

Rage--Forbidden Monastery

by chivalric

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Naturally, he kidnaps her. Naturally, taking care of a stubborn girl isn't quite as easy as he thought, especially not when her best friend, Keiran, comes after them.
Huh. Love. Aren't things complicated enough?

Prologue

Chapter 1 of 1

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A/N: As I post all my stories here at TPP, be it fanfic or original, I thought I'd do the same with this story. And like always, everyone who leaves a review has a chance of winning a complete copy of the book (Ebook or other.) Enjoy!

A/N2: I marked this as K+ so non-members can read and review if they wish. There is a slash scene in this chapter, though!

A/N3: Special hugs to kittylefish. She is the best *hugs*

Prologue

Overnight, fog had ascended from the valley, but now, just after sunrise, the world was ghostlike, cold and wet and beautiful. Tiny drops clung to the grass, to the trees, to every surface. Even the windows of the huge old mansion, just visible through the fog, were covered in silver pearls. So far, it was more a shadow than an actual house, but then, as soon as the sun had chased the two moons out of the sky, the fog would vanish along with Arwen and Galadriel, and the house would be there, dominating the landscape.

At the moment, however, the sun was low over the horizon, weak and pale and with no warmth to spare for the earth.

It was just as well for the man who was sitting on a branch of one of the big, old oak trees that surrounded the house. Preferring darkness, he needed neither warmth nor light.

He had been waiting for hours. He'd seen the fog rise and the sun too. He'd witnessed the first hesitant chirps of the birds waking up on the branches above him. His clothes, black as midnight, matched his black, spiky hair and his black, cold eyes. Only his skin was white, mainly because of the cold that seeped through the soft leather of his trousers and shirt.

This customer had asked to be killed around sunrise.

Dangling his legs, the assassin found a branch with his soft-shoed foot, turned, and jumped to the ground. He walked toward the back door, unconcerned that he might be seen...his customer had told him that he would be alone at home today and that the servants weren't up that early. He'd checked on that...never trust anyone who paid an assassin to commit murder...so he was sure his customer had told the truth.

The dogs hadn't been set free last night.

The footprints he left on the grass didn't bother him. After his job was done, he would open the dogs' cages, and their paws and curious noses would erase the only sign he'd been here.

The chill bit into his skin as he walked across the grass, and white clouds wafted from his mouth. Silently, he opened the back door with the keys the customer had given him. The kitchen behind it was empty, the hearth cold. In another half hour, the maid would be lighting the fire.

He'd be gone by then, of course.

It was a big house, old and filled with history and memories of past centuries. The old man living here, head of the house and about as old as the trees outside, was rich. He owned half the town and had interest in the other half. Magic was strong in his blood, and not only his. It was said that the old man's nephew was able to become invisible.

Without making any noise, the assassin went upstairs, following the map the customer had drawn for him.

Hiding in the shadows, the assassin cast a glance out the window. Still foggy...nothing more than a pale, golden, alien light.

Suddenly, he longed to be elsewhere. Outside on the streets, running off the tension in his muscles from the long night spent sitting in the tree. His back ached, and his neck was stiff. Lucky for him, this would be an easy kill. No need to hurry and no need to be overly cautious.

He touched one of the tapestries decorating the wall. It showed the empress as a young woman, strikingly beautiful. The scene showed her being crowned, sword in hand, with the severed heads of her enemies lying at her feet.

Shrugging and wondering why he had stopped to look at the tapestry at all, the assassin moved on. His victim was waiting behind the next door, and outside, the sun had edged a bit higher. It was time to finish this.

The door didn't even creak when he pushed it open.

Warmth embraced him. Flames were blazing in the fireplace, their heat caressing his cheeks almost painfully.

"Good morning." The voice that greeted him sounded as old as the hands resting on the small table.

The assassin bowed his head but did not say a word.

"I was expecting you sooner, but I am glad you were delayed. Watching the sunrise through the fog was a marvelous sight. Thank you."

The assassin approached and faced his victim. It was rare that he was asked to kill the one who paid him, but then he had very few rules, and this situation didn't fall foul of them. If the old man wanted to die, so be it.

"Please, take a seat," the old man said. "My valet told you what is expected of you?"

"You wish for me to kill you." The assassin's voice was soft, barely audible over the crackling logs. It was a warm voice, slightly hoarse, as if he knew smoke as well as drink.

The old man showed a toothless gum when he smiled. "Exactly. As you can see, I am not even able to move my fingers anymore. I am doomed to sit in this chair all day, propped up with cushions. My valet has to put me to bed, wipe my ass, blow my nose... feed me. It's time to move on, if you understand what I mean."

The assassin nodded. "You're tired of living. That's why I took the job. It's a nice change to be asked to kill a willing victim instead of a hated competitor or a cheating wife."

"Victim." The old man in the chair chuckled. He was as bald as an egg, and although the room was warm, he shivered under his big, fluffy blanket. He couldn't weigh more than a child. "Yes, you might as well call me that. So how will you do it?"

The assassin leaned back in his chair. "Your valet has paid me generously. I will kill you quickly and painlessly, if that is what you wish. I could make a mess too, of course, scare your family and all. Your choice."

A flicker of sadness crossed the old man's watery eyes. "No family to scare," he mused. "My wife died ages ago. My daughter was killed by a wild horse she insisted on riding at the age of twelve. The only relative I have is my nephew, who I managed to convince to be away today...it was, I assure you, not easy to arrange. No one will miss me. No one will be overly upset when I'm gone. No need to scare the chambermaid, though. Do it fast and without soiling the carpet with blood, if you please."

The assassin got up and stretched his legs. He took in the room, the untouched food on the table, the bed no one had slept in.

"You've been sitting up, waiting for me?" he asked, moving behind the old man. Almost gently, he put his hands on his victim's shoulders.

"I told my valet not to bother putting me to bed." The glasses on the old man's crooked nose were slightly askew. The assassin carefully took them off and put them on the table.

"Thank you," the old man said, his voice maybe a tad hoarse. "I'm George. Did I tell you my name is George?"

"No need to be scared," the assassin murmured into his ear and moved his hands so his fingertips connected with the main vein in his victim's throat. The pulse was surprisingly strong for a man his age. Without help, he may have lived for many more years. But it wasn't the assassin's style to question a job once he'd decided to take it.

Increasing the pressure ever so slightly, the assassin cut off the blood flow between brain and heart. Blood wasn't getting through the veins anymore, but as he didn't touch the windpipe, breathing was still easy for the old man.

"Not unpleasant," George whispered. There was a slur in his voice as though he were drunk. His head would have lolled forward had the assassin not caught it between his thumbs, supporting the old man's chin.

"I know," he replied softly, and then George's eyes fell closed. Keeping up the pressure with one hand, he placed his other on the old man's heart, sliding underneath the

blanket and the dressing gown he was wearing. George's skin was clammy. Living must have been sheer torture, always being cold no matter how blazing the fire or how warm and heavy the blankets around him.

George's heart stuttered, stopped, and beat again. The assassin's hand was steady on his throat. Then the heart stopped for good. The silence in the overheated room increased so subtly that

the assassin felt the small hairs at the back of his neck rise. Suppressing a shudder, he waited for a full two minutes to ensure the old man was dead.

"Safe journey, George," he said, then left the room, the house, and the garden in search of silence and peace.

Sweat poured down his face. The assassin leaned against a house wall, wiping his arm across it. The sun had killed the fog just like he had killed George...quick, silent, and painless...and her harsh beams burned the ground dry. A shower became more appealing by the minute.

But there was another need to fill first, and this street was just the place to look for it. What he wanted wasn't offered on a regular basis or in very many places. This town was considerably large, however, and if he was lucky, he would find the company he was looking for.

Groans emanated from a doorway, and he turned, watching for a moment. A bear of a man with his head pressed against the brick wall was pressing his groin into the face of a podgy young woman who seemed no older than fifteen but was, in reality, nearly thirty, her appearance being maintained with a bit of magic.

Disgusted, the assassin turned away and looked for someone more to his liking. A glamour, like the one that whore was using, was the perfect way to make his erection fade. Preferring a more natural look on the ones he paid for a fuck, he knew just where to go...to the dirtier parts of the street, the ones with the darkest corners, the ones with a smell of despair and loss. Usually, whores that did not use magic simply weren't able to do so, meaning they were either mentally or physically disabled. As a result, they charged less, which was just as well for him.

The girl that smiled at him from her bedroom window had only a stump and three fingers for a right hand. He smiled back, but went on...girls weren't his taste, although that one had been pleasant looking and not too dirty.

Twins approached him, one male, one female. "Not in the mood for a threesome," the assassin said and moved on. Both had distinctly childish grins on their faces, indicating that they were about as smart as a brush.

Over there, that one was better. Young, no older than twenty. Shaved head, earrings, a missing tooth. His left eye was missing too; the remaining one was a deep, striking blue.

"Hi there," the whore said, swinging his hips. "Want some company?"

"Depends on the price," the assassin replied, stepping closer.

He looked the whore up and down methodically, scanning for open wounds, a rash, or signs of drug abuse. Over the years, he'd gained some experience assessing his fuck toys. This one seemed surprisingly healthy given how he earned his money. Broad shoulders indicated he worked out, at least when he had enough to eat.

"How much do you charge?" he asked

"Seven."

"Forget it. You might be worth two Talents, but I doubt it. If you were that good, you'd be working the front half of the street, regardless of your eye." The assassin took a step back. "I'll give you one and a half if you make me hard in less than a minute."

For a brief moment, they looked at each other. Black eyes met a single blue one. The wind wafted through the street, rustling up some lonely leaves, chasing shadows, and causing goose bumps to appear on the whore's bare arms.

"Not enough," the young man whispered, stroking his hand on the assassin's thigh. "I'm good. I would work up front were it not for the eye. People get scared when they see me. You aren't scared. You aren't an old fart, either. I'd like you to fuck me, man. For two Talents. Have to live, you know."

His hand swiftly slipped higher, cupped the assassin's balls, and squeezed them. Skilled fingers made their way upward along the leather, sending heat and longing through the assassin's body.

The man in black smiled thinly at the whore, then whirled him around, pushing his face against the wall. It didn't bother him that the bricks were scratching the young man's face; all he cared about was his need. He opened his belt and undid his trousers as he pushed the whore's threadbare shorts down his bony ass. The thin bracelet braided around the assassin's left wrist got caught on a button. It might have broken had the assassin not twisted his wrist and freed it, his gaze lingering only briefly on the black strings the bracelet was made of.

More quickly now. The assassin craved his release, and so he spat into his palm for a bit of lubrication, placed his hands on the whore's skinny hips, and mercilessly pushed his cock in, not giving a damn about the strangled grunt his actions caused. He wanted to fuck, he wanted it now, and he wanted this to be over as fast as possible so he could go home and shower.

Briefly, the assassin shut his eyes in pleasure. He dug his fingers deep into the young man's flesh. There'd be bruises, but what the hell.

One last push, and he came, gritting his teeth to prevent a sigh of relief and keeping his balance by pressing one hand against the wall. Fast and dirty, just as he liked it.

The assassin already had his trousers up by the time the whore turned around. Business as usual. He buttoned his shirt and pulled up his shorts, not even bothering to wipe off the seed running down his legs. He hadn't even become hard. The young man kept his eyes downcast, seeming to have found something interesting in the mud at his feet, probably knowing from hard experience that if he was too demanding, he'd get beaten up, deprived of his work's due.

"Two Talents," he said without emotion. "Please."

Smoothly, the assassin pulled his knife. With his other hand, he grabbed the whore and pushed him back, knocking loose some glass shards from a broken window. "Look at me," he ordered, pressing the knife to an exposed throat.

One blue eye stared at him, wide and frightened.

"I always pay my debts. Two Talents. And one extra for being quiet and not pretending you enjoyed it." A flick of his wrist, and the knife was gone. Three silver coins landed on the ground.

As quickly as possible, the young man picked them up and stored them under his torn shirt. A hesitant smile flickered over his face. "Thanks," he said, but the assassin had already turned his back on him, leaving the street and the whore behind.

"What's your name? Come back any time, if you like!"

Stopping dead in his tracks, the assassin lowered his head. "I'm Rage. I'll be gone by tomorrow, and I never use the same whore twice."