

The Secrets Hidden Beneath the World

The chamber echoed with heavy footsteps; a menacing sound probably with an even more menacing source. Nicolae stood up from his kneeling position in front of the collection of stone tablets lined up against the damp cavern walls. He turned to his companion "Already?!" The deformed monstrosity of a man that stood hunched over at the opposite wall snarled "Yu' a' not to question ma' judgment!" Nicolae jolted up from the floor and had the Nosferatu pinned against the wall in one quick motion. "Your filthy kind is prone to deceive, so I will question it." Nicolae revealed his fangs to the *thing* in front of him and continued; "The beast was not supposed to wake up, but somehow it did, why?"

The heavy steps of the beast came closer and closer. A soft yellow light painted the rocky interior of the long natural passage with a glistening glow. In one hand Nicolae held a small lantern and in the other the dirty collar of his guide; a short little *thing* they called Rattle. Perhaps once he had resembled a human but now he was more like a walking corpse; skin burnt to an almost meaty texture accompanied with infected sores and a deformed skull which Nicolae thought resembled that of a rat rather than a human. The echoes entered the tunnel from the direction where Nicolae and Rattle had come from just a couple of hours before.

"Y-yu' would make a wise choice to e-'elease me if yu' cae' f-fo' yu' own health N-Nicolae!" The threat fell on Nicolaes bad ear as his good one was occupied with gauging how much time they had before the beast would arrive. "Rattle, are you accustomed to fighting these *abominations*?" The violent shaking of the Nosferatus' head was all the confirmation he needed. Nicolae released his grip of the collar. Rattle dropped to the hard floor, landing on his rear end in an almost comical fashion. "I believe it will be upon us in maybe two - three if we are lucky - minutes. Prepare yourself: we might have to take this thing down." Nicolae turned his back to the despicable creature crawling on the floor. He moved his lantern towards the seemingly endless tunnel stretching out in front of him. "How far do you think this tunnel goes?" Rattle, who somehow had managed to rise from his awkward position on the floor, crept up to the left of Nicolae "I would guess tha' this tunnel will lead futhe' down, po'bably into one o' those dungeons we found ealie'" Rattle was visibly shaken, but his voice was as ridiculous as ever, so Nicolae took him by his word. "Then we have no other choice but to protect these stone tablets ourselves." Rattled swallowed hard as parts of Nicolaes body began fading into the darkness..

A deep growling started to fill the atmosphere. Rattle had never really been one for fighting but he had a couple of tricks up his sleeves. *"If not fo' that stupid Lasom'ba powa' I could've atleast been able to see ma' mude'e in te' eye"* Rattle thought for himself as he focused his mind. In the complete darkness shapes began appearing in Rattles' field of vision. He saw what most likely was Nicolaes aura spread out in the air and further down the tunnel a hulking mass of auras all crammed together in one large pile of moving flesh *"Well, would yo' look at that, even the geate' Nicolae is sca'ed"* Rattle shook his head violently at the thought, *"Now is not the time fo' petty jealousy, my time will come"*. He watched the large mass slowly walk with two enormous legs grafted on to the large lump of flesh that Rattle would call its body.

Rattle pulled out his knife from its sheath with his left hand, careful not to make a sound. Using the wall as his guide Rattle fumbled in the darkness for one of the stone tablets on the ground with his right. He felt his fingers run across the deeply engraved words on one of the tablets *"Not this 'un..."* he leaned back a bit more to locate the next, all while keeping his eyes fixed on the monster closing in. As his fingers moved across another stone tablet he swore to himself *"Fuck, not this one eithe'".* He realized he would have to take another step back since he could not reach far enough. Slowly, with care, he took a step back not realizing his angle against the wall. He bumped into a stone tablet behind him that began falling over.

"Shit shit shit shiiit" Rattle, fully aware of the immediate danger dove backwards to catch the falling stone tablet. Just as the tablet was about to hit the ground Rattle managed to catch it with his face; it made a hard thumping sound as it cracked his nose. The monster froze in place and started to turn towards the source of the sound, but Rattle was too focused to even notice. He raised his right hand to the tablet and let his fingers run across it *"Bingo!"* he located the ancient words he was looking for. He moved the blade in his left hand towards his stomach. As he began transcribing the spell onto his skin, the monster started to move, quickly towards him. Rattle had to muster all his will as to not shit his pants at that point. The monster located Rattle, probably by the smell of blood oozing from his stomach. It took aim with its foot and raised it above Rattles' body. Just as the monster was about to strike him, an enormous force hit it from the right throwing it into the wall. Rattle took this opportunity to etch the last stroke into his skin. As he did, a great pain flooded into his body quickly shifting all his senses into overdrive.

Nicolae focused on the sounds around him. The darkness was a great cover and it ensured his own safety, but Rattle was still exposed. No matter how much Nicolae disliked Rattle, he could not afford to lose him. He was the only one to Nicolaes' knowledge who possessed information about these stone tablets, and he had yet not shared it all.

Suddenly, a loud cracking noise echoed through the tunnel. Nicolae reacted swiftly, summoning his abyssal arms to aid him. He could hear that the monster began rushing towards the sound, and with nothing but the banging noise of its heavy footsteps Nicolae took aim. To his own surprise, the dark tentacle hit which threw the monster into the opposite wall. Another arm appeared besides the monster. Nicolae struggled to hold down the hulking mass with his second abyssal arm.

Behind him Nicolae could hear Rattle scream in extreme pain. Nicolae commanded his body - the darkness surrounding them - to assemble. The darkness quickly took shape around his consciousness, and as it did the lantern on the floor began lighting the scene once again. As Nicolae regained his body he glanced at the monster, a huge abomination made of flesh and bones, struggling to be free from the grip of a long, dark tentacle sprouting from the shadows behind it. Nicolae spun around to see Rattle twisting in pain, bleeding profusely from his abdomen. A stone tablet had fallen over his face, which would explain the earlier cracking noise. Nicolae shuddered at the thought of having ones face crushed by such a large hunk of stone.

Slowly both Rattle and the monster began struggling less and less, until they were both completely docile. Confused by this turn of events, Nicolae approached Rattles' unmoving body thinking he had met final death. But, to Nicolaes' surprise, Rattle raised has arms towards the tablet and began lifting it from his face. Nicolae hurried to help him, but as he came closer he could feel his own body getting weaker. His vision blurred, and just as Rattle revealed his face, the last thing Nicolae ever saw was his eyes. Rattles glowing red eyes...

As Rattle stood over the unconscious body of Nicolae he could not help but to grin. Nicolae gripped his knife with both hands, raised it above his head. As he lunged the knife into Nicolaes' heart he screeched "Long live ou' fathe', long live Nefus Scellus!"