

The redemption of Danlael:
A Baldur's Gate story

written by

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INT. CASTLE'S CORRIDOR-NIGHT

Danlael paces the corridor with heavy steps. He surrounded by a dozen faces painted on the walls, prisoner of their gaze. Each one seemingly judging him and his shameful actions. He could feel the disgust as they walked past them.

At the end of the corridor, a door swings open. Sionia stands there, staring down at him. Her puffy yellow dress and her loose hair make her appear almost innocent—an unsettling contrast to her usual demeanour. With a cold gesture of her chin, she beckons him inside. Danlael, biting his lips, approaches her with the tension of someone walking to their execution.

She closes carefully the door behind him and sits at the oak desk. Danlael remains frozen in the centre of the study. For a short moment, he feels like a kid again, shame written all over his face.

SIONIA

I hope you understand the gravity
of your actions.

DANLAEL

I do. I really—

Sionia raises his hand, cutting him off.

SIONIA

I do not care for empty excuses. Do
you have any idea how old that bust
was?

DANLAEL

Absolutely, nothing compares to—

SIONIA

It was an offering from the House
Balceran. It took me hours to
convince them that your actions
were not a declaration of war but
merely the blunders of a clumsy,
ignorant child. Are you a child,
Danlael, or an adult?

DANLAEL

An adult. And I should have been
there to apologize.

SIONIA

Do not worry, you will apologize—
both to them and to me.

(MORE)

SIONIA (CONT'D)

How embarrassing it was to reassure them that my son was not the dangerous vampire slayer of the songs, but rather an imbecile. I have never been so humiliated.

Danlael has nothing to answer. He only holds her cold stare.

SIONIA (CONT'D)

You will serve in the crypt until I change my mind. If your brother were here to see you, he would be deeply disappointed.

Danlael's eyes widen.

DANLAEL

Mother, please, I—

SIONIA

I will not hear another word. Go, and leave me be.

Danlael takes a long look at his mother, at her delicate, yet frightening elegance. He nods, turns, and leaves the study.

EXT. CASTLE'S YARD—DAWN

Two soldiers stand a distance from the crypt's entrance, letting Danlael alone, close to the door.

OLD SOLDIER

So, it's true what they say? We're going at war with the Balcerans?

YOUNG SOLDIER

Couldn't you just, I don't know, perform a duel for honour or some shit like that?

OLD SOLDIER (GRUMPY)

I don't want to go to war over a stupid bust. I fought in enough pointless wars.

DANLAEL

There will be no war, I promise. I am exiled to the crypt, that is my price to pay.

The two soldiers exchange pitiful looks.

OLD SOLDIER

Well, at least you still have your
honour and your songs, kid.

YOUNG SOLDIER

That's true! You're the greatest
vampire slayer of our generation!

To this word, Danlael swallows hard, avoiding their gazes. The crypt's door opens, revealing a figure in a long black cloak holding a torch—one of the crypt's priests. Danlael enters, and as the door closes behind him, he receives one last pitiful smile from the soldiers.

INT. CRYPT'S STAIRS—NIGHT

Danlael follows the mysterious priest down the stone stairs, the only light coming from the torch.

DANLAEL

Is it true, what they say about
this place?

The Priest remains silent. Danlael is troubled by the echoing sound of their footsteps in the darkness, feeling trapped as if in a box.

DANLAEL (CONT'D)

Are they many priests in the crypt?

The Priest ignores Danlael's attempt at conversation.

DANLAEL (NERVOUSLY LAUGHING) (CONT'D)

Where do you get your food anyway?
I have never heard of food being
delivered here.

No reactions from the Priest.

DANLAEL (CONT'D)

How many priests have died here?

At this, the priest stops and turns to face Danlael, their face still hidden by the hood.

PRIEST (IN A LOW, RASPY VOICE)

We don't speak of that here.

Their voice is deep, weak, almost sickly. Danlael falls silent as they continue down the stairs.

INT. DANLAEL'S ROOM IN THE CRYPT-NIGHT

Danlael's room is stark and colourless. The walls are bare rock with no decorations or shelves. There is only a thin mattress on the floor, without sheets or a pillow. A single candle rests on a small box. Nothing more.

When the Priest leaves and closes the door behind them, Danlael sighs, finds his bed, and collapses onto it, crying himself to sleep.

INT. CRYPT'S CORRIDOR-NIGHT

Danlael paces the corridor of the crypt. On every side, there were heavy wooden doors, decorated with jewels. His pace is slow and weak, as if he might faint at any moment. He's uncertain how long he's been here, but his body feels increasingly frail, and his mind is shrouded in fog.

A heavy noise echoes from behind one of the doors, like a rock hitting the ground. Danlael freezes, reaching for his sword. He doesn't dare move.

Another noise follows, sounding like someone hammering on rock. Someone is in one of the rooms! Danlael takes small, cautious steps, positioning himself in front of the door. Danlael fumbles with the keys at his waist, trembling as he tries to find the right one.

More hammering noises.

Danlael hesitates.

The old soldier's words echo in his mind:

OLD SOLDIER (O.S.)

Well, at least you still have your
honour and your songs, kid.

Danlael takes a deep breath, chooses a key, and slams the door open. He raises his sword, assuming an awkward combat stance.

DANLAEL

Do not move! You are under arrest!

The coffin's lid is broken. A shadow rises from the darkness, hands raised in surrender.

DANLAEL (CONT'D)

I said, do not move!

ASTARION (AMUSED)
Do not worry darling. I don't
intend to. You've got me.

Danlael holds his weapon high but is too afraid to advance. A tense silence fills the room. Danlael notices the stranger's red eyes in the darkness. A vampire. Danlael almost chokes on his own saliva.

ASTARION (POINTING AT THE
SWORD) (CONT'D)
Are you going to use that?

Danlael approaches cautiously, sword still aimed at him. When Danlael is close enough, Astarion quickly grabs him and throws him to the ground. Astarion then draws his dagger, but Danlael fights back. They begin to struggle until a loud noise like an explosion shakes the ground beneath them, and they fall into darkness.

INT. COLLAPSED CRYPT-NIGHT

Danlael opens his eyes to nothingness. His body aches, but he can move his limbs. Then, reality sets in: he is trapped in a collapsed crypt with a vampire. He's breathing rapidly, sweat beading on his forehead. He stands, legs trembling.

DANLAEL (YELLING)
Stay away from me! Wherever you
are!

He searches for his sword on the ground next to him, but doesn't find it.

DANLAEL (CONT'D)
I will kill you if you come closer!

ASTARION (AMUSED)
Oh please, let's skip this boring
foreplay.

DANLAEL
Are you going to torture me?

ASTARION
Oh, absolutely not. Why would I
stay trapped here with a
decomposing body? Urgh, I'm not
going to inflict this fate upon
myself.

Danlael has no reply. He keeps searching for his sword or any weapon he could use. He moves cautiously, fearful of encountering the vampire.

After a while, Danlael still hasn't found his sword. The coldness of the crypt is turning into oppressive heat. Disoriented, he looks for a loose rock he might move and open an exit.

DANLAEL (PANIC BREAKING HIS VOICE)
We're going to die here!

ASTARION
Well, not all of us.

Danlael freezes. They fall into silence as Danlael searches for an escape, feeling blindly along the rock walls.

ASTARION (CONT'D)
Don't bother, I don't see any escape.

DANLAEL
I can't believe this is happening.
This is all your fault!

ASTARION (WITH A SNOB TONE)
Excuse me? I am not the one who chose to have this ugly crypt collapse on us.

DANLAEL
How can you say that?

ASTARION
Oh, trust me. You would say the same thing if you saw the competition. This is—

Danlael ignores him and continues searching in the dark. His hands discover the edge of a large, rectangular container. A coffin. Maybe there's a weapon inside.

ASTARION (CONT'D)
Oh dear, I wouldn't stick my hand in there if I were you.

Danlael disregards the warning and traces the inside of the box, finding bones wrapped in clothing at the bottom. He pulls his hand out, falling onto his back. Astarion laughs.

ASTARION (CONT'D)
I warned you not to be curious, didn't I?

Danlael wipes his hands on his pants, his panic shifting to anger.

DANLAEL

What in the world are you?! Why are you not attacking me?

ASTARION

Name is Astarion, disenchanted to meet you. And if you must know, your blood smells rancid. I'd prefer to avoid tasting it.

Danlael is disappointed to have been right.

DANLAEL

Do not play dumb with me. I know what you are.

ASTARION

I certainly hope so, given your prestigious family.

DANLAEL

So you know that once I find my sword, I will turn you to dust!

Astarion laughs sarcastically. Danlael searches the floor, tapping until his fingers finally grasp his weapon.

ASTARION (YAWNING DRAMATICALLY)

I doubt that. You are not the legendary vampire slayer Danlael Farlan.

Danlael raises his weapon, ready to fight.

DANLAEL

I am! I am the vampire slayer of the Farlan family, flesh and bones right in front of you. I will erase you from existence!

Astarion laughs. He gets up from his corner and brush off the dust from his clothes.

ASTARION

Oh darling, I know a thing or two about the Farlan family. First of all, their best slayers always know how to handle a sword.

Astarion moves closer, gently tapping the sword blades with his dagger. Danlael flinches and slashes the air with his weapon. Astarion dodging easily.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

Easy now! I will not harm you.
Well, if you don't harm me first,
that is.

DANLAEL

Liar. Monsters like you are all
liars. My family will come and
rescue me. All the Farlan slayers
will come to exterminate you.

ASTARION

Isn't that amusing? One of us is
delusional, and it's not me, for
once.

Danlael's expression shifts from fear to confusion.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

Oh please, don't give me that
pitiful face. I know I'm a monster.
Can you say the same about
yourself?

DANLAEL (JAW CLENCHED)

I am not a monster.

ASTARION

Have you always been a filthy
little liar?

Danlael is stunned as Astarion sits back on a rock, crossing his legs.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

You can pretend all you want, but I
don't see a vampire slayer in front
of me. Nor do I see a hero. You're
exiled to this crypt for a reason,
and I'm sure it's a juicy one.
Please, tell me everything.

Danlael's legs tremble. His heart beats fast in his chest.

DANLAEL (HESITANT)

No, I—I just broke a bust.

ASTARION

Oh, is that so? That's all you did?
Are you sure? Think about it and
take your time. I'll wait.

Danlael steps back, his arms weakening from holding the sword. Even under normal circumstances, it always feels too heavy. He collapses on the ground.

They stay in silence for a moment.

Finally, finding his courage, Danlael breaks the silence:

DANLAEL

I am not a liar, I am Danlael, the
vampire slayer—

ASTARION

Please, it's obvious you're a
fragile little man. This sword is
too heavy for you, and you were
trembling even before the collapse.
You're not the slayer you pretend
to be. It's okay to be a fragile
little man, you just have to
embrace it.

Danlael doesn't answer. Tears well up in his eyes, and he struggles to control his emotions.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

Don't fret, my dear filthy liar.
Haven't we all lied to ourselves
before? You have a chance to come
clean. Go on, tell me. Who are you
behind this mask?

DANLAEL

Why should I tell you anything?

ASTARION

Well, it's your conscience, not
mine. Again, one of us will die
here and it won't be me.

DANLAEL

Stop trying to get under my skin,
vampire.

ASTARION

Is this how you plan to pursue your
road to redemption? It's unusual,
but you've piqued my curiosity!

DANLAEL

What were you even doing here?

ASTARION

See? This is why it's so obvious you're a fraud. The *real* Danlael would know why I'm here.

DANLAEL freezes in place. Astarion smiles in the darkness, playing with his dagger.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

If I tell you, you must reveal one of your secrets.

DANLAEL (INSULTED)

Absolutely not!

ASTARION

A secret for a secret. It's only fair, don't you think?

Danlael sighs and rubs the bridge of his nose.

DANLAEL (RESIGNED)

Fine.

ASTARION

So, one of your ancestors was buried with a precious book that I want to acquire. Simple, isn't it?

DANLAEL

What book? What are you seeking?

ASTARION (DRAMATICALLY)

I want to walk in the sun. There it is, the grand truth! Mystery solved!

DANLAEL

Why would you want to walk in the sun? Easier to bite people?

ASTARION (LAUGHING)

No, because—

(sigh)

Because I miss the caress of the sun on my skin.

Danlael doesn't answer, staring at his feet.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

Recently, I was blessed with the power to walk in the sun. It didn't last, but it was a joyful moment. I would love to experience it again.

DANLAEL (melancholic)

I have to admit, I'd probably do the same if I were you. I've been locked up here for weeks and I miss the warmth of the sun, the bright, lazy days I once enjoyed..

ASTARION (CONT'D)

It's your turn now. Tell me who you are. I want to know who I'm speaking to.

Danlael's body shakes, his throat tightening.

DANLAEL (VOICE CRACKING)

My name is Cederyk. I am Danlael's brother. You are right, I am a fraud. I never intended for any of this to happen.

ASTARION (ANNOYED)

Spit it out already! Did you murder your brother?

CEDERYK

No!

ASTARION (WITH DISAPPOINTMENT)

How boring of you.

CEDERYK

He-He died, slaying a vampire and.. I was the one who found him. I couldn't be the sole survivor, you know? I am not like him. I am not the pride and joy of my mother. And since no one ever knew his face, apart from our family, I thought I could-

Astarion bursts into laughter.

ASTARION

This is the stupidest thing I've ever heard. You thought you could fill your big brother's shoes? How's that working out for you?

(MORE)

ASTARION (CONT'D)

Oh wait, you don't need to tell me.
You're here!

Cederyk remains silent, head bowed.

ASTARION (CONT'D)

So, how many times have you
humiliated your family to end up
like this?

Astarion gestures at the rubble scattered around them.
Cederyk shrugs.

CEDERYK

I wanted to be great. To be loved
by people. To be cheered by the
crowd. It was thrilling while it
lasted.

Astarion's expression turns serious as he gazes at Cederyk.

ASTARION

Dear, you are such a pitiful sight.
We will get out of here and you—
what's your name again, Cederyk?—
You will have to solve your mommy
issues and redeem your name. I'm
sure your brother is turning in his
grave as we speak. Pray for him or
whatever you humans do for your
deads.

Cederyk looks up, startled by Astarion's words. There's a
flicker of determination in his eyes.

CEDERYK

If we escape, I promise I'll do
that!

ASTARION

It's settled then! But first, we
need to figure out how to get out
of here. I refuse to be trapped
with a miserable fraud like you.
Come on! Hop hop, on your feet,
slayer, and help me move those
rocks over there.