



Bloody Fingers: Book of Prologues

Chapter 3- Vous Deux

D&D based novel by R Jon Matrim from the Echoing Worlds series.

Bloody Fingers Trilogy book #1: Book of Prologues

Chapter Three: Vous Deux

Location: Mother's Corruption

Year: -2

The small naked man hid in the dark shadow, laying in the cold muck of the underground bog. He was curled into a small ball with his skeletal arms pulling his emaciated legs tightly against his chest. His head was bent down, hiding his face against his knees. The curled position of his pale body highlighted every rib and the knob of every backbone along his spine. There were dark bruises along his back and legs, and there were bloody welts across his buttocks. He did not move. He barely breathed. The entire bog was still; just the sound of small drips of water falling from the rocks overhead.

The massive shape of Mother Malkin slowly sank into the stagnant water nearby. The stained foam closed in above her, hiding the ripples moving through the thick and dirty water. After she disappeared, a tiny semblance of life emerged in the bog. Insects crawled through the mud and over the rock. Small pale frogs began croaking and splashing as they chased the bugs.

"She is gone." A loud voice came out of the darkness. The woman's voice was cracked and wavered. It had been a long time since she had spoken.

A second woman spoke, her timid voice just above a whisper. "Where did she go, Grisilda?"

"She remains in the Eternal Night." A third voice, Grisilda, answered. "She keeps rising from bog to bog. She is searching for something, or someone, but the water barely clears my eye before she moves again. Can you feel her mind, Morgatha?"

"My sister is too far away for any clarity." The loud voice was Morgatha. "I know she hunts, but the images are unclear. I saw shining bugs and felt flames as she passed me."

"I'm so thirsty." The timid voice whispered again. "Is there time to drink?"

"Boy!" Morgatha shouted, and the noise was far too loud for this quiet place. It made everything stop for a

few breaths as the small things assessed their possible danger. The little man shifted just slightly, pulling himself into an even tighter ball.

"Get up, boy!" She yelled at the man again. "Bring the crone some water so she stops whimpering."

"Don't be cruel, Morgatha. Veridia is our coven-sister now." Grisilda spoke softly but firmly. "And she hasn't forgotten food and drink yet."

"She will never forget, Grisilda." The disgust in Morgatha's voice was palpable. "Must we be reminded over and over again because her kind is too weak to forget!" It was less a question than an accusation.

"Please, Vous Deux. Just a little." Veridia's quiet voice returned, ignoring the other two woman and speaking directly to the dirty little man as she sobbed quietly.

"Safe?" The misshapen man whispered.

"What did it say?" Morgatha yelled.

"Vous Deux asked you if it was safe." Grisilda answered calmly.

"I told you Mother was gone." Morgatha raged. "Clean the scum from your ears, you bitch."

"Witches be bitches." Veridia's sobs turned into a cackle, her broken mind quickly jumping from one thought to the next. "We are a coven... Get into the oven.". Her hysterical laughter increased in volume, so the woman placed both hands over her mouth to try and stifle her own sound.

"It is safe, child." Grisilda ignored both the insult and the insanity. "Please get the human a drink."

The small man took two deep breaths, releasing them with a shaking exhale. And then he uncurled, his bones popping as he straightened. He moaned with the pain of unfolding his body, but he did not stop moving. He rolled over onto his belly and tried to push himself up with his arms while pulling his legs up beneath him to move himself onto his hands and knees. His legs slid upward in the mud, but his arms gave out- dropping his face and chest into the mud. He tried again, and this time managed to lift himself into a kneeling position. He wiped the mud from his face as he tried to catch his breath.

"Cookies for boys... Girls get sweets... All get toys... I get to eats..." The crone's maniacal chant broke through her hands, and she gasped, her mind circling back. "Please, Vous Deux. Just a little water for me." Veridia had swung from glee to sorrow once again.

"I will tell my sister to eat your fucking tongue!" Morgatha shrieked. Her fury at the crone overwhelming any caution.

"Please, sister." Grisilda spoke calmly. "She is a human crone so she will take time for her mind to heal. Your voice was able to reach me when I woke here in madness. Let me do the same for her."

"You are a hag! Worthy to be my coven-sister." Morgatha's voice was back to simply shouting again. "She is human filth!"

"Eternity is a long time for us to be alone." Grisilda's voice was heavy with shared sorrow and resignation.

"She is food, sister. She is not fellowship." Morgatha answered softly this time, a frightening change. Veridia's torment had reminded her about hunger.

While they were speaking, the little man had crawled on his knees to the water's edge. He cupped his hands and dipped them into the water, bringing the filthy liquid to his own mouth several times. He scooped up tadpoles and swallowed them as well. He pulled a few small red mushrooms out of the muck and chewed them along with some dark algae that grew there. It was an insignificant meal, but it was still something. A flash of heat spread from his throat and stomach throughout the man's body. His hands pressed against his swollen abdomen. Vous Deux doubled over, his stomach clenching. The mushrooms caused pain but also smothered it under a red mental haze. Vous Deux gagged but managed to keep everything down. The warmth seemed to revive him, and the tremors in his extremities stopped.

The cramps softened enough for Vous Deux to straighten, and he reached out to the water again. He filled his cupped hands and shuffled slowly on his knees away from the water towards the cave wall. Three torsos were spaced about ten big strides apart from each other. They all looked like they had been buried in the ground up to their rib cages, with only their upper body, arms, and heads visible. The crone was the closest to him, followed by Grisilda and then Morgatha. He shuffled to the old human, Veridia, and tilted his cupped hands to pour the water into her open mouth. Her gray shriveled tongue extended past her lips, and she lapped at the trickle of water like an animal. Her split lips started to ooze pus as the water rehydrated them.

As the last drops of water fell, the ancient woman quickly reached forward and grabbed the small man's wrists, pulling him towards her mouth. He was lighter than the crone but being positioned on his knees gave the man a solid base. He pulled his arms back towards his body, and the upper body of the old witch tipped forward. Her mouth had stretched so wide open that the skin at the corner of her lips had split and her lower jaw had dropped down near her chest. Foul smelling ichor ran down the sides of her neck from the new wounds. She looked like a huge snake had unhinged its jaw and was trying to swallow the tiny man. A high-pitched squeal of excitement escaped from her throat. It sounded almost like a whistle.

Vous Deux fell backward, his starving body still unable to support both of their weights. As he fell backward, the woman's torso lifted from the flat etched stone placed beneath her. She had no lower body! The crone had been cut cleanly right below her ribcage and her upper body set upon the enchanted stone like a trophy. As she separated from the magical stone base, her skin tore away from the surface with a wet ripping sound. The stench of rot and petrification bloomed out from her carcass as her organs spilled out onto the ground. And the ancient woman screamed! A pure and primordial screech of anguish erupted from her mouth and from her mind. As her remains tore from the glyph that had spared her from dying, the pain and realization of her fatal injury exploded from the tortured witch in a psychic scream. The raw magic hit Vous Deux with a physical impact, slamming his head into the stone floor and driving his breath from his body. Blood dripped from his nose and ears as his eyes rolled up and back. The corpse fell on top of him. The witch would never feel hungry or thirsty again. She had been freed from Mother Malkin's coven by a massive death blow that had already killed her. The spell had just kept her from realizing she was dead.

"Mother is going to be so angry when she gets home." It was Morgatha's turn to cackle madly. The bugs

and frogs had gone still in the cavern once more as everything except Morgatha waited in fear and silence...

"Boy." Grisilda's calm voice called to the unconscious man. "Vous Deux. You need to get up."
"Stop!" Morgatha did her best to whisper, but it still came out as a yell. "Let Mother find him there. Her anger will fall onto him!"

"He is our only hope of escape." Grisilda tried to calm her remaining coven-sister. "He can move about. That means he has the potential to get away from here."

"You speak of hope!" Morgatha laughed. "Be assured, hag! You will forget hope just as easily as you've forgotten food and drink. It just takes more time. Mother leaves us with no hope. All we have is time."

"I see the battle Mother is fighting. You can feel her injuries, Morgatha." Grisilda tried to convince the other hag. "She may not make it back to the lair this time."

"You still do not understand her power." Morgatha was speaking in a calm voice for once.

The change of tone focused Grisilda's attention. "Explain to me."

"She cannot be killed. Even if her wounds overwhelm her, she will return here. Even if she is just clinging to her life by a claw- her hold on it is unbreakable." Morgatha sneered at the other woman. "You see how her magic keeps us alive. Do you truly not realize that it would do the same for her?"

"All things can die, Sister." Grisilda would not be deterred. "If she can't be killed away from this place, then she can be killed here. He could kill her."

"That wretched creature cannot make an end to my true Sister!" Morgatha laughed. "My sister and I consumed devils, giants, and dragons. We corrupted Seraphim and Aasimar. And when she had bored of those hunts, she came for me. I fought her with all my magic and all my tricks, and I was no more than a soft wind against mighty rock. She drank my power. She ripped me in two. And then she placed me on this stone so she could continue to sip at my magic for eternity."

"And yet she was frightened of that wretched creature the day it clawed out a womb." Grisilda still spoke calmly. "My eye saw that babe resist her corruption. You felt her fear and her wonder when that happened. There has to be a reason she has kept him alive for hundreds of years, morphing his form countless times only to return him to his wretched state."

"He is a toy!" Morgatha exclaimed. "We are all nothing but toys!"

The shouting hags had awakened the man, and he wiggled himself free from the weight of the dead crone. The argument covered the scraping sounds of his movement, and he slipped into the dark water to hide. He moved as carefully as possible and positioned himself in a shadow, just as a loud crack sounded and a heavy wave splashed over him. Both of the hags exhaled loudly, Morgatha groaning with animal pleasure.

Mother Malkin had just reappeared near the water's edge, steam rising up from her body. She had horrible burns over most of her body, and large gashes in her arms, legs, and abdomen. The head of a giant metallic ant was gripped in one of her large hands, the flesh still sizzling from the heated metal even though she had just been submerged. She was slumped over at the waist, her massive legs and lower body down in the water but still upright.

"I can almost touch my magic." Grisilda voice was low and breathy.

Morgatha groaned again, the sound rumbling up from deep within her throat. Her eyes were closed and her hands outstretched toward Mother Malkin's body.

"Vous Deux!" Grisilda called to the man, but he had already sunk low in the dirty water. The hag was not calm now as she looked for him with her one remaining eye. "Vous Deux!" There was desperation in her voice. "Just one blow may kill her!"

"You, bitch!" Morgatha bellowed. "If Mother dies, we die!"

"I can find peace in the quiet of death, Sister." Grisilda was still slightly out of breath, but she had pushed the panic down and was speaking calmly again. "Just strike her and your torture will be over, boy!"

"*Vous Deux!*" Morgatha's yell was inside his aching head. He wasn't able to hide from that voice! "*I have touched my magic. Run and hide, Vous Deux. Hide in your corner!*"

The pressure inside his head was tremendous! Blood began to trickle from his nose again. The small, deformed man sank beneath the water, but it did not provide an escape. The hag's voice followed him as he sank deeper.

"*Hide, child! Or I will consume you!*" She screamed at him!

He kicked with his legs and pushed off the rock towards the dark shadow where he had been before. Morgatha had gotten inside him! He had to escape! Mother sometimes tormented him this way, but his fear of her voice put him into a stupor within seconds. Morgatha's presence in his head was weaker. His mind didn't hide from her. But that meant the pain didn't stop. He wasn't overwhelmed. He was still awake! And he could feel her inside. Pushing and scratching at his brain. Yelling at him. Hurting him!

Suddenly, the pressure inside his head grew even more painful as another presence merged into the shared consciousness. The shock caused him to gasp, sucking in water and choking. By instinct only, Vous Deux lifted his head out of the water- coughing and vomiting. His eyesight went black, and his head wobbled on his neck as his balance was taken from him. He smelled blood and bile. There was a horrible and shaking whistle in his ears. And yet, he still heard both of the hags screaming and cursing. The barrage of sound was both inside and outside of his head. There was a loud pop, and his world went silent! The horrible pressure and pain in his head suddenly lessened, but something else was still there.

"*Breathe, Vous Deux.*" Grisilda's calm voice was quiet and soothing in his mind. "*We will never have full use of our magic again. These psionic tricks are all that we can accomplish now. True magic feeds of either life or death; and we are locked in between those two states. I am blocking my sister from your mind, but she is*

strong and will break through again. If you act, we can all be free!"

The man caught his breath, and his vision returned. Everything he could see had a weird green glow like a luminous aura. The vertigo remained, however, and if he hadn't still been in the water he'd have fallen. His head wobbled back and forth. He couldn't control it. His fear returned with a vengeance. Vous Deux squeezed his eyes closed. "Help." He mouthed the words but did not speak them. And then he hid from everything.

Grisilda and Morgatha had both gone silent in voice and mind. They looked at each other, their argument forgotten as they both tried to make sense of what they were seeing. They had both seen the man suddenly become detached from reality when Mother Malkin was playing with him. But this time it was very different than his regular somnambulant state. His face had gone lax and vacant, but his body was moving purposely.

The man called Vous Deux had suddenly lifted partly out of the water, and he altered himself. His arms extended and waved in the air. His fingers danced, drawing sparking purple sigils. His arms and fingers had grown longer. The skin between his fingers expanded, and his hands took on a frog-like appearance. Gashes suddenly appeared on his neck below his ears as gills developed. His eyelids turned clear and closed down to protect his eyes without stopping his vision. And then he jack-knifed his body and dove down beneath the water again.

Grisilda began to sob as her opportunity for release disappeared from view.

Morgatha laughed, enjoying her victory over her coven sister. "Mother was right, Grisilda. The wretch is something more!".

Vous Deux swam down and felt along the bottom of the mire until he came to a large crack in the rock floor. He pulled himself through, his diminutive body had become even thinner as the spell changed his body even further. His head had lengthened, and its girth was much smaller. His bones had softened, becoming pliable. His shoulders and hips flexed and bent as he squeezed through the tight opening, one webbed hand leading the way as his other arm pressed tightly against his elongated torso. Progress was slow. Vous Deux inched himself along, pulling with one hand and pushing with his toes.

The deformed man pushed through until the crack widened into a relict lava tube, now submerged. The smooth sides of the rock made progress much faster as the Drow's darkvision guided him through the tunnel. His speed was essential, as the spell had started to wither. Vous Deux was still swimming, but the water around him had steadily increased in temperature. The tunnel finally ended, opening up into a large dark area of warm water. The man stopped moving, unsure which direction would take him to the surface. As his spell ended, the newly formed gills closed and his need to breathe air turned frantic. Tremors began affecting his arms and legs. His reformed lungs spasmed, releasing what little of the precious air remained in his body. However, the bubbles did give him a direction. And he followed them, pushing off the lip of the tunnel with his legs in one last desperate push. His arms and legs jerked in the water as he splashed through the surface, breaking into the air with a choking inhale. He rolled over onto his back and floated while he gasped, his feet kicking weakly to keep him afloat.

Recovering, the man turned his body in the water so he could look around. A light fog covered the warm water, but it only obscured his vision slightly. The scent of sulfur was strong in his nose, but after the

stench of the hag's lair this underground grotto smelled clean and natural. It felt comfortable and safe...

Vous Deux started from his sleep, sitting up in a panic. His involuntary gasp was cut short as he clapped a hand tightly over his mouth and nose, desperately trying to stay silent. He remained completely still. Only his eyes moved, frantically searching the chamber. Not seeing any danger, he opened the fingers of his hand slowly and allowed himself to breathe. He inhaled carefully and quietly. He turned his head ever so slowly. Gradually increasing his range of vision and taking in the strange new surroundings. Still seeing nothing that would hurt him, Vous Deux slowly moved his hand away from his mouth. He placed his hand on his opposite forearm. He slowly tightened his grip, digging his filthy fingernails into his own skin. He squeezed tightly to feel the pressure and pain. His head moved wildly. His eyes searched for anything familiar. His breathing quickened and a small whimper escaped. He lay down and pulled himself into a tight ball, once again hiding his face in his knees. He stayed curled on the ground and cried softly for a long time.

His tears had dried on his face when he finally rose to his hands and knees. He crawled over to the water's edge and waited there, watching the surface of the water for any movement. A splash at the far edge of the pool caused him to flinch, but it was only a spider moving across the surface. As he watched, a fin cut out of the water, circling around the spider and then dipping below the surface again. Vous Deux realized that life was plentiful in this grotto. As he sat quietly, he noticed small movements all around him: crickets, spiders, crayfish, salamanders, and fish of different sizes. Most were eyeless, as was most of the natural life in the Eternal Night. But some had huge eyes, specialized to take in the dim light from bioluminescent fungi and insects. This cavern was vastly different from where he had been. Life was plentiful, and it was bold here. He pinched himself again, squeezing his eyes shut and counting to himself before opening them again. This new world didn't disappear. It was all so strange!

He stared down into the water and could see his own reflection looking back. He'd seen himself before, but in the hag's grotto- his image was rarely clear. There was plenty of light there, but the filthy water was covered with foam and algae. In this grotto, even with the dimmer light, the clean water showed his face clearly.

"We are safe, here."

Vous Deux recognized his own voice. He felt the comfortable tingling inside his head and as always, it told him he wasn't entirely alone. "Safe?". His whisper seemed too loud.

His reflection smiled up at him, the eyes wrinkling at the corners in amusement. He nodded.

"I brought us here while you were resting. It was a hard swim, so we are going to feel sore. But I don't think Mother will find us." The words in his head sounded light and happy.

"She was hurt badly from her hunt. That helped us get away. But she will heal soon." He answered the question before it actually became words. *"She'll scry to find us, but all she will see is that we are in a grotto in the Endless Night. She can search from grotto to grotto with her magic, but we swam far. She might never find this one."*

Vous Deux realized he was sobbing again, but his reflection had no tears and was still smiling. He took a few deep trembling breaths and felt the knotted muscles in his back, shoulders, and stomach soften. His pain lessened. He felt... He felt new... He felt relieved... He felt... Safe?

"We are safe. We are not alone. But we are hungry!" His reflection turned to look into the pond. *"There are some fish here. Do you want to try? Or should I do it?"*

Vous Deux heard soft laughter, and realized it was coming from his own chest. By instinct, both hands jumped up to cover his mouth and stifled the noise. His reflection was smiling sadly and shaking his head. In the reflection, it dropped his hands and released the smile that had been captive beneath them. It wiped his tears and looked into the pool of water again.

A small movement to his left distracted him. Vous Deux looked over to see the spider had crossed the water and had settled down on a smooth stone not far from him. He could see small lights flickering across its three round eyes. Vous Deus suddenly felt very, very tired. The remaining tension left his body, and he slumped into the soft sand. His breathing slowed, and he slept.

Vous Deux was sitting cross legged near the water's edge. He was taking small bites out of a pink fish. It was bigger than his hands. He glanced down and was surprised to see that he was wearing a ragged and dirty robe. It was short but it covered him to his knee as he was sitting. The robe was tied and belted across his chest. There was a thin, dark metal chain that hung down from his neck. It was weighted at the end with a brooch that was shaped and polished in the shape of a spider. He could see small lights flickering across its three round eyes.

Vous Deux rotated his head slowly, stretching his neck to shake the groggy feeling. He took another bite of the fish. It was cold and delicious. There was a small pile of discarded fish scales on the sand near his knee and a thin rock that had been used to clean the fish. He felt that comfortable tingling that told him he was not alone. He set the fish down and stood up easily using just his legs, surprised at how strong they seemed. He walked to the edge of the water and looked for his reflection.

"Welcome back. We needed rest." The reflection was smiling. It looked clean. The dark bruises still encircled the eyes, but the eyes themselves were clear. *"I have been taking care of us while you slept. Do you remember that we had a visitor."*

Vous Deux spun quickly, lowering into a crouch with his hands on the ground as he looked for danger. He didn't see anyone, so he continued to circle- slowly now. His eyes roamed up and down the cavern walls, searching for this visitor. He held his breath, even though his heart raced in his chest.

"Sorry. I should have been careful with my words. We had a visitor, but she has gone now. She gave us two divine gifts!"

"Gone?" As always, his voice sounded raspy and strained. It was almost too quiet to hear. But there was nobody to hear it anyway. Vous Deux was alone.

"Yes. She only graced us for a short time. She was happy that we finally escaped from Mother!"

The name made the broken man flinch. His hands trembled. His legs lost strength and he lowered all the way to the ground. Vous Deux wrapped his arms around his legs- pulling his knees up against his face.

"We are safe." The voice in his head was calm. *"I promise that we are safe."*

Vous Deux lifted his head and his shoulders and arms loosened. He took a deep breath. And then another. His heartbeat slowed. He was not alone. He was never alone.

"Do you like the robe?" The voice sounded lighter. *"It helps us do some amazing things!"*

Vous Deux looked down at the shabby coat. The sleeves were torn and frayed. There were holes throughout the fabric as if it had been chewed by rats. The fabric itself was unusual. It felt like a very, very thin leather. It reminded Vous Deux of Veridia's skin. There were tiny silver threads that ran through the cloth- too small to notice unless you looked very closely. Those threads ran through every part unbroken, even the holes where there was no fabric had nearly invisible strings. He touched a thread with a fingertip. It felt warm and held to his skin- stretching just a little when he pulled his finger away before the string released and moved back into place.

"She called it the Rags of the Spider Urchin."

Vous Deux rose to his feet again. He moved back to the water's edge and looked at his reflection. Its smile was even bigger now.

"Don't take it off... Ever." The smile had fallen for just a breath. The brow furrowed and the lips pressed tightly together. The voice inside his head continued without moving the mouth of the image. *"It hurt us badly when we put it on the first time. I actually thought we might lose each other. But that won't happen again if we don't take it off!"* The reflection tried to smile again, but the serious look quickly returned.

"That isn't completely true." The eyes suddenly looked tired and sad, and the mouth once again moved with the words in his head. *"If we pull the hood up it will hurt a little. But doing so helps us to hide better, so we can take that pain when we need to..."* The reflection brightened again, trying to move past the memory of pain.

"And...." He drew out the word dramatically. *"It gives us spider powers! I'll show you!"*

Vous Deux felt his eyes start to close as the tingling grew into a buzzing sound like a hornet. He slapped himself, hard. The violence and noise of the blow surprised him, but the buzzing went away. The presence in his head just tingled again.

"Sorry..." The voice sounded confused. *"You weren't ready. I'm just excited to show you."*

"Who?" Vous Deux asked. The question seemed to shock his reflection even more than the slap.

"Her name is Lolth. She is the Goddess of the Drow. She is our queen. We are Drow."

Vous Deux could remember hearing that before. Grisilda had told him about the Drow to help pass the

time once when Mother was away. She had said that many of the Dark Elves worshiped the Spider Queen. Grisilda had taught him many, many things. She had hoped that he could develop into a companion in their shared misery. His learning was slow, but they had been imprisoned together for more than three hundred years.

"Spider." It was a statement and a question.

"Yes. She is a spider. And she was going to turn us into something she called a Drider, but we asked her if we could just have spider powers instead and she thought that was funny! She said we were very brave for such a broken little man." The reflection laughed and dramatically brushed some dust from its shoulder before holding both arms up in victory. Vous Deux waited for the moment to pass. The arms slowly came back down.

"Always so serious..." The reflection complained. *"Anyway, she threw the coat at us and we put it on. Then we fell on the ground screaming. We peed a little, but she didn't care- she just laughed some more. And then we didn't die, so she said we could keep it."* The victory salute was back up, as was the proud smile.

"We can walk up walls and even walk on the ceiling, just like a spider!" The reflection was looking up at the cave ceiling before looking Vous Deux in the eyes again. *"You have to try it!"*

"Gifts?" Vous Deux wasn't ready yet to try to walk up a wall.

"The other thing scares me a little bit." The reflection pointed over to the furthest cavern wall. *"She called it a Wand of White Fire. She didn't explain much, but she said it makes a fire that can burn right through armor and that water cannot put it out."*

Vous Deux looked in that direction. There appeared to be a small object laying in the sand. It glistened a little in the low light, but he couldn't see it very clearly. He looked back at his reflection for guidance.

"It has some charges now. But she said we'd learn how to make more at something she called a lavatory. She said we'd use the wand to kill the auto-matrons and to get the golden one's attention." He continued explaining. *"She did tell me to make sure we don't use the last charge, or it would probably kill us too. That's why I put it over there."*

The reflection's face brightened as it remembered something else. *"Ooh! It does have a spider on it too. So, it matches the cloak she gave us."* He sobered quickly. *"Still, I think it may be safer to leave it over there until we really need it."*

Vous Deux gave it one more quick glance and then pushed it out of his mind. He was good at doing that with the things that scared him. He walked over and sat back down by the fish. He picked the fish up and continued eating. The tingling went away, at least until he needed help again. He'd never worn clothing before, so it was a little strange against his skin but it was warm. He took another bite of the fish and felt tears run down his cheeks. He didn't know what this feeling was inside his chest and belly, but it also made him feel warm. He'd never been able to eat slowly before. He'd never truly been safe. He couldn't even remember being warm. He lay down in the sand and pulled his legs up. For once, however, he didn't hide his face with his knees. Vous Deux slept.

He awakened as a spider tiptoed across his cheek. His eyes opened, but he remained still. He'd slept with insects and worms before. In the past, he'd have eaten the trespasser. Now, he simply waited for it to move on. But it did not. Instead, the tickle of the spider suddenly transformed into the touch of a cold hand!

A beautiful abomination was before him. Vous Deux was unable to move, to speak, or to even breathe. The awesome creature before him was a giant dark spider, with the torso of a beautiful Drow woman rising up from the thorax. Massive, armored legs were bent and squatting, bringing the goddess down lower towards the small man. Huge mandibles were dripping with acidic poison. The liquid falling to form a sizzling pool of death just inches from his face. Her Elven body was leaning down towards him. Her skin was pearlescent and her hair pure white. She was absolutely beautiful. She was absolutely terrifying. She had eight Elven arms, four on each side of her torso. The arms were too long and too thin, almost skeletal. Her hands and fingers also looked stretched, and her fingertips formed long claw-like points. One of those hands was resting on his cheek. Her gorgeous face was leaning towards him, and she was smiling. A purple glowing mist emanated from her body, lighting the cavern. She seemed to notice her multiple arms, and she blurred for a moment- clarifying once more to a more traditional Drow female form with only two arms.

"Sorry, love. Is this form better?". Her sultry voice pounded into his brain. A thousand hornets began to buzz behind his eyes and the small man opened his mouth to scream in pain. Lolth raised her hand and the sound was muted, only air and quiet vibration coming from his anguish. She waited as the energy escaped him.

"I have ended so many for so much less, love." She spoke with sound now, relieving some of the pressure and pain from his mind. "My gifts to you are seemingly endless."

The silent scream had released the lock on his body and movement returned to Vous Deux. He curled into a tight ball. A moan rising from the shaking flesh. The buzzing in his head was fierce and painful, forcing his eyes to close. And then with a loud pop, the buzz stopped and his eyes reopened.

"I can't let you hide right now." The woman's face had dropped down so close to him he could feel her cold breath on his face. "I want to see you, this time. Rise." Multiple cold hands grasped his body, lifting the small man into the air and setting him on his feet. They pulled away and there was a slight blur as the Spider Queen shifted back to just two arms again.

"Do you...." Lolth paused, her head rotating slowly to tilt in the opposite direction as she looked into his face. "... have the will to serve me?" she finished her thought.

"Your other has already made many promises." Lolth said. "But your corruption will taste so very delicious! Far more than what it has to give." A series of low clicks came from the spider body- alien sounds of desire and pleasure. Vous Deux felt his heart race and his manhood became rigid as her hunger spilled over onto him. He groaned and climaxed as the Drow goddess licked her lips. Tendrils of her purple mist brushed against his back and legs- her power taking control of his body and keeping him upright.

"Yes..." Vous Deux groaned again, that single word expressing so much. His body was lifted again into the

air as the purple tendrils wrapped around him. His teeth clenched and his body shook from the cold! He was turned in the air and then slowly lowered to the ground once more. The massive Spider Goddess was backing away from him, her shape blurring and blending with the darkness as the purple mist withdrew into her dark form- taking its light with her.

"So very delicious! Hide again, love. It will be better for what comes next." Her voice slipped away as the darkness overtook everything and Vous Deux gave way to the buzzing in his head.