

Alone in the forest, Thoren paced restlessly. This year, he vowed, this would be the year when he found his answers. "Your revenge is complete," the Paragon of Fire told him long ago... but he still did not have answers to the questions that arose in the meanwhile. He placed his hand on a tree he knew well. Alone in the forest, Thoren stood vigil for the anniversary of his lover's death.

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Alone in the 'borrowed' country manor, Liam paced the halls anxiously. Tonight it would be over - one way or the other. Tonight they would finally know if the Sorceress could deliver on the grand spell she promised.

Alone in the 'borrowed' country manor, Liam Bloodroot hoped the Sorceress would fail and he could put his sword through her lying heart.

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The Praetor of the Draco Disciples expected there to be more blood during the ceremony.

There had been blood in the beginning, of course. The Sorceress called in the vial of dragon's blood – five precious drops that she extracted from the land where the mighty dragon Bloodtharken had been slain. The Sorceress had given the vial to the girl. The girl drank it with the practiced indifference that only those of teenage years possess. The change was shockingly instantaneous. The girl's apathy changed to ferocious longing and she begged to be part of the Sorceress's spell. She pleaded to give herself to the pursuit of power. She lay down as sacrifice for a Praetor's ascension.

"It will never work! She does not love thee, thou little maggot!" The final words of Ruby Nightshade echoed and grew louder within the future Praetor's mind until he gave them voice and demanded assurance from the lithe woman before him.

The Sorceress sauntered over to him and brushed her lips against his ear as she crooned, "She does not need to love you. Her mother's blood flows in her veins. Her mother's blood is what the dragon's blood stirs into frenzied passion. Her mother's blood is what will make you Praetor."

The man nodded and the Sorceress cast the spell. He did not see how the Sorceress drew out the girl's blood. He watched the girl's face as she screamed – not cries of pain, but as if lost in the throes of passion. His gaze never faltered. He passed that small test of will.

With the spell completed all that remained was for the man to drink the girl's blood. Five small drops. He wrinkled his nose and thought, 'At least this way I don't have to eat her heart.'

As the blood burned down his throat, he could hear the triumphant roar of his Goddess. He could feel the strength of the five-headed dragon in his muscles. And he could now see the souls of men.

The Praetor of the Draco Disciples opened the door and stepped into the hallway of the 'borrowed' country manor.

Liam looked down at the slight frame of Vinz Clortho. "Do I get to kill the Sorceress?" Liam asked hopefully.

"No," Vinz whispered.

Liam tilted his head in confusion, "So the spell worked then? Are you Simeon?"

Vinz turned his piercing gaze to the large warrior, studying him as if for the first time. "I am not Simeon, but I am the Praetor now." Vinz smiled, "And we shall finally end this war my way."

Their footfalls were a cadence of determination as they left the grim chamber.

Alone in the former dining hall, the Dragon Sorceress vanished the bloodless husk of Estella Foxglove and cackled.