

## The Eye

The Dark Library which was right in a shadowy, extra gloomy corner of the Great Hall of Gloom. Gargon had told her that the Eyebrarian was the custodian of the Library and that it was called the Dark Library for a reason - it was literally pitch black. She didn't like the sound of that! Not to mention the problem of trying to find books in the dark. She'd asked Gargon about that, but he didn't know – he couldn't read anyway, so it was of no interest to him.

She'd asked what the Eyebrarian was, but Gargon didn't really know that either. All he could say was that it lived in the Library and knew lots of stuff. 'Lived' in the Library. That kind of worried her. What sort of thing lived in pitch darkness? And with such an odd name.

Gingerly, she passed the Ring over the great black-wood Library door, carved to look like the cover of some ancient book of dark spells. It clicked open. She stepped into a little vestibule with another door ahead of her. Behind her the door shut, plunging everything into almost impenetrable darkness.

She felt a rising sense of fear. She didn't like the dark, she didn't like it at all.

Carefully she groped her way to the next door. It hissed open, releasing a waft of ancient, musty air that smelt like really old books but with an underlying whiff of something else, something she had never smelt before, something slightly acrid and sharp.

She stood before the yawning blackness of the doorway, uncertain. She couldn't see more than a few feet in front of her. The only light was that given off by the ring, reflected off the Moonsilver cloth of her dress that Hans the Disembodied Valet had made for her. There was no sound, save for the ever growing hammering of her heart. She gulped. What she really wanted to do was make a run for it, but she had no choice. She had to go in, find the Eyebrarian, find what the Black Slayer's weakness was.

Her heart in her mouth, she stepped forward. Her footsteps seemed to echo like bells ringing in some benighted Cathedral of Hell. Slowly she walked on into the Dark Library, a tiny sphere of faint silvery light in a vast black gulf of impenetrable nothingness.

Sooz stopped suddenly. What was that? She'd heard something, she was sure of it! There, again! A little skittering sound. Getting closer. The pitter-patter of feet, tiny feet, and several of them! How many... things... were there?

Sooz began to shake with terror. The the weird sound had tipped her over the edge into full blown terror.

'Who... who's there,' she said in a half moan of utter fear.

The sound stopped suddenly. All Sooz could hear was her own laboured breathing and the thud, thud, thud of her heart. She raised her Ring hand and concentrated. The

Runes began to pulse, giving off a reddish glow that pushed back the dark just enough to see by.

With a thrill of horror she saw something in the red light - s a huge eye, glistening wetly in the light!

‘Aieee!’ she cried at the top of her voice.

The eye recoiled back as if in terror too. A huge eyelid came down, and two spidery legs crossed over its ‘face’, as if shielding itself from some threat.

Sooz stared at it, still shivering but not quite so scared now. The spidery arms came away, and the eye opened. And blinked once. And stared. And blinked.

Sooz stepped forward for a better look. It was a single eye, a great big eye, about three feet wide and resting on six spidery legs. That was why its footsteps sounded like several people walking at once. Weird!

‘Hello,’ said Sooz tentatively.

The Eye said nothing but it seemed to nod as if in greeting. It had an expression of quiet docility in its eyes. Well, eye, that is. Placid even. It seemed to be waiting for something.

‘Umm...’ said Sooz.

An eyebrow was raised above the eye, as if to say, 'Yes, can I help?'

Sooz stared at it open mouthed. The Eyebrarian - for that was what it was – shifted from foot to foot to foot impatiently.

'Ummm..' said Sooz.

The Eye seemed to glare at her in annoyance. It raised its two front legs, each of which ended in a three fingered hand and opened them up, palms toward her, as if to say, 'Yes, well, what is it?'

'Err... the Black Slayer,' said Sooz.

The Eyebrarian held up a hand, extending a single finger. It seemed to nod. Then it turned and skittered away. Sooz stared after it. It paused, turned again, and waved for her to follow.

Then a beam of pale, light suddenly burst forth from the Eye, lighting the way ahead like a searchlight.

Sooz could see rack upon rack of dusty tomes and grimoires, stretching away into the shadows as she followed the strange Eye Spider. Eventually, it turned down one aisle and after a few steps turned its searchlight beam onto a certain shelf.

Gingerly, Sooz walked up beside the Eyebrarian. On closer inspection, she could see its legs were covered in dark fur, as was the back of its Eye. And that was really it. Its body was basically a big Eye. No mouth or ears or nose or neck or anything. Just an Eye on legs.

The Eye turned toward her, blinked its light off, and stared up at her, blinking once again. It was quite cute really, in a freaky kind of way, Sooz thought to herself.

The Eyebrarian turned back to the shelf, and lit it up again with its Eye light. She could see a sealed ebon box, inlaid with glyphs and runes. Where the lock would be was the Seal of Dirk. Sooz passed the Ring over it, and the box lid flipped up with a click. Inside was a rolled up parchment and a strange looking stoppered glass bottle. Inside the bottle, curious charcoal grey shadows whirled and flitted.

The Eyebrarian reached up with a three fingered hand, closed the box and tucked it under its arm. Then it turned and skittered off down the aisle, motioning for Sooz to follow.

After a short while – Sooz had absolutely no idea about direction or location – the Eyebrarian led her to a low desk. It put the box down, opened a draw, reached in and pulled out a little card. Then it drew a black-feathered quill from an inkpot and wrote on it, before handing it over to Sooz.

The card read:

Dark Library Card

Black Slayer's Bane

Checked out on 2<sup>nd</sup> of the Month of the Dark  
Moon of Sorrows by:

The Eyebrarian gestured for her to sign her name.

She wrote 'Queen Sooz, Dark Lady of the Tower and Mistress of the Darklands' and handed it back. The Eyebrarian stared at it for a moment, blinking. It looked back up at her and sort of curtsied on six legs. Then it filed the card, handed Sooz the box, and reached for a little filing cabinet on the desk.

It handed her another card along with a quill.

Dark Library Service Assessment Form

How was the service provided for you today by  
your friendly, neighbourhood Eyebrarian?

Was it:

- a) Excellent
- b) Good
- c) As expected
- d) Poor
- e) Very bad

Sooz smiled and ticked Excellent. The Eyebrarian took the card quickly, and read it. Then it hopped about on various feet ecstatically.

Sooz shook her head. How sweet it was! She petted in gently on the back of its big eye. The Eyebrarian stared at her in surprise. A little tear seemed to well up in the corner of its great eye. Suddenly it hugged her leg.

‘Whoa, all right there, curious eye dude,’ she said, a little taken aback, but also flattered.

The Eyebrarian stepped back, and looked up at her devotedly, blinking rapidly. It reached up with a three fingered hand and wiped the tear away with a black silk hanky. Then it filed the assessment form in a little box.

Curious, Sooz reached over and opened the box. Inside were hundreds of assessment forms, no doubt filled in by Dirk over the years. She took a quick look. They were all either Poor or Very Bad! Wow, Sooz thought, Dirk was mean! No wonder the poor little thing liked her so much.

Sooz took the box with the scroll and then asked the way out. The Eyebrarian led her to the exit. Time to find out what the Black Slayer’s Bane was all about.