

UNCONVENTIONAL DESIRES

ZOHEB MASHIUR

The pentagram flashed an impossible colour thirteen times just as the scented candles at the edges of the star were snuffed out. The wizard sweated nervously. The vial of blood at the centre exploded with a strange purple light.

The light solidified and shaped the silhouette of a woman. The form gained depth, colour and detail, until the succubus had completely emerged onto the mortal plane. The candles lit back up, the better for him to see her with.

The wizard, who was very young, gasped at the vision before him. She looked like what humans were poorly designed to imitate.

The demon squinted, trying to catch a glimpse of her summoner through the darkness of the room. What was it with humans and rituals in darkness? They had electricity in the Underworld, her people weren't barbarians.

Eventually she spotted him hiding behind a sofa. He was looking at her in a way that implied that he'd always suspected women had actual bodies under their clothing but this was his first time independently confirming it.

She waited for him to say something. He didn't.

"Yes, hello," she began, impatiently. "My name is Anya."

"Uh, hi..." he said, nervously. "I'm Ahnaf."

She smiled. "Are you going to come out from behind that sofa, Ahnaf?"

"Um. In a bit." He shifted, better concealing his lower half behind the backrest.

Anya arched her brow, amused. "Feeling a little uncomfortable? That's what I'm here for, right? Come on out and let's see if we can solve your problem, darling."

"Well, actually..." Ahnaf began, not budging. "I didn't summon you for, um, that."

"Huh?"

"Please, I'll explain, but first, could you..." he averted his gaze, "could you put those on? I'd feel more comfortable."

Anya followed his gesturing finger. He was indicating something hidden in the room's shadows. "Turn on the lights first?"

"Oh, sorry!" Flustered, he scrambled for the switch.

The lights revealed the room, but only added to Anya's confusion. It was a tasteful, very neat bedroom picked out in sober blues. Ahnaf himself looked healthier and better put-together than he had initially, but just as awkward. Strangest of



all was the pile of clothes laid out in neat stacks on the bunk bed. She quickly scanned several complete suits of tasteful and slightly conservative clothing.

"What sort of twisted fantasy are you trying to play out here?"

"Look, I know this is probably really weird for you, but... I'm just looking for someone to hang out with."

The succubus looked at him. "You're right, this is really weird."

"Put on some of those clothes, and I'll explain. Please?"

Anya hesitated, then moved towards

the pile. As she selected an outfit she said, "You know you don't have to say please, right? I'll do whatever you ask me to, and what you're supposed to ask is -"

"Yeah, I know. I'm not stupid. But... I'm just lonely, I guess. My twin sister left for university a few weeks ago, and my parents are on a vacation. I don't really have many friends and the house just feels empty. I was always interested in spells and rituals so I thought..." he shrugged, amused with himself. "Didn't think it'd work, though."

Anya frowned. He looked a lot more relaxed now that she was clothed. "So you summoned a succubus to be your friend?"

"Yeah. For a month, until my parents get back. You don't have to do whatever I say either. Just... be yourself, I guess?"

She opened her mouth to say something waspish, but stopped. She didn't really know what to make of his proposal but... after several centuries of constant summoning for just the one thing it would be nice to take a vacation.

Provided, of course...

"Do you have Sega?" she asked.

He blinked. "Sega? Wow, how long has it been since you've been up here?"

"Earlier today, actually, but most of my summoners don't let me play video games."

"Fair enough," he grinned. "We have stuff that's better than Sega. My sister and I gamed a lot, let me just get the TV ready." He began to make his way to the door.

Anya called after him, a sudden thought striking her that would explain the situation. "Um, Ahnaf. These clothes. They aren't your twin sister's are they?"

He frowned. "Huh, no? Why would you think that?"

"I mean, you wouldn't be the first human to ask me to -"

Ahnaf went pale. "God, no! That's disgusting!"

"And you know what they say about twins -"

"Stop talking, please."

"Okay." Anya toyed confusedly with the collar of her shirt. "Did you buy all this for me, then?"

"Yeah. I sort of... got a bunch of different sizes. I can change them out tomorrow morning if it's not OK."

"No, they're... nice. You have good taste." She smiled at him, sincerely. "It's rare in a male."

He smiled back. "Thanks. I'll go, uh, get the Wii ready..."

"The what?" she snapped to attention again, everything once more clear to her.

"Good lord," Ahnaf muttered.

Zoheb Mashiur is a prematurely balding man with bad facial hair and so does his best to avoid people. Ruin his efforts by writing to zoheb.mashiur@gmail.com