

# To be Loved

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Of all the places in the empire Markus Flavius could have been posted to, why in the name of Minerva did it have to be here? Just who had he upset this time?

It didn't take him long to reach the conclusion that Britain was a complete shit hole. The empire should have left this barbarian infested island to its own devices; he couldn't understand why anyone would want to live here.

His legion was encamped near a small village and while most of the men were either getting their heads down or feasting on roast boar, he had been given the job of scouting the territory by his new commander.

Markus shivered inside his inadequate clothing, watching the ice cold rain drip off his helmet onto his nose. He was here because; somehow his commander had found out that his uncle was an influential governor in the senate.

He thought back to what the man had said to him last night while setting up camp. The commander informed everyone that he didn't like rich kids in his unit, his eyes fixed on Markus. Kids who were yet to be blooded, kids who thought the army was just something you had to do before joining the ranks of those greedy, fat self serving senators back home. His eyes only left him to inform the others that he was going to make the new boy's life so bad that with providence he would do everyone all a favour and throw himself into the sea.

Now that the commander had shunned him, it didn't take long for the rest of his unit to suddenly start to share similar feelings. He remembered walking back into the tent last night after having to dig the latrine pits and overhearing the sergeant saying...

"His mother should have realized just what she had brought into this world when he was vomited out and then slaughtered him to save the world the misery he was going to bring to everyone's life."

His unit all now hated him. No surprises there then, nobody had ever like Markus Flavius, even his own family. Especially his own family His Mother had once threatened to throw him off an aqueduct. His two sisters had tried to sell him to a passing slave trader, made worse by the fact that Father was willing to agree but pulled out at the last moment due to a dispute in the price. Was it too much to ask for at least one person not to wish him dead? He'd even settle for somebody just not to dislike him.

He sighed; sometimes it was hard being him. Markus wrenched the helmet off, placed it on the wet grass and tilted his head back, letting this downpour wash out the grime and sweat covering his tired face. He wondered if any of the local tribes had a potion to stop the whole of the human race treating him like a pariah. Then remembered

he was supposed to be at war with them and doubted he'd even be able to get close to ask them without any number of the barbarians turning him into chopped up flesh..

After replacing his helmet and scanning the landscape for any sign of life, he declared this desolate spot to be as empty of life as the last desolate spot and moved further away from the Roman encampment.

"Hello."

Markus spun around, his broad sword slipping out of the hands and hitting the wet grass. He crouched down, and seized the handle, ready to face his enemy with iron in his hands.

There was nobody there, he was still alone.

"Oh you won't need your sword Roman; I'm no threat to you."

"Show yourself coward!" He shouted.

"I'd rather not." The voice replied.

This was a dream, it had to be. He turned in a circle, there was nobody there and nowhere for anyone to hide. Perhaps he should play along. "Fine by me." Said Markus. He turned back round and walked away.

"Wait! Look, I want to show myself to you, honest, it's just that..."

"Just what?"

"Well, I don't want to scare you."

Markus laughed, "I don't scare easily. After the type of life I've had, you tend to become resigned to whatever is thrown at you."

The voice grew sly, "That's what I want to talk to you about, but I see that you need a central focus first. Fine, just don't say I didn't warn you."

The air in front of Marcus began to shimmer like a mirage in the desert then a noxious stench blasted his nostrils with the force of a runaway chariot.

He watched as the huge form of the bright red demon materialised in front of him. Markus stood his ground, put his sword away and sighed, that would be no use to him. The demon looked down and smiled showing off an impressive set of teeth shaped like ragged rocks.

"Well, now isn't that a surprise. You haven't turned tail and scampered away. Everybody else has."

Markus stayed silent, it seemed to be the best resolution.

"So then Marcus. You think that you have had a hard life do you?"

A curtain of fire sprang up from the ground encircling both the demon and Markus; he wouldn't last very long in this fierce heat

"I hope it's not too hot for you Markus, if it is then sorry about that, you'll just have to put up with it. You see I like to have the place looking more like home when I'm about to grant a wish."

"What do you want foul spawn of Hades?"

The demon laughed, oh I'm not from there, Hades is so yesterday. There's a new God in town. Haven't you heard? Anyway, where I'm from isn't important. Now do you want a wish or not?"

Markus shrugged. "What do you want in return?"

The demon shook its huge head, "Let's not get into that just yet. Your time is short, I can feel your heart racing and your blood boiling from here so just tell me what you wish for and it shall be granted. It's as simple as that."

Markus gave it couple of seconds thought; he needed less as it was obvious what he wanted. "I want people to stop hating me."

The demon beamed, "Oh, you have made my day. That is an excellent wish."

The fire vanished and so did the demon. He would have tried to put his experience down as some strange dream if it wasn't was the fact that he now found himself in the middle of the camp with his enraged commander marching towards him with his sword in his hand.

"How dare you disobey my order you diseased worm." He shouted.

Markus didn't bother to answer back as he knew it would be useless. The Commander wouldn't believe him. The other soldiers emerged from their tents, curious to see why he was shouting. The sergeant emerged behind the men, he yawned but didn't seem all that surprised to find Marcus back in the camp. He scratched his face then watched the commander striding towards Marcus with interest, it was the first time that he had seen the man grin.

"Do you not have an answer for me?"

Marcus shook his head. This angered him even more and ran over intent on slaying this thorn in his side, not understanding why he hadn't thought of this tactic before. His men fought as one cohesive unit until this outsider turned up and put everyone on edge.

He swung his sword, aiming for just below the neck. Markus didn't even move. What was the point? It was obvious that his wish hadn't worked; he might as well get his life over with.

True to his aim, the razor edge of the commander's sword connected with his neck but instead of slicing through the flesh and bone, the sword and the commander burst into with hot flame, Markus watched in disbelief and a small amount of satisfaction as the screaming man melted like burning wax.

The other soldiers dropped everything in their hands and ran from the camp leaving one man, the sergeant gripping the tent fabric and muttering incoherently then he saw a large red demon striding towards him, knocking the fleeing soldiers over like dried sticks.

Markus watched the ground fall away until he was level with the demon.

"What have you done?" He cried, looking in horror at his crimson arm and hand.

The other demon grinned rather sheepishly. "Sorry but you did say you wanted people to stop hating you, well now they fear you instead."

"But, but you've changed me into a demon."

The demon transformed into a 40 foot beautiful naked woman, "Well I was lonely." She pouted. "It's a new religion and us demons aren't yet populous, besides, its what you wanted."

She bent down, picked up the screaming sergeant by his foot and held it in front of Markus.

"A present my darling."

Markus grinned. Took the offering and placed it in half in his mouth and bit down then took hold of the female demon's offered hand.

It was so good to have a soul mate.

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