

The Curse of Nordumaal Sample

Chapter 4

It was on the winter solstice that the elderly chieftain's ominous warnings came to fruition and fell like the dark bloodied curtain he had predicted. Riding into the village square at dusk on a dark horse accompanied by a short stocky little man on foot, a black-cloaked and hooded man presented himself with a commanding bearing. His strange angular body and drawn face with a beak-like nose gave him the appearance of a ghoulish creature brought to life from a nightmare. However, his shadowy presence was forgiven by a captivating gift of charm that seemed to have a calming effect on the small group of villagers he encountered in Wilton's town square.

"I am looking for the chieftain of this village," the man on horseback stated.

The short stocky man standing beside the horseman, whose smell and sickly appearance made him particularly revolting, caused the small gathering of village folk to recoil. Noticing their reaction, the priest dismounted and waved off his assistant.

"Move back Algnomo," he commanded.

The short man with the foul odor stepped back from the crowd.

"My apologies. We have travelled a great distance to meet your leader and have not the chance to bath," the black-cloaked man said, bowing his head to those he addressed.

"Who shall we say is calling on him?" one of the villagers asked.

"I am Nordumaal. Tell him I have a proposal to make that he will be interested in on your behalf," the man replied.

Three of the villagers remained with the strange pair as one of them went off to confer with the chieftain. The hooded man sensed a great distrust and searched for a way to reassure them that he had no malevolent intentions.

"Your children are suffering, and the earth is barren. Murder and violence have taken the place of your once serene life. You must do something soon or this village and every village on the plain shall perish," he said, keeping his distance from the crowd.

The townspeople remained silent, cloistering, and looking at each other in an obvious display of wariness of the creepy pair who had intruded on their village. It was almost dark when the village chieftain appeared in their midst.

"Who calls upon me?" the booming voice of the tall, heavily built leader of the region asked.

"Thank you for your presence. I am Nordumaal and wish to confer with you on a matter of great importance to you and your people," the hooded man replied.

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“I do not speak with one I cannot see. Show me your face,” the chieftain said as he tried to make out the stranger’s face.

“It is my words not my looks that can convince you to listen. You cannot afford to allow your people to continue dying of the famine that has befallen you,” he stated, gesturing to the crowd.

There were a few moments of silence before the chieftain spoke.

“Come to my house,” he said before turning and walking away. “It is cold, and I have a fire to warm us.”

The man and his partner followed, walking the pitch black horse up to a hilltop above the village. The chieftain’s house was large, made of stone and mud with great timbers that formed a sloping thatched roof.

“Let me introduce myself. I am Kaalin of Wilton. You may enter my house,” the chieftain said gesturing for the pair to bend down and pass through the opening into the warmth of his home. As Algnomo passed through the entrance the chieftain flinched, not from his hideous looks but the stench of his body.

Once inside, Nordumaal’s beady yellow eyes contrasted by tiny black pupils shone through the shadow of his hood. His bent posture and dark presence made it difficult to get a close look at the features of his face other than the protrusion of a beak-like nose. The chieftain pointed to a wooden block across the fire from him, but the hooded man chose instead to stand in a darkened corner.

“What brings you to the village of Wilton?” the great chieftain asked.

“I have been sent here,” the man replied as he glanced over at his assistant who stood beside him.

“By whom?”

“Long before your time or even before the time of your predecessors, I became the high priest of the Underworld thanks to one of your own,” the hooded man stated.

“One of our own?” the chieftain queried.

“It is of little matter now; what is done is done. I am here and he is not,” he replied.

“You speak nonsense. Get to the point,” the chieftain said sternly.

“Very well. I have been afforded great powers of magick and wisdom through hundreds of years of walking in the shadows of those who are mortals. I know well their fears and that which haunts their minds in the dark of the midnight hours. Those of Earth are in wait of one who can

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take them through the labyrinth of darkness they have made for themselves. I possess great powers and will live eternally. I know of your suffering and can bring health, prosperity, peace and the return of rain to your region,” he replied.

The chieftain studied the pair as he weighed the claim of longevity made by the black-hooded stranger.

“You speak in a strange tongue that shrouds my heart in a pall and chills me to the bone,” Kaalin replied suspiciously.

“I speak of what is in the heart of all humans and you of all people know what I am referring to. This is an existence of light and dark, day and night. Those of the flesh hide in the shadows of evil. Men covet the women of their neighbours; their females turn green with jealousy at their wish for buxom beauty lusted after by their men. Greed and unbridled desires of the flesh cause men to steal, murder, adulterate and maim. You see great chieftain, simplicity and contentment are as elusive as the clouds that come and go in the summer sky. As long as murder is in your heart, celestial light will be absent, and the darkness of the Underworld will exist throughout this order of reality. This sorry world shall always be the dominion of evil. It is this truth of existence that has made the barren and hopeless world you see before you great chieftain,” the cloaked man continued.

Kaalin knew well of what he was hearing and had no argument for he had seen it for himself.

“Go on,” the chieftain said, motioning with his hand.

“I can bring renewed fertility to enrich the soils of your barren lands,” the man replied. “Without me, many more will perish, rich and poor.”

“We are protected by nymphs, faeries and angels from the Otherworld,” the chieftain stated.

The man cast a sardonic grin.

“They have abandoned you in case you haven’t noticed,” he replied with a sneer.

Although he was suspicious, the chieftain was nevertheless compelled by the bold assertions made by his visitor and despite his misgivings he had little choice but to give the strange looking man a chance.

“Very well. If what you promise is true it could be a great boon to our people. I will arrange for a gathering of the plainsmen and their women to discuss your proposal. But what will you have in return?” the chieftain asked.

“I will disclose my price once your people have pondered the benefits of my proposal,” the man countered.

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The chieftain got to his feet and walked towards the odd looking pair to get a look at the face of the man he was dealing with.

“Stop!” the hooded man commanded as he held up his hand while averting his face. You’ve heard and seen enough. Either you are interested, or you are a fool. Which is it?”

The chieftain stopped in mid-stride and considered what he had heard so far. He studied what he could see of the dark one’s face, noticing a prominent scar across his throat.

“Let me take it to them,” the chieftain countered.

“We shall make our way across to the southern moor and return on the eve of the third day to hear of your decision,” the stranger replied.

The chieftain found it odd that the dark hooded man spoke of the Moor of the Midwinter Sun as it was barren and devoid of settlements. Few if any had ever travelled over the dangerous uplands said to look down upon the great ocean.

“As you wish,” the chieftain stated.

The man who called himself Nordumaal nodded, bringing the meeting to a close.