

Zavish was walking down the street. The buildings next to it looked especially old, still possessing traits of Slavic architecture instead of being modified to more modern style. The morning sun gave them more beauty.

"Magnificent part of our town, isn't it?", the bat that was walking beside him asked.

"Yeah, looks really good, Snovid", the goat nodded. "It's the old part of Khorogard, isn't it?"

"Indeed. Built several centuries ago. The early parts of this settlement were... interesting to say the least."

"Let me guess... Demons were fighting for influence?"

"Heh...", Snovid chuckled. "I sometimes forget you're more intelligent than you look."

"Don't forget that you're one of the demons that were teaching me about supernatural stuff."

"That's true. I've heard that you visited Nevsha yesterday. Are you in pain?"

"It's slight at most", the goat shrugged.

"So you used her services?"

"As someone who didn't receive such "services", as you've called it, I'd be a fool to not use this opportunity."

"I think you can find someone more suitable."

"Wish I had such confidence in that regard", the horned man sighed.

"Zavish...", the demon placed his hand on the goat's shoulder. "Don't be so hard on yourself."

"Hard to do when you weren't respected for most of your life, you know?"

"Now, you have friends that respect your skills, but more importantly, they respect you as a person."

"Yeah...", Zavish chuckled. "Vitosh likes me, because he can teach me stuff about supernatural things. And Semezh has another person to drink with, as well as someone to hear his stories."

"Deviant overall is an interesting entity. Quite powerful, too. Semezh is on a good side and Vitosh... is kinda like you. He does bad things, but he isn't evil. Not anymore, at least."

"I wouldn't go into thievery, if I could find something that would make me happy", the horned man briefly looked down.

"Khorogard is a city of opportunities", Snovid pointed at several buildings with one move of his hand. "Especially, if you know how big this settlement really is."

"So you mean I can make some mortal friends?", the green-eyed goat asked sarcastically.

"Eventually, yeah."

"Maybe someone at that ceremony you're going to do."

"Ceremony we're going to do", the demon corrected him.

"Huh? You just asked me if I want to look at it."

"True, but since I got you for it, I can ask you for some help."

"Eh...", Zavish sighed deeply. "Demons really like to play with words, huh? Twisting the truth or straight up lying."

"You really consider me as such?"

"You're a demon. Simply trusting your kind with everything wouldn't be the smartest thing."

"And you know what I'll say?", the bat asked, looking into his companion's eyes. "You're right."

"Thank you."

"I'll tell you a certain thing about you. You're not a normal mortal, that's for sure. Can't tell what you really are."

"At least I got some truth... So what kind of help will you be needing from me?"

"Mostly simple things", Snovid replied. "Getting some things held, doing some readings... but there's one thing you might not like."

"Something harmful to me?", the goat asked.

"Yes. I'll need some of your blood."

"So I'll be the scapegoat..."

"No, no", the demon interrupted him. "Killing won't be involved."

"Are you hungry, then?", the horned man was confused.

"No... or at least not that much."

"So why do you need my blood?"

"It's related to old ceremonies", Snovid started explaining. "Folks were doing blood sacrifices for the gods to signify their devotion. It was helping, sure, but it's not like there was a guarantee their prayers would be registered. Still, doing something closer to that instead of using substitutes would give more enjoyment for the faithful. I'll just bite you in the neck and spill the blood on the fire."

"Mhm... and bleed out in the process."

"I'll give you something that won't make you feel pain and will heal you quickly. It'll be working for a short time after the ceremony."

"Eh...", Zavish briefly grabbed his face. "Well... if I have to die, it might as well be in an unusual way."

"You won't die today, Zavish. If you do then I'll let the gods punish me."

"Kinda funny that a demon will be doing a ceremony to please the gods."

"If you'd know my whole story, it wouldn't be that strange", the demon replied indifferently. "Least to say that I can do another thing with myself."

"You already can do a lot of things."

"Yes... Deviant might be more powerful, but it's focused on specific things. And I like to explore, gather experience and skills. I can do pretty much everything, but I'm constantly move."

"So being a priest is just one thing from the long list of jobs you can do?", the goat asked.

"Exactly", Snovid nodded. "Imagine being a priest that would keep himself afloat by only doing sermons instead of having normal work. It's just shitty behavior. People like this would be just parasites. Even if I can be considered as such, I can do normal jobs just fine."

"Plus such priests like you've mentioned would most likely be not very fun people to be around with."

"True. But I'm a good priest. Would you help me with the ceremony?"

"Sure, but the harm..."

"I'll compensate for it, don't worry", the bat interrupted him.

"Okay", the green-eyed man nodded. "So where are we going?"

"To the nearby park. Just on the next street."

Snovid turned left on the crossing. His companion followed him down the road. Both of them quickly saw the greenery. Big patch of it, if someone would like to be specific, since Khorogard had a lot of nature inside it.

They eventually reached the park, where they could see that a couple of different entities were already present there, gathered in one place. They noticed both the bat and goat approaching them and they greeted them in various ways.

As Zavish got to the group together with his demonic friend, he briefly checked on the faithful. His guess was that at least some of the inhabitants that gathered there were of demonic origin. And even without asking, he realized he was right.

"Hey, Zavish", the bat turned towards his demonic friend. "Come here."

"Got something for me?", the horned man asked.

"Yup. You should get dressed properly."

"I hope it's something that's not embarrassing."

"You'll see for yourself."

Snovid made a couple of gestures and soon after, the terrain that looked like some ancient ceremonies were taking place appeared. The big-eared man then reached towards one of the containers and got a white old-fashioned shirt with ornate markings out of it.

"Hey, that looks quite nice", Zavish stated.

"Then put it on and we can start."

The goat wanted to grab the piece of clothing from his demonic friend. However, he started to undress from his fleece jacket and T-shirt. As he was bare-chested, he noticed that one of the participants – a lynx woman – was eying him with a smile on her face.

He returned the smile and after putting the clothes that he had in his hands to some nearby place, he grabbed the shirt and put it on rather quickly, considering his horns. He still had to adjust it a bit to feel comfortable.

"Now you look like a proper Slav", Snovid said proudly.

"Wish I was truly one", the horned man sighed deeply.

"Zavish...", the bat placed his arm on the goat's shoulder. "You can be mortal, half-demon, full demon, mutant or automaton... It doesn't matter what you are", he then pointed at his chest, specifically at the place where his heart was located. "It matters who you are. And I think you know who you are."

"Problem is that sometimes I don't know myself. That's why I escaped my family place. To be myself. Or at least find something or someone to show me who I truly am. I want to be happy, but how can I be happy in a world that's slowly descending into chaos?"

"The fact that you're looking for such stuff is already showing that you aren't an ordinary person. I can tell you that you can be happy in such a world as well. I can't tell you how, since it's different for every entity. But you can be sure there's something out there to help you with finding the purpose in your life."

"Are you absolutely sure of that?", Zavish asked, looking straight into the demon's eyes.

"Yes", the big-eared man replied with confidence in his voice. "Even if you'd have to spend the rest of your life looking for it, it's worth the trouble. I'd understand, if mortals would end themselves because there is no thing worth fighting for. But that's not true. It's worth fighting for this little amount of good things there are here."

"And that's why I'm here in this city."

"Good. Shall we proceed?"

"Yes."

As the bat and his friend were doing last preparations for the ceremony, more people started to gather around that consecrated place. The priest started the small fire on that terrain, since bigger one would attract unwanted attention.

"Brothers and sisters!", Snovid said loudly, while briefly raising his hands upwards. "I welcome you all... in this gathering in the name of Svarozhits."

The entities that gathered in that place knelt before the priest and his assistant. They lowered their heads, looking at the grass. Zavish was a bit confused about this, but he didn't show that to anyone there.

As people were starting to rise up from the ground, the big-eared man grabbed two quite short sticks from the nearby stand and lit their ends. When they started to function as torches, he started to do fluid moves with them.

The goat was looking at the gestures made by Snovid. It looked for him as his friend was dancing, which for him, could be a sort of a prayer for the god for which this whole ceremony was conducted. After this dance, the bat passed the burning sticks to his horned friend.

"Now speak with me one by one", the priest ordered. "Say your prayers and I will pass it to our god."

The faithful gathered in line, going to Snovid one person at the time. All those conversations were private, so both the priest and the attendant were speaking with whispers, so others – including Zavish – couldn't exactly hear those private talks.

The horned man was just standing near his big-eared friend awkwardly, still carrying those burning sticks. He didn't want to interrupt him, though, so he was just standing in one place with patience, while being careful to not burn himself.

After waiting for quite a long time, Zavish eventually saw an end to this line of conversations. The priest grabbed the sticks from the goat's hands and thrust them into the fire that was still burning near them.

"May this fire show our desire for fulfilling our prayers", Snovid said, as he was throwing the herbs into the fire.

"Slava!", the crowd shouted.

The bat grabbed the scroll from his pocket and passed it to Zavish. The goat couldn't read the text at first, since it was written in an unknown language. The priest swiped his hand and the text was visible to his assistant.

"O Svarozhits", Zavish started reading. "Grant us our wishes. Fulfill our desires. Help us complete our goals. All with your glory, all with your name, O Brightest Flame. May the blood of this sacrifice be our sign of the deepest devotion to you. May you find this gift worthy, so we can get your blessing and spread your name to furthest corners of the world."

Snovid got closer to his horned friend. He grabbed a tiny vial which he opened and passed to the green-eyed man. The priest ordered his assistant to drink all of his contents, which he did after a moment of hesitation, after which he passed the vial back to its owner.

"I'll make it as painless as I can, friend", the priest said in a warm tone.

In a quick motion, the big-eared man thrust his teeth into the goat's neck. They were stuck like this for a longer moment. Eventually, they separated. Zavish pressed his hand on his neck. He saw that the priest didn't have a good look on his face, but then, he spewed red liquid on the flames.

"With the blood of this scapegoat, our prayers should be heard by Svarozhits", Snovid said loudly. "Let him know that we give him the best of sacrifices. Slava!"

"Slava!", the crowd shouted.

The horned man looked at the crowd. They were in joy that the proper sacrifice was made instead of something fake. Still, he was focused on pressing his hand on the neck. The priest said that he should stop since the wound was already closed.

"May the blessing of the Flame God be with you on your journeys", the bat said proudly. "Slava!"

Snovid started packing up things and the faithful were going into a minor disarray. The goat, being uncertain for a moment about what to do, started to help his friend with hiding things up, including the extinguishment of flame.

However, Zavish didn't expect one thing. Most of the faithful were going to him one by one, checking on him if he was alright. A certain lynx lady even placed a kiss on his lips. After their brief checkups, they started to leave the park.

"We take care of our own, Zavish", the bat said suddenly. "Khorogard doesn't have that many brutal fanatics."

"If you care about me, would you pass me the number to that lynx girl?", the goat asked with a smile on his face.

"Maybe later", Snovid chuckled and then, he magically hid the ceremony ground.

"So you have something else planned for today? Preferably with no harm to me and using my blood for a ceremony."

"I'll take you to your place and then, I'll get on another journey."

"Something local?"

"I'm travelling to another dimension, Zavish", the demon stated coldly.

"What?", the horned man was confused.

"Do you remember what I said? I'm a traveler. I don't stay in one place for too long. I'll return soon, don't worry."

"Before we go... I have a question."

"Ask away."

"I saw you weren't fond of having my blood in your mouth."

"I guess that's understandable, since I was having it taken from my friend", the big-eared man shrugged.

"There's more to that, Snovid", the goat pointed at him. "And friends shouldn't hide the truth from one another."

"Eh... While I like the taste of mortal blood, the demon one is quite bitter to me. And yours was noticeably bitter."

"So... I'm a demon?"

"It tastes demonic, but it doesn't mean it's really demonic."

"Oh...", Zavish lowered his head.

"Don't worry...", Snovid said in a warmer tone. "You'll solve this issue eventually."

"Yeah... I have to remember that I have a favor from you to take."

"Smart. Want me to take you back home?"

"And how will you do that?"

Snovid's robes got loosened a bit. Then, the bat's arms started transforming. A moment later, instead of the normal arms, that man had a big set of membranous wings. He stood in this powerful pose before his friend.

"You don't mean...", Zavish started talking.

"Straighten your arms to the sides", the demon commanded.

The goat did as he asked and quickly after, Snovid grabbed his friend with his feet and both of them started flying. They both were happy about that flight together. The rest of their journey was spent on some mundane talks.