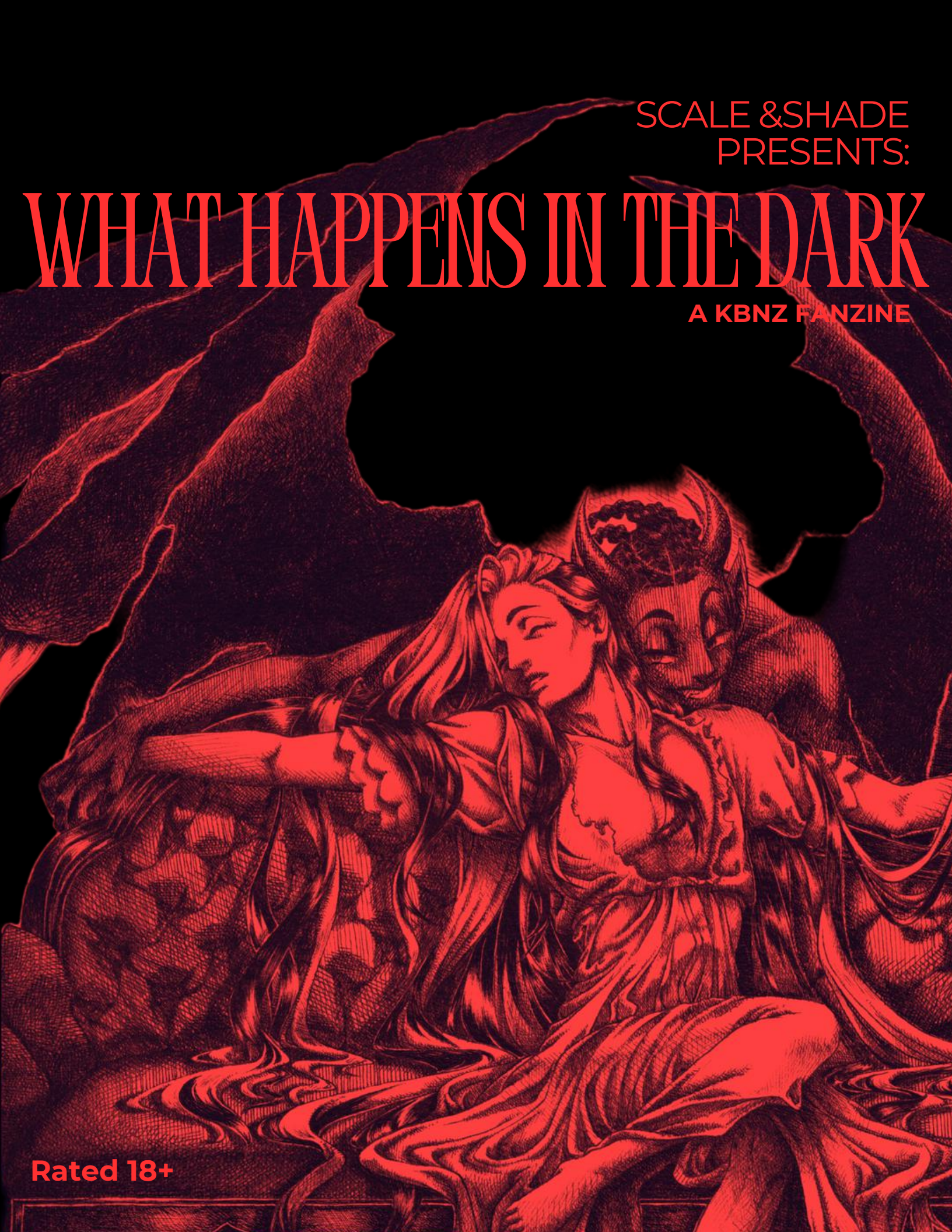


SCALE & SHADE  
PRESENTS:

# WHAT HAPPENS IN THE DARK

A KBNZ FANZINE

Rated 18+



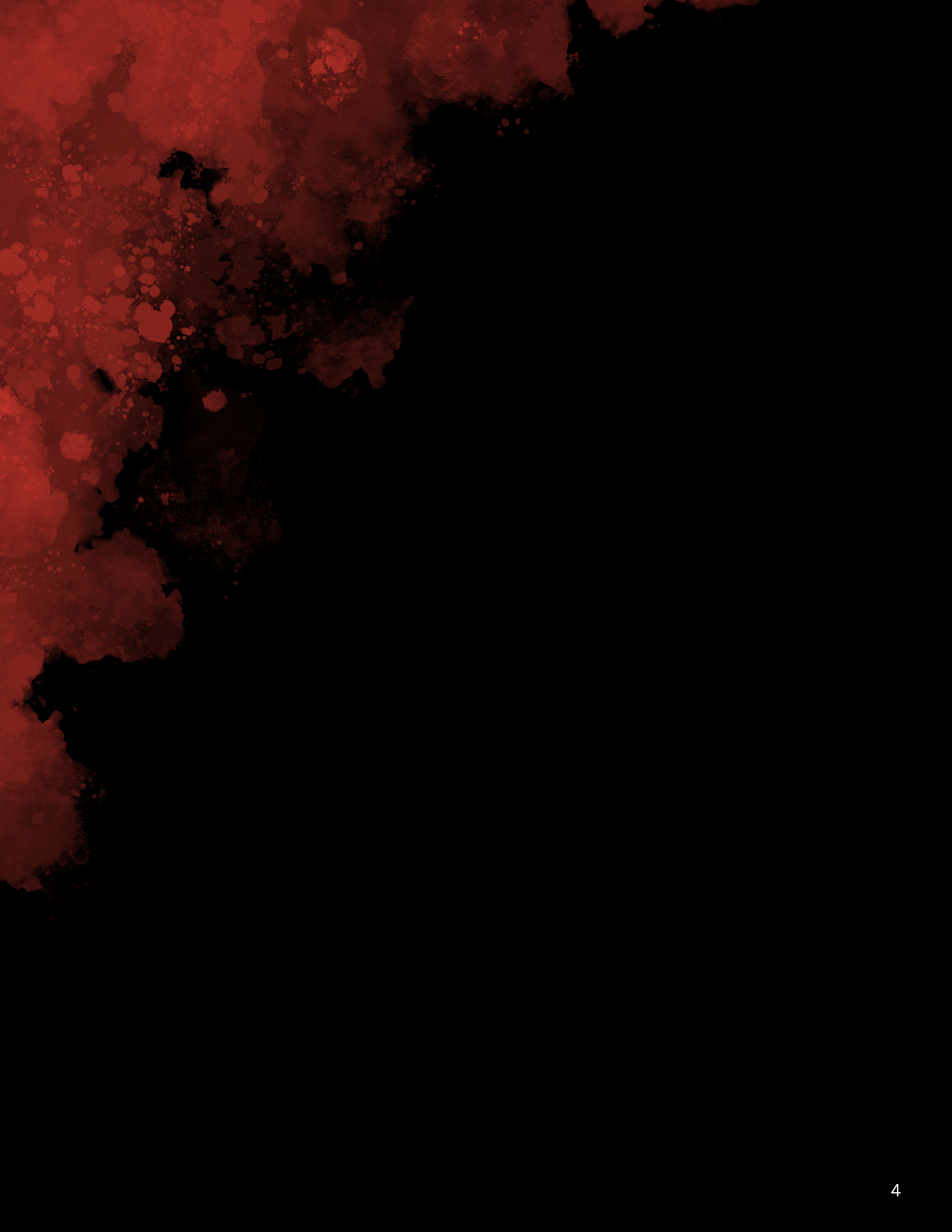




The background of the page is a dark, textured surface with a large, vibrant red splatter or ink blot on the right side, extending towards the center. The splatter has a mottled, organic appearance with various shades of red and orange. The rest of the background is a solid dark color, possibly black or very dark brown.

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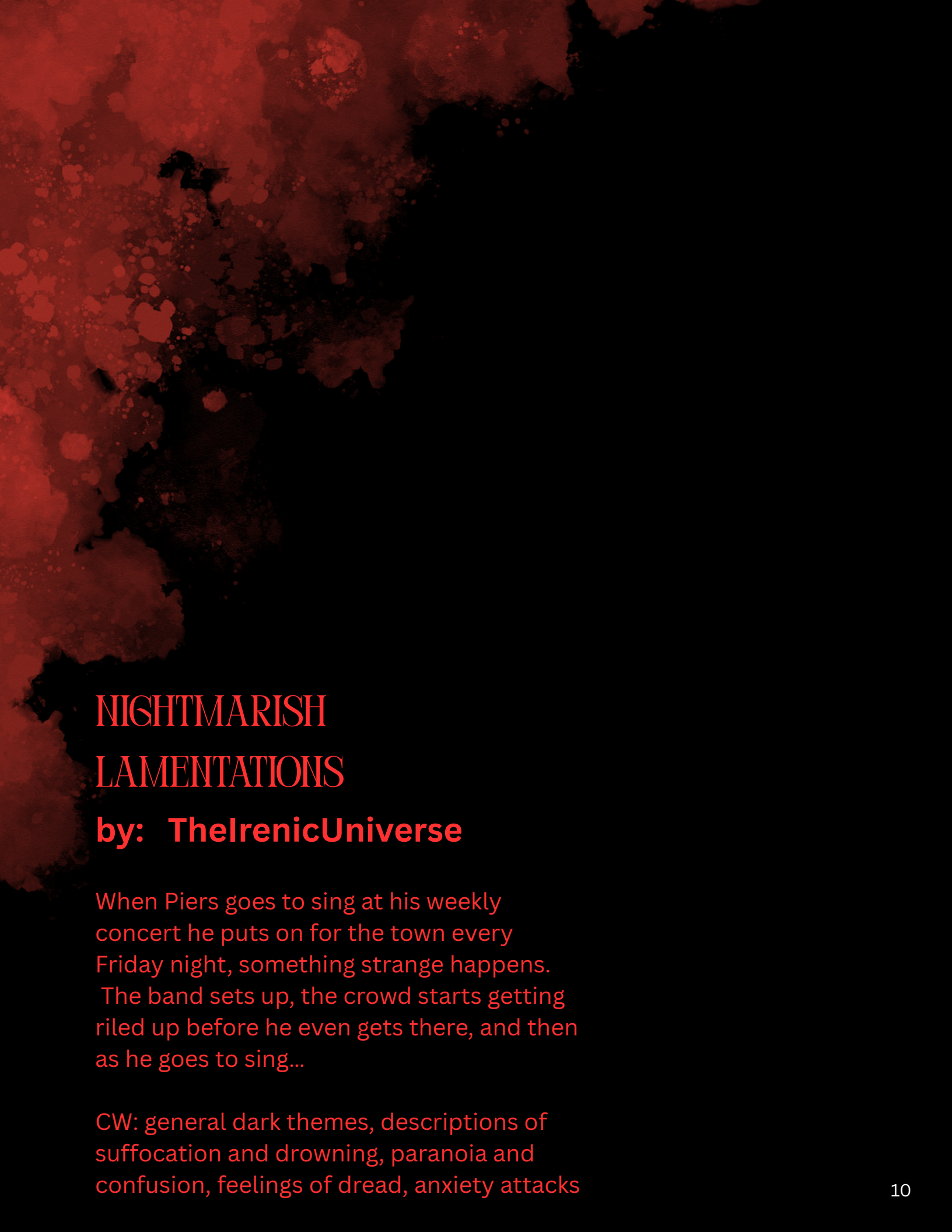


Everyone Knows of The BoogeyMan And His Monster...  
And Those Who Do Not Shall Heed This Warning.  
Beware The Streets And Alleyways, On Cold Autumn Nights  
Where The Silence Is Painful, And Lights Flicker Bright  
You May Just Come Across A Most Frightful Pair  
Whose Chilling Shriek and Most Terrifying Glare  
May Leave You Paralyzed In Such An Awe-Struck Pose  
Noone Will Ever Know How To Get You Unfroze.









# NIGHTMARISH LAMENTATIONS

**by: ThelrenicUniverse**

When Piers goes to sing at his weekly concert he puts on for the town every Friday night, something strange happens. The band sets up, the crowd starts getting riled up before he even gets there, and then as he goes to sing...

CW: general dark themes, descriptions of suffocation and drowning, paranoia and confusion, feelings of dread, anxiety attacks



Piers pulled out his mic stand while the crowd yelled out his name as loud as they could. He made them wait until midnight before showing up, and they went mad when they finally saw him. They were savages out there and threw their voices as hard as they could, shaking the buildings with their yells! Some just stood there and screamed, just to scream, no rhyme or reason.

His concert goers had a certain decorum about them. They knew he liked the noise. They brought the noise. Even some Pokèmon hung out and added their voices to the din. More ghosts and little misfits than anything else.

Zigzagons especially liked to dance right up front. Ghost types often floated near the back and above with a sprinkle of Nickits in the crowd.

Piers opened his mouth near the mic and the audience fell so silent, he could hear someone sniffing in the audience.

“Good job. You’re well trained.”

They threw a fit over that, and he just laughed in the mic.

“Yeah, yeah. So, I’m doin’ a short set tonight. Three songs. Don’t ask for anythin’ else.” They knew the drill.

Chatter started up in the crowd as he gave the guys behind him some directions. Basic stuff. Nothing too crazy, though he often riled them up anyway.

He went to silence the crowd again with a loud, deep note, but it caught in his throat. They obediently fell silent again in anticipation. He cleared his throat and adjusted the mic, stroking the stand with his hands for a second.

Again, he tried to start up the first song and just couldn’t get the song out. He turned and coughed away from the mic to clear up anything preventing him from singing.

On the last attempt, he knew it wouldn’t happen. His singing voice came out as a breathy exhale.

It baffled him that he could speak but not sing. He moved from foot to foot and debated what to even do here.

Raihan of all people noticed him floundering up there and got someone to take over and say whatever to excuse him. The crowd turned, but he barely heard it over his thoughts racing to find an explanation for what was going on.

Rai dragged him away from the stage and shook him. "Hey, what's wrong? Nerves?"

"I don't get nervous—not like tha'. I can't sing—"

"What? What do ya mean, mate? You're talking to me right now."

"Yeah," Piers mumbled. He looked around and could see and take in their surroundings just fine. Perfectly grounded, no panicking. So what happened?

"Get me outta 'ere, Rai."

Raihan worked his magic to sneak Piers back home without anyone noticing. Rai was pretty slick; he could leave a stadium full of people after a match with Leon without anyone noticing he got out. Piers never figured out how he managed to do that since his personality was so loud, but it came in handy now and then. Raihan's been to enough concerts to know how things went. Piers usually got swamped right after, which was once Obstagoon's mess to clean up. Since they started dating, it became boyfriend duty.

Once in the comfort of his house, Piers threw himself on the couch and scared the soul out of a ziggy hiding under it that immediately shot out of it at the speed of light. His sister must have sensed how fast the concert ended because she appeared before Raihan got back from clearing out the front of the house.

"Yer back already, bro? Wha', ya sing real fast or somethin'?"

"Funny, Marn'."

"M' serious. Why're ya 'ere?"

"Can't sing."

She pushed his legs off the couch and sat down. "I get nervous about stuff too. Even if I do it all the time."

"This ain't that." He sat up and pulled his feet underneath him. And debated kicking her off the couch. "Gimme some time. Don't wanna talk 'bout it yet."

"You don't know wha' it is, do you?"

No. He didn't. Now he felt a bit of panic. The confusion of before felt more permanent. The reality set in. What if he couldn't solve this? What if that was it? He sang his last song without even realizing it.

"Can ya sing right now?" She tried to coax it out of him. Before he attempted, she found his guitar and shoved it in his hands like a command.



His fingers knew what to do, so he started up the beginning of what was going to be his first song for the night. He tried to sing the opening, but a cold feeling in his throat held him hostage. Fighting the feeling hurt his chest. Even with just his sister around, it didn't matter. Not stage fright, not stress. He was never stressed around Marnie. Never stressed on the stage even with those hungry eyes watching him, wanting to devour him. So what? What was this?

Marnie shook her head. "Don't force it. It's fine. Jus' chill out; it'll come back."  
Yeah, hopefully.

She left him alone for a bit like he asked. So, he played and stared at the wall until Rai got back. Raihan slumped onto the armchair across from him and raised his hands up. Piers took that as an invitation and jumped into those arms before he even spoke, ditching the guitar on the couch.

"First you quit the Gym Leader thing, now the singing? I think yer just getting lazy."  
Piers fake-hit him.

Raihan chuckled. "So, wanna talk about it or...?"

"Dunno what it is. I can't sing. Ruled out the obvious stuff: nerves, sick, stress." Piers shook his head. "M'done, Rai. It's over."

"Don't say that." Raihan unlatched his choker's clasp and slipped it off. "Sleep it off. You know how gutted I am after losing to Leon? Sometimes I don't even train for a while."

Piers didn't reply until Raihan started stroking his neck. He hummed a bit—it hurt to even do that.

"It hurts."

Raihan stopped touching him.

"Not you." Piers rolled his eyes. "When I try and force it. It hurts my chest 'n' throat."

"Maybe you hurt your vocal cords." Raihan guessed.

It didn't add up. He could yell but not sing? Unlikely an injury. It was... it was ominous.

"Wanna come to Hammerlocke tonight? Stay over a day or two?"

"Won't make a difference."

"Yeah. But do you want to?" Raihan shrugged.

Piers sighed and debated it. Maybe... Where would he put Marnie for the night?

"Nah, it's a little late for that."

"I'll just stay here then." Raihan squeezed him a little.

"There's not enough room for you. Yer too big!"

But of course he stayed anyway, and really Piers wasn't trying to get him to leave. Jabbing at him now and then made him feel a little better about... whatever was happening.

--

That night, he had a dream. Nightmares usually left him upon waking, but after he opened his eyes, Piers gasped for breath from the feeling of drowning. He grabbed his throat and tried to calm down. His hands were shaking. *It wasn't real, but the feeling was still there.*

In the morning, Raihan made some pancakes and talked up Marnie. She prepped for training for the day, and when Piers got into the room, the conversation died.

"What?" He glared at them for the dramatic reaction.

"Oh, just admiring that fiery, bed-head you got going on." Raihan remarked.

Piers scoffed and turned to the bathroom to fix it. Honestly his hair wasn't so bad, Rai probably just didn't know what to say. The dark circles under his eyes looked much worse.

Piers pulled out the ponytail and brushed out the tangles. His reflection sure looked washed out. He paused and felt so rotten about his situation that he mindlessly dropped the brush. It made a heck of a lot of noise. *Great. That's sure to summon a dragon.* Just as he touched it to pick it up, and just as Raihan walked in to investigate the sound—the memory of the nightmare hit him like a cold wind in the wintertime.

The drowning dream, the feeling in his throat, it all threw him into a coughing fit that brought him to his knees.

A coldness came over him that gave him this ominous sensation of dread and despair.

Raihan pulled him up to his feet and had to hold onto him to keep him upright.

He trembled, digging his nails into Raihan. He closed his eyes until it passed. Was this a panic attack? What happened on the stage was not this. It was something unexplainable. *Something worse...*



When it ended, they met eyes.

"What was that?" Raihan asked him. "You okay?"

"Felt like I was drownin'. Had a bunch of nightmares last night—it was so real, Rai." He gently rubbed Raihan's arms in apology. "I'm fine though. Nothing's wrong."

Raihan picked up the brush and finished brushing out his hair for him. "If you wanted attention so bad—"

"Shut it—"

"Just saying, there's easier ways to get my attention."

Piers rubbed his eyes. "Can we hang at your place? I don't wanna be 'ere anymore."

Raihan agreed, and they went back to Marnie who ate all the pancakes they left behind.

"Hey, bro, is it okay if I go with Gloria for a bit? She wants to do some extreme trainin' and camp out overnight."

"Yeah, sure. I'll be with Rai. Be careful. Don't forget to eat—don't get into trouble!" He warned and pointed at her.

"You either." She packed a bag. "Rai, keep an eye on him."

"I won't let him outta my sight!"

--

They went to Raihan's loft above the castle—he lived like such a princess, or a *dragon*. Piers sulked in bed while they brainstormed about his problem.

"So, we ruled out nerves, you can talk just fine, right?"

Piers mumbled some curses to confirm. He was sprawled out on Raihan's bed trying to disappear in his covers instead of doing whatever this was.

"Maybe you have a vocal cord injury? Can you whistle?"

Piers sat up and whistled loudly with two fingers. The sound shot straight through Raihan, so he covered his ears. He awakened Flygon, a Goomy, and Sandaconda. Sandaconda slithered up on the bed, Goomy started to cry, and Flygon grunted in question.

Piers picked up the goopy dragon and shushed him. "He made me do it. Yer okay, no need for cryin'."

"Guess that answers that." Raihan rubbed Flygon's head. "Maybe it's in your head?"

Piers tsked and offered a hand to Sandaconda who just flicked his tongue at his hand and went to hide under Raihan's bed again. "Great. So then what's the cure?"

Raihan returned Flygon to his ball and hopped on the bed. "I know a way to calm you down." He gave him a flirty grin.

He rolled his eyes. "Kay, but I got Goomy guts all over me, lemme scrub it off." He flicked some at the dragon tamer and laughed when he started groaning about it.

Goomy goo required a special towel and burning whatever you were just wearing. He dragged an oversized t-shirt to the little loft's bathroom and rubbed off the goo bit by bit.

Raihan followed him after he took more than two seconds but jumped out of his skin when he entered the bathroom.

Piers frowned at him. "What? You've seen this all before."

"The mirror!"

They looked at the long bathroom mirror. For some reason this only made him look more uneasy. "Okay, yeah it looks normal, but a second ago, you weren't there!"

He did these ridiculous hand gestures, trying to emphasize his point, but it just made Piers chuckle at him.

"I'm serious, something's wrong."

"That's what I've been sayin'!"

Raihan brought him back to the room to make a list of all the symptoms. Maybe they could figure out if this was some kind of disease or something. But it slowly seemed like it was something else. Something a little more sinister. He kept talking about not seeing his reflection for a good minute there, but Piers didn't really believe him since he did see his reflection. Did he look at himself in the mirror when he went in there or was that in his own bathroom? He didn't

totally remember if he looked or not, but he probably would've noticed if he didn't see movement in the mirror, right?

He sulked on the dragon tamer's bed again, while his partner rattled off possibilities, none of which seemed to be the thing that was happening.

"Maybe if you're distracted, you can sing?" Raihan offered, though his tone said he didn't completely believe that that was it. No, they needed help with this. Piers sat up and suggested, "How about you do what you do best? How 'bout you look online and see what's going on?"



Raihan threw out his phone and let it float in front of him. He made the screen bigger and started scrolling through and clicking away. Piers couldn't see what he was actually looking up, but at least he was actually doing something. He got quiet all of a sudden, as if he managed to find something.

"You been online since yesterday?"

"No, I kinda got a problem I've been dealing with since last night."

Raihan chuckled. "I just mean because... there's a lot of stuff about you on here." He fell on the bed and went to show him, except he was scrolling so fast that Piers couldn't actually see anything.

"I'm tagged on some of it too. People are complaining about you, mate."

Piers moved closer and leaned on him while looking. Raihan switched hands to grab his hand and interlock their fingers.

"See? Gordie's on me about you walking around Circhester singing around midnight. But so is Nessa, and she's all the way in Hulbury. But you couldn't even sing last night—wait, there's a video!"

He pushed play before Piers could comment, and the screen looked mostly black. The camera bounced like someone walking, and they stopped once they caught the audio of someone singing.

Raihan and Piers both tensed when they heard the voice—Piers' voice—singing a haunting tune in the video. The singing grew louder and louder, but the video cut off just before they could see who it was. He shivered. Piers knew his voice from listening to recordings. He's heard his own music. That's his voice!

The post was from last night in Turffield. Raihan pushed the phone down and went to look at him. Instead of meeting his eyes, Piers clung onto him.

"Piers, there's one more thing it could be."

Piers made some sound to get him to continue.

"I think there's a ghost involved here."

Piers scoffed. "Really, Rai?"

"Make fun of me all you want. I'm calling Allister."

Raihan brought the phone to his ear. When it sounded that someone had picked up, he said, "Hey, ghost boy."

"Hi, Raihan."

"I have a question. You got some time?"

The boy asked someone something away from the phone before answering, "yes, I have time."

"Piers is with me, we had a bit of a sleepover last night—but I checked social media this morning and it looks like he's been all over town singing. Now get this, he hasn't been able to sing since last night! I'm thinking it's paranormal related. We ruled everything else out. Any ideas?"

"Oh, he's being haunted," the boy replied without skipping a beat. "I heard him in the cemetery. There was a lot of energy there. You can go there... but it sounds really strong. Piers should be okay with his Dark types..."

"You'll pull us out if they pull us into the other side?" Raihan joked with a toothy smirk.

"If they take his soul away, I won't be able to." Allister replied. "Don't let that happen." When Allister hung up, they stayed awkwardly silent. Raihan started chuckling, nervously, but it cut the tension.

"So, are ya coming with me?" Piers looked at him.

"Well, yeah." Raihan pushed him. "Who's gonna record the whole thing if I'm not there?"

--

They visited the cemetery near Stow-on-Side where Allister mentioned the unnatural amount of energy came from last night. Raihan treated this like a ghost hunting expedition until Piers made him turn off the recording.

"Nothing's here. We must've gotten here too early. We shoulda waited until late evening." Piers sighed and scratched his head.

"Wait. Do you hear that?" Raihan put a hand on his shoulder, and they both leaned forward to listen.

A small voice just barely carried to them. It sounded like Piers crooning in an undertone when he practiced in the middle of the night. Raihan pointed at the direction it came from, and they slowly approached the sound.

The sound grew as they approached. It sounded more like Piers singing for someone specifically, but the words were nonsense. It *felt* odd too; Piers felt every exhale taking some energy from him the closer they came to it.



Then they saw it.

The ghost, the shape of Piers holding a mic stand, turned to face them. It took the appearance of a purple, fiery silhouette of Piers, and it floated a few inches as if on an invisible stage. When it met Piers' eyes, the flames grew in size. Piers felt the ground shifting around underneath him and nearly toppled over before Raihan caught him.

A voice called their attention from somewhere unseen, "I've heard your voice but never seen your face; you let them take your voice? What a disgrace!"

"I didn't have a choice—" Piers started but his voice caught.

The apparition started to serenade the mysterious voice, and it directly affected him.

"Take it back. Take your voice back. Don't let them take your soul from you!" A woman appeared holding a mic, looking slightly ghostly herself.

Before Piers had a chance to ask, Raihan blurted out, "Ryme! I thought I recognized that voice! She's—"

"A Ghost specialist," Piers finished. "I'll get it back." He pulled out his mic stand, pretty confident he could do it—just sing.

Nothing came out. He tapped his foot and started with a low hum that hurt like needles in his throat.

The ghost sang over him, hitting higher notes he normally wouldn't with his own singing. Every note it sang took something from him: it needed to be stopped first.

Piers took out Obstagoon to end this. "Obstagoon, use Snarl on that ghost!"

Obstagoon sang out in an enraged voice and hit that ghost with a powerful shot. It just grazed it, but the evil singing stopped.

"Obstagoon, use Throat Chop!"

A Chandelure revealed itself, and the Piers figure disappeared. Obstagoon chomped at the Chandelure, which hit it way more than Snarl did.

Piers took in a deep breath and could already tell something was different. "Finish it with another Throat Chop!"

Chandelure shot Obstagoon away with some kind of fire move and tried to regrow its soul-eating fire again. Piers collapsed but held onto the mic stand for support.

"Flygon, use Crunch!" Raihan's Flygon flew in there and crunched down on the Chandelure.

The ghost looked at the growing number of enemies and hesitated. After a thought, it disappeared instead of fighting back.

The hip-hop singer sauntered over to Piers and pulled him to stand up. "See? You did it, baby. You can't just let ghosts just take what's yours."

"Why was it—"

"I came to Galar looking for some talent. That Chandelure heard you and tried to use your voice to get my attention. Must've heard about my sick rhymes."

Raihan joined them. Flygon too since the ghost was gone. "Well, if you're looking for talent, Piers is the best singer in Galar."

Piers didn't verbally agree but smiled at Raihan.

"Yeah, I know. I've heard your voice since yesterday."

"Good. I owe the people of Spikemuth a concert. Wanna join me on stage for a real performance?"

Raihan put a hand on his shoulder. "You should battle! You can both sing and battle—Ryme runs a Ghost Gym, double battle style. That'd make the performance of a lifetime!"

"Sounds good to me."

--

When he called the crowd, they came. Piers threw together a last-minute concert, spreading a rumor that it was going to be a throw-down with the famous rapper, Ryme, from the Paldea region. People couldn't believe it, but they knew the only way to know for sure would be to show up.

Piers had his Toxtricity by his side, playing along with the band nearby. "Are you all ready to rock?!"

The crowd went nuts, louder than the day before if that was even possible.

"What's that? I can't hear ya!"

They practically screamed in unison at that, longer than he expected them to. He laughed at that and tapped the mic to get them to settle down.

"What's all this noise I'm hearin'?!" Ryme walked up on stage with him. "This crowd's so loud, it could wake the **dead**!"

The audience went absolutely feral.

Ryme took out her Toxtricity and Houndstone. Houndstone bobbed his head to the music already playing, feeling the beat like all her Pokèmon probably did. Someone hooked up Ryme's mic to the speakers so she could walk and rap as she pleased, which she did.

Piers tapped along with the music despite not singing yet. "Ready for a battle? I've only got one rule—no encores!"

"My spirit's burnin'—yearnin' to get this battle churnin'! You best be ready to go, baby!"

She gestured for him to pick a second partner. Right, she does double battles.

He took out Obstagoon. "Get ready for battle full of yellin'! My team knows how to work together, it's not my first time doin' double battles!" Piers glanced at Raihan, recording from the audience. Yeah, he's getting a treat later for being the world's most reliable boyfriend ever.

Piers started the battle by singing the loudest opening to a song he possibly could—they couldn't even hear Ryme until he stopped. But while he held out that note, he swore he saw a purple flame flicker through the people in the audience. And he felt a little stronger from it...





Amélie Chérie 0-10.2025.















# ETERNAL DUSK

**by: Bex**

**Rated: T**

**Tags/Warnings:** Raihan/Piers, Vampires, Twilight Parody, Raihan POV, Scent Kink, Trans Piers, mentions of menstruation

Of the many things Raihan found enticing about Piers, the one that kept drawing him in was how Piers had a certain kind of smell during different weeks of the month.

His scent was woody when they first met. Piers seemed so aromatic then, like a dewy forest waiting to be explored. It struck Raihan just how much Piers' scent would overwhelm his senses on an olfactory basis alone, considering how silently void the man's consciousness was. There had never been a person before that Raihan couldn't hear the neverending trail of thoughts of. Never, until this new kid came in, smelling of cedar and ash, more closed off to his supernatural senses than any other mortal he had met in his one hundred and eighteen years.

But the woody waft was just a start, because a week later, a metallic tang crept in. Raihan could feel his mouth salivate at the scent of it, and it was all he could do to turn his head and avoid breathing deeply while they sat next to one another. It became an hour of torture, drawing out his instincts to bare his fangs and lean in, with only his chivalrous willpower keeping him from doing something so uncouth in their biology class.

Surely, it was Piers' menses, and if he could only bear until the end of the week, he could go hunt in relative peace and let all of this morbid temptation be cleansed. His fangs gnawed at his inner lip for the whole day, and by the time the school bell rang, Raihan knew he'd have to take a few days off to go satiate his hunger or risk doing something his conscience never wanted to do.

That had to be the worst of the tempting scents, because nothing could be more enticing to him than blood, surely...

But no. Raihan was done for.

Piers was now ovulating, and the smell of it overtook Raihan the moment he came to the school grounds. It spread with every step, and grew richer, fuller, and so much more alluring with every meter they came closer. Raihan was feeling rabid with need at the sweet, deep scent that dug deep into his brain and reminded him of a sweet milk chocolate.

And it had been many, many years since Raihan had tasted chocolate.



“Did someone blow off in ‘ere?” Piers commented lazily, slamming his black studded messenger bag down as he collapsed into his chair next to Raihan. “Ye look like yer nose is offended.”

Raihan had to grip the edges of his desk and cover his face as the waft of Piers’ scent fully overtook him. His nose was far from offended, truly. The vampire was transfixed, frozen in his state of his uncouth actions. He didn’t want to be so obvious to Piers, needed to hide his diablerie... but the only thing between his killer fangs and Piers’ pure ivory neck was his own overbearing hand keeping tight the beast within. Control was the only thing he could focus on, because the scent of the other man simply scoffing and shifting was too delectable. The monster within him kept begging, demanding, kill, kill, kill... he could kill Piers quick, but it would only be a good fifteen seconds before the rest of the room would react. Could he kill them all in less than a minute? Maybe, if the professor stayed facing away...

“Oi, ye prick, I’m talking to ye.” Piers jabbed at him with a pencil, and Raihan winced back, stunned. Oh, his grotesque instinct, playing at ruining such an ethereal being. Pale skin, decadent musk, an oddly patched dye job that could have only been on purpose... a small prod of connection between them, a demon and an angel. If only Piers could know how much of a monster he was, he’d never have dared turn a rubber to Raihan’s ice cold skin.

“I swear, me words go in one ears ‘n out tha other...”

If only Raihan could see what was on Piers’ mind. It was a suspicious, excruciating thing, with Piers’ mind being the only locked gate in the absolute crowd of thoughts that always cheek-ached him. The one thing he couldn’t see, the sweet, sweet fruit in the garden of Eden...

Raihan gathered his unneeded breath and turned away from his friendly acquaintance. “I’m sorry, Piers... I... I think I am under the weather, I...”

His tawdry words of excuse would be so threadbare, and Piers would catch on. Oh, how he fought himself, over and over. Piers was so innocent, so *human*... he’d be such a monster to even think of it, killing Piers. Fighting with himself, over and over, about Piers. A thorn in his side, a constant force that made him want to run and hide and claw and *bite*...

“Well go on to tha nurses’, ye daft mitcher.”

Raihan could run for now, out the door, to the loo. But he couldn’t run forever. He couldn’t switch his classes - because of that wanker Principal Rose - and he couldn’t miss every period he had been unwittingly assigned with the porcelain temptress. Melony would be furious with him for even deigning to fail a course.

He missed days of school, sunny days, which were few in this part of Galar. He’d make up the coursework. A hunt was more important. He needed to let the beast inside of him calm, be fed, be tamed, and turn docile in its driving need.

But even with the numerous days away from the man, Raihan could not stop missing Piers. It ached in him to stay away, the hunger, the need... not just for Piers’ blood, or his scent, but his *everything*... his locked treasure of his mind, that was so sweetly kept out of Raihan’s grasp...

Piers’ scent taunted Raihan for days on end. As he returned to classes, Raihan found himself tracking his classmate through the school, always subtly aware of exactly where Piers was. It was bothersome, though exhilarating. Fate kept them aligned together, as Nessa said from one of her visions. Fate. What a fickle thing to tempt, but tempt it, he did.

Raihan eventually gave into the deep temptations that scratched at him, and he began to track Piers further. To his house, to the grocery store, to the diner. Piers tended to keep to himself, not really going too many places within Spoons. There was only once that made Raihan freeze up and turn back - when Piers had driven deep into the northern woods, into a place that had a putrid smell of wet wool that overwhelmed Piers’ honeyed nectar.

Piers, though, always came back at night.

It might have been a little... much... to be watching Piers sleep soundly, but being able to see the way the young man would do his evening rituals and then settle into the mortal lull calmed Raihan’s instincts more than any distractions could. His mind, his body, his senses ached to be near Piers, making him need his classmate’s presence near his own. There was something, strong, horrid, drawing them together, like a Pyroar in love with a Wooloo.



Though, with the way Piers' black and white hair would tangle up at night in his bed, he looked a lot more like a Zigzagoon.

It was protection, Raihan rationalized to himself, when that creep of self-judgement from the action of watching Piers sleep came about. Kabu questioned him on exactly the nature of his long trysts of late night disappearances, but he found his own excuses oddly fair and sensical, allowing for the abominable act of spying to continue.

The next day, unknowingly, Raihan was proven right about how protective he was. Raihan didn't even think when the incident happened. He just moved, jolted, a split second reaction. A millisecond's worth of decision, and a choice made out of the purest form of altruism that his vampiric nature could produce. Seeing a large van come tumbling upon the gaunt shape of the object of his watch, he ran, racing to put himself between Piers and his untimely doom. Piers stood, shocked, frozen in his little pink track uniform, as a large van swerved and then toppled, hit in a half-second of contact from Raihan throwing himself and his superhuman strength between his fixation and the metal death trap. It was moments away from crushing him against the brick wall behind him.

Piers blinked.

The van stopped, a large dent in its side from bouncing against Raihan's palm. Piers stared deep into Raihan's eyes, and suddenly the vampire realized just how much he had always wanted Piers to stop and look at him like this. Like... a hero. Like a protector. Like prey.

Raihan swallowed his anxiety, instead letting the delicious savor of Piers' full and silent attention come over him. He could jump time, break the speed of sound, and make a man cower from his own thoughts, but when it came to Piers, he was putty, truly.

"Alright, luv?" Raihan asked, swearing about the pet name the moment it fell from his mouth.

Piers remained silent, his eyes staring deep in thought.

Raihan had to peel his own gaze away from Piers' neck. And then his lips. And then his eyes. He had to- oh. He needed to go. He just displayed all of his speed and strength and everything unholy about him in one fell swoop and Piers was going to suspect things-

He took off, into the forest.

Raihan needed to stay away. Needed to. He was getting too close. Piers was dangerous for him. Too much. Too... sweet. He couldn't harm Piers, he'd never forgive himself if he did, but yet every time he got around that sweet nectar of the man's scent, his mind split in two.

But he had protected Piers. Saved his life. What was he even protecting Piers for? So he could take it himself next time? Keep the gaunt fellow nice and protected until the next moment his guard was down and his hunger overtook him? It was vital for Raihan to stay away, for Piers' own safety and needs but... that scent. It was still here. In the forest, in the school, in his mind, everywhere. It followed him, taunted him. Just as Piers did. Fragile Piers, so easily crushed if he would have done nothing. Piers who was the blankest of all canvases, his thoughts truly hidden, his beauty in a trove of mystery.

Raihan mulled. And mulled. Back, and forth. Tearing up his choices, and then tearing into a small deer that wasn't quick enough to run. Eventually, his body stopped, but his mind never did. The day turned to evening, and when the sky turned a dusty gold, a distant bleat of some other creature shook him from his reverie of focus. And that fragrance struck him again.

Piers.

"Oi, ye gonna come out, ye muff," called a voice toward the south of the forest. Raihan turned, his hearing immediately tuned to the sound. "Fecking trees n' shite, gonna make me come in this wood, are ye..."

*Piers.*

Raihan's body moved for him, racing, running, silently bolting toward the voice, toward the scent, and he climbed a tree and hopped the branches, silently gliding closer, and closer. Piers was... here? His precious mortal, approaching the deep of a wooded enclave, all the more seeking his doom. Raihan should run the other way, stay away from Piers, to protect the ignorant fledgling from his reckless deathwish... but his legs travelled the direction that his heart called.

"Ye so feckin' stubborn... I know ye can hear me." Piers huffed, crunching leaves and kicking rocks as he walked. An easy target. Too easy. Raihan's body betrayed him and went closer, and closer, speeding through the forest.

"I know all about ye, ye knob." Piers continued, everything about him loud and open. He'd be killed. He'd be ruined. Raihan could pounce on him, take him, *feast* on him... "I know yer impossibly fast, 'n strong... I knew ye got cold skin 'n weird colour-changin' eyes."

Raihan landed on a tree close enough to see Piers below, his eyes watching soundlessly while Piers bumbled through the brush. His remained ablaze in the internal fight to *kill* or *protect* while crouching on a branch stock still.

"Ye talk like a dyin' Kalosian war widow n' stare at me while I sleep like a feckin' voyeur."

He was precious, he was delicious. He was warm, and handsome. His scent, delectable, tempting, musky, sweet... the perfect bait for a striking demon like Raihan, to pull him into an inclination so repugnant, so despicable... what was he, but a monster? A bloodsucker, a devil... evil in the world, cursed to hunt those so pure... "Ye don't eat anythin, and pissin' Ponytas, I can feckin' *feel* yer weird eyes on me now."

Raihan couldn't even control how he moved. Didn't register how he had jumped down, came close, slowly, and then stood up behind Piers directly, looming over the man in his beat up black punk attire.

"I know what ye are," Piers repeated again, and silence blossomed between them. He couldn't. Piers couldn't know. But he had to. Raihan caught his breath. "Say it. Out loud."



Piers turned to him, icy blue eyes baring into the empty void that was once Raihan's soul.

"Some kinda shite vampire."

Raihan could feel his insides clinch in fear. Impossible, his fair Piers-

"Are you afraid?" Raihan rasped, feeling his fangs descending, yearning, needing the sacred flesh in front of him. He didn't need it. He couldn't do that to one so pure... but he desired it so much...

"Of ye?" Piers scoffed. "Ye 'avin a laff?"

For a moment, everything around the two of them froze, and a million endings ran across Raihan's mind. He could. He *could*. The scent was dizzying, devine, a dare. He stepped closer, more into that perfume of temptation, and his arms reached out to grab. Piers' heartbeat hammered through his senses. Was he truly the monster? Or the protector he so wanted to be?

"Gonna kiss me?" Piers taunted, with only the smallest tremble of doubt in his words.

"Or bite me?"

Raihan chose the easy way to silence temptation.







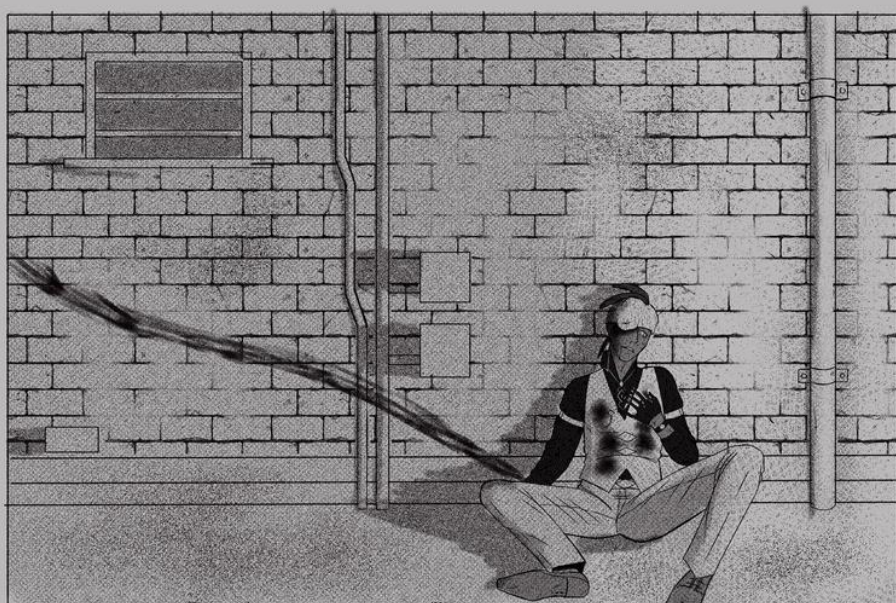




The background of the page is a dark, textured surface with a large, vibrant red splatter or ink blot on the right side, extending towards the top right corner. The splatter has a mottled, organic appearance with various shades of red and orange.

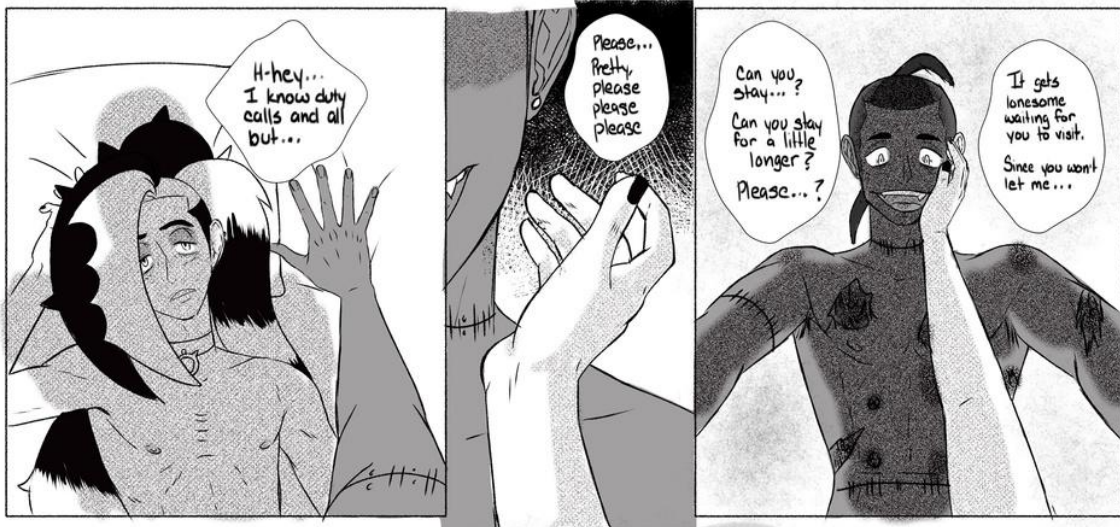
# DEATH IS ALL YOU NEED

**by: Kirukirururin**











# RAVAGER'S EMBRACE

**by: Danger**

A soul hunted and destroyed beyond the walls of the citadel's capital. A call for the mighty demon king to venture out the walls to deal with the beast of the night. The creature before him was full of pain and he couldn't help but offer his blood to soothe it.

CW: Mild body horror, Blood letting, Blood drinking, mentions of self harm.

The peaceful night was always so soothing to him. The shine of the full blood moon as it fell upon the garden of his humble homestead. He sang into the chilly air as he danced lightly along the cobbled path. He twirled around the statue within the center before taking a bow as his song faded. He looked past the stone visage toward the citadel's capital. As a human, he had difficulty entering and finding his way. Many of the denizens were cautious. Or perhaps they saw themselves more superior given humans were nearly extinct in this particular land. He sighed softly, recalling the face of the ruler. Such a handsome man, or was he merely a beast with a human face? It mattered not, despite being the king of demons. He was truly handsome. Piers wondered if he would ever get to see the king up close. He had spied him during a few of his performances within the stone and spiked city of ruin. He hummed before singing a song once again. A wish to meet the king and to at least stand near him. Maybe they could exchange mere words before the king would away on his duties.

A sudden horrid noise ripped through the air, choking the soft melodic sounds from Piers's throat. His eyes widened as he looked to the nearby woods beyond the stone fence. He shuddered as his brows furrowed. Just what was that? He had never heard such a cry in all his time living here. He hunkered down behind the demonic statue he had been dancing around just moments before. He stared off into the dense woods aglow with hues of red. The sounds of silence filled the night air, not even the sounds of birds in the distance. Piers felt a cold spike of terror pierce his chest. Something was emerging and its horrid fangs drooled a thick substance. Piers stepped back slowly as he tried to remain calm.

The beast that came lumbering out had massive, twisted wings it used to walk on. It let out that shrill cry once again before taking flight. Piers ran immediately once he saw it ripped its way through the sky at an alarming speed. He didn't bother looking back as he felt the ground tremor in fear as the monstrosity landed. He rushed towards his home and threw open the door. Swiftly slamming it behind him and locking it. He was thrown backwards as it rammed against the door. A splintering sound was heard, he didn't need to wonder what that meant. He rushed through his home and searched for a place to hide away.



He chose to hide in the pantry and covered his mouth. The hard slam into the door resounded once again and the splintering sound grew louder. The door groaned with each attack. A crash was heard as the beast entered. That hulking thing smashed aside several things as it stormed its way into Piers' home. Piers wished he knew what manner of beast this was. It was capable of flight, that was all he knew. He jolted as he felt the floor vibrate. The wooden floorboards did not appreciate the weight of such a creature. Piers scooted back a bit further and willed his breathing to remain steady. He could hear the sound of that thing heavily breathing right outside the pantry door. Which started to groan as some sort of talon pressed against the feeble wood. Piers swore that all the noise around him was being drowned out by his rampaging heart. Terrified that it would alert the beast. His fear was soon recognized as there was a deafening roar before the door shattered.

The next thing he knew. A shooting pain in his neck as teeth sunk in. The sound of something splattering to the floor and his vision going black. He grew colder by the second, his limp body thrown. The beast had yelped in pain, but why? Such a question would probably not be answered as he slowly faded. Was his life over? Where was the light everyone spoke of? Why was his life not flashing before him? It was just everlasting darkness. He wasn't sure how long he had been aimlessly floating in this abyss. He slowly became aware of a burning around his neck as well as a deep hunger. His eyes slowly opened to be blinded by the light coming from a window. Was it a dream? No, his neck furiously burned. His precious choker felt hot, and he reached to pull at it. The searing pain that shot through him upon the touch. He hissed as he sat up with a gasp. Why did it hurt? Why was his home derelict? The beast tore through his home for sure but why was his home rotting? He couldn't focus as he shambled to his feet. The pit of his stomach tore up his insides. It hurt so much, but it was nothing compared to how much his body screamed in pain. He felt off, he felt something tearing at his back. His vision faded in and out as he made his way to the door. He collapsed to his knees as he threw his head back. Something was trying to come out of his body. He was terrified of what it was before he let out a scream.

For months, the demon king had been receiving reports of some monochromatic beast lurking within the eastern sector of the citadel. It was said that its horrendous cries rung out night after night. It was becoming a problem, especially now as it had been leaving destruction in its wake. Raihan sighed heavily as he stood up. His tail lashing to the side as his dragon-like wings extended behind him. His clawed hands dug into the marbled top of his desk, causing slight chipping. He marched his way through his grand study. Stopping before the silver polished mirror. His face humanoid as four large, massive horns resembling a sort of crown protruded from his head. His scaled armored forearms adorned with jewelry. His legs were bare at the moment, showing off the transition of dusky skin to armored scales just like upon his arm. His tail swayed behind him as he took a breath and sighed. Wisps of smoke were exhaled from his nostrils. He wasn't dressed for an outing. He would need to change that before he headed out to investigate. He knew not what the beast was, however, he did know it was dangerous. He would need to bring his axe to deal with whatever this monstrosity was.

Raihan stepped out onto the balcony leading from his study. Casting a glance up at the swirling pink and purple clouds that lit up as they crossed the sun's path. Such a fanciful sky and astral bodies that could only be found here within his domain. Other realms had a more bland, in his opinion, sky to observe. The various shades of his domain had a variety of red, pink, purple, and blue hues depending on the day and weather. Currently there was a slight overcast. He looked off to the eastern wall of the capital. Far off within that sector of the citadel was the beast that had been terrorizing his denizens. He couldn't allow such a threat, especially one that seemed to originate from nowhere. He took confident steps over to the ledge and stopped just before the stone railing. His wings shifted and soon opened with a flourish, spreading wide. Vibrant orange and blue with flecks of gold adorned his wings along with jewelry that fitted over the spikes protruding from them. His tail swayed from side to side as he crouched. Launching himself into the air was an easy task with wings as splendid as his. His dark cyan eyes lit up with a glow as his pupils turned to narrow slits. He stayed aloft in the air before diving suddenly to pick up speed before launching upwards with a beat of his wings. He shouldn't be too long to travel towards the destination of complaint.



Raihan slowed to a stop as he hovered in place above the ruinous town. Despite the derelict appearance, the inhabitants lived inside stone structures that made way underground. He had been here before on a few of his outings, mainly to listen to the melodic and enchanting song of one particular individual here. He wondered if the monochrome songstress was safe. Humans were such fragile creatures after all, and he was one of the few remaining in this realm. Not many humans came to this realm due to various reasons. Which made humans endangered in this domain. Raihan shook his head to focus his thoughts, the clink of golden chain attached to his four horns ringing out. Now was not the time to get lost in thought. If he was so truly worried, then he needed to deal with this monster that haunted the lands. He recalled that the beast mainly came out upon nightfall. Wailing with horrific screams of rage. Lashing out at anything that moved, it was sheer luck it had not killed anyone yet. Such a creature usually racked up several death reports. Which puzzled the demon king. None of the reports talked of fatal injuries and a few of them noted the monster was hesitant in attacking unless provoked. Granted some reports contradicted each other. So Raihan must be ready for whatever this creature would do.

The king watched as night begins to fall. His mere presence in the sky made his people hurry home. Given he hadn't descended for pleasantries alerted them to why he was truly there. The purple and blue hues of dusk began to claw their way across the sky as the bleeding moon rose. The moon always bathed the land in reds, it was soft and gentle. Soothing and calm. Now, however, with the beast lurking, it was insidious and nerve wracking. A deep exhale released flames from the demon king's mouth as he descended to be closer to the ground. Soaring just above the tree line to observe everything. He circled the town almost lazily as he took the time to focus. His eyes dilated to let in more light, constricting to enhance details on certain places of interest. His pupils became full blown as his body jolted from a piercing scream. His body whirled around to face the direction. Pupils forming slits as his eyes narrowed. There was a broken homestead in the distance from where the scream originated. He made quick work of flying there but he did not land just yet. The scream was not human, it held a grating and distorted noise to it. Raihan gripped his axe tightly within his tail's coil. Having put it there due to him growing tired of holding it in his hands.

The silence that filled the air was only broken by the faint flapping of the demon king's wings. His eyes focused on the broken and rotting building. He recalled that this place was well cared for in the past. He had used it as a landmark during his flights. Now whatever beast that roamed was using this place as some sort of nest. He was mournful to the idea that whoever lived here must no longer be among this plane of existence. He sighed heavily as he slowly approached overhead. He paused as he heard movement and a growling sound. Something was emerging from the building. Raihan held his breath.

The sound of rotting wood creaked as clawed wings grabbed the sides of the broken entrance, the figure lunging out of it as it let its body slump forward as if the effort of moving drained its energy. A wild mass of white and black fur hid the beast's head from the king's view. As the beast shambled forward, more of its body was revealed. The back had vibrant pink spines jutting from the monochrome fur along its spine. The wings slowly spread out showing a similar colored membrane that matched the spines. Open wings revealed arms that were hugging the creature's chest. Sharp talons clawing into its own flesh. One hand clawing at its own throat. The beast stumbled forward on beastly legs. A tail coming off of its backside with spines where membrane was attached. This spindly thing was humanoid. Its face was obscured but there were large dish-like ears coming from its head. It was some monstrous bat-like beast. It stumbled forward more then suddenly a spray of blood erupted from it as it threw its head back. A piercing scream came from a maw of gnashing fangs. The thick mess of fur and hair moved enough to show it still had a humanlike face. The distorted scream was full of agony and sorrow. Though what horrified Raihan was that the beast was clawing itself open. Tearing at its own throat in desperation. Those wings began to jerk and twitch before it launched the beast into the air. It seemed to have difficulty as its legs kicked the air as if trying to swim. It soon whirled to face Raihan, having sensed his presence.

Raihan dove down as the beast launched itself full force at him. The demon king couldn't afford to be hit in the air given the drop that would result. The way this thing was acting wasn't connecting with any of the reports.





The only thing that was even close to the reports was it rushing after individuals who got noticed by it. Raihan turned his head then spun to the side to avoid being grabbed. The bat like beast flew past with yet another scream. It was not one of rage but distress. Raihan had hunted enough foul beasts to tell the difference in the tone of their cries.

The beast rushed him again, Raihan reacted by lashing out with his tail. The axe slammed into the beast with the flat side. The beast got agitated and made a grab for Raihan again, who switched the axe to his hands to better attack. He froze as the beast got closer to him. It was already hurt in so many places. Self-inflicted no less. The hands on this creature weren't aimed to claw at him but merely grab. In his moment of hesitation at the sight of its wounds, the beast grabbed at his pristine clothes, jerking him forward. That face became more recognizable the closer he got to it.

He, however, could not focus on it as he kicked it away in defense. Slamming his heel into the beast's stomach to knock it off. It let off a choked cry and a wheeze. It once again flailed as if it was trying to swim, its talons clawing at some bright metal around its neck. Why did that look familiar to the demon king? That familiarity prompted the king to be more curious. Raihan growled as a bit of flames leaked from his mouth. He lurched forward using his wings to propel him as fast as possible. He spun just as he was upon the bat-like beast, striking it down hard with his thick tail. The metal adornments on the armor scaled tail made the impact stronger. The monster gave a choked noise as the tail slammed into its side as well as one of its wings. This caused the beast to lose control of its ability to fly. It dropped out of the sky while stunned. It slammed hard into the ground with a scream. The noise caused Raihan to grimace and wince.

Raihan watched to see if the beast would stand. It didn't, it weakly dragged itself through the overgrown garden as it whined. The demon king dove to land not too far from it. He watched as it struggled to get up. It was bleeding from its self-inflicted wounds. It was once again clawing at its throat.



That aerial fight wasn't much of a fight now that Raihan thought on it. It was more like the beast was reaching out to him. Raihan took a tentative step towards it, walking in a wide arc to get in front of it.

Now that it was grounded and no longer interested in moving, Raihan had the ability to observe it up close. It had black and white fur, pink spines along with the membrane of the wings. It looked withered from the way its body was. It was frail and thin, practically wasting away. Why was it not trying to kill and eat him? Such a state as this would guarantee that any living thing would be ravenous for food. This thing didn't seem interested. Or maybe it was unable to eat. Raihan stepped closer. He slowed to a stop as he saw the blood slowly burn away and the wounds start to close. He hadn't seen that earlier, it was closing so slowly it was almost unnoticeable. Being this close up, he could hear soft crying and gasping. Stepping even closer made him aware of a voice, broken and pitiful. He felt bad for it, even if he had to end its life for the terror it caused. Maybe this was a way of showing it mercy. He took a stand before it and raised his axe.

Before he could swing it down into the beast's head, it looked up at him and his heart nearly stopped. Wasn't that the face of the songstress he had come to adore during his outings? He never got to interact with her personally, but he always wanted the singer to grace his grand galas with song. To see such a beautiful face on such a body as this, it drove a spike into his heart. What happened to her? Those teal eyes were wide with fear, tears streaming down ashen cheeks. That mouth, capable of the most enchanting melodies, was now filled with horrid fangs designed to rend flesh from bone. Even so, it frowned in despair. Those eyes trailed up towards the axe in the air, the tears streaming forth even more before those eyes closed. Talons sank into his own neck as the singer's mouth moved to form words. Nothing came from it. As those talons dug and dragged down that pale chest littered with fur, the pure metal choker was shown, along with the burning flesh beneath it.

A vampiristic transformation? It made sense. Some vampiric individuals lost their sense of self and become mindless blood thirsty beasts. Especially when unable to feed. When that happened, it took a lot of rehabilitation to bring them back. Some were deemed a lost cause, their mind having been destroyed from being in a bestial state for too long. The process of degradation, as it was called.

This creature before him was once human, however. This beast still retained his humanity. Meaning... There was a chance to save him from his fate.

Raihan stared down at the mutated songstress before him. He understood now, the reports were wrong. It wasn't a beast out to attack people. It was a cry for help that his once fellow humans couldn't understand. He wasn't one of them any longer and that was what terrified them. Raihan closed his eyes as he grimaced. He couldn't do this. The man before him could still be helped. The demon king let off a sigh and threw his axe to the ground beside them. The first thing needed to be done was to provide food. Though given the pure metal digging into the singer's neck, it may be hard. Then again, some bestial vampires got a taste of blood and couldn't stop feeding once they started. Maybe the band would help slow down the feeding process, even if it hurt. For now, that was the best option given the location. Once the singer was sated enough, Raihan would bring him to his castle and get him proper treatment. Raihan knelt down before the beast. No, this was a man. A man in a difficult situation.

The demon king's scaled hand reached out to push matted hair back. The man before him lunged forward. Raihan resisted the urge to defend himself, a good call given he wasn't being attacked. He felt talons dig into his finely tailored clothes, the sound of tearing heard as the man clung to his chest. Raihan sighed and wrapped his arms around the smaller man. Those wings of his looked lovely this close up. He soothed the man enough to convince him to drink some blood. A difficult feat given the singer was vehemently refusing. Raihan had to resort to biting into his own armored skin before talking the vampire into finally accepting. It didn't stop the man from crying. This was going to be a long and difficult rehabilitation.

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Part 2 available on A03

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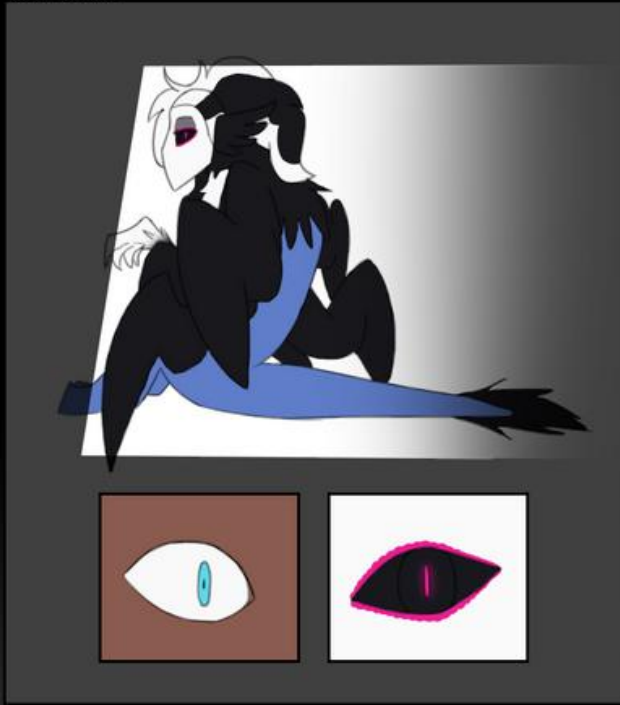
he had always been  
there...

... watching me





Rat+res+ood







# TOO PERFECT TO TOUCH

**by: Bina**

Really was a shame Piers had to wait so long for his turn to be made into art.

Tags/CW: captivity, serial killer, macabre art, allusions to past violence, suicidal ideation, dead dove: do not eat

Art recognized art.

Piers, work-in-progress as he was, sat awestruck as Raihan's latest masterpiece took its final shape. Just a few more touches here and there. A lock of hair tucked into place. A damp cloth wiping the blood from what used to be a shoulder—or was that particular patch of skin from the thigh? Piers had lost track ages ago.

Raihan set the chisel aside and smeared his gloves dry upon his waxed apron. Done at last. Another body made transcendent through his touch. Transformed from a mundane nobody into something special, all thanks to the only one brave enough, generous enough, to twist the flesh and bone into its full potential.

Everything Raihan made was perfect. His pieces didn't last long, no, but the ephemeral nature of each sculpture only added to the importance of it all. Calling his art just a mangled corpse would be like calling the Mona Lisa a mere cluster of pigments.

Really was a shame that Piers had to wait so long for his turn.

It'd been months since he was lured off the street by a handsome smile. He'd had nothing left to his name back then. Hopes, dreams, all washed into the sewers along with the last of his luck—or so he'd thought. No, some last crumb of luck had clung to him that miserable soggy day, and it was just enough to lead him right where he belonged.

He had a roof over his head now. An attentive master. A purpose, a point to his otherwise useless existence. He would become the jewel of this killer's collection. The centerfold of his portfolio. Raihan told him so. Sure, his remains would only be displayed for so long before the evidence was lovingly disposed of, but within that time, under this sculptor's powerful hands, he'd become more than he was ever capable of becoming alone. No more letting people down. No more being a failure.

If he could just become like that man on those hooks over there, spread open and carved apart, his worthlessness transformed into ephemeral, grisly beauty for Raihan and Raihan alone to admire, he could die happy.



He would die happy. It was only a matter of time. All those years spent wasting away would become worth it.

Piers wet his lips to speak while he watched his beloved captor shuck the rubber from his hands and ditch his soiled apron. He asked the same question he always asked on the flayed heels of every new masterpiece, and tried not to sound too eager.

"Am I next?"

As always, Raihan waited until there was nothing left to do before answering. His clothes were immaculate underneath the shed apron, as was the sheen of his dark skin in the hazy lights. As a painter left all splotches and flecks behind on their tools and canvas and tarps, so did Raihan leave all the blood behind on his scalpels and trays and the rusted drain below.

"I'm not ready for you yet."

Again with that...

Piers pouted and shifted on his nest of towels. He touched the proof of Raihan's favor locked around his neck for reassurance.

(He never understood why Raihan thought he might run away, but he didn't mind the collar or chains at all. It meant Raihan wanted to keep him.)

"Been askin' for ages," Piers pressed. His collar clinked as he shifted closer. "You're plenty ready. How can you not be, when you make shite like that out of nobody who was anybody to you?"

In Raihan's silence, Piers jutted his chin towards the latest sculpture. Really, it was beautiful. It glistened in the lights that hurt his eyes, grisly angles and spread-open flaps and shiny pins that crucified it all in place. One big, humanized angel dripping all over the tile. Lucky bastard.

"I said I'm not ready." Raihan looked his latest piece up and down with a critical eye. "If you're going to be next, I need more practice first. I refuse to waste you."

Piers scoffed and folded his legs under him. "Can't see how you think you could waste me when you've been doin' this for so long. You're plenty good enough already."

Raihan only shook his head. Piers could practically taste the man's dissatisfied grimace. Again, these doubts... not at all befitting the great artist he knew the man to be. How many deaths in Raihan's portfolio? How few leads for the police to follow?

Raihan was the only man who could lift a sorry sack of mortal shite this close to the divine. Piers wanted his turn, damn it all—there were too many no-name undeserving bastards cutting ahead of him, leaping onto that steel table where *he* was meant to lie. Raihan always made the first cut the same way on that table; Piers could practically feel the phantom scalpel slitting his belly open. He wanted it, needed it. His life had to end exactly in this way. His existence would be pointless otherwise.

"If I'm as beautiful as you're always toutin', why hasn't it been my turn?" Piers pulled at the chain securing him to the floor. The clatter of it echoed around them both in this small grey room, and the rusty musician's part of his brain reveled in the harsh clink-clanking of metal against ceramic. "You *promised* me, Rai, it's why you keep me here at all!"

Raihan pushed a steel cart aside. Its wheels were silent, streaking wet red a few inches across the floor as the murderer reached for a wall-mounted hose.

"Quiet, dove."

The nickname did little to appease him like it did in the early days. Back when he still had all the black on his nails and a hell of a lot more patience.



Piers pulled petulantly at the chain. "I'm just wonderin' why I've got to wait like this. You're good enough if I say you're good enough. Ain't like you're competin' against anyone here, how high are your fuckin' standards when you're already so flawless?"

Raihan silently unwrapped the hose and tweaked the faucet. Cold water guttered and spat from its mouth, aimed by a hard thumb into the floor. Color swirled. The drain gurgled.

Piers did nothing to avoid the rivulets of fluid pooling around the square room and threatening to soak into his nest. If he got dirty, Raihan would clean him. Raihan always took very good care of him. Wouldn't do no good to let your block of marble be filthy for that precious first cut.

Whenever the fuck that would finally be.

Raihan still wasn't looking at him. Piers hated it when Raihan wouldn't look at him. He was supposed to be the favorite, the best, the upcoming magnum opus. Raihan always treated him like he was the most precious gem found amidst the slag he thought he was worth. Being ignored stung like nothing else.

The lights buzzed like a muted version of the dremel Raihan liked to use for bones. The drain gulped down its last morsels for now. The faucet squeaked in a pattern Piers could recite by heart by now, as did the rubber of Raihan's soles as the man approached at last.

Piers sat up straighter and looked as pretty as he could, chained up as he was. Raihan loomed like a statue. Piers gave him a smile, crooked teeth and all.

For a long moment, Raihan only stared. Looked him up and down with the same seriousness he gave his last project. Some inscrutable flicker within Raihan's gaze almost made Piers panic—only for a warm hand to find his chin and ease every worry away.

He could sense his chance. It was hidden in the tender way Raihan stroked his jaw. Lingering, almost hesitant.

Aw... being shy, was he? Now it all made sense. Piers knew what he wanted. Raihan certainly wasn't the first, but at least he'd be Piers' last. It made him happy that the last man to touch him would be Raihan.

"What about a... rough draft?" he risked, lowering his lashes. He nuzzled his chin into Raihan's palm, a perfect obedient pet. "Been a while since you've done a rough draft."

Just a sketch. The construction of a future plan. Some reassurance that Raihan planned to do anything with him at all.

Another slow stroke over Piers' lips was met with tongue, a gentle catch of teeth. Wasn't his place at all to damage his savior, but he could lick and worship to get his message across. Gently now...

"Don't have to cut me now. Just a rough draft, love." He closed his eyes like the warmth of Raihan's hand was all he needed to sustain himself. It truly was. "I love what you make of me even without a knife. Don't you want to see how I'd look on that table? Might help you visualize what you want to turn me into."

He could hear Raihan's throat bob. "That desperate for me, are you?" his artist murmured.

"Always. Yes. Please..."

A low sound of deliberation from his captor. Piers could almost taste his wish coming true.

"A bruise or two wouldn't hurt you..." Raihan pressed a hard thumb into the hollow beneath his jaw. A warning that made Piers' breath hitch. "You know I won't be able to start on you properly until it's all healed up, right?"

"You'll make me all better." He dared to grasp Raihan's wrist, pulled it closer. He sucked a long finger into his starving mouth, shuddered when it tickled the back of his tongue partway down his throat. He groaned around it, withdrew his head and stroked the wet digit along his shackled throat to dry it. "Anything is better than nothin'. I need you, Rai... You're the only one I've ever wanted."



The flash of a silver key was all it took for Piers' clothes to feel like barbed wire on his skin. Off, off, he needed everything off! He stripped what he could as the lock around his neck twitched and jumped in Raihan's hands.

The chain hit the floor in a thundering clatter. One grab, one pull, and his bare back struck the stainless steel table that would be his penultimate resting place. The shock of cold was nothing compared to the sinuous heat that melted onto him from above. Piers gasped when a greedy tongue soothed the redness of his neck in one broad swipe.

He'd been wet ever since Rai made the first slice into that lucky bastard over there. It was too bad the bloke's eyes had been squished down that drain; Piers wouldn't have minded being watched.

He spread his legs wide and welcoming for his artist. A low groan left him when he felt Raihan's passion knocking heavily at his inner thigh. He needed it, craved it, he'd die if he couldn't feel his killer inside him soon. It wasn't a knife but it'd gut him all the same.

"I'm mad about you," Raihan raggedly breathed, lining himself up as Piers whimpered for him to hurry. "Completely mad. Can't blame me for wanting to savor you before I end you like the rest."

"It's torture to wait—" he gasped and dug his nails into Raihan's back when he was split open without mercy. It wasn't the kind of dismantling he craved the most, but it would last him until he could be taken apart for real. "Why are you makin' me wait?"

"You're mine to do with as I please." Raihan lips peeled back against his neck, white teeth pressing into his flesh and threatening their euphoria with every snarl. No matter how far back Piers tipped his head, they wouldn't bite. "If I want you alive, I'll keep you alive no matter how you whine."

"But you promised," Piers all but sobbed. "Make me into art, it has to be you! Slit me open, drag everything out, keep every one of my bones, I don't give a shit what you do with me but you *have* to!"

Piers' shriek bounced off the dingy walls when Raihan's pace became brutal. If this was Raihan's way of shutting him up, it was working. This was better than all the nothing his master had been giving him. He'd take sore hips and bruised arms over being left to gather dust.

The dripping sculpture was their only audience. It couldn't see nor hear them, but Piers moaned even louder for it regardless. He imagined his voice seeping into its stitches, bouncing off the rearranged bones, ringing through that hollowed out skull in the center of it all. See? See how much more Raihan loves him compared to any other victim?

He was special. He was loved and he would die loved. What more could he ask for?

Raihan clutched him close, unleashing a guttural groan as he rutted himself to completion. Piers whispered sweetness to him, rubbed his back and begged him for it, legs spreading all the wider. I'll never leave you, love, you own me. Treat me like it.

They came together on that hard steel table. Their panting breaths, their sweat mingled all together. The mess of their lovemaking slowly seeped out between Piers' weakened legs.

The overhead lights gleamed around Raihan's head like a halo. Work of art in his own fucking right, how dare he be so beautiful? Perhaps Piers could forgive him for taking his time. Of course every great artist had their slumps—he of all people should understand that.

Sated, tired, Piers let himself be gathered up in those strong arms and carried away. Stairs. Heavy door. Hallway. Warm light and dark wood and pretty curtains in the windows. He maintained his happy daze as Raihan bathed him, washed his hair that'd gotten far too long over the months. Piers hummed along to his soapy touch. The basement had good acoustics, but the bathroom's were even better. Best of all, Raihan didn't bother teasing the mess out from between his legs. He got to keep his killer inside him for a little longer.



Piers only roused when his damp head touched upon a pillow. So soft... Raihan's bed? Seriously?

He nearly chuckled. It was almost like this seasoned murderer wanted him to make an escape. Why would he ever try to leave, though? He was exactly where he was meant to be. This place was home, morgue, and grave all wrapped up under one tidy roof.

He smiled tiredly as Raihan clambered over him once more. This time, rather than consuming him in a storm of passion, the man blanketed him chest to chest and wove their legs together, shoving strong arms under Piers' bony back. Piers' arms folded around his master once again. He petted over the raised lines his scratching had caused, kissed the crease in Raihan's forehead.

He knew Raihan wouldn't let go until morning, where he'd be led back down to his room and chained up proper. He felt too light, too unreal whenever he didn't have that collar locked around his neck, that chain securing him as Raihan's most prized possession. This moment was an exception to that. Strong arms and a heart that beat against his own were as good as any shackle of steel. Same thing, at the end of the day—and what was one more day?

It'd do him good to remember the sensitivity of artists. He used to be one too, after all.

"Remember, love," he singsonged, playing with the locs over Raihan's nape. "You need to take responsibility for me soon. Give us what we both want."

The body enveloping him curled tighter. The air squeezed out from Piers' lungs, transformed into a chuckle on their way out. Really now, how sweet.

Piers softened his voice further and spoke to the heart he knew was open and listening for him. "I want my turn, Rai. I've seen far too much of what you've done. You know what needs to happen to me eventually." He traced along Raihan's spine. "Make me into something beautiful the way only you can, and we'll both be happy."

Raihan shuddered around him.

"...Promise. Soon," were the words murmured into his skin. Piers purred and stroked his lovely killer in reward, nestling into the possessive hold.

He supposed he could wait a little longer for his happy ending.

A promise was a promise.



The background of the page is a dark, textured surface with a large, vibrant red splatter or ink blot on the right side, extending towards the center. The red color is a deep, slightly dark red, and the splatter has a mottled, organic appearance with various shades of red and black. The left side of the page is mostly black, with some faint, lighter red or pinkish tones near the bottom left corner.

# FEATURED ARTISTS



## BINA

Been loving kbnz since I got into Sword&Shield! I mostly write fanfic, and have written a good number of fics and AUs for these two in all sorts of situations. I may write less often these days but it was still a treat to revisit the ship!



## BEX

i like dwagons



## THEIRENICUNIVERSE

I am a fanfiction writer on Ao3, multi-fandom but I mostly write for the Pokèmon fandom. I'm a teacher, so even though I'm old and progressively bad with technology, I occasionally, accidentally, use mixed generational slang. I'm super ace, but I write a lot of romantic content. And read a lot of it!



## TEM

Hey there, I'm Tem! I'm an Australian-based digital artist and animation student who has been obsessed with KBNZ since 2020. I'm glad I could come onboard as an artist again for this awesome zine! I'm a big Pokemon fan and a huge lover of Dark-types (which is why I'm also a huge fan of Piers. He won't leave my brain. Help me.) I also cosplay in my spare time!



## POMMEPAWS

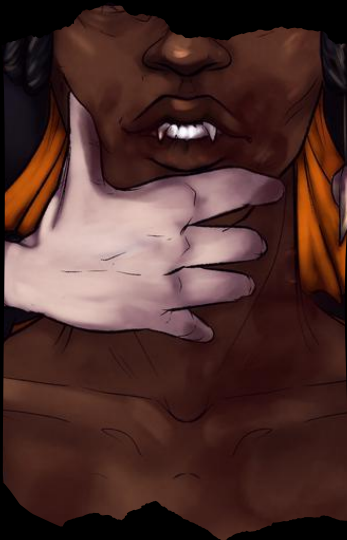
Hello, everybunn! I'm PommePaws☆, a self-taught digital artist. I'm happy to participate in the second year of our lovely *Scales and Shade* zine, especially so for spooky season! This year, I am doing a collaboration with Danger, who wrote a very tantalizing piece for our Zine! Please enjoy our humble efforts, and give all the artists and authors tons of love! Thank you for all of your support!



## DANGER

I'm Danger! I love drawing and writing. Anything creature related is the stuff I enjoy. From drawing them and writing them.





## KIT

Hi I'm Kit, I draw pics and write fics under the username hoennaround.

I'm a big nerd and I make barbies kiss in my spare time. I also love vampires. A lot!



## EDDIE

Small time hobbyist artist that likes to draw in my spare time for fun. Big on fanart and OCs alike, I'm always full of ideas so feel free to check out my stuff :)



## WASABI

Hi I'm Wasabi! I make digital art, from furry to character designs, but what remains strong is my obsession about kbz so you'll keep seeing me here for a couple of years or even longer ^^



## AMÉLIE CHÉRIE B.

Author illustrator, I draw colorful illustration for work. When it comes to draw for me on my free time, it's essentially to draw Piers or KBNZ, and I decided to try black and white with them. This piece named "The Nightmare" is entirely made with black pens, and is a reference to Johann Heinrich Füssli's painting of the same name.



## GOTHICPRINCE

Helloooo! I'm Gothic and I change my hyper fixations a lot. Drawing and listening to music are my two favorite things ever. If I don't make too much art it's probably because I'm in art block and still thinking lmao



## CHILLINGXY

Hi :D I'm ann and I'm a design student who loves kbnz! I've loved this ship since 2019. I was never able to make this ship justice because of my art level but being contributor for both editions of this zine has given me the opportunity to challenge myself! I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!



## NINJACOOKIEXD

Hey there, I'm Ren! This is my second time in the zine. It was so much fun last year, and we had such a good time making it that I knew I just had to join in again, especially given the theme as I love horror as a genre! I make art/merch and do commissions on my Insta so feel free to check it out if you like my art here ^\_^ stay spooky



## KIRUKIRURURIN

I draw and I write. Brainrot snatches me up at the most random times. I'm also trying to make art my living.



## MELON

Just another semi-inactive artist who likes video games





## FUYU

Hello, Fuyu here~ I am a Singapore-based freelance illustrator who loves to draw both fan art and original art. I participated again in contributing to Vol. 2 of this zine as an excuse to draw mah boi Piers (with Raihan). <3

For Vol. 1, I drew a crossover of KBNZ with KDA (League of Legends), and my recurring theme of K-pop strikes again, as I siezed this chance to draw them both as the Saja Boys/ Demons (K-pop Demon Hunters)! Piers' design is loosely inspired by Mega Malamar, and Raihan's design is loosely inspired by Goodra.



## EMBBU

You arrive at a dark cave, filled with Zubat. If you listen close enough, you can hear faint gremlin giggles and high-pitched screeches coming from the darkness. If you wait patiently, you'll meet an EmBBu, as they emerge from their lair. Smelling faintly like the ocean, they appear once in a blue moon to yap about their favorite characters, birds and merfolk. After they're done also throwing art at people's faces, they once again disappear back into the cave.



## SCEADU

Hey, I'm Sceadu! I am a traditional and digital artist and a lover of the natural world.

I photograph plenty of nature and also make jewellery, candles and other bits.

I'm a long time Pokemon fan and a collector of the TCG.



## RATTLESTOAT

Queer critter artist. You may also recognize me as Mothmallow/Leamhan but I prefer to keep shipping stuff to my 18+ alias.



## SOUP

I'm just out here brain-rotting for these two...

Thank you so much for taking the time to read and look at all the spooky art shared !

We hope you enjoyed this Halloween special. Please take the time to visit each artist's account and send them LOTS of love and appreciation!



## IDKPURPLEGARNET

She might be familiar to you. Whether it is by name or by avatar. Almost a year ago, a dear friend and fellow fandom member was laid to rest.

She was part of Scale and Shade since the beginning, having participated in our first zine with their commentary on KBNZ and sharing her playlist. We were hopeful for the next edition.

IDKpurplegarnet was always a bright presence in our comment section and her absence is deeply felt by those who got the chance to interact with her.

Thank you so much for being so supportive and kind Garnet. We hope you enjoy this zine too.

Rest in peace friend, we miss you.



