

Sneak Peek

Under the Cover of Darkness

Book Two

ZABASHI

By

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CHAPER ONE-

****Mt. Imarcu, Virticus Lair, Years Ago****

“I need that PROPHECEY!” roared Virticus, throwing small glasses of orbs across his lair— shattering them across the stone wall.

“My Lord, if I may...we’ve been searching for the *Books of Za’* for...well, years. There very well may not be any such books...maybe they’re just a-a...myth” stuttered the short, round man, with pale skin, and a large red bump on the side of his bald head.

“Norman,” hist Virticus through gritted teeth, “*The Books of Za’* are real. I know your little mind may not possess the aptitude of knowledge like myself, but that is no excuse to be this ignorant!” Virticus looked upon the small man with distaste. “Long ago, I was shared a piece of the scripture that was

written in the *GruDir Prophecy*. It told of a time when a powerful being would be born...who would (one day) be my downfall. Now, I need to find the *Books of Za'* so I can have the entire prophecy, do you understand?" Vorticus glared down on the trembling man.

"Y-yes, of course...my Lord."

"Now, you go find me someone who can be of use to me, someone with the foresight to find my books!"

"Someone like me," said a voice from his doorway. His eyes snapped to the voice as a flame of fire appeared in his hand at the ready. Standing against his door, was a young woman with long brown wavy hair with streaks of blond. He didn't know what was more mesmerizing, the tight v-cut blue dress that left nothing to the imagination, or her deep stunning grey eyes. The mystery

woman strolled through his lair as if she owned the place.

“How did you get in here?” Virticus asked, glaring at the beautiful woman before him.

“It wasn’t hard really,” she shrugged. “You should have better men watching the place.” Usually Virticus would have killed anyone who came into his palace the way she did, but there was something about her...something intriguing. “My name is Larissa and I have something to share with you.” She ran her petite finger along his large dark throne, never taking her eyes off him.

“Norman, you’re dismissed,” said Virticus, eyeing her closely. He wanted to see what she had to offer...alone. Norman fled from his lair at once. Virticus turned his gaze back to Larissa and grinned.

“You have one minute to tell me what you’re doing here, before I kill you.” Keeping

her mystic gaze on him, Larissa slid into his throne and crossed her long-toned legs, un-intimidated.

“The being you seek will be born in the year of the red moon,” said Larissa, staring into Virticus’ icy blue eyes.

“How do you know that?” he asked taking her in, now with much more interest.

“I saw it.” She leaned back into his chair, running her hands along the engraved sculpted sides. “I have the power of foresight.”

“Who—”

Her gaze lowered slightly. “I cannot see who the person is...I’m being blocked somehow. It could be that the child isn’t born yet, or someone immensely powerful is blocking me.” She met his gaze once more. “You may want to kill me, but I see myself being of exceptional use to you—even your legacy.”

“Why do you want to help me?” he asked, watching her carefully—he trusted no one.

“You are the most powerful force Zabashi has had in centuries...I’d like for you to stay in power, and in return I would like to be by your side when *we* make...history.” She plucked a berry from a bowl on his side table.

“We?” he asked, with a grin.

“*We*,” she repeated, eating the berry.

“How do I find the one chosen to stop me?”

“You have a few years to prepare and build a better infrastructure. You have until the end of the red moon, or you’ll lose your chance to kill the child. So, do we have an agreement?” They stared at one another for a moment. He had to admit he hadn’t met anyone recently who piqued his interest, and she seemed like fun. Virticus summoned his top Lieutenant, Lance.

“If you can take Lance, the position is yours,” said Virticus.

Rissa smiled, and rose from his throne. Virticus watched her move effortlessly as she took on Lance. He was a bit surprised. Lance was immensely powerful and double her size; yet the way she had flipped onto his shoulders and knocked him to the ground...apparently size did not matter. Larissa’s moves were impeccable; it took only a few minutes for her to defeat Lance. If she could beat his top Lieutenant in five minutes without a scratch on her, then he wanted Larissa on his side. No, *by his side*.

Lance was laid out on his floor bleeding. Impressed, he stared into Larissa’s grey eyes for a moment. He liked her, and she could be of good use to him. Lance jumped up and charged towards her. She was quick, sending a blast of purple mist immobilizing Lance. Impressive and useful he thought. Virticus

was powerful, but even he did not control that ability...yet. Keeping his cold eyes locked on hers, he sent a fire ball vanquishing Lance instantly.

“You’re hired,” he said, moving closer to Larissa. “Now, tell me Rissa, where will the chosen one be born?”

She tilted her head slightly and with a coy smile, “You’ll find the child near Rabicca.”

House of Ba’kar, twenty-one years ago.

Heavy winds and rain blew hard as a storm picked up throughout Zabashi. Rain drops the size of berries lashed at the kingdom’s windows, and thunder flashed in the night’s sky. The water from the lake on the grounds rose, the gardens overflowed, and the winds picked up howling dangerously around the House of Ba’kar. The four Ba’kar brothers stood in the large

room filled with weapons, books, and potions. A large map of Zabashi hung on one of the walls in the back, the room was lit by candlelight and torches. A large circular table—with the House of Ba’kar coat of arms was engraved along the edge—and held an old faded letter, a small orb, and a few bags of herbs.

Lord Makai leaned back in his chair, “It’s a good thing we have some time, because we need a better plan than that,” he said to his brother Lord Yaqin.

“We have been over this, it’s the only choice. Once the girls are born, we will have to send them somewhere out of Virticus’ reach,” said Lord Yaqin rubbing his temple.

“We’ll have to make our wives understand why it’s not safe for the babies to be in Zabashi after their births,” said Lord Naeem, his eyes flickered with emotion.

“The ladies will never agree,” said Lord Jabril, pacing the room.

“We’ve been planning this since their conception. We all knew when our families arranged our marriages to the Aleems...what we would be giving up. We cannot look at them just as our children, but as Zabashi’s only hope to survive the wrath of Virticus’ evil,” said Lord Yaqin with a heavy heart. “It will be hard but must be done.”

“Where would we send them? Who would go with them?” Lord Jabril asked his brothers.

“We will send the babies to another world if we must,” said Lord Yaqin very grim. “It’s the only way.”

“Another world,” repeated Lord Makai, taken aback.

“Sending them to another world could be risky...we may not be able to follow,”

expressed Lord Naeem immediately, his eyes wide with worry.

“I know,” whispered Lord Yaqin.

After a moment passed, Lord Jabril finally spoke. “We’ll have to assign a guardian or two, to make sure the children will be raised together. Their guardian would have to teach and train them when they reach the right age for battle, then they will return to Zabashi to take their rightful place as deities.”

“Samaya’s been through so much,” uttered Lord Naeem. “This is the first pregnancy that has made it to the last trimester. She will be devastated if she cannot be with her child. Maybe she could go with—”

“No, she cannot, none of us can. It would bring attention if our wives disappeared, they are the Ladies of Zabashi. We all agreed

when we married the Aleems we would have to make sacrifices for Zabashi. Yaqin's right, this is just another sacrifice, and...our only hope," said Lord Makai, with a break in his voice.

A knock on the door seized their conversation, "Enter!" said Lord Jabril.

One of their wives' midwife Zarina, entered the war room with a guard, her brown eyes were filled with concern.

"My lordships," said Zarina bowing. "Something is happening, please come quick."

She led them to their wives secrete room below. Only a hand full of people knew about the pregnancies for the most part—the Ladies of Ba'kar kept their pregnancies hidden—once they began to show they

stayed inside the castle, and made up stories for why they weren't going outside.

Thunder and lightning flashed outside the windows when Lord Yaqin entered his wife Radinah's room. She was panting, holding onto her stomach, and slouched over. Even in pain, Radinah looked beautiful, her black curly hair was tied to the back, a few loose curls hung in front covering her dark eyes.

Radinah was one of the strongest women he had ever met. Although she was a powerful enchantress and warrior, Radinah had a soft spot with a heart that was pure and kind to all.

Even though Lord Yaqin was forced into their marriage, he had fallen in love with Radinah when they were young children. He knew she did not feel the same at first, but she was always his world, and he loved her unconditionally.

“Radinah, are you alright?” Lord Yaqin asked moving to her side and pushing back the loose curls from her face.

“I-I th-think...the baby is coming,” she panted, holding onto her stomach.

“It’s early, isn’t it?” Lord Yaqin asked Zarina, who still appeared worried.

“Yes, my Lord,” said Zarina while checking his wife’s vitals—Radinah was the last one to conceive.

“Zarina, come now, it’s Ladies Samaya and Jalila!” called another voice from the next room. Zarina rushed out.

The brothers gathered and watched through the glass windows as Radinah, Anaya, Samaya, and Jalila blew in and out in unison. The elements along the grounds grew more intense, the flames in the fireplace shot up, and floor began to shake violently from the earth

trembling outside. Lord Yaqin stared at the four women and knew they had run out of time. He faced his brothers. “Times up, they’re coming.”