

Sokara

Queen Sokara - First Queen of the Gemin, had been exiled to spend the rest of her unnatural days on Earth in solitude. She wasn't about to let that happen. Admittedly, it had taken many moons to achieve the escape from the prison that her less-than-loving husband, King NeVada, had planned for her. She had used the tragedy of another to her advantage. In the process, she had infected the human with her gift as his reward. At this very moment, she was expecting his arrival to join her. She would profit from his knowledge of this star they call Earth; a star that has been foreign to her even though she's been a habitant for over two thousand years.

She lay in the darkness of an actual hole in the wall where she found refuge in the small town of Bilbor in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania. She rested in the dirt in the wine cellar of a local inn guarded by a young girl, Victoria. Sokara had taken the owner's life as her own energy had waned, but had granted Victoria life. The only reason she did so was because she needed a guardian that could watch over her as she slept during the day. The Earth sun was too much for Sokara to handle. The bright rays burned her skin and threatened to end her life within seconds. So it was decided that night time would be more beneficial for feeding and exploring the region on this star on which she found herself stranded.

Her hunger had tussled her out of her sound sleep. Her eyes popped open immediately as if in danger, when in fact, she wasn't near any possible danger whatsoever. No one had known that the murderous Queen was in hiding at the bottom of a small inn among the mountains of Romania. There wasn't a soul on Earth that was even aware she had gone missing. Further, no one on Earth had even known Sokara was being held prisoner in the confines of one of the most well-known pyramids of Egypt. She was being paranoid for no reason. Or so she convinced herself as she was waking from her sleep of death.

She dug herself out from under the dirt from which she had buried herself for her day's respite. There was a window that had let in what little sun could hurdle the mountain tops to stream into the wine cellar below the inn. That natural light would creep along the dirt floor and find its way under the wall and penetrate one corner of the dark recess she was temporarily calling "home". The light caused her pain. To avoid the pain, she had Victoria dig a hole in the ground and then bury her when she laid for her long nap until the cause of her pain hid below the horizon of the mountains. This trick seemed to work. She was impressed by her own savvy to have even come up with the idea. Under the dirt, no light could get to her. And, as it turned out, the dirt seemed to have renovated her spirit.

But, now, it was time to crawl out of the dirt and rejoin those above ground. She needed to feast. She was beginning to feel a little puckish. A heart or two would pick her right up and drastically change her current mood, which was dangerously beginning to fall under the category of madness. And when Sokara became mad, villages were wiped out. She didn't feel like wiping out an entire

village today. Her purpose was to regain a realm. If she kept eating people, her realm would be nothing more than buildings and empty structures. She found no fun in ruling over property. Property didn't fear her like people did.

Her Shroud enveloped Sokara as she slept. This is to prevent any sort of harm being done to her person in her suspension of consciousness. In effect, when Sokara goes to sleep, she literally dies. The virus within her stops all bodily functions including organ operations. The Khepra that inhabits her brain is the only hurdle from her former life to her immortal death. When Sokara is in stasis, she is vulnerable to annihilation just like any mortal. Her Shroud protects her by enveloping her in a fog of black mist. If she had come to any danger, it would whisper to her. She wouldn't come out of her sleep, but her eyes would open. This, alone, would be a deterrent for anyone to harm her. Her eyes were completely black, even the whites surrounding the iris. She would then enchant those that would harm her into harming themselves instead. This was not something she had learned while at first being ill with the virus. It had just come naturally. Her Shroud had then shown her how to fine tune the defense mechanism. It's saved her immortality twice, so far, while in Castle Castora when her own trusted people attempted to assassinate her in her own chambers.

She rose out of the dirt to begin hunting for food when she was hit with the most blindingly white light that she had ever experienced. The luminescent glow filtered in from under the stone door of her hideaway to soak the entire alcove in its brilliance. It wasn't, however, brilliant for her. Her bare skin was seared wherever the light caressed her. Her Shroud immediately shielded her by enveloping her with a barrier of black mist. She let out a few shrieks as her skin was bubbling where the light had hit her. She couldn't see anywhere around her for a moment not only because of the black fog surrounding her, but because the light had blinded her.

What fresh hell is this? she thought. For a moment she had the notion that someone in the Gemin had located her and had some new-found weapon to bring her down. That couldn't have been the case, she then pondered, because she was so far away from her former prison that there would be no possible way someone had followed her. She was certain of that. The light had to have been some sort of anomaly. As these thoughts were flowing through her mind the burns on her skin were beginning to heal.

After some time, the light began to fade and she was in darkness once again. Her Shroud lowered itself from around her. It whispered to her as it crawled to the crack under the door that served as the entryway into her tomb to make sure the coast was clear. It had been. Sokara exited her alcove with caution. She had no way of knowing where that light had come from, nor did she know if it was going to come back. She walked the thin aisle between wine casks carefully.

Her daytime guardian, Victoria, was nowhere to be found. She had most likely gone home to her family. It was, after all, night time. Sokara slipped up the stairs from the wine cellar to the bottom floor of the inn. Not a single soul was in the kitchen. She let herself out of the door she had found securely locked from the inside and lifted into the night sky. If someone was trying to harm her with a strange light, she would have to fight back. The only way she knew how to do that was to

gather an army. And since she didn't happen to bring an army with her from Gijar, she would have to create one.

"No time like the present." she said to herself out loud as she lifted off into the night sky with the fullest moon she had seen in over two thousand years.

Bilbor, the town she had chosen to begin her life anew, wasn't a busy metropolis busting with people both day and night. It was a small village with barely any people at all. A few people peppered the cobbled streets, but not as a destination. They were usually going from one home to another or patronizing the one and only local pub. There was never an instance when one would have to look up into the Transylvanian night sky where the wind is crashing like waves in an ocean to fall on them with its frigid reminder that they were in "cold country". But, in case they DID happen to look up, Sokara had her Shroud surround her with its mist to cloak her in darkness to blend in with the night. An unsuspecting person wouldn't know she was in their vicinity until it was too late to do anything about it.

She was never good at this hunting business. Her prey was always brought to her. They were willing to be hers because she would enchant them first to calm them down for the slaughter. The element of surprise or hunting and tracking was never her forte'.

Since the village didn't have many people, she had made a decision while flying high in the air above the unsuspecting villagers. She would begin her Sistrum anew with the very people she flew over. Maybe she couldn't be a Queen on her home planet, but she could become one here. Instead of eating the people for nourishment, she could turn them and then, if all went well, they could all do the hunting and foraging for her. *I truly am brilliant*, she thought as she zigged and then zagged in the night sky. In order for her to accomplish the task of culminating a new army, she would first need to culminate more Khepra.

The Khepra were the important piece of the complicated puzzle to immortality and to the servitude to her station that she desired. Her very own Khepra could produce a few other Khepra at her whim. However, it would take time to produce a few thousand Khepra. The new Khepra would have to evolve into adult Khepra before they, in turn, would be able to generate their own Khepra. And so on and so forth until she had a few thousand of them. It had occurred to her that she could have done this long ago when she was imprisoned in that monolith her King placed her in and then she would have had over a million Khepra by now. *Maybe I'm not that brilliant*, she thought to herself as she headed toward the village to begin building her Sistrum.

She had her eye on the one young man far below at the edge of the village seemed to be walking all alone from the neighboring town. The path he was walking on would lead him directly into a forest. This was perfect timing to give her army a rebirth. She turned to the art of Sheut – the art of becoming one with the shadows – to get closer to the young man.

He had his hands in his leather jacket pockets. The weather in Bilbor was incredibly cold. The snow on the ground should have insulated the heat from the sun except there was hardly any sun in

this mountain village. He was tall and very good looking. He had a knit cap on his head with dark curls peeking out from around the edges. His breath was coming out of his nostrils in little puffs of steam periodically like that of the Gijarian dragons. She wound her shadow to the trees far ahead of where she had anticipated his current trek would take him along the dirt path. She released her Sheut to become woman, once more. She camouflaged her wings so she wouldn't scare the guy. And that's where she laid, on the cold ground, waiting for him to arrive.

Stefan walked the trail between Bilbor and Rachitis to see his young love. He was a resident of Bilbor while his girl lived in Rachitis, the next village over. He was now heading back home after an evening of amore. The smile on his face was not as big as the smile he currently had in his heart. He wasn't even paying attention to the dark path through the forest because his mind was elsewhere. He was reliving his lover's kisses and her embrace. He was fawning over her smell and her touch. He almost tripped over the lady lying in the middle of the path.

He cautiously stepped up to the woman dressed in all black. He barely saw her in the dark. As his vision became clearer he noticed the woman was fairly tall with a beautiful head of dark black hair. Her dress was wrong for the current weather. It was thin black material that draped over the shoulders. It was below freezing out here and this lady was dressed like she was vacationing in the Caribbean. He turned her over a bit and inspected her closely. He didn't recognize her face. And Stefan knew everyone in the surrounding villages. This woman was definitely an outsider. He brought his face in closer to place an ear over her mouth to check her breathing.

She opened her eyes instantly to lock onto his. She entranced him to remain still. "This will only hurt for a second," she whispered into his naked ear. She raised her arm where a Khepra was eager to be released from her wrist. The lump below her skin moved to and fro in search of an exit. It couldn't find one, so it made one by ripping the layers of skin on her wrist. She placed her now bloody wrist next to his ear where the Khepra then entered. Stefan held the palms of his hands to his ears like he was listening to something that had become unbearably loud. The Khepra dug into the membrane above his skull to burrow its way into the part of the brain that would delegate his obedience to Sokara.

She waited. Stefan began grunting and screaming. She knew this process hurt. It hurt a lot. She wasn't going to deny him his right to thrash about and cry like a wanton child. She had done the very same thing with the exception that she had been bound to a stone slab when the process was handed to her. She was never offered the opportunity to be able to try to grasp the creature from her body. Eventually, Stefan had given in. He laid on the thin cover of snow that had fallen to the ground that night. Black goo had been dripping from his ears and the corners of his eyes. Some of that goo was now dripping onto the pure white snow to land in a hiss and a sizzle as it became one with the cold powder.

Her lips didn't move as she repositioned herself over his prone body where hers had just been previously. "Be patient my young one. The Khepra will become one with thee. Forget your present and your past. Your future now belongs to me."

It seemed to Stefan like he had been lying in the snow for hours. In reality, he had only lost approximately fifteen minutes on the ground. Snow had been tossing in the wind that had been blowing through the trees to land on him. Snow had dropped on his eyelids, which woke him out of his dream. *Had I fallen? Did I become unconscious?* He had a severe headache. He placed his hand on his head where the pain was throbbing. He didn't remember being hit on the head. He opened his eyes as he slowly sat up. His eyes had gone from his previous hazel color to pure black. There were no whites to his eyes at all. He removed his knit cap to be able to feel for a lump in his head. There wasn't one. He removed his hand to inspect it for blood. There was no blood, either. He did notice, however, that he could see his hand perfectly in the dark. He could see the veins that were providing blood to all corners of his long fingers. He was amazed that he could see all of his veins. He raised the arm on his jacket to look at his arm. He could see the veins there, as well, as the blood rushed through his veins like water in a pipe. He couldn't understand how this was even possible.

Just then he heard footsteps a few feet away. They were the footsteps of a deer. He could see it clearly even though it was in the middle of the night. He could hear the deer's heart from where he sat. His thirst kicked in. He didn't even give the pain a second thought. He lifted instantly from the ground and was on top of the deer in the matter of seconds from where he was sitting. It was as if he flew to the deer. The poor creature had no chance of escape. Stefan tore into the chest cavity of the deer. The snow under the deer was turning into a bright red lake. The hot blood mixing with the white snow had made the ground turn liquid. Stefan had blood all over his face, arms and hands as he searched for the deer's heart. When he found it...he devoured it. It was the best thing he had tasted in all his life. The Khepra was satisfied. The pain in his head had dissipated. He let out a conciliated sigh. He had no idea that this sacrificial meal would be the first of many thousands for the remainder of his life.

Sokara was pleased. She flew back to her alcove to feed on a guest at the inn before she would crawl back into her pit. There, in the dark of the alcove, she would plan her revenge on The Stones. She would create an army to rival their army. The best part is that the Stones won't even see her coming. She laughed aloud as she lowered herself into her pit to sleep and to dream of events to come.

