

BLOODED FROST (excerpt) by Chase Coulson, 07/2022

It feels like a lifetime ago, such a long time ago, but is it? No.

I was once a freelance detective in a world full of monsters. I slowly approached another crime scene, all too familiar, dead body found grounded, notebook in hand, and Magometer in the other, but this time it was in the Enchanted Meadows. I stepped under the blue and black police tape wrapped around the surrounding trees which circled the body. The body was human. Coincidence? Nowhere close. The body lay on the ground, face planted in the grass, deep into the Meadows. Such a distinct and peaceful forest.

Subject male, black hair, white skin, clawed up back, three claw marks larger than that of a bear's but with no blood at all. They were black, leaking black smoke. The subject had a deep slash in the back of his neck. It looked to be from either a sword or ax. The body also had no forearms and was sprinkled in blood. Most of the officers on my team who came to review the scene puked when seeing the body. Even Layla and Shorok, our best who has seen the worst, tried their best to glance, no attempt to stare at that body when collecting evidence.

While analyzing the body, I could still hear tiny birds chirping in the wilderness, surrounded by giant light brown trunks of purple and pink-leaved trees which calmly floated in

the wind like the blue and green grass and clear flowing rivers. The trees smelled sweet, like lavender, but that scent was masked by the iron in the blood.

As I got closer to the body, stepping over the puddle of hemoglobin spatter soaking into the grass below, a sudden wisp of freezing cold air called upon the goosebumps on my skin to awaken. It was the middle of spring, the air wasn't this cold. Dazed by curiosity, I pressed the green button on the Magometer and turned the dial up to 80%. It clicked and beeped as its screen lit up in a green outline with the words,

"No Magic detected."

Strange.

"Magometer got ya down?" said Officer Lanester in a sarcastic tone. He was my most trusted partner and our best officer. The guy leads most of our cases, plus he was already here when we arrived. Great guy when you get to know him, but he loves his job a little too much if you ask me.

"So, lemme guess, it says no magic huh?"

"Yeah, none. But that doesn't make sense right?"

"Eh, don't seem likely to me mate. I've been around some nasty cases, but only two with no magic detection when there was clearly magic."

"Really? I've only seen one."

"Unlucky," he chuckles.

"You must know a lot more about this then," I say condescendingly, "what's your take?"

"We might be gettin' played out right."

"Hm. I felt it too. By who though?"

"Witches? Ha. Those pesky capitalistic pricks will play with scenes like this to hide evidence, or tamper with it just to get paid off by some other Elite."

"So you think the Elites have something to do with this?"

"Third murder this week mate. All in sacred locations, peaceful ones too. Don't seem very normal to me. If they are involved then they're definitely throwing us off, and if anything, it's to cover up some filthy rubbish they're doin as we speak."

Lanester and I stopped and gazed at the body before continuing, eager to figure things out.

"But hey, I wouldn't speculate with the Elites though."

"Yeah? You think they'd bite?"

"Pissing off the wrong person in this place, pfff, some of those rich arseholes will pay someone off to have your head split open like a melon for the smallest coverups."

"Ooo scary. You know that won't stop me, I mean, why do you think I'm out here?"

We locked eyes and he pointed at me,

"Best detective in the western region mate."

"Damn right," I confidently said back.

“Half elf, Half genius. Not so much for your human side though.”

“Ha ha, fuck off you egregiously useful bastard.”

“Ha. Oi, I’m heading to the car to start paperwork, you best stay vigilant out here alright Detective? Watch your six Alkea.”

“Yeah yeah, same goes to you Lonny.”

Lanester was like a brother to me. Hmf.

I went back to the body and around it I saw the murder weapon. It was an ax. I saw it lodged in a bare tree stump lying near the body. I walked closer to the ax, stepping around the body to examine it. I couldn’t help but notice that the smell of blood from the dead body was strong, fresh. This body reeked of iron, murdering my sense of smell. Ignoring that stench, I examined the ax at a close distance; it flowed with blood, and ice, leaking onto the tree stump. The light blue sparkling fluid covered the top of the handle and the bottom of the blade. The blood was drenched over the top of the blade. I looked back over to the body. One arm, draped in blood, was laying two feet away from the ax in the stump, and the other arm, sat still, directly under the severed shoulder, where the arm should have been. This arm wasn’t even bloody. Hmf. And the ice, it didn’t seem to melt in this heat, not by one bit. It has to be magic, but the Magometer said nothing of the sort. This case got way more complicated than I could have imagined.

I walked away from the body as the officers around continued to scout it out. I walked up to a tree about a few feet away from the corpse but then I heard a gut-wrenching scream. I whipped my head around before I could even write more reports in my notebook. *Officer Landell*, poor ignorant bastard. As curious as humans are said to be, you never expect them to be as careless as people say they are. Well, Landel ended up touching the frost on the blooded ax without gloves to collect further evidence. We learned that the ax was cold to the touch, so cold in fact, officer Landell scouting the scene, reported getting frostbite from just laying a finger on it.

Nothing added up. Could the killer have been a Frostling? Most aren't very religious so they wouldn't come here and people say most are criminals, but that's just the stereotype. Maybe a Magic-user? But then why did they kill? Magic users are usually peaceful from what I know. Learning magic through sacred means doesn't imply they wouldn't attack here. So then Who? Why here? How did they slip away so easily? And where are they as we speak?

Those were some of my last thoughts. . .

It took a few minutes of silence to piece this whole thing together but once I did, my eyes expanded wider than they ever have before.

Officer Lanester. . .

He wasn't exploring the scene anymore, nor was he even in the vehicle as he said before, I didn't see him. And, he is the only officer we trust to report the most important cases. He knows magic, he knows The Elites, he knows people, powerful people, violent people.

It was a set up. . .

And he told me to watch my back. Ha, cheeky son of a bitch.

I immediately heard the rustling of shoes on grass and leaves as a ***WHOOSH*** cluttered my ears and I tried to dodge to my left to avoid the swing of a sword.

I dodged wrong. . .

The sword split my head open like a melon, just as he said. In the few seconds I had left as my dying brain processed such a surprise, I watched from the ground, bleeding heavily out of my open skull, eyes turning red, as Lanester soaked each officer's bullet, disarmed, then killed all of them, slashing and slicing through them with black smokey claws and his sharp silver sword. Officer Lanester then slowly walked over to me, each step he took sloshed through my partner's and officer's mangled body's. The closer he walked to me on my last breath, the more his black smokey claws retracted back into his fingers as he wiped the blood from his face and hands onto his bullet riddled, red stained uniform.

"You know, Alkea, I never would have expected emotions to get the better of you. Especially because of what you've seen and experienced mate. Ha, what did I always tell ya?

Don't trust anyone. And please, rid yourself of that *disease* you call trust. I've known you for years, you do your best work alone."

That was the last thing I heard. . .

I was finally finished explaining this tale to the vengeful spirits that lingered around my dead body during the rain in the dead of night. It had been days, weeks, months since that moment, but I never went anywhere. I waited. I let my soul boil in rage, drowning myself in my anguish until they showed up. Only once have I ever read about where they came from; in the devilish books I've found on special cases. Reading it was said to curse your soul just by every word your mind consumed. Huh, guess it worked.

I've heard stories of the afterlife before. Never knew what to believe, but in every fable, every story of the end, The Spirits of the Damned, those of vengeance, never seemed to stop their plague from corrupting every single one.

I knew their power. Their allegiance to their God, Jor, the God of Vengeance itself. He was an "ancient" and "powerful" God I've been told by some of the wisest, oldest people I've met. He was even said to have opened Pandora's box, unleashing darkness upon our world. Oh, how I could wait an eternity for these spirits to find my soul and feed on my turmoil. I knew they could make me a *Champion*. No longer did I want my revenge or the power to enact revenge, I fucking needed it. I decided not to beg the vengeful spirits but bargain with them. I knew they only came to visit because I spent all of my energy keeping my soul chained down to

my decaying body. I never passed on to The Land of Souls to be burdened as a spirit of darkness or, or, be let go into The Forever as a spirit of peace. I knew how this worked. I wasn't going to let Heaven take my hand and bless my soul with tranquility. I was well past peace, I was set ablaze by my rage.

"We need access to your mind young one. . ." The three spirits freakishly mumbled in unison.

So, without hesitation, no question, I handed it to them on a silver platter. I felt my spirit get bombarded with my memories. They flew past my present mind like bullets to my skull. It burned like hell. Felt like my soul was being dragged down there already. I screamed louder and louder, still silent in the real world, but ever so noisy in my own mind.

God, the reminders of the darkness I fled from was unbearable, but I knew it would be worth it. They saw my life:

Alkea Hawk. Half elf, half human. Raised by a police officer father, killed in action. Mother, killed in mysterious suicide at a young age. Brilliant mind. Half elf boy solved that case, exposing corruption in the City of Thorns. Half elf boy nearly raised by Mimics and Humans after childhood was stolen. Start of detective work. Decade later. Death of best friend to a Betawolf. Death of loving partner to a Goblin gang. Death of hopes and dreams now. Depression arised, lingered, turned to darkness. Now, betrayal and the death of the half Elf boy, now a man.

"You, boy, are consumed with rage, fueled by it, along with an even stronger lust for revenge. You could melt the consciousness of a spirit just with a look. You are chosen to become the essence of us spirits, The Harbinger of Vengeance."

"The God of Vengeance itself, Jor, welcomes you. . ."

Yes, YES, FINALLY, those stories of resurrection, those tales of such by the three spirits was only a story, only a dream, only a thought, but now, IT WAS REAL.

The vengeful spirits hauntingly chanted this saying until it made my mind collapse. As soon as they stopped, my spirit floated away from my dead body on the ground in the rainy night and towards the darkness that possessed my body's now blackened eyes.

"Arise, new warrior, new Champion, Alkea Hawk, The Harbinger of Vengeance, the spirit of Revenge itself!" The spirits yelled.

I felt alive again. . .

I surpassed the dark void that consumed my vision and opened my eyes.

My head rapidly healed like fabric rewoven. I soullessly picked up my corpse, feeling my flesh wind back together In the lightning storm that had now engulfed the meadows. The dark skies flashed white, exposing each raindrop splashing onto my once decaying face, washing away the dirt, the regret, and the doubt. My eyes turned black leaking shadows of smoke from every blink. My short brown hair sprouted back from my skull and flowed with the smokey darkness. I felt my hand suddenly grip the handle of a six barreled pistol, manifesting right in front of me. It glowed with streaks of red, illuminating words with names of those who had

wronged me. My heart sank to the floor so I looked down. An abyss of darkness circled around my feet. Out crawled a scythe, one I've only ever seen in the stories of the Grim Reaper. Its blade glowed purple and its handle smoked black like the shadows.

I had felt powerless before, but now, I feel like a *God*. I have been reborn. Am I still Alkea? Or have I really changed? What is The Harbinger of Vengeance but a title fit only for me, myself, and I.

"You, Alkea, Harbinger of Vengeance, you have allegiance to us, the spirits of the Damned, of revenge. You summoned us, you transcended spiritual passing, and you've tempted our lord to guide you, so, we gave you a fraction of his power, such power is unimaginable to most demi-gods. However, if you now stray away from our orders and your plans for revenge, we will not hesitate to annihilate your soul and rid your body of life once again."

I nod my head with a stale blank face, feeling the shadows float away from my eyes. No longer did I feel the fear of death wrap around my soul like the shroud once needed for my corpse. I only felt anticipation, a longing. Finally I found a way to unchamber the rage I kept locked inside. Officer Lanester will not feel my wrath, no, he will know my pain like a memory through my blade. . .