



That was easy enough to *say*, anyway, but it was still two more days before Isaac could walk, five before he was at full capacity and could actually swing a sword confidently again. But now, *now* it was time to save his son.

The vampire castle loomed large against a bright, shining blue sky. Birds chirped, and a crisp breeze carried on it the scent of spring. Parkeriss remarked that this would be a lovely place for a picnic. Isaac imagined the place would be a lot scarier at night, but only fool would miss a chance to attack a vampire during the day. Just outside the walls of the castle sat a small hut, which turned out to be Derek's house. He wasn't kidding when he said he lived right next door to the vampire princess. Warrendar had to stop in briefly to use the restroom, but then it was time to commence the attack.

The walls were breached with little effort, but it was within the gothic courtyard that their first obstacle awaited. Isaac knew what he was looking at in an instant, though he still couldn't believe his eyes. It was supposed to be just a legend.

As a boy, Isaac heard many a haunted tale about the mad Doctor Roycen Beckerstein, and the monster he created by stitching together the limbs of the muscular, hunky dead. Isaac never believed the stories, but this was undoubtedly that very monster. The hulking frame, the patchwork skin, the sexy five o' clock shadow. The monster rose to its full height, towering above even the orc twins. Its massive fists crackled with power.

The battle was short and easy, but Derek's house got destroyed anyway. Despite cutting an imposing figure, the monster was wildly outnumbered and frankly kind of a wuss when it came to getting hit with swords. It surrendered with enthusiasm, and the party left it alive and sulking in the courtyard. Parkeriss felt bad, and suggested they try to cheer the monster up before resuming their siege. Isaac reminded her that the rescue of his son took priority, and she admitted that was fair.

Pressing onward, the party came into a cavernous great hall. They assumed it was cavernous, anyway, but they had only the echo of their own footfalls to make such an assessment. The daylight of the front door was swallowed up by darkness within just a few short steps beyond it, and the group had little choice but to light a torch to get their bearings.

An obvious choice presented itself: go up, or go down. The orc twins proposed that the vampire princess was no doubt in the very top of the tower, as she would want a vantage point to survey the land below. Warrendar proclaimed that idea to be ridiculous, as a vampire would no doubt seek subterranean refuge during the day. The orc twins were slapping Warrendar when Isaac held up his hand. He thought he heard something.

A quiet howl from below, building into a chorus of screeches that Isaac remembered all too well from the night his son was taken. Their presence had alerted Cassiel's vampire thralls, and now they shrieked for blood.

Isaac readied his sword, steeling for the fight of his life, when Marakul shoved him toward the spiral staircase leading upward.

“You are brave, and the small man is dumb,” she said. “Find your son, we will hold the line here!”

Isaac looked at each of their faces, Derek, Warrendar, Parkeriss, Trishavere, and Marakul, the allies, no, the friends he had made since setting out on his journey. They echoed Marakul's sentiment as they lit

sconces along the wall, preparing for the fight. Isaac bowed humbly before his companions, and turned to sprint up the stairway, vowing not to waste what they had given him.

Isaac's chest pounded as he climbed the stairs, stumbling in the dark but pressing ever upward. Determined as he was, he felt no fear, but he did feel...alone. He realized it had been quite some time now since he'd been alone. Hadn't that been the reason he set out on this journey to begin with? He had sought a wife, yes, but maybe that hadn't been the truth of it? Princess Chloe had rejected him, and he now realized he hadn't even had any friends to console him at the time. So alone was he, he'd set out on this journey because he simply had nothing else to do, no other way to cope with his heart being broken.

Torchlight broke the darkness in the narrow stairwell, bringing Isaac back to reality. The time for personal epiphanies would have to wait. As he came to a wooden door carved into the stone, he prayed that Warrendar had been wrong about where the princess may reside. The odds were in Isaac's favor, at least, the young mage was frequently wrong about most things in general.

Kicking through the door, Isaac found himself in a spacious bedchamber. It was a hedonistic den not unlike the hobgoblin queen's lair he'd been in just days before. Heavy curtains blocked out the sun completely, but a jagged fireplace sent ominous orange patterns dancing across the stone. The vampire princess sat sprawled in a regal, high-backed chair against the far wall. Cassiel beheld him with bored, hooded eyelids as she chugged from a wine bottle in a manner unbecoming of a lady. To her right, in a magic bubble suspended in the air, was-

“Blobbo!” cried Isaac.

“Pops!” called Blobbo. “You gotta save me, dawg! This chick is cuckoo bananas. She's forcing me to give out free therapy!”

“Oh fuck off, I am not,” slurred Cassiel.

“Avoiding responsibility for your behavior as usual yo,” said Blobbo. “This is why the other vampires wouldn't play with you.”

Cassiel gasped, incredulous. “I told you that in *confidence* you little *bastard!* That's it! First thing tomorrow I'm spreadin' you on fuckin' toast!”

“I doubt it, sister. That would mean actually following through on something, and that's not your thing.”

“You mother *fucker-*”

“Enough!” declared Isaac, pointing his sword. “Release my son, and deal with your issues!”

“Never!” cried Cassiel, throwing her wine bottle dramatically aside as she did so. “Die, little meat sack!”

In an instant, Cassiel was behind Isaac. She wasn't fast, like Abiglix, it was more like she could blink between shadows at will. He dodged not a second too soon, and Cassiel's fist cracked into the stone wall beside him, sending bits of debris to the floor.

Isaac had nary a chance to regain his footing before Cassiel raised her other hand, and a ring of magical fire surrounded Isaac. The flames licked at his skin, he was trapped.

Cassiel laughed wickedly. “Hey slime ball! I'm about to roast your old man, how's *that* for follow through!?”

“Well *duh*,” said Blobbo. “He's an invader who's attacking you. You always expect praise for doing the bare minimum yo.”

“Shut up! You're the worst therapist I've ever kidnapped! I'm gonna-”

This was it. The only moment Isaac was going to get. His foe distracted, he sprang forth with his sword through the fire.

Isaac despaired as Cassiel vanished into the shadows once more, long before his stroke could land. He instead sliced clean through one of her curtains, spilling sunlight into the chamber.

“Fuck!” yelled Cassiel, recoiling from the sunbeam. “You know what?” she said, growling with anger. “This ain't fuckin' cute anymore!”

With a flick of the vampire's wrist, Isaac was instantly suspended in floating bubble, just like his son.

“This beith so *cheap!*” lamented Isaac.

“It is, ain't it?” sneered the vampire. “You're goin' out the window now, bye.”

Isaac struggled fiercely. He could move, but it was like he was underwater. There was no way he could swing his sword, but it was then that he remembered the small box given to him by the hobgoblin, the one that contained Cassiel's one weakness!

In hindsight, Isaac realized he should have had this box in his hand and ready to use before he even opened the door to the chamber, but it was no use kicking himself now. He struggled to pull the box from his pocket as his bubble carried him towards the deadly fall that awaited him.

“Aw, what have you got there?” said Cassiel mockingly. “Some kind of last-chance effort to save yourself? Those are always cute. Let me see.”

The box was pulled from Isaac's pocket and into Cassiel's open hand. Upon beholding it, fear flashed across her face, followed immediately by rage.

“Abiglix,” she snarled. “Is there anyone that that dick-eating little cock-sleeve *won't* give my one weakness to?!”

The chamber shook. The *castle* shook. So great was the anger of the vampire princess that her eyes blazed like hellfire. When she spoke, her words echoed with demonic power.

“That's *it!*” she screamed. “When the sun sets, I'm gonna find that fuckin' imp and bite her on the head! I'll bite her friends! Her family! The nearest town! The whole kingdom! *Everybody's* getting bitten on

the fuckin' head!"

Cassiel's fangs gleamed in the firelight as she lunged at Isaac.

"Startin' with *you!*"

Still imprisoned, Isaac could not even brace himself for death. Just before vampire's claws could pierce him, a strange yet familiar pointed knife whistled through the air from outside the window.

The knife missed Cassiel, but it did strike the small box from her hand. It fell open as it hit the stone floor.

From it, a set of simple dice clattered to a stop. Cassiel let out a blood-curdling scream of terror.

The sky went dark. The fire in the room swirled and twisted with unnatural color. Now before Isaac stood a tall naked woman with red skin, long purple hair, and horns sprouting from her head. Cassiel cowered in the corner, and Isaac and Blobbo were released from their respective prisons.

"All right!" said the creature. "Who's gambling and what's the game? I'm feeling lucky and I-"

The red woman's jovial demeanor faded as she looked about the room, settling into what seemed like exasperation.

"Are you fucking kidding with this, Cassiel?" she said.

"M-my queen!" stammered Cassiel. "Oh great Sylvana, mistress and lord of evil! So honored am I to have you in my home-

"You let *another* goddamn wannabe hero summon me just to stop you. *Again*. You know what this means, right?"

"N-no! Wait!"

It happened so fast. In seconds, Sylvana had stripped Cassiel of her corset, thrown her over her knee, and was just...just...spanking the hell out of her bare ass right in front of him.

Slowly, carefully, Isaac picked up Blobbo, and inched his way out through the chamber door. Sylvana didn't seem to pay them any mind, and soon the slapping of flesh and Cassiel's yelps were fading behind them as they hurried down the stairwell.

Blobbo hugged Isaac tightly. "You totes rescued me, pops," he said. "That was baller, yo."

"Sorry it took so long, lad," said Isaac. "But we must hurry, our friends are in danger!"

Isaac found his friends in the great hall where he left them, scuffed and bruised, but alive. The thralls had apparently retreated in terror when the sky went dark. Judging by what he'd seen in the tower above, Isaac didn't question their desire to flee.

"You saved him!" said Parkeriss, her eyes welling with tears. "I knew you would!"

“It was only because of all of you that we succeeded,” said Isaac. “Now that our mission is complete, what will you all do?”

“Continue my studies,” said Warrender.

“Crank out babies,” said Trishavere and Marakul in unison.

“Build a new goddamn house,” said Derek.

Parkeriss looked suddenly shy. “I’d...I’d like to keep traveling with you and your son, Sir Isaac, if that’s okay, I mean.”

“Of course it is,” said Isaac.

“Really?”

“Was there any doubt?”

Parkeriss rattled her tail and smiled. Isaac was no longer alone, and that had been all he truly wanted. He took Parkeriss by the hand, and they stepped out into the courtyard to try and cheer up the depressed monster.

The End!