

FORGOTTEN REALMS

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THE
DEVIL
you
KNOW



1

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NONE OF THIS IS REAL. THAT THOUGHT CHASED FARIDEH'S EVERY WORRY, every plan, every panic. Her mind felt as if someone had peeled it away from her numb, mechanical body and her heart, which could only scream and scream and scream. None of this is real.

"I have to go," Havilar said, with a firmness that didn't match her trembling voice. "It should be me."

Farideh shook her head. "No. I can't let you."

Farideh shut her eyes, trying to clear the memory from her mind, but it hung there as if suspended in cobwebs, and Sairché still sat in the center of Havilar's unmade bed instead of Havi. The cambion prowled her nightmares often enough, but never like this—wounded belly newly bandaged, pallid and hollow with blood loss. Still, her gold eyes regarded Farideh with cunning. Farideh didn't trust Sairché and Sairché returned the sentiment.

"You can talk," Farideh said, "or I can break the circle."

The cambion's golden eyes flicked over the tiefling warlock as if she would evade the inevitable—it was only the protective circle Farideh had laid around Sairché that shielded her from the effects of the cursed dagger that had been buried in her gut. If the circle were so much as smudged, her erinyes half sisters would pour out of the Nine Hells and strike Sairché down, killing the oathbreaker marked by their dead mother's blade.

Sairché glanced once at Mehen standing behind Farideh's left shoulder, once at Ilstan positioned at her right. One unswervingly devoted to Farideh, one too mad to claim. No comfort to be had, no play to make—even Sairché had to recognize she was cornered, Farideh thought.

"Where do you want me to start?" Sairché said.

Bryseis Kakistos looked out of Sairché's eyes: "I need a body. Just temporarily. I'll give it back, perhaps in better shape than I found it . . . It needs to be one of you. You were made for me. It won't be so difficult to maintain control. It won't damage you so badly. But you have that barrier on you. You have to be willing. You have to ask me in."

"Where have they gone?" Mehen demanded.

"I don't know," Sairché said. "You want to find out for certain, you need to scry the lordling. If I had to guess, I'd say she's headed for a fortress owned by one of her former followers. Up in the Snowflake Mountains, near Erlkazar."

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Havilar said, "It's the only thing that makes sense. You know what's going on better than I do. You're the smart one—you'll find a way to stop all of this. To fix it. And I'm the strong one. I can . . . I've done this before." Havilar's hand squeezed her own tight. "Just figure it out, all right?"

"A lich is a matter of some difficulty," Ilstan Nyaril said. "They are wicked and tricky and not to be trusted, but oh, the magic they remember, the spells they can speak . . ."

"You should know the weaknesses of the ghost," Farideh said.

Sairché scowled. "I thought I *did*. But as you may notice, she managed to overtake me, get me cursed, and leave me here for dead. I assume she's taken a different strategy with your sister."

There are two pieces still trapped inside you from that moment of error, buried in the layers of your own souls, Bryseis Kakistos had said. That's what makes you interesting to the devils. That's what makes you interesting to Asmodeus.

In Farideh's mind, every awful moment came again and again: Sairché's arrival in Djerad Thymar as the vessel of Bryseis Kakistos, the Brimstone Angel—Farideh and her twin, Havilar's, great-great-grandmother. The threats. The terrible revelations. The moment when Havilar volunteered to be the one the ghost possessed, to save their loved ones and buy Farideh time to solve this puzzle. The feeling of having a part of her soul—albeit an alien part, a fragment of Bryseis Kakistos—torn away. Watching Havilar—no longer Havilar—vanish with her lover, Brin, and Zoonie, Havi's hellhound, in tow.

Do you know what happens when the king is stolen out of the Nine Hells?

How could you have let this happen? Farideh thought, at Sairché, at herself.

"Bryseis Kakistos made it sound as if she had a plan for Asmodeus," she said instead. "What exactly is she doing?"

Sairché cleared her throat. "Bryseis Kakistos is collecting heirs of the Toril Thirteen, the most powerful and potent ones available. That's the core of her ritual. Through them, she can make the purest link to Asmodeus and the Nine Hells' power."

"How many has she found?" Farideh asked. How long do I have?

"In her possession?" Sairché asked. "One. And that's stretching things. One of the original Toril Thirteen, the warlock Phrenike, persists as a lich—it's her castle Bryseis Kakistos must have fled to. Given she's still alive—for certain definitions of the word anyway—she's the surest link. *She's found* four others—the heirs of Caldura Elyria, Pradir Ril, Margarites, and Titus Greybeard."

"Five," Farideh said. "She has Havilar." And me, she thought, and she knew in that moment if she could save Havilar by agreeing to Bryseis Kakistos's ritual of revenge—the powerful magic she meant to use to destroy Asmodeus, the king of the Hells, once and for all—Farideh would go to her grave without question.

But Sairché gave her a withering look. "You'll recall she has things for the both of you to do."

“What things?” Mehen demanded.

“She needs another body,” Sairché said. “Another heir. And your daughter’s workshop is in perfect working order, so to speak.”

Farideh blushed scarlet. *That is your task, my dear—difficult and simple together*, the ghost had said as though she were a commander handing down tasks to her subordinates. A body for herself to be reborn in, a body for Havilar if something should go awry. Just as she and Havilar had been made, a vessel to hold her reincarnated spirit, twenty-seven years ago. *It’s what you are for. You have the cambion. He would do. If I can free the Harper, all the better. Not as handsome, but steadier.*

The reminder of Dahl’s absence slipped through her. However it grieved her, too many other things hammered cracks into her heart.

“It’s not the worst idea,” Sairché pointed out. “She’d be a lot less trouble in a newborn babe’s body. And it means you’re not number five.” She looked at the door. “Where is Lorcan?”

“How long is it going to take her to find the other heirs?” Farideh asked.

Sairché shrugged. “I don’t know. Yourself and your sister excluded, it isn’t terribly difficult to track down warlocks. The need for the most potent connection might force her to search a little more. What’s going to be trickier is that she hasn’t discovered the focus.”

“What does that mean?”

“Something for the ritual to affect,” Ilstan said, in the dreamy way he spoke. “Something to give the power to—it must go somewhere, that is the nature of things—like a river or a wind or a path, it must lead to something.”

Sairché looked at Farideh as if Ilstan were not to be believed. “The ritual inverts the warlock pact and pulls power out of the Nine Hells beyond what it normally should,” she said. “That alone is meant to weaken Asmodeus. But the power has to go *somewhere*, otherwise it’s liable to loop itself back through the warlocks.” She waved a hand. “The specifics aren’t important. She needs somewhere to force the power to go.”

A chill with no clear source ran down Farideh’s spine. “Where?”

A wicked smile played on Sairché’s mouth. “Ask your war wizard friend. Or rather, ask him to ask *his* friend.”

Ilstan Nyaril, Chosen of Azuth, regarded Sairché as if he’d only just noticed she was speaking—which might well have been the case. More often than not, the god of spellcasters spoke in Ilstan’s thoughts, a constant murmur of madness.

When the Spellplague ripped through Toril a hundred years ago and the goddess of magic had died, Azuth, the Lord of Spells, had perished as well, his divinity devoured by the king of the Nine Hells, the last step in raising Asmodeus from the station of archdevil to that of a god.

But within the last year, as strange happenings rocked the land and the Chosen of the gods walked the plane, Azuth—it seemed—had awakened, whispering

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madly in the brain of a single talented wizard of war. Ilstan had been convinced that Farideh was his enemy, that to kill Farideh was to save Azuth from Asmodeus. Farideh knew it wasn't long before she would have to tell him what she'd learned as Bryseis Kakistos's memories were torn out of her: that Azuth did not truly die, that he persisted within Asmodeus.

"She wants to feed the power into Azuth," Farideh said quietly. "Kill Asmodeus from the inside out."

"Got it in one," Sairché said. "Which means she needs something connected to him on a very powerful level. She needs the staff of Azuth."

Ilstan suddenly broke toward Sairché, eyes wide and mad. Farideh caught his sleeve as he hissed, "Where is it?"

Sairché snorted, all bravado. "If I knew that—if anyone knew that—we wouldn't be sitting here."

"Guess," Farideh said.

The cambion smiled at her, as though she meant to test the strength of Farideh's resolve. Try it, Farideh thought. Whatever pity, whatever empathy she might have had for Sairché, doomed as she was by her bad luck and worse choices, the previous night had destroyed it.

"I will let him go," Farideh warned.

"Asmodeus," Sairché said, "is not a fool. He got rid of it—inasmuch as you can get rid of such a thing. A god's weapon is like a part of them. You destroy it and it may well turn up somewhere else where you weren't expecting it. I hear it's frozen in the heart of Prince Levistus's glacier. I hear it's lying in the bottom of the deepest lava pit in Nessus. I hear," she said, with not a little significance, "that he gave it to a certain trusted mortal to hide, believing she didn't know what it was."

Mehen spat a curse of Draconic. "You said he wasn't a fool."

"And I said I would guess," Sairché retorted. "She doesn't have it now, I can tell you that, and she's starting at the same point as you when it comes to remedying it. The difference being—I hope, at any rate—that she is mad enough and angry enough to do this ritual, not knowing whether it only angers Asmodeus or ends up destroying a large chunk of Toril and the planes above, and you are cautious enough to avoid such a thing."

"Why did you ally with her if she's so mad?"

"Caution breeds weakness," Sairché said. "If she succeeded, then I had a very precious gift for the right archdevil in the right circumstances. If she didn't—and let's be clear, that is where I would have laid my coin—then I had a traitor to hand His Majesty. Clearly I miscalculated." She considered Farideh a moment. "Your turn: What exactly are you planning to do?"

Ilstan grew still. "I find I think I need solitude," he said meekly. "Can you lock the room?"

"Pardon me," Farideh said, a little acidly, "I have a guest to attend to." She strode from the room, Ilstan on her arm, knowing Mehen would follow, knowing

Sairché's curses would chase her, knowing she didn't have an answer to Sairché's question, not yet.

"The staff . . ." Ilstan said as they reached what had been Mehen's room. He held out his hands for the shackles he wore when the madness of Azuth's gift ate at him. "She doesn't know where it is?"

"I don't think so," Farideh said. "Does Azuth?"

Ilstan's eyes seemed to gaze far into the fabric of the planes. "He remembers it, the original, and the thing it became, the symbol and the strength. The feeling of it being pulled from him in the fall . . . No." He blinked, focused on Farideh once more. "He doesn't."

Farideh nodded. She hadn't expected anything different. "We'll find it," she assured Ilstan. "Forget the shackles."

Ilstan looked uncomfortable. "Then lock the door."

"Of course. You have enough to keep enchanting?"

"Enough," the wizard said. She locked the door tight and turned to find Mehen waiting for her.

"The staff is the choke point." Her father's deep voice shook as he spoke, and Farideh's stomach knotted at that. "That's where we can stop her—there are a great deal more heirs than staves."

"Mostly," Farideh agreed. "The, um, Kakistos heirs." Even the sound of those words made her temper rise. "There are only five, or there were when I . . . When the pact started. Me and Havi and three others. And they should be easier to find."

And they might also include her birth parents—she and Havilar had been left at the gates of a remote village. Abandoned and exposed to the harsh winter, they would have died had a dragonborn exile returning from patrol not found them and claimed them when no one else would. Somewhere in the world was at least one Kakistos heir who had signed on with Bryseis Kakistos's first attempt to ruin Asmodeus, to resurrect the Brimstone Angel with a child bred specifically to be her vessel.

Easier to find than a god's weapon, Farideh thought. But still she'd rather dive into the deepest lava pit in Nessus than face the people she descended from.

Mehen's tongue fluttered behind his parted teeth, and his anxiety made Farideh's build. "We should just find this fortress," he said. "Storm the gates and get your sister and Brin back safe. Let the gods worry about themselves."

Do you know what happens when the spark is stolen out of a god? The god is killed. Destroyed.

Farideh shook her head. "I don't know. I don't know that we can get the ghost out. We'd need a priest—a more powerful one than we know." Havilar had been a willing vessel, a participant in the spell. While a priest could turn out an unwilling possession, it seemed as if it should be much harder to do this time.

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It should have been me, she thought before she could stop herself.

“Dumuzi?” she suggested. “Would he . . .”

Mehen shook his head. “Not a priest, or so he says.” He rubbed a hand over his face, knocking loose one of the jade piercings he’d started wearing again in the frill of his jaw, a mark of Clan Verthisathurgiesh. He fumbled with the jewelry a moment, unable to get it back in. With a roar of frustration, he hurled the plug across the room, where it *plinked* against the brazier.

Mehen sank down onto the couch, and Farideh tucked herself close beside him. He held her as if she were a little girl again, and rubbed his bare jaw frill against the crown of her head.

“Promise me,” he said, his voice thick. “Promise me you won’t rush in this time. Promise you’ll tell me first before you do anything—just tell me, if nothing else.”

Farideh held her father. The truth was she had a hundred different plans, all spinning themselves into sense within her head, all at odds with one another.

Do you know what happens when the spark is stolen out of a god?

If Bryseis Kakistos succeeded, then the god of sin would be destroyed, and wasn’t that for the best?

Do you know what happens when the king is stolen out of the Nine Hells?

If Bryseis Kakistos succeeded, the Nine Hells would fall into chaos and war might spill out over the planes, and so she had to be stopped, didn’t she?

If she didn’t stop Bryseis Kakistos, Asmodeus might do it himself, no matter the consequences to Havilar.

If she stopped Bryseis Kakistos, what would happen to Azuth?

“I promise,” Farideh said to Mehen, while her heart screamed and screamed and screamed. She hoped she wasn’t lying.

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BRIN FOUND IT hard to look at Havilar. One moment, he could pretend that the woman he loved was still here, still in control of her form. She’d be looking out at the frozen vista of the Snowflake Mountains, her expression still and unconcerned, and she might be Havilar.

But then she’d notice him watching and she’d smile, and it wouldn’t be Havilar at all, even though it was her face the ghost smiled out of. Perhaps to another the difference would be too subtle to mark, but to Brin, it was the difference between the heavens and the Hells.

“Are you looking for something?” Bryseis Kakistos asked with the voice of the woman he loved. She stood in the library of the fortress she’d brought him to, standing over the lich whose fortress it was and flanked by her servants, a pair of char-black skeletons whose bones had been chased with gold and silver, their

eyes replaced with staring bright gems. At her feet lay an enormous black mastiff with glowing eyes. Zoonie lifted her head as Brin came in, her tail thumping against the floor.

“Aside from your designated task, of course,” Phrenike drawled. Her eyes, two pinpoint lights within the sockets of her withered skull, managed still to convey all the former warlock’s disdain and suspicion.

“That’s why I’m here, saer,” Brin said with every ounce of grace he could muster. His tutors could be forgiven for not foreseeing that Lord Aubrin Crownsilver would have need of their skills in the forgotten castle of a tiefling lich and the most infamous warlock to walk Toril, particularly since he was managing all right so far by pretending the two ladies were ranked duchesses. “If you please, I didn’t bring my spellbooks.”

Bryseis Kakistos tilted her head. “You cast spells?”

“Rituals,” Brin corrected. “Not many, but I find it wisest not to leave blades on the table. So to speak. I find myself stymied, saers, without access to a scrying or a sending ritual. Would you have such spells?”

Bryseis Kakistos looked over at Phrenike who waved a skeletal hand at the library. “Oh somewhere. Everything’s somewhere.”

“Would you mind if I looked around?” Brin asked. He kneeled to scratch the hellhound behind her ears, through the muzzle. Zoonie licked the air between them, tail thumping happily. The hellhound had been a tool Havilar had gained from her status as Chosen of Asmodeus, a status that belonged now—had perhaps *always* belonged—to Bryseis Kakistos. “And I could take Zoonie out for a run, if you wish.”

The face that looked down at him was one Havilar never made, puzzled and maternal and faintly amused. It made his stomach twist. “You really think of it as a pet,” she said.

“Havi adores her.”

Phrenike snorted. “What heirs you’ve got, Bryseis. A simpleton who plays with devil-dogs.”

Bryseis Kakistos turned on the lich, slowly, slowly. “A Nessian warhound. She’s charmed a beast I could guarantee was meant to savage her. A notable start, I’d say.” She flexed Havilar’s hands, the strong muscles of her arms shifting beneath golden skin. “Especially considering she’s spent far more of her efforts gaining skill with her blade. At her age, had we faced a demon lord or bargained with an archdevil?”

Phrenike was quiet. “I hadn’t.”

“That’s right,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “So don’t call my granddaughter a simpleton.” She gave Brin a sidelong look. “And besides all of that, she’s gained herself a prince.”

Brin was sure Phrenike rolled her eyes at that. He smiled in a way he hoped looked a *little* simple.

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“The library?” he asked. “Can I search for the books?”

“You want me to let you wander my library?” Phrenike asked.

Yes, Brin thought. Whatever it took to find what he needed. “You could always show me the proper shelves.”

“No, no, don’t waste your time,” Bryseis Kakistos said. She paused a moment, as if steadying herself. “I require assistance.”

Two *pops* broke the quiet of the library. Zoonie came to her feet, eyes on the pair of imps hanging in the air between Brin and Bryseis Kakistos. The red one, Brin recognized. The dark one with the crooked nose, he did not.

“What do you need, my lady?” Mot asked.

“That’s better,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “All the rebellion burned out of you?”

“We would never rebel,” the darker imp said. “Order is paramount to devils.” It looked around the library. “Where did you get all of these books?”

“Bosh,” Mot said in a warning tone. “Not now.”

“My guest requires your assistance,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “He needs to find a fairly minor spellbook.”

“I beg your pardon?” Phrenike said. “You’re letting imps and bratty boys rifle through *my* things?”

Bryseis Kakistos clucked her tongue. “What could you possibly fear? The young man is a dabbler at best. The imps will keep an eye on him and expedite things. Besides, you have far more important things to do than play librarian.”

“Are you sure?” the lich asked tartly. “Perhaps the dabbler could find them both in one shot? Or maybe once you find Caisys, he’ll just manage everything again.”

“Don’t be sullen, Phrenike, it doesn’t suit you,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “You are the one I came to, not Caisys.”

“And he’s the one you gave the staff to.”

“Oh, Ilmater’s old bandages, are you jealous?” She noticed Brin and the imps still standing there and shooed them toward the books. “Get to it.”

“*Eshata*, Zoonie,” Brin said. Zoonie started after him, looking back as if unsure if she should follow or stay with this person who was and was not her mistress. Brin crouched down beside the enormous hound. “Come on, puppy girl.”

“You’re too soft on her,” Bryseis Kakistos said.

“Keeps her loyal,” Brin said, taking hold of the muzzle.

“A Nessian warhound is nothing but loyal,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “They are bred for it. They are also bred to be efficient killers—why waste that?” She turned back to Phrenike. “Have you got any prisoners or anything? Perhaps she could hunt them.”

Phrenike’s pinpoint eyes found Brin. “If I have prisoners, I drain them.”

“Thank you both, saers,” Brin said with a smooth bow. “I’ll let you know how I fare.” He took his leave, heading into the shelves, trailed by a hellhound and a pair of imps. There was no tutor in Cormyr who could have prepared him for that.

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THIS ISN'T THE FUGUE PLANE, Alyona told Havilar. *I promise.*

Havilar remained skeptical. Bryseis Kakistos had taken her soul from her body with a stolen spell and left her in a field of nothing but endless, shining fog, where her breath didn't matter and her glaive was nowhere to be found. If that didn't sound like the plane of the dead, she didn't know what did.

But we're ghosts, Havilar said.

The silver-eyed tiefling woman gave a little waggle of her head. *I am. You . . . I don't know. You still have a body. You're still connected to your body. So . . . It gets complicated, spirits, you know? A ghost is not a wraith is not a spirit is not a specter is not a . . .* Her voice trailed away, before abruptly resuming. *I suppose we're both connected to your body though, because we're both connected to my sister's soul.*

Like she did with Sairché?

Alyona frowned. *Which is Sairché?*

The cambion Bryseis Kakistos possessed.

Oh. Then no. Not like that. She sighed. *I hate that name.*

Havilar couldn't have said she'd ever given a moment's thought to Sairché's name, so she sat on what felt like the ground, her arms wrapped around her knees. Everything felt close to numb, as if her mind were just suggesting to her what *ground and legs and arms felt like. If she wasn't dead, it was close. She said she'll give my body back.*

Then she will, Alyona said with a stubbornness that made Havilar doubtful. Odd enough she was sitting in a little pocket of a plane no one had a name for, but the fact that she was stuck here with the Brimstone Angel's until-now unknown twin sister made the whole thing feel like a wild story. The fact that Alyona seemed to be nothing at all like her infamous sister—more like the kindly, absentminded aunt that Havilar supposed she was, given their relationship—just made the whole thing ridiculous.

And we can't get out?

Alyona waggled her head again. *Yes and no. It takes effort, but you can slip into the material world. But you won't be seen, and you can only speak to Biseria. If you want to speak to others . . . Besides you don't want to bother. Phrenike is . . . I will bet your young man is making fine progress*, she said, as though they'd been talking of Brin all along. After all he has all the motivation in the world.

Havilar sat up, alarmed. *Progress with what?*

His search, Alyona said. *He came along, you know, to find . . . Well, if you want to check on him, we could. It wouldn't be a bad idea for you to try anyway.*

Havilar felt the memory of her heart hammering in her chest. Brin, in the hands of Bryseis Kakistos, in the lair of a lich that Alyona made clear she didn't like, and everything Havilar knew had to be pulled out of a ghost that couldn't keep a

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thought in her head for more than a sentence. *Yes, I want to see him. Now. How? How do we do that?*

Alyona considered her a moment. *You have to go out the door.*

There was no door—not so far as Havilar could see, and she bit back a little screech of frustration. *Help me?* she asked. *None of this is the way I do things.*

Alyona smiled. *Oh, I know that.* She took hold of Havilar's hand, and tugged.

For the length of an eye blink, Havilar noticed the door, the fold in the fog that led out of that interminable prison. The next, she stood—or maybe floated—at the left hand of her own body in a cavernous library. On her other side was the lich in the lavender gown. And there was Brin, holding onto Zoonie's muzzle, and Mot and some other imp besides.

"Are you sure?" the lich asked tartly. "Perhaps the dabbler could find both in one shot? Or maybe once you find Caisys, he'll just manage everything again."

"Don't be sullen, Phrenike, it doesn't suit you," Bryseis Kakistos said. "You are the one I came to, not Caisys."

"And he's the one you gave the staff to."

She looked over at herself, at Alyona who she could just make out standing on the other side of her body. Blushing. A blushing ghost, Havilar thought. Nothing made sense here.

She watched as Brin slipped away, Zoonie and the imps following behind. She followed, unseen, just wanting to be near, wanting to know he was all right. She reached out to touch his shoulder, but her hand slipped through him, as if neither of them occupied the same space. *Oh Brin*, she said, even though no one heard. *You sweet, sweet pothachi.*

"What are we looking for?" the darker imp asked, flying up and down the shelves.

"I need a sending ritual," Brin said. "And a simple scrying—a scroll if you can find it."

The dark imp narrowed its eyes. "Do you *know* how to cast those?"

Brin smiled, as if it took all the effort in the world to not swat the imp. "Please find them." The dark imp flew off along the shelves, but Mot remained behind, arms folded across his tiny chest.

"Is she all right?" Mot asked. "I mean, do you know?"

"What do you care?" Brin asked. "She's not Chosen anymore."

"Hey, I didn't say I cared!" Mot said. "I just *asked*. I've got this new Chosen to worry about, in case you didn't notice, and she got rid of that stupid bastard Olla, so we'll get on just fine." He glowered at Brin for a moment. "You don't know, do you?"

"No," Brin admitted. "And to be honest, I don't know what it is your new mistress thinks I can find. But if she finds that out, at best she'll throw me out into the snow, and Havilar's got one fewer person trying to get her free."

Mot snorted. "Oh, like you'd stop, you dumb mortal." His stinger-laden tail flicked from side to side. "I'll help you find out what it is."

“What’s the price?” Brin asked, and Havilar felt terribly proud of him.

“This one’s free,” Mot said. “Let’s say it’s for her, not for you.” He glanced down the row of shelves to where Zoonie had lain down. The other imp hovered over her, arms folded.

“A hellhound oughtn’t be lying down,” he said. “They’re killers. Everyone knows that.”

“Blistering archlords. This one’s free, but maybe you can help me get a new partner down the line.” He flew off to search the shelves.

Havilar drifted nearer to Brin, close enough she could feel the memory of his warmth. She reached to touch his blond hair—maybe he could feel her stir the air beside him—

All at once, she felt herself snapped back to where Bryseis Kakistos and Alyona’s ghost stood. Her own eyes seemed to fix on her. “You need to go back,” Bryseis Kakistos said. “You’ll just upset yourself.”

Suddenly Havilar felt herself yanked away, back through that fold in the plane, and she was swathed in fog once more. Karshoj, Havilar spat. *Fat lot of good that did.*

He’s all right, Alyona pointed out. And so is your dog.

Maybe, she thought. And Brin had some sort of a plan—a sending and a scrying. And she knew now that Bryseis Kakistos was looking for a staff, and someone called Caisys who had it.

Who’s Caisys? Havilar demanded.

Alyona blushed all over again. *A man we knew, once. He was an ally of Bisera’s, though she never did appreciate . . . He had the kindest manners. And he was terribly, terribly handsome.*

A warlock?

Alyona’s smile wavered. *Yes. Among other things.*

Havilar cursed to herself again. The only person she knew that could give her a better answer about an ancient warlock was several hundred miles away, and sleeping like he’d never done it before.