

# The Vivimancer's Revenge

The sound of my boots scuffing on the ancient stone stairway alerts the guard. I spare him no pleasantries as he unlocks the oaken door.

"I hadn't thought to see you again. Returning here invites death."

"My dear Provost Major, death is exactly what I had in mind." The malice in his eyes nearly distracts me from the curious bulge on his right arm. "In fact, I've thought of nothing else since you stranded me on that desolate rock."

"You're fortunate you were only banished for what you did. I told you that your obsession with the dark arts would be your undoing."

The bulge slithers around his arm, corkscrewing down to his wrist and back again. It seems to perch at his shoulder, but it's under his skin. Whatever that is, it's crawling around under his skin.

"What is that? An illusion? You're under a ban in this tower. How can you possibly cast a spell here?"

"Ever the curious one, Provost Major. Quite observant." He sneers. He's glad to have confounded me so.

"Out with it now. What devilry is this?" I watch the form slither down and emerge on his left shoulder.

"In order to ban the use of magic, you have to understand its workings. I made use of my solitude; you see." The thing swirled around his neck and returned to his right shoulder. "I devised an entirely new school of magic while I endured my exile."

"A new school of magic? Preposterous."

So rapt at the grim spectacle was I that he took his chance to lash out, clenching my wrist in an iron grip.

"I call it Vivimancy." He twists my arm. The sleeve of my robe slides back enough to see the thing dart down his arm, through his palm and into me. It bulges across my wrist and vanishes under my sleeve.

"You see? What's yours is now mine."

The dreadful sensation of that thing inside of me clouded my wits. "What do you mean? What is this?"

“This is the end of you, dear master. I could command it to crush your heart.” It swirls around in my chest. “But that would be too simple, too quick. This seems far more fitting.”

The thing darts from my chest, traversing my arm and returns to his shoulder.

“What do you mean to do with me?” My breath is ragged in the wake of that thing burrowing through my body.

“As I said, everything that was yours is now mine.” He tightens his grip with such ferocity that I can’t help but wince. When my eyes open, I am no longer looking at him. I’m looking at me.

“What? What have you done?” I stagger back, releasing his grip on my wrist. Or is it my grip on his wrist? “I don’t understand.” I study these hands that were not mine, but now they are.

“And that is why the ban did not suppress my new art. Just as you took everything from me and stranded me on that godsforsaken rock, I now have everything that is yours. I hope you aren’t planning on protesting your innocence at the block tomorrow. My little friend is going to dock your vocal chords, just to be sure. If you try to plead your innocence, it will nibble on your brain to dull your wits. You are done, Provost Major. It would be a mercy to kill you, but that’s not in my nature. I’d rather you wait in anguish for the axe to fall.” He knocked on the door and departed without a backward glance.

I screamed at the door, and the thing slithered over my clavicle. Its teeth savaged my throat, the scream now a bloody gurgle.