

Grave Favor

A gloomy sky dances above the Pride Ring, the winds blowing a gentle breeze, brushing every autumn leaf across the pavement, as the sun rises over a new day, a surprisingly calm setting. No screaming, no murder, no pain, and no sign of the Overlord of Fear... at least, not yet. We're not at that part of the story yet, we find ourselves in the late 1940s, a time where the newest generation of truly capable overlords was only beginning. And here, we come across our early Overlord of Fear, Sereptis, or in this case, we can call him Edward. One of the newer sinners to appear in Hell, boasting a snake-like appearance, a truly-large smile, a less than appealing green sweater vest, and of course, a top hat. We can tell, this isn't the Overlord we know, no souls under his hand, just another average sinner without that Overlord flare, and while Edward is doing a good job at getting used to his new form and the places around him, he's still very new, very lost, and very confused. We find him today slithering towards a new part of Pentagram City, one of the smaller portions of this expansive city, Cannibal Town. As he approached, he could immediately feel a sense of doubt fill his mind, unsure if this is a good place to wander into.

"Mmmph, geez, what am I about to get myself into...?"

Despite his doubts, Edward would slither into the hungry town, colored by not only the pink roses in the bushes, not just the pink and white patterns across most of the buildings, but the color of red and black blood covering the concrete like paint. This town was truly a gory place, cannibals indulging all around, smiling and speaking to one another like it was no issue. Edward was... very unimpressed, and confused about such a tradition this town holds. I suppose it does live up to the name, but those pitch black eyes and that toothy smile that matched his own... It was uncanny, even for him. Though, today, Edward was here for a reason, and that was to meet with the Overlord who watches this town, who keeps her folk in check, the dazzling Rosie. Edward quickly found her emporium, which just opened up for the day, and prepared himself to meet a new Overlord.

"Whew, okay... let's not screw this up."

Edward wandered inside the empty emporium, getting greeted by the sight of a rather nice setting, tables set and ready for townsfolk to wander in, blooming flowers from inside vases spread across the room, and a dazzling display of fingertips in a heart-shaped case, there to be a sample for new guests. As Edward admired the display of fingers, mildly disgusted at the fact people eat this stuff, a voice would make itself known from across the room, as Rosie herself walked in from a separate room.

“Be sure to have a sample, dear, ya gotta fill that stomach of yours!”

“O-Oh! Uhh, yes, of course...”

Edward didn't wish to disrespect the Overlord already, so with mild discomfort, he took a finger into his hand and placed it on his lengthy tongue, taking a bite. The crunch in his mouth was loud, the bone was still inside, Edward quickly reached for a napkin and spat the finger into it, tossing it.

“Its... an acquired taste, I presume?”

“Mmmm, I suppose ya can say that, dear. Come, have a seat, I assume you're here for me!”

Edward nodded, slithering over to where Rosie took her seat, joining her at the same table. His size caused him to have to shift around a bit in the seat, making him feel a bit awkward right from the start, but despite this, he recollected himself, as Rosie poured herself and Edward a cup of tea, sliding the cup to him.

“Thirsty, dear?”

“Ah, why not?”

Edward picked up the cup, taking a small sip, as his smile widened a little, it certainly wasn't anything to scoff at, quite delicious. He set back down a cup, nodding with approval.

“Very nice.”

“Thank ya darlin! You seem pretty new here, though I'm sure you already know who I am... so tell me, what's your story, snake?”

Edward was almost offended by Rosie calling him a snake, but immediately realized that, well, she isn't wrong. He shrugged it off, as he let out an exhale before speaking.

“My name is Edward... I've come to you today by suggestion of another Overlord by the name of Zestial. I dropped into this Hellscape around a week ago, and despite all I've tried to do so far... I feel as if I'm stuck, like this place is limiting me on my actions, and I would like to speak with someone more experienced to hopefully fix this issue of mine.”

Rosie was immediately a little intrigued, most people that come to her ask for power, food, souls, anything of that sort... but it seems Edward is taking a different stance.

“Please, do tell, Edward.”

“Mmmph... while I was alive, I was a murderer... I was one of the best, I was prestigious in my craft, multiple kills under my hand and each one without a single trace of who I was. Outlets all around talked about me, the “The Top-Hat Killer” they called me, and they could never even get a single clear photo of me, I was perfect at what I did... until one day, I proved myself wrong, I made a mistake, and it costed my life... and now I find myself here.”

“Ha! Well, murder is quite the sin, hon... not surprised ya ended up down here.”

“I’m not exactly surprised either... I had partially believed Heaven and Hell didn’t exist, seems I was wrong, huh?”

“You sure were! Ho-Ho, Hell is a very real place, though, I don’t think you’ve explained your problem to me yet...”

Edward took another sip of his tea, a longer one this time, before continuing to speak once more.

“Right... well, I attempted to continue my craft here in Hell, as I didn’t want to let eternal damnation ruin my fun... however, I was met with disappointment. Even despite my... interesting form... I managed to get my first kill, and while it’s always satisfying to see life leave their eyes, I came to a realization that... nobody cared. It was so weird, they just continued to walk like nothing happened, paying me no attention, nobody running... nothing.”

“Well hon, in a place constantly surrounded by pain and death, it’s hard to draw fear and shock from the residents by basic killing! I don’t see why that’s an issue though, you can kill all ya want down here without anyone batting an eye, isn’t that a good thing?”

“I suppose in some ways... yes, it is.”

Sereptis sighed, looking at himself in the reflection of the tea in his cup, the smile on his face still wide as ever.

“And you seem to be pretty happy for being in Hell, haha!”

“Mmmm, trust me dear, I am aware... it seems I cannot stop smiling for some odd reason.”

“Sinners always come with the silliest of quirks!”

“I guess, but that’s not the point! The point is that I have lost my motivation for what I did!”

As Edward’s tone got more aggressive and persuasive in his speech, Rosie smiled a bit more, leaning back and further listening to him, sipping her tea.

“As much as I adore watching the life drain out of someone’s body as I kill them... that’s not my main motivation for doing what I do. I enjoyed the mystery, the fact that no matter how many I killed, I could NEVER get caught! I had techniques, I had strategies, I even tapped into the Dark Arts briefly, learning how to vanish out of thin air, to TELEPORT! But now, the mystery is gone... what’s the point of trying to hide a murder if nobody is going to care for it? The flare is gone, and now, it makes my kills almost completely unfulfilling...”

“Hmmm, I see your point, darlin... did ya go to any other Overlords before coming to me?”

“Yes... I went to the Radio Demon first, but he seemed to completely disregard me... I wished to go to... what was his name again? Vox? But he was so pissy and immature, I couldn’t bear it... and then I went to Zestial, and while me and him shared a pleasant talk, he said he had nothing to offer me... and referred me to you.”

“I see...”

Rosie stood up from her seat, as she continued to give her pleasant smile, slowly taking Edward’s hand. His claws and hand were much bigger than her own, but Sereptis still felt the urge to stand up and respect her authority.

“So let me get this straight... you’re a murderer who’s looking for a boost back into the spotlight, hmm? You’ve lost that flare, and now, you need a new reason for people to look at you the same way they did before?”

“That... sounds about right, yes.”

“Mmmmm, ho-ho... I think I could help ya darlin... how about we make a little deal?”

Edward was immediately a little uncertain, he's heard all about how these deals can lead to horrible things if done in the wrong way. He paused for a few moments, looking towards Rosie in the eyes, those pitch black eyes of her own gazing back at him, even if he believed at that time his eyes had still magically disappeared.

"I suppose... I can hear you out."

"So, let me cut to the chase... not only will I grant you a... moderate boost of power right here, right now, just to get you a little head start in the ranks... but I'll also provide you with a new motivation, a new drive, a new... addiction... one that'll make you wish to kill all over again, while also bringing back that fear you miss so much from others..."

"Okay... sounds pretty nice... but what's the catch?"

"Yes yes, there's always a catch... but ya know, I like ya, Edward... when you slithered in here, did ya happen to notice all my townfolk outside, eating and living their happy lives?"

Rosie went to place her palm on Edward's shoulder, as her gaze remained on him, as the deal continued to get explained.

"Yes... I did?"

"Well, ya see... as much as I love em, they aren't the smartest, and often times, they're fresh meat for other Sinners to sink their knives into... so, in return for what I will do for you, all I ask from you is that you will provide the best protection you can manage for my Cannibals. Keep them safe as best you can, hold them higher than any other demon on your radar, and do not kill them unless they attempt to kill ya first... simple as that!"

Edward thought over the regulations, relistening to every word Rosie spoke in the back of his mind, putting together the entire deal and ultimately, making his decision, taking his last sip of tea that he still held in his hand.

"Sounds... pretty fair. Hmmm, and you're positive that these drives you give me will stick around, they won't just fade away for no reason, right?"

"Mmhm! Of course, darlin, even if I ever fall to the ground dead, your desire and drive will stick around, never fading!"

"I see... well, that sounds... good."

Rosie then backed up a little, holding out her hand, as a bright golden light floated around her palm, keeping her sights on Edward.

“So do we have a deal, dear Edward?”

“Mmmm... I believe we do.”

Edward extended his hand out, as a sudden green flare of magic erupted from his palm as he made contact with Rosie’s hand. A burst of light erupted from their handshake, as the deal was officially made between the two. Edward pulled his hand back slowly, and once he did, he felt a sort of warmth erupt inside his body, as suddenly, a green gas began to flow from his hat, he could see as his claws began to glow a bright green... it seemed his new abilities were already awakening.

“Hehe... Hehehe... my my, this feels... hehe... incredible!”

“Ho-ho, doesn’t it darlin? My little boost should’ve already unlocked more of your potential... keep harnessing that power and collecting your own souls, and maybe you’ll find more!”

“Hehehe... ya don’t say?”

Edward admired his claws, as the smoke from the top hat he wore grew to a stop. Edward could already feel the potential rising... though, there was still something missing.

“Heh, one more thing... what exactly was the ‘drive’ you gave me to kill?”

“Haha, well dear... how are ya feelin at the moment?”

“Mmm... powerful, energized... but also quite hungry, haven’t had anything filling in a couple of days.”

Suddenly, Rosie snapped her fingers, and that same box of fingertips appeared in her grasp once more, holding them out towards Edward.

“Why don’t ya eat up?”

“Oh, hehe, I’m quite alright! Already tried those, they aren’t my thing...”

“Are you sure, dear? You won’t regret it...”

Despite Edward's distaste towards the fingers, he decided maybe they'd be worth one last try. So he picked up a new fingertip and popped it into his mouth, fully expecting to have to reach for another napkin... only this time, he didn't have to. In fact... goodness, the finger, it was DELICIOUS! The crunchy bone, the tender meat, the juicy fat, and even just the feeling inside his mouth, it was all perfect! Sereptis was shocked, stunned, as he reached for another... it was just as incredible.

"Dear... hehehe... dear Satan, these are incredible..."

"Ho-ho, and that honey, is your drive!"

"Wait... what?"

"Mmmm yes yes! Ya see, you needed a new reason to kill, and also a new way of drawing fear out of others, one more unusual than most... so I thought, if you're gonna be protecting my Cannibals... I might as well make ya one! Trust me dear, fingertips are only scratching the surface of your addictive drive for the taste of flesh..."

Edward began to add the pieces together... and one would think Edward would become angry, distraught, horribly saddened by having such a depraved and horrific drive for murder... but Edward, he was the complete opposite. Edward's entire disgust for the idea of eating flesh, bone, any of it... it vanished. His smile widened, as he began to laugh.

"Hehehe... hehe..."

It grew louder.

"Hehehe... HEHEHE..."

And louder.

"HEHEHE... HAHAHA!!"

And louder, until he finally calmed himself down from this ultimate high of his, as some sort of green toxic liquid leaked from the corners of his mouth.

"Oh Rosie... you're a genius... hehehe, consider your Cannibals safe... this taste, it's unlike anything i've ever had before! I will have more, I'll become more and more powerful with

every soul I collect... and before you know it, you'll have a new Overlord protecting your townsfolk!"

"That's what I like to hear, it's been a pleasure to meet ya, darlin! And remember, if ya ever wanna chat once more, I'm always here... my doors are open for a smiling man like you!"

"Hehehe, I assure you dear... once I'm back in action, this ring will have something new to fear... hehe, I'll be visiting this town very often... I bid you adieu, dear!"

Edward gave a bow to Rosie, taking her hand once more and giving it a light kiss, as Rosie gave a charming laugh.

"Awww Edward, ya charmer!"

"Hehe, the pleasure is all mine, dear... thank you for your business! Hehehe, now it's time to quench my hunger..."

Sereptis turned towards the door, slithering and exiting, giving Rosie one last polite wave, as Rosie returned the same with her warm smile on her face.

"This ring will finally know what it's like to feel FEAR! Hehehehe... prepare to feel the wrath of the hungry, murderous, powerful, and calculated Cannibal..."

"..."

"Sereptis..."