

Shall I speak to you of stories? Shall I tell you tales? Shall I mock you with the truth and falsehood of my darkness? You have walked through the night to find a courage to read my thoughts, yet is it truly courage? Or a temptation that has brought you eagerly to crave my words? Admit it; admit to yourself, you ache to learn of my secrets. The secrets of power from the darkest places that I have travelled.

I have walked the darkest night, in realms where the stars are afraid to shine. I have tasted the cries of death and torment, and known the pleasure of mastery over your mortal existence. I have held fragile life in my hands, and exulted as it has been warped, corrupted, or destroyed. The flesh that you value so much is but a tool, a garment that may be shaped as I wish. The mind that you believe is strong, intelligent and shrewd is merely a page upon which I might write my will. I have seen the puny miracle of your existence, witnessed it a thousandfold, and watched it powerless to resist the might of oblivion. Make no mistake, as soon as your fingers caressed the pages of my work, you became mine. I know you now, far better than you will ever know me. You are mine, and like others before you, shall become a slave to my fell purpose.

At the beginning there were many of us. Yet, only five found the way to fulfil our true destinies. Much as your nature consumes the weak, so our greedy growth slew and consumed our brethren. Some of my brothers felt guilty at this self-genocide, others accepted its price and responsibility. I alone revelled in the destruction of the others of my race, those who had failed. Each that I destroyed and devoured granted bliss; each that I tortured and defeated gave ecstasy. Some had delved into the darkest reaches, almost as far as I. yet none possessed my power, and as I slew them so I added their might to my own, and my hunger grew.

At the last only five of us remained.

Shall I tell you the tale of how I seduced them with lies and trapped them with fell promise? They had grown sick at the sight of the cost of our struggles against one another, grown sicker as I had exulted, and grown weary as I had grown ravenous. They had seen the cost of our war paid in the lives of mortals; witnessed as even the longest living and most hardy had been snapped as twigs, broken as dolls in the path of warring hurricanes. Such was our power, and such was their craven weakness, that they resolved to end the glory of the eternal war.

So when I was forced by them to attend their gathering in the first city of the Mortals upon a nameless world in the bosom of our father, I swallowed my fury, and suppressed my hunger. Instead, I spoke soft words to them, suggesting a plan that would end our strife. A purpose that would bind and chain our immortal existences, and would end our war forever. Foolishly, they agreed to my terms, trusting me to perform the Magic's, as they believed I would. Fools! They did not understand who or what we were! In spite, I spoke the words, weaving them in my power, trapping them with my might, and humbling their hoarded eternal power. The last that they heard of me then was mocking laughter, as they discovered the weakness of their new found mortality, trapped upon a world gripped in a sundering war of races, as the city of Elder mortals broke asunder with the fury of power.

I alone remained incarnate and eternal. True, the use of power weakened me for a time, and I was forced to leave them to their fate, whilst I rebuilt my strength, so that I might consume them utterly. Yet, when I tried to return, I could not find them, nor could I find the broken city that had borne the burden of my might.

In fury, I spent lifetimes pursuing them, seeking their trails across the void. Yet the body of our father is infinite and grows more bloated as he ages and loses his strength. Though they

were now reduced and weaker than I. they remained four to my one. In different ways I was to learn later, they had divided themselves to survive and to escape me.

In turn, I was left with a stark choice. To sacrifice my advantage and separate myself to find them, or to employ others to do my bidding. I chose the latter, and cast my net amongst the lesser creatures of existence to find those who might aid my cause.

Amongst an Ancient Imperial Race, there was a general who courted his lost love. A faithful hound, loyal beyond questions, he was betrayed by the paranoia of his Emperor, who did not deserve such a perfect servant, and was sent forth to fight an endless cause. With little else to sustain him, he grew to love the violence of his fate, and fell in love with the spectral Lady of war. He chased her incessantly throughout out the lands of his conquests, but grew frustrated by her ability to evade him.

As the first, he was easy to corrupt. After having introduced myself, I made a bargain with him, granting him the chance to court his lady throughout existence, in exchange for his service to my cause. True to his word, he pledged himself to me, betraying his army that I might feast upon their worthless lives. In exchange, and upon a whim, I decided to keep my word, and transformed him, so that he might suit my purpose, binding his pattern to my service, to become my General. Satisfied I sent him forth with his corrupted army to search for my brother of Chaos. To this day, some part of his dark heart denies what he has done, and he has claimed me as his long dead liege. As he was First so shall he be Last to Be.

In Cloisters of Faith, bound unto a servitude for the length of his long mortal life. There was a monk who harboured secret desires against his vows. Every night he burned with carnality, consumed by the passions of his flesh. He was easy to tempt, for the boundaries of flesh hold no limit upon me. I whispered to

him in the darkness of his cell, and promise by promise, lust by lust, temptation by temptation I stole him from himself. My hooks upon his heart banishing his faith and truth, filling him instead with lies and hatred. Eventually under my direction, he rose high in the ranks of his order, and the sweetest taste of my mastery over his life was to make him the instrument of its eradication. In the end all that remained of him was a husk and dried shell of what he had been. In Unlife he became Faceless, as what within sickened and died. He became my Seneschal, and Inquisitor, and the Lord of Lies. The last truth that remained of him was his birth name, which upon a whim, I kept and held for myself. Since all other mortals who might have remembered it had long since succumbed to oblivion's touch. With the power of his true name, I commanded his absolute loyalty and service, sending him forth to search for my brother of Good.

And then, in the darkest places of the void, and the furthest reaches of our father's body. I felt the presence of another observing me. In the pit, the darkest reaches of power I found a mortal who existed alone, and followed me, thinking me oblivious to its attentions. Seemingly intent upon my designs, I allowed him to observe, and to follow me. Further and farther I travelled, marvelling at the creature's interest, until finally I bored of the chase and upon a whim, I returned once more to the forbidding darkness, where the bindings of our father's flesh is weakest. Once there I rested, and moved no more for a hundred years. I waited therein, spinning the webs of my plans and deceit, feeling its eyes and its burning curiosity as I worked in the gloom. Yet, I was safe in the knowledge that even its sight could not penetrate the web of darkness that now surrounded me. Slowly, it grew frustrated, grew more cautious, and grew less careful. Eventually I laughed as I watched its curiosity consume him, and overcome its caution and fear. His need to know more of me conquered its desire to protect its own miserable existence. Slowly it crept closer through the gloom of my dark fire. Slowly it swam through the ink of my evil,

probing to find the secret at last behind that which it had followed

And realised finally that once it had entered the gloom it could not escape.

Trapped at last I brought him before me and marvelled at what I had found. Here was a creature unique of little power in comparison to mine own. Yet, there was nothing within him that I might corrupt. His only desire was to know.

So, I struck a bargain with him. I agreed to grant him the knowledge of what I was that he craved, in exchange for pledge of his service and fealty. Trapped as it was and wracked by it's need it readily agreed to my terms.

I showed him everything. All the hopes and dreams that I have destroyed. The fragile mortal hearts I had broken, torn, and desecrated. Finally, I showed him the story of my struggle against my brothers, the eternal war of the champions.

In exchange, I bound him to my service. In the darkness of the kingdom I had constructed for myself, I named myself King of the realm, and gathered all of the corrupted remnants of those who had once existed. I made my residence in the furthest reaches of existence, where the weave was weakest, and blighted it to shape it to my own choosing. I became the King of Unlife, and made the masses of my corrupted followers bow down and worship me. My nameless follower I named The Watcher and made him Keeper of my crown and title. Should my brothers attempt to steal my new kingdom then the pact that bound us would trap and destroy them. No being may rule the plains of Unlife without the Watcher at their side.

The last of my high servants was to by my finest and best. For it was through her machinations that, at last I and my brothers were re-united.

After aeons of absence. I determined to pay a visit once more to the world of my triumph. Yet, as I neared my destination, I became aware of the labours and work of one or more of my brothers. Caution overcame my haste, and I elected to approach the dwelling place of my brethren with care. After such a long absence it was unlikely they would greet me with open arms. With caution I was able to determine that it was my brother of neutrality who had laboured to mask and repair the damage our wars had caused. Caution overcame my hunger and haste, and I elected to approach my brother with care. At first, I was able to determine that the mortal binds I had placed upon his pattern still remained. Yet, he had found a means of evading my curse, by dividing his essence merging with a different mortal host as each life span expired. Yet my brother of neutrality was old and frail, and it took little effort to corrupt his chosen candidate for his next life, a young mage known as Brand. Instead of accepting the charge of my brother, Brand elected to fight him. Yet during the conflict between both mages, somehow my brother eluded my trap and switched sides, merging with Brand and callously allowing his former incarnation Aelias to die. Yet, none of this mattered when I caught sight of her.

My Bride.

Shall I tell of the through which I ensnared her? The Box of my Essence through which I ensnared the foolish and greedy wizard Arcane? And the sly words which stole her from her people. Slowly with promises of power, and whispered lies she became mine, and remains mine to this day. Despite the thwarting of my plans by my eternal brothers. In the end, her presence served to mark the beginning of the end, as my brethren found a way to bind me to them, and remove us all from the ruinous war we had waged throughout the ages. Yet know this mortal, I have found ways to elude their magics before, and I shall do so again. For every follower bound to my eternal power increases my might over theirs, every whispered

devotion and act of foulness lends strength to my arms. My Bride waits for me to return, for our marriage shall last through all of oblivion's fire, until all else is consumed by my father's final death throes. Then at last we shall be alone, left to rule over the weave, as we would shape it.

As for you little minion, now you have read of my tale, you shall find yourself becoming part of my eternal story. My hand leaves its mark upon those who would crave the darkness, and none escape my reach. Know then that I have marked you mortal spawn, and shall return to claim you at the end of all. Then you may retell my story to all those who would hear its glory. For such a tale is yet undone, and incomplete until I have eradicated my brothers from existence. Wait for me my love, I shall return, and I shall claim you in glory....