



A glimpse into the upcoming
dark fantasy novel, *Draconic Mark*,
under byline S. G. R. Spencer.

Excerpt from *Draconic Mark*

By S. G. R. Spencer

He had lived to kill.

He had taken so many lives in his lifetime he couldn't count them all, yet each and every one of them visited him every time he closed his eyes.

He had hardened himself to death and grown so calloused, the mess of it, the stench, the new ghost in his conscience—none of it fazed him anymore.

So he couldn't understand why looking upon the elf with the waterfall of tangled curls disturbed him so. She wasn't even dead yet.

But she was no longer herself, either.

Ajlin looked from the writhing, hissing form in the cage to the alchemist who had orchestrated her possession while he hummed the “March of the Sun Soldiers” over his desk.

“That's it then?” Ajlin asked the older man. “You just leave her like this?”

Ottogat stopped humming and faced him, glanced at his failed experiment briefly, then back up at Ajlin.

“They're no longer of use to me when this happens,” he explained in his nasally voice.

“Can you reverse it?”

Ottogat smiled piteously as if the mercenary were a naive little boy. “It's easier just to get another one.”

He thought of all the rest of them, of the droves of them haunting the woods the same way his victims haunted the shadows of his own mind. It surprised him then that he had never much considered them as having been sentient people before. They just were, the wraithes.

And now she was one of them. Someone he had known from before. A recognition that didn't fully materialize until it was too late.

As if that should make a difference.

Was this better than dead?

He watched her in the cage, her stare feral and cold and no longer her own. For the first time since his first kill, it felt wrong.