

A SIREN'S SONG



S. R. RUARK

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A Siren's Song

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Chapter 1



The room was opulent even by the Dead God standards. Wall hangings of natural fibers in geometric patterns were used as floor coverings. Lush paintings and more natural fiber pieces of art depicting different planetary scenes of flora and fauna hung along the grey metal walls. Metal chairs cushioned with plush foam padding covered in spider silk for the Dead God’s managers, while each Dead God enjoyed lounging couches of material so soft to the touch that many would swear it was fur not woven fabric.

The table held cookware, dishes, and goblets of clay, glass, and wood. No two items the same as the other. Artisanal work, not factory made.

The silent servers were covered in natural fiber loincloths. Each server wore a different patterned material instead of a uniform color, denoting the use of material unique to each slave instead of using just one bolt for all. Several slaves had ribbons woven around arms or ankles, even in their hair. One woman with dark skin and blue tips at the ends of her braids had multiple thin strands of variegated blue ribbons woven through the rings piercing her upper and lower lips. The ribbons pulled the rings together so the woman could not open her mouth to speak or drink. The ribbons tied together at the corners of her cheek, giving her a false smile. The ends of the ribbons were done in complicated braids hanging down past her chin. Each ribbon ending in rare freshwater pearls and tiny gold and silver bells chimed cheerfully every time the woman walked or turned her head.

Chloefina watched the ribboned girl, standing next to Senodices as he reclined gracefully, her head bowed and hands clenched tightly together.

“New slave?” She asked, waving her glass goblet in the direction of the slave in question.

Senodices, smiled indulgently, a hand running down the girl’s bare back, ignoring the shuddering revulsion she hadn’t yet learned to hide. “Yes. A gift from Menodiscus. He asked if I would find the time for training. I find that ribbons are good for silence without wastefully cutting out her tongue.” His grin broadened as he dug pointed nails into her inner thigh. The girl tried to scream and back up, but the ribbons kept her pain muffled, and his fingers kept the girl in one place. “As you can see, more training is needed.” Blood coated his fingers as he removed his hand from between her thighs. He held out his coated fingers to another slave, who knelt with a towel and a bowl of water to wash away the mess.

Chloefina laughed, with an edge that made her slaves unobtrusively edge away if possible from their God. “Good luck with the training. Your pens always

produce the most docile yet intuitively helpful slaves I have ever had the pleasure of owning.” She tugged none too gently on the honey brown braided hair of the male slave kneeling on the floor next to her couch. Only the other slaves seated on the floor saw his face pale in anticipation of what she might do next.

“You flatter me.” But Senodices was not displeased with the other Undead God’s assessment of his training skills. He inspected his hand for flecks of blood under the nails after the cleaning. The cleaning slave was very thorough. Once Senodices was satisfied he motioned for the ribboned slave and the floor to be cleaned. They all ignored the girl’s tears and muffled sobs.

“It takes knowledge of how to tame a talking tool without breaking them,” Chloefina added, admiring the ribboned slave. “I would love it if a couple of my breakers could undergo training with you.”

“Breaking takes...skill. Not all breakers or Overseers have innate talent. However if you like I would be delighted to train a slave for you, or if you would like I have several who are extras in my household but excellent in all areas from managing to serving.”

Chloefina blinked in surprise. “I would very much accept your generosity. I could use a couple more household slaves.”

Menodices entered the dining room with only four slaves following. His silk robes as overstated as the room.

“My apologies at my tardiness. My second wife just gave birth to a young girl.” He took his place on the remaining seat at the center of the half circle. His slaves arranged themselves similarly to the other Gods slaves, one behind the seat, one at each end to serve and pour as needed. The one seated would lift any plate upwards so Menodices would not have to lean or lift, while eating. The Gods had only to talk and enjoy the meal set before them.

There were murmured congratulations. “Your dinner was precipitous. Had I known you were going to be blessed with another I would have brought a gift.” Chloefina said, smiling widely, lifting her goblet towards Menodices.

“Your company is what I craved. However, I am sure my wife would love some trinket or other.”

“She favors brunettes?”

“And perfumes,” Menodices confirmed as he accepted his goblet.

There was a general chuckle around the diners as the conversation returned to the previous discussions before Menodices arrived.

“We heard about your world ship being attacked. Were your losses great?” Chloefina asked, a thin veneer of civility covering delight over Menodices’ misfortune.

“Luckily it was only one small battleship, fleeing from my own than an actual attack.” Menodices snapped back, lips pressed into a flat line.

“Damn runaways are getting fearless.” Koarrass bemoaned, looking down into a highly carved wooden drinking goblet. “We need to bring them back to the ships. We need to remember what we are fighting!” His fingers touched the tree’s trunk on the goblet as if touching a lover’s face. Trees of any form were usually in

growing areas or rare living spaces, hardly large enough to hide the entire six limbed animals as the carving depicted.

Menodiscos looked over at his father with annoyance. More silver curls than black these days. Koarrass' days as a feared fighter had allowed his family to ascend to Gods on the world ship, displacing the former Undead God's family. Koarrass had kept the former God's wives, concubines, and daughters for his harem or kitchen slaves while killing all of the male lines of the necromancer. He stepped aside only a couple of years ago for his son, Menodiscos to rule the world ship. In exchange, Menodiscos kept his father for valued wisdom, though the font of wisdom was running dry as age started to take the formerly vaunted fighter's sharp mind down grey and blank corridors. Menodiscos tapped long fingers on the top of his kneeling slave's head.

"He does bring up a good idea, the runaways do need to be returned, and we just can't go head to head with them," Sendices grunted, spearing a sweet green fruit in light floral syrup with a two-tined silver fork.

"Not even our gladiators can go head to head with one of those four arm monsters they keep." Choelfina shuddered. She had seen the footage from one of the mines lost to the runaways' attacks. The mines were a total loss, and only half of the minerals had been saved from ships already in route. Those being loaded into shuttles as the runaways entered the solar system; the mining colony had been either detonated remotely by the overseer in charge or his God. The slave loss from death or absorbed into the runaways had been high, but mine slaves were cheap, counting less than the loss the mineral they mined.

"Poisons would just kill our own." Chloefina mused. She nibbled on a small round pastry with a dark sweet and spicy meat filling, held at mouth height by a shaved headed petite and pale skinned slave. Her family specialties were rare plants and extracts. Everyone took care to bring tasters to one of her parties. Another slave offered her a drink from a glass goblet. The bottom of the goblet was crackled and colored with beautiful golds and greens, matching Menodiscos' eyes. The comparison was not lost on Chloefina as she admired the drinking ware in her slave's hands.

"Gas jets set into hallways. Burn their damn fur off."

"Rather keep them alive long enough to skin. Those fur pelts are just gorgeous."

"I hear their own Redeyes God skins them when the mood strikes her."

"Not even we, skin our own just for amusement sake," Choelfina said indignantly, motioning for a plate of flat round biscuits with a shaving of cheese be brought closer for her selection.

"They do not understand the hardships they have on ships, believing the lies told. They'd rather raid us for supplies than admit their ships are old and dilapidated."

"It's not like we can talk to them to negotiate their return. They just keep trying to steal our ships and developing worlds."

"We've made an attempt a few times."

“Yes, and only gained one or two ships. A severe loss by that one horrid attempt.” Chloefina grumbled. “A few lost their world ships.”

“The skins and slaves the rest received as gifts before they were taken were nice.” Senodices murmured, into his drink as he lounged back into his seat. A slave knelt in front of him. He ran crumbed and greasy fingers through her thick blond hair before she could raise a moistened towel. He allowed her to clean both his hands when he had finished the primary wiping.

“Not being a fighter, I would seek commentary from those who supply the military with weapons, but isn’t a good percentage of the ship battles hand to hand?”

“Enough of it is. Yes.”

“Back to the idea of poison.”

“It would kill our troops, and trained troops are expensive.”

“Perhaps an antidote to our own, coating weapons and skin so that a touch would be lethal to the unwary.”

“Pfft. They’d have the formula figured out in one go or two at the least.”

“Poisons are like lovers. It’s never good to have just one.” Chloefina said, with a smile, holding her glass out for more wine. The wine was poured quickly, quietly and precisely as she liked from the slave with wide darting eyes behind her seat.

“And when they have all our poisons figured out?” Chloefina said testily, stabbing a tidbit with a two-tined fork. The force was more than the meat and fruit tidbit required.

“How many slaves and lovers can you do in a year?” Came the counter. “We can afford a few losses.”

“They would lose more than us, but every loss to them is far greater than our own,” Menodices said soothingly, to keep either woman from becoming overly angry. Ships at war would hamper his plans at this juncture. Later perhaps he would flame the engine fire to blow this matter up, but for now a gentle weld along cracks would be more conducive.

“Easier then refitting our planets and ships with jet flames that are just as likely to damage our ships as their fighters.”

“Perhaps traps though, of a less damaging nature.”

“More steel and minerals from the mines.”

“Better profit.”

“Selling the remaining Gods on the idea of this shouldn’t be too hard. With a well-written proposal and cost-effectiveness.”

“Your dinner parties are never boring, Menodices,” Chloefina said with a smile, leaning over to lay a gentle hand on his arm.

“They can’t all be blood and sex.” He took her hand, saying with a smile, as he kissed her fingertips.

She favored him with another wide smile, before settling back down into her pillow filled couch. “More fun those. Though this growth plan will be more to my wife’s liking.” Said Senodices.

“More profit?” Menodiscus asked, genuinely curious.

“More dead runaways. She still mourns her first daughter’s death at their hands.” Larentia’s mouth turned down at the memory of the girl’s death.

“A fighter, was she?”

“Yes. Well trained and well blooded. She met her death at the hands of one of those monsters.”

“I think if we talked to a few others who have lost loved ones at the runaways’ hands, we could present a stronger bloc with both monetary and emotional appeal.”

About the Author

My interests are widely varied, so much so that when discussing different types of genres and subcultures; I keep being asked which lane I'm driving in. All I can say is that my lane is usually all over the map! My stories are never just short stories. I think I have one, maybe two that I can/will call short, but even then they will end up being close to 75 page novellas. I keep a dream journal and a notebook just for one liners/off the cuff remarks because anything can and will be used! An SCA enthusiast with a wide range of friends and interest including but not limited to fencing, dancing, cooking and reading anything not being sat on by a cat.