

So you stand accused of malicious infiltration in my property, incitement to rebellion, numerous threats to me and the killing of my servants.»

The prisoner with his arms and legs tied proudly raised his chin and spat towards the Supreme Vampire, «If you expect me to beg for a mercy – it's in vain. I wish I could drive a wooden stake through your wicked heart, cut off the head, and-»

«Would burn my body and scatter ashes into the ocean. Did I miss something?» finished Lord Varkula, using a tone that one would expect of a vampire as old as himself.

«All of you, arrogantly describing themselves as the great vampire hunters wish me and my kind only death and destruction, in one way or another. May I ask, what's the reason for such maniacal obsession with my death?»



«What is the reason?» the hunter angrily shook his head, trying to weaken tight knots of rope.

«You and all of your servants are abominations who feast on the blood of innocent people.»

«Your point, Sow?» a vampire passed a claw over the arm of the chair, and snickered with contempt. «All the aristocracy of Banfar and Garsh baronies are vampires, my warriors as well as loyal servants. Being a vampire is a great honor. This gift is given to only a select chosen few.»

«And common people are just cattle for you to slaughter?!» another hunter chimed in.

«Not exactly. We have learned to coexist peacefully with one another. We give protection and stability to humans. There are no crimes and exorbitant taxes in my barony. They actually pay their taxes not with gold, but with their own blood. Everyone has a heart, and has blood to give - even you have enough. I feel how it flows through your veins. It's a fair exchange to give something of yours for something of mine, no? You were brought here already bound, and it wasn't by the hand of vampires. You came into my town and encouraged people incite rebellion. Called me a freak. Promised to kill me, and when my servants tried to placate you, you killed three of them. The people who saw this swarmed you, took your weapons, beat you, and brought you to my court. They are a content people, who respect what I and others of my kind have done - do you see that?»

«Damn you, Beast!» the prisoner quietly exclaimed, having to acknowledge that this creature did indeed tell the truth.

«You and many others, since long before you existed, and thousands of years after. Strange though, to me, it seems that you and your kind are far more bloodthirsty than myself.» The Vampire Lord mused. The hunter did not share his excitement.

«So what are you going to do with me?» asked hunter, looking at him with his bleak view. «Kill me? Drink my blood?» Lord Varkula shrugged and stared at a hunter with renewed interest.

«Why would I do that? You seem very capable... very healthy.»

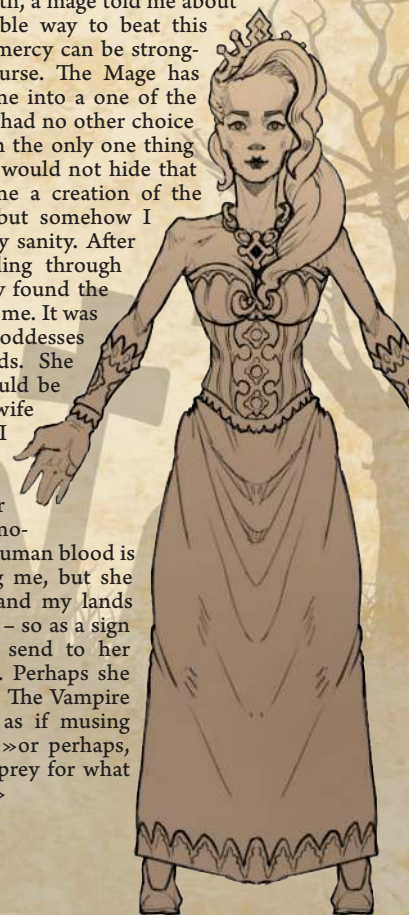
«You'll let me go then?» said unbelieving hunter. «Release me from your lands alive?!»

«I will,» lord admitted, using barely visible smile.

«And definitely alive.» The hunter stood there in stunned disbelief.

«Do you know of Narak?» the Vampire began, and first time his voice sounded rife with a threat. «This is a one of the lower worlds. The world of eternal darkness where the sun never shines. Nevertheless, this world is full of intelligent beings, such as hungry shadows, fallen gods, and many other creatures. A long time ago, in a previous life, I went there. This was my own free will, and the only way to save my beloved wife and my loyal servants.»

«After the cataclysm which hit Signum, our land was cursed by a terrible disease. People's families and villages died from this catastrophe. All of my children died one by one. My court mage was sick. I mourned the losses of my children and friends. After a while, my wife also got sick. No potions and spells could cure her disease. Standing on the threshold of the death, a mage told me about the only one possible way to beat this curse. Only a dark mercy can be stronger than the dark curse. The Mage has opened a gate for me into a one of the lower worlds, and I had no other choice but to go there with the only one thing I had left – hope. I would not hide that Narak seemed to me a creation of the worst nightmares, but somehow I was able to keep my sanity. After a long time travelling through these lands, I finally found the one who could help me. It was Lilith – one of the goddesses of the lower worlds. She promised that I would be able to save my wife and others, but I need to accept her dark mercy and agree to drink her blood. From that moment, the thirst of human blood is constantly torturing me, but she kept her promise, and my lands came back to thrive – so as a sign of my gratitude, I send to her people such as you. Perhaps she will convince you,» The Vampire Lord leaned back, as if musing over a private joke.»or perhaps, you will simply be prey for what has been forgotten.»







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LEGENDS OF SIGNUM



LORD VARKULA,  
THE  
NIGHT VISITOR