

# The Bloodstone Queen

By Verna McKinnon

She woke on the thirteenth day of her life; for since birth she slept like a fairy princess from an old tale, a maiden enchanted by shadows. Waking at last, organic sensations mesmerized her; whispers filled her ears, the incense-smoked air she breathed stirred her from cloudy slumber. Touching her body with curious wonder, she discovered she was a woman.

She was not alone. Voices surged with rising elation. Sitting up in the great bed, she stared at the robed beings that circled her cradle of sleep, dancing their primal ballet with grim joy. They ceased their ritual, these hooded-figures in gray robes, and bowed. They spoke as one, "Hail Obsydia, daughter of Ahridum, God of Darkness and Chaos."

Worship soothed her confusion, but not her curiosity. She spoke for the first time, the words forming easily on her tongue. "You call me Obsydia. If that is my name, I will not quibble, for the sound of it suits me-but who am I? What is this place?"

A feminine voice answered, "You are the immaculate conception of darkness." The robed creature stepped forward, throwing back the concealing hood, "We are your handmaidens. My name is Shade, Holy One."

Shade's gray face was ancient and feminine, though demon in origin. The deep black eyes glittered with old wisdom and dusky mystery. Obsydia marveled how she knew what a demon was.

Restless, Obsydia rose from her bed, naked and untainted by modesty. Hesitant to move at first, she discovered her legs were strong and supple. She walked with care, exploring the feel of muscle and bone. Her steps small, but graceful, and she explored the large chamber like an inquisitive child opening a present.

Shade took a scarlet dressing gown from a chest, "A silk robe for your comfort," she offered, and helped Obsydia to put it on. The soft material caressed her body. It pleased her.

"Where am I?" Obsydia asked.

“A great tower, created by Ahridum as your haven. It is a holy shrine to your birth. It rose from the ocean at his will, and is protected by a violent sea. A sphere of storm guards it from infidels.”

“Show me,” Obsydia said.

Shade led her to a great balcony of black stone. It shimmered with dark magic. Obsydia looked down, and realized the tower soared thousands of feet above a raging sea. A maelstrom shielded the fortress. Thunder echoed in the weeping sky, lightning burst with rage as the rain whirled around the temple of her birth. The tempest did not penetrate the sanctuary, but protected it. Obsydia enjoyed the torrential rain with bright-eyed wonder. “I speak and have names for things, but my life is new,” Obsydia said. “Teach me, Shade. My mind hungers for answers to my beginning, my birth, why I was born.”

Shade smiled, “As you command, Princess. Your father is Ahridum, the Eternal that stoked the fires of creation in the universe. Eternals are also referred to as gods. Eternity reaches beyond the puny minds and limited philosophy of mortals; the realms of the Eternals span beyond that conception. They are not caretakers, but the creators of all things. With creation, there is conflict and war. Eternals of light and dark battle even now for conquest.”

“Battle?” Obsydia asked.

“Yes, a crusade against the Eternals of Light. Ahridum’s Realm of Night spawned nightmares and shadows. Now Ahridum battles light for dominion. Darkness came before the light, and Ahridum’s darkness was brightest of all. His will demands reign over all things. You were conceived so you may rule in his name on this world.”

“My father is the spiral of the universe then, not just this world,” Obsydia said with pride. She asked, “What of my mother? If indeed I was created by a god, why is my body flesh?”

“Ahridum is pure Eternal, but your mother was mortal, a seer named Lilith.”

“I remember fragments of my birth from dreams. Visions of a black-haired woman, kneeling on an altar, her naked body painted with sacred red rune symbols. My father’s essence seared her. I grew in her womb like black fire until she withered to a husk. I nursed upon her soul for nourishment.”

“After your birth, only ashes and dusty terrors remained of her life. Not even her spirit escaped to be judged by the Underworld. To bear the child of a god is to be consumed utterly,” Shade said. “But now you remember your birth,” Shade said, pleased with her progress.

“If my mother was human, then I am not pure Eternal. I am flawed.”

“To rule this world, you must have physical form, thus requiring a human mother,” the handmaiden soothed, gently taking her hand. “I delivered you with my own hands and had the honor of holding you as Ahridum named you. That was thirteen nights ago. During that time you have slept, growing from an infant to woman. Your father whispered to you, feeding you knowledge, so when you woke you could do his will.

“You are my guide then?” Obsydia asked.

“Yes, sweet darkness, I was made to serve you and set you upon the path of conquer and rule,” Shade replied with a smile.

“Then tell me more,” Obsydia commanded. “What are my talents?”

“You are immortal. Many things you must learn and experience for yourself. Through you, this world shall be Ahridum’s kingdom, eclipsing the light of the other gods.”

Obsydia retreated from the balcony. Her legs were stiff with newness, but each breath, each step, became easier. She reveled at each new experience, and craved more.

“What do I look like?” Obsydia asked. “Am I Eternal or mortal in my form?”

The handmaiden led her to the far corner of the room to a tall mirror stood, over ten feet high. The glamour of magic around it was tantalizing. Obsydia touched the frame of shimmering black metal, decorated with dark jewels. “What is this?”

“The Eye of Shadows. It is framed in ebonite, the rare black gold of this world. The mirror itself is sorcerous,” Shade explained. “Ask for your reflection, Holy Princess, and it will obey.”

“Reveal my image,” she commanded.

The gray vapors roiled and faded, revealing dark glass. Obsydia dropped her robe, to see what the daughter of a human and god looked like. Was she a monster? Deformed? A gray skinned-demon like her handmaiden?

But her beauty was devastating. White, flawless skin smooth and glowing with raw life; the oval face sweetly formed with high cheekbones and a delicate pointed chin. Instead of human hair, a living shadow sprang from her skull, a halo curling into smoky tendrils around her face. Large eyes, luminous, the color of silver-moons, though her pupils were hues of bright flame. Her lips red as blood, curved with promise. She examined her slender body, delighted with the full breasts, slim waist and long, tapering legs made for desire.

She put on the robe and stepped away from the mirror. “My loveliness is a sword that will cut the heart of those who touch it.”

Shade smiled, “A gift from your holy father, both your beauty and the mirror. The mirror has many powers. All you need do is speak to it, and it will reveal things, people and places in this world, the scenes of battle, lust, corruption, allies and enemies. You can also travel through its mist. It will take you anywhere there is night or shadow.”

“It is a fine gift then, for a queen has many enemies,” Obsydia agreed.

“Rest now. Let the other handmaidens serve you.”

Shade led her to an opulent bath chamber. Obsydia entered the deep pool. The steaming water soothed her. Black lotus blossoms floated around her, their exotic scent filling her with desires as the handmaidens bathed her. After her purification, they anointed her with oils and clothed her in a plain shift of black silk that clung to her ripe body, and left her slim arms bare. On a pillow of red satin, rested a slim crown of silver, set with black diamonds, though the center piece was a large red and black gem, polished to a high sheen. A bloodstone.

“That is my crown,” whispered Obsydia. “The bloodstone is my symbol.”

Shade nodded, “Yes, the emblem of a new age. This world uses gems to represent the eras. The diamond was the age of creation, when Eternals walked the worlds, created the stars and suns, planets and moons. The emerald represents when life was born in all its forms. The sapphire is enlightenment, when the races of the world developed, built towers of ivory stone that touched the sky and found philosophy and magic. That era died two hundred mortal years ago when Ahridum struck this world with a dark star-creating an age of chaos. The bloodstone now rules.”

Obsydia reached for the crown, but Shade’s hand stopped her.

“Not yet, Princess. The crown awaits your first test before you are truly queen,” Shade informed her.

“I must perform a duty then, to prove my royal worth?” Obsydia said angrily.

“Ahridum has decreed it. Your evil is still virginal. You need to teethe on the blood of victims, to sharpen your talents as conqueror and queen.”

“What is my father’s command?”

“I will show you,” Shade bowed.

Obsydia followed her to a vast throne room. Vaulted ceilings over two hundred feet high were carved with images of Eternals battling for supreme rule in the universe. Along the smoky stone, images shifted and moved with mystical grace, recreating scenes of mythical combat.

“They dance for me,” Obsydia laughed.

“I am happy it pleases you, Princess,” Shade replied.

Pillars of ebony and red marble gleamed in the light of the bronze braziers. At the end of the enormous chamber, a throne of ebonite gleamed, the seat covered with a red velvet cushion. The high back was a delicate curved design set with a bloodstone the size of a human head.

“My throne,” Obsydia whispered.

“Yes, but first you must perform a test,” Shade said, leading her away from the opulent chair. “Bring in the prisoners,” she cried.

The tall double doors opened. The hooded handmaidens dragged in three young men, chained and ragged. The first man, a youth with golden hair, his amber eyes wide with fear and wonder. The second man, his color raven dark, looked upon Obsydia with adoration. The third man wore torn leather armor, his wild brown mane tied back with a thong, his blue eyes glazed with hatred.

“We gathered them here after you were born,” Shade explained. “They were chosen for your test as Queen.”

“These three are my challenge? They are primitives that reek of mortality. I see only shrouds of rotting flesh unworthy of my grace.”

“The trial is unfolding now,” Shade said. “Your actions will determine crown or oblivion.”

“If I fail, my father’s power shall destroy me?”

“As a father loves, he must discipline.” Shade answered.

“Then I accept his will.”

“I will leave you now to your examination.” She bowed deeply and took her place among the shadows in the chamber.

“You were born in sin,” cried the first man with golden hair. “Be cleansed of your black birth and follow the light.”

“This mortal dares to speak to me,” Obsydia said, surprised.

“My name is Jantu. On the day of your birth a solar eclipse blackened the sky. The world shuddered. But I have been chosen to bring you light. I am a holy man. I offer redemption. Light is the way of salvation and true power.”

Obsydia touched Jantu’s brow with a gentle hand. “Light does not rule here-I do. What do desire to teach me, Jantu?” she asked softly.

“Love is the light. The salvation of the world. Accept it. You can choose. No one is born evil,” Jantu protested. “I can make the mortal part of you love, and the darkness can be purged from your soul.”

“I am like the scorpion. It is my nature to sting.” Obsydia gently lifted him up. Her hand caressed his chest, feeling the rapid beat of his heart. He sighed like a lover, a prisoner of her will. “I accept your love. Now accept mine.”

Obsydia bloomed like a spectral flower as Jantu’s life was drawn from him. He shriveled quickly, a fragile fruit that rotted with her touch. She removed her hand. Jantu fell at her feet, killed by her love.

She turned to the second prisoner. “What do you offer, slave?”

His gaunt face was sharp and clever. “I offer my devotion. My name is Boren. Jantu was a fool unworthy of your holy presence. He deserved death. Let me serve you as your High Priest. I have already sacrificed for you. The blood of my wife and

children I have already sacrificed for you! I bathed in their blood with joy. My only desire is to worship you.”

“Yes,” Obsydia whispered dangerously, “Worship.”

“Your pet’s begging is making me sick,” the warrior spat.

“I did not give you permission to speak,” replied Obsydia.

“I don’t need it,” the warrior replied without fear.

His insolence amused and angered her, but she returned to Boren-a rabid monk who would worship anything that would serve his ambition and greed. So, gently she raised him up, and he shook with tears of joy. He praised her wisdom, “I knew you would recognize my worth. Thank you blessed goddess.”

She grasped his throat with her slim hands and snapped his neck. Boren fell dead at her feet, his quick death her only blessing.

“You’re welcome,” she said lightly.

The third prisoner, the warrior, stared with violent loathing, powerful muscles swollen with tension.

“What is your desire?” Obsydia asked softly.

“To kill you,” the warrior replied simply.

No ambition or delusions clouded his mind. She smelled the sweat of the battlefield in his soul—a feral slayer never bound to anyone.

“What is your name?” she inquired.

“I am Solem. Kill me and be done with it.”

“But it is not my pleasure...yet. What king do you serve? What god?”

“I serve myself.”

“Yet you are driven to vanquish what cannot be destroyed by mortal hands.”

“A man must try; else he is not a man.”

“Shade, did this warrior come with any weapons but his tongue?”

“A sword only,” Shade replied.

“Bring it to me,” Obsydia commanded.

Shade brought the sword. Obsydia picked it up with ease. In human hands it would be considered heavy, yet she found it light as air. A fine death toy. The purpose of the test became for clear as she progressed. Obsydia realized her father’s wisdom. This was a choice that would reflect her skills as a ruler.

She smiled and turned back to Solem. “This is the weapon you chose?” Obsydia asked. “This thing of iron?”

“That weapon has slain many enemies. I have faith in my skill and in that blade.”

“Yes, I believe you have faith. Unchain him,” Obsydia commanded.

Shade hesitated, but did as she was ordered. She unlocked the heavy chains and freed the warrior. Solem stood before her, his bravery and revulsion so earnest she could have laughed. He would rip her apart with his bare hands if he could.

Obsydia said softly, “Witness my faith, warrior.” Obsydia plunged the sword into her chest. She did not crumble or cry out, but smiled as she pulled the blade out slowly. The wound healed itself almost immediately, leaving no mark upon her flawless breast.

“I am a living Goddess. I command life and death, it does not command me,” Obsydia proclaimed.

On the sword, a tiny bead of her blood sparkled like a black jewel. Obsydia ran her finger along the edge to catch the drop of blood and stained her lips with it. She dropped the sword and took Solem with in her arms and kissed him. He struggled against her embrace. But Obsydia was stronger. His will wavered and succumbed to her power. The strength of her own violation and the kiss stained with her mystical blood transformed the warrior; an ecstasy she feasted on until his soul burned black. When she finished, she released him. He stumbled back, her essence twisting his soul and body with pain. His eyes changed, transforming from blue to deepest red. His skin grew pale and his nails deepened to a black hue, long and narrow. A dark jewel to add to her crown. Radiant now with evil, Solem knelt at her feet, the strength of his warrior heart still strong, but now it served Obsydia.

“Behold my first warrior priest,” Obsydia decreed. “Solem, you shall gather armies for my pleasure. Lead demon and mortal together to do my will. You shall serve me as Goddess and Queen. Pick up your sword and follow me.”

He obeyed, and kissed the hem of her gown before he stood up.

Obsydia sat upon her throne, with Solem by her side, a champion of darkness now. “I am truly Ahridum’s daughter. My reign shall be a sword of fire upon the lands, in my father’s name, I rule. From this test, I have chosen the strongest of the three. I have made him mine. I cast out the rest. I am Obsydia, the Bloodstone Queen.”

“Yes, Queen Obsydia,” Shade replied, and crowned her.

The handmaidens gathered around the throne and knelt before her, singing a dark hymn for her coronation.

A powerful voice echoed through the tower, “Behold my daughter, Obsydia, she is now Queen of this world. In her I am well pleased.”

Obsydia bowed her head, “My father, what shall I do for you now?”

The End

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