

# CHAPTER 1

Scorn rapped heavily on the door of the monastery of Mount Profitis Ilias, pulling his cowl up on his head to avoid the blazing yellow sun shining down upon this cursedly bright part of Thera and the Greek isles. He was still feeling rather good about himself for finding the dark twin of the Dagger of Dorje on the bank just below the monastery so easily. The future ruler of the world took that as a sign that the universe wanted him to be the one that lorded over everything in creation. He smirked—like there was a better choice?

Though, it was ironic that the very first steps of his master plan necessitated him dealing with the mortals that inhabited this monastery. A superior being like him having to deal with mere mortals to begin the path to his ultimate greatness? Surely, the universe had a sense of humor. Things had been going so well for him since he had so satisfyingly slain his half brother Hedley Edrick. Scorn would never forget the look on the old Master of Masters's face when he had rammed the Blade of Truth into his chest. Such utter surprise as if Hedley had never foreseen his own demise coming, but that was inevitable just like Scorn ruling the world. The only surprise that Scorn had was that Hedley departed to the great beyond with the Blade of Truth. Ah well, that Relic would return to him when he called for it as it was bound to do his bidding.

So, perhaps that was a harbinger of these monks doing his bidding? He would get what he wanted from the monks without all of the recent

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bloodshed and mayhem, which frankly was growing a bit monotonous. Now, monotony did not apply to the final showdown for the Relics and the Blood of the One because that was something completely different. Eternal world domination would be the ultimate ecstasy.

The door to the monastery opened partway, and this time Scorn did not even bother to wedge his foot in it to gain entrance.

"You do know who I am, yes?" he questioned the young monk, who had from the smell of things clearly just shit himself, and was a vegan.

"Yes," the young monk finally managed. "I will get who you need."

The door shut quickly, and Scorn did not have the urge to kick it in because the mud the monk made in his trousers stank no more.

How irritating to smell someone else's crap when you were on a quest to take over the world, and your proverbial destiny smelled like roses.

Continuing the floral analogy, Sirius Sinister and the rest of his enemies, especially Angus Blackheart and Baron Orcinus, would soon be pushing up daisies. His hand went to the Dark Dagger on his belt. It radiated evil and a thirst for blood, but would it now give life to one that Scorn desperately needed to return from the dead?

One minute passed, then another, and Scorn was beginning to think he had reason to question his decision not to storm the monastery and just take what he needed, causing more than a few soiled britches on the way. That whole "soil yourself" thing was just nasty, unpleasantly reminding him of Justice, the other half brother he hadn't pleasurably murdered with the Blade of Truth through his heart. Maxie boy had

been a regular robe spoiler in his younger days. Thus, the future ruler of the world resolved to wait just a moment more before proceeding into the monastery and ripping all of the monks into brotherly bits.

The door to the monastery opened again, and this time the young monk's older brother appeared, or Scorn supposed it could possibly be his father, owing to the exact same stupid-looking face just with wrinkles and a copious amount of white in his beard. But oddly there was a faint flicker of recognition in this man's face when his eyes fell upon Scorn. "It's you—you are back," the monk exclaimed in obvious surprise. And once again, Scorn realized from the smell of things that this man had also shit himself, and he too was a vegan.

"I never went anywhere," Scorn said, annoyed, and if not for the pungent poo assaulting his nostrils, he would have stuck a talon in this

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guy's throat. "Your son, or baby brother, said he was going to get who I needed like just a second ago. So where is he? And by the way don't bring your grandfather up here next because I am going to go out on a Grecian olive tree limb and say he has probably shit his pants already!" "I don't have a son, or a baby brother," the man said, terrified. "I am an only child, and a monk. But, nonetheless, I will get who you need. Again. But this time I beg of you—please don't go anywhere." The door to the monastery shut quickly, leaving Scorn quite confused, which was a feeling that did not resonate well with the former Breaker of the Bold. What in the hell had just happened? Surely these monks were not so emboldened as to be playing games with him? If that was the case, then their attempt at comical would soon turn homicidal for them. He snorted in derision, thinking about how the monk had told him not to go anywhere this time. Not funny. Not funny at all.

But right as he was about to kick some monkly ass, the door creaked open, and thankfully a different, better-smelling monk appeared. This bold fellow, firm of chin and straight of posture, was clearly the leader of the monastery, and by the steely, confident look in his eyes, he was no fool. But, more importantly for Scorn, this fellow would do anything to ensure the sanctity, or more accurately the survival, of his monastery. He held out a ceramic urn and looked Scorn dead in his red eyes, showing no fear, which Scorn respected, and thus the main monk would live to pray another day.

"Yes, yes, there she is," Scorn replied. "Thank you for keeping her safe all of these years."

"We honor the dead, and you would do well to do the same," said the monk, recoiling slightly as Scorn's body stiffened in anger. "Or not. It's a free universe, so do what you will with her, but just leave us out of it!"

"Dead is just a matter of perspective, so why don't you set down that urn, and go pray on it?" Scorn said, having no idea why this man was still living, or living right, as it were.

"Gladly," the monk said, putting down the urn carefully, blessing himself, and retreating back within the monastery for what would be weeks and weeks of prayer. What else could a monk do after an

encounter with one of the darkest souls in this existence, or any other?

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Scorn watched the door of the monastery slam shut, and again considered entering the monastery and killing the whole lot of them. As much fun as that would be, he, instead, would simply take pleasure in knowing his ability to intimidate, coerce, or just plain get what he wanted was as strong as ever. Not that he ever doubted himself because that was something only fools did, but it was always nice to see that his scowls, glares, talons, and sheer evil presence were effective and intimidating.

He picked up the urn, and carefully popped the top of it, shielding the contents with his hand from any wayward Grecian zephyr. He was pleased to see she was there in the same state he had left her. All that was left for him to do was find the exact spot where she had passed from this world into the next. That place served as the anchor that still tethered her to this earth. Her ashes and the Dark Dagger of Dorje would complete the circle, and hopefully bring her back into this plane of existence. He was about to find out just how diligent the monks had been in collecting her ashes. If indeed this urn was filled with more dirt than actual ash, Scorn was ready to end the life of whatever pile of primordial ooze came back to life. He studied the monastery and noted how perfectly clean it was, and how right on time to the very millisecond the prayers started. Thus, it stood to reason that the urn's contents were complete and would surely bring her back because the monks' attention to detail was second to none.

Scorn walked away from the monastery, and let her ashes be his guide. He was very nearly to the edge of the cliff that he had imagined had marked her last moments on earth, when suddenly the weight of the urn grew so heavy, he was forced to put it promptly on the ground. It stuck to the earth like a magnet to metal, and Scorn stood back, pleased at his brilliance. The top of the urn popped off seemingly of its own volition, and the wind that frequented the top of this mountain stayed quiet, afraid of the consequences of its actions.

"It's time for you to come back to me," Scorn said, pulling the Dark Dagger of Dorje from his belt. "I have need of you once again."

The urn began shaking on the cliff, wobbling so much that Scorn for a moment feared it would dump its contents into any raging gale that dared to blow upon them, and the essence he was seeking to reconstitute would then be gone forever. But he realized that was just the

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movements of a restless soul, and he knew that she was finally ready to be freed. Scorn thrust the Dark Dagger into her ashes, and there was a great flash of purple light so bright he had to avert his eyes to keep from getting blinded. When he turned back, he saw the urn and the ashes were gone, and there sitting in the sand as naked as the day she was born, or reborn, as was the case now, was the Professor.

She looked down at herself, and up at Scorn, and rolled her eyes.

"You couldn't just leave well enough alone, could you," she said. "I was quite happy just being dead, you know. Once I got over the rage of being offed by my father, and outmaneuvered by Sinister, I learned to

love the peace and quiet of death. You should try it, Scorn—you would like it. No one, and I mean no one, bothers you.”

Scorn stared down at her, wondering if he had miscalculated bringing the Professor back to life, as between the tone of her voice and her insolence, he was considering taking her out like her father did, just with a different dagger, of course. “Thanks for the offer, Professor, but as you know, my goal is eternal life with unlimited power at my command,” Scorn replied. “So, forget death, I am going to dominate life!”

“Well, death did not make me forget what an insufferable dick you are,” the Professor said, leaning back on her hands and thrusting her breasts out as she tossed her hair in the sun. She spread her legs slightly, which to her great amusement clearly conflicted the once Breaker of the Bold in making him feel enraged and aroused all at the same time. Men had certainly not changed since she had passed on. They, even the ones with designs on world domination, were so damn simple!

“Death has made you bold,” Scorn scolded her, recovering his poise.

“You would do well to fear me, and not insult me!”

“Uh, why, what are you going to do, kill me?” the Professor mocked him. “Been there, done that, Gulthie!”

“You are going to make me question why I brought you back in the first place,” Gulth said. “And I am the kind of person that doesn’t question anything that I do!”

“One, I never asked to be brought back,” the Professor said. “Two, the Grecian wind is going to blow a whole bunch of sand up my coochie if I keep sitting here like this until you get to the actual blasted point as to why you need me. Though, I am sure those monks over there know

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how to treat a lady like myself. So, Gulth, answer the only question that matters—what is in this for me?”

Scorn tapped his taloned foot on the ground impatiently. He was certainly not going to tell the Professor his plans. She looked at him and yawned, now stretching her arms high above her head, and drawing his eyes to her rather impressive breasts, which he knew, of course, was her intent. Women were not complicated, but that certainly did not stop him from looking. Actually, even if he had wanted to, and he didn’t, he wouldn’t have been able to stop himself from looking at her tits. And this real-man ruler of the world had been there with the Professor before.

He would never forget how he had given it to her oh so good in his cave not so long ago. He had married her out of a plan, but from the look of her body, that perhaps wouldn’t have been the worst thing in the world. After all, he had done it with Martin’s mother, which was rather like fucking a wooden plank, right down to the splinters he felt in his shaft from her dried-up glory hole of a pudendum. Note to the future ruler of the world, he would make sure when the Blood of the One had restored him to his rightful virile self that he would sow his seed in the finest the world had to offer him as its king.

“I know my tits are fabulous,” the Professor said. “But can the little man let the big man talk so I can get my ass up off of this cliff? And besides, I am betting a whole lot of drachmas that the monks over yonder

are lined up right now and laying hands on themselves over seeing my heavenly body.”

Scorn had another rather important part of his plan to put into action, and he honestly hadn't expected so much resistance from the Professor. Death had certainly emboldened her, but yes, she was right—what could he really do to her other than kill her? And, she was not only not remotely afraid of death, but she also practically welcomed it again. So, for once in his life, he did not have the upper hand in this negotiation. He needed her far more than she needed him. Actually, she didn't need him at all, thus he really did have to make it worth her while.

“Okay, Professor, have it your way,” Scorn said, almost retching as he spoke. “What do you want—gold, jewels, land, a seat at my table when I rule the world?”

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The Professor leaned back her head again and laughed as Gulth Scorn really was not as apt a judge of people as he was back in his day of ruling over lawyers and litigants at the Immortal Divorce Court. “Jewels, gold, or land,” she repeated. “Is that what you really think motivates me?”

“Ah.” Gulth nodded. “It's power,” he said approvingly. “Fine, you can have power at my side as one of the exclusive members of my inner circle.”

“Well, duh, Gulth, that is a given,” the Professor said. “And, with it will be jewels, gold, and land, and all the other blah, blah, blah. But really what I want is that which makes me happy.”

“Forget it,” Gulth said crossly. “I am not going to give you what you most desire—we both know that you want my phallus. Perhaps later, if you are lucky, but now I do not have the time for such idle dalliances!”

The Professor hid the smirk of smirks and thought that any real man would have already taken her right here and now on this cliff with all of the monks watching and taking notes. Not that Gulth Scorn wasn't fierce, and dangerous in his own way, but he literally wasn't all man, something she had experienced firsthand, or rather with her hand, in his cave to fraudulently consummate their sham of a marriage.

“Oh, woe is me, Gulth, you know me so well,” the Professor said.

“It is power I want, and you!”

What she had really wanted before dying and going on to the next world was Scorn's head on a platter, Sirius Sinister's head on a platter, Angus Blackheart's head on a platter, her sister the Thief's head on a platter, and especially her father's head on a platter. Back then all she ever wanted was a whole lot of people dead, dead, dead. She even wanted her own daughter dead, because the Professor was so messed up, courtesy of her psychotic mother, that she wanted her daughter to live only so long to understand that it was her own mother that was killing her. She shuddered, and not from being cold. What in the hell was wrong with her back then? Oh yes, everything. She had thought that murdering her own child would close the circle with her father, Lobsang. But now, sitting with her really great ass in the sand, and

feeling the warm kiss of the sun on her spectacular tits, she was appreciating her body and her own self for the very first time. So, now her

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viewpoint was that all of that assorted murder and mayhem was a whole lot of unnecessary, senseless, and wasted effort.

If there was one thing that she had ironically learned while being dead, it was that life was short, and there really was no need to be a conniving psycho-bitch all the time like her thankfully dead mother. When you have been gone, it would be easy to focus on the bygones, but now she just wanted to get gone to the life that had been given to her as a second chance by the universe, orchestrated by the pompous ass in front of her. But, to achieve her new and achievable goal of a happy life far away from megalomaniac immortals, she needed to play Gulth Scorn's games, and the best way to do that was to appeal to his massive, and she really did mean massive, ego.

"I always admired how you were one step ahead of everyone in the world, including me," the Professor said, batting her eyelashes. "So, why did you bring me back? What is it that you need me to do for you?" The Professor could see that Scorn had taken her bait, owing to the fact that he was trying to stare at her vagina without being too obvious about it, and also was now afforded the opportunity to pontificate on his awesomeness while on a mountaintop on Thera with sweeping views of the Aegean Sea. As Scorn opened his mouth to speak, she wondered what was more enticing to him—peeking at her pussy or talking about himself?

"Ahem," Scorn said, clearing his throat, and answering her question. "As it most unfortunately turns out, the blood collection I liberated from Hedley Edrick after I drove the Blade of Truth into his heart is a fake."

"Hedley Edrick is dead!" the Professor interrupted. "And you killed him? Wow, there is nothing like being dead yourself to miss all of the good stuff! You know, like someone-you-can't-stand-being-dead good stuff! And no, I don't mean you, Gulthie love!"

Scorn's face cracked, attempting a smile, and failing miserably as the muscles in his face were so unaccustomed to doing so. He had people killed for interrupting him, and/or consigned to Hell, but this was one time he didn't mind. "Yes, it was I that was the slayer of the Master of Masters in his very own vault. My plot was ingenious, and my execution of it, and Hedley, all went according to plan."

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"But you stole a fake blood collection?" the Professor queried him.

"So, how is that ingeniously going according to plan?"

Scorn now minded being interrupted, and if he didn't need this insolent bitch, he was sorely tempted to throw her naked ass, and the rest of her, off of this mountaintop. "Did you hear me say I killed the Master of Masters—the one and only Hedley Edrick?" he asked the Professor. "A little nonsensical detail such as getting a fake blood collection pales in comparison to actually sticking a sword in the gut of the Teacher of Teachers, don't you think?"

"Oh yes, absolutely," the Professor agreed. "And clearly I am here to

help you get the blood collection back, right?"

Scorn felt something move beneath his robe that hadn't moved in centuries. Perhaps the Professor *would* get what she most wanted after all. "You are a quick study, Professor," he said. "I am not sure if I like that, or not."

"You like it," the Professor said, tilting her head just so, and realizing that she had to be smart and sexy enough to get Scorn's plans revealed, but not so brilliant and seductive that the long-dormant gavel of the former Head Magistrate was resurrected right along with her, and it ruled that it wanted to do some Professor pounding. "But you were saying something about your plan to get the blood collection."

"Oh, I wasn't saying anything of the sort," he replied curtly, frowning as the front of his robe returned to its normal flaccid self. "However, since you are going to need to know this information for us to move forward—it is what it is. But I am not the only one that has figured out the blood collection is a fake. The horrible harpy that is the mother of my son Martin . . ."

"Sinister calls her Bloodsucker Number One," the Professor blurted out.

Gulth Scorn considered this bit of information and nodded. "The man may be freakishly lucky, annoyingly pure of heart, and way too popular with the ladies, but he is not an idiot anymore," he said.

"Anyway, my sources at the Immortal Divorce Court tell me that Bloodsucker Number One, with the aid of her new attorney, my traitorous son Martin, has filed a motion to reopen her equitable distribution case against Sirius Sinister for the sole purpose of getting possession of the blood collection."

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"That's right, I forgot in my death that she was married to Sinister before!" the Professor exclaimed.

"And so were you," Scorn said slowly.

"Aha!" the Professor shouted. "I am going to intervene and lay a claim on the blood collection too! But who is going to be my attorney?"

Scorn just smiled and turned away from the Professor. "That would be me," he said over his shoulder. "So, come on—we need to get to Immortal Divorce Court. We have some filing to do."

The Professor rose to her feet and brushed the sand from her buttocks— hearing loud moans coming from the monastery—which Scorn ignored with great difficulty. She shook her incredible breasts to put the brothers over the edge and was rewarded with another chorus of masturbatory musings. Somehow, back from the dead, she enjoyed the power that was woman in ways she never had before. Death was so liberating! She turned away from the monastery, bent over, and made to flick a bit of detritus from her shin. "Pray to my almighty muff, boys," she said.

Scorn turned to look back at her, and seeing her exposed position, quickly snapped his avian head back forward. He was not going to lose control. "Professor, can you stop with the pussy parade?" he scolded.

"Really, time is of the essence here!"

"Fine," the Professor said, straightening up. "You don't perhaps

have a robe, or something I can borrow, do you, partner of mine?"

"We are most assuredly not partners," Scorn said. "Why don't you go ask your new fanatics over there in the monastery if they can spare a hand not in use and lend you some clothes. Or don't. I don't care."

The Professor fixed her eyes on something in the sky over Scorn's head. "Hmm," she said thoughtfully. "I have a feeling you are going to care about that."

Scorn turned to see what she was looking at and was excited and enraged to see the comet all at the same time. It wasn't the monks that had been fucking with him just now. It was his dear, dead brother Hedley Edrick. Time had literally passed him by on the doorstep of the monastery. He should have figured it out at the door when he recognized that the same bloody monk had greeted him both times, identical but for the now obvious aging. Though, in his defense, it was not like it was a regular occurrence to have time skip twenty years or so,

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while you waited for some monks to bring you ashes you intended to resurrect into an actual human being with the help of the dark twin of a Relic. Clearly, he had a lot on his mind, so he would cut himself some slack. But damn if one thing irked him about the whole event. "I don't know how he did it," Scorn exclaimed to a confused Professor.

"Uh, did what?" the Professor asked.

"Never mind, it doesn't matter," he spat, not taking his eyes off of the comet. "Well, no time like the present to begin my plan of world domination."

"And world domination includes you giving me a very nice silky robe, or lacy cloak, yes?" the Professor said. "Come on, it is getting cold up here with that ocean breeze. My nipples are like little party hats."

"The party's over," Scorn said. And with that, he was walking back down the trail that led off of Mount Profitis Ilias, leaving the Professor standing there with her hand on one shapely hip.

The Professor could think of no other options but seeing what the monks could do to help her. Surely, they were thankful for her letting them relieve what she imagined was decades of pent-up desires. But what if they were angry with her for being so naked and exposed, and her forcing them to give in to the temptations of the flesh? She reached down and got a rather sharp rock, which would look rather nice in the eye socket of the first man that dared raise a hand in her direction. So, she set off toward the monastery door, and was pleasantly surprised to see the monks had left at the doorway clothes, walking sandals, food, water, and a rather nasty dagger, all of which she was most thankful for. "Pray on, my brothers," she said, dressing quickly. "Pray on." She blew a kiss to them as she knew they were still watching her, and then set off down the trail to catch up with Scorn. "Oh, Gulthie dear," she called. "Wait for me!" Being alive really was a whole lot more fun the second time around!

Scorn had no idea why he had heeded the Professor's call and waited for her when she had beckoned him from outside the monastery. It wasn't that long of a journey from the island of Thera to

Immortal Divorce Court on the Greek mainland, though it had seemed to last a mortal lifetime because the newly alive Professor was keen on expressing her new opinion about everything—and he did mean everything—she saw like it was the first time. She did, however, make

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the valid observation on the boat ride that dolphins looked like they were smiling. Scorn internally celebrated when she finally and appropriately shut the hell up when they saw the Gates to Hell ominously rising behind Immortal Divorce Court. He out-and-out rejoiced when the faerie deputies manning the gate to Immortal Divorce Court let him and the Professor pass without challenge. Sure, Head Magistrate Dough would now know he was coming, but since what he was about to file in the Clerk of the Court's office was public record, that didn't really matter. In fact, he couldn't wait for Sirius Sinister and the new Master of Masters to know of his plan. He was fully ready to take on all comers.

Scorn sniffed the paper of his pleading as he entered the Clerk of the Court's office, and once again more deeply as he stood in front of the filing clerk. Oh, how he had missed the business of the law! The filing clerk, as he should have been in the presence of such legal greatness, was visibly shaking. It was all this buffoon could do to take the pleading from Scorn, date stamp it, and file it without losing his breakfast. The former Breaker of the Bold was certain this man was going to file a workers' compensation claim for his post-traumatic stress disorder, which would be denied by the now Head Magistrate. But maybe it should be an accepted claim? Even so close to Hell, the filing clerk had probably never experienced the powerful, one-of-a-kind evil personified in Scorn. He rather liked the sound of "post-traumatic Scorn disorder." And, when his plans came to fruition, it would become a worldwide epidemic.

Scorn exited the hastily constructed ramshackle building that now served as the Immortal Divorce Court Clerk of the Court's office and a small courthouse that could hold at most five people total. He didn't know how Head Magistrate Dough was actually getting anything done here. But he knew the reality was that she wasn't, and was using other venues outside of Greece to hear cases and dispense her own non-Breaker of the Bold brand of law. He held his nose as he walked away to guard it from the almost-too-much-to-stand stench of the ruins of the former Immortal Divorce Court courthouse, which was still exploded into bits. Scorn allowed himself a smile of congratulations for a job really well done. His anger had subsided over being time tricked by Hedley, or perhaps he was now simply so focused on his plan that

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there wasn't time to be pissed off anymore. He had confirmed with the Clerk of the Court's office that it was only the first week of August in the blessed year of 1835, and thus he had ample time until the comet arrived to usher in his eternal rule.

He wondered why they hadn't put the temporary Clerk of the Court's office a little farther from the sewage still seeping up from the rubble. Then he realized that was done on purpose by Head Magistrate

Dough, letting all the Immortal Divorce Court lawyers know she was in total control. He nodded in appreciation—he really had trained her well! Scorn glanced again with pride at the devastation he had caused and very nearly framed Sinister for doing that dastardly deed. A bubble of noxious gas popped with a disgusting sound and accompanying smell. He didn't know what the Head Magistrate was waiting for because it was not like the Immortal Divorce Court courthouse could ever be rebuilt where it once stood. But that was not his issue anymore. Instead, Gulth was thrilled he had gotten the proper paperwork filed at the Immortal Divorce Court on behalf of his new client, the Professor, and thus he was able to leave her to her own devices until such time as the case was calendared to be heard. He was also relieved that he had continued to keep up his membership in the Immortal Divorce Court bar because those ten gold coins a year in dues were going to turn out to be money well spent. He slunk off into an alley just off the main road leading toward the Immortal Divorce Court courthouse, trying to shake the feeling he was being followed. He closed his eyes for a moment and exhaled, summoning old skills that enabled him to nearly blend into the stone wall that was hard against his back. And he was not disappointed, for sidling down the street was a solitary brownie, looking way too happy for someone coming from the direction of the Immortal Divorce Court. That, in and of itself, would have been reason enough for Scorn to be suspicious, because no one put that much obvious effort into trying to look pleased at visiting this Hell on Earth. Brownies were by nature inconspicuous, so the joyous purpose in this fellow's peppy step was troublesome to say the least. So, the moment the brownie came even with the alleyway, Scorn thrust out one taloned hand, and yanked the diminutive dumbass to him, planting him into the wall so fast the brownie didn't even have time to scream.

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"Why are you following me, you accursedly happy brownie?" Scorn said, squeezing the throat of his prospective spy just enough to send a message, but not enough to kill him. "Tell me why, and maybe, but no promises, I will let you live!" Scorn expected to see fear in the eyes of the brownie as the little man dangled there helplessly, but instead he saw only that same damn positivity of purpose the brownie displayed earlier.

"I have a message for you," the brownie gasped, clearly happy to be able to breathe and fulfill his mission.

"From whom? Orcinus? That bumble dick Angus? Who dares send a message to the likes of me with the likes of you?" Scorn demanded.

"Tell me now, or I will squeeze you so hard your eyeballs will pop clean out of your head and roll into the street, where some wretch on his way to the Immortal Divorce Court will stomp them into so much ocular jelly!"

"I don't know who Orcinus and Bumble Dick Angus are," the brownie said. "My name is Dusty Kins, and I work for Immortal Divorce Court. Actually, more specifically I work for the Continuing Legal Education division of Immortal Divorce Court, and I am here to

tell you that your recent court filing is being held up from actually getting filed with Immortal Divorce Court because you are short one-half hour of Continuing Legal Education credits.”

Scorn’s eyes went wide with horror, and he very slowly and deliberately unclenched his hand from around the throat of the Continuing Legal Education brownie and set him softly on the ground. “Quite sorry for the whole ‘jacking you up into the stone wall’ thing,” Scorn said. “You know us attorneys—all of that lawyerly stress really puts us on edge. And don’t even get me started on how many of us drink too much or rely on opium for inspiration. Anyhow, that is the job of another division of Immortal Divorce Court no doubt, but I thought you were following me to, uh, rob me—yes, that’s it—rob me, or assault me.” Scorn ignored the brownie looking at him like he was the biggest idiot in the alley, because at that moment the self-proclaimed future ruler of the universe actually was said idiot. “But there has to be some mistake,” Scorn continued. “I took all of my classes and sent in all of

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my affidavits of compliance. In fact, I think I am carrying extra CLE hours over this year as per usual.”

The brownie nodded in understanding as every lawyer he had ever spoken to about a Continuing Legal Education deficiency always took their classes, sent in their affidavits, and was, of course, carrying extra CLE hours into the next year. “We checked, double-checked, and because you once were a judge on our esteemed bench, even triple-checked what you had sent us,” he said. “But I am sorry to report that you are indeed one-half hour short in CLE credits, and thus, your filing is frozen until said deficiency is corrected.”

“What is my one-half hour deficiency in?” Scorn said, quite befuddled at this bizarre series of events.

“Ethics,” the brownie replied.

“Ethics,” Scorn repeated. “Can’t I get a waiver as an ex-judge?”

“That would be unethical,” the brownie said.

“Right, I guess it would,” Scorn agreed. “Can Head Magistrate Dough issue an order of compliance? I trained her, you know.”

“Still unethical,” the brownie replied.

“Indeed, I know that, you see, I was just testing you,” Scorn said emphatically. “Good job—you passed.”

The brownie was not amused, and rolled his eyes, which Scorn made a mental note of for the future torture of this rule follower. “Well, in spite of what might be construed as questionable behavior not befitting a member of the bar, we have recently adopted some new types of courses to make it easier for lawyers, particularly deficient ones such as yourself, to get their CLE credits,” the brownie offered.

Scorn was going to ignore the assaults on his character and do anything he could to get his half-hour ethics credit, and get his blasted pleading filed. “What kind of courses are you talking about?” he said.

“Time is of the essence for that filing, you know.”

“All filings are of the essence, or they wouldn’t need to be filed in the first place,” the brownie said. “You can satisfy your one-half hour

deficiency online,” he said.

“I beg your pardon,” Scorn said. “What is this *online* you speak of?” Another judicious eye roll by the brownie followed, to Scorn’s chagrin. “Come on, follow me,” the brownie said, and walked out of the alley and back toward the stench of Immortal Divorce Court.

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Just short of the pathetic edifice containing the Clerk of the Court’s office and the courtroom, the brownie turned and entered a low-slung building. Scorn followed him in, and there painted on the floor of the building were lines of all different colors stretching the length of the massive structure. Sitting in chairs by one wall was a multitude of lawyers with tomes in their hands and lectures at the ready. “There, that one over there—the blue line symbolic of trustworthiness is the online Continuing Legal Education ethics course,” the brownie said. “Go stand on the blue line for one-half hour, and your requirement will be fulfilled. And, Scorn?”

“Yes?” Scorn replied, stepping on the blue line, and feeling relief as the instructor rose to his feet to begin his treatise on ethics.

“If you ever put your hands on me again, I will double your CLE requirements for a century, got it?” the brownie said sternly.

“Understood,” Scorn said, taking out his notebook, and pretending to take notes as the instructor spoke, as did every other lawyer in the building. Who knew that trying to take over the world could have moments of tedium, or CLE classes, which were actually one and the same, as it turned out? From here Scorn would go back to the Clerk of the Court’s office to make sure his filing was indeed filed, and then he would be off to take care of one final part of his plan. He felt a chill come over him—was the online CLE instructor actually going to try to engage him in conversation to make sure he was really paying attention?

He felt sweat on his brow, realizing this online CLE stuff was no joke. The half an hour standing on the line seemed more like half a century, and he resolved that when he was the ruler of the world, he would have CLE abolished entirely. But, as he walked out of the Immortal Divorce Court CLE building, he realized that if he got rid of CLE requirements, then how would he be able to torture all of the lawyers? No, he would abolish the CLE requirements for himself, and double them—no, triple them—for everybody else! A quick check at the Immortal Divorce Court Clerk of the Court revealed that finally his pleading had been properly filed. Now, the only thing he had to do was to wait for the docketing of his filing to be heard. He had a feeling that hearing was going to be a party. Well, actually it was going to be a party with a whole lot of parties, because there was about to be one

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hell of a consolidation of cases against Sirius Sinister coming to a legal venue somewhere soon. So, now the only thing that Scorn needed to do was to make sure that Sirius Sinister wasn’t going to be there to participate in the proceedings. An empty chair just sitting in the courtroom was all that Scorn desired to see of Sinister. But just who had a chance of taking out the famous master assassin? Scorn simply wasn’t going to try, and Kunchen was now so much Himalayan dust. A smile crossed

Scorn's face for the second time in recent weeks, threatening to undo the tense face muscles that were so dead set against showing happiness. He shrugged and let himself smile. What other reaction could you have when you succeeded in killing the Master of Masters and Sirius Sinister all in the same century?

And so it was that Gulth Scorn found himself in a nondescript cave along the Spanish coast, waiting for his charge to come and pay homage one final time. But he wasn't here as the Breaker of the Bold or the killer of the Master of Masters. No, as he made sure his dry ice was making the proper amount of eerie fog, Gulth Scorn flipped up his black hood, and settled into a skeletal mask that he had improved on nicely over the years, and voila—the Grim Reaper arose from the pits of Hell for one last time. And, speaking of one last time, the one under his dark control was approaching to receive his instructions for a final, deadly mission.

"You haven't sent for me in years," Ernesto said to his bony boss.

"I was beginning to think that someone had taken you out. Or maybe that was just idle wishing on my part."

The Grim Reaper raised his arms angrily from atop his stony perch in the cave and rasped an irritated growl. "Your onus is to kill as Hell commands you to do, and not to think," he said. "Death is eternal, and so as its servant—so am I."

"You are talking to an immortal," Ernesto said, his patience growing short. The days when he answered to anyone, or more specifically any creature from the dark reaches of the netherworld, were long gone.

"So, eternal for one like me is all relative."

"Relative, you say?" the Grim Reaper chided. "That is an apt description of your next mission."

"I am done with your missions," Ernesto said. "I don't know why I even bothered to answer your summons."

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"You don't exactly have a choice in the matter," the Grim Reaper replied. "You don't get to say no, remember?"

"That's pretty damn debatable right now," Ernesto said. "I have lived a long life, so what are you going to do—kill me if I refuse? And that is assuming you can actually kill me."

Gulth Scorn was wondering why everyone in his life was giving him such a hard time lately. First the Professor, and now Ernesto, were thumbing their collective noses at his threats. Threats that he had taken great care to show were anything but idle. Wasn't anyone afraid of death anymore? That had to be it, because he most certainly wasn't losing his edge! Well, if Ernesto did not fear his own life being taken as part of the cosmic balance, Scorn knew whose lives Ernesto did value above all else.

"I could kill you by simply snapping my fingers, but that just sounds like taking the easy way out," the Grim Reaper said. "Death is far more complicated than all of that because sometimes killing a man has nothing to do with the taking of his actual life. Arguably, the greatest death a man can experience is when by his actions he causes the deaths of all of those he loves the most in the world."

Ernesto stiffened and shook his head in utter disbelief. "You leave my family out of this," he said, drawing his blade, and picturing it taking the head off of the Grim Reaper more efficiently than any scythe he had ever seen.

"Why are you getting so upset, dear Ernesto?" the Grim Reaper said. "I haven't even told you who it is that you need to kill, have I? I mean, what is the life of just one person compared to that of all of the lives you love? Isn't that a simple choice to make, relatively speaking?"

"It's my wife, isn't it?" Ernesto said, not lowering his blade.

"Of course it is not your wife," the Grim Reaper said. "Come on, use your assassin's noggin, Ernesto! What has she done to draw the ire of the netherworld? Except that whole 'gave birth to Sirius Sinister' thing, but that wasn't exactly her fault entirely since you were the one that planted the seed in her. So, it has been ordained that you are the one to bring things full circle, and thus you are charged with ending the life of your son, Sirius Sinister."

"I won't do it," Ernesto said. "And you have no power to make me."

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"You are absolutely right, Ernesto," the Grim Reaper said, getting the trigger of his trapdoor ready because he felt Ernesto was about to try and end this relationship permanently, and in a way not one bit to his liking. "The power is yours to choose. Will it be the life of Sirius Sinister, or will it be the lives of *everyone* else you love?"

As it turned out it was almost the life of the Grim Reaper, who dropped down his trapdoor just in the nick of time as an enraged Ernesto stomped and screamed in the cavern above him. Gulth Scorn pulled off his mask, dropped it to the floor of the passageway, and removed all indicia of the Grim Reaper from his person. It mattered not if Ernesto killed Sirius Sinister or failed in the attempt with his own life forfeit. Either way, death would come to Sirius Sinister. He stopped in the cave, troubled by the stray thought that his years and years of brainwashing would fail, and Ernesto would disobey him. He shrugged, realizing that it was not the Grim Reaper that Ernesto feared, but Death. So, like all honorable men, Ernesto would most certainly choose the death of one to ensure the lives of many. Gulth Scorn was feeling pretty good about himself as his master plan was all coming together.