

Bungle screamed and struggled against his bonds as Kaed tipped another priceless object into the fire that had been built out of the various rugs and exotic furniture that the bear-skunk had been collecting for years. He tried to lung forwards, to break free of the bonds holding him in place. He couldn't move, he'd been grabbed in the middle of the night whilst he was asleep, his castle's defences hadn't activated. One minute he'd been asleep, next he'd been grabbed by a hulking mass of undead zombie gnoll under the direction of the little shit kobold who was leading them. He'd fought back, he wasn't entirely defenceless, blasting zombies, calling on the castle defences but the element of surprise was in their favour and he had been able to subdue him.

Now Kaed had been released from his picture frame and the wolf had spent the last three hours burning everything. The lemon furred wolf turned and smiled at the bear-skunk softly as he held up a priceless porcelain vase, he grinned over the rim of it and dropped it. It shattered, exploding into thousands of needle sharp shards which were casually and callously swept into the fire.

"Anything else Erin?" the wolf called out, turning toward the yellow kobold, "I am growing somewhat bored of burning furniture."

"Nothing else," Erin walked in, "I set fire to the library, it's burning merrily and I think everything else left has someone trapped inside of it or was a person."

"Fair enough," Kaed said, pointing a finger at the bear-skunk and firing a spell into his stomach. The bear squeaked and squirmed, gasping softly as his body began to harden... he was being petrified. A thick, solid, granulated brown stain that was making his gut harden and flow outwards, covering his body.

"NO..." Bungle screamed, "No stop, stop you can't do this!"

"Of course I can," Kaed said with a growl, "I warned you not to fuck with me bear... good bye." he watched with a wicked grin as the bear-skunk's body was consumed by wood. The gleaming, beautifully carved walnut consumed the bear-skunk's tail, his body, leaving him trapped as a wooden statue from the neck down. Kaed smiled warmly, enjoying the look of sheer terror covering the bear's face as it hardened and solidified into place, trapped in a rictus of sheer terror and disbelief at what was happening to him.

Walking away from the statue Kaed stopped before his apprentice and looked down at the kobold, "Nothing else of interest?"

"Only if you want to start setting people free and enslaving them? No way to tell what kind of people they are though."

"No," Kaed said with a shake of his head, "That is too much hassle, any sign of the grey wolf?"

“Sadly not, I haven’t seen anyone like that, though there is a whole hall full of statues, every piece of furniture is an antique and I am out of zombies,” he shrugged sheepishly, “This place has some rather good defences... I used most of them up breaking through the various wards and protections covering this place.”

“Annoying, never mind we’ll find you some more corpses or make them for now though...” the wolf turned and waved his hand at the wooden statue of the bear and lifted it up and over into the centre of the pile of burning rugs and dropped him on it.

Turning his back on the statue of former bear-skunk Kead strode out of the castle with Erin in tow, “Let’s go and see what we can do about getting home, I have had enough of this place.”

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Running lightly through the forest Erin easily kept the larger form of his teacher in sight as Kaed led the way. Leaping over a fallen tree-trunk the kobold landed, knees bending to absorb the impact. He pushed back off, leaping forwards and bounding his way up a series of moss covered rocks to keep pace with the lemon furred wolf ahead.

He wasn’t sure where they were going but the master said he had found a good place for them to replace the zombies he had lost springing him from that castle a week or so back. They were totally out of undead and there hadn’t been anyone useful using the road nearest their camp. They’d been running for about ten minutes now and Erin was really glad for his heritage. Kobolds were short but they were sturdy and had stamina, his tiny little legs carrying him forwards tirelessly. Scrambling up a long fallen tree trunk that offered a way over a stand of rocks Erin’s left arm slipped on the slimy moss covering the side of the rock. His chest slammed into the ancient wood and for a moment he started to slip, digging his pale lemon claws into the rotten wood he managed to rip out several large chunks of wood. Falling over the side he landed with a thump and a groan as he winded himself, a shower of beetles, woodlice and rotten chips of bark scattering over his bright yellow scales.

Slowly sitting up and cursing Erin brushed the wood off his body and then grabbed one of the beetles as it tried to scuttle off and bit it in half. Chewing on it the young kobold stood up and kicked the tree in annoyance before finishing off the rest of his beetle.

“Stupid tree, bloody, damn stupid...” he stopped as he became aware of someone watching him and looked up into the eyes of his teacher. The wolf Kaed shook his head in amusement, smiling softly and brushing his long lemon yellow hair back.

“I thought you were twenty two years old Erin, not five, having arguments with dead trees and stopping for a snack when you are supposed to be following me.”

Erin scrambled up the rotten trunk and stepped onto firm ground next to Kaed and snorted through his nostrils, "I was following you, I fell off."

Kaed grinned, "I saw, it was quite a tumble, you know you could have just levitated yourself up if you were unsure on the wood. But no matter, let us proceed I want to get there before midnight."

He turned and raced off again and the yellow kobold sighed softly and started to run after him. It wasn't a bad life being Kaed's student, he actually cared about Erin in his own weird way. He was also a good teacher, the only teacher he'd found who was willing to talk to him about sorcery and how it worked. Back home in the clan everyone was a mage or a priest or had natural dragon magic. None of them were sorcerers, he was the only one in the whole clan and no one knew how to teach him to harness his powers properly. Kaed understood however, he knew what it was like to have powers and no one to show you the way.

Of course his Chief and the High Priestess didn't understand that, all they saw was a Vampire trying to seduce away one of their hatchlings! Well Erin was old enough to make his own decisions and he'd decided to leave home and live with Kaed. His cousin Nocuous understood, he still saw him sometimes but ugh the chief was so bloody intractable! Darting left around a tall stand of ferns blocking their path Erin caught up with Kaed who had gone right and grinned at the wolf as he glanced in his direction. He nodded and picked up speed, loping into the lead again in that manner only a wolf could pull off.

"You do have stamina, well student, follow me..." and with those words Kaed dissolved into shadows and streamed forwards as a wave of inky blackness. Erin lost sight of him almost instantly as he wove in amongst the shadowed tree-tops and slowed to a halt and frowned. Hands on hips he drummed his fingers against his bare thighs whilst he scanned the woods with his power to try and pick up his master's trail. It was dark, there was no moon tonight thanks to the thick clouds and the forest made it see anyway. He had passable night vision but that wouldn't help with his Master running around in shadowform like this and unlike Chief Vikris or his cousin Nocu he didn't rely on trinkets, objects and artefacts.

All his magic came from within and since living with Kaed he had adopted the wolf's habit of not bothering with clothes for everyday living. Kaed only wore his hat because it had a bunch of enchantments piled on it to protect him from the sun and other things. He was covered in scales, he had magic and it wasn't like he had anything that would embarrass people though he did have a loincloth and some tunics stashed back in the camp incase he did have to go into town like a regular person. People got so hung up over appearances, though truth be told once he mastered it he would be able to shroud himself in a disguise complete with clothing. So alone in the forest, several miles from camp the lithe yellow kobold reached out with his hand and pushed his magic outwards, eyes closed as he felt through the forest, searching for the telltale energy signature of undead. Kaed had started his training with mastery over negative energy

and the necromancy. He was no master, not yet but it was his strongest skill and Kaed was a vampire.

Erin had learnt many different things over the past six months, transmutation, evocation, conjuration. It was amazing what he could do, he just had to think about it, bend his innate magical energy towards his desired end goal and make it so! And there... off to the right and moving away from him was a faint undead signature. Moving off Erin picked up speed, pushing his magic out backwards, forcing it to twist through his body and launching himself into the air as a pair of shimmering wings made from purple energy burst out of his back and carried him up into the air. Kaed was moving swiftly away, another few seconds and he would have been out of range but the young sorcerer was determined to keep up with him!

Pushing his way up above the canopy Erin turned around and flew after his teacher, focussing his thoughts on him and skimming across the sky towards a place about five miles ahead where the forest seemed to end. Kaed was waiting, sitting on a rock and staring out across the uneven meadow of rock and wild grass. It looked like the earth had been turned recently, there were large patches of bare soil that had recently been disturbed. Erin dropped out of the sky, his magical wings flaring, carrying him to land gently on the earth beside the wolf.

"Well done," Kaed commented, turning his head to look at the kobold, "Now tell me what can you sense out here, under this field."

Erin turned his green eyes toward the meadow and reached out with his otherworldly senses. He was very careful not to use his hands or make any gestures; some spell casting required hand movements usually as a focus for channeling. But something as simple as extending his senses should require no hand movements at all. About a month after Kaed started training him Erin had started to pick up a habit that he needed to use his hands for everything. Kaed had been less than happy, calling it a weakness and claiming, quite rightly, that such a tell-tale sign of using magic would rob him of the ability to be stealthy; to catch enemies unaware by launching a magical attack with just a thought. To fix this Kaed turned Erin into a large, yellow scaled snake and then hid the rune to unravel the permanent polymorph spell somewhere in the woods. Erin had to learn how to use his senses and basic sorcery without hands; by the time he located the object with the counterspell on it he'd become accustomed to not using his magic.

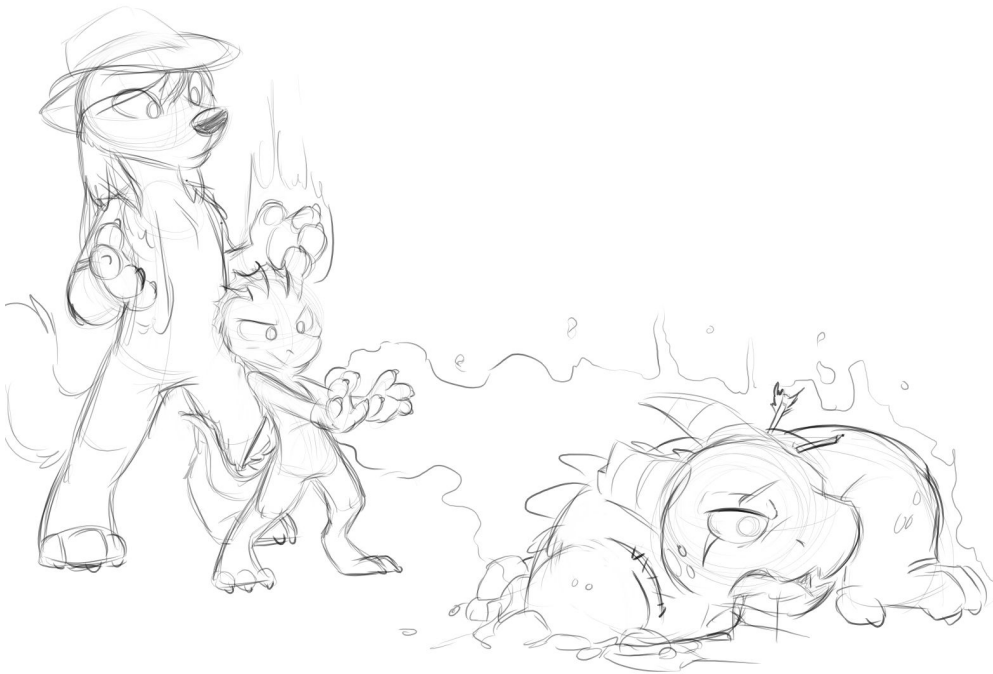
"There is something dead under there," he murmured, walking forwards down the hill, "Not old either, maybe a couple of days... a week at most. But the ground doesn't look recently turned so it was probably buried with magic."

"Correct," Kaed replied, "So tell me, how would you raise it?"

Erin frowned, letting his thoughts move around about the corpse under the ground, "Well there are a lot of corpses under there. Quite a lot of them are badly mangled and wouldn't be much use for raising but I sense about eight I could use and..." he frowned, focussing his mind toward

the larger object buried under there, “God’s that’s huge... I could do a ritual to raise it. It’d take about a day maybe a bit more or... and this is a bit of an exposed location,” he looked up at the wolf “So, I think yeah, hey Kaed, lend me your power to help me raise this thing, please.”

The wolf blinked then laughed and stood up, “Good answer, come on let’s raise this thing,” moving behind Erin the wolf raised his paws, summoning up his magic and feeding it into the little kobold.



Erin had already begun to build up a large amount of negative energy. It was interesting to see how Erin coped with that much dark energy flowing into him.

It could easily have reduced him to a lifeless husk but the kobold had learnt well, he didn’t take the energy in, he just acted as a conduit, allowing it to flow through him and into the spell he was weaving.

Dark purple tinged energy zapped across the meadow and delved into the dark. Kaed could feel Erin’s thoughts weaving the net of energy into the corpse and then it started to move. The soil ruptured, the grass was pushed aside as the dull purple claws of a dragon broke the surface. Their head followed shortly, Erin’s spell pouring more energy into the dead and slumbering beast, pulling them from their grave as a mindless zombie.

“I think you’ve got the basics of Necromancy down,” Kaed rumbled, feeling a little bit proud at having brought the kobold this far, the kid was actually willing to listen to his teachings and had an aptitude for their style of magic. “I think it’s time we focussed on some other schools for a

bit.” he eyed the dragon as he continued to claw its way out of the earth. Dirt and soil cascaded off its cold dead body and the wolf grinned, “We can get this thing to fly us back to camp.”

Erin lowered his paws and looked at the dragon, admiring the massive zombie, he nodded his head and started forwards, “Sure thing Kaed, can we maybe... buzz some farm houses on the way back?”

Kaed laughed and followed, “Why not, but let’s make sure they’re pretty far out from our home. I can get a snack whilst you see what this thing is capable of doing,” grinning maliciously at the idea of terrorizing some locals and seeing how well Erin did at controlling a dragon this big. It would be fun teaching this kobold more complicated stuff now he had mastered the basics of unlife; it was probably time to focus on transmutation and conjuration. It would never do for the kobold to get too mired in necromancy, there were so many other schools out there that they could experiment with.

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