

A Company Of Thieves

by M J Dixon

P R E F A C E P R E V I E W

Preface

Malachar Veyneth stood in the centre of his darkened chamber, the oppressive silence broken only by the soft hum of magical wards that shimmered around him. In the middle of the chamber, the Diamond of Dravmir hovered, defying gravity, suspended in the air by a series of intricate spells. Its many facets glinted in the dim light, casting eerie reflections that danced across the stone walls. The diamond pulsed with a faint, dark energy, like the heartbeat of something far older and more malevolent than the world itself.

For months, Malachar had been probing the diamond's power, conducting experiments that stretched the boundaries of even his formidable knowledge of the arcane. The diamond had resisted him at first, its magic ancient and stubborn, but Malachar had been patient. He had felt it, beneath the layers of raw energy, beneath the dormant chaos, there was something more. The diamond was a conduit, a key that could amplify his necromantic spells to levels never before achieved.

For centuries, dark sorcerers had whispered of the Diamond of Dravmir, but none had truly unlocked its secrets. They lacked the will, or the stomach, to break the boundaries between life and death. But Malachar; Malachar had no such limitations. His frail, twisted body was a testament to the extremes he had gone to, the dark rituals that had sapped his strength but sharpened his mind. He had paid the price for his power, and the diamond would be the final piece to fulfil his dark ambitions.

His experiments had grown more dangerous in recent weeks, as he pushed the limits of the diamond's ability to amplify necromantic magic. He had raised the dead, minor creatures, reanimated with simple commands, many time before, but when animated with the diamond they were far more capable, imbued with latent power. With everything he tried with it, the diamond promised so much more, amplifying his already vast potential. In his dreams, he had glimpsed shadowy figures, beings from the shadow plane, waiting just beyond the veil. They could be summoned, controlled, used to form an unstoppable army. With the diamond as his conduit, he could tap into the very essence of death itself, bending the laws of mortality to his will.

Malachar raised his skeletal hand, whispering an incantation. The diamond's dark energy flared in response, tendrils of shadow twisting in the air around it, hungry for the command of its master. Malachar's blood-red eyes gleamed as he felt the power surge through him, intoxicating and dangerous. He was so close, closer than anyone had ever been, to unlocking the full potential of the diamond. Once he did, there would be nothing to stop him.

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The shadows in the alley seemed to stretch and twist in the early morning light as Nimbo Dee made his way to the guild, his steps quick and purposeful. The message from Tarbot had been brief, but it was enough to catch his attention. The guild master rarely reached out directly unless there was something serious in the works.

Pushing through the back entrance of the guild, Nimbo moved quietly through the familiar corridors. When he reached Tarbot's office, the door was already open, the guild master seated behind his cluttered desk, sorting through parchments.

"Nimbo," Tarbot greeted without looking up. "Glad you could make it."

Nimbo slipped into the room, closing the door behind him. "I don't usually turn down a call from you, Tarbot. What's going on?"

Tarbot glanced up, his sharp eyes studying Nimbo for a moment before he set down the parchment in his hands. "Remember the last time we talked? A few months back, you mentioned needing work."

Nimbo nodded. "I do remember. What, something's come up?"

"More than something," Tarbot replied, leaning back in his chair. "There's a job. A big one. A client wants someone to steal the Diamond of Dravmir."

Nimbo raised an eyebrow. "A diamond? That sounds pretty straightforward."

Tarbot shook his head, a grim smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Not when it's locked away in Malachar Veyneth's tower."

Nimbo frowned. "Malachar... That's a name that sends most thieves running in the other direction."

"Exactly," Tarbot said, his voice dropping a notch. "But the reward for this is worth the risk. The thing is, the defences on that tower are... complicated. There are magical wards, gargoyles, guards and shadows that patrol the place. The diamond itself is locked in a magical globe suspended halfway up the tower, surrounded by layers of protections. Getting in will take skill, real skill."

Nimbo crossed his arms, processing the information. "And you think I'm the one to do it?"

Tarbot leaned forward. "Many will try, no doubt, and guild rules mean I must open it to the floor. But it'll take someone with your skillset to pull it off. I won't lie, the information I have about the tower comes from the client and seems a little 'third-hand' shall we say. I can't vouch for how accurate it is. You'll be going in blind in some areas. But if anyone can slip through, it's you."

Nimbo stayed silent for a moment, weighing his options. "Third-hand, huh? Not exactly comforting."

Tarbot shrugged. "It's the best we've got. Besides, we have it on good information that Malachar will be out of the tower for a night in exactly two weeks time. That'll give you time to scout and a good window to get in and out with fewer obstacles in your way."

"Fewer, but not none," Nimbo said, his voice cautious.

"Exactly." Tarbot stood and walked around his desk. "This isn't a simple heist. There are still plenty of dangers, but with Malachar gone, you've got a far better shot than most. And if you succeed, you won't have to worry about work for a very long time."

Nimbo nodded, his mind already working through the logistics. "Alright, I'll take it. But if this goes sideways, I expect the guild to back me up."

Tarbot smiled, though it didn't quite reach his eyes. "You've got my word."

Nimbo left the guild master's office, the logistics and preparations for the heist already spinning through his mind. Stealing from a dark mage was no easy task, especially when the information was unreliable. But if anyone could pull it off, it was him.

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