

Peter's Mission

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Peter smiled as Falco, the Bardic Council Member for the Band of the Twisted Claw, revered him. "Master Amadeus, I appreciate the formalities, but as I have said before, they are not needed."

Falco nodded. "My apologies, Lord Hellebore. With... what happened to Robert... I find myself somewhat absent-minded of late."

Peter gently rested a hand on the Falco's shoulder. "Worry not. Let us cement the bond that you and Robert were working together to form with us. Let us end the needless bloodshed between the Band of the Twisted Claw and the Draco Disciples."

Falco smiled and extended his hand. "I would like nothing more, Lord Hellebore. Your goddess and our god created the world together. We too should be together once more."

Peter shook Falco's hand. "Our formal alliance starts this day."

Once Falco departed, Peter turned and entered into within the pavilion once more, a sly smirk tugging at his lips. It had been only a week since he had been handed the latest Ikon from Robert O'Coppe. He paused, musing over the memory of the somewhat tragic scene. It was unfortunate what had happened to Robert – Peter actually liked him. Robert would have made a useful ally indeed. However, what was done was done, and the next step of his plan would begin soon. If the Band of the Twisted Claw continued to develop a friendship with the Draco Disciples, everything would be so easy.

"My Lord Praetor?"

Peter nodded at Lady Efah as she interrupted his thoughts. "Yes, Lady Efah?"

She stood grimly. "There is aught I must tell you. It is about the gem that Robert O'Coppe gathered for you."

He frowned. "What of it?"

She cast her gaze downward for a moment, wringing her hands in an obvious gesture of nerves, and then looked up with purpose. "I fear that the gem possessed the power to amplify magic around it. When I cast my spell on Liam, the remaining power was drained." She knelt before

him, and Peter's eyebrows raised in surprise. "It was not my intention to do so. But if I have jeopardized your plan to bring our goddess forth, I submit myself for punishment."

Peter chuckled, reaching down to grasp her hands and help her to her feet. "Rise. The magic you speak of is unimportant to me. There is another purpose to these Ikons. Something far more powerful. Soon, all will be revealed and the unknown dark will be expelled by the light."

Efah's usually calm expression twisted into a look of robust puzzlement. She narrowed her eyes at him, trying to suss the meaning of his words, certain she was missing something, but unable to decide exactly what. After a moment she sighed and nodded. "Very well, my Praetor. I shall excuse myself then."

Peter watched her go for a moment, deciding to wait until she reached the doorway of the pavilion, and then spoke again. "Come hither, Lady Efah. I have one more thing." Typically, such obvious shows of power were beneath him, but for some reason, he felt larger than life lately, and it spilled out of him in all sorts of new, surprising ways.

Her face was stone as she turned. If she was upset at this petty show, her expression showed nothing. Soon enough, she stood before him again. He continued. "Bring forth your thrall, Liam. I think he has learned his lesson."

Efah called for Liam, and he walked to her side, his face void of expression. The spell Efah had cast on him was powerful magic indeed – it robbed him of his will completely. It was as if he were a prisoner in his own mind. No matter how much he struggled against the bars, he would not be able to free himself. Simply, with a wave of her hand, she dismissed the spell. "You are released," was all she said.

Peter looked to Efah, and then to the door. She left without another word; she knew Peter would want to speak with Liam. The shouting began before she had fully left the pavilion.

"Liam! You nearly jeopardized our plan! I *clearly* stated that Robert O'Coppe was **not to be harmed!**" Peter's knuckles were white as he gripped his cane.

As the light returned to Liam's eyes and he was present in himself once more, he fell to his knees before Peter, his arms outstretched before him in supplication. He did not dare speak. Anyone who might have seen this would have been quite surprised at the show of humility from the strong, formidable Lord Justice, but then again -- most did not know the true power Lord Hellebore wielded, either. In that moment, Liam was just grateful to be free, no longer a prisoner in his own body and mind. Tears crept into the corner of his eyes as Peter's harsh tone cut through the eerily quiet Bristol air.

"I stated clearly what we were going to do! We were in agreement, we would fake a fight between us in front of the Travellers to earn their trust. Yet... you could not find it in you to follow

those simple orders. To make matters worse, you laid hands on my sister, . forcing me to show my power before them! And for what? To get petty revenge on the past?” Peter brandished his cane like a weapon before Liam, as if he were going to strike him again, as he had magically just days before. “You cannot comprehend how disappointed in you I am! Yet....” Peter paused, resting his cane on the ground.

Liam flinched. He had expected a blow.

Peter sighed, taking a deep breath. As he released it, his tone softened. “Your actions, as deplorable and ill-advised as they were, seem to have drawn more members of the Band of the Twisted Claw towards the friendship I seek. For that, you have my thanks. Well done.”

Liam blinked, and hazarded a glance up his Lord and leader. Peter met his gaze, crouching down and reaching a hand out to cup the side of Liam’s face in what was an almost kind fashion. Liam nodded in acceptance of the Praetor’s praise. Perhaps he had come away clean, after all.

As if he could read Liam’s mind, Peter’s expression darkened in an instant, and he used the hand upon Liam’s cheek to grasp his chin roughly. He brought his rabid expression unsettlingly close to Liam’s face and his voice was cold and eerily calm as he spoke. “Do not act on your own again. There are no second chances. You get but this single token of my benevolence.” He then roughly pushed Liam away from him, straightened, and strode from the pavilion, his cane and boots crunching the gravel as he strode out into the fine Bristol air.