



Gavin Baen

Profession: Witch Hunter

Image: Stern Hunter

Reputation: Single-Minded

in

True Sight

A SIMPLE COMMUNION STORY

TO HUNT THE WITCH

AN HONORED CITIZEN OF THE OLD KINGDOM, GAVIN ENJOYS THE RESPECT OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE FEAR OF THE WICKED. HE PLIES HIS SKILLS HUNTING EVILDOERS WHEREVER THEY MAY HIDE. HIS COURAGE IS KNOWN IN THE RIGHT CIRCLES, WHICH GIVES HIM SUPPORT AND CONTACTS TO PURSUE HIS WORK TIRELESSLY THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM AND ITS STEP-CHILD, THE EASTERN EMPIRE.

A GRUFF, AGELESS 40-SOMETHING, THE WITCH HUNTER IS A NO-NONSENSE PROTECTOR OF CIVILIZATION AND ENEMY OF WITCHES EVERYWHERE.

HIS POWERFUL PRESENCE, HONED IN THE FACE OF DARKNESS, AND HIS FAITH SHIELD HIM AGAINST THE DARKNESSES THAT INFECT THE EMPIRE AND ROT IT FROM WITHIN. HIS SPOTLESS RECORD, HOWEVER, HE CREDITS TO THE FAITH OF HIS HOUND (A SUPERNATURAL SERVANT SENT BY THE GODS? AN ELVEN SPIRIT-BEING WILLINGLY SERVING A CHAMPION OF GOOD?) AND THE LOVE OF HIS WIFE WHO LEFT HER BLESSED IMMORTAL HOMELANDS TO TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH HIM, SERVING THEIR CAUSE.

HE IS A STRONG WARRIOR AND A TIRELESS INVESTIGATOR, IF NOT ALWAYS A GOOD POLITICIAN WITH THE FANCIER FOLK HE IS PROTECTING. WHEN PEOPLE HIRE GAVIN BAEN, IT'S BECAUSE THEY NEED PROTECTION AND JUSTICE, NOT FANCY WORDS.

GAVIN FOUND HIS WIFE IN PURSUIT OF AN EVIL THAT TOOK HIM PAST THE BOUNDARIES OF THE SACRED ELVEN PROTECTORATE. LOATH TO VIOLATE THEIR INTERDICTION, BUT HUNGRY TO PURSUE THE EVIL THAT WAS ROTTING THE OLD KINGDOM, GAVIN TOOK THE BATTLE TO THE FIEND.

FINDING STRENGTH IN ONE OF THE MYSTICAL PLACES OF THE ELVES, THE DEMON WAS STRONGER THAN HE IMAGINED, AND GAVIN NEARLY FELL BEFORE IT. AS A LAST RESORT, HE BURNED THE LAST OF HIS IRREPLACEABLE OLD KINGDOM RUNES TO TRAP WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A TRIUMVIRATE OF DEMONS INSIDE A MASSIVE REDWOOD TREE.

BLEEDING, ARM BROKEN, HE DRAGGED HIMSELF TOWARD LIGHTS GLIMPSED THROUGH THE TREES. GAVIN STAGGERED INTO THE LAST HOUSE OF LIGHT, A SMALL ELVISH ENCLAVE AT THE EDGE OF THE PROTECTORATE.

BY A POOL, LIMNED IN MOONLIGHT, HE SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FACE HE HAD EVER SEEN - ILLYRIA NANHIALLEN. HE GASPED WHEN HE SAW HER, AND RATHER THAN RUN BEFORE HIS BURNT AND GRISLY VISAGE, SHE WHISPERED BLESSINGS OVER HIM IN AN ELVISH HE BARELY UNDERSTOOD.

SHE TOOK HIM TO A SANCTUARY, AND IN THE DARK BLOODY HEALING THAT FOLLOWED, THEIR SPIRITS INTERTWINED. BY MORNING, SHE KNEW THAT HER FATE LAY WITH HIM, BEYOND THE PROTECTORATE, IN GAVIN'S PATH, HEWING THE TIDE OF DAMNATION.

THE LOWDOWN

There are a few things you don't let on to your clients (towns, outlying villages, forts along the border with the Great Northern Wilderness). For example, your hound is not a dog, nor is he the young man sometimes seen assisting you, or the woman who seems to leap occasionally out of nowhere to save you. The Hound is a gift from the one you serve, an intimate companion of sorts.

You certainly strive with all your might to keep to yourself the fact that you **are** a Witch, who has traded a lifelong servitude to Shadow and Flame in return for power in this world.

YOUR WIFE?

She is a Healer, 'tis true. And you met her where the stories she tells say you did. However, her healing powers - to the elves - are adequate but minor. Her hard-won skills as an assassin, learned in a dark 3 decades in the decadent Western Empire are so much more useful in your line of work anyhow. The demon blood burning in your veins is quick to heal your poor mortal frame.

Illyria's love and sincerity of commitment is a continuing inspiration to you, bolstered by the contrast of her flawless elvish manners. The fact that she has no morals whatsoever, and only plays nice because she enjoys it, and because you prefer it... well... that's certainly fun too.

THE HOUND?

It turns out he is your shapeshifting demonic familiar, suckling from the third nipple under your left arm each night to stay in this world and to affirm your connection to your Dark Lord. He is, however, very friendly and he never jumps up. You and the Hound enjoy a telepathic link when near each other. He's got quite a nose on him for the supernatural. He's often useful, if sometimes a bit more sardonic than seems respectful.

As an added bonus, Illyria simply *adores* him. She has ... strong passions, you see, beyond even your prodigious constitution. The *Hound* seems more than content to fill in and they just *love* each other.

One. Big. Happy. Family.

YOUR LINE OF WORK?

The usual...ferreting out 'witches' - often real ones (who serve another Demon Lord, of course! Can't have competition, now can we?). You also take the opportunity to discredit The excessively good and nosy and other witch hunters who seem to be getting too reputable and too interested in you. You avoid the corruption of the innocent. You are not a wicked man. You are devoted. Your desire to root out the corruption in the Empire is real, if... not exactly what it seems to be.

WHAT'S ON TODAY'S DOCKET?

You received a personal request from the Mayor of a little nowhere place called Faran's Outpost, one of the last human settlements to sit down close and flip off the Wolfen in their Great Northern Wilderness.

It seems that the Outpost has problems other than the usual predators, and people have started dying. Recently, in a grisly manner.

Dangerous.

Isolated.

Tense.

Sounds like your kind of place.

THE PAST

When you were younger, you were a weak and sickly boy. And as manhood came late upon you, the world weighed heavier. You were a decent man, trying to do his best in life. But being sickly and weak, you were often at the mercy of others, even those you wanted most to help.

When you lost a wife and young daughter to the coughing sickness that then came to claim you, it was simply too much to bear. And as you lay alone, sick, dying, weak, you called out, praying in a sense. Life was not over for you. It couldn't be. You would do anything to live. You called that out, first to the Gods, then to the Spirits, then to Anyone or Anything that would listen and help.

The Helper that came to you that night asked you if you were certain it were *anything* you would trade to live. You said yes, afraid, but certain. Not your soul, it promised, only lifelong servitude would be required. And your new Dark Lord would set you as a power on the world. All the strength you never had in life. You would be given immunity to the weaknesses of the mortal coil – poison, disease. You would be given a sip of the Dark Lord's blood to invigorate your flesh with supernatural strength and tirelessness. A servant of your own of great power would be sent to aid you.

Your Dark Lord thought he had just the work for you. You would be hunting the wicked. Saving the innocent. Most of the time.

So that was how it began. There was a terrible ritual you hardly remember with the Visitor.

Afterwards, you found yourself intact, in a way you had not thought to. You were the man you had always been, except now a power flowed through and supported you. Yet your sense of ethics seemed untouched, your knowledge of right and wrong unchanged. Perhaps serving the Shadow and the Flame, you could still redeem the world.

It was on your first journey, filled with new supernatural vigor, that by devilish providence, you met your wife, more beautiful than any human could ever hope to be, her visage a rarity among Elves known for their beauty. The two of you recognized each other for what you were, and feel deeply and terribly in love. She has served by your side, a remarkable creature.

In recent months, a sort of wild-woman has begun 'stalking' you. She is resourceful, relentless, doesn't mind waiting for you to 'change your mind' about your wife, and has even proven useful in the background cleaning up a mess or two.

No need to kill her yet. In fact, she may prove useful as a scapegoat ... or some other purpose.

Time will tell.