Y'know, I didn't choose to be evil.

... No, really, I didn't. Stop laughing at me, you bastard. It's your fault I'm here, after all. If anyone bears ultimate responsibility for the failure of the quest, it's you. If you hadn't been such an intriguing one to look on in the movies, or such an interesting one to read about in the books, do you really think that I'd have walked through that portal? Of course not. I would have stayed at home, writing fan fiction. But no. I couldn't get the thought of you out of my head. So I delved around on the 'net, looked around places I probably shouldn't have gone. And there it was. The spell. The one that brought me here. It looked safe enough.

... Well, of course it wasn't. I know that now. For starters, I know I should have looked for an indication of where it would drop me. As it was, turning up in the middle of Mordor was something of a hint that it wasn't exactly the best move I could have made, right? So I turn around to get the hell out of there, but the portal's gone.

... Yeah, yeah, I know, big hint number two. Shut up and let me tell the story my way, dammit. It'll be a bit quicker, and then He'll just kill you, kill me, and it'll all be over. So much for Arda, so much for the world I knew.

Don't even bother. The chains are welded. You should be proud - it takes time and effort to weld a chain shut, and it takes even more time and effort to explain the concept of "escape-proof" to an
orc. Yet He was so keen on getting hold of you that He spent that time and effort. Not to mention a number of orcs in the process. You're really popular around here. Really, *really* popular. He really does hold grudges for a very long time, you know. So don't try to escape. I don't fancy spending much time at the bottom of that volcano, and trust me, that's what I've been threatened with. An eternity at the bottom of Orodruin. Lucky me.

Oh, yeah. I'm getting sidetracked. Anyway, I come through the portal, I find myself in Mordor, I have just enough time to realise that the portal's shut the minute I step through it before I get picked up by a bunch of orcs. Apparently He'd been waiting for someone to be dumb enough to step through. I couldn't understand a word of what they were saying, of course.

Because the language I speak is different to the one that you speak. He's put a translation spell on me - one that wears off the minute I get more than five hundred yards from the path He has chosen for me to walk. See, I'm chained, just like you are. It's just that my chains are slightly different. Threats, isolation, lack of language. I'm chained to Him, for as long as He needs what's inside my head. That's not likely to be much longer, either.

Anyway, I'm taken by these orcs. Orcs which look somewhere between twenty and fifty times worse than the ones that they thought of for the movies, too. You can still see the elf in these ones, which is what makes it worse - there's the dream that if you can just wash the dirt off, clean the clothes up, tidy them up a bit, then they'll be redeemable. They're not, of course. That's what makes it worse than just having the goblins looking at me. At least the goblins are ugly outside as well as in. Orcs also smell worse than anything I've run across before. Worse than week-old sweat, worse than a pig farm, worse than a sewage treatment plant, worse even than powdered Parmesan cheese. So on top of being shocked by the transition from my world to this one, on top of the shock of not expecting to wind up where I did, on top of all the myriad shocks that come from suddenly winding up within the ashfall of a volcano...

Yes, that's where I picked up the scars on my face. Hot cinders will do that, you know. Oh hang on, of course you know. That's where you lost the eye, after all. Stop distracting me.

So, orcs smell, and I've suffered an assault to all of my senses in coming to this place. All of which means that I'm not really thinking properly when I'm being dragged off toward this tower. Mind you, given the architecture of this place - spikes, pointy bits, lots of black - I'm pretty damn certain that I've not landed in MordorDisney, which means that I'm panicking all the way. I've got at least some idea of who's going to be waiting for me.

Stop looking at me like that. I can cope with you hating me. Don't feel sorry for me. It's my own silly fault for being a fool.

And don't apologise either. I need to be angry with myself to be able to say all of this. I can't be angry if you're being sorry for me, or if you're apologising to me for the mess I got myself into. Can't you just hate me, and have done with it?
Yeah, I suppose so. It is a bit hard to dislike people on first acquaintance. Never mind, I'm sure I'll give you plenty of reasons to hate me by the end of this.

Anyway, I got taken into the tower and locked up in a cell, along with a lot of others.

...

What?

...

Well, of *course* I wasn't the only one to have been so damn stupid. I wasn't even the first to have been so damn stupid. There are another three prison levels below this one, all devoted to the Legolas Lustbunnies. Or at least, there were back then. But I'm getting ahead of myself, and getting ahead of the story. You keep distracting me. Stop distracting me. Life here isn't that pleasant, and I'd rather get it over and done with as soon as possible. The longer I draw this out, the longer I get to lie at the bottom of that volcano. So, you see, it's in my best interests to get this over with as soon as possible.

I got thrown into a cell, surrounded by a lot of others just like me. Well, some of them were just like me, geeky loners. There were a few tall willowy ones. There were even a couple of boys in there.

...

Don't be so surprised. Of course boys can be interested in you "that way". Where in the names of all the Valar do you think some of those more... inventive tortures came from?

...

Yeah, most of them were mine. But we're getting ahead of the story again. We were all cooped up together, told that only the strongest would live. Each day, the orcs would come and drag forth one member of our company, take them up to Him. They'd return later that day, generally as a mindless husk. They didn't live long after that. Most of them didn't have the strength to fight the rest of us for the scant food we were provided. They certainly didn't have the wits to realise that they needed to eat to survive. I don't know that any of them even had the desire to survive any more. In a way, that made it easier to kill them.

...

Let me spell it out, okay? There were about thirty of us in there. We got provided with food enough for three. #Right, there's another one, don't you frown; Chew the meat and hold it down; It's a tale they won't believe...#

...

I'm all right. Stop fussing. I'm going to be dead in a short while anyway. So are you. So it's not worth worrying about me.

I didn't have to start resorting to that anywhere near as soon as the others, though. I used to be very fat, or at least I was when I came here. I was able to live off my hump for a fair while before I started needing to join in the slaughter. I'd also been sensible enough to pack some rations in my pack, though the orcs got them before I did. I was able to last quite a while in that cell.

Of course, it eventually came my time to be dragged before Him. I'd been avoiding the meat for a
few days, due to my stomach feeling a bit queasy, and that was just enough for the others to push me forward for the orcs to take. No loyalty in the cells. So I was taken, and I'd barely the energy to sob. I was so certain that I'd wind up dead, so positive that I'd end up a gibbering wreck like the others. At that time, life was still sweet, I still wanted to hold on to it; the thought of having it taken from me unwilling was terrifying. Now, of course, I can't wait to be relieved of my burden.

You're looking at me with pity again. Stop it. Stop it, or I'll try some of the little tricks He taught me. I told you: hate me, but don't pity me.

...

Pity reminds me of who I was before I started all of this, of the weakling I used to be. I've no chance of surviving, of course, but I'd rather die as what I've become than who I was. At least there's a bit of a twisted status to being important enough for Him to kill personally. Now, do you want to understand why I've become this, or not?

...

Well, stop interrupting, and stop sidetracking me.

I don't know if I can truly describe what it felt like, that first time in His presence. I know, you've been there, but trust me, He was restrained with you. With you He was in a gloating mood, He wasn't searching for information. With me it was different. Let's put it this way: every single torture you had inflicted on you, every single one of them was mild compared to what I faced in the first minute before Him. To this day, I don't know how I escaped with my sanity intact.

Oh. That's right. I didn't.

My sanity got sandblasted away in the first moments, where my mind was scrabbling around and running before His Eye like a mouse on lino in front of a particularly nasty cat. In a very real way, I died that day, just like all the others. It's just that enough of me survived the first onslaught to pique His curiosity.

...

No, I didn't "go away inside my mind" or anything silly like that. I just stood there, and let Him wash over me. I didn't fight. I couldn't fight, I was so tired, so exhausted, so disgusted with myself. Yet He let me live. Even now, I wonder why.

I was taken from that place, and I thought the cells were my destination again. Instead, I got taken to a room. A room, with a tub, a bed, clean clothes, and food. Food. Not the swill that the orcs were giving us. Not the tattered flesh of my former cellmates. Actual food. Fruit. Oranges, in fact, and I've no idea where He got those from. Water in the tub. Covers on the bed.

Not that any of this meant anything at that point. I think I spent the first three days in that room huddling in a corner, afraid to touch anything.

...

Remember what I said earlier about my sanity having been sandblasted away? I wasn't joking. I didn't have enough of my mind left to function coherently. If I'd been put back into the cells, I would have been dead anyway. That's probably why He didn't have me put back there. I interested Him, and He wanted to look in my mind again. It took me three days before hunger and thirst overtook me enough that I could venture near the oranges. I took one, peeled it, revelling in the smell of it, the feel of the zest beneath my cracked nails. I figured that even were it poisoned, I'd at
least be able to enjoy the peeling for a while. At least until I encountered the inevitable razor blade.

...

You haven't seen my world. See, that's why He was so interested. The whole time He was looking in my mind for information that first time, I was running through all the various ways that He would probably kill me. I didn't realise until much later that He hadn't even realised that half of them were possible, let alone feasible. Now there's an eye-opener and no mistake - the half-living embodiment of Evil didn't know every possible way of torturing a human. He's a fast learner though. But then, you know that.

Anyway, after I finally mustered up the courage to eat that first orange, and found it good and sweet and oh-so-wonderful, I curled up on the floor, hoping to die in my sleep. No such bloody luck, unfortunately. When I awoke again, I found myself still in the room, but the fruit had been replaced. Apricots this time. Apparently He had seen them in my mind, and realised that they were my favourite fruit. Still no razor blades.

That day, I washed my hands and face, using water from the tub, then went back to sleep again, expecting to wake up dead. So it went on, for another few days. By the end of a week of actual conscious near-coherence, I was eating a full meal each day, wearing the clothes He provided, washing on a regular basis, and sleeping in the bed. After all, if I was going to die, I may as well die with a memory of comfort. Then I was taken back to His presence again.

...

No, I wasn't dragged. I actually walked. I was curious myself - I wanted to know why He'd put me into such a place. He actually explained that, by the way, when he offered me my options.

...

Oh yes, I got offered options. Just the standard two: join him, or die in an unutterably horrific manner. I chose to join him. Like I say, life was still sweet at that point, and I didn't realise quite how foolish I was being to hope that I could outwit him. He offered me all of my hearts desires, after all. What's not to like about such an offer?

...

Look, the alternative was back to the cells, all my limbs paralysed and power of speech removed, but mind wide awake and screaming the whole time while my former cellmates ate me. And that was just for starters. I signed on the line. Life was sweet, I'll say it again. I'd got hooked on life at a very early age, and I didn't want to try giving it up at that point. Put yourself in my place, then tell me you wouldn't have taken the chance.

...

I thought as much. Anyway, after that, I got taken back to the room, and left alone to recover from what had happened to me. I was provided with the orcish healing draught, which helped bring me back to much of my former strength, although I'll never lose the cinder burns on my face. I was beginning to think I'd gotten away with it when He came to me.

...

Oh yes, He put on a physical form, and came to me. A physical form much like yours, in fact, although there were a few fingers missing. He came to me in the night, offered me the pleasures of the body, and I accepted. Yet, while He was driving my body to distraction, enjoying my willing
submission, He was raping my mind, tearing it apart for the information He wanted. It was an ... interesting experience. It was one which I was to get used to, and even come to like. Eventually, I came to want it, to need it like air and water. While He was enjoying himself with me, I could feel I was alive. If He were to appear before me now, I would be on my knees before Him, begging Him to do it again, to give me that exquisite combination of pleasure, pain, comfort, torture, submission, domination. I would let Him do that to me until it killed me. He is addictive, if you let Him be.

It was my mind, eventually, that He got the information He needed from. Not much information, but just enough. He sent me back to get the things He wanted. He gave me gifts, of course, before He did this. I was given power, charisma, enough gold to be able to buy most of the planet, and the knowledge of what He wanted me to do. With that combination, I was able to do His bidding, buy Him the mercenaries, the technology, the spies He wanted. I was also very tightly leashed. I needed Him. I needed what only He could do to me. Sex was nothing compared to that. The desire for Him flowed through my blood, throbbed in my veins. As I said, I'm in chains just as strong as yours. It's just that He has me tied to Him, rather than to the cell wall.

When did it start to crack apart? Oh, but you see, it didn't. If things had cracked apart, you wouldn't be chained up in front of me. If things had cracked apart, that oh-so-precious Steward of Gondor wouldn't have fallen for the one who could understand him so very, very deeply. The one who could give him the pain he desired so much, the degradation he wanted so very dearly. Once Denethor was broken to my will, the palantíri belonged to Him. Saruman had come over to Him of his own free will. I was merely sent as a keeper, a watcher to make sure that the wizard didn't decide to defy Him.

Oh, the rumours were a bit exaggerated. I don't bathe in blood every night. No more than once a week, honestly. Oh, and the one about the virgin hobbits? Pure fabrication. For a start, it's far too difficult to find a hobbit on this side of the Misty Mountains at all, let alone on this side of the Andúin. And having found the hobbit, why waste time questioning them about whether or not they're virgin. They're all too damn coy for that, and it would interfere with the exsanguination. Oh, and you only need four of them to fill a bath, not a hundred. Or so I'm told.

Well of course I'm mad. I have to be. If I'm insane, I can do what He needs me to do - nobody expects sense of a madwoman. Anyway, when your little hobbit friend started on his daft quest to destroy the Ring (good idea, by the by; pity it didn't have a hope of working), He was watching the whole time. He sent out the Nazgûl to distract you all. After all, if you all thought you had the real Ring, you'd be kept busy by it - a large number of the leaders of Men, Elves, Dwarves, and Hobbits, all out of the loop, all concentrating on what happened to be a decoy.

Oh yes. It was a decoy. See, one of the things that He picked up from my mind when he was in there was a list of things which were hints and tips for an evil overlord. One of which was "If I learn the whereabouts of the one artifact which can destroy me, I will not sent all my troops out to seize it. Instead I will send them out to seize something else and quietly put a Want-Ad in the local paper". Once I'd explained to Him what that one meant, He agreed with a little plan that I came up with, which was to just hire a sneak-thief in Hobbiton to replace the Ring with a near-identical decoy. That "Ring" that Frodo had was designed to simulate the One - it changed size, it showed
the "ash nazg durbatulûk" and soforth when it was dropped in the fire, it even made Frodo invisible and drew the Nazgûl to it. But it wasn't the One. He had *that* for about ten years before the quest even started.

...

Why not let the quest go on? It kept you all busy, and looking in a completely different direction. Plus, He thought it would be so cute to see your faces when Frodo dropped the "ring" into Orodruin, and He was standing there intact. He was right. It was. I was watching it all on palantír. I would have thought you'd have been suspicious when it appeared that Sam wasn't affected by the silly thing. I mean, Frodo got a classic case of the placebo effect - Frodo thought that the "ring" he carried was the One, so it let Frodo show up all the nastiness and evil that was inside his soul. Of course, He *liked* that. I think He took notes, in fact. Expect to see a whole batch of new rings hitting the shelves any time soon.

See, this is the difference between the world that I come from and the world you live in. My world is full of nasty people thinking nasty things about one another. We're all that much closer to Him. You're all innocents here. Even He was comparatively innocent when He first started rummaging around in my mind. He had no idea of the capacity for darkness that humans carry within them, and how little is required to let that out. Even the black Númenoreans were fairly innocent. I think it's the effect of too much contact with the Valar. Even at your blackest, even at your darkest, none of the humans I've encountered here have come even vaguely close to my own capacity. Scary, no? Especially when you consider that I used to be a fairly ethical and nice person back home.

You're looking all pitying again. Do I have to hurt you more to make you hate me?

...

Well, yes, that would be nasty of you. And better than I'd expected, even at this stage.

Anyway, you know how the rest of it turned out. The Gondorrim and Rohirrim wiped out the combined orcs and Easterlings at Pelennor, and romped off to try and wipe out the Dark Lord himself. The "ring" got dropped in the volcano, the Dark Lord came out of his fortress, grabbed himself a couple of hobbits, a few choice Men, and the elf and the Dwarf. You wound up as my toy. Lucky you.

...

Now, now. You were lucky. The others are still His toys. Especially the hobbits. I could almost be jealous of them - He spends so much time in their company. But then, they don't know Him as I do. They haven't learned to enjoy what He does. Yet. But I know that they're close. Frodo particularly - there wasn't that far to go, after all. When that happens, He won't need me any longer. He'll have all the toys He needs. Besides, I'm getting dangerous. I'm too insane, too unpredictable for His purposes. While He thinks that I've been ... enjoying myself here, with you, my dear, I've actually been off destroying Nazgûl, sending orcs off to different places, terrifying that fool Saruman. I've been a bit limited in what I could do, but I think my last little trick will take the game.

...

You want an explanation? I suppose so. Well, this syringe here holds a nice little dose of insulin that I was able to pick up back home, before He pulled me back. I've kept it in reserve all this time. The last meal I fed you, dearest, dearest Aragorn, six days ago, contained a secret ingredient. Not much. Just a little ring. A little, little ring. A little Ring that He is going to miss terribly when He realises that it's halfway down your gullet, when you get thrown into the volcano. It's such a
terribly convenient garbage disposal, after all. And a six-day dead corpse isn't even fit for orc food. The orcs can eat me instead. I'm sorry about the cyanide, love, but it had to be done. You couldn't very well lead the armies of the West from inside this cell, and there's no chance He'd let you out alive. He hasn't found out about the ring. Yet. Call it my last little gift to a world I learned to hate.

Death isn't so very hard, after all.

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