

## The Witches Bound: Nergal

Marius, the Witch of Nergal, was deeply annoyed.

He knew that he should be in a much worse position, but annoyance was the best that he could muster. He was currently lying naked on his back inside a tiny stone tomb, which had been filled to the brim with heavy sand, sealed tight, and - if the Templar gloating at him had told him the truth - buried beneath the altar of the temple in which he had been restrained. He'd run out of air some time before - maybe hours, maybe days - and only his own arcana was keeping him alive.

He rather wished that he wasn't. But above him were a row of beds, and on those beds were a dozen women, women that Marius himself had brought to the temple in order to study their unique maladies. The Templars had used them as a trap, tethered them to Marius so that he could not escape their pain. Normally, that was to his benefit. His magic was a hungry thing, reaching out to snare the suffering of everyone around it. He could glut himself on the pain of others, use that to break free of this trap. But the Templars had layered a *second* trick upon him. Within this temple, suffering was transmuted to pleasure, fed by the tethers to Marius's divine soul. Only the initial trickle of pain reached him; the rest suffused him with lust and pleasure, distracting him from his attempts to plot an escape and drowning out his magic.

Ironically, Marius had been engaged in the study of witches when he was captured. To become a witch, one must hollow out a portion of their soul, making room for a divine spirit to nestle within. Marius had constructed a thesis with two premises: first, that such a process was not, as the other witches believed, a one-time event, but rather an ongoing situation in which one's soul was gradually eroded and corrupted to reflect the spirit contained within, and conversely that by applying counter-pressures to the witch's soul, one could weaken that divine link and reclaim a witch's soul, possibly to the degree that the divine spirit fled entirely, leaving the witch a simple magician once again.

His present situation suggested that he was not the only one to be interested in testing such a thesis, and that he had been entirely correct. If *he* weren't the victim of the experiment, he would be quite pleased at the revelation.

Instead, Marius faced a dilemma. If he allowed himself to be swept away by pleasure, Nergal would be expelled from within him, utterly ruining his revenge over the disease-god and incidentally leading to his death shortly afterwards when the magic sustaining his life fled with it. But if he fought *against* the pleasure, his arcana would only empower it, making it that much harder to escape. The Templars had built a cunning little trap.

Marius groaned as the surge of hatred that the thought of Nergal's escape brought him was transmuted into a wave of arousal, echoing out from him to the women to whom he was tethered. He could feel them respond from their beds, backs arching in pleasure as frissons of delight ran up their spines from the redirected anger. He couldn't even hold a painful *emotion* in this place. The best that he could manage was *annoyed*. Which, in turn, created a new wave of anger, which was turned to lust, and so on.

His breath quickened, fruitlessly breathing the same stale air as he tried to fight back the surge of pleasure echoing through him. He couldn't have this distraction. He needed to think. To develop a new theory for how to escape from this situation.

That time was not given to him. Instead, one of the women lying in bed above him whimpered, toes curling with pleasure as the feedback engulfed her. Before she had been brought here, she had been writhing in pain, but now her only thoughts were of bliss. Her hands grabbed the sheet draped over her naked body, panting with lust as her damaged nerves sent wave after wave of pleasure rocketing through her. Combined with Marius's own emotions, she was pushed over the edge. Her whimpers became cries, and her body stiffened as she was rocked by yet another orgasm.

Marius couldn't see the Templar nurse who came to the woman, giving her water and holding her hand as the climax rippled through her. He could sense her, though. The tether echoed out to every person in the temple, and he could feel the nurse's tiny aches and pains transformed into shivers of pleasure as her tired feet padded across the stone, the soreness in her back twisted into a pleasant massage. He could feel it as clearly as if it were his own feet being caressed, his own lip reverberating with a pleasant kiss. The four sick women were the fulcrum, but every person in this place was distracting him with their positive response.

It was sickening. These people didn't *deserve* to be happy.

But then, a small thought surfaced, wasn't that what he had wanted? To shackle the power of a god of disease, and turn it to healing? Perhaps the Templars had done him a favor, locking him in here with his hated god. His suffering was bliss. Nergal must be even worse off.

But no. Marius tried to focus past the orgasms crashing through him. A second woman had succumbed, now, and both of them were wracking his body. He needed to... he needed...

Need was not pain.

He *needed*. Needed more pleasure, needed the release, needed a moment to gather his thoughts.

As the first woman calmed, the third was overwhelmed by an agonizing spasm in her chest, which rapidly became a surge of coital bliss the likes of which she had never experienced. It poured through Marius, and his mind went blank.

He needed.

He needed.

He needed...