

## From City of the Lost God – Part 2

~ Podd - The Bone Collector ~

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### About a Thousand words.

No one ever bothered Podd the bone collector. It wasn't just that every truly civilised city needs a bone collector of some kind; it was also because he didn't look the sort of person you'd want to bother. Even he wasn't sure of his parentage but there was a lot of mean demon in there, large and angry mean demon.

"Are you calling me a liar?" He asked.

The two members of the guild in his yard looked uncomfortable which was a surprise, as was the fact that they hadn't threatened him or given him a beating. Podd may have been big and ugly, but he was no fool and he knew that for some reason the Guild of Thraan didn't want to ruffle any feathers in the City.

"We know you collect bodies from the old town," said the one in charge, "we just want a little information. We can pay in gold if the information is worth it."

The guild offering good money for information they could just beat out of people! Podd knew that something big was happening, huge in fact. Yes he'd picked up the body, but by then it was naked and getting very smelly. Plus it was missing a head, which wasn't that unusual in the part of old town where he'd found it. No one really cared who killed who in the City, unless it was someone who mattered and it was beginning to look like the dead Shelzak demon mattered.

"He told you! He doesn't know anything about it." Shouted Ash.

Podd had often wondered if taking the kid in off the streets had been a good idea. He seemed to eat enough for a dozen kids and he wasn't the brightest knife on the shelf, but the kid was a good apprentice and fiercely loyal. Best of all the kid had a loud voice and his visitors were looking around like startled wurtle bugs at every noise. Not that there were any neighbours to hear anything. The fat boilers at the bottom of the yard put out a smell that most found unpleasant, so he'd moved his yard across the river, a good half mile from the rest of the slums. It stopped complaints and usually gave him complete privacy.

"Perhaps we could see your special collection while we're here?" They asked him.

In one long shed Podd had a few shelves of unusual items he'd either collected or found on bodies before they went in the boiler. Most people shunned his yard, but a few enjoyed a visit to his private museum and he'd even been given gold by some in appreciation of the items he kept. Aeony in particular was a regular visitor, always very polite for a dark angel and always keen to see the new exhibits. Not just see either, he remembered her running her tongue over the heart of an Arcadian he'd removed from its jar of pickling fluid.

"Thank you Podd, this is exquisite." She'd said.

A real connoisseur was Aeony and she never failed to tell him about any bloated bodies she'd noticed around the City.

"No," he said, "my collection is for invited guests only."

People just didn't say no to the guild, it just wasn't done, yet they showed no signs of drawing weapons. He saw Ash looking at him in amazement and hoped the kid didn't try anything stupid. It wasn't that they'd find any Shelzak parts in the collection. As soon as he'd seen the guild brand, Podd had put the entire body into the boiler and it was now reduced to fat for the soap makers and

powdered bone for the fertiliser seller. The problem was that they might ask to look in other places and there were a lot of things in various trunks, hidden in various places that he didn't want anyone to see.

"We could pay."

The one who seemed to be in charge pulled out a purse and let it fall onto the table, while his colleague began to play with his sword hilt in a meaningful way. The gold was tempting, it seemed a few words about taking Muzzie home on his cart that night could make him very rich, but Podd had few friends in the City and he wasn't going to sell out the few he had.

"I know nothing about any Shelzak body. Please leave."

The quiet one who looked to be mostly medium level demon started to draw his sword, but the one in charge stopped him. Neither of them were pure bloods though, very few in the City were.

"You heard the guvnor, fuck off !" Shouted Ash.

He'd called him Ash because his skin was the colour of last night's ashes in the grate. The kid had a slightly withered arm and he was undersize for... well for anything. But Podd was quite proud of him and surprised that either of them was still alive. No one, ever insulted the guild. Yet they had and they still lived.

"Easy boy," he said, "I think our guests are leaving."

The leader picked up his purse and glared at Ash.

"I'll remember you boy !" He said.

Then they opened the gate to his yard and started walking towards the river, which was always difficult to cross with dignity. Podd himself had arrived home sodden after a few too many at Muzzie's. He watched as both the members of the guild went up to their knees in the mud and gave them a cheery wave as they glared back at him. Silly he knew, they would indeed remember him, but he couldn't resist.

"Ash. Can you remember a message for Sara ?" He asked.

He saw the kid's face crumple a little, a good memory wasn't one of his blessings.

"Give them." He gestured with his hand at the guild members still wading across the river. "A while to get clear, then go to Sara and tell her the guild were here asking about the Shelzak."

"Is that it ?" Asked Ash.

Podd wanted to add a few words to the message, but he knew from past experience that it was likely to get garbled.

"That's it. Just don't forget."

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~ The End ~

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