

THE ROSE WITCH



A Vampire: The Masquerade™ Fiction
Written by
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Chapter One – The Wise One:

It was quiet night at the manor. Nathaniel was sitting by the fireplace with his usual facial expression - the expression of a Fledgling. So full of questions and wonder, but lacking the patience to learn over the eternity they had. If they were bright and cautious, of course. He was clever that one, but too curious to be patient. I continued my look at him in silence for a few moments. My peace was interrupted by the huge old clock in the dining room. The bell rang out twice through the whole mansion, followed by the usual quiet ticking. I walked over and sat in the armchair next to him. He looked at me with wonder in his eyes.

"Yes Nathaniel, what is it?", I asked him with a surrendering tone, followed by a deep sigh.

He took a few moments to think, like I taught him to, and said:

"You've always seemed to know everything about me. Even that which I had no idea about..."

"Your point being?" I asked impatiently".

"... It's just, if I may ask Miss Craven..."

"Abigale!" I said in a reminding snarl.

"...Yes of course. Abigale. I know very little of you. Where you are from, who you were before your embrace, and what occupied your time before you found me. Can you tell me a little about your past?"

I smiled at him. So full of wonder, indeed. I certainly chose right with this one.

"Yes, my dear. I can tell thee about my past. Though the story is not going to be short. There are no short stories when one is more than a thousand years old."

He looked at me with awe, jaw dropping a bit. He noticed his befuddleness and gathered himself. Then waited for my story to begin. I aired out a deep sigh and stared into the fire, then I turned to him and began my story:

"Before my embrace, before I was Abigale. I was a young woman, a daughter of a hunter and farmer, living in a tribe in Scandinavia. Thora Njalsdottir was my name..."



The village I lived in consisted of five small farms. I lived there, with my father, mother and

a little sister. As you can imagine life back then was very different from the city of life of one such as yourself growing up and living in the great city of London. My day involved tedious chores, though at the time I thought it peaceful, and on occasion my father would take me on one of his hunts. Those adventures out into the wild, would be the peak of excitement of my life. I was an only child, hence my father had no sons. Therefore, I enjoyed some privileges, that not all women could have. It was not uncommon for females at that time to learn how to fight and shoot the bow, but still, not a common practice. See, the majority of people's activities in those times, concerned taking care of your family, and acquiring food for the next day.

On the morn of my final sunrise, I went hunting with my father. We left the house before the sun had fully risen. I left the house, bow and quiver over my shoulder, to find my father preparing his hunting tools. Rope, knife, sleeping hides etc. He looked at me with his big warm smile and said:

"Greetings Daughter, and good morn to you.

Are thou ready for the wilderness?"

I returned his smile and replied: "Of course father, dost thou knowest of a day where I have not been prepared for anything the gods might put in my path!"

I laughed as he was walking towards me. He gently grabbed my chin with his rough fingers and said: "That is my daughter! Beautiful as Freya, brave as Thor!"

I smiled in delight, took his hand and kissed it. He nodded respectfully at me, and we started walking toward the forest.

It was a trying journey through the hills. Rough on the legs it was, but we were not inexperienced, so we swiftly made it there. We arrived at the edge of the forest before midday. I looked around at the awesome force that nature is, and felt humbled and calm. I felt my father's firm hand on my shoulder, turned and he said: "Be wary and awake, my child."

I nodded and he smiled. He turned and walked into the forest, me following close. When the sun was at its highest we found our prey. In a clearing, a small doe stood and grazed. The rays from the sun were shining through the

treetops at the animal. A true sign from the gods, my father would have said. Silence was required though, and he made sure I remembered that by hushing inaudibly, raising a finger to his lips. The elk was calmly grazing, not knowing that it was being watched. The creature was not the only one unaware of its hunters that moment. My father put an arrow to the bowstring, and I followed. Both of us carefully aimed our bows, and just when we were ready to fire, something startled the elk. The arrows were in the air when our prey dashed away in between the trees. One struck true. Pierced its hip. My father sprinted after it, and yelled back at me: "Circle around it!". I sprinted after him and took a turn, so I could get around a huge area of raspberry-bushes, to end up at a small chasm, that I knew would be there, up ahead. I arrived there just to see the elk turn away from its downfall. Shifting direction towards me, it saw me, got startled and tried to spin and run the other way. But instead of getting away it slid and fell into the chasm, followed by a loud bawl and its body smashing unto the bottom. My father came out from the forest, looked at me and smiled. "Find

me something sturdy to tie a rope to, Thora. We shall not go home empty handed." He said loudly with an exhausted smile.

The sun was in the west when my father descended to claim his price. I stood at the edge, feet firmly lodged in the ground, with my hands around the rope, that had been tied to a tree, looking down at him. He reached the bottom wrapped the rope around the deer, looked up and called to me:

"Go ahead and pull it up, throw the rope back in when our food is secured."

I did as he said and started pulling it up. Heavy it was, and I was breathing exhaustedly. When I saw the head of the beast, which had seen better days, I secured it, dragging it to "safety" by its antlers.

"It is secured father, I am throwing the rope down. Be quick with thy climbing, the sun is setting." I yelled exhaustedly down at him. I could hear his warm laugh from below. But that was not the only thing I heard. As he was slowly ascending, I heard the wind swoosh from below, and what sounded like a feral hiss.

As I cried out to my father to make haste, I saw a smoky shadow creeping out from a small hollow in the chasm. I could see on his face, he heard the noise as well. He started to climb faster, breathing fatigued. As he reached the top, I grabbed his arm to pull him up. Looking past him, I started into a pair of red, gleaming eyes, enveloped in smoke. For a moment, it felt like time stood still. The bestial eyes stared at me, and for a second I saw a cruel, vicious grin with teeth like a cat. In an instant, my father was dragged down, screaming in agony. I cried out in despair, and then a panic came out me. I was frozen in terror by the screams of him. I forced my body to move, and looked down over the edge. There was nothing to be seen, and a moment after nothing to be heard.

I sprinted through the forest downhill, not knowing if I was being followed or not. I had no sense of time, and I ran until the adrenaline could no longer carry me, where after I fell sulking to the floor of the forest. I had cuts and bruises all over my body, and they were starting to sting a bit. Knowing that I was miles away from home and safety, it was a dangerous trek

home. I looked at the sun setting, and a sudden sensation of anger and vengeance came upon me. If this beast wanted me, I was in a for challenge. I stood up, scanned my surroundings and limped along the way to my house. It was getting very dark, every noise around me was intensified by my fear. I tried to the best of abilities to be silent, and meditating on something that would centre and calm me. Valhalla was in my thoughts. Surely if I died from, whatever this evil creature was, the gods would perceive my death as honourable. I was nearing the edge of the forest, when I heard a growl. It seemed to come from all around me. I was a mouse, and the cat was toying with me. Standing very still, I put an arrow to the bowstring, aimed it at the darkness and waited for a sound to shoot at. A sinister laugh echoed from within the forest. Being taunted, I was. A sense of focus washed over me, and just at the right time. I saw a shadowy figure coming towards me with lightning speed, and I release the arrow. Closing my eyes, awaiting my doom, I send my last prayers to the gods. But no harm followed.

When I opened my eyes, I saw, to my great surprise, a man gasping inaudibly, with my arrow buried in his chest. He lay paralysed with his hands grasping the arrow. I mustered my courage and walked closer to him. He was dirty, dressed in rags, and dirty as a rat. I looked at his pale face. Mouth open, I could see his canine teeth. Sharp and point as arrowhead they were. His gasping ended, and I thought him dead. I kneeled beside him, and grasped the arrow. As I was about to pull it out, to stab him again, I heard a man's voice from behind me:

"Stop! Or It will be your demise!"

I turned around shocked, and I saw man dressed in a long red robe, with silvery embroidery - like that of what a nobleman would dress in - with a long sword at his side. He had long black hair, tied in a ponytail, and a silver amulet around his neck. It was depicting a wolf, howling at a moon.

"Why?! He is dea..." I asked confused.

"Ah, but he is not. Merely paralysed. It takes more than an arrow through the heart, to kill a creature like that". He replied in a lecturing manner.

"What is he?" I asked wary.

"Cainite... or Draugr, as people from the north call them. This one is a mere reflection of what he used to be." he said with a frowning look upon his face.

I looked the corpse on the ground, and wondered what the meaning of the stranger's words could be. Afterwards I turned my gaze back at the nobleman and questioned in a strict manner:

"Give meaning to thy words, nobleman!"

He gave smiled arrogantly and replied calmly, as spoken to a child:

"He is twice damned. Firstly, with a curse, thousands of years old. Secondly with succumbing to the beast within, losing all that he once was, and henceforth becoming a feral being, whom only exist to murder and feed."

His words were riddles to me at the time, as they should be to someone who only lived in the world of mortals and their normality. I looked at the red-robed man, trying to comprehend the information he had shared, and suddenly it occurred to me that no introductions had been made, nor an understanding giving to how he came by this

knowledge. As if he read my mind he spoke out in a soft voice, that calmed me down, yet did not cease my lingering anxiety:

"I have numerous names and titles, but thou mayest call me Alvis. What is thy name woman?"

Without though nor hesitation I spoke out my name, as if the words had been forced from mouth:

"Thora Njalsdottir."

My anxiety grew by a feeling of lost will and control over myself. I suddenly felt paralysed looking into the stranger's eyes.

"What was thy purpose in this forest?"

I attempted to withhold my words, but again lost the battle within.

"My father and I went hunting, and came by chasm occupied by that monster on the ground."

"A victim of poor fortune then, or cruel fate perhaps."

He grinned at me. His eyes glowed red similar to the fiend on the ground, and the same sharp fangs revealed themselves in the corners of his mouth. My anxiety turned to fear and in a trembling whisper I said:

"Thou art his kin"

He laughed mockingly and replied:

"Somewhat, yet far from it!"

He walked towards the other one, and kneeled at his head. I still could not move muscle save my neck, which turned and look at them both. He put his hands on the man's head, and with a nauseating sound of breaking bone, Alvis tore his head clean off, after which both head and body ignited briefly and turned to ash, soon to be scattered by the wind.

"Trice damned now." Alvis said with satisfaction.

I stared in panic, screaming inside my mind.

Alvis stood up and calmly walked back in front of me. He sighed and said:

"Now, what am I to do with thee, mortal? Thou hast seen and heard too much to just let thee leave in peace. Thou survived being hunted by a Cainite, and that is no small feat. Thou hast shown remarkable wit and fortitude, and thy relentless attempts to break fear of my will, while under duress of extreme fear, is admirable. Even if it is futile. I suspect that our meeting is not coincidence, but rather the hand of fate. I have an offer for thee. Become my Childe and suffer thy first death, or decline and

suffer thy final one. The choice is thine.”
I regained control and could suddenly move again. Alvis stood with his arms crossed, gazing into my eyes and awaited what I would do. I knew I could not flee nor hide, even though every part of my being told me to.
“I accept thine offer, monster!” I said with despise.
Alvis smiled and said calmly, with a voice like a whispering wind:
“Then sleep my Childe, and await a new dusk.”
I felt an overwhelming tiredness and fainted.

Chapter Two – Death and Despair:

I awoke to the sound of chanting. I lay uncomfortably on a cold stone altar in the midst of a forest enclave, naked and freezing. Around the altar stood the source of the chanting. Five men in scarlet-red hooded robes. I attempted to roll off the altar, but found myself chained to it. Although no chains were on me. Terror and despair came over me, and even overwhelming as it was, I could not make a sound nor move. I wooden bowl filled with blood was place on my stomach by the man standing at my feet. I looked at his face beneath the hood, and saw it was Alvis. His fanged smile caught my eye, and I tried to scream once more, to no avail. Three of the unknown men started to pain mystical runes on my body, while the forth drenched my hair in a thick sanguine-coloured substance. Alvis rose his arms and they all became silent. The four moved backwards and disappeared into the dark cover of trees. Alvis stood at my side, held my arm in the air, and sunk his teeth into my wrist. I closed my eyes for a moment, feeling light-headed from the exsanguination, and when I was about to faint, something

dripped onto my lips. I opened my eyes again and saw Alvis holding his bleeding wrist above my mouth. He stepped away from the altar, gazed at me and awaited in anticipation to see what the outcome of the ritual would be. Peace and weakness was all I felt for a few moments, and then it turned into an intense pain. It was as if the whole inside of my body ignited. I could hear my heart beat like drums in my ear. The paralysation ended, and I could finally scream again. My wail echoed throughout the forest as I lay twisting in agonizing pain, listening to my heart beating fast and hard. After what felt like an eternity the pain ended abruptly, followed by shadows blinding me, and then I fainted yet again.



I paused in memory of the night, feeling a sadness that had not touched me in a long time. Nathaniel gazed at me with a heartbroken frown and said quietly:
"I suddenly felt grateful for the circumstances of my embrace.

"How could they do something so malicious to you?" Nathaniel asked with sorrow.

I looked at him, smiling vaguely at his ignorance, and replied:

"It was a different time before the dark ages... immensely less civilized and rife with mystique."

"So, it does not concern you?" he asked frowning, showing confusion.

"It does not affect me, but I do not condone such rituals. Hence how thine own embrace was executed".

"I see..." He took pause, looked to the floor and then turned to me again.

"What happened afterwards?"



I do not recall much of what happened in the hours following my embrace. Memory flashes of running through the forest, torch-lights from a village, screams of terror from people, and blood. When I regained full consciousness, I was sitting inside a barn covered in blood. A stable-boy lay a few meters away from me. His

face expressed in fear, his body pale and bloody. The building was dark, yet I saw it as lit by the brightest full moon. No breath came from my lungs, and I could feel no heartbeat inside my chest. I tried to stand up, but instead I leapt through the roof and landed gracefully outside in the square of three houses. One of them had started to burn inside, and the fire made me feel fear. The entire world around me felt so bright and alive. I could hear the soft winds rattling the leaves in the trees, as clear as if it had been a storm. I could see a heated signature of the animals around me. An owl looking at me from a far away, and even farther away, a swarm of bats ascending to the sky. I listened to their sonar shrieks. It was something I never heard before.

Suddenly a familiar voice startled me, and I turned swiftly towards the owner of it. "Enjoying thyself?" Alvis asked coldly, as he was looking at the destruction I had caused. I felt an anger rising in me and I screamed at him: "What didst thee make me do?! What manner of dark enchantment didst thee place upon

me?"

He smiled amused and condescending, after which he replied in a soft voice:

"I gave thee a gift. Immortality and far more than you could possibly comprehend at this moment. As for thy tiny bloody outburst, thou didst that... or rather the beast within you."

"Beast?" I asked bewildered.

"This is thy first lesson of many to come. Every one of us, every Cainite, have an eternal struggle with the Beast inside us. It needeth blood to be kept at bay. After thine embrace... that is what we call the act of turning someone into a Cainite... Thou wast almost completely exsanguinated, and therefore needed to feed".

He made a waving gesture towards the buildings behind me. My dead heart was aching, and a bloody tear rolled down my cheek. I could not accept what had just happened. Alvis looked at me with a pitiful expression and said calmly as he was walking towards me:

"My dear Childe, do not despair. I promise thy questions will be answered, and the pain thou feelest will subside. But to do that we need to get to a sanctuary. A place where the dawn will not annihilate us."

He put his hands on my shoulders, kissed my forehead, took off his robe, and wrapped it around me. I kept silent and nodded at him. He picked me up in his arms, smiled at me, and started running. The journey was so swift I completely lost all sense of direction. Everything past by us in a blur, and after what felt like the blink of an eye, we stood in front of a stone-built tomb. I could see faint glimmering runes above the entranceway. He put me down, bowed his head, and entered. I looked around to see the location of the tomb. It was placed at a hillside near the edge of a forest. Out of mortal habits, even though I did not need it, I took a deep breath and went inside.

The inside of the hill was not what I had expected. The first few steps it was an earthly, almost animal-made, passage way. Then it turned abruptly, and revealed a stone chamber, with a plain sarcophagus in the centre. Alvis stood beside it, moved his hand along it, and pressed a hidden switch. A deep swoosh sounded from beneath the great stone, followed by the rumbling of stone grinding against stone. As it scraped the chamber surface, a staircase

slowly became visible. Alvis descended into the dark - Well, everything was visible, but knew it was pitch black – and I followed. As we went down the rocky stairs, the sarcophagus slid back in its place. A quiet chiming sound followed, and then nothing but silence. We descended down the stairs followed by a short corridor, which lead to a metal door, covered in similar wards as those at the entrance. Alvis opened it, and we went into a huge chamber. There were three doors leader further into the catacomb. In the middle of the room stood a grand marble statue. It resembled an armoured warrior, clutching a sword, with the tip facing downwards. A strange aura surrounded it. Not visible, but I could feel it in my very being. Alvis saw my staring at the statue in wonder. He smirked and said:

“It is the guardian of the Sanctuary. Gargoyles they are called. It will come to life when called upon or if an unworthy steps foot in this place.”

“Unworthy?” I asked in wonder.

“Someone whom is not Cainite”

I was about to touch the guardian, but a tingling in the back of my mind, made me refrain from doing so. Alvis opened and entered

the door on the left wall. I followed, and looked back at the statue as I proceeded to the next room. It had turned its head, looking right at me. I felt unnerved but shook it off, and closed the door behind me. We now stood in a grand hall, lit by dim lights, coming from small glowing orbs, hovering above four long tables. Each of them could seat twelve people, and each had three orbs, glowing with their blue light. At the far end of the hall, was another door. We swiftly passed the tables, and entered the next room. It was the smallest so far, but with numerous doors. Alvis made a pointing gesture at the doors and said:

"Each of these doors leads to corridors with many doors. All of them are protected sleeping chambers. During the day, we are gravely vulnerable. Therefore, we need a secure place to rest. Rest in one them, and meet me here at dusk."

I did as he instructed, and choose the door closes to me. As promised, the passage was filled with doors on each side. All of them resembled vaults, with doors made of silver. I entered one of them, and found myself in a cramped room with just a bed. I shut the door,

and saw a huge bolt lock. I slit it in its place, and lay down on the bed. As soon as I closed my eyes, I blacked out.



Nathaniel looked amazed at me and said curiously:

"Was is not wondrous to be in such a Sanctuary?"

I smiled warmly at him and replied:

"I was a tad too overwhelming, at the time, to take it all in. I came to appreciate the catacombs later, though. It is truly a magnificent place."

Nathaniel eyes became wide open, and said very surprised:

"Is? The place still stands?"

"I assume. I have not been there in some time. It is a fortress, though. Few beings have the power to bring it down, and frankly I cannot see why anyone would."

"What happened next?" he asked, interestedly. I raised my brow at him, insinuating his question was moronic. Nathaniel sighed at his own mistake and said:

"Right. Training."



I awoke the next evening, with a hunger I never felt before. I exited the room, feeling wobbly and sick. Alvis stood, as he said he would, and waited for me in the sleeping-chamber entrance-room. He extended a glass jug, filled with blood. I took it, looked at it hesitantly, and drank the entirety of it. Even technically dead, I had never felt more alive. I felt powerful and clear-headed. Alvis smiled and gave sign for me to follow. We went upstairs, into fresh air. I looked around, and asked: "What are we doing here Alvis?"

He frowned and looked harshly at me, and replied:

"We are here to commence your lessons. Firstly, some etiquette. Thou wilt address me as Sire. Which is the proper way of addressing your maker. Secondly, to survive, you must learn how to feed. Not only for aliment, to retain thy undead form, but also do it in a manner that does not draw unwanted attention."

"What will thee hast me do, Sire?" I asked

respectfully.

He smiled in satisfaction and replied:

"Venture out, locate a prey... a human prey, feed on it without killing it and without alarming anyone to thy true nature."

I did not like the idea of feeding on people, but something in me knew the necessity of it.

"Anything else, Sire?"

"Trust thine instincts, do not succumb to the Beast, and most importantly of all, return before dawn." he said with a grave expression.

I nodded at him, gazed upon the horizon and when I looked back he was gone. I wandered into the open landscape. The world had never looked more beautiful. The stars in sky were so bright, and the moonlit surroundings were glowing gracefully. As I was walking, feeling the grass and enjoying everything I could see, hear and smell, I came by a sparkling pond. I halted and peered into the water. It was the first time I had seen my own reflection, since my embrace. I looked paler, and my strawberry-blond hair had turned sanguine. I assumed it was because of the dye, that had been drenched into my hair, on the night of my embrace. I gazed upon myself, and ran my fingers through my hair,

when suddenly a scent distracted me. The scent of cattle, and where livestock lived, so did people. I turned towards the direction of the scent's origin, and ran towards it. I moved so swiftly through the grass. With the speed of an eagle, I quickly arrived at a hill, overlooking two farms. I could hear voices from them, and see a bright fire inside both. I closed my eyes and listened. Inside the farm on my left-hand were five people, two of them children. Inside the right, only two adults. I dashed to the one of the right, and found myself standing beside a well. Tied to a pole, next to the stable, were three grand hounds. They spotted me and started growling. Out of instinct I revealed my fangs, and growled. They all whimpered, lowered their heads and became quiet. I knew I had to be patient if I wanted my mission to go unnoticed, so I looked around for a hiding spot, within distance of the door. There was the well and around the corner of the stable. The well was closest and gave the best opportunity to ambush, but it could not hide the entirety of my body. I had to rely on the cover of darkness. I kneeled down behind it, head of the edge of the well, and kept my eyes on the door. The young

couple were conversing of eating. They seemed to enjoy themselves inside, and for some reason, that made me frustrated. Just as I began to become impatient, I heard the woman telling her husband, that she would go outside, to gather more firewood. I lowered my head a notch, as I saw her exit the house, and closing the door behind her. The hounds began to whimper, and she went to comfort them. She knelt down in front of them, and caressed them around their ears. I wanted to ambush her then and there, but came to the conclusion, that even though afraid of me, the dogs would most likely make a fuss. I waited, and fortune was with me. The pile of firewood was stacked against the stable wall, around the corner. As she turned the corner, I followed with haste. She stood back turned to me, putting the wood inside a basket, and was humming a tune that suggested she felt safe. I walked slowly towards her, and when I was close enough to touch, I grabbed her. One arm around her stomach, and one hand on her mouth. Her muffled scream was interrupted, as soon as I sunk my fangs into her neck. She feeling was ecstasy, and she, very surprisingly, seemed to enjoy it

as well. I felt a soothing rage inside. The beast calling to me. I wanted to drain her dry, but as I heard her heartbeat decelerate, I remember Alvis telling me not to kill. I wrestled myself free from the feeding, and looked at the bloody puncture marks. Just one more drop, I told myself, and licked the wounds clean. I felt astonished when I saw the holes closing, and was wondering how many surprises I was in for in my new existence. I later found out, the wonders would be endless.

I re-entered the sanctuary and found Alvis in the great table-filled hall. He was reading in huge tome – back then I had never lay eyes on a book before – and drinking blood from a big cone-shaped glass. I was about to speak out, and inform him of my return, when he rose his hand, one finger up, signalling me to withhold my words. I remained silent and stood there waiting. After a few minutes, he slammed the tome shut, and turned his attention towards me.

“Hunt go well?” he said in a low, almost disinterested voice.

“Remarkably! I left the woman in a tranquil

state. Is that common?"

"Yes. The Kiss is very pleasurable to mortals. Most only remember the feeling, and are completely unaware of what transpired."

I felt relieved and replied calmly:

"That is fortunate."

"If one cares for such things" he replied with a sigh and the same disinterested voice.

My eyes caught the book again, so I pointed at it and asked:

"What is that?"

Alvis scoffed, laughed at me and replied:

"Oh, people from the north! This is a tome. It is an object thee can write in. Very good for passing on knowledge or history, and certainly more transportable than a rune-stone".

I looked curiously at the book and asked excitedly:

"Can thou teachest me?"

He smiled pleased and said:

"One day my child, one day. But for now, take rest, and we shall continue thy lessons tomorrow night."

I awoke the next dusk, and found Alvis greeting me the same place, as the night before. He

handed me a jug again, and I drank it. It was not as satisfying as live-blood. I sunk the last mouthful and asked:

"What is today's lesson?"

Alvis calmly replied:

"Go outside and await me".

I waited and saw him exit the crypt, with swords in both hands. I tossed one at me, and I caught it.

"Tonight, and all following, we shall be training in the art of combat. We shall do so, until I deem thee worthy of progressing to the next stage." he said in a stern voice.

I looked at the ground and mumbled:

"I have always been better with a bow."

He scoffed at me and said in an even sterner tone:

"When thou art faster than an arrow, a bow is useless. When thy Cainite blood can empower thine every strike, shooting at thine opponent is pointless. Come at me with all thee hast!"

I gazed at the long sword, then back at Alvis, and readied myself. I charged him, fast and hard. Though I could feel the swiftness and strength of my blow, it was met in a hard parry. I drew back, and struck multiple times. Each

strike was parried with ease. Alvis hit me the chest with the palm of his hand, which made me fly several meters backwards. I managed to regain control mid-air, made a backflip, and landed on my knees. I stood up and prepared myself for another assault. Alvis smiled wickedly at me, and said:

"My turn!"

I barely saw him coming towards me, and I had no chance of defending against his swift slashes. He cut deeply into my arms, legs, and finally one long cut down my back. I fell to the ground in pain. He circled me, looked down upon me, and spoke harshly to me:

"Focus on thy wounds. Use the power of thy blood to regenerate. Thy body is able to resist more than thee canst ever imagine!"

I closed my eyes, and concentrated on the pain of the cuts. The pain subsided quickly, and the wounds closed at the same speed. Alvis stepped backwards and yelled at me:

"Again!"

I became angry, and my fury triggered something in me as I charged him. The entire world around us slowed down. The leaves and the grass barely moved. Even the wind blew

with less power. Alvis looked at me with a grin upon his face, and my blade met his yet again. I leapt back to avoid his riposte, lowered my sword and asked in an amazement:

"What in the name of the gods was that?!"

Alvis' smiling face became stern once again and he replied:

"That, my Childe, was a small taste of the power of our blood. A power derived from a curse. One that the ONLY god placed upon the first of us. Caine, was his name. He slew his brother, God did not approve, to say the least, and that is how we came to be."

I wanted to ask more question, but already knew what Alvis would reply, so I held my tongue.

He pointed his sword at me, and said:

"Again, Fledgling!"

We continued combat training for nearly an entire moon, spending our nights with me getting lacerated, healing myself, and drinking the stored blood- Which source still had not been revealed to me. One final night, I managed to wound Alvis. In an upside-down slash, I had put more strength in, than ever

before. His parry was pushed back, far enough so I made a deep cut vertically across his face. Alvis looked briefly staggered, then smiled satisfied. He closed his wound, without a flinch, and said proudly:

"Astounding! Thou showest great promise and immense vigour, my Childe. I know deem you worthy of progressing."

I bowed down my head and said with a new-found respect for him:

"I am eager to obtain more knowledge, sire". He replied in his usual emotionless smile of approval, and made a waving gesture for me to follow.

We went downstairs to the guardian's chamber, and entered the room to the right. It looked like an armoury. There was a several swords, shields and spears hanging on the walls. In the centre, there was an oval-shaped table, with a rolled-up scroll placed on it. A spiral staircase led further down the sanctuary. He continued on, and I followed. Beneath the armoury lay a room, matching the size of the dining hall. I could feel a peculiar energy emitting from the place. Alvis turned around, raising his arms

high, and began to present the great hall:
"This, is a place to delve deeper into the powers of our blood. Ancient mystical powers reside here. If used correctly they can bring great revelation into a Cainite's supernatural abilities."

I looked around, expecting something to appear, but nothing did. I could not help feeling a great sense of awe as I stood surrounded by these powers, and it made me even more curious. I respectfully asked:

"Canst thou perform an illustration?"

"Thou hast already seen some of the abilities I have acquired. Learning them is mainly focus and willpower, but more importantly listening to power of the Curse. Every Cainite, have certain features in common. For example, our heightened senses, improved speed, immense strength, great resilience, and of course, our abilities to heal our wounds..."

Those I was very familiar with, and the thought of it, almost made me feel the countless cuts inflicting upon me.

"... Every Cainite belong to a certain Bloodline, or ancestry. There are several bloodlines, all with their own distinct powers. They are the

baseline of how a Cainite can work their blood-given abilities. How these powers are used, is entirely determined by the individual Cainite. More baselines, can be acquired through an action called Diablerie... though that is highly frowned upon in most civilized Cainite society... which is draining another Cainite, and thus gaining their knowledge of the blood and much more."

I gazed at him in amazement. It was a lot to take in, but I felt a peculiar excitement regarding my new existence. I paused and thought about my next question, while Alvis waited, patient as ever.

"Canst thou tell me more of these bloodlines? More specific, ours."

Alvis frowned, and looked like he was thinking hard about the best way to phrase it. Usually he was straight forward, so this behaviour led me to believe he was hiding something. He finally spoke, in an intellectual tone:

"Our Clan is called Brujah. In our blood lies the following powers: Our physical strength far surpasses that of any Cainite whom does not share this ability. As with all of these powers, it is something that must be called upon, and the

blood within us, is the fuel for them. Next, we have the power to manipulate other being's emotions and control their perception of us. For example, when I froze thy body in fear..."

A sudden anger rose in me, but for the sake of learning... and not getting tossed around, similar to that of a lifeless body, I held my tongue.

"... And finally – Thou canst never speak to anyone or anything about what I am about to tell – we can distort and manipulate time itself. It can be exceptionally dangerous to use, if you take it too far. Accelerating your own body is one, but controlling the flow of time is another. Do not EVER let anyone see you use this ability, unless in dire need. Only use it to move faster, as this is a more common trait."

He had a grave expression upon his face, so I did not question his word. I nodded to show obedience and understanding. I waited until his face became calmer, and asked hesitantly:

"So, how can I use and increase these powers correctly, sire?"

He looked slightly impatient, and replied so:

"It will come natural to thee. Thou hast to use your will. Time and practice will strengthen

them."

He walked past me and said as he was ascending the stairs:

"I have matters to attend to. Stay here and practice. We can reconvene tomorrow."

I was rather confused, and waited a few moments, to gather myself. Looking around the vast chamber, and sensing the primordial energies which lay here, reinstated the awe I had felt when I first entered. I pondered over Alvis' lecture for a lengthy amount of time, and then tried what he had told me to do. I closed my eyes, and focused on my entire form. Every muscle, every joint and bone. I felt powerful and confident. My body felt electric, like tiny sparks surging through it. I opened my eyes and pictured something to hit and the end of the chamber. To my great surprise a visage of a man appeared, where I had imagined it. I readied myself, and charged the spectral form. In the blink of an eye, I closed in my target and punched right through it. The visage depicted what the impact would have been, had it been real person. My arm went through, and ripped out half of the torso, as I passed it. The visage faded, and I looked astonished at me hands.

The surging energies faded, and I suddenly felt very fatigued and famished. I slowly walked upstairs, to the great dining hall, and found a blood-filled jug on the nearest table. Alvis always had great foresight. He was nowhere to be seen though. I felt dawn coming, so I went to my sleeping-chamber, and took rest.



"You seemed so full of life back then. Even in death. What happened?", Nathaniel asked teasingly with a big smile upon his face. I glared at him, and replied:

"I have existed for more than a millennium, which have made me more grounded, and less impulsive."

Nathaniel mumbled, looking into the fire:

"Apparently, not less grumpy".

I continued my glare, but withheld my scolding, in recollection of recent memories. We sat in eerie silence for a while, before Nathaniel before silence. He asked respectfully, yet with an undertone of tease:

"What happened next, Sire?"

I aired out a hopeless sigh, and said:
“Politics, Childe, politics...”

Chapter Three – Knowledge and Power:

Two moons passed since my first day in the primordial chamber. I spent most of my time in combat training in said chamber, and on occasion wandering about in the sanctuary's surroundings. Alvis checked in on me once in a while, but mostly kept to himself, out of sight. One day he came down to the chamber, and said in a serious tone:

"Come along, I have to show thee something." I followed him upstairs, through the centre door in the gargoyle's entrance-hall. It led to a corridor, which lead to a new room with three unexplored doors. Alvis walked straight to the centre door, opened it, and went down some stairs. I followed, and caught up with him in a round chamber. In the centre of it, was a great fountain, filled with blood. It flowed slowly from the top, down four levels, each of them larger than the other. Alvis pointed towards it and said in a proud and weighty voice:

"This, is the cornerstone of the sanctuary. A well, with an endless flow of fresh blood. It doth

not cause the same pleasure when consumed, as I am sure thee art familiar with, but nourishes just as well."

I looked at the marvellous spring in wonderment, but became curious towards a different matter and said inquisitively: "It is astonishing for certain, but why art thou revealing this to me now?"

Alvis replied with a sigh and an undertone of frustration:

"I have to take leave for some time. I have to locate some Einherjar – a group of Nordic Cainites, whom dost not seem comprehend, the necessity of obscuring their true nature. To mortals and alike – and attempt to talk some sense into them... Await my return, and we shall deal with them according to their answer."

I nodded obediently and replied:

"Understood, Sire. I shall guard the place in thine absence."

He glanced at me, nodded in approval and took his leave.

I stared at the fountain a good while, before I went upstairs again and returned to my training. I wondered how such a well had been made, and where the blood came from.

Ten days passed, and Alvis still had not made his return. I stood outside the sanctuary, look up at a crescent moon, when suddenly I heard the sound of breaking twigs. I dashed around a tree, and obscured myself behind a thorny bush. Through the wood I saw three torch-lights. My nocturnal vision revealed four human men, walking towards the entrance of the crypt. One of the them, snuck around a few paces behind the others. Most definitely he was there to counter-ambush and scout. I listened in on their conversation, and gathered from it that they were hunting the 'monster' that slaughtered a bunch of people and burned down their farms. I whispering to myself: "Curse the gods for bringing misfortune onto me".

I knew these men were looking for justice, but only anguish would come their way, if they found the 'monster'. I would rather solve this issue without bloodshed, but if they located the mound, I would have to take action. Even though they could not see the entrance, the hill still looked peculiar from a mortal perception. I waited to see if they would stray from their

path, but unfortunately, they did not. The entrance-location definitely caught their attention. Three of them halted and examined it. I suddenly had an idea. Perhaps I could mind-wipe them, causing them to forget they had ever been here. I did not know if it was within my power to do so, but decided it was worth a try. I crept around them and came behind the scout still hiding away from the others. He was crouching, looking intensely at the others, and was completely unaware of my presence. I swiftly grabbed his face, holding my hand over his mouth, while trying not to break his jaw – Which I knew I could do with ease. He tried to scream and fight me off, to no avail. I grabbed his neck with my other hand, and made him stand up. I walked towards to others, and when I was sure they could see me, I spoke out confidently:

“Evening mortals. You are trespassing on sacred ground.”

They turned around with a startled look upon their face. One of them, the man in the front, exclaimed:

“Witch! Release this man, and we shall make thy death painless!”

I scoffed and laughed scornfully. I stared at them, eyes wide open, and revealed my fangs. I could see the intense fear on the faces, and one of them made attempt to flee, but the man in charge, grabbed his wrist, and ordered him to stay and save his honour. They drew their blades, and took a step forward. I smiled rudely at them and focused in on their fear. Their heartbeats became more and more rapid, and I could feel my power working. Their fear turned to panic, and I could see they wanted to flee, but the horror had paralysed their bodies. Their facial expressions became crazed, and their hearts beat even faster. Frozen in terror, without the ability to scream, they swiftly descended into madness. I wanted to make sure they would never remember, so I intensified my focus. I realised that I had taken it too far, too late. With three simultaneous gasps, their hearts gave out, and their bodies collapsed. Shocked my mistake, I let go of the man, who fled, as fast as legs could carry him, down the hillside. I gathered myself, ran after him, and caught him with ease. He was whimpering and begged:

"Please, lady, please spare me!"

I looked him in the eyes, and shushed him gently. He calmed down, but still had a fearful expression. I pulled him in and sunk my fangs into his neck. I drank until I felt his heartbeat decelerated. I licked the wound, and saw that he had fallen into the tranquil state, I had hoped for.

I picked him up, and ran to the farm where I had fed on the farmer's wife. I put him down at the well, knocked on the door, and swiftly took my leave. When I came back to the sanctuary, I could feel dawn coming soon. I thought of the fastest way of disposing of the bodies. There was not enough time to bury all of them, nor carry them far away. I told myself in stress: "Think, think, think! Not enough time... Time! That's it!".

I knew Alvis would not be approving of it, but if I accelerated the rotting-process of the corpses, they would dispose of themselves. I stretched my arms towards the bodies, making a square with my palms for me to focus on. I assembled all of my will, and ignored everything but the task at hand. Briefly time stood still, but then the corpses started to decay. Their skin corroded, and their organs became goo. Not

only did the bodies rot away, but the grass surrounding them began to grow rapidly. I continued until only their grass-enveloped skeletons were left, and then I felt exhausted to the ground. I forced myself to stand and walked slowly down the stairs, and down to the blood-well. I put my entire face in, and drank ravenously. Though fully satisfied, I felt so weak. Never had I been up so close to dawn. I rushed to my bed and collapsed hard on it.

I awoke to a furious voice, quaking through the halls:

“Thora! I summon thee!”

Without thought or hesitation, I rose from my bed, and dashed to the dining hall. I was met with a very angry Alvis. Usually he did not show much emotion, but this time his face and voice was filled with rage.

“What happened upstairs? - And do not even bother lying, I could feel the time-distorting from miles away – Explain yourself!”

I bowed my head like a child getting scolded by a parent, and said softly with great remorse:

“Four men came by the sanctuary, and to avoid bloodshed, and discovery, I tried to wipe their

minds. I failed horribly, and accidentally... scared them to death."

Alvis briefly looked at me approvingly, but then returned to anger and said:

"Foolish Childe, our clan doth not hath the ability to dominate minds... and that still doth not explain the time-distortion."

"Forgive me, Sire. After I disposed of the fourth guy, I returned here, lacking the time to dispose of the bodies, before dawn. So, I thought it a bright idea, to accelerate the decay of the bodies."

He paused, gazing at me for what felt like an eternity. Then his face returned to his usual emotionless expression.

"Thou didst well Childe. Lacking knowledge and pressured by circumstance. Do try to be more careful henceforth. Thou wast fortunate disaster did not occur."

Surprised by his reaction, I kept quiet and held my head-bowed stance. I was excepting further lecturing from Alvis, but he kept silent as well. I finally mustered the courage to look up at him and ask:

"How did the council fare?"

He looked up and sighed in frustration:

"Unfavourable, to say the least. They could not see sense in operating with low profile..." he said.

He scoffed and exclaimed:

... Einherjar, as stubborn in death, as in life!"

"So, what do we do, Sire?" I asked confused.

Alvis started to walk out of the room, into the guardian hall, and I followed. He was talking as we walked:

"We do what a master doth, when a pack of mongrels will not obey."

He turned left and entered the centre-door, and continued talking in a very displeased tone:

"Find the biggest one and teach him a lesson."

He growled annoyed and exclaimed:

"Gangrel scum... and Einherjar as well! They have no respect for the Traditions, nor their elders. The only thing they comprehend is raw physical power."

We stood in the room prior to the blood-chamber, and Alvis opened the left door and entered the room. It was a small one, with a metal door, similar to those of the sleeping-chambers', but much larger. Alvis drew out a key from one of his pockets, turned a huge

lock, which made a faint click. He pulled the key, which worked as a handle for a small hatch. Behind the hatch was a hole, just big enough for a hand. Alvis put his inside it, and a tick was heard. He pulled out his hand, which was bleeding from each fingertip. Next, there were loud sounds coming from many turning mechanisms, in the wall. Then a brief moment of silence, followed by the rumbling of the door opening inwards. In the room were seven stone pedestals, each had an object on top. I only saw the room fleetingly, but made out the objects contained within. A helmet, a flute, a spear, a vial, a book, and two swords, one of which Alvis removed from its holder, and carried it out of the room. The door began to shut, as soon as he left the room. He presented the sword proudly to me, stretching it out on both arms. It looked magnificent. The sheath was made of shining metal, spirally bound in red leather. The grip looked as if it was made of some kind of bone, wrapped in the same type of leather, and the pommel was a large clear ruby. Alvis pulled it from its holder, and revealed the blade. It was even more polished than the sheath. The blade itself was covered in

mystical symbols from guard to point. Inside the fuller was an inscription that read:

DRACO INTERFECTOREM

Alvis handed me the spectacular blade and said:

"This, I give to thee. It will cut through almost anything, and can harm most supernatural beings. The sword is worth more than your existence, so do NOT lose it. I hope it will serve you well."

I took the sword, speechless. It was a perfect creation. Never had I seen anything so beautiful. It weighted perfectly in my hand, and was equally as balanced. I looked at Alvis, and said gratefully:

"Thou dost me great honour, Sire. I am not certain I deserve this. How can I repay you?"

He laughed and replied:

"Continue obeying me without question, and follow my instruction as well as thee always hast. Thou keep persevering, as I predicted when I chose to embrace thee."

I bowed deeply before him, and awaited his command. He handed me the sheath and said: "Go upstairs, and give it a few swings. We take leave tomorrow evening."

I awoke the next dusk, and was greeted by Alvis in his usual jug-extending manner. He instructed me to only bring my sword, a pouch of coins, and a black woollen robe.

Inconspicuous, he said it was. We left within minutes and started trekking through the terrain.

"Can you share some information about the journey?" I asked curiously.

Alvis smiled at me, and said calmly:

"Of course, Childe. Knowledge is always crucial. - We are headed east. A town lies there, near the ocean. We shall barter our way across the Baltic sea, and venture into the wilds on the other side. There we shall find a place, some of the Einherjar, call home."

"We are to interact with mortals?" I asked surprised.

"Indeed, we are. Kine have their uses – Kine is a Cainite term for mortals – they are obviously below us, and their main function is sustenance. But they can be quite practical, and they remind us of who we were, before our embrace. Thus, pulling us further from the beast within."

Alvis glanced at me and told me that we should

start running. We moved as swiftly as I could, without accessing our powers, and at the brink of dawn we arrived at an old burial mound. Alvis wedged himself inside the small entrance, and I followed. The grave was empty, long since cleared out by grave-robbers. Not even skeletons lay there. It was big enough for five people. Five individual graves were dug out from a circular centre-point. Alvis put himself in one, and I in another. I was complaining to myself how the chosen resting place, and how our sleeping-chambers were much more pleasant. But when I closed my eyes, I passed out just as easily as always.

The following eve, we arrived at a Harbour settlement, consisting of approximately twenty houses. I could see six large fishing boats, and a smaller vessel, most probably for transporting people across. The stench of fish and livestock was horrid, and were I capable of being nauseated and vomiting, I definitely would have. As we stood on an elevation descending towards the town, I could see the other side of the water. The gap was tiny.

"What is thy plan, sire?" I asked cunningly.

Alvis pointed at the largest building and said: "We shall go to the gathering-hall, find a man known as Ander. He knoweth me as Thorvald, and I have often bragged about my beautiful wife, Astrid. Whom he is going to meet tonight." he said with a sly smile.

I raised my brow, and asked disbelievingly: "So, I am to pretend to be thy loving wife?"

He laughed and said:

"Yes, that should not be too difficult. Just let me do the majority of the talking".

He held out his arm, nodded at it, and said flippantly:

"Come wife. Let us fraternize".

I rolled my eyes, took his arm, and followed him to the hall. The inside was blazing hot, and the air was thick with the stench of mead, meat, sweat and smoke. Twenty-Five Kine where inside, drinking, conversing and eating. Most of them barely noticed us enter. Alvis pointed towards an overweight, bald man, with a face red as hot iron – the parts of it that was not covered, in a chest long, black beard. He saw us approaching, and excused himself. He walked towards us, and gestured towards a table, only occupied by a sleeping drunkard.

Alvis pushed him with the back of his hand, tilting the man off the bench. Ander sat down and spoke loudly – as was required in the noise – with his arms out wide, gesturing a warm welcome:

“Thorvald, my old friend! Welcome, welcome! I see thou broughtest along thy ravishing wife. Thy beauty cannot be described, even by the most skilled skalds. A most unique colour of hair thou hast. Colour of a blooming rose. Most exquisite!”

Alvis smiled warmly at him and replied:

“Ander, thy charmer! It is good to see thee as well”

Ander poured mead into three massive clay jugs, and two of them in front of us. He took a huge gulp of the mead, and gazed at us, waiting for us to drink. Alvis raised the jug to his lips, and pretended to drink. Ander smiled warmly and asked:

“Wife not fond of mead?”

Alvis subtly spit the mead back in the cup, smile back at Ander and replied:

“Oh no, her stomach doth not agree with it, and it maketh her unusually giddy.”

Ander laughed loudly at the ceiling, after which

he put both arms on the table, holding his jug. He hunched down a bit, to move closer to. "So, how can I be of service my friend?" Ander asked in a tone, less easy to be overheard. Alvis mimicked him, and replied in the same tone:

"We need to get across the water, and arrive in good time before dawn. Art thou too intoxicated to sail?"

Ander scoffed loudly, as if it was the most ridiculous thing he ever heard, and replied: "Impossible! I shall ready the boat at once".

Alvis put a small coin-pouch on the table, and Ander claimed it on his way out. We waited a few moments, and exited the building ourselves.

Alvis looked around, and said:

"Now, would be a good time to feed. Be brief, and meet me at the pier."

Before I had time to say anything, Alvis was gone. I looked around for a loner, and found a drunk man sleeping in a stack of hay. I scouted around, to make sure no one was watching, and fed on the drunkard. His blood was foul, it tasted of fat and alcohol, but it did its job. Soon afterwards I stood at the pier. Alvis and Ander

were already in the boat, and so I jumped in. We sailed in silence for a few minutes before Ander broke it:

"I am sorry for my behaviour earlier, Sire."

His tone had suddenly changed into a more respectful and obedient one. Alvis sighed and replied:

"Do not think any of it. We all do what we must to uphold the masquerade."

I was shocked and said confused:

"So, Ander knoweth of us? I thought we could not show our true nature to Kine! And what is the Masquerade?"

Ander smiled, peering across the waters, and said:

"She really is new-born, is she not?"

Alvis replied proudly:

"Indeed, she is, but a very promising student. She will make a powerful ally."

He paused for a moment and then he started one of his lectures:

"The Masquerade, is one of the Traditions passed down from Caine himself. *'Thou shall not reveal thy true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing such shall renounce thy claims of Blood.'*

The Traditions are our basic laws, and if they

are upheld, they make all Cainite's existence much more bearable."

I raised my brow in wonder and asked:

"Why does Ander know about Cainites then?"

Alvis turned his head, gazed me and continued his lecture:

"Ander is my Ghoul. Once a moon I feed him a bit of my blood, and thus gaining a loyal servant. Ander doth in return, gain a minor portion of our abilities. Strength, halted aging, etcetera."

We all remained silent for the rest of the journey. I looked at the star-shining night-sky, thinking about all I had just been told. There was so much to learn. Which made me anxious and eqaully as excited. We arrived on the other side, and leapt to land. Alvis handed a Ander a small vial, and told him to keep it until he needed it. We parted ways with a respectful nod. Ander sailed back, and we went into the inland. Before dawn we found a formation of large boulders, one of which Alvis lifted. Underneath was a small place we could sleep. We rested side by side, in the tight space, until the following sundown.

The next night we ran, through rough terrain, mostly forest, for several hours. When the moon was at its zenith I heard drums beating, and what sounded similar to a large gathering of people, from within the forest. There were screams, laughs, howling, and the sounds of fighting. We came upon a grand moonlit opening the forest, filled with people. They were having some sort of celebration. A vulgar and horrific one. From the cover of trees, I could see kindred feeding on wailing kine. Others were fornicating in large orgies. Further towards the middle were men and women fighting. It was like a perverted version of Valhalla. Furthest from us, sat a large, grizzly looking man. He was dressed in animal hides, and his unkempt hair and beard, had tribal trinkets in them. His throne was made of bone, and it was built high, and thus he could overlook the entire gathering. Alvis turned to me, and said in an extremely serious tone:

"Do not speak unless questions are directed towards thee. We are greatly outnumbered, and these people are enraged easily. They belong to the false Brujah and the Grangrel clans, and are therefore prone to severe aggression."

I nodded obediently, and placed my hand on the hilt, hidden by my robe. We walked slowly through the crass display of activities. As we approached they brute on the bone-throne, more Cainites began to pay attention to us. Some refrained from their doings, and started to surround us. We halted before the throne, and Alvis gave the man a slight bow. He leaned forward and gazed down upon us. He spoke out in a voice, as loud and brutish as himself:

"Alvis! Hast thou come back, for another attempt, to disrupt our ways?"

Alvis turned and spoke to all whom would listen, in a stern, and ominous voice:

"Nay! I bring a warning. If thou dost not abstain from thy ways, thou wilt bring down calamity on all kindred of the north. The Traditions exist for a good reason. Breaking the Masquerade will attract Hunters, Lupines and other foes alike. It is imperative to obscure ourselves, if we are to exist without obstruction. Thy leader, Leidolf, wilt not adhere to our sacred Traditions. Yet, thou can decide for thyself."

Leidolf laughed imperious, and said arrogantly: "We have an understanding with the lupines further north, and Kine are no threat to us!"

Alvis glared at Leidolf, and smiled. He replied even more imperious:

"Oh Leidolf. So ignorant thou art..."

Gasps were heard from the crowd around us

"... The Lupines will attack when they see fit, and Hunters are not the average livestock. They are organized, highly skilled, and have a fearless conviction. Worst of all, they have one goal... Vanquishing us!"

Fury rose upon Leidolf's face. He stood up and he yelled:

"How dare thee! Thou enterest my domain, and spewest out demands! Thou attemptest to turn my people against me, and our ways! We shall never submit to thine insignificant laws!"

Alvis smiled flippantly and replied calmly:

"So be it. *'Doing such shall renounce thy claims of Blood.'* I hereby enact Lextalionis. Leidolf, thou mustest suffer thy final death."

Leidolf pointed at Alvis and screamed in wrath:

"Insolent scum! Thou art the one whom will meet thy final death. Seize them!"

Alvis rose his arms in air, and in the blink of an eye, we were deep within the forest. Far away, a beastly roar echoed throughout the forest.

Alvis was kneeling on the ground besides me.

He looked weakened. I asked extremely surprised:

“What happened?”

“I froze time, and gave us a head start. Quickly, pick me up and carry me to the rocks, where we slept. Only dawn will stop them now.”

I tossed him over my shoulder, and ran as fast as I could. I ran for hours, with the bestial yelling closing in on us. When we exited the forest, the hunt for us seized. Dawn was less than an hour away. I located the mound, and lifted the boulder with much hardship. I put Alvis in the hole, and jumped in after. The sun came up just as I pulled the stone in place, and a tiny ray hit my right hand. Never in my existence had I felt so much pain. It was excruciating, and worst of all I could not regenerate. Alvis was sound asleep, and I tried to stay awake. But the need to rest was too severe, and I passed out.

Chapter Four - Hunt the Hunters:

"Froze time? How?" Nathaniel asked in disbelief. I raised my brow, gazed at him and asked: "We are both vampires. Thou hast seen other monsters, and thou hast seen magic. But stopping time momentarily, thou canst not comprehend?"

He sighed and said:

"I know, it sounds preposterous. It is just, time in this invisible, untouchable force. Similar to gravity. It seems far from reality, even ours, to be able to control it."

I smiled at him. His undead heart was as if it still beat. One of the many reasons I felt so much affection for him. He sometimes made me feel alive again. Nathaniel saw my smile and my thoughtful gaze, and asked confused:

"Why are you smiling, Sire?"

I resumed my usual self, and replied:

"Do not concern thyself with it, Childe. Maybe, someday thou wilt, learn to control those 'forces', thou art speaking off."

Nathaniel looked as if he tried to imagine it and

replied:

"I doubt it. Please continue with your story, Sire."



I awoke to the sound of sniffing. It came from outside. Something started to move the boulder. I gripped my sword, and readied myself for a fight. I looked at Alvis, whom was still not awoken. The stone was slowly pushed aside, and as first opportunity, I sat up, and leapt into the air. All in one motion. The one who had pushed the stone leapt backwards in surprise. I checked to see who it was. It was definitely a Cainite. A very animalistic one. He had red, with a hint of yellow, glowing eyes. On the tip of each finger, he had black, talon like claws. He growled deeply at me, and leapt towards me, ready to slash me with the claws. He was fast, and I stood unbalanced, but I managed to stop the hand coming from the left. As he cut deep into my upper arm, I cut off his right hand. We both yelled in agony, and withdrew from each other, simultaneously. He sneered at me, and I

hissed at him. I could see his morale was low, after losing a limb. Even with a burnt hand, and slashed arm, it was a chance I was willing to take. I sped myself up, and charged him. He reacted to my attack, my sword had already impaled him chest. With surprise and pain, he fell backwards onto the ground. I drew my blade out as he fell, and moved besides him. I raised my sword to decapitate him, but then doubted the action. I had no feud with the man himself. He could just be following order. On other hand, he tried to kill me. If I spared him, he might return for a second attempt. Even worse, some mortal could come across him, and that would break the Masquerade. I lowered my sword, dried it off in his clothes. I sheathed it and went over to the rock formation. I dragged Alvis out and put him gently on the ground. Afterwards, I picked up the man, and threw him inside, along with his hand. Then I pushed the boulder on top. Scouting around I came to the conclusion that no one else was there. I picked Alvis up, and ran to the place where Ander had docked. Unfortunately, no one was there. I did not dare to swim across. Not knowing the water and its current, would make it too dangerous. I

decided to run south, parallel to the eastern coast of the other side. Hopefully I would come across a settlement, where someone had a boat. After hours, I came by such a place. A small house with light inside. At the shore lay a fisherman's hut, and a boat tied to a small pier. Suddenly I heard howls from far away, and knew they were closing in on me. I ran to the house, lay down Alvis at the pier. I knocked panically, and wailed in my best scared-helpless-woman voice:

"Please help! I beg of thee! I require aid!"

Hasty footsteps sounded from inside the house. A middle-aged, white bearded man, opened the door, and looked at me with squinted eyes. He asked with concern:

"What is the matter child?"

I continued my emotional panicky voice and replied:

"My husband and I were held captive by brigands. We managed to escape, but they are gaining on us fast. I'm badly hurt, and my husband is unconscious. Can you please help us to the other side of the waters?!"

He looked empathetic, and kindly said:

"Certainly. Let me get my gear. Wait here."

He went inside the house, put on a bearskin cloak, and grabbed a hand-axe by the door, on the way out. He walked towards Alvis and picked him up. He said strained from Alvis weight:

"Get in the boat, girl."

I continued my act, and ran to the boat. He put Alvis inside it, and pushed it from the pier. I started to row, and when we were a good distance from the shore, he spoke again:

"My name is Einar, what is yours, child?"

"Thora" I said with a long sniff, like I had been crying.

He looked at me with concern and asked:

"Can I please check on your husband? He does not look good."

"Yes, please" I said with another sniff.

Einer stopped rowing, and kneeled down besides Alvis. He put his fingers on Alvis' neck, and his ear to his mouth. He looked up at me, and shook his head, with a sad expression upon his face. He said consolingly:

"He has been claimed by the gods. He now rests in Valhalla"

I pretended to be in shock, to avoid questions, or further conversation.

Einer began rowing again and said grievingly: "I know how thou feelest. I once had a family as well. Two beautiful daughters, equal to my wife. Much like thyself. A decade back, they were claimed by the same illness. By the cruel will of the gods, I yet live."

I gazed at him, sincerely saddened. He forced a smile and looked away. The rest of the journey across, I stared intensely towards the east, fearing dawn would arrive at any moment. We arrived at the shore. Einar carried Alvis to land, and I followed behind. Intense hunger came upon me, and even though it saddened me, I had to feed on the sweet old Einar. I reluctantly walked up behind him, and sunk my teeth into his neck. He aired out a relieved gasp, and his body became limp. I held on to him, and lowered him slowly to the ground. I stopped my draining, and whispered in his ear: "Thou shalt see thy family soon."

I sunk my teeth into him yet again, and drained him dry. Afterwards I put him into the boat, and pushed it out. A bloody tear rolled down my cheek, and a guilty feeling was left in me. I kneeled beside Alvis, bit my wrist, and came it to his mouth. For a few seconds, nothing

happened. Then he slowly started to feed from me. After a while he opened his eyes, and pushed away my arm. He looked at me and nodded:

"Thank you, Childe."

I replied respectfully, with a hint of fear in my voice:

"My pleasure, sire. I..."

"I already know what occurred. Thy blood showed me." He said dismissively.

He scouted around for a few minutes, in silence. Then he said determined:

"The burial mound is to the north-east. We should be able to make it before dawn. We must return to the sanctuary, as soon as possible."

The journey back was without complication. The following night we returned to the catacombs. Alvis and I descended straight to the blood-chamber. The thirst was great in us both. We each drank two jugs, and then we finally felt contempt again. Alvis drank his final sip, and turned to me. He said in a thoughtful voice: "I have to head out, Childe. There are some fellow Cainites I must inform of what

transpired. Remain in the area, and await my return. I shall know what to do, when I come back."

"But what if the Einherjar come here? What shall I do?" I asked concerned.

"I doubt they know where this place is. Nor, do I think, they will leave their enclave, or try to hide. They are too proud for that." he said calculative.

We went upstairs to the gargoyle's room. Alvis spoke out in his lecturing voice:

"Before I leave, I have to teach thou something: *'Those thou create are thine own children. Until thy Progeny shall be Released, thou shall command them in all things. Their sins are thine to endure.'* This is the Tradition of Accounting. Dost thou understand the meaning of it?"

I nodded and replied:

"Do not do something that would shame thee. Doing so, would harm thee, and, me as well."

He nodded, and went up the stairs. As he ascended, he yelled over his shoulder:

"Stay safe, my Childe."

I looked hopeless at the floor and said quietly:

"I shall, sire. I shall."

I waited weeks. Alvis had still not returned. Autumn had begun, and the vegetation outside had started to turn reddish-brown and wither. One night, I stood outside, overlooking the hillside, and landscape below. It was windy, and not a single creature was to be seen. Suddenly, I heard muffled footsteps from behind. I turned quickly, and drew my sword. To my great surprise, I saw the man I had buried beneath the boulder. I had a better look at him this time. He was young in appearance. His long, filthy hair was tied up in a ponytail. His twig-filled beard, stretched to his hyoid bone. He was dressed in animal hides and furs. Overall, he blended in well with nature. I hissed at him and said harshly:

"Give me one sensible reason, why I should not slay thee, right here, right now!"

To my great surprise he kneeled before my, bowing his head and said submissively:

"I can give thee three. I abandoned the Einherjar. Thy Sire's words made sense to me. And I can help thee carry out thy blood hunt on Leidolf."

"Why?" I asked confused.

He lifted his head and spoke again:
Thou spared my unlife, and I can see the perils
not upholding - What did he call it? - The
Masquerade, will bring. Leidolf is blinded by
arrogance, and power. He thinketh himself
equal to one of the gods."

I looked at him in disbelief and asked:
"Thou wouldst help me end him? What dost
thou have to gain?"

He smiled, and aired out a relieving sigh. Then
he replied:

"Freedom, of course. To roam unshackled, and
do whatever I desire."

I understood and nodded. I gazed at him a few
moments, trying to analyse his character and
his words. I did not trust him, but I would let
him prove himself.

"Fine!" I said sternly. "Thou canst stay in the
surrounding forest, as long as thou stayest
hidden. I shall inform my sire, and inform thee
of his decision. But first, stand up and tell me
thy name."

He did, and said:

"Kleng. I am called Kleng."

"My name is Thora. Now, Kleng, be patient, do
not kill anyone, and await me. It may take a

while”

Three moons passed, and snow had crept over the land like a white blanket. Alvis hid not his face, and I was growing worried and reckless. Most of my days were spent on training, and meditating. At times, I felt as if my sanity left me. I would pace around the catacombs, calling out to Alvis, hoping that he would appear. Unfortunately, he did not. I grew tired of waiting, and decided to take matters into my own hands. Now was the time to strike, and my new ally could help me. I exited the sanctuary, and yelled as loudly as I could: “Kleng! I summon thee!”

After a while, Kleng appeared from the snow-covered trees. He nodded at me, and said: “What can I do for thee, my lady?”

“Now is the time. We hunt Leidolf, and slay him!” I said determined.

“Very well. When do we depart?” He asked, with one brow lifted.

I paused, and thought if I needed anything for the journey. I put my hand on the hilt of my blade, and replied sternly:

“Now. We journey north-east, and cross the ice

at the narrowest point. We can discuss a plan on the way. There is a burial mound, about a day from here. We can take rest there."

We ran all night, and made it to the resting place. Inside the mound, I broke silence and asked Kleng:

"Thou saidest thee had a way to end him. What didst thou have in mind?"

He replied excitedly:

"Ah. I thought of a way to do it, without much interference. Leidolf is fond of hunting. He would usually go looking for the biggest creature he could find, and fight it with his bare hands. On those hunts, he would only bring two of his most trusted people. That is when we strike! On one of those hunts."

I frowned and asked in disbeliefingly:

"So, thou wantest us to locate him, in the middle of nowhere. And fight him, and two other Cainites. Firstly, how do we find him?"

Kleng smiled proudly and said:

"I shall find them!"

I asked in the same tone, with a continued frown:

"Thou wilt find them? How?"

He looked offended, and replied flippantly:

"I found thee, did I not? I am a skilled tracker, and the winter makes tracking easier. It is hard to explain, but the snow reveals many scents, to those whom know how to sense it."

I nodded and replied, slightly more optimistic: "True. Well, I am counting on thee, then. Leave Leidolf to me, though."

"Thou art going to fight all three by thyself?" he asked, just as disbelievingly as I sounded before. I smiled and said confidently:

"Nay. I know Leidolf is too proud, and arrogant to decline a challenge. Which is exactly what I am going to do."

Kleng nodded approvingly and said teasingly:

"That may work. If thou art defeated, I can always say I lured thee to him, and deny having helped thee."

I aired out a scoffing laugh, and punched him on the shoulder. He replied with a smile, and crawled into one of the graves to sleep. There was something strangely comforting about having an ally, whom was not a Sire. That morning, I fell asleep with a smile upon my face.

Winter was a great thing for Cainites, indeed.

When we woke next dusk, it was late afternoon. This time of year, it was more night than day. In other words; kindred paradise. The early cover of darkness, gave of the time we needed to cross the ice on foot. Kleng seemed to move well, but I felt like an infant, learning to walk. The frozen fjord was slippery, and at every step, I feared the ice would collapse beneath me. After hours of slow traipse, and taunting, flippant jokes from Kleng, we finally made it across. Kleng made one final remark, laughing: "Thou resembllest a scared deer, fleeing on slippery surface!"

I sneered at him and said irritated:

"We do not all have thy damned claws! And need I remind you that we are on land again? I can catch thee and make thee submit with ease now!"

He smiled, bowed mockingly, and said teasingly:

"I shall refrain from more taunts, my lady."

I ignored that last one, and replied annoyed:

"Let us find shelter. We can take rest beneath the boulders, where I put thee. Or we can attempt to find another place within the forest. What dost thou reckon?"

Kleng looked around, scouting the area. I could see that he called upon powers of his blood.

After a while, he replied:

"I do not sense any dangers around. I reckon we travel further north, following the tree-line. There is an abandoned hunting cabin up there."

I nodded approvingly and said:

"Lead the way, tracker."

We ran a couple of hours, and as Kleng has said, we arrived at a large hut. It was slightly hidden by the forest. Old worn-down skinning racks still stood outside, along with an equally worn axe. Kleng walked towards the door and opened it. The door bound a little, and opened with a rusty creek squeak. We entered the hut, and found it mostly empty. All it contained was a broken bow, and wooden chair. Kleng walked to a corner, and pulled up some floor boards. He turned towards me and said:

"We can sleep beneath the cabin, and tomorrow we can hunt. I do not know about thee, but I am starting to feel a bit famished."

I nodded and descended into the tight crawl-space. I made room for Kleng, and came down as well. He put the planks back in place, and we

both took rest.

The following night, we travelled through the forest. Kleng tracked down a resting moose. He pointed at it, and signalled that I should go around it, to prevent it from escaping. I circled around it, and found myself opposite from Kleng. I looked at me, and leapt towards it. The moose made a startled moan, and turned towards me. Kleng landed on its side, and burrowed his teeth and claws in its flesh. As the beast ran toward me, I drew my sword and cut one of its front legs in half. The heavy animal fell to ground, and groaned in pain. I stepped aside, preventing it landing me, and slit its throat as it fell. Before life left the moose completely, we both sank our fangs into it, and drained. It was not even close to the satisfactory feeling of human blood, but it worked well enough. After we fed, we ventured deeper into the forest. At midnight, after almost half the night had passed. Kleng picked up a scent. He inhaled a big whiff through his nose, and said:

"Leidolf passed through here, yesternight. Along, with four other kindred. I reckon thy

sire, have made him a bit paranoid. They went north. Towards the mountains."

"Can you locate them?" I asked impatiently.

He nodded and said warningly:

"I can, but there is a slight problem. I cannot mask thy scent. Which means they will know we are coming. And that will leave us upon to an ambush."

"But thou would know if they are coming, right?" I asked fretfully.

He rose his brow, and replied confused:

"Of course, but they outnumber us."

"It doth not matter. I just need enough time to call Leidolf out, and challenge him." I said, disregarding Kleng's wariness.

He shrugged and said surrendering:

"It is thy sunrise, lady."

I gestured for him to move along, sighed, and replied:

"Let us continue, shall we? I would very much like to avoid that sunrise."

"That is not what I meant. I..." Kleng said confused.

I rolled my eyes and replied hopelessly:

"I know what thee meant."

We journeyed further north, until we came upon what looked as freshly dug graves. Five of them. Kleng whispered to me:

"They are coming. I can smell them."

I nodded and whispered back:

"Hide! In case I do not make it back, thou must find Alvis, and tell him what transpired."

Kleng gave me a worried look, moved past me and disappeared into the forest.

I gathered my courage, and yelled towards the sky:

"Leidolf! Show thyself! I know, thou art here!"

My voice echoed between the trees. Soon after I heard a malicious laughter, coming from my front. Leidolf's brutish voice followed:

"Foolish girl. Thou comest here, all alone, and very outnumbered..."

Leidolf stepped out of the shadows in front of me, and around me four Cainites, as dirty and ragged as Kleng. All of them, men. Leidolf continued his boasting:

"...Thou hast entered thy final resting place.

Men! Tear this Fledgling apart!"

I raised my arm, gesturing for them to halt, and said with haste:

"Wait! I challenge thee to one-on-one combat.

Unless thou are art a coward!"

The four henchmen laughed condescendingly, but halted, awaiting Leidolf's orders. Leidolf sneered, stroked his beard in thought, and replied arrogantly:

"Very well, girl. I shall tear thee apart with my own hands!"

I sniggered and said:

"Bring it, brute!"

As I drew my sword, I could see the rage in his eyes. His pride and wrath, would be his downfall. He charged me with a roar. I sped myself up, and dodged him at the last moment. He ran head first, into a tree, which snapped in half at the impact. I laughed mockingly and said:

"That is, it? I have fought Kine, stronger than you."

He rose from the ground, even more angry, and charged me yet again. This time I leapt over him, and kicked the back of his head. He turned quickly, and punched aimlessly at me. I dodged all the blows, and leapt backwards. As I did so, I cut him across the chest. His henchmen looked at us in disbelief. Leidolf tore off his bear-skin shirt, and said frothingly:

"Enough. I grow tired of thy cowardliness". He laughed, and that laugh became deeper and deeper. He began to transform his body. His joints cracked, long black claws grew from his fingers. Fur grew from his body, which grew in size. After half a minute, a massive beast, looking like something in between a man and a bear. He was almost three meters all tall, hunched over, and very fearsome. He charged me on all fours, and attempted to bite me. I stepped aside, and cut deep in his shoulder. As soon as he missed, he swung his arm towards my legs, attempting to claw them. I jumped, and kicked myself off his massive body. He turned, and rose on himself up on two legs. As he tried to maul me, and rolled and slashed his stomach. His front paws hit the ground with a loud thump. He roared and charged me again. I leapt in the air again, trying to jump over him again. But as I jumped, he rose, and swung out a paw. One of the claws pierced my lower leg. Like a hook it hatched on. He swung me around like a lifeless body, and the claw cut through the muscle. I flew across the battlefield, and slammed into a tree. The agony was intense, and I was extremely disoriented. I could hear

and feel the enormous paws pounding the ground, as he came charging again. At the last second, I gathered myself, and saw his razor filled jaw coming towards me. I rolled, and stuck my sword in the direction his head. It pierced his neck, and he roared in agony. He paused to gather himself, and I dragged myself away from him. I could not rise, and he knew it. He walked slowly towards me. Grinning and overpowering. I attempted to cut his face, but he parried with his claws, and pinched the blade with them. He tossed it aside and rose on back legs again. As the crushing paws descended towards my torso, I closed my eyes, accepting my final death. I opened my eyes again, and screamed fearlessly. Then, time stood still. The paws were less than a second from crushing my body. Even though surprised, I had no time to think. I rolled away, and stood up, using a tree to get up. I limbed towards my sword, picked it up, and then back to Leidolf. I assembled all strength I had left, and committed it to a single blow. Time flew again, but too late. My sword buried itself deep in Leidolf's neck, cut it clean off. To my great surprise he did not turn into ash. Instead he dissolved into earth. As he was

dying, his chopped off head, gasped out one last sentence:

"Now I see how thee could kill my son."

I was baffled by his last words, and the way of his demise, left me with a bad feeling. Like a dagger between the shoulder-blades. Looking around, I noticed his followers had dispersed. Kleng appeared from the shadows, with an exited grin upon his face. He laughed and said relieved:

"Thou didst it! I do not know how, but thou didst it!"

I looked frowning at the ground, and said wondering:

"What did he mean by 'kill my son'?"

Kleng put his hand on my shoulder, answered consolingly:

"Do not worry about it. It was a dying man's word. I can look into it for thee, but now we need to take shelter."

Chapter Five – Torches and Pitchforks:

Two moons passed. Kleng and I had spent them in the sanctuary. Kleng was mostly outside, but I had allowed him to enter, when he wanted to. There was still no sign of Alvis, and I had begun to wonder, if he ever would show up again. While Kleng consumed most of his time, enjoying his freedom, I exhausted mine studying. In the last unexplored room, downstairs to the right, I had found a small library. Among the books, was one on runic translations, into Latin. In the primordial-chamber, I learned how to pull small bits of knowledge from my blood. I assumed the knowledge was something Alvis had passed down to me. It gave a clearer picture of how the language was used, both verbally and written. My learning process was sped up, tremendously. Within two months, I had learned basic reading and writing, as well as uttering a few sentences in Latin. I did not find it very interesting, but somehow reading, and learning, gave me a strange sense of tranquillity. Which

made me less restless. I was worried for Alvis, though. So, I decided to attempt making contact. I wrote a note - written in my blood, so he would know I wrote - saying that I had important matters to discuss, and that I would appreciate if he would return. I went outside and called out for Kleng. Moments later he appeared out of the woods, like he always did. "Yes, Thora. What can I do for thee?" he said impatiently.

I sternly gazed at him, and answered in a serious manner:

"I need to leave for a couple of days. I have some matters to attend, east from here. Canst thou help me, whilst I am gone?"

He nodded, smilingly:

"Certainly! What dost thou require?"

I smiled back and replied:

"I need thee to find out more about what Leidolf said, and who this son, he spoke of, is."

"I shall see what I can learn." he said earnestly.

We said our farewells, and parted ways. Kleng disappeared into the woods, and I journeyed towards the harbour town out east. I figured if anyone could contact Alvis, it was Ander.

I arrived the following night, when the moon was at its zenith. The town was dark, and quiet. The only sounds came from livestock and from a few loud voices inside the gathering-hall. I moved silently passed the houses, and entered the hall. The smell of alcohol, food, and sweat was as intense as last time. This time, only a few men sat inside. Most of them very intoxicated. To my great fortune, Ander was there as well. He saw me instantly when I entered, and approached me swiftly. He grabbed my arm and said with a worried tone and face:

"My Lady, thou shouldest not be here."

I looked disapproving and his hand upon my arm. He let go, and bowed his head in apology. I rose my brow and asked curiously:

"Why? What is amiss?"

He whispered to me with a grave voice:

"Rumours have started to spread. Rumours about a witch, with hair the colour of a rose. Thou needest to leave. Before anyone discovers thee."

I understood his worry, and whispered back to him:

"I have a note for Alvis. If thou see him, please

pass it to him. Have you seen him lately?"

He shook his head and replied:

"I have not. If I do, I shall pass it to him. Now, please leave!"

As I passed the note to Ander, one of the men looked up, and peered at me. He yelled out drunkenly:

"She is here. The Rose Witch! Gather the men!"

I looked at Ander. He imitated someone breaking out of enchantment. Blinking his eyes with haste, and stepping unsteadily backwards, with a confused expression. He also yelled out:

"Witch! Get her!"

He made an intentional, feeble attempt to grab my arm as I dashed out the door. I ran out of town, towards the burial mound. I stopped for a moment on the hill, and looked back. He could hear the Kine rabble, and see torches getting lit. I ran as swiftly as I could, and arrived at the mound, in good time before dawn. Who could spread these rumours? I thought to myself.

After a while of recalling the past, it came to me. The man I had let live that night. That was the only logical answer. I had to hunt that man down and figure out, who and what he had told people.

I awoke the following eve, to the sound of voice. Not far from the mound, I could hear a rabble. I crawled out, and saw torch-lights in the distance. They were coming my way. Curse the gods... or God. Whoever brought this herd to arms. I snuck away fast, with the cover of darkness, and ran towards the farms, where I had dropped the young agitator. I arrived hours later, to find the two farms dark inside. They were probably all asleep. I went to the house where the previously encountered woman lived. I snuck past the dogs, and enter the house. I heard the sound of snoring, and heavy breathing. The woman and her husband were sound asleep in their bed. I walked over there with fury in my eyes. I pulled the man from the bed by his neck. He yelled out in pain, and surprise. The woman woke up and screamed. I stared at her, and aired out a whispering sneer: "Keep thy mouth shut, or I break his neck!" The scream became a whimper, and her husband asked panicked: "What dost thou want?" I ignored him and continued my stare at the woman. I hissed out in anger:

"The man, found on thy doorstep many moons ago, what did he tell thee?"

The woman looked terrified. She stared at me, then her husband, and back to me. Then she stuttered out a reply:

"I-I-I... I mean... He saith... T-t-that he was h-h-hunting a monster... Because of s-s-some strange sightings. Him and his f-f-friends came by a weird s-s-shrine, and were attacked by a b-b-beautiful witch with the hair colour of a rose."

I pushed the man hard, on to bed, and learned in closer to her. I looked at her, like a predator hungry for flesh and spoke in a snarl:

"What is his name and where did he go?"

She began to cry, and closed her eyes in fear. I yelled furious at her:

"ANSWER!"

She gathered herself, and continued her stutter:

"K-k-knut. He called himself Knut. He left one day, with a foreigner. Short dark hair and beard, brown skin. Spoke our tongue poorly. H-h-he said the man, Knut, was bewitched, a-a-and he would help him. They w-w-went west. That all I know! Please, do not hurt us!"

I nodded at her approvingly and whispered: "Tell anyone of what happened here, or that thou saw me... And I shall be back!"

I let go of the man, and stepped back. The woman embraced her husband, crying. I rushed out of the house and back to the sanctuary. I descended into dining hall, and paced around angry. Who was this foreigner? And why had he taken the man? I kicked a chair across the room, and sat down on another. I gathered myself and calmed down. West. Someone to the west would probably have seen them. Hopefully they would not have heard about 'The Rose Witch'. But in any case, I should be careful, if I hoped to learn the truth about all this, undiscovered.

I waited until the next dusk, and travelled west. Spring was almost in season, but the ground was still covered in snow. Along the way I passed the farms where I was raised. I gazed at my childhood home, longingly. I thought about visiting my mother and sister, but they probably thought, both my father and I, dead. I had not had the time or opportunity to grief, but at that very moment, it hit me, severely. Bloody tears

started to roll down my cheeks, and I succumbed to sadness. Falling to my knees, I looked up at the skies, asking the gods why they chosen my undead fate, for me. Obviously, no answer came. I stayed there for a good while, before I moved on. I eventually gathered myself, wiped the tears away, and moved on. Not long after, I arrived at the small settlement. I used to come here as a child. My father brought me along, when he needed to trade. In one of the houses, were a craftsman, whom my father sold hides to. It was many years since I had been there last, and the village had grown. Now consisting of 10 small houses, and a slightly larger gathering-hall. I braided my hair, as a walked to towards the village, and before entering, I tied it up in a bun, and covered my head with a hood. The village was quiet, apart from the drunk voices, you would usually find in a gathering-hall. Even more so in winter time. I entered the hall, and saw four men sitting there. Drinking and conversing. One of them, to my great surprise, was the craftsman. He looked older, and more worn, but more or less the same. He was a fat man, with a bald head, and a huge red beard. They all gazed at me,

when I entered, and I gave them a greeting smile. They smiled back. Happy to see a beautiful young woman, I reckon. I walked towards their table and pulled up a chair.

"Greetings, men! How dost thee fare this night?" I asked kindly.

"Well enough." they all replied with a happy mumble.

The craftsman - Finn, I remembered his name was - asked inquisitively, but friendly:

"Have we met before, I swear thee look familiar?"

I shook my head, frowned and replied, acting confused:

"No, I do not think so. Thou dost not look familiar"

He blinked his eyes a few times, look down at the table, and mumbled:

"The mead must be getting to my head, then."

One of the other men, a short, scrawny looking fellow, asked curiously:

"What bringeth thee to our town? And in the middle of the night."

I leaned in closer, and replied in a gloomy tone:

Questions, sirs. Questions. I am looking for my

friend, Knut. He was taken by a foreigner. Dark haired man. Short hair. Someone told me they traveled west, hence why I am here. Have you seen a man by that description?"

Finn looked up and said surprised:

"Yea, I have. Comes by the shop sometimes, to trade. Pays good coin too. I think he is hold up down south, somewhere. Sketchy looking fellow, he is. Carries around a thin-bladed sword. Like a needle. And a strange symbol around his neck. Nothing I have seen before."

I squinted my eyes, and nodded. I asked impatiently:

"Anything else thou canst tell me?"

They all shook their heads. I nodded disappointed, and walked towards the door. As I was about to exit, Finn said worried:

"When thou findst him, be wary. That man hath a dangerous look about him."

I nodded respectfully at them, and took my leave. Dawn was not far away, and I had to find a place to rest. I looked around town, and found a small hole. Probably dug by a dog. The hole lead to the crawl-space beneath a barn. I scouted around, to make sure, no one saw me enter. I squeezed myself into the tight hole, and

crawled deep into the darkness. There were a few animal bones around me, but no signs of occupancy.

I woke to the sounds of a dog whimpering. A man was talking to the dog, in a proud, comforting voice:

"What hast thou found, boy. Is there a fox inside? Come one, move. I shall take a look."

I swiftly moved to the side of the entrance, ready to grab whatever might come through the hole. Flames lit up the first few meters of the crawl-space, but thankfully did not reveal me. The man outside, dragged the dog away, commenting on its silliness. I waited a while, then peered outside. People were entering their houses, and soon the streets were empty. I crawled out of there, and brushed some of dirt on my clothes off. I felt hungry, so I looked around for prey. I found the village's well, and waited in shadows, hoping someone would come by. Fortunately, not long after, someone did. An adolescent girl. She was humming a tune, and scuttled to the well, without a care. As she was pulling the wells block and tackle, I snuck up on her. I quickly grasped her mouth,

and sunk my teeth into her. After I was done, I licked, the wound, and put her down by the well. No one saw us, so I left the village with haste.

I ran south, and after running almost an entire night, I found a worn-down cabin, missing half its roof. Faint lights came from inside. I had probably found my rabble-rouser. Dawn would arrive soon, so I decided to find shelter, and wait until the following night. Not far from there, I saw a burrow. Probably made by a badger or something similar. It was dug under a fallen tree, providing additional cover. It was a tight fit, but I managed to get inside, curled up like an infant. I covered the entrance with dirt, so the rays of the sun could not enter.

The following eve, I stood at a distance, looking upon the house. The faint light was the only thing I could see inside. I walked towards the door, drew my sword, and kicked it in. As the door flew off its hinges, I heard a mechanic, click. I heard it too late though. Two small arrows, coming from peculiar looking bows – I later learned it was crossbows – came flying

toward me. One pierced my shoulder, the other right beneath my collarbone. They stung like fire inside me, so I swiftly pulled them out. Unfortunately, they were constructed so their tip would stay inside. What manner of arrows were these, I thought to myself. The fiery agony spread throughout my body, and it took considerable willpower, to remain standing. I had gravely underestimated my opponent. A flippant voice, with a thick accent came from within the house:

"It stings, doth it not? What thou art feeling, is the righteous fire of the Lord, burning thy corrupt soul."

A short man appeared in front of me. Apart from the description given to me, I noticed a brigandine armor, with metal shoulder plates, that extended to a metal collar-like armor, protecting his neck. He held a rapier in his hand, and a large crucifix in the other – At the time, I did not know what any of those were. I walked towards him with heavy steps of anger. He held out the crucifix and spoke with conviction, in Latin:

"In the name of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, I repel thee, spawn of the devil."

A few steps from him, my body was stopped by an invisible force field. I could not move close to him. He stabbed me in the stomach with the needle blade, and spoke tauntingly:

"Ah aah, Fiend! Thou canst not harm a servant of the Lord."

The blade hurt just as much the arrows, which made me wrathful. I attempted to use my power of presence, to overwhelm him with fear. He closed his eyes, and whispered another prayer. He opened them again and said as tauntingly as before:

"Saint Felix feeleth no fear, monster!"

He stabbed me again. This time in the leg. I gathered my thoughts, trying to think of a way of this petrified state. And then it came to me. I forced a smile, and said condescendingly:

"But Felix feeleth, pride and arrogance. So much that he dost not need a weapon, and the Lord to defeat me."

I could see him struggling with his emotions, but eventually he let go of both objects in his hands and said with pride:

"I shall slay thee with my bare fists!"

The invisible chains ceased to hold me. I held out my hand, and put him in temporal stasis.

Now I could see the fear in his eyes. Not able to move, or even blink. I savored this moment, as I circled him. I came up behind him and whispered in his ear:

"Tell thy Lord, he choseth a poor servant!"

I sunk my teeth into him, draining him until nothing my air where in his dry veins. The blood abolished the fire within me, and I no longer felt pain. Felix fell to the floor, pale and limb. I gazed down upon him, spit blood on his neck, and decapitated him.

"Kine scum!" I hissed at the air, as I went outside. There was no sign of Knut. I scouted around the house, and found some disturbed earth. Apparently, the hunter had buried him. Not so holy after all, I thought to myself. I went inside the house again, to see if there was anything of worth. Apart from the crossbows, and his sword, I found only some provisions and a blanket. I was not going to leave any evidence, so I gathered some wood, by breaking what furniture was left, and collecting some from outside. The faint light had come from an oil-lamp. I tossed in the pile of wood, and it went up in flames. I exited with haste, and ran towards the forest. If I took a short-cut

through it, I could hopefully be back at the sanctuary, before dawn. Just as the sun was about to ascend, I entered the catacombs.

Chapter Six – The Safety of Torpor:

A week passed, with no signs of either of my male associates. I was reading in the dining hall, when suddenly I heard hasty footsteps coming down the stairs. I inhaled the scent of the guest, and recognised it. It belonged to Kleng. I shut my book, and went out to the entrance-hall. I opened the door and said impatiently:

“Finally! What took thee so long?”

I was met by a panicked Kleng. He looked as if he had seen a ghost. He uttered fearful words:

“Thora! He is back! Thou didst not kill him!”

I grabbed his shoulders, and looked him in the eye, and said sternly:

“Speak sense! Calm thyself, and tell me what right.”

Kleng's terrified look disappeared and he gathered himself. His tone turned into that of stress, instead of fear, and said:

“Right! Okay. I travelled back to the einherjar to speak with some of my companions. They told me that Leidolf had risen from the grave.

Apparently, he wears a small totem... a magical amulet of sorts... that prevents him from dying, without being inflicted with extreme damage. Sunrise, fire, that sort of destructive means. Now, here is the important news. The Tremere witch, whom made it for him, is she the way to him now. Sailing from the south, through the fjord. When she arrives, she is going to renew the magic!"

I threw my book across the room, and snarled in frustration:

"Curse him! I should have staked him and left him for the sun! I knew something was amiss, when he did not turn to ash."

"What do we do, Thora?" Kleng said equally as frustrated.

I shrugged and gazed at Kleng with a look of desperation, and said exasperated:

"I do not know, Kleng. Curse thee, Alvis! Where art thou, when thou art needed?"

A calm, emotionless voice came from the stairs: "I am right here, Childe"

Alvis entered the chamber, and looked disapprovingly at Kleng. He said condescendingly:

"I see thee have taken in a stray dog."

I looked at him in surprise, and said infuriated: "Where wast thou? I have waited for so long!" He gazed at me, with those eyes of his. The look that made me, want to curl up in fetal position, and hide. He replied calmly, with a hint of anger:

"Mind thy tone, Childe!"

I immediately held my tongue, and looked down. Kleng took a couple of steps backwards. Alvis sighed and continued speaking:

"Where I have been, is not important. Where thou art going is. Thou must finish thy task. End Leidolf. But first, thou must intercept the witch, before she arrives at the forest. Her name is Eiliswintha. She is of the Tremere clan... Kindred blood-mages. I have had dealings with her in the past. Tell her, that it would be in her best interest not to renew the ritual. And give her this."

From his pocket, he pulled out an amulet. It was made of obsidian, and had an engraving depicting an eye. He handed it to me, and I took it hesitantly. I was strangely heavy. Alvis put a hand on my shoulder, and looked me intensely in the eye. He said solemnly: "Now go! Go forth, and kill this beast."

I gazed at him with sadness and replied:

"But sire, thou hast just returned."

"And I shall be here, when thou returnest" he said, patting me gently on the cheek. He went past me, and exited the room. I looked over at Kleng's confused face, and said disappointedly: "Let us go, Kleng. We have work to do."

As we ascended from the sanctuary, Kleng said disapprovingly:

"I do not care for the way, he speaketh about me."

"Do not mind him, Kleng." I said comfortingly.

Four nights later we stood in the most southern end, of the coast. Ander had helped us journey unseen, across the water of the to the east, into the land on the other side. Two nights we had moved south until we arrived at our destination. I scouted across the water, trying to spot a boat or ship in the distance. I could not see anything, but had this ominous feeling that someone was approaching. After several minutes, something approached from afar. A Peculiar cloud of fog, was headed towards us. I glanced over at Kleng, and saw he had noticed it as well. As the fog was about to enter land, it

dissolved, and revealed a small ship. On the ship were three passengers, all dressed in black cloaks. The ship stuck land, completely soundless. It was a marvellous creation. The sails were dark red, covered in shimmering runes. The wood, which the ship was made of, was a strange, white lumber. There was no doubt in my mind, that the ship was enchanted. The person at the ship's bow, stepped off onto land. A female voice, with a germanic accent, spoke out from under the hood:

"Art thou my welcome committee?"

"I am afraid not. Art thou Eiliswintha?" replied impatiently. She removed her hood, and revealed her face. She was a beautiful, young looking woman. She had porcelain skin, light brown hair, and emerald-green eyes. She put on a false, polite smile and asked kindly:

"I am her. Whom is asking?"

"Thora Njalsdottir. Alvis is my sire. I am here to pass you a message."

She squinted her eyes, glanced a Kleng, and then gave me a long stare. After a moment of silence, she spoke out in the same false politeness as before:

"Well dear, pass it then."

I cleared my throat and said with authority:
"It will be in thy best interest, not to convene with Leidolf. Thus preventing, the renewal of the magic upon his totem. If thou agreest, thy reward will be this."

I held out the amulet for her to see. Eiliswintha looked attentively at the pendant, and began walking towards me. She halted in front of me, and held out her hand, palm up.

"I agree, dear" she said with a genuine smile, this time. I handed her the amulet. She took it, made a slight bow, and walked back to her ship. As she stepped on to the ship, she turned, gazed at me and said warningly:

"Beware of thy sire, Thora. His schemes run deeper than the molten earth beneath our feet. If thou cometh south someday. Seek me out. I reckon we shall be become close friends."

She blew a kiss from her hand, and the ship sailed out. Once again, it became enveloped in fog. Moments later, it was gone from our sight.

"She was pleasant! Quite attractive as well."

Kleng said contentedly.

I frowned at him, and rolled my eyes.

"We completed the first task. Now we end Leidolf... again. And this time we do not leave,

until I see his ashes." I said determinedly.

We travelled north for three nights. The journey was relatively obstacle free, apart from those naturally made. On the fourth night, a few hours past dusk, we made it to the Einherjar enclave. The same tribal, barbaric activities, as I had witnessed at my last visit, were being committed all around. From the cover of three, I scouted the area, trying to locate Leidolf. His throne was empty and he was nowhere to be seen the crowd. Kleng tapped me on the shoulder and whispered:

"Someone is approaching."

I turned around, and saw a man – one of the henchmen, that was there last time I battled Leidolf. He had a grim look upon his face, and spoke out arrogantly:

Leidolf awaiteth you up there..."

He pointed at a tall, rocky hill in the distance.

"He sayeth thee must meet him alone, or he will drain thy family!"

Rage and despair rose within me. I drew my sword with lightning-speed, and held it at the man's throat. I snarled furiously at him:

"My family? Speak sense, mongrel!"

He smiled haughtily at me and replied:
"He hath thy mother and sister. Thou better maketh haste, before he becometh thirsty!"
I looked wrathfully at him, and with one swift motion, I cut off his head, clean. He fell to ground, with the haughty smile upon his face, and turned to ash.

I turned towards the hill, ready to run. Kleng grabbed my arm and said nervously:

"Thora! It is a trap. Thou knoweth that, dost thee not?"

"I care not for his trap. Let go of me, or lose thine arm." I said with rage. Kleng let go, and I sprinted towards the hill. When I arrived at the foot of it, I heard Leidolf's taunting voice from above:

Come, Fledgling. Come meet thy doom!"

I rashly ascended to the top of the hill. Leidolf stood there, awaiting me. In his hands, he held my mother and sister. They were hanging, bloody, beaten and weak. Leidolf laughed malevolently and said:

"Thou shouldest never have angered me. Now thou wilt suffer!"

My mother looked at me with one eye open, and whispered my name. Leidolf growled at me,

snapped their necks, and threw them over the hillside. I roared at him scornfully, and looked at my family's corpses smashing on to rocks down below. I dashed brashly towards him, sword in hand, ready to strike. He anticipated the move, dodged, and kicked me in the stomach. I flew to the other side of the hilltop, almost falling over the edge. I groaned in pain, rolled over and gazed at Leidolf. He had started one of his transformations. He quickly altered his form, into a black cat, the size of a horse. I looked shocked at the leap across the entire platform. I rolled, attempting to avoid his massive claws. His left paw landed on my back, and raked it deeply. I screamed out in agony, and Leidolf's head moved swiftly towards my neck. I drew my arm back, and stuck his nose with my elbow. It disoriented him, and gave me enough time, to get free. I pushed myself off the ground, and regained foothold. The great cat was moving slowly towards me, almost tauntingly. I made a lunge for his face. He made a sidestep, but my attack hit. My blade went through his right ear, cutting it in half, as I drew back. He growled in pain and lashed out with his paw. He grazed my leg and drew back.

I took a few steps towards the middle of the battlefield, and kept my eyes on him. He began to circle me, like a predator circling its prey. I awaited his attack and prepared to thrust. He leapt towards me, and I stuck my blade deep in his stomach. That did not divert him from attack though. His front-paws landed on my shoulders, pushing me to the ground. He buried his teeth deep in my shoulder, and raked both my legs with his back-paws. I could not move, and pain was incapacitating. He held on with his jaws, and scratched me over and over, until he had lacerated almost my entire body. He finally let go, and walked away. I was barely conscious, and I felt limp. Leidolf transformed into his humanoid form again. He pulled out my sword and threw it forcefully to the ground. He grinned and said disdainfully:

"I admire thy courage, and cunning, girl! But thou lackest strength, and willpower. And that, makes thee weak! Thou belongest in the earth, forgotten and insignificant... like thy Kine family!"

He approached me slowly. As he came closer, a great power rose within me. A power I had only felt once before. The Beast took over, and

vaulted toward Leidolf. It landed on him, and wrapped its legs around his waist. I could see the surprise on Leidolf face as it happened. The beast buried its teeth in his neck, holding on tight. I was just a passenger, having no control over my own body. Leidolf tried trepidatiously to get me off. But it was a futile effort. He grew weaker with each drop of blood, drained from him. He fell on to his back, and regained control. But I did not stop. I drained him dry. He turned to ash in my mouth, and scattered to wind. I roared in frenzy at the sky, and fell to the ground shaking with potency. Incomprehensible memories flashed before my eyes. I felt unconscious.

I woke to the sound of Kleng's concerned voice: "Thora. How dost thou feel?"

I opened my eyes, and found myself surrounded by Einherjar. Kleng was kneeling besides me, smiling.

"Thou succeedest, my lady." he said with relief in his voice.

I stood up, and gazed upon the many kindred before me. One by one, they started kneeling. Kleng put my sword, in my hand, and rose it

above me. I looked surprised and confused at the crowd. Kleng yelled out at the them:

"All hail Thora. All hail the Queen!"

A collective hail sounded from the gathering. I took a moment to gather myself, and remembered my family. I looked at Kleng, and said with sadness:

"I have to do something. I'll be back before dawn."

I ran off, and found my mother and sister's crushed corpses. I held them both in my arm, and wailed. I held them tight, with bloody tears dripping down, for hours. I could feel I did not have long before dawn, so I put them gently on the ground, and began to cover them with stones.

I returned to the sanctuary a week later. Kleng had wanted to come with me, but I told him he had more important matters to attend to. I left him in charge of the Einherjar, until I would return. He was the only one I trusted to go it, and he had understood that. I was greeted by Alvis in the entrance-chamber. I gazed at him exhaustedly and said with a sigh:

It is done sire. Leidolf is no more."

"Just as I planned it" he said with an arrogant smile.

I suddenly remembered Eiliswintha's words, and screamed angrily at Alvis:

"Thou planned this all along!"

He gazed at me with anger upon his face and replied with pride:

"I did! That night when I found thee. I was looking for the son of Leidolf. I wanted him as leverage. When I saw you on the ground, opportunity presented itself. I saw a way of removing Leidolf from power. I trained thee, but left out important information, that would ruin my plan, if thou knewst. I whispered in the right people's ears, so Leidolf would find out who was responsible for his son's final death, and thus rendering him incapable of reasoning with me. Then all I had to, was wait for thee to slay him. I left out the information about his magical trinket, so thou wouldest not kill him in your first attempt. Thou needed to be more powerful, for my plan to work. The Kine's little witch-hunt was a complication, but thou handled that perfectly thyself. Then after Leidolf had risen again, I whispered in the right ears, yet again. Leading him straight to you sister,

and mother, thus giving thee great power, fuelled by vengeance. And it worked! Not only did thee make him suffer his final death, the Einherjar now worship you as a queen! My Childe! Leader of my enemies, turning them into my loyal subjects. A perfect scheme!"

I began to sob and said, addled:

"Thou used me? Thou had my family slaughtered, for the sake of power?"

Alvis scoffed, and replied dismissively:

"Oh, dear Childe. All those emotions thou hast within thee. They will wither with time. Thy family will be all but a distant memory. I promise."

My sadness turned to rage, and I reached for my blade. Alvis made a swift gesture with his fingers, and suddenly I was unable to move. He another gesture, signalling that I should follow. Alvis began to walk down the corridor, leading downstairs. I followed him, unable to disobey. In the next room, we entered the library to the right. Alvis pulled out three books in the bookcase, and it slid aside with a loud sound, of stone grinding against metal. Behind it was an empty vault, made of metal. He commanded me to enter and I did. Alvis looked gravely. His

gaze met mine, and he said in a strict tone: "Thou needst to locate the one bound by death, unshackled by a Fallen, and transformed by mortals into a slayer of darkness. Thou must find, and embrace him."

I gazed at him with confusion and despair. I managed to speak a few words filled with fear: "Do... not... leave... me... in... here, monster!" He smiled at me, and sighed. He went out of sight, and I could hear the books sliding back in their places. The bookcase began to slide, and soon after the vault was sealed. Alvis' enthrallment broke, and I could move again. I hammered on the door with my fist, screaming in rage and panic. After hours of attempting to break down the door, I finally gave up. I sat down in the corner of the vault, and waited for Alvis to let me out.

I do not know how long I was in there. After days, I lost track of time. I could not break out, nor would Alvis come for me. In the end, with being able to feed, I succumbed to weakness and blacked out...



"You slept in a vault for a millennium?"

Nathaniel about baffled.

I gazed at him, and frowned like it was the stupidest thing he ever said and replied:

"No, of course not. I was in torpor for a decade or so."

"What happened when you woke, then?" he asked learning forward, and being very interested. I smiled calmly at him and said:

"That, my Childe, is a story for another night. Dawn will be here soon. Go take rest"

Nathaniel stood up and walked towards the door. As he was about to exit, he turned, gazed flippantly at me and said:

"Good morning, Thora. May you sleep well."

I yelled back at him in a cheerful scold:

"Go away, Nathaniel!"

He laughed and close the door.

What happened when I woke, he had asked. More horrors and trouble, of course. As was the way of our unlife. Eternal struggle...

The Rose Witch

"The Masquerade, is one of the Traditions passed down from Caine himself. *'Thou shall not reveal thy true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing such shall renounce thy claims of Blood.'* The Traditions are our basic laws, and if they are upheld, they make all Cainite's existence much more bearable."

The Rose Witch, takes place in Scandinavia, during the ninth century. The protagonist, Thora, is a beautiful young woman. Daughter of a farmer and hunter. One day, on one of those hunts, something goes horrible wrong, and Thora's world is spun around, completely. She is henceforth forced to make difficult choices. Choices made from the dark side of humanity.

Thora must face her new unlife, as a Fledgling. In a world before The Dark Ages. In a land where many gods exist, and not all kindred believe in the Traditions, nor the creator of them...

