. He would drink from the cup and raise an army, he best his enemy at long last. He'd dreamt of the moment for so long! He would have Orandere on his knees, and he would look him right in the eyes and say, "You're mine!" And then, finally, he would kill the man who'd stolen everything from him.

Rammenuss reached the cup and grasped it, the metal cold and shivery in his hand. Just as he lifted it to his lips, Orandere and his men charged into the room. Rammenuss drank, and he felt the power of the ancient, eldritch magic flow through him.

Orandere began to laugh as Honna went to his side.

“I summon an—” Rammenuss started to shout, but his hand flew to his throat as his eyes went wide. The voice he spoke with was not his own. It was the voice of a woman.

Orandere and his men laughed louder.

“I raise an army...” Rammenuss shouted, ignoring the sweet twilling of his voice, even as his clothes seemed to fade into smoke, and the room seemed to grow larger about him, while long hair tumbled over his shoulders. The eyes of Orandere and all his men fell to Rammenuss’s groin, and now naked and shivering, he dropped a hand to cover himself only to feel it brush against— a mound?

The mocking laughter grew louder still, and Rammenuss, who could feel the power of the Grail flowing through him, seething with rage and shame, tried once more. “I summon the invincible army!” He screamed, now sounding like an angry little girl. “What’s happening to me?” He cried out as he felt his chest grow warm and ache. Looking down he squealed in horror as he saw soft breasts swelling upon his chest, even as his hips rounded and spread.



Ashamed, humiliated, he sank to his knees, weeping.

Orandere strode into the room, cupped Rammenuss' chin and tilted his head back, staring down into his big, pretty eyes. "You misread the inscription," Orandere said, smirking. "You see, the word "generitian," by the fourth age, had come to mean "raise." The inscription, though, was written in the first age, when the word meant "birth." The inscription reads, Whosoever drinks from The Dagroth Grail will *birth* an army invincible."

"Birth?" Rammenuss whispered, not comprehending.

Honna strode forward. "You are a most fertile young woman now," she said. "You will deliver litters of 8-10 babies every three months, and they will all grow rapidly into the most powerful and fearsome warriors in the land. You will keep bearing children until you have birthed an army 1000 strong."

"1000?" Rammenuss whispered, as the truth of his fate began to sink in, and he began to weep in horror as he came to understand the future that awaited him.

"Once I discerned the true nature of the Grail and learned of your misunderstanding of it's magic, it was child's play to bring you here and clear your path. Now, don't cry, little girl. Look on the bright side. You will have a 1000 sons, all fathered by me. Oh, and one more than a thousand."

Rammenuss, shocked, horrified, could not speak or even comprehend anymore.

"I bare your son withing me," Honna said, placing her hands on her belly.

"I will have a son? One I fathered?" Rammenuss said, finding a moment of hope, some small light in the darkness of his defeat. It had long been his hope to father a son.



“Yes, indeed,” Orandere laughed. “But I shall name Lisia, and raise him as a girl. Perhaps I will allow you to braid his hair.”

All Rammenuss could do now was weep.

Once more, Orandere cupped Rammenuss’s chin and tilted his head back. “You are mine,” he said.

With that, Orandere undid his pants and let them drop to the floor. At the sight of his stiff, hard member, Rammenuss gasped as a fire unlike he’d ever known consumed him.

“I’m yours,” Rammenuss whispered, horrified at what he was feeling, saying, but powerless against his blazing passions. “Take me.”