

137 – Her True Form

“What exactly is going to happen?” Ludwig wondered.

I’d never realised, until now, how careful of a person he truly was. Despite being an Incarnate and making countless Possessed Items, he came across as the kind who did experiments and tests with several layers of protection. What I would attempt was antithetical to such careful procedures.

The six of us, Letthorr included for some reason, were in some underground vault deeper than even the Necromancy Guild, but accessible from it by going down its ‘basement’ staircase, though it was weird to think of it as such. It was not enormous, but still spacious enough for at least a couple dozen people to stay within comfortably. It was vaguely domed-shaped, and the centre had an island of porcelain, or what looked like it. According to Mortl, it was not actually porcelain, but rather some strange metal that was highly resistant to adverse effects of summoning rituals that could happen with some entities.

Demons, she means, I thought but didn’t say. It was clearly why such a room had been made. The ceiling and floor beyond the central porcelain circle were covered in sigils, which, although almost all were unintelligible to me, were clearly of a warding nature.

I’d moved to the centre of the room and the impacts of my boots on the porcelain plate resounded like the peals of a bell, almost like an ominous heralding of what was to come.

Saoirse had instructed me on some parts of what she wanted me to attempt, and I’d pieced together the rest from watching her perform the ability on the Gleeful Hoarder. She told me she had a plan for what to do after I succeeded. I still wasn’t sure I *would* succeed.

As Armen, Saoirse, Mortl, Ludwig, and Letthorr watched, I lifted my right hand which held the Music Box and then my left. I couldn’t make it as flowery and poetic as what the Dullahan had done, but I figured it was more like embellishment than necessity.

“Thou art a child of the Ocean, a Singer and a Huntress.”

“The Song of an Absolute resounds through thy body.”

“An unfathomable power clings to thy voice.”

Now came the part that was new to me and completely untested.

“Thy True Name to me is known and in mine hand beholden.”

“Reforged by mine touch, be released from mine desire.”

“No longer mine to wield, return to thine True Form.”

While uttering the litany that was more-or-less improvised, I pulled the soul of the Music Box through my right palm and manoeuvred it through my body and past my heart, before expelling it from my left hand. When Saoirse had used the ability, she had released a silvery energy, and this same light emerged from my left palm, falling upon the ground and taking on a vague hazy outline of something. It was a slow process, but over the course of two minutes, an amorphous *thing* formed of silvery energy stood completed.

Then, like a shockwave, a tremor flowed through the air, and the energy became more than a thing.

Ludwig gaped in surprise and even Mortl seemed at a loss for words. I myself had not expected it to be *this* simple, but, as the Music Box crumbled to ash in my right hand, my left pointed towards a creature that’d been trapped within.

Black hair fell down around a long angular face with two abyss-black almond-shaped eyes and long Elfin-like ears. Her skin was ash-grey and her body was humanoid until the abdomen, where it transitioned into something like an octopus, but of a size that was deeply unsettling.

It took Lyssalynne a moment to realise that she was free, but then she began to move around, the tentacles holding her upright squirming and squelching under her, as they all moved with independent motions and a life of their own.

“Miss Siren, would thee care for some tea or perhaps cake?” asked Letthorr, sounding very serious, but managing to break the tense silence.

I felt a tug on my body as she spoke, as though I was filled with an invigorating sense of euphoria. *“I could eat a horse! Oh, how famished am I!”*

Then she spun around and faced me. I heard Armen begin to move towards the centre of the room, but Saoirse was content to just watch.

“Exorcist, you delivered on your promise.”

One of her tentacles reached out to caress my chin. I welcomed the sensation of her touch.

“Not yet,” I reminded her. “I promised to release you to your ocean home after all.”

“I will make my way there on my own. It is not far from here. I can sense it.”

Every syllable of her voice dug her hooks in me. I hadn’t put up a Soul Barrier nor prepared any charms. I was almost about to tell her that she could do whatever she wanted, until Saoirse spoke up.

“You will not make it there on your own.”

Mortl joined in, “There’s no way we can let a Siren just roam freely in the city.”

“She won’t harm anyone!” Ludwig argued and I was about to agree with him, until a black snake formed of smoke coiled around the Siren and created a bubble, sealing off her power.

The Necromancer sighed. “Sirens are always such a pain to deal with.”

I shook my head, feeling suddenly embarrassed, as a warm sensation left me and clarity returned.

“I should have prepared better,” I said.

“I assumed it would fail,” Mortl replied, “Otherwise I would’ve prepared some wards.”

“So did I, truth be told.”

“What’d you do?” Ludwig asked, looking at the black sphere. I was intimately familiar with it from the time when the Dullahan had used it to separate us from all outside observers, while also limiting all my powers.

“I prevented the Siren from using its voice to turn you two into her puppets,” said Saoirse.

“Does her power work better on men?” I wondered.

“All charms do,” Ludwig admitted. Given that one of his familiars was a Succubus, he would know.

“I will fulfil Ryūta’s silly promise and take the Siren to the sea,” Saoirse then said.

“Why would you do something to help humans?” Mortl asked suspiciously.

“I do not care about your species, but as I am bonded to Ryūta, it means that his promises are also mine to uphold. It is irritating, so I will deal with it now, rather than later. In return, I wish for you to get rid of his curse.”

The Necromancer nodded. “Somehow, it puts me more at ease to know you have ulterior motives. Very well, I will resolve Eminent Ryūta’s curse once you have dealt with the Siren. But, how are you planning on doing that?”

“Observe.”

We all turned to look at the smoke sphere, which dissolved and left behind a normal-ish humanoid. It was Lyssalynne, except her bottom half was now as human as her top half. It made her look like a dark version of an Elfin, just without the horns.

The green light in Mortl’s eyes dimmed slightly. “I’d love to study your powers. I do not comprehend how it functions whatsoever.”

“I will tell you before I kill you,” Saoirse promised the Necromancer.

Letthorr, who had apparently been gone to attempt to fulfil Lyssalynne’s request, returned with a silver tray upon which lay select cuts of meat, all either dried, smoked, or cured in some manner to

increase shelf-life. *“I was unable to locate a horse in mine kitchen larder, but these may be to thine tastes.”*

The Siren took a step towards the chaplain, then paused to look down at her human legs.

“Reaper, what have you done with my beautiful body!?”

“It is merely a temporary measure.”

As the sound of the Siren washed over me, I no longer felt that charming pull of her lilting cadence and knew that Saoirse had somehow sealed this away alongside her true visage.

Armen came up next to me. **“I do not wish to sound impudent, but would such a spell not also function on me?”**

I shook my head, already knowing the answer. “It only works with Possessed Items, you are basically human at this point, or well, close enough, and you are only bound by a Pact, which I do not think I can reforge.”

“What do you think will happen once I am released from this Pact?”

“I don’t know, to be honest. But do you wish to be set free?”

“No.”

“You don’t know how much that pleases me to hear,” I told him.

Then a thought crossed my mind suddenly.

Saoirse, are you planning on travelling alone?

Of course. You would only be in the way.

I see. But how will that affect the Soul-Pact?

You may feel discomfort as the distance between us swells, but it shouldn’t kill you.

That’s not very reassuring.

Try not to die in my absence.

I sighed.

Ludwig came over to where I still stood in the centre of the room, his eyes still locked on the Siren and Saoirse.

“That was both impressive and terrifying. Don’t you dare pull that ‘release’ trick on my Possessed Items. Some of them have some pretty bad tenants inside them who wouldn’t be so grateful to be released.”

“I wasn’t planning on it.”

“While we’re here, you might as well summon the familiars we were talking about earlier, at least the ones we have ingredients for. I think Mortl might have some suggestions as well.”

I nodded. “Good idea.”