

Fifty-First Day of Autumn, 1498

I am Forever, I am the Land. My beginnings are lost in the darkness of the past. I was the princess turned warrior, I was the daughter who gave everything. I was more than any father could have hoped for.

I did what no man could, I did what no woman even dared to even think. I thundered across the land for my family's honor with the wrath of a just goddess, but the war years and the killing years have worn down my soul as the wind wears stone into sand.

Seventh Day of Autumn, 767

Most people walk through life and do not realize that they are already dead. They slouch along with blank faces and empty eyes, trudging forward towards their deaths and each step they take leads them only closer to their graves. They simply do as they are told and when I look at them I see only corpses. It is only perhaps one in a hundred who have the spark of life within them, who have the will to shape the world to their will.

And if these other people, slouching housewives or lazy men, move only towards death, making no mark on the world other than the marker above their grave, what does it matter when and where they meet their end? Is it not the right of those with the true spark of life, the true will to rise above their station, to make use of these other lives, of their deaths? They will die either way, but a woman with a true will, can give those deaths meaning, and can create a better world for those who are yet to come. Is this not virtuous? If they exist at all, is this not the will of the gods?

First Day of Spring, 768

For years this world has shown me nothing but ugliness—hate, suffering and death. The persistent dark cloud of war hanging over my lands.

Ever since my father failed to bear any sons, I took it upon myself to honor the Von Zarovich name, and don armor instead of a dress. I have lived for years shrouded by the horrors of war, while my younger sister is being courted by princes, I have taken it upon myself to lead my fathers army.

I only know death and despair, never feeling the warmth of a man, but only the cold touch of death. Up until today.

Cedric is his name; a simple half-orc, born of a orcish father and a human mother. Born without lands or titles or names worthy of mention. But all of that falls away in light of his kindness. It is not only that he is beautiful in face and body—although it cannot be denied that he is surpassingly handsome. No, Cedric is not only lovely to look at, but he shines with a fiery spirit that I have never witnessed before. As a half-orc, he is both a savage and civil, he is dangerous, but controlled and cautious. The princes that I have met have always tried to flatter me with their hollow words, but he is different. His orcish nature makes it so he understands struggle, he respects strength, and he has seen the horrors of war. All of that combined with his pure joy—he is everything that one could want of a man, everything that one could want of a husband. I feel that I have been searching all of my life, without realizing that I searched, for Cedric alone, that he alone can fill a void within me that I never recognized but always felt. And I knew as soon as I met him that I would give anything, even if it be this kingdom, to be with him.

Forty-Fifth Day of Summer, 768

I ride again for war, to lead my father's armies. and pray that this will be the last one that will bind these lands together under my father's name and under my protection. But I ride now with a new purpose as well.

Cedric. I see his face when I close my eyes, and I know that I ride to war to finally be with him, to keep our future safe, to start a new life with him. His favor rests always beside my heart.

Never have I put much stock in prayers. People make this world for themselves, and receive only what they fight to earn and fight to keep.

But when I remember now that Cedric is praying to Hoar for me, I feel that I am invincible. I know that a love as strong as ours will not easily be snuffed out, and that I will return to him when this war is over.

Seventy-Third Day of Winter, 768

Of all those in the valley of Barovia, one shines bright above the others.

Only one man is truly worthy to sit by my side. I would call him my king, my god, my lover. And yet, he calls me friend. When I look into his eyes, they reflect another name: death. He sees in me the end of life, the death of the aged. He relishes in his youth, like Ivanka, like all people lucky enough to spend their youth as carefree as she has. I have grown old of body and spirit, and Cedric can see it.

Eighty-First Day of Winter, 768

Men have always loved Ivanka better than me. Father, the court princes, even the servants. Men love Ivanka because she is careless, and that is because, like a puppy, she has never witnessed the horrifying, tantalizing darkness of war. She has never sent men to their deaths, has never faced her own death as it rode her down on the back of a dark destrier, has never seen the light go out of a warrior's eyes as their corpse slides from the blade of their sword. Soldiers go to war and they become stronger, or they die. And Cedric does not know that when the darkness falls and all is lost, when the wolves are at the door, he needs a woman by his side like himself, one who has seen the bleakness of war, not a damsel like my sister. But one who can fight with him. But instead, he chooses Ivanka. And she will die, and then he will die, and I will survive to mourn both of them alone.

Seventy-Third Day of Spring, 769

I have done what needed to be done. He will be safe. He will be mine. I sorrow to cause him pain, but I have known in my heart what must be done, and I have done it, no matter the cost. Just as I always have.

Fourteenth Day of Summer, 769

My Cedric has fallen ill. And it seems that captivity has put a heavy strain on his mind. I regret that it could not have been avoided, but I know that this was the only way.

I called in my best doctors but they said that they could do nothing for him, that his mental state is hopeless. I brought them below and pressed them further, encouraged them to think creatively, but they can do nothing for him. I must seek another solution. Time, as always, races against me.

Thirty-Sixth Day of Summer, 769

I found the answer. A way to save my Cedric, to keep him with me. I traveled to the edges of my lands and found something lost, something hidden away, preserved in Amber, magicks thought too dark for any man to know. These magicks held the secret, the secret I needed to save him. And, perhaps, in saving him, to save myself. My youth and innocence have been squandered, my chance to be loved given for my people, for my land, for my father. I have given up bearing children and having a loving family for nothing. Only to satisfy my father, a old, bitter man who himself alone is responsible for not bearing any sons. In that moment, I thought I was right. I thought I was a brave independent woman, who did not need a family or a warm embrace. But I was wrong. Now at the end, I see what I have given up, only to satisfy my bitter old father.

I have never feared death, but time, time has been always my greatest enemy. The years slip away from me, and as a moment passes, I look in the mirror and realize that I have become old. After all that I have done for my people, am I not worthy of a measure of time, time to rest, time to be loved?

Never again shall I walk in sunlight, never shall I know true sleep, food will be but dust in my mouth. Holy ground will be forbidden me as well, but the gods have never done me much good for all that I have done for my land and family. Why should I care about these gods, for everything I have done, they have never smiled upon me. And what are these costs, any of them, beside Cedric's life, his love, for eternity?

Already, my soul is forfeit. But, perhaps, with more blood on hands already too red to notice any difference, I will be able to keep him with me, forever.

Forty-Second Day of Summer, 769

I knew my memory would hold forever, but I did not know what horrors it would hold. Forever, I will clearly see the sight of his body, lying broken and lifeless on those rocks far below. I went to him, and as I reached him, the sky split open and I heard a dark voice. "The promise has been kept." This is not how it was supposed to go! In the halls of Ravenloft, below, a woman was giving birth. Twins are lucky, the elves say, and what could be more pure of soul than children just brought into this world without having to experience the cold, bitter and cruel world. Two of them, one for him and one for me. Their lives for ours.

I did not even have the chance to bury his body. The mists swirled down and took him away, and as they did they closed in around me. I could feel them tightening on my throat. But I also felt something new, a power coursing through my veins. Strength. Vitality. Youth. Beauty. "No!" I shouted, and I reached out and I tore at the mists and as his soul tried to float away from me I tied it down, I tied it to this land.

If I am trapped here, then so is he. It may take me one year or a thousand, but I will find him and we shall be together in eternity. We will have all of the time in the world.

Seventh Day of Winter, 1028

I have come to know my new life, as the years have passed by, wearing down the land, reshaping the world, but never touching me. Vampyr is my new name. Still I lust for a loving life, and I curse the living that took them from me. Even the sun is against me. It is the sun and its light that I fear the most, but little else can harm me now. Even a stake through the heart would not kill me, despite what some might tell you. But the sword, that cursed sword that my father brought to this land! I must dispose of that vile weapon. I loathe it as I loathe the sunlight.

I have searched many years for Cedric. I have found and lost him countless times. Yet, time and time again, he eludes my grasp. The memory of his beautiful face, those tusks, and his snow white locks haunt me, taunting me, tantalizing me. What would it take to finally be with him forever?

Long ago, my father rebuilt the walls of Castle Ravenloft. Now, I have made a new home for myself, far beneath its walls. I live among the dead and sleep beneath the very stones of this hollow castle. I shall seal shut the walls of the stairs that none may disturb me. If ever I fall, I must return to that dreadful box, that constant reminder that life is not to be mine. Each time I fall, I am reborn, and each time my mind grows darker. I must find Cedric. I must have him, or all has been for nothing.