Twitter Thread by Zak, the Attempter



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The Purleighan Realms: Dragonfall

Darsyx held him, but only just. Part of the God of Protection understood exactly what his friend was going through, and refused to bring his full strength to bear, but he worried that might have to.

Vrayl was not himself.

"WHO FUCKING DID THIS, NERMAL?! WHO!?" Vrayl lunged, and Darsyx slammed him to the tiled floor of Nermal's throne room. Vrayl let loose a strangled roar as Darsyx expertly wrapped one arm around his neck, locking it in.

The throne room shook as a pulse of Vrayl's power sent tiles flickering away like leaves in the wind. Even with Darsyx's arm around his throat, Vrayl still dragged himself back to his feet, another step closer. "SHE'S DEAD, NERMAL. MY TENLEE IS DEAD!"

"Vrayl," interjected Darsyx, trying not to snarl. "You need to calm down. Dont make me end you. Please."

Darsyx moved to tighten the choke, but Vrayl spun and dropped, neatly slipping free of the choke.

He whirled, claws alight with divine energy, the spectral form of his true self crackling around him. "WHO KILLED HER, NERMAL?! WHO FUCKING KILLED HER?! I TRIED TO BRING HER BACK, NERMAL. I TRIED TO BRING HER BACK.

I tried. I fucking tried and I tried and I tried and I couldnt fucking do it..."

He slumped, the spectral dragon surrounding him vanishing. Quietly, Darsyx sheathed his blade. Vrayl was likely one of the closest things to a friend that Darsyx had.

He understood the madness that seemed to be gripping him, and...I'd hate to kill him like this. He laid a sturdy hand on Vrayl's shoulder, but Vrayl didn't seem to notice. When he spoke again, there was something dead in his voice, something hollow.

"Who did this to her, Nermal. This is all your world. You know who did this. Tell me."

"Why do you want to know?" asked Nermal, uncharacteristically direct. Darsyx raised a single eyebrow at her, and she gave him a single glance.

An alarm went off in his head, and he spoke to her across their linked consciousnesses.

she responded.

Any other time, that response would have been playful, but now it was iron-hard and just as cold, the voice of the Goddess who had created the very world he stood upon. He steeled himself.

"Because if I can't have my Tenlee, I will have my retribution," Vrayl answered without hesitation, that same deadness permeating his voice. Another pulse of power flickered through the throne room. "It is my right."

"You have whatever rights I give you, Vrayl." Nermal's words were a whipcrack, lashing out across the whole throne room. "You're a God because I allowed it. You killed one of my children to become what you are, and you come into my throne room demanding things of me?

Who do you think you are, boy?"

Vrayl's power flared, rushing out to envelop Nermal. Darsyx never even had time to draw his sword before Nermal's own power reached out batted Vrayl across the room; a cat, playing with a mouse.

"'Your right'? You petty excuse for a god; you exist because I allow you to. You've done more to unbalance my world, my realms, my family, than any other being in creation, and you should be at my feet thanking me for not annihilating you the moment you'd served your usefulness!"

Vrayl pulled himself to his feet, eyes blazing, power beginning to shred reality around him. Darsyx sighed and stepped between them, drawing his sword; the blade seemed to drink in the light, and the air pulled away from it, as if the touch of the blade was agony.

Vrayl's claws glowed with an intensity that Darsyx had never seen save on his own blades, and suddenly, he understood.

"Stand aside, Darsyx. She knows who killed my wife, and I will have my retribution."

Vrayl advanced, and the hammer of his will went before him. Darsyx blocked the blow with his own divine might, and was shocked to find that the blow left his psyche ringing.

He stood firm, regardless; for all that Vrayl was fully in his domain of Retribution, Darsyx was equally within his domain of Protection. He would not fail. The thought rang hollow, alone in his own head.

A cold shock surged through the god. Nermal had shut him out?

"You will have nothing, boy," she snarled, her focus entirely on Vrayl. The world seemed to slow to a halt, and Vrayl froze midstride, face contorting with effort.

"Don't you get it, you uppity little human? Gods. Die. You killed my daughter for power. Someone else killed your wife, for the same hollow, greedy reasons. I owe you as much as I owe the dirt under my feet, boy. Nothing. You aren't even a god unless I say so.

You can only bear up under my glory because I say you can, you dont burn away to greasy shadows under my gaze because my will keeps you from being obliterated. You have nothing that I dont give you, boy!"

"Then...you...should never..." snarled Vrayl, and suddenly the binding he was under shattered, power crackling around him. "HAVE GIVEN ME ANYTHING IN THE FIRST PLACE!"

The Dragon-God surged forward, a hurtling wave of claws and power ripping through the air.

Claws met steel in a thundering shower of sparks as Darsyx blocked with a single blade of blackened metal. "Dont do this, Vrayl! Stand down; we know what you're going through, this can be forgiven. Go home!"

"MY HOME IS DEAD!"

Nermal watched as her husband and protector traded blow for blow with the enraged god. It was a battle that, had it happened anywhere else, would have been sung about, a saga for the ages.

For a moment, Vrayl had the upper hand, and then the tables turned, and then back again, as the two exchanged blows with a speed and skill unmatched by anyone else. Bloody lines opened up on the both of them.

Patches of broken scales scattered the ground like glittering diamonds with every well-struck blow of Darsyx's sword, and pieces of broken, black-metal armor skittered over the floor as Vrayl's punishing claws raked it away.

Then, as quickly as they'd come together, they sprang apart, eying each other warily.

"You've learned, Vrayl," Darsyx said softly. "You're formidable, in your way."

Vrayl said nothing, just watched, waiting. Darsyx shook his head. "You can still walk away."

The Dragon-God flicked Darsyx's blood off of his claws. It splattered the shattered floor tiles. "You could just tell me who to kill."

"I can't tell you what I don't know," Darsyx answered, his voice ringing with the power of his other domain, Truth.

Vrayl smiled then, but it was a cold thing that never reached his molten gold eyes.

"She can."

"But I wont. Did Darsyx break something in that thick skull of yours, Vrayl?" asked Nermal, sarcasm dripping thickly in her tone.

"I owe you nothing, not retribution, not godhood, nothing. In fact...you owe me."

Her will shattered the air into visible pieces, like shards of broken glass, hanging glistening in the air, as the spark of Vrayl's divinity suddenly burned into brightness that even the naked eye could see.

She crooked a single small finger at the spark. "I think I'll have back what you stole from me now, boy."

Darsyx let out a heartfelt sigh, stepping back. At least this would be an end to it. He'd see about calming his mate down, and then having Cayden wipe Vrayl's memory.

He'd put him in some quiet realm, someplace far from the damage. They could rebuild what would need to be rebuilt, and -

"No." The shattered nothing around Vrayl pulsed, once, then twice, and his spark flared brighter.

"What?" Nermal's voice was a low growl, mingling disbelief and incandescent rage.

"Before dragons, before retribution, I was Defiance, Nermal," he answered, speaking in snarled Draconic, Purleighan speech eluding him as he fought her irresistible commands.

"I am Defiance, and I said n - "

Vrayl froze, mid-word, and looked down at the midnight-black steel protruding from his stomach. A strangely comforting hand squeezed his shoulder. "I am...truly sorry, my friend."

The blade twisted, and a gout of blood left Vrayl's mouth, splattering the floor. With a practiced motion, Darsyx ripped the blade free, slicing out through Vrayl's side in a shower of crimson.

Vrayl hit the ground, a puppet whose strings had been cut as neatly as his own flesh had. He coughed, muffled by the blood welling up in his throat. Darsyx looked up at Nermal on her throne. She glared. "Finish him."

"I would prefer not to," answered her mate honestly.

Flames flickered around Nermal's eyes as her rage built.

"Are you defying me, my mate?"

Darsyx shrugged. "Not really. I didn't want to kill him in the first place."

Nermal stared at him for a long moment, then looked at the spreading pool of blood beneath the choking god.

"Then what do you suggest?"

"Craven."

"Craven. With the demons and devils and such."

"Craven, the prison, that nothing escapes from and nothing leaves without your express permission."

Nermal looked at him for another minute, then nodded, before vanishing in a swirl of blackness. Darsyx sheathed his sword and dropped into a crouch. "You get a second chance.

Craven is a shithole, but someone like you, especially as a god, even a broken one, should be able to do fine. Work hard, remember who you are. Maybe in a few centuries, I can get her to reassess."

Vrayl tried to speak, but the words were muffled by blood. Darsyx leaned in.

Vrayl spat blood onto the floor, and grated out: "Kill...me."

"Nah. You get a second chance."

"No...point. Dar...kill me now...or...regret it...later." The words rang with absolute Truth, and for a moment, Darsyx considered going against his previous thought and doing exactly as Vrayl recommended.

His hand found the hilt of his sword of its own accord, and Vrayl caught his gaze. The Dragon-God nodded. "Do it."

Darsyx's hand tightened on the hilt...and then he let it go. "We all deserve a second chance. You'll find yours in Craven."

He laid a hand on Vrayl's shoulder. The Dragon-God seemed to try to laugh, but all that came out were snarls of pain. "Shoulda...shoulda killed me...in...the beginning...Dar..."

Vrayl vanished, as Darsyx sent him to the prison realm. He stood, feeling the pain of his wounds, wincing a little as they pulled tight. "Maybe. But like you've always said, the gods, they just dont listen."

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