

Chapter 306

GRAND LORD ZAIPER

Grand Lord Zaiper lounged in his living room, his boots propped comfortably on a velvet footstool. A goblet of ale rested loosely in his hand as he watched the fire crackle lazily in the hearth.

After leaving court, he had spent hours downtown, carefully avoiding his home until well past midnight. All to escape facing the Oracle. Zaiper needed time to decide his next move, to strategize how best to deal with the problem that was her. Until he reached a decision, he would avoid her as much as possible.

And today, he had succeeded.

Absently sipping his drink, he smiled, his eyes tracing the flickering flames.

A knock shattered his peace.

Frowning, he tilted his head slightly. There were hushed murmurs outside.

Scowling, he set his drink down with a thud, pushing himself up. “Where the devil are all the servants and useless slaves?”

His mood was quickly souring as he strode to the door, throwing it open.

The Oracle stood behind the door.

He barely had time to take a step back before the old lady stormed inside.

“You impertinent little child!” Fury radiated from her like an erupting volcano. “How dare you break this kingdom? How dare you!”

She stomped her staff against the ground.

An unexpected force slammed into Zaiper, lifting him off his feet and hurling him across the room.

He crashed against the far wall, pain flaring through his back as he hit the stone floor with a brutal thud.

What the fuck!?

Zaiper groaned, rolling onto his side. Wincing at the sharp pain in his tailbone, he gritted out. “You should not abuse your powers like that, Oracle.”

She stepped forward, her golden-streaked eyes dilated, burning. “If you can abuse yours the way you have, then I shall do the same with mine.”

Raising her staff, she wrapped her fingers around it so hard. “How could you do something so despicable?” Her voice was thick with disgust. “Centuries ago, I foresaw many futures—some better than others, some darker than I would have liked. But none as vile as what you have made come to pass.”

She stomped her staff again, and this time, Zaiper flew across the room, colliding hard against the edge of the fireplace.

Ffffuckk...!

Agony lanced through his ribs at the impact, his entire body screaming in protest.

“You are disgusting,” the Oracle spat. “The embodiment of evil itself. How could you do this to your kingdom, to your fellow Grand Rulers? How could you do that to your own blood brother?”

Blood filled Zaiper’s mouth, and he spat on the floor.. “Oh, spare me the righteous outrage,” he sneered. “Kristoff got what was coming to him for looking at what was mine.”

Now, her face twisted into something so dark it sent a chill down Zaiper’s spine.

She lifted her staff.

A blast of unseen force cracked through the air.

Zaiper heard cracks a split second before his entire body seized in agony. A few of his bones had shattered simultaneously.

The pain was unbearable, ripping through him like fire and ice all at once.

“You conniving old hag!” he roared in agony. "This will take weeks to heal, damn you!"

“You are a disgrace to the name Dragaxlov,” the old hag declared. “Your clan has long harbored ambitions of claiming the First Throne, but never have they stooped to such despicable acts to seize it. You wiped out an entire kingdom. Slaughtered younglings who looked up to you. Murdered your own brother.”

Zaiper groaned through his pain, spitting out blood again. “One day, someone will take that cursed stick from you, Old Lady.”

“That someone will not be you.” The Oracle's voice dropped into something colder, deadlier. “Come clean to the kingdom. Confess your crimes and face the consequences.”

“How does ‘never’ sound?” Zaiper drawled.

“Tell the people what you have done, or I will.”

Zaiper let out a bark of laughter, ignoring the sharp stab of pain it sent through his ribs.

“You can’t do that, you withered hagspawn. You are not allowed to interfere.” he reminded her, wiping the blood from his mouth.

“I can, and I will.” Her golden eyes blazed like twin suns. ”Do not mistake my restraint for weakness, Devil's spawn. I would gladly sacrifice my life to expose the darkness you have wrought. To cleanse this land of your corruption.”

Zaiper’s smirk vanished. Surely, she does not...

“You don’t mean that,” but his voice lacked its usual arrogance.

“Foolish boy,” the whisper was coated with disdain. “The first pages of The Gods and Their Servants will tell you an Oracle does not speak idly. Every word I utter is weighed and measured.”

Now his heartbeat was drumming against his ribs. "You expect me to confess? You expect me, Zaiper Dragaxlov, to walk to my own execution?"

“What I want,” the Oracle said coldly, “is justice.”

“You cannot reveal secrets of that magnitude, the impact could kill you! That’s right, I also know a bit about that damned book and your oath.” He said smugly.

“Yes.” she was unfazed. “But I will gladly die than let you get away with this.”

Zaiper gawked at her.

Sh stepped back, her expression unreadable once more. “I will grant you time to consider your choices, Grand Lord Zaiper. But know this: this matter will not rest. Justice will be served, with or without your cooperation.”

Turning to the door, she moved toward it.

Zaiper’s mind raced. There had to be a way to stop this. "Wait! I wish to strike a bargain!"

"Denied." Her voice was calm. "Consider your choices, Dragaxlov. I will return." She didn’t so much as glance back.

Anger overpowered panic. I will strangle her with my bare hands!

He rose. Or tried to.

Pain, like moving water, rushed through him until Zaiper felt like he was surrounded by burning pillars, forcing him to sink back to the ground.

"Wait! You cannot do this to me!" He meant to shout, but the words came out as nothing more than a ragged groan of pain.

The Oracle paused at the threshold.

Angling her head slightly, she cast a final glance over her shoulder. “And while I am feeling generous, undo every foul enchantment you have woven to the Grand King’s mind.”

Zaiper sat there, panting through unexplainable pain. She knew of that too!?

"Tear them from his mind, thread by cursed thread, until not a single trace of dark magic remains. Do not test my patience further, you spawn of darkness.” Then, she vanished into the night.