

We feel you sister. The Völur are with you. We watch through your eyes. Even though in this place only a plane walker can act, we are your witness and will be your strength when you return.

The material world slips leftward and sideways and in front of her is a different version. A version where she sees only the ethereal nature of existence, of souls, of beliefs. Gone are the constructs of man. Gone is their meaty shell. What is left is the bit that lives on and its pipeline of energy and power. These tethers are beautiful. They are golden cords that shimmer in this in-between place. They are intention and truth. They hold the essence of whatever of the being exists in the material world.

However, In the echoes of the battles that waged on behind the murky scrim of the other reality, mortal coils are shed and energy released at a staggering pace. Before her very eyes, these ties rush past her violently as they are severed. She watches as the beautiful shimmering threads of the fallen elves journey to Avendesora, their sacred Tree of Life. There are magic creatures of fire, water, earth, and air in the battle below. As they are defeated, their threads snap and sizzle, reclaimed by the primordial furnaces that birthed them. She watches sadly as the electric essence of a storm giant returns “home.” Then there are the golden ribbons of human life reaching toward Ao and his Children. So many. Here there is no Marakeenian or Skaldian. Here they are all just souls bound for their keepers. All is returning to right. The sickening gravity of the Abyss, that abomination created by GahDreel, is gone. The rip is healing, She feels peace as the cycle of destruction and creation is being restored. The energy is going to their willed destination; they are going to where they belong, where they were bound before Gahdreel interfered.

She knows what she must do. She searches and finds it. The Dark Lord’s ropey cord is snaking its way to the closing void. She seizes it before it can escape and holds it in a firm grasp. It feels like an eel, at first, flopping and struggling in her hand. Then, what had seemed like a slimy mass, frays and separates into sticky strands. She gasps as the strands begin to burrow into her flesh. Frantically, she attempts to pull them off her as they penetrate her forearm and begin to travel toward her heart. She rips futilely as the few strands become hundreds. The thready tentacles penetrate and squirm their way under her skin. Her forearm roils with the intrusion. Her heart hammers and she screams and curses as she feels the invaders dig their way up her arm to her core. She desperately slaps and squeezes her own flesh. It’s too fast. There are too many. She screams. Fear turns to terror. Her mind can no longer process anything but “OFF! GET IT OFF!!! SOMEONEHELPMEEEEEE!”

Then time stops and there is only a chorus of voices. *Peace Sister, this is **your** domain. He has no power here. Peace...No power... Your Domain....Sister....Peace*

Her sisters’ voices quell the panic. She has a moment where she is outside looking down on her own form, and instantly, three things occur to her. It occurs to her, that her muscle and skin and sinew and organ are not here. Her physical form cannot exist here so they are in no actual

danger. It also occurs to her that this mindfuck is merely a stall tactic. While she has been distracted, Gahdreel's tether is pulling his soul toward the closing abyss. That is what he wants. And, it occurs to her that Gahdreel must *NEVER* get what he wants.

Then her moment of clarity and respite is over. She is back in the struggle. The ropey strands are swarming under the skin of her right arm, her shoulder, her torso, and pulling her along in a sickening tide. With all her will she fights the disgust and brings her swollen and boiling forearm to her mouth and bites down. Her mouth and throat fill with a viscus ichor and the iron tang of her own blood mixed with the fetid evil fills her nostrils. She wills herself past the revulsion to stay present, to bite down even harder, to tear and nash through rubbery cords. Long moments pass as she savages the teaming mass with her own teeth. She bites and bites again, and then it is over. The cord is severed. His spirit is returned and doomed. She smiles.

Everything slides sideways and rightward. She is back on the bridge. She thrusts her arms forward into the light of the material world. They are whole and unscathed. She is unharmed. It is done. She has done it. She tells them all. Gahdreel is forever severed.

Now, Sisters! Now, I need all of you for I am going to make him MINE. She screams her urgency into their collective minds and they respond with a rush of energy that rejuvenates her weary core. And, in what would be to her comrades the blink of an eye, she casts out her net and traps the would-be Dark God's essence to her bidding. *His pain and agony are now mine. He is mine... forever.*

Some years later...

Verileigh entered the circular chamber. The Church had done well restoring much of the Blind Isle's damaged structure, but this was their crowning achievement. The room was perfectly balanced. The windows, the woodwork, the furnishing, the art...all in perfect harmony. Light and dark, sumptuous and austere, new and old, power and humility. She smiled at the thought of her old life in the Marakeen shops, searching for treasures. She missed having the time to think about such aesthetics. However, time was precious and there was a job to be done. In a swirl of silk, she approached the dais. She had grown into the full maturity of her power and beauty and every member of the chamber sat up

"High Justice, honored ambassadors, attaches and counselors...thank you for responding so quickly to my request. As you know, We *Völur* keep to ourselves and try to not meddle in the affairs of nations. The primordial magics of the world are a thorny garden and need our constant tending. It leaves us little time for...diplomacy. However, a warning has come to me from my spirits, a disruption in the balance. The thrum of new blood magic is in the air. The North is in danger."