

# Villainous

By : **Sambelini**

Suppose you were shamed and ridiculed? Cast out like a demon, accused like a witch? Suppose they took everything from you, burned everything, killed everything - and then gave you a chance to get it back? It's fate, of course. Who am I to deny the destiny placed before me? I'm not a villain, my revenge is well-sanctioned. I'm not evil. I'm the Hero. It is time I came home. It's time I claimed my reward. It's been a long journey.

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## **Table of Contents**

Villainous Chapter 1

# Villainous : Chapter 1

## *Prologue*

I'm not a bad person. Despite any rumours or stories circulating, I can assure you I'm not nearly so bad as they sound. Sure, I live deep in the Darkwood, hidden in mystic shadows and magic mists. So what if I prefer to remain shrouded in mystery, lost to the world? I'm none of its business anyway.

My story begins herein, surrounded by things like me, I suppose. Not evil, just misunderstood. My homely Ruins. A place to cook up a new recipe for rain or fashion a fresh species of frog. Perhaps you've guessed it. I'm a witch.

That's why they cast me out. Of course, I wasn't a witch, but does it really matter? To adapt to the forest, I had to accept its mysteries. The trees seep black magic from every pore in their bark. If you can attribute magic as "black" or "white". One man's poison's another man's porridge, after all. Just like a single brew of mine can kill a man but make another immortal. It's more about the ingredients of the man than the brew.

I'll use any ingredient I find useful. No matter how impossible to collect or control, every herb or root has a weakness - to the cold, or saltwater, music, or silver. And I'm excellent at finding weaknesses. I found all of my own and made them into strengths. I can live forever, eternally in the blossom of youth. I never hunger nor thirst, yet may eat and drink to my delight. I am the Queen of the Darkwood, and the plants are my subjects. Not that I don't do my share.

Each morning I get up as, I imagine, the dawn is breaking in the citadel of Erlommen. The thick, brackish trees block any sunlight from my Ruins, but the Moonwood trees begin to glow soft silver moonlight as the sun rises over them. It's said their pale green leaves soak in the moonlight each night so that it shines out the branches and barkeach day. As they begin to softly glow, I gather fresh herbs and plants and sing to the buds so that they will grow. Don't you see, I'm not at all mean or brutish as they say. Perhaps I'm not as darling as my complexion, nor as sweet as the sonatas I whisper to the rosebushes. But not at all a bad person. I am writing this now in hopes that you will understand me, as I'm about to give reason to doubt. But you will see, I'm being perfectly just.

Tomorrow, I will poison the King.

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