

JOIN ME IN DEATH



A Fighting Fantasy 'fanfiction' inspired by
Ian Livingstone's

Crypt of the Sorcerer

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by

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join me in death

Roughly around the period before, during, or after 271AC-280AC... a child was born that would one day wear the crown as one of the most indestructible and hardest to defeat villains ever. He is the former hero of Allansia and cannot be conquered in battle. Rituals were passed down to every champion who challenged him, but without being extremely lucky, the odds of killing this necromancer was doubtful...

Background

A heavily armed creature stepped upon a skull, crushing it to dust. The ground filled with a wide rippling of ice and frost as it walked through the Southern Plains. It had elongated skeletal features and a resemblance to that of a ram with horns protruding out of its helm. Its plate armour was extremely far advanced than any other plate available in Titan. It also held onto a smoky green sword that was abnormally shaped, unearthly ornate and demonic, and in the weapon were set skull runes upon the hilt and base of the blade. Its eye sockets burned a wicked blue...

Before the cataclysm, the citizens, and fishers of Fang and Zengis saw the River Kok lift out of its cavity and twist around like a rope, all fish simply plummeted out of the bizarre waters...

A dusk befell the land as a nasty revelation began... the sky was dark and menacing...

Port Blacksand, a city notorious for its crimes, hatred, and ungodly punishments could not withstand a dust plague. The plague was not like the Bubonic Death. This one came in an instant and without any warning. Allansia was not prepared for the disaster and humanity paid the price in blood. This is the fault of a grudge and a plan with purpose, carefully calculated throughout the years, and in the necromancer's death his retribution was still carried out by a faithful companion not of the worldly plane.

Lying on the floor, prepared to turn to earth like all the other primitives was the faithful subject of Zanbar Bone, Lord Azzur. His corpse, his legacy, never stood the might of the remnant of the powerful sorcerer of the Moonstone Hills. The city was in ruins, one would describe it as deserted as a zombie infested city and that bats fluttered above the great fortress, but not many of the animals endured. The infamous carriage that rammed into townsfolk was covered in dust and had the skeletons of its horses still attached to the harnesses.

Allansia was in fragments now with only Khul and the Old World left to pull to pieces. In this wreckage of dead bodies, there were still the three wizards of Yore and a few survivors.

The clouds cast over the moon, it was the last of our illumination, our hope but with the coming of the entities of the spiritual planes all life as Titan knows it will be extinct forever and the lich will come through the portal.



Chapter one

They bow down one by one to the demon of the Netherworld, a fist over their heart in loyal fortitude the four Chaos Lords must find the old relic that will open the gate. Hidden by good forces, and only known by them, they know that humans have joined the evil forces too and the forces are fortified against them should an ambush on the world be imminent.

A woman walked in Kay Pong clutching her swollen belly that was nine months grown, in great pain she fell at a merchant's table and pulled herself underneath it. "By fire, this child will be the death of me!" Giving birth to this infant would normally bring joy to a new mother but she feared it and when she gave birth, she kicked the baby away from her. Covered in blood she crawled out from the table as the merchant returned and noticed her.

"Lady, why were you under the table?" The baby let out a squeal and the man lifted the cloth to peer under. "My lord! A child."

The mother shook her head and slithered away on all fours leaving a trail of crimson behind her. She was crying hysterically and in a great panic as if someone was out to kill her.

"Guards! Apprehend that woman, she has given birth and has forsaken it to die!" The merchant yelled.

Townfolk came in place of the guards and took her up by her arms, she started to tremble ferociously and suffered a massive heart attack. No one was sure as to what had just happened or why, but her corpse was dragged away...

"Poor little thing, you weren't worth two croggies in Karn according to your mom, but we will see about that one." The smiling merchant, a hefty older gentleman wrapped the baby up in a blanket and took the infant boy into his loving arms, carried him over to a blacksmith named Tamal.

Although Tamal was a childless widow, he accepted the newborn as his own and named him Razzaq. Later changed to Razaak, his name meant *the one who provides the necessities of life, and the one who can take it away*.

Razaak was raised as a blacksmith by his honorable father and at the age of twelve the young boy crafted a sword of his own unlike any other. At first the sword was just a plaything and he eventually sewn together a scabbard for it. He took it into the wilderness and practiced swiping, lunging, and thrusting and by the age of fourteen had mastered shadow sword fighting. Tamal didn't dissuade his son, but upon his deathbed he clutched Razaak's hand, "Do you know why I nurtured you?"

“No, father. Although it seems it to be your duty to do so?”

“I had a dream of a little boy who would grow up to be an avenger, but then the dream became darkened and that righter of wrongs that Allansia came to love so much had a duel with the Lord of Death and instead of defeat him, he became him.” Tamal became sleepy. “You must promise me, son, that you will never fight on the side of evil for profit, but if you must do so because your heart is set upon it, then do so with such a might that it equals your awards as a renowned hero. Never accept tyranny like one accepts a quick death to avoid the pain. You were born with a curse a witch once told me, but you are not a cursed soul, you are a clever craftsman who was born with the spirit of an unmatched divinity.”

Razaak didn't understand the message but his father gasped, mouth open, and blood seeped out of the corner of his mouth.



Chapter Two

They made a blood pact to be brothers forever.

A young dark Vermithrax Moonchaser met Razaak in Salamonis and they had been inseparable ever since. Vermithrax never used any sort of weaponry besides his book of witchcraft, he was a pupil of Yore and was a huge supporter of the Erridansis Whitewolf cause. They went on various missions as they learned white magic together in their youth.

Riding upon camels, they arrived in the city of Vatos having been sent there after a symbol of a silver dagger beneath a crown was carved into a tree. Rumours from Darkwood Forest of dark elves of Tīranduil Kelthas and the Freezeblood mountains were plotting something in the Desert of Skulls. Reports all the way from Gallantaria and as far as northern Khul say they spied some elves on a galley who were talking about the great snake demon.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary, until they went underground and found a series of subways along the sandy fissure and a count of forty zombies surrounded the two. Razaak used his sword to cut them down and Vermithrax cast spells on the others. These undead humanoids were easy to dispatch and left in squirming body parts. Razaak told his friend that cutting down that many zombies would no doubt bring them renown and be the talk of Allansia for a century.

“I am however not a fame seeker,” Vermithrax replied. “You’re no doubt the first person I have met that is exceedingly trained and gymnastic.”

“Might we talk about my sword instead?”

“Obviously its blade is sharper than any other in all of Titan?”

“There will never be another to match it,” he responded with pride.

“I prefer the guile of the written word.”

They stepped onto the body parts and continued searching the tunnels until they arrived in a chamber where three undead caarth warriors were standing guard. A purple gem flashed to life on their forehead and their bodies animated to life.

The first one attacked with its broadsword, one swift strike by Razaak broke the caarth’s blade but it did not show any anxiety, and Razaak simply stabbed it in the gut, lifted his blade upward and slightly quartered its body. Vermithrax chanted loudly at the second warrior and a beam of light encircled his foe causing it to halt in its tracks giving Razaak a chance to cut its body into two parts at the abdomen. They moved to the last one and Razaak said he’ll give a go at a bit of his magic, in the end, causing morbid damage than intended by the semblance of white magic laws. The caarth floated into the air and his skin was ripped clean off his skeleton and all its organs fell to the floor. The remaining skeleton fell to the ground and started to jogging around the room and Razaak blasted it to bits with a mini fireball. He started to laugh aloud in amusement and looked

at his friend, who stared at him with stirring disapproval ultimately wiping the smile to a faded existence.

The tunnels became wider and the ceiling higher and the floor was very difficult for the duo to crawl over, step on, as there were many stalagmites. Vermithrax tip toed and released a sheet of sand that plummeted into a pit full of spikes, Razaak yanked his towering companion back to safety before he fell in. A Walking on Air spell was cast on their boots so they could tread over the quarry. They had to stride up steep tunnels and slide down nearly vertical ones. Some tunnels opened to broader ones and as they walked through one archway they stopped in their tracks and peered upon a beast they had never laid their sights on before. Hovering a few feet from the sandy ground was a round bulbous creature about six or seven feet in diameter, brown in texture, wrinkled skin, with a large mouth full of double-rowed thick and pointed teeth. It had ten tentacle-like stalks protruding from the top of it each set with a single blazing eye. It opened its one main violet eye and immediately woke up in aggression. This enormous hive or nest they stumbled upon had a heightened roof of a hundred feet or so. A tiny version of this hideous monster appeared out of the being's main eye and started to float around the room. One of the ten eyes fired a beam which smashed into the wall overhead Razaak and Vermithrax! they spun around and exited the chamber as the eyes starting firing one after the other destroying the rock wall.

With their back pressed up against the wall, Vermithrax quickly leafed through his book not knowing exactly what to do.

Razaak watched the lair and noticed that the creature was creating large green skinned orcs, "You might want to hurry up, that tyrant of eyes is up to something."

That monster spoke in a deep, menacing baritone, "Before you die, intruders, know that the last thing you will remember is the bearing of your blood sacrifice before you serve beneath the powerful Xix."

Vermithrax scoffed as he gazed up, "Did that thing just *say* something?"

"Yes, but hurry up, he's starting to soar this way."

Back to the book, "I'm trying to look as fast as I can!"

"Well, perhaps we will come back tomorrow, shall we?" He pushed away from the wall. "Damn it, watch out."

A massive blast of fire hit the wall where Razaak was leaning up against a few seconds ago! toppling sand and debris upon the two. Vermithrax loudly called out an incantation and the lair and tunnel filled with a dense fog. The large, orb-shaped beast calling itself Xix backed away into the middle of the room as the two ran in after it. An orc got between Razaak and the monster and it zapped the orc with a cold stream, the orc lifted its sword to attack Razaak and solidified into stone. Razaak ran away as the statue of his foe blew into fragments.

Angered now, Xix directed shafts of light into the ceiling and caused a downpour of stones and gigantic black centipedes to plummet into the nest. Razaak and Vermithrax charged back out the exit in horror and revulsion. Razaak slammed his sword down upon one of the insects as it scurried

after them. The fog was disappearing as they took in a deep breath and returned to the fight. The mini replica that had been flying around with ease was slain. A torrent of oil came splashing into the room from reservoirs that were set into the walls. Vermithrax cast a creature copy spell and the huge monster slowly turned its rage upon the likeness of its creation. With the floor slick now, they decided it was best to escape out one of the tilted ascending chutes. Orcs trying to capture them kept slipping and sliding on the lubricant.

With two beholders fighting each other now, the lair was a firework display of colourful lasers, jets of cold torrents, and paralyzing rays. As the beasts battled it out, they started to destroy the den itself with their authoritative magic and biting one another with their vicious maws.

Vermithrax and Razaak crawled up and out and away from the disaster as fast as they could. Once they reached the exterior of the lair, the chute gave way beneath them and they came tumbling down with it and all the sand on the surface of the desert came pouring in on top of them. The architecture of the underground cavern was collapsing within itself, anything that was inside of it was crushed to a pulp. The portion of the desert where this mishap happened opened like a gaping wound. Fortunately for the two adventurers they were on top of the warped fissure and were fighting against the flood of sand coming in...

When they finally got out, covered head to toe in sand, they turned to look at the incision in the desert that was healing itself by filling back in. They looked at one another in disbelief that they managed to even survive that and slowly dragged their feet towards Vatos.

This was the last quest they ever went on, and they did not talk about it to anyone but to those who had sent them on the undertaking in the first place. The dark elves have lost an imperative vital source and they had now seemingly gone quiet.

Afterwards, the lure of magic enticed the teenage Razaak so much so that he sought out cities, towns, and mountains to learn more. He loved the power it gave him, it made him feel invincible and he was able to use it in combat against minions of malevolence. His reputation as a sword for hire made him a celebrity and he was sought after by leaders to protect them and their communities. Razaak was the saviour of Allansia and his skills created him the most difficult to overcome. He never failed in an adventure and travelled to all the mountains, caves, forests, deserts, and plains. Now eighteen, and a young man now, his interest in alchemy intensified and his goal was to become just like Vermithrax. The swordsman was gifted in white magic, but it still wasn't enough to be a wizard and Vermithrax was extremely enthusiastic in becoming the greatest one of all. His schooling was what ended the alliance and they went their independent ways but never parted on bad terms. The way the grand wizard loved and favoured Vermithrax so much, Verm confessed to his great friend that the grand wizards had a secret vow never to teach Razaak anything ancient as they were suspicious of the young swordsman and had a bad feeling about him, and this made Razaak very sad and jealous that the person he made a blood oath with was now under strict regulation to disassociate all ties with him.

Razaak would meditate in the Moonstone Hills, a massive beautiful range of slopes in northern Allansia which is also the home to many inhabitants. Amidst the high headlands and slender valleys; he would pray for a sign from the gods, any deity to please guide him to become stronger

in his wisdom of witchcraft. Nothing would ever answer him, and he'd become frustrated. "Although I am authorized to use the universe to send out a spell, I am not permitted *to be* the spell."

His robes were a host of yellow, blue, and white themes; he was not like other fighters who chose leather armour, plate mail, or chainmail, he seemed more like a monk and never allowed his hair to grow out anymore. Even though he was starting to suffer from an inflated ego of his stardom, he was relying more and more on his witchery in battles against warlocks, dragons, necromancers, and the undead. His fascination against these foes is what sparked his interest in what they knew? They used a different nature of magic than him and it was formidable.

Now, in secrecy his curiosity to learn necromancy flourished and instead of killing a necromancer, he promised the villain that if he showed him the ways of dark magic, he would aid him in whatever plan the villain had. The necromancer took Razaak to a cave and introduced him to an evil half wizard whose knowledge exceeded his own and declared that Razaak was once a friend of the grand wizards of yore. The wizard killed the necromancer, taking his head off, for making a human aware of his presence.

"You are an enemy of tribute," the wizard warned, "You do not deserve to know our secrets, you deserve to die and die you shall."

"My lord, if you gift me the knowledge of the black arts, I will be your loyal student."

"You are to bow down to me and no longer use that sword to spill the blood of my allies."

Razaak knelt to one knee, "I have been the hero of Allansia for years, they have not rewarded me but have taken me for granted. My body is well equipped to use any weapon, but it is not my sword arm that I find is my strength... it is my mind."

"Why do you wish to join the ranks of evil, you are deceitful."

"I've come to realise that a wizard in Salamonis has kept his wisest rituals from me and therefore does not want competition. I wish to become like him, I wish to be as powerful as him, I wish...." He paused for what he was about to reveal. "I wish to have the talent to destroy him."

The evil wizard touched Razaak's forehead and placed a burning symbol upon him, "Now you will never have the valor to return to the light."

"It is my personal desire never to hunger for it again."

Vermithrax did not invite Razaak into his home although before he usually did so. "It has come to our attention that the necromancer you were sent out to slay has been killed?"

The necromancer beheaded by the evil wizard remained silent upon Razaak's lips. He would not confess anything.

"You are now well into your twenties and have been vanished for a year or two at a time without informing anyone. My messengers know that you've been visiting a dark magician. It is with a

heavy heart that you are no longer a member of our circle due to your violation and dishonesty. What you have learned now has corrupted your soul. Our friendship is at stake now. Why have you come here?"

"To inform you that all your doubt towards me is true and that I have come here to kill you, brother."

"*Begone*, brother." he shunned him off. "You know no more than a druid who has nothing to his name but a poisoned blade dagger!"

Razaak removed his sword in aggression and Vermithrax lifted his index finger and the sword flew out of his grasp and thudded deep into a tree. "The next time you oppress me, I will turn you into a frog and you can cast your wicked spells at flies."

"You're starting to sound wise beyond your times, Vermithrax, but I know it's all just an act."

The wizard apprentice cast a spell and Razaak found himself shrinking into the grass. Just as Verm was to pick him up something blue blasted into his chest and knocked him into his house. Razaak now a toad saw what looked like a person in black garbs and veil with glowing blue eyes come and fetch him. She took his sword, lifted him off the path, and a crow fluttered into the sky and circled the area before flapping its wings in the direction of Firetop Mountain...

The female with scorching blue eyes brought him to the half wizard who then reversed the spell.

Razaak was upset that he still did not have enough experience of black magic to defeat a white wizard. He attacked him too soon. He looked at his sword and decided he must conjure up the most wicked vile spell on earth and put into the weapon so that no man could use it. He gawked at his saviour in black garb, whose beauty was concealed behind a veil. To blast Vermithrax into the wall with a single fireball and him not be able to defend himself spiked his fascination.

"What are you?"

"I am neither a spirit nor a human being. When you're ready," she said in a whisper. "You are to meet your new master. And if the evil wizard you call upon protests, I will kill him. He will not complain though if he is smart."

His new goal now was to learn all the depths of sorcery and leave behind that soft heart of his, his upbringing was to a loving father, he had to eliminate those memories. His stamina was leveled up for Allansia, but he vowed to do something to them that was irreversible. He must not feel the pangs of dignity, rely on emotions, or feel pity or any sort of remorse for a dying thing. His body was his temple, but it was too weak, and he hated that. That last prayer of his to the gods about being the spell itself, being that energy, he realised he had to create an experiment and a sacrifice.

He looked up at that person waiting for a reply, "I will go with you, my lady, on one condition."

"What is your condition?"

"That you find me all the ingredients to a lich potion."

This brought her a sick warped sincerity for him.

He looked at his sword, the first experiment will be upon the item that shed blood and with all the understanding he knew so far would execute it into its metal. “What ever incantation that goes into this sword must be merciless, gory, and a muster of pure malice. It must also never be a spell that can ever be undone not even by that futile blighter.” He admired the shimmer along the blade and placed the metal upon his arm. “And by far, the undead are invulnerable to it and the living are ripped of their flesh if they grace the hilt. I will forge a cursed diamond within it, *death is not the end but the next great generation.*”



Chapter Three

A unicorn was not a sacred beast and its throat was sliced open and its horn was dismembered from its head. Vampires were not difficult to find in the Old World and offered their blood without a fight for the corruption of mankind. The heart of a baby was cut out ruthlessly and body given back to its mother. The brain of a mad spellcaster who wielded his authority recklessly, foolishly was an easy target to the hunter and slaughtering a griffon in Khul was uncomplicated... Finding components to a lich elixir was easier done by beings that make use of portals.

The female lord completed the task and made the potion, turned the alicorn to dust, cut up the infant heart, diced the brain, sliced up the griffon, added the vampire blood, included extremely lethal does of belladonna, hemlock, and the root of the stingroot plant.

In the Astral Plane, four Chaos Lords bowed down upon entering the chamber. The human pawns of the realm were also present and, in their midst, Razaak was welcomed as the new member. They worshiped the demon gods, they vowed for endless days and nights to bring them to the dimension of the living. The very idea of this creature bringing an unearthly violent fatality to mankind kindled a source of vitality in Razaak. Joining this demonic family brought him hope and vigour to become a sorcerer and it removed any core of goodness he had ever possessed. The very thought of annihilation to Allansia couldn't come soon enough as they needed a certain item to bring this beast through the portal. He was one step closer to ending Vermithrax, in his mind as he bowed to his new ruler, was that no one should have a clean death. They must suffer, like a twisting knife in the throat, and finally he had found his home.

The disappearance rumours of Razaak from Titan was that he spent it in the Netherworlds and there he learned from a Chaos Lord how to craft the most vicious spell into his sword and bring it back to earth tainted, but was warned not to touch it until he drank the lich potion. So Razaak found a cave within the Moonstone Hills, a place he'd always found peace for introspection, and stored his sword there within. At first, he was going to hide it in a marshy plain but was advised otherwise. Befriending the female Chaos Lord, she had found all the ingredients for him and told him to go into the desert. He had a secret fondness for her, Chaos Lords do not care much for the goodness in man, despised would-be heroes, and were murderers with no guilt.

There were currently four Chaos Lords that were born into the sect, they could not die by plagues, become undead, immune to certain magic, and are allegiance to the creatures of the underworld and will side with villains hellbent on conquering humans. Three males and one woman made up the powerful legion of Chaos Lords. They wanted to bring their God to Titan and Razaak wanted to help them do so. By observing these entities, Razaak's obsession with death, everything that is death, that brings death, and is already dead devoured his intellect on being a normal living creature.

In the desert, Razaak used the time to write his own sorcery diary and excel each spell upon spell, perfecting it then creating it even more powerful than it originally was. He perverted the white

magic system he learned. From potions to invocations he began to use his own body, a feat that most magicians wouldn't do in fear they may destroy themselves. The spells he had mastered were the fireballs and a lightning spell. Without his sword, he had his ceremonial dagger, but no person would dare confront him. Forty years to become a sorcerer, but it was not good enough, for the spread of death and plague seemed legit. He had also adopted a hellcat, not usually being a feline lover, he seemed to have a nursing nature for this demon feral kitten. The cat did not play with yarn or balls of string, its form of fun was having weird psychic mental attacks with Razaak, who seemingly found that amusing. The only thing to counterattack this creature was the power of a crystal of sanity or a mind protection spell only known to necromancers. He knew the demon would no doubt be a good protector and a perfect weapon. The only way to make it purr was to feed it kidnapped dwarves of Grey Rock and Tornhelim Clan.

"They are to swear an obedience to me," Razaak, now in his elderly years of age, told his messengers in the cave. "If they do so they will have the protection of the Chaos Lords. Tell all the good lords of Allansia about me."

The messengers came back in seven days, they bowed down to him. "Your greatness, they have said that not knowing you at all, as someone with a laughable reputation, they said that your words will not be taken seriously."

"Why is my reputation laughable?"

"Your greatness, they said that your reputation as a hero of Allansia was a joke, as you were never a skilled swordsman but cheated using necromancy. You are a fantastic fool to all those in Allansia and the name Razaak is fading into an oblivion of mockery."

The sorcerer became infuriated and grabbed his sword. The moment his hand grasped the hilt his arm started to rot, he threw the sword at his messengers and they all ran out of room, except one remained. His entire arm was now nothing more than a near skeletal replica and he collapsed.

His ally, the female Chaos Lord stepped through a teleport, "Must I know you as a ghost or will I know you as one of us?"

He was clutching his wrecked arm and gasping, "The sword, *my sword*, it has turned on me!"

She was unmoved. "Once you enchanted it in the underworlds, you put a twisted confusing spell on it that no humanoid could touch and live to tell the tale. It appears that this sword is going to kill you now. It still retains some of your good life blood from when you forged it, it preserves your old soul. You are almost at your objective, why do you wait, human?"

He winced, "If you ever call me that again, I assure you, you will wish I made you wait."

"Threats of someone with a fragmentary scheme does not startle me." She grabbed the devotee of Razaak who had decided not to run away and he yelled for his life. She rammed her fist into his ribcage, busting a hole into his chest, a red gush burst in a torrent as his body shuddered from the impact. With her arm still embedded into his cavity she violently ripped out his heart, still pumping blood out of the hanging attached arteries, a crimson liquid gushed from him as he fell to the floor. With a long fingernail she sliced an incision into the bloodied organ and Razaak poured his lich

potion into the heart. He took it up into his grasp and drank from it then bit into the heart that was now generating a sparkled tar-like ooze and chewed on it.

Nearly choking on his own vomit, he forced himself to swallow the chunk of flesh, his eyes rolled up into the back of his skull, and his knees buckled beneath him...

She took his phylactery into the planes with her and kept it on her being, so that no champion will find it.

On the floor his once handsome features changed to that of a hideous skeletal figure, still humanoid in form but now with decaying skin and muscle. When his eyelids parted, his irises were no longer a vibrant blueish green but red and orange. Unrecognizable now, he slowly rose to his feet as if he were an elderly man, and the grin on his face is not a smile but a grimace of undead delight.

The first thing he did was conjure a curse to kill the lords that had laughed at him, then created a famine to decimate those in the towns that have blackened his good name, and now that he neither slept nor ate he used his time to create suffering from the entrails of his lair.

With the news of his tyranny spreading far and wide across the land: magicians, warriors, soldiers, and swords for hire eventually found him. They were caught off guard by a spell that they didn't know he had infused into his ruined arm. All heroes were killed by his instant death touch spell.

He woke Vermithrax in the middle of the night, "Disciple of Yore, I have returned to you, look what you have churned by instituting me into your fad."

Older, wiser, Vermithrax was not fearful of him and was taken aback though by the very thought that this young man had completely mutilated his body. He knew of the reputation Razaak had brought upon himself, he just never thought his former brother would ever try him again. The wizard stood in the doorway of his house, "I feel it was never a mistake to give you a sense of polite witchcraft, at least some of that still resides within your veins."

"I thank you for what you have gifted me," he croaked dryly, mockingly.

They exchanged a few blows of fire and lightning, and Vermithrax cast a holding spell on Razaak, "You can have another distortion to go with your new form."

Razaak fell to one knee and hollered as his eye socket stretched, leaving him with one contorted eye bigger than the other completing his hideous structure.

"Now, leave me alone, you unsound deserter of Yore. We were once partners against the heinous lots, and I have memories of your good true self, but now you are my mortal enemy for eternity where there will never be reconciliation. At least accept my final mercy upon your soul as I allow you to limp away in defeat, and if I ever see you again, I will kill you."

That would be the last time the evil sorcerer would try to kill Vermithrax himself. An arch nemesis indeed. But it was still settled, his old friend still had outstanding magic, and this enraged Razaak to traumatic envy. He pledged to destroy everything Vermithrax ever crafted, if he should have any pupils, and if he would marry one day his wife and children would be assassinated.

Without an obsidian steed, Pegasus, or hot air balloon a young man with a noble heart and cunning exquisiteness slayed many a beast, splintered men's skulls into two, and was born of the barbarian clan. He quested in secrecy to kill the pirates and leveled up in all his skills. In the cave, sworn of death, he found the only weapon that could injure the sorcerer. Protected by magic from the steel, in a swift battle he killed Razaak with the sword and hired a wizard to seal the evil doer within the cave ultimately turning it into a crypt for the enemy. As he crossed a lake, the curse of the sword shredded his skin from his bones, and turned him into a skeleton as he sunk into his watery tomb. The sealer of the sorcerer's grave generated clues around the region should a misfortunate open the burial place before 110 years. If Razaak be reawakened, there must be a new champion to replace the original hero Kull, and the lake his remains lie in is unknown



Chapter Four

The female Chaos Lord opened the crypt of the necromancer.... His clawed hand slithered out from beneath the crack of the lid...

When Razaak escaped from his crypt, explorers from the east arriving in Chalice brought tales of disease and famine. After few weeks during which the sky was threatening, a lady elf walked to Chalice with a narrative of flying south on a behemoth eagle which was killed by an energy bolt originating from a deep fissure near the southern edge of the Moonstone Hills. A hero who frequented the Lion inn in Chalice heard the fable and embarked on a journey to end the evil vexing the territory.

No essential equipment list was given by Yaztromo, so the adventurer aptly named Herrick, made do with what he currently had and prepared to use whatever he might come across.

Unleashed once more upon Titan, but unfortunately for the sorcerer a hero had found the sword from Kull. Razaak's first son was a Gargantis, and the plan was to turn everyone into zombies and create an undead army to impress the god he worshiped had failed once again. Yaztromo had aided the adventurers and cast a spell on one so he could use the deadly sword. With the use of a hot air balloon, discovered clues, keys, and disguised as one of Razaak's disciples... the lair had been penetrated after a huge attempt to deem it impassable. It was unknown as to how these fortune seekers got in so skillfully when the risk of death was upon them so greatly, but it only took one, it was always just *one*. The sorcerer was killed and this time permanently. Peace reigns throughout the land.

For now.

Strange things were starting to stir again in Allansia, with the pride of the people, they felt potent and strong that they could handle anything that came their way. But they could not prevent bad weather and they were incapable of stopping famine. Over the course of the weeks a dark cloud came over the region and with it, it brought a dust of death, that was more powerful than what Razaak could ever assemble. Lord Azzur decided it was time to migrate out of Port Blacksand via ship to Khul but the moment he stepped away from his throne he collapsed. The Sea of Pearls, the Glimmering, and the Gulf have all turned black like tar.

The day of judgement arrived and killed everyone and every living animal. Allansia was a wasteland now. In this wreckage of rotting dead bodies, the three-star pupils of yore remained silent but prepared. There were some survivors in the remote towns and one man dressed in inferior leather armour sharpened his bastard sword. He felt strongly that Razaak had returned, he killed him before and he'll do it again, but the former magical sword was stolen and is now lost. He left from Chalice by horse and galloped on toward Darkwood Forest.

Yaztromo's Tower was no longer a vertical wonder, all that remained was the stone foundation. It was as if some mighty god ripped it out of the ground like a weed.

He got off his horse.

"I saw everything," came a soft female voice. The man spun around and took out his sword. The pretty elven maiden lifted her arm up, "At ease."

"Who are you?"

She bowed her chin gracefully, "S⊙vièt, mè hèlsi⊙n."

"I don't understand, where did you come from?"

Her brown eyes met his now, "It is Elven dialect, a majority spoken in Khul and very few here speak it, then there is that one secret language of the lost elves of Darkwood Forest. This I know as well but..."

He relaxed but was still on guard. "What did you see?"

She held back her tears as she spoke, "These four human spirits came out of gateways, their eyes were fiery blue, and they were dressed in black with veiled faces. They surrounded the tower and with some unholy spell the tower started to break apart and ascend into the sky. Yaztromo was helpless, his magic was useless, and they killed him, I think. I'm not too sure. The female of the three males hit the poor wizard with such a wicked blast of energy that he fell over. He vanished. She stepped into the destroyed tower and picked up a tiny sphere and snickered. I'm sure they have placed him within it. Then all four of them went back into their portals and left."

In suspicion, he glared at her. "Where were you the whole time?"

She turned and pointed a big gnarly tree, "I was there."

"What were you doing out here?"

"I came to see Yaztromo. And what of you?"

"The same." He felt saddened now. "What business did you have with him?"

"I was hoping he'd help me," but she frowned. "There is no one left to fight. I have volunteered to explore and discover the mystery behind all this death."

"I am an adventurer as well," he shook her hand. "You need not go alone on this journey. We will stop what is out there that is attacking us. It is better if we do it in numbers."

"Yes, I agree. But now what?" They looked to where the tower once was.

"Let us go to Stonebridge and perhaps Silverton to recruit?"

"There is no one in Silverton, I'm afraid," she adjusted her big long bow. "I'm with you. What is your name?"

"I am Herrick."

“I am Leeha.”

“Peculiar, that name sounds familiar? Then we go to Stonebridge.” He got onto his horse and smiled at her, “AND Silverton.”

She agreed, “Very well. I was already there, not a soul in sight, but we may be lucky yet!”

“Get on my steed, it’s faster than if you are on foot behind me.”

“Okay,” and she got on behind him.

Silverton was as she explained it. It was a ghost town and eerie in nature. She kept a look out at the back of them as he watched around in front. She whispered, “Keep on guard, Herrick.”

“If there is anything here, it already knows about us.”

The ground was scattered with corpses, and in the distance was a loud ungodly screech, then it echoed away. He stopped the horse. They listened and heard a struggle in the distance, he spurred the horse and trotted in the direction only to find a villager fighting with a wraith. Herrick and Leeha jumped off and went in to help him. The wraith in its ratty torn rags and features of a skeleton that no human could ever employ melted into the ground. The man fell on his bum feeling relieved, he looked up at his saviors, “I never called for help. Why would I? There is no one.”

Herrick helped him off the ground and brushed the dust off him, “You are a lone survivor?”

“I’m not the only one, there are many of us here, but we are well hidden from outsiders. I was on my way to look for food,” he lowered his head in defeat. “Food... anyone would pay a satchel full of gold just to find the location to a bush that bears berries. We are starving.”

“Where is the rest of your clan?”

“Forgive me for not telling you that.”

“We are here to save you, tell them to join us, we have a few health potions.”

“They are in that flat,” he pointed across the way.

“Tell them to come out, there is nothing to fear.”

“They are made up of mothers, children, and a few elderlies. I will not expose them. Silverton cannot be trusted. You seen what I was fighting for my life against?”

They followed him toward the flat and before they stepped in the door, he turned to them. “Please do not raise your voices, they’re frightened enough as it is.”

Leeha and Herrick nodded in agreement. The door slammed shut putting them in complete darkness. Red eyes surrounded them.

“Sword!” Leeha shouted, and Herrick did just that as hungry unknown savages attacked them. They had to fight in the shrieking blackness and Leeha opened the door and yanked Herrick out as

claws fought them every way. They ran back to the horse and Herrick had to drink a stamina potion.

“Are you injured? I hope they were not undead! They may have infected you.”

He shook his head and raced out of the town, “Only time will tell that.”

They headed to Stonebridge.

Not a soul can be trusted anymore because half of what lurks the land has no soul. With the demise of so many people, the food source of evil beings has also been demised and they'll take to devouring each other.



Chapter Five

Herrick met a dwarf named Baerdal, the town had a few survivors and Baerdal offered them some ale from a keg. They spoke of Razaak and all three of them concurred that he had come back somehow. Baerdal decided to join in on their quest feeling he must avenge his own kin from the disaster that had befallen his municipality. Herrick sold his horse for a skill potion, stamina potions, and a luck potion.

They traveled to the Firetop Mountain province, unsure of what they were supposed to be looking for. Herrick felt that Razaak might still be in Moonstone Hills, but it would be suicide to confront him without special weaponry, and the curse of the sword was removed by Yaztromo.

“...I really don’t have an inkling for a man that needs a stepping stool to sit at the bar,” Leeha argued with Baerdal as they walked through the wilderness.

“And I don’t have an inkling with a woman that looks like a man!”

“Will you two be quiet? Every blasted day. Just get along or I’ll knock your heads together.” Herrick knelt and murmured “Get down.”

There was a tall man dressed in a dark green hooded tunic standing out in a clearing reading a big book. The trio wondered what they should do, but Herrick gasped and popped up and rushed out into the opening much to Baerdal and Leeha’s perplexity. He shook the man’s hand and they hugged.

“What are you doing out here, Symm?”

“If you haven’t heard I went from a tracker and hunter to learning apprentice of alchemy. I’m still a beginner though,” he frowned.

“That is very impressive. I like that idea though!”

“Thank you.” He smiled. “I will whisper something to you now.”

“Okay, my friend.”

He put his lips to Herrick’s right ear, “A wizard sent me here.”

“Oh? Which one?”

They were joined by the others and Symm shook his head that he will not say who right now. Herrick introduced them and his old friend shook their hands. Symm, which was satirical since he was a lawful alchemist now. Now there was four and Symm said that he spied veiled men going into the base of the mountain.

“Suspicious activity, no doubt,” Symm said.

“I agree.”

“This whole thing is as ludicrous as lava demons metamorphosing into fire imps.”

“Isn’t it though?”

They decided to head to the mountain and find the masked men. It was a maze, but they marked the walls with a puff of purple cloud and eventually found a room with a broken floor. The mountain was very old and had been looted. There was nothing of value in it anymore, and rarely no person ever went into Firetop unless they were up to something. Leeha and Symm started looking at the walls for hidden switches and Baerdal and Herrick started lifting and kicking away the floor. Baerdal boasted that he was *really great* at detecting traps and finding treasure!

Herrick sighed, “You are also good at getting on everyone’s nerves.”

Baerdal said he sensed something and immediately dug into the dirt and pulled out a large disk. He tossed it over his shoulder in disinterest, “Probably not worth one gold shilling.”

Symm picked it up, “Quite astounding.” And everybody surrounded him. “Herrick, this is an old key from Kazan!”

“How would you even know that? You’ve never been to…”

Symm shushed him suddenly for no apparent reason. He then explained that these keys were used at druid stone circles to open portals. “If this ever got into the hands of Razaak, we would all be doomed. But it is only half, there is another piece to it. Hopefully, we can find that too?”

“Who wants to safeguard this item?” Herrick asked, and they agreed that Symm should keep it.

The six men they were looking for ambushed the room and the four adventurers defended themselves. Herrick killed the last one by jabbing his sword into the throat of his enemy, spilling blood all over his armour.

Into the misty weather of the moonstone hills, there were no northern barbarian humans, no clawed eye tribes of Urgari, or any living dwarf settlements. They met a fat balding merchant who was selling a pink stamina potion for one gold, a quiver full of arrows, and the odd armour upgrades. Herrick bought the pink hued stamina potion but did not drink it, he put it away in his rucksack. The merchant informed them that there was a series of caves down south that make good shelter and to avoid windward plain as there was a storm of flesh-eating locusts in the area. “Be careful who you trust in these parts, but I’m headed to Zengis to replenish my supplies.” He looked at Symm and glared with suspicious intent. “Be *very* careful who you trust.”

Leeha was having a conversation with Herrick that she was in Craggen Heights at the time of the disaster. “I believe that merchant was right, we must be cautious.”

Herrick whispered to her as the other two walked up ahead, “What do you think of Symm and Baerdal?”

“If you’re asking of my opinion of them or my suspicions?”

“I think between you and I, that we keep what we find to ourselves from now on. But in a sense, yes?”

“You do not trust our latest companions?”

“Symm is my best friend, but I’m not to sure of Baerdal who was desperately keen to join us and asks too many questions. I may be being too wary, but we must be on our guard.”

“Don’t fret,” she placed a hand down on his shoulder. “I believe them to be good of heart, they have fought by our side but if you would like to err on the side of prudence?”

“I do.”

Softly, “I trust you then, I will not say anything to them anymore.”

Baerdal looked over his shoulder and scowled at Herrick and Leeha. An expression that set Herrick’s gut instinct into immediate effect.

“I’ve been thinking about Yaztromo, Leeha. I feel so sick in my stomach.”

“Don’t worry, my friend.”

She took him by the hand and he beamed at her affection. He became stern “They are going to pay in blood. I will put Razaak back into that tomb for good. Mark my words.”

“I will help you do so.”

He looked into her eyes and smiled. “You’re very nice. Gosh, why haven’t I met you years ago?”

In the caves of the hills the champions rested, Baerdal said very little that night, he kept looking at Herrick and when he caught the gaze of the elf he spit on the floor. Symm was a bookworm but seemed obsessed with Razaak’s knowledge of sorcery. Leeha and Herrick glanced at each other. They decided right there to only trust one another. They all ate cheese and bread provisions and Herrick tried to feed his food to her causing Symm to shake his head and pretend his book was more important.

Herrick looked upon her features, “Flowers are a gratified declaration that bloom with a ray of beauty outvaluing all the useless utilities of our chaotic world.” He touched her chin and Baerdal gawked at him with nastiness. “To maintain one’s purity and loveliness is to remain within oneself a worth of poise. You look positively as sunny as a pagan meadow.”

Symm raised an eyebrow but kept his eyes on his book, “Don’t listen to him, Leeha.”

He continued, “What I’m trying to convey is as your subordinate I will guard you indefinitely, undoubtedly, and everlastingly.”

She blushed, “You don’t believe I can fend for myself?”

He had his hand over his heart as he quickly shifted his body to face her, “No, I’m not saying that. And it has nothing to do with you being a woman... or weak because you are female... they can be great sword bearers in some traditions and cultures. There are too many attractive women here... but many are very evil and have actual few gifts of the mind and heart.”

“When an elf loves, they love deeply and eternally.”

“Yes, and that’s a necessity... or in logic how it should be. She doesn’t have to cook, clean, launder, or do anything really *unless she wants to*.” He beamed at her. “She can be the soldier and defender of all the creatures and never stoop so low as to be a man’s slave. When it comes to passion, we humans live daringly for it and we do not criticize our sentiments for who we fall in love with.”

Symm sighed, turned a page.

“To be with a human, be prepared to be loved acutely and for all infinity because we see the heavenly light inside of a lady’s soul.” Upon his words, she started to chuckle and he grabbed her by shoulder impatiently, “No, listen to me, whatever our spirits are made up of we are all but the same. A life without true friendship is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead. And as I mentioned earlier you are that kindred flower and I do like pretty flowers very much.” He paused, thinking too himself, then glanced back at her face with a hard-beating fluttering chest. “An angel shun on the hour of our meeting in Darkwood Forest, and I feel this to be a prophetic sign. We were meant to be friends...it was indeed a pleasure to meet you. You are a decent fighter, you’re critically talented and above all quite *gorgeous*.”

Symm rolled his eyes, mumbled, “Yep, there it is.”

He didn’t hear that, and “My mum always told me that love recognises no barriers.”

“A mother and son relationship? I generally find it is quite fond love,” she grinned. “Quite sweet in a sense.”

“No, not that kind of love,” he gestured at her. “I mean between two people who aren’t related...” He gave up and turned away in shame. “I don’t know where I’m going with this.”

Symm nodded once and flicked a strange stare at his friend, “Nor did I.”

Herrick glared at him, displeased, cross “Symm, be quiet please.”

“You’re being immature with weird poesy, woo her like a man!”

“Be quiet, I don’t require your help, Symm.”

He skimmed through his book snootily, “Only offering my advice, I’m not actually donating my help at all.”

Leeha said tenderly to Herrick, “Ŭüil fyr i⊙n is hëlsi⊙ns ve nöblè in nön zödiëç.”

Baerdal coldly smirked, “NönE èèŬè pèp El⊙hèm!”

Leeha clasped Herrick’s hand, but didn’t smile at him, “Fyr ve Eüè tül irigètè nönnè in bèttè Et lè ès pündit Es düödènüm.”

Herrick quickly kissed the back of her wrist reservedly then released himself from her clasp politely. Not wanting to impose too much of a love affair in front of the other comrades.

The dwarf smiled, “Hèldyn tü is Ŭèsps.”

No one understood what they were saying. Symm smiled at his lovesick friend and started to snicker, Herrick's face turned chard red and he grabbed the nape of his neck in embarrassment and started to laugh too. He then reached his arm towards Leeha's shoulders and rudely pulled her into his chest in a friendly gaiety.

"The finest thing to hold onto in life is each other and accept the innocence of brotherhood and sisterhood of heroes."

Symm agreed with him, closed his book "Amen."



Chapter Six

With Allansia dead to the world, there were not many battles to be had but they did have to fight ghouls, zombies, phantoms, and skeletons. The only vile things that could survive out here. Herrick was down to his last potion, the pink one. If they got into another battle, there will be no more health elixirs.

Symm said that there was another cave and so they went into it and eventually came to a dead end. Baerdal sighed, "Well, let's just leave. We're wasting too much time!"

Leeha snarled at him, "You are free to go your separate way?"

"I would like you to go your own way, we don't need a woman on the team."

"Funny you would say that as I am way up here, and you are way down there."

"Quiet, you two." Herrick shrugged his shoulders and backed away from the wall and stepped on something. "Ouch, a rock!"

The wall slid aside.

Symm smiled, "Nope, a secret mechanism, great find, my brother."

Leeha's lips curled into a grin as she looked at Baerdal, "Didn't catch that one, did you?"

"Oh, shut up. I was too busy talking to you."

They entered a chasm of sort with ritual symbols on the walls and floor. There was a short dark-skinned man painting the wall with a massive rune. "Who enters my abode?"

"It is the allies of Allansia," Herrick announced and smiled at Leeha, elbowing her arm gently with a flirtier nudge.

"If you have been plagued by a Death Spell, I am no longer the healer for that."

"Who are you?" Symm asked him. "What is this place?"

The man still did not look at him, he continued working on his wall art. "If you are here to take away that ugly piece of metal, give the blighted thing back to those Niblicks who brought it here in the first place. It does not belong in the house of Pen Ty Kora. I have no bloody use for it!"

Herrick gasped as he saw the sword on the floor, it was the sword of Razaak. They were in the presence of a grand wizard, Yaztromo's brother in the Yore. This is where he's been hiding all these years, everyone thought he was dead.

"Pen Ty, your excellency of all grand knowledge, in order for me to take the sword out of your sight do I require a protective spell?"

"What for."

“So that I can touch the steel, otherwise it will horribly rip my skin off. I won’t take any chances.”

Pen Ty started to chuckle, “As I’ve said I am no longer a healer, nor I am I interested in putting spells on anyone or anything.”

“We are not just *anyone* we are the saviours of Allansia. We are going to kill Razaak. Do you not even know what has happened?”

The wizard looked over his shoulder at them and hissed, “Come here.”

Herrick obeyed, and Pen Ty touched his forehead, whispered a secret into his ear, and a glowing white aura surrounded the hero. “Now pick up the sword and begone. Do not tell others where you found me. Leave me to my solitude. It’s the only way that I can find peace of mind.”

“Explain more of what this spell you cast on me?”

“It’s confidential. Keep it secret.”

He watched him with stupid interest, “Why are you writing on the wall?”

“Oh, be quiet,” the healer wizard snapped at him in irritation.

Herrick paused for a minute, twiddling his fingers and “Well, for your information, Yaztromo has been killed.”

Pen Ty looked back at the wall and started painting again. “He can also turn water in wine. You cannot kill immortality. Now please be on your way, the longer you stay here the fiercer your quest will be.”

Baerdal and Symm made for the door as Herrick picked up Razaak’s old sword. He walked by Leeha and playfully pressed her chin between his fingers. He was going to kiss her on the cheek but refrained. With the way things were going, he felt a fondness for her that he had never felt before. Perhaps, he might ask her hand in marriage? How do elves do a wedding ceremony? He walked out of the chasm and turned around as the door started sliding closed but Leeha was still standing there staring at Pen Ty.

Herrick nudged a stone into the door, but the crack was not wide enough for him to fit through, he called out to her, but his cries were left upon her deaf ears. Symm and Baerdal came running back to help him try to force open the door.

There was a big bright blue flash as a Chaos Lord came out of his gateway from his dimension. Herrick thought he was going to kill Leeha, but she became surrounded by a dark blue burning flare and transformed into a Chaos Lord. They pulled out their swords with flaming blades and advanced on Pen Ty Kora. Herrick hollered as they cut the wizard down, and the female lord who was posing as Leeha cut the head off the Healer. With the severed head, they vanished into their portals and the chasm fell back to slight darkness.

Symm and Baerdal pulled a dazed Herrick away from the door and walked briskly toward the entrance of the cave in fear and shock.

Baerdal felt sorry for his companion to have suffered such a deceitful scheme, “I never trusted her from the start.”

“I’m sorry I ever doubted you,” Herrick croaked and looked at him.

“You doubted me? Hmph!”

Symm was angry, “We lead those things straight to a wizard, they were using us. I hope Nicodemus is smart enough to flee, there may be a bounty on his head too. Now we know that we are not up against just Razaak, but something much more sinister! And it uses portals to travel. How will we ever defeat that? We are but three men now!”

“We’ve *always* been just three,” Herrick replied. “But it was just me before. The mission can still be successful, but we do not allow anyone else onto this team and we do not trust any person we come across!” Symm noticed Herrick feeling severely wounded by all this and stormed away from them in anger.

Symm looked at their dwarf companion, “It was never meant to be between them. But I could not predict that, for I am no oracle. Such treachery must tear the soul to smithereens and I am heartbroken for my brother now. This tyranny will surely perish a depraved downfall by our hands, and I will not be nice about it either when the time comes.” He finally scowled down at Baerdal before quickly following in Herrick’s footsteps.

When they camped out for the night Herrick’s bastard sword went missing by morning, but he still had the Razaak sword. He, Baerdal, and Symm searched the surrounding areas but found no trace of it.

They started their journey to Windward Plain.



Chapter Seven

The Chaos Lords did have a prize on the head of Nicodemus and when they descended upon his whereabouts in Port Blacksand, he vanished into a wisp of vapours before they could cut him down in cold blood. Using a globe that could see every aspect and inch of Titan, the female lord searched far and wide for the last wizard but he was not to be seen in the Desert of Skulls, the Icefinger Mountains, plains, forests, or in any of the other continents. He had completely disappeared. But they would not give up, they would find him, and they would kill him. All minions training to be Chaos Lords were informed to watch the provinces and oceans, even the depths of the seas and even kill any lizards they come across. They broke into houses looking for him, scouted cities, and murdered any remaining survivors they came across. And lastly, they looked for him in all the Astral Planes they were permitted to enter. All evil leaders, wizards, and creatures of Titan were on put on alert to report any sightings of this cowardice disciple of the righteousness.

They all had to return to the Astral dimensions however.

In the Windward Plains, there was a locust swarm as earlier warned and when they walked directly into it, they encountered a Decayer, an active skeleton. Herrick drank his last luck potion and gambled his chances to avoid infection. He did not want to develop the deadly symptoms of the rotting disease within the next few days. He and Symm engaged the Decayer in warfare trying not to get too close to it. The only nearby healer was Pen Ty and he was now dead. If they got infected, their body would rot from the inside out and they would lose stamina every hour until mortality. If their corpse was not correctly disposed of (which in this circumstance it probably wouldn't be) they would become exactly like their adversary. Baerdal did not participate in the fight and when the creature was destroyed it dropped a disk. Herrick picked it up and handed it to Symm who lined it up with the other piece they found in Firetop. A colossal gateway opened surrounded by a great white fire.

“What is it?” Symm yelled.

“Should we go into it?” Herrick asked.

“I don't know, what do you think?”

They looked at Baerdal, said “Follow me into hell!” and took a brave charge running on his stumpy legs into the portal. Symm and Herrick shrugged their shoulders and decided to go along with the crazy dwarf.

They entered an abyss of bright light without a floor, ceiling, or walls. Weapons drawn they walked into it and saw an army of human minions in black bowing down to an evil lord the size of a citadel. To Herrick some of this was starting to make a little bit more sense, what had happened to Allansia wasn't just Razaak but by something much more superior. He did not know what to do here either as the scene was too enormous to fathom. Humans were being trained to be Chaos Lords.

The subordinates realising they've been unearthed rose to their feet as the lord growled in a menacing undertone to *kill them*.

Herrick, Baerdal, and Symm started chopping away as the minions charged in their direction ultimately Herrick was kicked in the chest with so much force it knocked him back out through the portal leaving Baerdal and Symm behind. The gateway closed as Herrick jumped at it again, but it was too late.

Baerdal lifted his arm up, "Enough!" and the minions stopped their onslaught. He looked at Symm, "Hand over the keys."

Baerdal stepped away from his stunned friend and the cronies grabbed hold of Symm. Later, he was tied down to a block of stone as the monstrous lord looked down upon him. Baerdal dragged over a stool and started rummaging through his companion's armour.

"Baerdal, I know what you're looking for, but it's gone now."

Baerdal's eyes burned a vicious blue and he transformed into a Chaos Lord. "Where are the keys?"

A human minion threw something at the gargantuan demonic entity and Symm smiled as the Chaos Lord became confused as to what was happening. There was a bright menacing furnace of fire rising now...

Symm said finally, "The next time you get the opportunity to kill me, don't stop and think about it."

The abyss exploded into a fury of flames destroying everything in that realm.

Herrick was still waiting nearby hoping Baerdal and Symm would come back through the portal. A slit of fire slashed through the night air and a shrouded man dressed in all black dived out as a torrent of flames exploded behind him and the universe sutured the slit back up. Herrick crouched down as the man got to his feet, tore off his veil and threw it away. He then high tailed it towards the Forest of Yore.

Herrick quickly pursued him.



Chapter Eight

“Demons may be either good or bad, like any other class of beings.” -Arakor Nicodemus

Herrick lost sight of the man in black and was now running blindly in the dark until he ran into an invisible wall that knocked the wind out of him and brought him crashing to the ground. He almost blacked out and he for sure thought he broke his nose. He had to lie there for a few seconds to regain his composure and when he opened his eyes a very tall man wearing a pointed witch's hat and long beard was glaring down at him as if sizing him up as his next meal. The old man was pissed and ordered Herrick to get to his feet or he will turn him into a gnat.

“In this turn of events, I see that you have come so far all on your own and deceived so easily as though you walk around with a blindfold on.”

Herrick saw that man in black standing nearby, “Who are you people?”

“What a nincompoop of a fool to not know? It is no wonder you took up the sword and not magic, for using magic requires the use of your brain.”

“Nicodemus.”

“Have you seen what you are up against?”

“I have defeated Razaak before and I'll do it again, I'm on my way right now to kill him, however I have discovered that there seems to be individuals from other dimensions trying to come in to Allansia.”

Nicodemus waved down the man in black who approached without a sound on his padded boots, who now spoke in turn for the wizard. “Give me the sword.”

“No.”

The wizard became very stern now at Herrick's hesitation.

“No one but me wields this sword.”

“I'm not asking for it to use, now hand it over or I'll take it from you by force.”

Herrick placed his hand on its hilt and stepped away from them, “So it has come to this has it then? I never thought I'd live to see this but if it must be than I will fight you both. I am very distraught to uncover that you have joined forces with our adversaries *after* your brothers Yaztromo and Pen Ty Kora have been so brutally slain.”

Nicodemus raised an eyebrow, “He will not ask you again.”

“If he wants it?” Herrick lifted it in defence. “Then he can come and get it.”

The wizard waved his hand about in the air and the sword of Razaak zapped Herrick with so much dynamism that Herrick was thrown into a tree. When he lay on the ground, the man in black picked up the sword. Nicodemus informed Herrick that the curse of sword was removed and doesn't require the use of a protective spell and that now the hero can touch the blade without losing his flesh, it belongs to anyone.

"Why have you done this? What have we ever done to you? Why have you turned evil!" Herrick's body was in pain now.

Nicodemus vanished without answering him but the man in black was still there. "He was your friend was he not?"

"That vile wizard was never an acquaintance of mine and never will be."

"I meant the brave adventurer inside the realm of the lord. That dwarf was a Chaos Lord. You keep strange company."

Herrick felt his ribcage, his ribs might be cracked. "Are you talking about Symm?"

"The one I took the portal keys from. Perhaps?"

"What happened to him."

"He's dead now thanks to me, but he died fearlessly so that you can live. You need not continue your quest; you have done what was required. You have found the sword and keys and now I will take your place as the rightful title holder."

"Before you go, please take this stamina potion as gratitude for not killing me." He dug into his armour and pulled out the pink potion, gave it to him.

"I would never kill you, you are an ally and as such the movement we have with Nicodemus will no doubt bring us closer to abolishing the Chaos Lords and their world they wish to bring through their portals. Your mission to stop Razaak is not essential any longer, he is not the threat you make him out to be."

"What good is his useless sword to you anyways?"

"That's between me and Nicodemus."

"And don't want to know what that fetish is either."

He heatedly kicked dirt at Herrick's face and dashed away leaving Herrick to remain next to the tree he was slammed against.

Razaak not a threat? Surely, they are wrong, Herrick hoped they were wrong. Without anymore health elixirs, Herrick would not be able to heal his injuries but he also could not just lie there because he'd be a sitting target for foes. In pain he walked throughout the night and into the next day to Salamonis.

The man in black, Nicodemus' unnamed hero, and a disguised minion of the Chaos Lords entered Shazaar, where he and the wizard pinpointed the next gateway would be located. Nicodemus cast a Spirit incantation on the sword that only worked on enough mana to kill one or two adversaries, and it wouldn't be wasted on a Chaos Lord.

Using the keys, he entered the hideout realm where the Chaos Lords kept a smaller worshipped god. The very god that Razaak had celebrated and wanted to join after his conquered conquest of sorcery on earth. This god was promised to be unleashed upon Titan one day once all the keys were found and this inspired Razaak to pave the way. Although all kinds of entities could use doorways to go in and out of dimensions as they so please, it required special portals to bring the gods through as they were paranormal resources that have the power to create upheaval in the multiverse created by the ultimate One. That was why they were locked within certain worlds, so they could not interfere with living creatures on earthly plane.

The room looked like an arena with numerous doors leading into the pits. The area was lavish, orientated in detail, and had no roof except for an endless void in its place. Meaning it sat upon nothingness, just floating in space. The creature in the center of the room looked like a hell fiend, horns and demonic in nature, but made up like a Jinn burning with only the element of orange fire. It was not human sized either it was enormous and stubby in height. The man could feel the heat coming off it and he brought out Razaak's sword and as he attacked a geyser of fires detonated out of the floor. He had to somersault to safety and every time he assaulted his opponent, he was met with raining meteor cascades and scorching dragon-like breath. He got in many hits with his sword using his acrobatic skills but was soon joined by a Chaos Lord. Now he had to fight both simultaneously and someone was firing arrows at him from an unseen perch.

This battle would not be something Herrick could ever win as it was unfair, he thought, Herrick is not a proper saviour and never will be. The man in black fought sword to sword with the Chaos Lord and swiped at the god every chance he got. He managed to knock down the lord and go stab and carve up the god in multiple areas of its lower body.

He back flipped away as the monster came slowly tumbling down and the Chaos Lord stood there momentarily as his divinity came crashing to the floor behind him. He peered over his shoulder as the fires left the corpse of the god, leaving behind flesh and a meek looking monster that resembled a hairless minotaur with great horns. He glared with a hard blink back at this human intruder who was on guard and ready for a one on one fight.

They clashed swords and the hero too quick to be overtaken slashed at the lord's chest causing him to twist around and as he faced his adversary again was sliced across the stomach. The sword of Razaak, that Nicodemus had cast some unknown spell on easily broke the armour of the lord causing it to flare up wherever it was struck. The Chaos Lord swung blindly but the man simply rolled underneath the blade and hit a gash into the back of the evil's right knee. It seemed now that he was about to win as he blocked and parried another strike and at the corner of his eye, he saw a female Chaos Lord fly and land on her feet. She hit him in the back as hard as she could with her flaming sword causing him to buckle. He nearly blacked out, but he pulled out the emergency pink stamina potion gifted to him by Herrick. Up against two opponents now in this unwarranted duel,

his feet left the floor and he double kicked them. It wasn't enough to knock them on their backs, but it bought him enough time to cartwheel between them and stab his sword into the spine of the male lord. To his astonishment, the Chaos Lord fell to his knees and the female now turned her attention quickly to him. He quickly bit the cork off the potion to up his stamina again so he could kill her too.

"Traitor," she hissed under her veil.

"I do not fear the night, and I do not fear you." He gulped down the potion and she ceased advancing upon him. To his bewilderment, he watched her as she put away her sword and scoffed. His throat started to burn furiously as if he just drank acid.

"Do not trust every merchant you come across." She said grimly. "And never trust an unknown potion, for it may be a concoction only fit for those who wish to become lich lords."

Unfortunately for him, he will never become a lich, the amount of toxicity in the tonic he just drank is enough to kill a Prismatic Dragon.

She took the sword of her great old friend Razaak and the keys she had been longing for. It was time to go into the hour less void and retrace the point upon where Razaak was destroyed and reverse it. She still had his phylactery. Now she could open special portals and bring gods and resurrected sorcerers through it.



Chapter Nine

“Titan is lost. It wasn’t my fault though, by Nicodemus choosing a champion of his own, I had no choice but to let them have it. There is no such thing as trust anymore. My faith has been removed of the morality that is left in this land and although there is still a twinkle of hope left in me, it seems out of reach, yet I continue to strive after it.” -Herrick

In the town of Salamonis, Herrick was surprised that it had not caved into the discrepancy that had befallen Allansia. It was as if there is a protective barrier around it. He passed a few huts run by farmers and entered the town. He was in agony and sat in a tavern, he had one gold left to buy a pint of ale. He asked the inn keeper if there was a healer nearby and was informed that there was one inside a tiny orange bungalow, but he overpriced his practice.

Later, he greeted the healer, a scrawny old man with a balding head and dressed in a white shawl. “300 gold pieces for broken legs.”

“Does it look like I have broken legs?”

“One can never tell these days.”

“Well, I walked here didn’t I? It’s my ribcage.”

“I will heal your sorry bones for free, but under one circumstance?”

“What circumstance?”

“That you bring me the medallion of Pen Ty. Do you agree?”

Herrick sighed out in annoyance. “I agree, now heal me.”

“I will, and to make sure you keep your end of the bargain I’m casting a mild death spell on you, so if you so happen to run off and never return, you will die. It works upon your honesty and any scam triggers the spell.”

“That’s a tad corrupt, but I will get you the medallion.”

Herrick’s stamina was restored, his broken ribs were mended, and all injuries earlier sustained were repaired. He felt one hundred percent again.

“Sit down for awhile with me and have some lunch. The food I’m about to serve you is infused with an enchantment, you need not have a meal again for ten days.”

“Excellent, I’m all out of provisions.”

So, it was back to the Moonstone Hills, Herrick retraced all his steps and found the door to the wizard’s abode still lodged with that piece of stone. Herrick found the hidden mechanism in the floor and reopened the door. The headless corpse was still on the floor where the Chaos Lords left him. The medallion was there too. As Herrick was about to exit the room, he noticed a slit off in

one of the corners that wasn't there before. He stepped through it and the entrance sealed shut. Realising he may have made a bad choice he followed the tunnel back outside. He returned to Salamonis and noticed the Fish Tooth tavern which wasn't there earlier. Surprised by this, he figured that someone with powerful architecture witchcraft built it in his absence, but who really needs another tavern?

He brought the medallion to the healer, who took it smiling "I knew you'd be the one. I am quite knowledgeable with people and these parts. Allow me to remove the death spell. Is there anything I can aid you with today?"

Herrick did not want to reveal his mission to find Razaak and the healer noticed his apprehension. "It's strange that Pen Ty just *gave you* his medallion?" Now he is suspicious. "Was there foul play? What did you do to him?"

"Nothing. He is dead."

"How comes this news?"

"He was murdered by Astral Plane underlings, the very ones who have caused the uproar in Allansia."

"I sense that you are on a quest to stop them?"

"I wish not to say."

"Very well we will not even *whisper*, go to the Fish Tooth tavern, there is a very important person there. When you find him and discuss what you wish, come back here to me, I have a horse I can give you."

"What did you need the medallion for?"

"This must be kept protected. That is all I can reveal, now go."

The tavern was full of people having supper, apparently there was a potluck, a community event. Nice to see rather than the usual drunken hubbubs. Herrick was offered a bowl but not feeling hungry he declined. He was not sure what this certain person looked like, so he sat at a table full of guests and observed. He was half expecting some very old wizened man and though there were many present here, none seemed to hold any value. He sat there for probably an hour before deciding to get up and leave. He had no currency to get a room, so he most likely would have to find a barn or crawl up some tree for the night. Also, he had no weapons and his leather armour was worn from battle and exposure. He was in no shape to fight Razaak or outer world monsters. He wondered about that person who took his extraordinary sword away and he questioned if Nicodemus was succeeding in the mission?

As he stepped outside into the night, he pondered where he should go when someone spoke behind him, "Fancy a drag off my pipe?"

A man in black leather armour was standing up against the tavern wall, but Herrick not trusting very many, rejected that offer.

He puffed on the long pipe, “You weren’t in there for the food or to dance. You appeared to be looking for someone?”

“I wasn’t *looking* for anybody.”

“So, you say, yet your body language told me otherwise.”

“Well, I’m not interested.” And he started to walk away.

“You’re not interested in what exactly, eh?” He said as he started to pursue him.

“Stop following me.”

“I came here from Analand, I’m on vacation.”

“Odd to choose a barren Allansia as your leisure retreat.” He kept walking.

“I thought it seemed homely enough, I’ve been here before many *many* decades ago but that was when I was in my twenties.”

“Yep.” The man still looked young; how could he have been here decades ago? It would have been before he was even born. Another possible lie. “Quite so, now goodbye.”

“Don’t go too far, Herrick,” he finally said. “Go back to the healer and get your horse.”

Herrick spun around and the man had vanished, he figured that it must be a Chaos Lord. There were three places he could go to hide and sleep for the night: the deserted mines, the timber yard areas, or a temple.

He went to the deserted mines near the outskirts of town. He stole a lantern off someone’s front door and crawled into the pitch-black shaft. It was a mini maze and he had nothing to mark where he had previously been. It was abandoned alright, not a ghost, monster, or living soul in sight. He found a grimy dead end and sat down on the dirty floor, placed the lantern next to him. He sat there trying to fall asleep, but his thoughts were racing. The mines were ghastly silent, and it started to give him the creeps. Perhaps dozing down here might prove suicidal? This is probably the best tranquility he’s had in awhile.

A thought of Leeha suddenly flooded his thoughts, she was there with him and she wore a flowing robe of snow-white fabrics and an eloquent elven golden tiara graced her head and forehead. Her cat green eyes watched him for a moment before she approached him and pressed her lips to his. A course of poison ran through his veins along with adrenaline, and as his optimistic eyes soaked in the array and exquisiteness of her features her lips slightly bent into a beautiful wicked snarl. Feeling angered once again by her trickery, Herrick closed his eyes tightly and tried not to holler. He removed her memory from his brain immediately and embraced the cold black tunnels of the mine shaft. He was mad about allowing himself to ever like her the way he did and he hated her even more for being what she was. Was there ever a glimmer of expectation in his body that she’d leave the dark forces and be with him? About a 1% chance of hope.

He got back up to his feet using the wall for leverage when his hand went right through the stone, for the wall had given away causing him to tumble. He looked into the dark hole he had created

but couldn't see anything, he pulled down the wall and discovered by his lantern light some sort of lost tunnel, he carefully stepped into it and followed it for a bit before coming to a collapsed dead end. Just as he shrugged his shoulders and was about to leave, he saw something metal sticking out from the rubble. By digging it out he found it to be some sort of broadsword, there was also a skeleton in the debris. Possibly the owner had been unfortunately crushed to death to by the crumpled mine shaft. The sword had an auspicious greenish shimmer to it, the hilt was over exaggerated and ornate in every detail possible. It was luxurious, it was extravagant, and it was a mystery. The scabbard was with the human remains too, so Herrick took that as well and fastened it to his waist.

He then decided to run to the orange bungalow and the healer pulled him inside, "Did you speak to him?"

"I spoke to someone, but I'm positive I'm being followed and watched by an evil entity. I've been greatly hoodwinked before."

"Then the prophecy is true." He invited Herrick further inside. "You must tell me the members of your campaigners in order for me to decide if it's truly you. Which was the one that wielded a large lance?"

Herrick crossed his arms over his chest in resistance, "Why would you want to know that?"

"Then it is accurate, you were in a campaign? Why would you come so quickly to defend it?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"If you do not know then you are not who you say you are. You will not walk out that door alive, I'm sorry."

"If I tell you their names, what will you do?"

"Give you something you've been thirsting for."

He paused for a bit, wondering if this was a good idea. "Leeha was an elven lady, she had a bow. Baerdal was a dwarf from Stonebridge, he had an axe. Symm was my friend and learning alchemy, he had a book. There was no one that owned a lance, and I used a sword. Do you want to know which ones were Chaos Lords?"

He lifted his hand up in protest. "No, and do not tell me that."

The man from the street who was dressed in black leather emerged from a room. Herrick felt misled again and he had a sword to protect himself but no other means to fight against spells.

The man in black revealed his identity, "I am a grand wizard of the Old World with as much zeal as the wizards of Allansia. At first, I didn't know who you were at the tavern, but upon scrutiny, I knew you weren't there for the potluck. My friend here told me that someone was coming to talk to me one day." He looked at Herrick's ragged appearance. "Either you're gifted with infinite luck or you're the best swordsman that ever lived. Yet there you stand with a questionable blade and

wearing something worn and torn that my grandmother would be caught dead in. That sword is the destroyer of undead unholy knights, where did you get that?”

He rolled his eyes in mockery, “And why are you in Allansia?”

“Roll your eyes at me again, and I’ll make you blind. A plague is starting to make its way across our continent. I’m sure you know why?” He raised an eyebrow at him.

Herrick nodded, but was still unsmiling. Usually wizards are old and in robes, but this guy seemed in his thirties or forties and favored leather. “What do you want with me?”

“Are you not a hero or have you become a coward now?”

“My mission still stays, but my other sword was stolen from me, so I cannot defeat the sorcerer I once killed before... unless I can get a Gargantis horn?”

“You don’t need to do that. And I will give you another sword.” He pointed at Herrick’s current sword. “But not that one.”

Herrick was intensely confused by that. *What exactly*, he thought to himself, *is going on here?*

The man then spoke to the healer in another language that was not English, and “Stay here, Herrick, do not go out alone tonight.”

“Why do you want to help me? *How* will you help me? We are up against Chaos Lords and Nicodemus has hired his own champion and injured me! Razaak will prevail!”

“He was wrong to have doubts about you. There is no time for the Temple of Testing...”

“What’s that?”

He looked upon the face of the healer, “He will do though, and he already knows too much. Let’s begin upon this hour...” And the healer agreed and smiled at Herrick.

“What’s going on, begin what?” Herrick noticed the man’s eyes starting to turn into a vivid white glow as he raised his hand, and Herrick suddenly felt dizzy and blacked out...



Chapter Ten

Herrick was standing in the Pagan Plains underneath a starlit night and a hot air balloon soared through the sky, he wandered if Borri was captain of it. Images of his fight with Razaak started to replay and he felt he was back in that situation again. He could feel the rough edge of the Gargantis horn in his hand, he saw Yaztromo when he cast the spell on him to handle Razaak's sword, and then him again when Razaak was disguised as him. The number sequences he had to find and all those vital items he stumbled across. Kull in the lake... The collapsing crypt... Symm, Borri... and the death of the evil sorcerer. It was enough to make anyone tired, but he felt rejuvenated, energised as if he might have to do it all over again tomorrow.

He flew over the ocean and saw Analand, as if he were some ghost he landed in a dungeon. The wizard who knocked him out in the first place was there. He didn't say anything just pointed out for Herrick to watch and learn. Ten villagers were forging iron and as Herrick watched on, he saw that they were making a sword from scratch. The wizard explained that it would take weeks just to create it and several years to complete the entire process of all the elements, but with the limited time they have it must be done before he wakes up. The sword was completed with a black and crimson handle, the thing looked flimsy and plain. It was a katana, the same kind used by ninjas in Chiang Mai. The wizard seen Herrick's doubt as this weapon would either bend or burst like glass if struck by an axe. Also, the hero was not trained to use this type of sword as he only knew how to use broadswords, rapiers, and short swords. The wizard already knew this.

The Katana was handed to three wizards of the Old World who put several spells into it. A gem from Khul had to be used to put into the base of the hilt which offered the user Arcana and Intelligence.

"You have had swords stolen from you, but no one will ever be able to steal this one. It has been infused with a death spell should a thief or unknown take it up."

In just his shirt and pants, he was handed the lightweight sword for the first time. His new leather armour would be next to receive but one wizard had taken it after a mage and another wizard had enchanted it. He said it was missing a component but when he gets it, he will hand it over very soon.

Herrick was sent to a gauntlet much like the Temple of Testing for sorcerers. He had to learn by teachers how to wield that katana properly, trained in martial arts, flexibility, and acrobatics. Then passed on to other professors who would give him tests against arrows, fireballs, minor aggressive sorcery, small monsters, large monsters, and various types of weaponry they will use against him. If this was just a dream, it was a wild one. He had to become a professional of that sword and know every aspect of not only its slicing blade and double handed hilt, but the how to make use of the spells put into it that make it unbreakable and intimidating and how to maneuver his body in sync with it.

They had him inhale a special incense smoke as protection against fire; his armour had been infused with a protective spell against the undead insect swarms; and they said they'd place a magic shield somewhere for him to find which protects against Lightning spells. At one point he had the magic Ring of Truesight but ended up giving it to Yaztromo to dispose of. Although it was to see through Razaak's illusion when disguised into Yaztromo, Herrick vowed never to fall for that trick ever again, so he didn't need the ring. The Crystal of Sanity was lost, so they forged it into his armour studs.

Once he got his spirit leather armour, he felt indestructible, but his appearance made him look like a beginner adventurer with a rickety weapon. He seemed the right opponent against a heavily armed friar not against a world psychotic sorcerer and Chaos Lords!

The wizard smirked at him, "That's what I want them *to think*." He placed his hand on the champion's shoulder and became serious. "Now wake up."

Everything started to dim to blackness....

"By the way," the wizard said as Herrick started to come to consciousness. "There are reports of lich potions passing off as stamina potions. You wouldn't by any chance have come across one?"

He rubbed his forehead, still on the floor but strangely in his new full armour and katana by his side, "What do they look like?"

"They're described pink."

Herrick realised he just gave Nicodemus's champion that, but he said nothing. He realised now that perhaps that unfortunate soul had consumed it. "Not sure."

"Not only are you a resistant force but you're also a liar, get up off that floor."

The healer chuckled to himself mumbling about *there can only be one*.

"With the aid of those in Analand, you are no longer an abettor of Allansia, now I don't mean that in a bad way but the almighty you have on your side right now you cannot even fathom that and I'm not going to tell you either. The Astral state you were in has advanced you the decades you lost from whence you were just a child. This has never been done before and will never be done again." He paused. "From now on, all your supplies will go through us, do not buy from merchants or use potions and such items you come across. Leave them be. The cynicism in this land is insufferable and foolhardiness will get you killed despite your upgrades. Trust no person either as you are now experienced with the treachery our enemy is capable of."

With the two keys, the female Chaos Lord used the timeline back to when Razaak was still alive in his crypt before Herrick showed up. He was a bit taken aback that she came through an entirely different portal than her usual one. He did nothing as she approached him and held out her hand, hesitantly he lifted his hand too and she dropped a tiny clear orb into his palm. His ugly mug reflected upon it and if he could smile, he would, but he didn't. He saw Yaztromo looking up at him with worry. The best gift, better than Yaztromo's death, was knowing that he'd been

conquered and by whom. By killing the old wizard would be meaningless as he would've had no idea why he was slain, the Chaos Lord explained. The sorcerer was very pleased and even though he strongly wished to crush that orb in his grasp, he decided to wait and find another fitting violent murder for the wizard...

"Come, Razaak, there is a new lair awaiting you through the portal."

"The unrighteousness shall inherit the earth."



Chapter Eleven

The Analand wizard sent Herrick back to the Moonstone Hills. By steed, he checked caves and traveled west. It was very odd not seeing a living soul anywhere, it kept reminding him of how dead Allansia actually was. He came upon a peculiar strange cloud in the sky, hovering recklessly above a large mound, a nest of sort with soil and rotting vegetation, and thousands of eggs that hatched upon his approach. The entire mound was covered in purple fungus filled with eyeballs. By the heat produced by decomposition of the land, Herrick expected some vile baby creatures to come out after him but all that came out was grey ooze. He dismounted and stepped over to the hill when he heard someone shout at him.

“Halt!”

He peered over his shoulder and seen a dwarf running at him, and Herrick took out his sword from the back scabbard.

“Stop, Herrick! Don’t go near it!”

Herrick lowered his weapon, “Borri?” It was him of course, and he stopped to catch his breath. “What are you doing out here? I thought you were dead?”

“Nicodemus,” he panted. “I was transported by him, but he will not show himself as he is being hunted.”

“I know he is.”

“Where is Symm?”

“I don’t know. I know naught if he’s alive or...” He wouldn’t reveal a thing.

Borri inhaled deeply, “I never thought it would ever come to this again?” he noticed Herrick’s apprehension. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m sorry, but I am under orders to trust *no one*.”

“I understand that, and I don’t blame you. But you must trust Nicodemus.”

“What for? I am not on good terms with him. So, I must apologise, but you must return to where you came from.”

“Herrick!”

“Borri? GO.”

He lowered his chin, “I’m sorry it has come to this, and it won’t severe our friendship if that is your decision.” He looked at Herrick. “It appears we have been sent to the exact location of Razaak?”

“Interesting. I never mentioned anything about Razaak?”

“Is it not why you’re in the Moonstone Hills?”

“I could be out here picking slumberberries for all you know?”

The dwarf paused, “Look, I know you don’t trust me and to be honest I don’t care if you do. But you were about to go near mortality ooze. Just as potent as a Decayer and there are many of those now in Allansia. The person is using the eyes to spy on us. Trying to get rid of any of the fungus with your bare hands, it could fire a ray at you.”

“What’s your point, and you still haven’t told me what you’re doing here?”

“I am here on behalf of Nicodemus as was our friend Symm.”

“I do not want anything to do with that old buzzer.”

“He’s trying to help you by sending me as your aid!”

“Help me? That’s preposterous. I am not warning you again, Borri.”

“You have become either crammed with over-confidence or you’re power tripping on something. If you don’t want my help, then step aside.”

Herrick did as he was told and said *be my guest* but all the while still having his sword in his hand. He thought Borri was a Chaos Lord. Borri said that this mound is not protected by magic and that a simple wither spell will destroy the ooze. “Do you know a wither spell, Herrick?”

He chortled, “I thought *you* were going to save Titan all by yourself? Yet you do not possess a simple incantation? Yet you are the minion of Nicodemus?”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“Well, I really can’t see a three-foot humanoid with a powerless axe defeat a sorcerer and be able to saunter fast enough out of a collapsing fissure?”

“I am going to make you eat that insult.” He readied his battle axe.

“If Nicodemus thinks he’s so great than why doesn’t he fight Razaak himself?”

Borri did a face palm, “Oh, Herrick, shut up!”

“I have been proven corrected; you are not who you say you are.”

“Neither are you!” Borri attacked him, and with a swing of his weapon Herrick easily stepped aback from the blade, and booted the hilt, knocking it free from the Dwarf’s hands. Borri picked up his axe again and started swinging it like a crazy person. To his astonishment, Herrick parried the axe by stepping aside of the blade as Borri brought it downward, all Herrick did was step out of the way and used his hand to push the axe. Then he was going to use the one feature on his sword which was the death nick to the throat. One quick side swipe and a light tap and this Borri

character will die instantly. But just as the blade came an inch to Borri's throat they were both blown off their feet by an eruption!

Nicodemus appeared from a cloud of smoke and he stared ruthlessly at Herrick as if he were ready to turn the cocky hero into an earwig. Without another word he cast a violent spell upon the mound blasting it into an oblivion of exploded dirt and ooze! Revealing a crack in the ground. Borri and Herrick quickly rose to their feet and without saying anything to the angered wizard lowered themselves into the break in the earth. They were in some sort of tunnel...

"Told you I was with Nicodemus, you idiot." Borri grunted.

"Probably wise, a minute ago you would have been revealing that from your grave."

"Why were you such a pus?"

"Deceit, betrayal, and all that nonsense makes a person go in denial. Sorry. I just didn't know?"

"Are we friends again or are you going to stab me in the back when I have it turned?"

"I'm glad you're here. We'll have an ale in Salamonis when this is all over."

"Agreed. And you can tell me what's become of Symm during our celebration?"

"I heard he met his fate."

Borri was sad now. "How?"

Herrick couldn't reply to that question because he didn't quite know, and he didn't answer, he just ran ahead. Enough time was already squandered on conversations and procrastinations. Borri was shouting at him to *wait up* because he was too short to keep pace with. The murky tunnels descended further underground and Borri lit a torch, Herrick looked at him like he was a smart ass but going into a dungeon setting without a lantern or light source was just stupid. Borri was going to crack some shrewd comment at him but best decided to keep it to himself. The dwarf also noticed something about Herrick's armour, it was illuminating a gradual bright white glow from the boots up as if warning of imminent trouble approaching. A sudden steady gust carrying a frosty demeanour whipped through the tunnel as a physique came out of the shadows ahead.

A tall person in Old Arabian colourful rags that at one time were considered opulent of a Caliph stepped into view carrying a glowing green scimitar and had red smoking eyes. He had two-crossed daggers on his left breastplate indicating that he was a traitor. His entire face was covered by a burgundy shroud. Herrick held onto his katana when he noticed his other sword at the hip was twinkling like crazy. He put away the katana and brought out the other. There was a nasty smell of decay like that of a bloated rotting corpse out in the jungle. The stench was overwhelming enough to make a person gag.

"Death is a black camel that lies down at every door," it murmured coldly.

Herrick raised his eyebrows a bit at the Knight, "Then feed it and tell it to come back another time." He glanced back at Borri and whispered, "Is that his best catchphrase before killing his victims?"

This was a Necrosis Knight, and it slammed the tip of his scimitar on the floor causing a wave then didn't affect Herrick but Borri started to retreat in case he caught wind of it. Herrick's heart started to pound for some reason as he suffered a massive anxiety attack and intense dread, he almost fled yet he couldn't understand himself as to why he would unexpectedly just turn into a coward, and as he lost the light of the torch and the Knight looked more menacing than before as it approached. His legs felt like jelly and he was so scared now he could only deduce it was witchery. The runes on the Knight's hilt started to glow and Herrick abruptly tasted a lot of salty copper in his mouth, he realised that the Knight was casting some sort of spell on him. As he backed up from his adversary, he slightly bent over and puked out blood. Borri yelled at him because now he was worried his companion was going to drop dead. Herrick well-ordered him to stay away and not come close to the skirmish.

The scimitar swung upward in the darkness and then downward in a sharp motion using his rune magic of Swordbreaking, so if Herrick had been using his katana, it would have shattered. Herrick barely blocked because he was trying not to choke on his own vomit. His chin and chest were red with blood now. The Knight lifted its claw and a red energy started to come out of Herrick's body causing him to go unsteady.

"Herrick!" Borri shouted in panic as he ran to his friend. "Get out of his way! He's draining your blood!"

Borri grabbed Herrick's arm and yanked him out of the Knight's range. The dwarf kept an eye on the enemy that did not advance on them, "Let's just find another way around."

Herrick was weak and had to lean up against the wall, he was ready to pass out. And "No!" He shook off the cobwebs, looking paler than before.

"Are you daft?"

"If you haven't noticed, the continuation of the tunnel is directly behind him?" He wiped his red chin in disgust.

"What do we do then? We're trapped."

"Shall I look inside the great manuscript of answers? You'd honestly think that Nicodemus would offer some insight rather than just throw us to wolves?"

"Why does everything always come back to *him*? It's not his fault!"

"An extremely over-powered creation in Titan." Nicodemus said. "In no way *ever* expect to prevail against one, particularly for wizards. If you cross paths with one, give up all your hope." And he appeared, looking grave. Him being here was risky given that he is in the lair where there are Chaos Lords.

"Tell him to move aside," Herrick grumbled.

Nicodemus heatedly grabbed the glowing sword out of Herrick's grasp. Nicodemus with his staff calmly stepped toward the Knight and it lowered its scimitar and raised its other hand in indication for the wizard to hand over the sword. If Herrick remained in possession of the weapon it was

possible the Knight would pursue him all over the lair, and if they gave the sword up to it, it was unknown if it will leave them alone or attack them with the newly gifted blade.

“You will state why you are here!”

It pointed at the sword.

“Are you working for Razaak?”

It shook its head no and gestured at the sword again. The wizard determined that the sword was of some great importance and that the Knight was not going to get it, he also wondered where Herrick even got it from? Borri and Herrick said nothing as the wizard ignored them now and it was unknown to them, but Nicodemus had to summon everything he ever knew. He might have even whispered the name of Oiden.

In only seconds which seemed like an eternity a female Gaddon Knight (sensewarrior) appeared wearing a strip across her eyes, a paladin knight wearing full plate armour, the Armour of Purity, armed with the Shield of Truth and a Wrath Sword, and a very young Chadda Darkmane arrived.

The impressive brawny knight, a seven-footer who was famous for his dedication in destroying evil everywhere, announced himself “I am Sir Gon...”

“Never mind introductions,” Nicodemus bellowed and created a Ring of Holy Blessing, and in one hand a trident with three barbed points, which was made entirely of blue sheen metal, covered with elaborate engravings, and a bulky handle. As well as a Talisman appeared, and the Talisman was forged into the Trident in an instant and handed to the Gadden Knight. A special silver lance was given in place of the Sword of Wrath to the Paladin. And Chadda got an enchanted bow with deathly accurate Arcana arrows.

It was not explained on how Nicodemus was receiving these items, but he uttered the name of Astragal and his Ring of Burning Snakes and the Ring of White Flame. The tip of the wizard’s staff sparked to life and lit the entire tunnel, and the Knight felt no intimidation as he readied his green scimitar. Every skill score and stamina levels were maxed out by one simple powerful spell. Even Herrick suddenly felt emboldened as the spell affected him too.

A forceful beam of white light from the staff that disintegrates the target in a cloud of purple smoke blasted the Knight, but it did absolutely nothing to him, he didn’t even flinch. This made the Knight aggressive and now he advanced.

Nicodemus cast his Consecrate spell creating a barrier around the area of the defendants. Chadda started firing his arrows at the skull of the Knight, they embedded into his head, but it did not stop it from approaching. The teenage Chadda continued to fire relentless.

The wizard then cast Time Freeze which halted the Knight for only a few seconds as the Gaddon Knight listening to his feet, knew where he was and leapt through the air toward the Knight. She never told anyone what she was planning to do, and her maneuver caught the team off guard, she stabbed him in the shoulder with her trident and the trident started to liquify. Nicodemus never had

the opportunity to enforce it with a timed critical attack. Tendrils came out of the floor in a green mist, coiled around her in mid air and crushed her to a pulp.

The paladin immediately attacked with the lance, with Nicodemus as his rally, he used a combat form of knightkneeler and this weakened the evil Knight, but the rune stones on his scimitar were glowing as he fought off the paladin with so much quick moves, it was too fast for the paladin to parry and block each time, and Nicodemus kept re-healing his champion with a blast from his fingertips...

Nicodemus kept exploding incantation after incantation at the Knight from his all-powerful staff.

With a combined combo from the wizard and the Paladin, Nicodemus timed his spell upon the Paladin, and he was able to get in one critical hit that packed so much global force behind it that it would've brought down a Great Wyrn.

The Paladin being too close in range to the Knight made one minor blunder, he was treating the melee like any other normal one and getting desperate to make the final kill blow, was struck by a death grip and started to shudder violently and his body exploded within his armour and all the blood drained into the Knight's aura. It began to regenerate its lessened runic abilities and spike its stamina back up to max...

Nicodemus not wasting another second and allow it to do so tossed the sword at Herrick and cast a divine pulse that caused the tunnels to appear like it was in some sort of unusual time warp. The Knight was slightly unaltered and made its way over to kill the wizard. Time Freeze was no longer effective and this one spell Nicodemus was about to cast would drain all his energy. The Knight oddly ended up taking a few steps backwards as if his actions were reversed and there was a time loop.

It felt like Herrick was moving through a resistant force or when one tries to run in their dreams. In this very critical few seconds, Herrick bolted, taking wide strides and plunged the sword into the Knight's chest. The floor started glow with green flames as the Knight threw its arms up and nearly toppled backwards, but it tried not to falter, with whatever strength it had left it was going to take Herrick with it to the tomb.

As Nicodemus collapsed and the light went out on his staff, Herrick was now at the mercy of the Knight and with his knees buckling beneath him he stared up into the face of his dreaded tormenter. The last spell Pen Ty gifted him before he was brutally slain was to materialise one holy explosive. Chadda Darkmane noticing Herrick's sudden hesitation realised that this was a fatal mistake, charged by the fallen wizard, picked up the Ring of Holy Blessing and threw it at the Knight, which caused the ring to smash open and release lethal gases that only damaged remarkable wicked entities. He ran over to Herrick and the Knight slapped his scimitar up Chadda's chin and Chadda was sent flying and twisting then completely vanished into thin air. Herrick used Pen Ty's magic and materialised a holy bomb and instead of throwing it up at the Knight he by suicidal means detonated it. Both he and the Knight were caught in a gargantuan eruption of grey fire that caused Borri to scramble for cover.

Borri who was up against the end wall opened his eyes and seen Herrick lying on the floor on his side, and the Knight turned into a spray of atoms and the sword exploded into a great puff. There was still some light radiating off Nicodemus's staff and he finally sat up. Borri checked on the wizard's health but he told him cruelly to go see if Herrick was still alive. Nicodemus understood exactly what spell Herrick had used and knew that the spell only harms evil, not the user.

Herrick didn't wake up immediately and Nicodemus went over to him and said his stamina was most likely very low, one punch and it would've killed him. "Unfortunately, I do not have enough energy to level up his stamina. I have *never* been weakened like this before."

Herrick whispered, "I'm not doing that ever again."

Borri helped Herrick slowly sit up.

"Where did you learn that spell, wise adventurer?"

He grinned at Nicodemus, "A friend. A very good friend."

For the first time, Borri and Herrick seen tears fill up in the wizard's eyes, but he fought them back and nodded with a slight grin, blinking them away.

Borri had a few tiny vials of stamina potions but he said they were utter crap as they only granted a minimal amount of health. He forcibly made Herrick drink them all, popping a cork off, stuffing it between his companion's lips, and tossing each emptied vial aside. And now they had no more stamina potions. Herrick told Nicodemus to go to the healer and wizard in Salamonis so their supplies could be replenished. It would take days by foot, so the last of the energy the wizard had left in him used it to transport himself to the city. In a few minutes, a shoulder bag appeared half full of Healing Potions along with a scroll saying:

By order of the Wizards of Analand of the Old World, we have shipped you the requested potions, but now we are unable to grant any more as there have been reports of sightings of a malevolent individual in Salamonis. If we transport you anything else our and your location and arrangements will be intercepted. Your mission must remain secretive and crucial. Nicodemus is now bed ridden but the healer is working hard to regenerate him. Sorry.

After they read the scroll it turned to dust. Without further delay Herrick got to his feet and they rushed down the tunnel.

Borri groaned, "How did we ever manage against that thing?"

"I was never trained to fight one of those. Even the author of my life is being unfair."

"What author?"

Before Herrick could answer, the entire floor slumped and they could not in run any direction, they were dropped into a huge pit. Borri's armour clamored as he hit the floor and Herrick quickly got to his feet as he was the first one to spy a very large orc-like creature animating to life upon their arrival. The sword of this giant was the length of Herrick and the blade wider about the width of a great shield. Herrick picked up the torch and slid it into the center of the room so he could see

better. The bulbous giant swung the sword which caught the wind with ferocity that it created a sound and Herrick had to do a front flip underneath it and get out of the way. Then the giant flipped the blade and brought it downward, Herrick had to move out of the way again as the blade smashed into the rocky floor with a detonation all around.

Borri attacked the giant's stubby legs as Herrick distracted their foe to keep all attention on him and not his axe wielding ally. The monster's flesh was very tough and Borri's weapon caused little damage. Herrick brought out his katana and using the opponent's own sword against him, every time it swung that blade at Herrick, he either had to quickly step aside or dive out of the blade's path and quickly slice vertically downward, upward and sideways at the Orc's exposed vulnerable spots. Even stabbing it did nothing. Borri laid one harsh plunging hit upon the back of its knee and left his axe imbedded within it. It turned around and with its massive arm knocked Borri across the room.

The giant thrust the sharp wide end towards Herrick and he jumped up onto the blade and swiped at the orc's eyes, then jumped off as the creature started thrashing about with blood pumping out of his wound. With a series of hard-hitting gashes to the creature's bulky abdomen, Herrick leapt aside as the giant opened like a sliced fruit and tumbled to the floor in three ripped parts.

After the battle, they tried to climb out of the far opening of the pit, Herrick balanced Borri on his hands and lifted him up but the dwarf couldn't pull himself up back into the tunnel and they both toppled down. They checked the walls but found nothing, and Borri said they were trapped down here. They tried everything to get back up into the far tunnel, but it was just too high up and there was nothing to grasp on to. Herrick got so frustrated he kicked a rock as hard as he could, and it was sent spinning through a portion of the wall. He walked over to it and realised that where the rock had gone was nothing more than a mirror illusion, he could step back and forth through it. A mirage that anyone would never know was there if they weren't looking for it.

There was a loud ghastly howl and spectral arms started to manifest out of the floor. Transparent faces on phantom bodies looking like little more than a puff of smoke. Dark spots in place of eyes, the faces had a horrifying appearance, contorted into the anguish of undeath. Undead spirits once walking corpses, now ghostly visages and it attacked the living to attach itself onto its host. The collector of souls and usually summoned by zombie lords and evil mages, it was quite possible a construction by a Chaos Lord to arrest Herrick and Borri.

Not taking a chance with the visage, they withdrew and raced down a very narrow tunnel. A burst of fire erupted with a monstrous bang up ahead sending a heavy fireball their way. Borri turned around and ran in the opposite direction as there was nowhere to stand to avoid it. Herrick positioned his katana on a tilt in front of his body and tested his luck as he waited for the comet to collide with him. The fire struck the blade with so much force it caused the soles of his boots to slide back on the floor, but the blade, acting as a shield eliminated the fiery ball. It left a black blemish on the blade that was easily removed by running it along with his sleeve. Borri rejoined him and they walked down the passageway as blast after blast came at them. Herrick said that his hilt was starting to get too hot and his hands were starting to scorch every time he stopped the blazing fires. By the time they reached the end they found out what the culprit was causing them,

it was a stone pillar, and the dwarf promptly dismantled the charge. Herrick's entire sword was black with soot now and Borri told him he can clean it thoroughly when they're back to safety above ground.

"What's this?" Borri looked behind the pillar and picked up a strange heavy metal shield with a blade and gauntlet on it. "Not sure what kind of contraption this is supposed to be or how one would actually it. Do you defend yourself while jousting? Stupid."

"Looks like a lantern shield, guards in Port Blacksand use them to ward off robbers and attackers." He took it. "I fought Razaak with a shield before, this might come in handy once again."

"Why was it just left there?"

"That I couldn't tell you, but we have seen many a strange thing already so far have we not?"

"Fine, take the shield, I won't question the unknown anymore."

Another blast came down the tunnel and Herrick said he was not wanting to fight off more fireballs as his hands were sullied and blistered by ash. They stood in an alcove and watched the fireball annihilate the pillar in front of them as if it were made of tissue.

"Well, we can't stand here all day."

After Borri's retort, Herrick sighed out of irritation and annoyance; they repeated the process of preventing fireballs with the katana blade as they made their way up the tunnel. When they reached the column, it was disassembled, and Herrick dropped his hot sword and blew into his palms as if they were an inferno. Borri rummaged through his belt purse and handed his companion ointment, "Doubt a stamina potion will heal those wounds."

After, he picked up his sword again and they looked at a blue flaming doorway that was at the end of the passage, and they stepped through it...



Chapter Twelve

"Those who know, not only that the Everlasting lies in them, but that what they, and all things, really are is the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord." -Joseph John Campbell

They arrived inside a lavish courtyard of sort, there were large double emerald doors on the far end with fountains set into each that didn't cascade water but flows of blood. On the left and right side were doors that lead into other dark dimensions. The floor had a mosaic of runes marking that the adventurers had entered a room belonging to the chaotic of evil and the gods that they worship. Herrick dumped his shield on the floor and held tightly onto his weapon as he caught the gaze of a male Chaos Lord guarding the doors. The lord was holding onto his blue flaming sword and his eyes glowed like blazing sapphires.

The Chaos Lord tapped the hilt of his sword with the heel of his palm and there was a sudden flicker upon the doorways, a big bull of an orc warrior hosting a warhammer came out of it. Two goblins, one armed with a rapier, the other a poisoned polearm. Two other orcs, one with a tarnished broadsword, and the other held onto a very impressive whip of jagged steel and as he swung it around it made a metallic noise and lit up in a glow of voltage. They were in various types of armour from chainmail, to minor plate mail, and dragon scale. Three zombies also emerged. Herrick couldn't tell if the blazing eyed Chaos Lord was grinning at him since his lower face was covered, but it was plausible given the weighted situation.

Borri hacked away at the zombies.

The first thing Herrick had to do was sidestep away from the path of that giant hammer, if he blocked it with his sword instead, he would still be crushed beneath it. He quickly ducked as the orc suddenly swung it sideways, Herrick used that second to brush alongside the front of his enemy and run his sword against the underbelly of the orc's armour as he did so. It appeared not to cause any damage but in a twinkling of a heartbeat the gash that Herrick had created opened the orc from the torso and he split into two parts, falling to the ground with his spine still intact.

The nearest goblin jousting with his rapier as Herrick tucked in his belly with a sudden jerk, damn near being stabbed, he twisted his katana in mid air and with the goblin's arm still extended, sliced the limb off, rolled the blade up in a circular motion and swiped it across his foe's neck, taking the head off in one clean gesture.

He had to keep moving, they weren't just standing there awaiting their turn, they were attacking him from all sides and for some reason ignoring Borri.

Borri intervened the Chaos Lord from taking a jab at the distracted Herrick.

Using his katana, he sideswiped the goblin's polearm with so much force the blade cut a clean indent into the wood shaft, and Herrick flexed his blade in one swift wave and cut off the leg of the goblin at mid thigh.

As opponents were falling down and so he wasn't swamped, Herrick immediately turned to the next foe and the next, while blindly swiping all around his range to keep others at bay. The orc with the metal whip caught Herrick's blade in a cocoon of jagged teeth and he tried to yank it free from the hero's clutches but Herrick moved his arms in one circular rotation, twisted his katana and tore it free as the whip shredded in multiple parts. Herrick didn't waste any time fighting this orc and he did an instantaneous touch of his blade to its neck, giving it the death touch and moved away not even waiting for the orc to fall down dead.

A thrusting sword scraped along Herrick's back, barely breaking the leather armour open and as he spun around he kicked his adversary's hilt with his foot causing the attacking orc to momentarily lose control of his arms, and he wasn't given a second opportunity to recover because Herrick whipped his katana upward in a split second and sliced off the orc's entire face!

The Chaos Lord lifted Borri up like a sack of potatoes, a gateway opened, and he threw him into it like he was nothing but a nuisance. Herrick seen the dwarf's little body flailing as he flew into the Netherworld, and Borri's armour and weapon disappeared from his body leaving him naked and helpless. The gateway closed.

The orc who had his face cut off was stumbling about and Herrick separated the creature's shoulders from its body, cutting through his upper body with near effortlessness with his razor of a katana.

The Chaos Lord started cutting the air around Herrick, who in response had to block and parry the flaming sword while another zombie horde appeared. Outnumbered, outflanked, and without the aid of Borri now, the zombies surrounded him and the Chaos Lord who was still trying to kill him. Sword to sword, Herrick feeling worried now looked into the lord's eyes and only saw nothing but fury and murder not one ounce of empathy.

Die....

Herrick heard him hiss and he pushed him back a bit, dropped into the splits, a move the Chaos Lord didn't see coming and rammed the blunt end of his sword up against the Lord's groin. A crack of fire erupted in the enemy's pants from where he was struck. Zombies were grabbing at his armour and hair and being annoying, so Herrick bent to his right side, backwards, and his left while twisting the katana in a swift circular rotation dicing the legs of the enveloping zombies behind him and beside him. Herrick rapidly faced forward and the Chaos Lord leapt up from the swinging blade so he wouldn't lose his knees and backed away. He had never seen a hero treat a sword like spinning machete before. When Herrick somersaulted back to his feet the injured Chaos Lord lifted his hand and blasted the hero with a blue fireball, this sent Herrick flying into the remaining zombies and they all toppled like bowling pins.

From the doorways, ninjas and an armoured huge breasted female gladiator with serpents for hair appeared, and as Herrick got back to his feet, he noticed they all carried hiltless swords and she

had a scepter. They wore special gloves to hold the blades without getting cut. They supposed the hero could disarm opponents with hilts but not just a straight blade.

The first ninja struck and the hero met his hiltless weapon at midpoint, causing an X in the sudden block, Herrick suddenly stepped in towards him and used the hilt of his sword to knock the hiltless blade out of the ninja's grasp. This happened in seconds and with Herrick's back to the ninja's stomach jabbed his katana into his ribcage. The other two rolled alongside them as Herrick pulled out his sword and blood sprayed up behind him. The first ninja dropped to his knees, as Herrick blocked the second ninja's blade, he pushed his own sword down along his foe's blade so that the tip now pointed at his chest, but he did not thrust, he grabbed the top of his blade and yanked the hiltless weapon out of the ninja's grip. And without giving another second to his enemy sliced the ninja's cranium into two.

And as the top half of the skull sailed across the air, the gladiator lady stepped in screaming bloody murder. Herrick never gave her a chance to even use her spiked sceptre because he immediately put his sword between her wrists and yanked her hilt free causing the weapon to go flying across the room. Herrick arched his sword downward and carved off her boobplate! now with two open wounds where her breasts once were, she fell to the floor on her knees and Herrick beheaded her with one swipe! but to his bewilderment her head didn't even dislodge, his sword was so sharp, it was like pulling a cloth off a table without disrupting the dinnerware upon it. Herrick smacked it off her shoulders, it rolled across the floor, and to his disgust the snakes slithered out of her skull in all directions across the room.

Herrick was kicked in the head, faltered and quickly recovered, used the inside of his foot to boot at the ninja's hiltless sword, bumping it from the ninja's grasp. The ninja did a lightning quick roundhouse kick and struck Herrick in the left ear, punched him in the heart, and knocked his feet from out under him. When Herrick hit the floor, his katana flew out of his hand.

As Herrick got up to one knee, the Chaos Lord brought down his flaming sword, Herrick caught the blade between his palms and a blue fire gushed up his forearms.

"Take his damn sword!" The Chaos Lord hollered at the remaining ninja.

The ninja doing as he was ordered picked up the katana and twirled it a few times in his grasp like a propeller, and seconds later lacerations started to rip across his physique, there was a raging fire within his body as a violent grey smoke poured out of him, burning up from the inside out, he dropped the sword in shock. He started to crack open like a lava beast and putrid fumes of burnt flesh filled the room.

The two were watching that unfortunate event occur and then quickly turned to glance at one another for a second. Their struggle continued, Herrick moved the flaming blade back and forth and jabbed the hilt forcefully into the Chaos Lord's chest, he then kicked him in the groin a place where there was already damage. The second the Lord stumbled back, Herrick rolled off his feet toward the smouldering remains of the ninja and his sword, the Chaos Lord charged at him howling... Herrick brought down his katana upon his skull, splitting the Chaos Lord right down

to the hips. Instead of blood splashing out a vicious blue vapor discharged as his body separated from the seam.

He removed his katana angrily as the remnants of the Chaos Lord toppled and he flicked off the blue burning ooze at the advancing zombies, which did not flinch by getting slimed by it. Herrick unaffected by their unpleasant presence swiped just once like a madman at the remaining zombies and opened them all up, spilling out their decomposed guts everywhere and nearly semi-sectioning them. He used quick footwork and disembowel them individually with one furious swing. This didn't kill them; they were still intact at the spine and were crawling slithering around the floor at his feet now. He booted their clawing hands aside and walked away to retrieve the lantern shield he left on the ground.

The doors to the dimensions closed and the emerald doors started to open, with the room void of anymore monsters to fight, Herrick stepped fearlessly towards the giant entrance.



Chapter Thirteen

Nothing like the crypt he originally fought in, this was some advanced lair that was gifted to the evil sorcerer. Herrick thought that they treasure him so much? They can go to hell with him tonight.

There was a massive portal against the far end wall with a familiar scene within it, recognisable as the old crypt. This large room, obviously a throne room should the sorcerer prevail, it was set to be where he'd rule from. Standing in front of the portal was the female Chaos Lord, but she was not dressed in her black garb or veiled. She wore full plate armour from the tip of her toes to her great helm, which had a crazy frazzle of iridescent blue and purple tresses. She had her back to him, hands on her hips, was viewing the supernatural entryway but there was no sign of Razaak anywhere in the room. As Herrick stepped further in, she slowly turned to peer at him, her closed helmet didn't even have slits for her to see. She lifted her flaming sword and stood to face him now as the awaited champion entered the abode.

He readied his katana, shield, as his armour throbbed a glowing white pulse and stepped more into the colossal chamber. He wasn't sure if he should charge at her or wait for her to come at him first. He'd have to use the two-handed sword with one hand as his other hand was fastened to the indestructible shield.

She charged forward and he raised his sword and shield and she vanished in a burst, appearing suddenly by his side. He lifted the shield to protect his face and her flaming sword shattered the metal shield like it was made of glass. He rolled off his feet to get away from her and removed the remaining handle of the shield off his arm as he did so.

Without looking, he held his katana over the back of his head and her blade slammed into it. He spun around and clashed swords with her back and forth they look like Paladins fighting for the right of the throne of god. Sword banging against sword and the blades scraped against each other as they backed away, calculating each other's next move. She started swinging as he blocked every swipe, and swung his blade in an uphanded motion and sliced a fiery gash up the front of her armour. As she jumped back, he ran at her and slammed his forehead into her helm! he was going to headbutt her again but poisoned spikes protruded out of the front of her helm and he retracted. He tried to disarm her from her hilt and pulled her into him as he fell backwards on the floor and viciously booted her in the stomach, ultimately forcefully flipping her off her feet. She landed hard with crashing of armour behind him having never been manhandled like that before.

A clawed hand came out of the portal and held onto the side of it, then Razaak's ugly mug intensified peeked through it. He was going to come through...

They got back to their feet and attacked again. Herrick parried her rushing blow and tried to disarm her, but she shouldered him hard with her explosive aura and he was sent tumbling. He flipped to his feet as she came at him again, poisoned spikes projected out of her shoulder pad as she charged but he stepped to the side, and in anger he cracked her upside the buttocks with the blunt end of

his sword causing a narrow flame to ignite where he hit. He said that was for smashing his favorite shield.

“And for breaking your heart?” She bantered.

He grimaced at her with disgust now, not liking to be reminded of his affection for her, and she vanished and returned on the western part of the room floating in the air and raised her arms. A series of beams erupted out of the floor spanning the entire length of the room and Herrick ran to the opposite end and slammed up against the wall as he felt the heat of the lasers behind him. He protected his face with his hand silently screaming as he was being seared. They even made a loud sound as their tips nearly reached the roof.

Razaak stepped out of the portal and stood upon the expansive stairs.

When the beams died down Herrick ran back to the center and she drifted to the ground and sprinted at him again. Going in and out of gateways in a second before he could strike her armour, which left him hitting nothing but air. Every time she re-emerged, she moved like flash of lightning and hit him hard and he had to be quicker at blocking every time she appeared now. He had to be mindful of the barbs in her armour, and with his katana slapped her blade downward simultaneously as his footwork moved him out of her path once again.

Razaak summoned wraiths, which came out of the floor. His rotten limb followed Herrick every where he went, and a large fireball came out of his index finger.

Herrick realising the Chaos Lord was only distracting him from the sorcerer, he saw a fireball coming right at him and he jumped off his feet in a backward cartwheel right over Razaak's fireball and it smashed into three wraiths destroying them instantly.

The female lord brought out her bow of death as Razaak cast a swarm of deathly locusts to fill the room. Herrick fought off one wraith while tapping away arrows or cutting them in half in mid air with his sword. Back and forth, to the wraith and then twisting his torso to spank the arrows aimed at him out of flight.

A series of fireballs spread out across the room as Razaak cast one spell after the other, Herrick could not run away in either direction, so he fell into the splits and pressed himself down onto his chest and face as the fire soared overhead. This mistake cost Razaak the rest of his wraiths. The hero pushed off his back and flipped back to his feet and the Chaos Lord were fighting again. Razaak targeted true and cast a very powerful fireball that he knew would instantly kill Herrick. Herrick saw the flickering of the fiery inferno at the corner of his eye, kicked the Chaos Lord away and swung his sword hard and slapped that fireball right back at its sender! the sorcerer shuddered vehemently when nailed from the impact of his own blazing orb.

Herrick noticed that his blade was not burned by Razaak's magic as it was with the fires in the tunnel. The locusts started to wither away as the spell wore off. Herrick battled the Chaos Lord again, and this time was unaware that she was walking him right up to Razaak where he then quietly touched the hero's armour just once causing him to stumble off to the side. The villainess thought she had the advantage after the death touch because he was nearly in a defensive daze.

Before he could fully recover, she started hacking at him with her sword like it was an axe and he blocked each time, and using her desperation against her, he turned his sword backwards and rammed her armour good and hard with the gemstone embedded into his hilt. This activated the arcana in the stone and put the effects of psychic attack upon her which caused her to briefly lose her balance and stability. Before she recuperated with her quick reflexes, Razaak summoned two of the most powerful spiked death balls he could muster so much so that instead of an orange red torrid they soared at the Chaos Lord and Herrick like howling white phantoms.

Herrick ever ready for anything saw the ball of instantaneous death raging in his direction and fell out of its path before it turned him into a cascade of body parts. The other smashed into the Chaos Lord with so much force it nearly knocked her out of her boots. With contempt she realised he was trying to kill her too; it appeared there might be a smirk on his face after doing such a selfish thing.

“You will not win this battle for me, for it is I who wishes to be the vanquisher.”

This betrayal finally gave Herrick only one window of opportunity as she stumbled about trying to recover. He flipped the sword into the air, catching the hilt, and ran her through with it!

She paused, her sword lost its flame and toppled out of her glove, she slowly fell to her knees, and landed on her back with her legs still buckled underneath her. He yanked out his sword in one quick tug.

Electricity started to rain all over the room, Herrick noticed it was all coming out of Razaak’s hand and he flicked his arm at Herrick who dove out of the way as a savage Lightning spell blasted the spot where he just was. He must not go anywhere near Razaak anymore, for one more contact with a death touch and that’ll be the end of him.

Armed zombies appear and unlike the average undead humans these ones could run and fight. Herrick realising this war is going to start getting unreasonably unfair irritably looked at the sorcerer and pointed his katana at him, “You were a coward when you were born, and you’re still a coward upon your final death!”

Razaak didn’t like that affront as it suddenly reminded him of his father Tamal, he stopped his electrical onslaught and brought down a torrential downpour of lava! He wanted Herrick dead, and he wanted him dead *fast*. No more toying with him. This lava wiped out all the zombies that Herrick didn’t even get a chance to engage in battle. The sorcerer was very mad as he stepped down off the stairs and onto the floor.

The gemstone in the katana hilt created an umbrella of protection from the scorching molten rock, but the heat caused Herrick to holler in agony.

A demonic god was approaching the portal now... if this monster managed to come through Herrick will lose everything indefinitely.

Razaak could not see the hero through all the lava and assuming he had wiped out every living and unliving thing in this room stopped the spell to peek. He was infuriated to see Herrick crouched near the floor and holding his sword vertical. He cast a final incantation, one that he knew the champion was unaware of, one that the champion was not trained to fight against, and one that he

knew no wizard had prepared their sacred warrior to combat. This was now an instant death clash and Razaak did not have to do anything but wait to touch the armour of Herrick again if his creation didn't do the job first.

Herrick staggered to his feet, weakened by the heat of the lava, used his sword for leverage but it slipped causing him take a quick tumble on the side of his bum. He observed in horror of what the sorcerer was summoning. Now he truly believed this wizard was not only insanely evil but demented beyond any reasonable doubt. The room was gigantic in size but with an undead dragon slowly materialising, it was going to be cramped. With an undead dragon in the picture, Herrick was not protected against the toxic spray assault of one nor taught to fight dragons.

The one thing that he noticed that he hadn't before the lava storm was a glowing vial floating above the dead Chaos Lord. He ran up to it realising it was Razaak's phylactery and destroyed it with his sword causing a mighty bang! Then spun around, lifted his katana up like a spear and attempted something he was *never* told to do by the wizards of Analand... ever. And that was to throw the sword at any target. He hurled the sword with all his potency at Razaak and watched it impale deep into the sorcerer's side. He then backed away as the dragon emerged in full form and Razaak raised his arm to the sky. He was engulfed by magic flames that begin to burn his body to a cinder. He didn't shout out in pain; he simply departed in silence. All that remained was floating fiery ash. The dragon lowered its head to look at Herrick, eyes blazing green, separated its jaws, and vanished with the scene. The armour and corpse of the Chaos Lord also disappeared.

Herrick ran to get his sword, noticed the two keys on the floor, looked up at the portal and perceived the god had grabbed onto the edge of it. Before it could poke its horned head through Herrick tossed the keys into the air and smashed them to bits with his sword, in due course causing a violent whirlwind of energy in the room that blew his hair about but did nothing else to him, the light show got sucked into the portal closing it forever.

All that followed now was a stillness as intoxicating as the graveyard.

Seeming unaffected by his lack of stamina, he spied a small glass like orb resting on the top stair. When Herrick picked it up in curiosity, he was puzzled to find Yaztromo caged within it. Just as he was brainstorming on how to release the wizard from the entrapment, the roof started to fall apart all around him and there was a thunderous rumble. Like prior experiences, he ran for his life or be crushed to death.

When he arrived at the pit, he was once again stuck with the same predicament as he and Borri were in earlier. Just after he took a drastic running leap to the wall, he desperately pulled himself up and poisoned spikes of doom jutted upward from the walls and floor! Missing him by seconds. They released from the floor and fired in every direction within the pit. Knowing full well this was not even the way out he ran down the tunnel in complete darkness. Holding his hands out, he continuously banged into the sides of the wall, but could still hear rock crumbling. He ended up tripping on something before him, flat on his face now he frantically felt with his hands and realised he was at a stone staircase. Picking himself up in a mad dash up the steps, the corridor behind him was caving in and he could feel the rocks hitting his ankles and the back of his legs. His head hit the roof and he started pounding and pushing upward but to no avail. The ceiling fell on him,

burying him in the rubble. He urgently pushed on the ceiling which suddenly lifted away with a silvery flash and Nicodemus quickly pulled the hero out. They were not quite out of the fissure and raced for the exit. Herrick could barely walk from his leg being mashed by the crumbling tunnel. He had to wrap his arm around the wizard's shoulders and was dragged outside. By pulling him out of the fracture moments ago the wizard accidentally broke Herrick's leg.

As Herrick lay on the ground crying out in pain, Nicodemus watched beneath his pointed hat as the caves and tunnels collapsed beneath the ground. Smoke, dust, and rock exploded into the winds, a narrow hole opened and filled in just as fast. The lair was demolished.



Chapter Fourteen

Through action, a man becomes a Hero Through death, a Hero becomes a Legend Through time, a Legend becomes a Myth. And by learning from the Myth, a Man takes action.

“Your leg is broken but it will heal,” Nicodemus said.

“You’re a *great wizard* cast a spell on it then,” Herrick countered, remembering the amount of agony he was in as the uncaring wizard brought him back to the city on horseback.

“That smart mouth of yours will get you into more trouble than what you were already in.”

They were in Salamonis now within the healer’s home and Allansia was starting to restore itself from the plagues and death spell it was under. Herrick handed Nicodemus the orb which had Yaztromo enslaved within, “Can you get him out of there?”

“My poor old friend is under a truly powerful invocation.” He sighed. “It is beyond what I’ve been schooled but it is never *impossible*.” He spoke to the wizard of Analand who helped Herrick and they discussed as to how they’d release Yaztromo.

Herrick lay in his cot as the healer sat next to him, he held onto a bowl of stew, “You have lost your friends, this I know, and for that I am truly sorry. There will be no celebration due to their memories, for the mission is not over if you are not aware?”

“Razaak is dead. The mission *is* over. For me anyways. Let someone else be the hero from now on.”

He offered Herrick a spoonful of the stew but was refused, “Let us recollect of what happened on your quest?”

He pushed the bowl and spoon away from his face, “Let’s not. I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Very well.”

He looked at healer’s kind features, “What do you mean the mission is not over yet?”

He seemed hesitant, “I’m not supposed to tell you, it is up to the Analand wizard to reveal that. He knows more about it than I do. There have been new reports, and they’re not good ones.”

“Does that wizard even have a name?”

He smiled, “He does, and he will tell you that too in due time.” He got up and was about to leave the room. “By the way, have you named your sword yet?”

“I thought of one name, yes.”

“What is it?”

“Well, I’m not supposed to tell you, it would be up to the Analand wizard to reveal that, would it? Since he seems to know everything that is yet to be foretold.”

“Your choice then.” He left through the doorway disappointed.

Herrick lifted his head, “Healer?”

He looked back in, “Yes?”

“It’s kavisli güneş... Otherwise in our tongue known as the Curved Sun.”

“Nice.” He became serious now. “I’ll heal your leg tomorrow.”

“Great!” Herrick said with a huge smile.

“There is still a charge of 300 gold for it.”



The rumours would come to Herrick’s knowledge eventually and it had to do with reversing the effects of the orb Yaztromo was imprisoned in; the fact that Borri could still be alive and possibly rescued; something to do with someone called Xortan Throg... and another Necrosis Knight.

