

Gold

by Angie



Paracelsus regarded the stacks of gold coins in front of him with some dissatisfaction. He loved gold, but mostly because it was revered by the world above and almost untraceable.

He had come by this at some cost to himself – his fungus farm had been difficult to create, certainly, but the personal cost was greater. He ran long fingers down the side of his scarred face. He was not a particularly vain man, but he would have to do something to recover his dignity.

A mask, he decided, out of the very gold that had caused him to lose it all. Revenge would come. Gold allowed many indulgences.

The gold towers glittered coldly in the candlelight of the small cavern.

Strange that something so valuable could look so beautiful, and yet so cold, he thought.

It rivalled sunlight in its purity, but of course, he did not venture into that, had not for decades. Sunlight revealed all that it touched. Vincent knew that too, he thought, and chuckled to himself, a sound that reverberated unpleasantly around the stone walls. That was some consolation for his loss, but none of his doing. His revenge would be different. Very different.

For now, he was content that his plans were unfolding. The gold mocked him, though. It did nothing now, just reflected candlelight and gave substance to an otherwise bleak existence. He didn't fool himself. No one wanted to live the way he did. Gold allowed him some luxuries, but couldn't replace sunlight or growing things.

As an alchemist, that challenge was one he relished. Could he trap the essence of gold and provide a rich light to brighten his underground existence? He had been reading the ancient tomes he had collected on alchemy. Those men had been unclear on the science behind the elements they worked with, but they'd had passion, long years of it, tireless in their experimentation – but ultimately unsuccessful, and they died disappointed, if not disillusioned.

He had the advantage of all the modern knowledge and the equipment to experiment. Gold needed a great deal of heat. The burning of his fungus farm had only served to blacken a few coins. That pathetic heat was not great enough to melt gold, which needed around 2,000 degrees F. But he would not have to melt it. Gold was malleable. He could grind it to dust, flatten it into flakes, and produce a pure, fine suspension.

Yes, he would succeed where others had struggled. Gold had many uses, and he would make it his slave.

Weeks later, the clear bottle of golden fluid with a round stopper reflected the candlelight, but seemed to glow of its own accord. That was success in the dark place he now called home.

Paracelsus smiled. It could be used as a lure, and he would need that soon.