



Creative Writing Sample

Talisman by Christine P. Rose

Chapter One

There was only one talisman left for the Demonians to find. It was all that separated Mera and its remaining inhabitants from extinction. The Demonian Chieftain could smell victory through the giant nostrils on his elongated snout. Saliva dripped from a mouth full of railroad spike teeth as he sniffed the air. For he had learned who held the fifth talisman.

Surveying the charred remains of what had once been a Meran wizard's hideout, the Chieftain noted white drawings on the cavern walls. He couldn't read them any more than he could understand the Meran language. Neither could his sycophants who, though they had once been Meran before his own army possessed their bodies, had lost the ability to speak anything but Demonian as a consequence.

He snorted in disgust, kicking a strange contraption he suspected had held a Meran child from its size. Yet he smelled no blood of innocents. He looked at a Meran crumpled against the wall. Her head was missing, but something was around the stump of her neck. He crept closer and reached out a leathery grey clawed hand, plucking the object quickly from the corpse.

He inspected the small item at the end of the rope twine that had once made this the woman's necklace. At first he thought he'd found his prize, and threw his head back to call his legion and sycophants back to his side. But just as quickly he realized he'd been tricked. For the object, while the right color and shape, was dark. Talismans glowed and pulsed.

Screaming in rage, he threw the fake gem to the floor and watched it shatter. There was only one who would have tried to fool him in such a manner. The High Wizard Kana, and now he had a head start. The Chieftain looked down at the small, broken bed once more and then back to the female.

Kana had a child. This Meran must have been the mother. As his legion gathered he made it very clear what their next move was. The Chieftain grinned as they crawled out of the cave and into the early morning air. He could almost taste the blood of the child on his lips and felt hunger pangs tear at his insides.

Within seconds his scouts advised they'd picked up the trail of three who had escaped. Mere seconds later the legion, their sycophants upon their backs, were in flight. The



Chieftain would track them down. He would take Kana and the talisman, and he would not only rule two dimensions, but have the most savory meal known to his race in celebration of his victory.

He cried out and the legion sang in response as he made a wide arc into the sky and dove back down toward land. It was time.

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Branches broke and tore at bare arms as they plunged through the dead forest. He clutched the child to his chest, adrenaline pumping. His legs carried him as fast and as hard as they could, the footsteps of his student keeping in time just behind. His breath came hard and fast, mind racing far ahead of them. Abruptly he stopped, and Bijan slammed square into his back.

It took only a handful of seconds for him to get his bearings. Moving quickly again, he half-closed his eyes to keep the branches from taking them out. Bijan was close enough that Kana could feel the heat of his body as he ploughed through the final row of trees onto a worn dirt path. The little girl and the talisman meant everything to him. Everything.

Looking first left and then right, his eyes seemed to find the solution he sought. Hand cradling the precious head of his daughter to him, he nodded to a tall silver-grey wall of rock at the end of the path and saw Bijan nod in return. The two sprinted the last dozen feet, then he turned and thrust the three-year old girl toward his pupil.

* * *

Bijan took her without question, nestling her in the crook of his arm as her large green eyes looked upon his face with the trust only a small child can have for another. Kissing the top of her head quickly, his eyes were riveted to what his mentor was doing. Silently Bijan prayed for it to happen quickly, because a distant screech wafting through the still night air told them both they had very little time.

He couldn't help but note every little detail of the High Wizard as he began to speak in a low tone. Bijan's eyes were always riveted to his mentor because even the smallest gesture, the quickest movement of his eyes, taught him more and more about the role he was being groomed for. Kana's hair was salt and pepper, cascading over his ears and along the length of his bronze-tan skin to just above his shoulder blades. His face was branded with lines that told of his tenure as one with the world's problems to bear in a planetary war that had been raging for lifetimes.



As Kana's hands rose with palms facing the flat cliff face before them, blood from the branch wounds to his arms dripped onto the reddish-brown dirt below, splashing in little puffs of dust in slow motion. A low, throaty tone that started as a single note soon grew into a harmony of two and then three until the full four-stream vocalization was complete. Bijan felt the air around them change, and while he was used to the sensation, it never ceased to fascinate him how everything seemed to expand and contract all at once when a portal was being opened.

"Kana, will it be in time?"

His teacher didn't respond. He could see Kana's lips moving and knew the words he spoke as well as he knew his own name. The screeching grew louder. Bijan tightened his hold on the girl, wondering if she understood that her mother had been killed. He turned to look all around them in the fading light. One sun had already dropped below the horizon; the other was only half visible. His attention returned to what Kana was doing, and he saw the portal had begun to grow. Every hair stood on end as static electricity filled the air.

The Demonians were almost upon them. And the portal wasn't nearly large enough. Bijan felt fear well up inside him and stepped forward, laying a hand on Kana's sleeve. "There isn't enough time."

Kana whipped around, their eyes locking. Bijan saw his own anxiety reflected in his master's face and felt his heart clutch at the futility of their flight. When Kana held out his hands, Bijan handed him his daughter. He watched, heart breaking a little more with each kiss Kana placed upon her forehead, her cheeks, her mouth, her hair. She clung to her father's neck as a shadow passed overhead.

"No," Bijan whispered, shooting a panicked look up into the sky. His eyes lased back to the portal. "Kana, we must go."

Looking first at his pupil, and then down to his daughter, Kana's jaw set firmly as he placed the girl on the ground. "My daughter," he said as more screams filled the air above and around them, "you are the last hope for Mera."