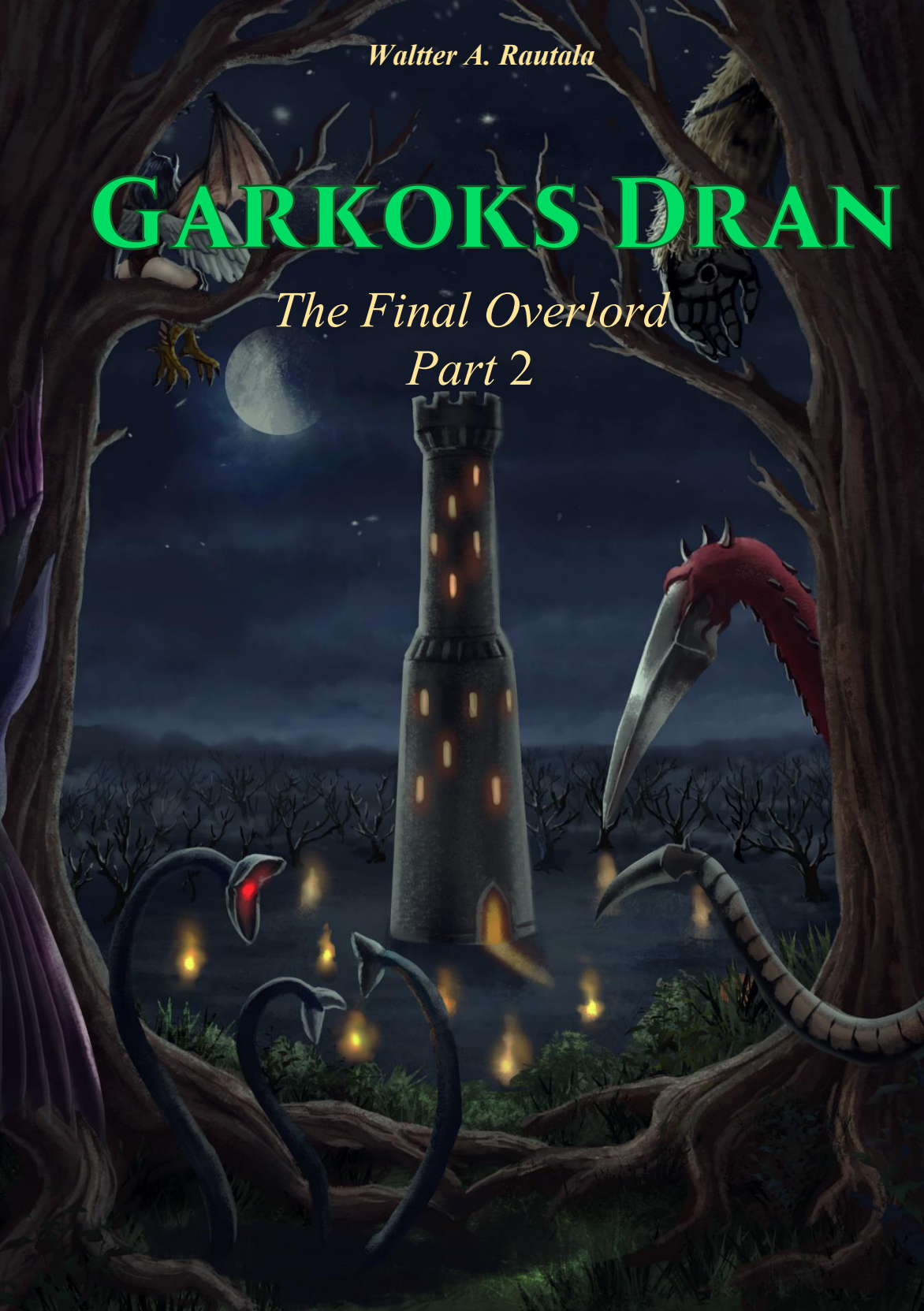


Waltter A. Rautala

GARKOKS DRAN

The Final Overlord

Part 2



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Chapter One

Redeeming Promises

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Part one

After telling Ryzekna about his new name, Garkoks Dran had once again had to quarrel with his teacher. Ryzekna wasn't angry at the young Overlord, rather the cause for the argument was well justified.

Many high-ranking demons had chosen the name *Skark Dragon*. They had done so, so that their new Overlord would have an easier time becoming popular, amongst his citizens. It had been a political strategy that Garkoks had foiled by his own initiative.

Ryzekna had suggested to him that he wouldn't change his name, or at least not yet. Because if the demon lords were to lose their confidence in Garkoks at this point, it could result in a civil war amongst the demons.

But Garkoks didn't agree to this. He had made a promise to himself, and didn't agree to change his name back to former. Ryzekna had remarked that *an Overlord couldn't have a name that had no meaning*. To this Garkoks had sternly answered, *I will give it meaning*.

The quarrel had eventually stopped, when Hilgrane had accepted Garkoks's new name. She had told Ryzekna that *they should respect their Overlord's decisions*.

Despite the dispute coming to an end, Garkoks had memorized Ryzekna's words. With the help of the Brotherhood of the Overlord, he had assembled the demon lords together, to hold a meeting. The demon lords were bigger and scarier than Skark had remembered, but didn't let it discourage him. In the meeting, he had talked about changing his name and explained his reasoning.

Some of the demon lords had been angry at Garkoks's decision, but from fourteen lords, it was the minority. In addition, Garkoks Dran wasn't a fool. He hadn't summoned a group of powerful and potentially rebellious demons, without a backup plan.

On top of the demon lords, Garkoks had also summoned his adoptive father, Death.

Seeing that the Death had nothing against the name change, none of the demon lords dared to protest. After hearing the Grim Reaper's speech, about the purpose of names being to

distinguish things; the demon lords had dropped the subject. Eventually they had all shown respect to their Overlord, Garkoks Dran. Though some of them did this more sincerely than others.

Even with the demon lords' consent, changing Skark's name to Garkoks Dran, had still caused discord amongst the demons. Especially in the Brotherhood of the Overlord, there had been quarreling and brawling, but according to Vavgiga, it had been mostly squabbling.

Nevertheless, surprisingly many brotherhood members gave Garkoks unofficial silent treatment. Even more surprising was that the demons in question were the ones Garkoks had thought as his most loyal citizen.

When the problems caused by his name change had begun to subside, Garkoks had turned his attention to other things. These included: his plans to improve the demons' lives in the Dead World; differentiate himself from his parents; replacing things he had inherited with things he had earned; and continuing his studies. But Garkoks considered the promises he had made with his human friends in the World of the Living, more important than all of these.

After further consideration, realizing his friends' dreams seemed more time consuming. Thus, Garkoks decided to first figure out; how to free them from slavery? While thinking about the answer, Garkoks had gone through dozens of different plans and hundreds of different variations of those plans.

As his fourteenth birthday arrived, despite everything else, Ryzekna had agreed to escort Garkoks to the World of the Living. The children had been very happy, seeing Garkoks return on the agreed upon day. To his shame, Garkoks had to let them know that he didn't have a plan ready yet, for freeing them.

Despite this, the kids had played with him all day and exchanged news. After the demons' attack, Blacwur had become Loombra's farm's new person in charge, and no news had been heard of Leon. They had also accepted Garkoks's change of name and told; that it fit him better. At the end of the day, Garkoks had told his friends; that he would continue planning for their freedom. He promised that next year he would have a plan ready.

To his grief, Garkoks Dran noticed this same pattern repeat year after year. Each plan that he came up with, didn't seem to work in the long run. He had fun with his friends each year, but as Ryzekna had told, they grew faster than him. While Garkoks was still a small child, all his friends had grown to teenagers.

As the years went by, came Garkoks Dran's twenty-fifth birthday, at which point he gave up. Unable to come up with anything, he desperately asked Death for help.

But even Death couldn't help Garkoks in freeing his friends from slavery (other than bringing them to the Dead World.) Garkoks had started to consider this option, but then Death suggested something else. Instead that the Grim Reaper would help the Overlord free his friends, he could give Garkoks more time.

Reluctantly and gritting his teeth, Death had given Garkoks six talismans. The talismans belonged to a ten-talisman set that Death had received from the gods. The talismans had the ability to stop their wearer from aging, without any side effects. The talismans had been given to Death, incase; that some mortal would need to live longer than their life-span allowed.

Since Death had all ten talismans undistributed when Garkoks arrived, this agreed to give him six. The only condition was that Garkoks would return the talismans, when Death asked to get them back.

Garkoks understood that he couldn't just give the talismans to his friends and that was it. He still had to come up with a way to free his friends. But now, he could concentrate on other things and think about his plan in peace. After giving the talismans to his friends, they had agreed that they would try to survive as long as Garkoks needed.

As the years went by, Garkoks continued his studies and learnt more and more, of both magic and science. After Ryzekna had taught him everything he knew about math, history, biology, and the geography of the World of the Living; he began to Teach Garkoks more advanced subjects.

For a demon, the teacher knew a lot about philosophy, psychology, and diplomacy. But in teaching economics, martial arts and tactics, Ryzekna needed help. Thus, Ryzekna and Garkoks made several field trips around the Dead World, to learn these things from other demons. Elokrantor and Beelzebub had helped Garkoks in studying economics. Martial arts were taught to him by the brotherhood's chief, Tedokame, and other brotherhood members. In tactics he had been helped by the lost assassin Muvokrai's father, Malokrai.

Despite the new subjects, Garkoks still enjoyed magic lessons the most. To his surprise, psychology had become his second favorite subject. This subject had become very handy for him, during discussions with his substitute teachers. Especially with Malokrai who grieved the loss of his son.

As Garkoks got older, Ryzekna started to teach him even more advanced magics and spells. When Garkoks was almost sixty years old, Ryzekna taught him his first lesson in *curses*.

Curses required a lot of preparations on top of a spell. The preparations required materials and rituals, depending on what one wanted to accomplish with the curse. The other difference between a curse and a regular spell, was that the effects of a curse didn't disappear over time. The end result was a spell that could cause physical and spiritual symptoms, transformations, and even plagues.

Though the purpose of curses was to cause problems and great hardships on their victims, Garkoks had an idea about them. An idea that could help his friends, and would fit in with his *other* plans. Thus, Garkoks had told his friends that he finally had an answer, but they would need to be patient.

So that he could fulfill his plans to the best of his ability, Garkoks started to voluntarily supplement his physics and chemistry studies. By listening to teachings from both living and dead scientists, Garkoks quickly learnt more than Ryzekna knew. Garkoks felt that the more things he learnt, the more opportunities he found in his plans.

As Garkoks grew up: his name, teachings, friends, and responsibilities, weren't the only problems he faced. After returning from the World of the Living for the first time, Garkoks had noticed that his hunger had truly awakened. He felt stomach grating and demoralizing hunger, like all other demons. According to his original plan, he had prayed that gods would send him weekly food deliveries. Three weeks later, Garkoks had received a short message, as an answer to his prayers.

Gods who choose to eat, are themselves responsible for getting their food.

At first Garkoks had been angry about the answer. But after getting a bit older and thinking about the message, he had eventually come to his own conclusion. The gods who chose to eat like mortals, felt hunger, so that food tasted better. Where the gods got their food from, was no doubt their own choice. Upon learning that some priests sacrificed cattle to the gods, Garkoks decided to trust his theory.

Still, Garkoks still had a problem with how to avoid being hungry. Worshippers who could sacrifice him food, were hard to get, and he didn't even know how it would work. He did try to fast until food was available again, but this took a year. As Death brought him a food basket on Garkoks's fourteenth birthday, he decided that it was faster to get food himself.

After learning enough psychology, transformation spells, and negotiation skills, Garkoks had succeeded in persuading Ryzekna. He had requested that he would take him on field trips to the World of the Living. The trips' purpose was to learn about the mortals and their ways, so that Garkoks would learn of other cultures. But on top of this, Garkoks used the trips as an excuse to spend his money in restaurants of the World of the Living.

The plan worked, but it wasn't entirely simple. First Ryzekna had been angry, since Garkoks used these possibly dangerous trips to have fun. But when Garkoks had told that Ryzekna could eat with him, the hungry teacher agreed. As they brought food home with them to Hilgrane, the plan was also secured from Urvanko's law.

Problems arose afterwards as well. As they made trips to other planets in the World of the Living, they didn't have the right currency with them. For this reason, Garkoks decided that most of the field trips would be held on Earth. In addition, all of Garkoks's money was from his father, so there was a limited amount of gold. Thus, he limited the number of field trips to one per month, and made a deal with Beelzebub. If he brought Beelzebub a large bottle of some alcoholic beverage that he didn't have; the grand-demon would pay him two hundred gold coins.

This is how the years went by and slowly turned into decades. As Garkoks grew into an adult, his powers, knowledge, and plans grew and developed as well. According to Ryzekna's plans, when Garkoks were to turn ninety-nine years old, his education would be done.

The last year was used for final exams and tests. Though Ryzekna tried his best to make the exams and tests as challenging as possible, Garkoks had no trouble passing them. In reality the year was mainly spent, so that Hilgrane and Ryzekna could be sure of Garkoks. No other Demon Overlord, had stepped into the position at such a young age, and this made them nervous.

Garkoks himself would have wanted to skip the last year and start his reign immediately. Though he himself wasn't in a hurry, he knew that World of the Living was constantly changing.

Part two

Waking up from a bright, warm, and happy dream, Garkoks noticed that he had slept on his back, so his wings were aching. With one effortless movement, Garkoks swung his leg down from his bed and stood up. Once up, he stretched his aching wings and felt them rub against the ceiling.

“Again, that same dream, and on the same day...” he mumbled half asleep and yawned.

Garkoks opened his tired eyes and looked around him. His room felt small and cramped. He could no longer run around in it, like he could as a child, or jump on his bed. The entire tower felt like it had shrunk, but this was to be expected.

He was no longer just a child, but had grown into a three-and-a-half-meter tall Overlord. His scales were no longer leathery, but were as hard as dragon scales, though smaller and more concentrated. He no longer had the same slender hands as a child. His hands were large and powerful fists that could crush abyssite. His arms were now thick, muscular, and strong, thanks to abundant food supply and training. His feet were large and his toes long, and like his arms, he had strong legs. His torso was proportionate to his limbs, even though he was larger than normal, compared to his own age group.

Puberty had caused Garkoks many different pains, as his body changed. Garkoks’s wings were now strong and clearly bigger, and could lift him into the air, without any spells. His snout had become longer, but was still shorter and sturdier than on dragons. Garkoks’s jaw had become longer as well and grown wider. The scales on his face had become more angular and rougher, giving him a serious appearance.

The six horns on his head were now longer, thicker, and curved upwards instead of down. In addition, they no longer pointed straight back. During puberty, they had risen up to an almost forty-five-degree angle.

Garkoks’s claws were now shorter, but this was due to his own choice to trim them. Overly long nails had caused problems with his projects, but they were still sharp.

As he woke up slowly, Garkoks wondered; why did he think of himself as a child, but then remembered he had been a child in his dream. Though Garkoks had no trouble remembering things, including his dreams; that one dream always fled from his mind.

While trying to remember the disappearing dream, someone knocked on the door. After the knock, before Garkoks managed to say anything, the door opened and Hilgrane walked in.

Hilgrane was wearing a festive looking black and red party dress, received from Elo-kranor, the long skirt of which reached her shins. The top of the party dress included decorative shoulder pads that reached the height of Hilgrane's ears. In front of the dress, the succubus had a white apron. This made the party dress seem a lot more routine, but that was exactly why the nanny wore it.

Unlike Garkoks, Hilgrane hadn't changed a bit during almost a hundred years. Though she had gotten to eat as much as Garkoks; the nanny hadn't grown and her appearance hadn't changed. Hilgrane had eaten her own share slowly, due to which her body mass hadn't increased.

Though Hilgrane was still a demon, so eating food had its effects. The nanny had definitely gotten stronger over the years, but Garkoks had never wanted to find out, by how much.

"Has our young Overlord gotten out of bed by himself today?" Hilgrane asked amazedly. "This is great progress."

Garkoks looked down towards the nanny and scolded with a deep voice, "That joke got old thirty years ago. Though I still sleep in now and then, you have milked it dry."

Hilgrane hadn't stayed the same in only appearance, but also her personality had stayed the same. Or, more specifically, she had become more relaxed, as Garkoks grew into an adult. Maybe the reason for this was that she had given up on guiding Garkoks. On the other hand, Hilgrane could've just given her foster child more room to grow. When she had been asked about it, Hilgrane had said, *the more our Overlord grows, the less he needs to be pampered.*

"I know, I just wanted to say it one last time," Hilgrane answered longingly. "Aww, almost two hundred years has passed, where has all that time gone?"

"I thought you would be happy that you finally get to leave from here," Garkoks stated, as he started to get dressed. "Ryzekna at least seemed happy to be able to travel again."

Hilgrane shrugged, "Well he is a globetrotter and likes seeing new places. I myself have lived in this tower for so long that I don't know if I can adapt to anywhere else anymore."

While Hilgrane talked, Garkoks put on large, black, and wide legged velvet pants, and an emerald green vest. The pants and vest were both made by Hilgrane, and the succubus's sewing skills had improved further over time.

The pants were elastic and well fitting. Though they seemed velvety and stylish from the outside, from the inside they were made out of enchanted fabric. The fabric's enchantments

made it more durable and self-repairing. Due to this the pants didn't rip, even though Garkoks's long toenails were pushed through them daily.

The vest Hilgrane had made didn't contain magic, but its maker's craftsmanship was clear to see. The front of the vest had two symmetrical golden, embroidered dragons. The dragons were so full of details that one could've thought them to be alive. The back of the vest had no decorations, since it wasn't on display. Since Garkoks's wings were now too large that they could be pushed through; the vest was completely open by the upper back. The vest's collar was attached only to the front that wrapped around under the arms and connected at the lower back.

After pulling the vest's zipper up to his neck, Garkoks continued the conversation, "I'm sure that the two of you will enjoy your trip. And if you have a hard time adapting, then you can always change the scenery."

"But what if he wants to stay for longer in some area?" the blushing Hilgrane asked. "It will be awkward, if he has to leave early because of me."

"You can return there later. You worry about this way too much," Garkoks replied frustratedly. "Go downstairs now and make sure that Ryzekna hasn't forgotten to pack something. I don't want you to come back just to pick up some forgotten underwear or junk."

Hilgrane curtsied politely and left for downstairs, "Very well my Lord."

After Hilgrane left, Garkoks lifted a black coat off a wall hook. The coat's outside was made of black, shorthaired fur and its inside was silk that matched the color of his vest. The coat had patterns sewn to it with shiny green thread that resembled dragon heads and necks. His initials were embroidered on the lapels of the collar with golden string, into a round mark in the Dead World's letterings. On the overcoats wide back, were two over meter and a half long slits, from which his wings fit through.

The primary colors of his clothes, black and green, were chosen by Garkoks himself. The colors didn't just suit him in his opinion, but were also in a sense the Dead World's national colors. Psychologically speaking; the time he had spent in the Dead World, had made him value these colors above the rest.

The colors of his clothes fit the world surrounding them. They didn't seem out of place in the Dead World, even though they were from the World of the Living. For this reason, the dead and the demons didn't think of him as a foreigner, seeing his luxurious clothes.

Having folded in his large wings, Garkoks threw the jacket over him skillfully and routinely slipped his wings through its large slits.

After getting his jacket on, he walked over to his chest of drawers and picked up two vambraces off of it. The vambraces were made entirely out of dark metal and they had the same purpose, as his old jacket's gold bracelets. Unlike the bracelets, the vambraces hadn't been enchanted, since their material was already durable enough.

The vambraces covered his forearms completely and covered his jacket from cuffs to elbows. The vambraces were completely smooth and polished, apart from the round initial marks on top of them.

The vambraces weighed a lot more than the bracelets, over seventy kilos each. But Garkoks was already used to it and could move his arms effortlessly.

Having dressed, the Demon Overlord headed towards the door that was now almost half his height. Without slowing down his pace, Garkoks transformed into a bit under two-meter-tall high elf and walked through the door. On the other side, he changed back to his real form, as reflexively as before.

The spell he used was called *Omni-infiltrator*, a very advanced and difficult transformation spell. The spell changed both the user's outside appearance, and their clothes. The spell had been difficult to learn and required plenty of mana and concentration. Despite this, Garkoks was used to using the spell daily. It was very useful to be able to move in the size of the tower's original owners, without having to stuff oneself through doors.

Garkoks walked down the stairs calmly, looking at the Overlord's Tower like a steed dying from an old age. Soon he would be the only resident of the tower and later he'd also move out of the tower, once he obtained larger accommodations.

In reality, he was no longer sure, if he would ever again sleep under the tower's roof. He hadn't mentioned anything about it to Ryzekna and Hilgrane. He had thought about burning or exploding the tower after he left, so it wouldn't remind him of his past, but he had decided otherwise. It would be better to keep the tower intact and abandoned, so it would stay as a memorial to others. Maybe he himself could return here someday, to compare his achievements to his father's.

After arriving on the bottom floor, Hilgrane and Ryzekna stood next to the front-door, with suitcases and backpacks. Next to the suitcases, on the ground, lay a pole made out of dark metal that had several hooks.

The pole was a carrying pole that demons used while moving, the hooks of which the demons attached their personal belongings while migrating. The bar was then hoisted onto a demon's shoulder, where it hung for the rest of the journey. Hilgrane and Ryzekna had received the bar from Elokrantor, since she supposedly wasn't planning on moving.

Seeing his ready-to-leave caretakers, or rather his former caretakers, despite Garkoks's calm appearance, a lump rose into his throat.

Unbelievable, even though I have known this day to come for almost a century, I still cannot come up with anything good to say. Maybe even I cannot say goodbye to my parents, without heartache. ...Nah, bad parents I could throw away without any problems. The reason why this is so difficult, is because they were so wonderful.

"Death knew how to choose, better caretakers are hard to find," Garkoks praised them composedly. "I will miss you."

Though Garkoks thought of these two demons as his parents, he had never called them with that word. His family was a weird one, and the term *parents*, brought a bad taste to his mouth.

Skark and Drajenic were his father and mother, but they had died before he had hatched. Death was his grandpa, and he had guided and helped him often, and his daughters were like Garkoks's sisters. Despite all of them, Hilgrane and Ryzekna were the ones to take care and raise him at the end. Who he should call his parents; was a question that Garkoks had already given up on answering.

"We will also miss you, my Lord," Ryzekna answered politely, "I am happy that our work here didn't go to waste."

Our Lord, or, *my Lord*, were Hilgrane's and Ryzekna's new ways of addressing Garkoks. They had started calling him their Lord, as Garkoks turned sixty. The idea was to supposedly get Garkoks used to thinking about them as his subjects, and not as caretakers. Though Garkoks understood that the purpose was to get him used to this moment, when their time came to leave.

At first, he had been happy about this. No more, *little Overlord*, or other such nicknames. But thinking back at those days, Garkoks couldn't help but think about it nostalgically. Soon those days would be completely over, and he would never again be called like that. Kind of like he would never again see an old friend.

After thinking about how to answer Ryzekna's words, Garkoks stated, "I appreciate everything you have done for me. Let us see how long it will take, until I screw up the whole thing."

Hearing Garkoks downplay the situation, Ryzekna and Hilgrane chuckled at his joke. Not often would one find subjects who laughed with a ruler who joked about his job. But this just showed how well they knew each other. Garkoks might joke about his position as the Demon Overlord, but they all knew; that Garkoks only joked about things, when everything was under his control.

"By the way Ryzekna, you haven't forgotten that one thing we talked about," Garkoks reminded his teacher.

As Hilgrane looked at the teacher ignorant of what the male demons talked about, Ryzekna snapped his fingers.

"Oh right! Thanks for reminding me," Ryzekna yelled and reached into his leather jacket's pocket.

The dream-demon pulled out a dark purple crystal ring from his pocket, with a rose on top of the band, shaped from the same crystal.

Ryzekna handed the ring to Hilgrane and asked with a calm voice, "Hilgrane, will you be my wife?"

Seeing the ring, Hilgrane's crimson eyes seemed to gleam from surprise. It was clear that the succubus was happy and flattered, but saying this was an understatement. Hilgrane's wings flapped from enthusiasm, creating a gust of wind in the bottom floor.

"Oh, my goodness, where in the world did you get that?! Or better yet, when did you get it?" Hilgrane asked mesmerized.

"You remember that longer field trip that me and Garkoks went on twenty years ago?"

Hilgrane thought for a moment and nodded.

"During that trip we visited the acid lakes that I have told you about. We borrowed some tools from a nearby village, and then flew over to the large abyssite crystal. We knocked some pieces off of the crystal, one of which we brought to the World of the Living to be refined."

While listening to the story, Garkoks was grateful to Ryzekna for not revealing more about their visit to the World of the Living. Though they had easily found a suitable jeweler amongst the dwarves, the trip wasn't exactly simple. They had at first had to *persuade* the jeweler a little, so that they would agree to collaborate and wouldn't tell others. On top of this, the crystal that they wanted to make the ring out of, was completely unknown to the jeweler. While getting accustomed to the new material, the jeweler had broken most of the right sized crystal shards. Once the dwarf finally finished the ring, Ryzekna and Garkoks had wiped his memory empty of them. Finally, they had taken the remaining crystal shards, so that they couldn't be traced.

Hilgrane shook her head and looked at Ryzekna sternly, "So you were on such a dangerous trip without me knowing? Whose idea was this?"

"Mine," Ryzekna admitted sincerely, "but I suggested that our Lord would have stayed in the village, while I got the crystal. So, what do you say?"

Hilgrane wrapped her arms quickly around the teacher and yelled happily, "Yes! I do! I need to tell my parents about this! Oh, I hope they can still be reached..."

Garkoks chuckled. It was surprisingly fun to see Hilgrane's reaction, after twenty years of waiting. Actually, he was surprised that they hadn't proposed by themselves a long time ago. They had confessed their feelings towards each other a while ago, and they hadn't waited for the honeymoon. Ryzekna had supposedly wanted to wait until Hilgrane no longer needed to stay in the tower, before he proposed.

For a few times, Garkoks had thought, how amusing it would be, if Hilgrane refused during the proposal. Almost a hundred years of waiting and Hilgrane refused at the end, Ryzekna's expression would have been one of a kind.

After Hilgrane and Ryzekna stopped hugging, Garkoks helped them attach their burden onto the carrying pole. The pole was about four meters long, and it had a lot more hooks than they needed.

So that the luggage didn't fly off the pole, as the demons ran, the tips of the carrying pole's hooks could be locked onto the pole. The locked hooks could not be opened afterwards, other than with the key that Hilgrane kept around her neck. If the key was lost, they could always rip their luggage off the hooks, on the expense of the suitcases and backpacks.

After attaching the luggage on the pole, Hilgrane and Ryzekna carried it out of the iron door. Outside Ryzekna lifted the pole on his left shoulder and waved goodbye to Garkoks.

Decades have passed and Garkoks Dran has grown up. The world has changed and his plans have changed along with it, but his goal remains the same. His training is now complete, and he is ready to spread his wings.

The time has come for the Demon Overlord to amass his allies and face his adversaries.

With his forces and funds in short supply, will Garkoks Dran be able to take on the world? Will the demons finally be able to return to the World of the Living, and will humanity be set free from slavery?

Here begins the reign of history's greatest villain.

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