

Chapter 3

Even my fall was magnificent. As the epitome of grace and fortitude, I accepted the menial attack of the lower denizens of Creation with humility and tact. They had cast me from Terrace of Miracles, now the Gallery of Betrayal, and I dove into the Logrus, seeking to become one with its true power.

Of course I succeeded.

Deep I plunged into the swirling sea of the Logrus itself. It is power, it is change, it is the pureness of chaos, the ethereal nature of the winds, the stuff of oceans. I swam through infinity. A thing happened that had never happened before, nor since, for I was the one, the only, the sole holder of the power of the Logrus. Drunk I was with the wine of Creation and mad with grief with how badly the other Dawn Gods had used me. Drunk, mad, and filled with rue for those who were not wise enough to know it themselves, I swam the pathways of all-seeing reality and plunged from the ocean of the Logrus to a sea of intemperate rage.

I fell into a dark and stormy night, the kind great novels are written about. Rain-lashed, wind-driven, assaulted by the fists of storm and wave, I fell from the cold stars through clouds and foam. The world suited my mood. I sought out the most barren depths to contemplate the iniquities befallen me and howled in anguish to the listening tides.

They did listen. Everyone listens to me. It's because I'm so cool.

As I lay in tormented repose, two creatures approached. Long as worms, they slithered through the water like serpents and spoke with forked tongues. Like dragons, they were, only small and vile, and from their memory I grew an idea of a great wyrm with an evil tongue. It would be greater than them like I am greater than their mistress. But that was ages yet. These two little eels approached me and made obeisance to my power.

"Lord Mairon," said one. I don't know how he knew my name, but it was probably because I'm so wonderful. "We have heard your lament."

"Your troubles are great," said the other.

I agreed. "They are."

The second eel continued, "We know someone who-"

I interrupted her. "First, you must know more of my troubles."

"No, we heard those-"

"My troubles are great and legendary!" I proclaimed, and launched into my tale of woe.

("At least you've got a rhythm," said Random quietly.)

They were overcome by my suffering. They could not endure even to listen. As I wrapped them in a veil of words, often the eels were moved too far, felt too much, and they sought to redirect me to redress. But paid their distractions no mind. I told them of my griefs, my wounds, my indignities. I regaled them with the history of the Dawn Gods. The storm above faded, the sun rose, my saga of endless suffering continued, and I drew a new storm from the powers overhead to suit my narrative. Truly, I am the greatest.

Finishing, I withdrew into my mind palaces and felt anew the stings and arrows of lesser beings.

One of the eels nudged the other, who'd gone slightly comatose.

"You done yet, big guy?" asked an eel.

"For now. Though as I recall, there were a few points I did not properly address, grievances which should be stated anew. You see, some several thousand years ago--"

"Which is why you should speak to our Mistress!" impolitely interrupted an eel. I wasn't paying attention, so I don't know which one.

"She wants to know!" said the other.

"A lot."

"She yearns for your explanation," said the first.

The two eels entwined themselves and nodded vigorously in unison.

"I'm sure she does." I agreed. "But you two should hear this other part first."

"No, no," said the one.

"Please no," said the other.

"In the days of old!" I proclaimed, but I didn't get any further.

"Great Mairon, your suffering is too much for me!" said one eel, speaking very quickly.

"We are overcome by emotion," agreed the other. "We are not great enough to comprehend your agonies."

They nodded again.

I paused. It was fair. I was great, and so too was my suffering.

"But our Mistress is great too, and she can appreciate your grievances."

They had mentioned this Mistress before. In my brilliance, I'd noticed.

"Your Mistress?" I prompted.

"She wants to speak with you," said the one eel.

I nodded. "Of course she does. Everyone does."

"Yes, everyone," said the other eel, but she spoke slowly, as if in great pain. No doubt my suffering overcame her still.

There was no more time to waste. These pathetic creatures had distracted me from good business for a day and a night, filling their hungry ears with my tale. "Lead on! Take me to your Mistress. And let her know that Mairon the Wise is her guest."

"Oh, thank the deeps," whispered one eel.

"And you, Great Master, should know we take you too--"

"Don't care," I interrupted.

"Ursula," finished the other eel.

You know how some creatures just want to get the last word in.

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They lead me to a truly inferior palace. It had walls of earth tones and mother of pearl. The floor plan lacked oomph. Frankly, it was garbage.

The denizen of this sub-par demesne met me in a cavernous, poorly lit room. She was gray-skinned and white-haired, fully-bodied and many-legged. Just meeting her, I knew she had moxie. Drawing me in, the Lady Ursula greeted me with delicacies and pleasant conversation. She asked me who I was and from whence I'd come, and I told her all. Unlike with the eels, I did not abridge or hasten my story. She was immensely interested, especially once I got to Shadow Guard.

"And this palace, Shadow Guard, you said it would have endured for all times had it not been sabotaged?" she asked after my story.

"Yes. I am sure of it. It was probably that Jadis woman, a nasty creature."

"Yes, yes," said Ursula. "But she's not here. Regarding the palace, could you make another one? Under the sea?"

"Easily." I looked around her dingy abode. "And you need one. Look at this place. Unmortared stone without spells and incantations of binding? Terrible."

"Could you make a palace worthy of yourself, the Lord of the Sea?" she asked.

Ursula, I'd noticed, had a wide and friendly smile. She had brilliant white eyes and red lips.

"I could," I said, feigning modesty. "I could make a palace that would drive all creatures of this realm to awe and inspire them with loyalty and obedience. But I do not intend to stay. I have no business in this watery place."

"Oh, so you would build a palace and leave?" asked Ursula.

"I would, and in my absence the world will be less. Darker, dimmer, and weak."

Her smile spread, bright as light, while her gray skin faded. The darkness of the boudoir, she seemed little more than teeth and eyes. The eels had long since left. It was just the two of us.

"Baby!" cried Ursula and threw herself forward. "Let me lead you to the joys of the ocean!"

And in the darkness, we conjoined our powers.

("Get you some, boy," said Flora.

"Aunt Florimel, that really could mean anything," Merlin chided her gently.)

I gave it to her double dirty.

("Yes, Merlin?" asked Flora politely.

"Nevermind." He sighed.)

I slipped her the Logrus tendril.

("Oh, dear God," whispered Fiona.)

I pounded her like a ship on a reef.

("Merlin, you were saying?" repeated Flora, smiling brightly.

"Could just be how magicians talk," said Merlin.)

We had tentacle sex.

There were suckers.

Everywhere.

("Merlin?" asked Flora.

"Look, I'm not uncomfortable with this conversation; I just don't want to have it in front of my dowager aunt!" snapped Merlin.

"Your what?" shouted Flora.

"Oh damn, son, now you're going to die," said Corwin, hand to forehead.)

Sauron paid them no attention. "And lo! I got up in there like Randolph Carter."

("Is that more tentacles?" asked Julian. He turned away from the slowly-building argument with a smile.

Random shook his head. "No, it's where you stick your nose in dark places man was not meant to go."

Even the fighting Amberites stared at their king.

Random waved his hands. "I'm a musician! We talk about these sorts of things!"

"I think a few people here have known Randolph Carter," muttered Merlin, but badly because everyone heard him

"Merlin, she kills people!" yelled Corwin.

"And he's wrong too!" said Flora.

"Absolutely." Corwin nodded.

Merlin bristled, and his hair rose like that on a cat's back. "No, I'm not. You've been married, like, eight times! You've got three empires from mysteriously-deceased emperors. You have more secret exes than Margot Tenenbaum!"

There was an instant of intense, high-octane silence.

"But I'm not old," said Florimel.

"You're not," said Corwin.

"Old? You look like a hipster sofa," said Merlin, mouth moving way faster than his head. "Distressed leather."

And the mark of doom was spoken.)

You're not talking about me enough.