

OF beast and gold.

'Never in my life would I have thought I end up here, never had I thought I would not only be come and adventurer but manage to rise the rank to gold rank from a simple copper rank I was 4 years ago.'

Taking my hand, I reach up to my neck to where my gold adventure plate was resting, fiddling with it in my hand. Taking a glance around the city, I was now in it was very populated, actually it was to populated.

The city was crowded with many refugees from surrounding villages having come to them seeking shelter from the demi-human that where in the country side. This related in there being to many people in the city, and not enough room to house them.

As I traveled down the street, I spotted several dirty disheveled family huddling together in makeshift tent on the side of the road.

The sight would have normally made me sad and want to help them or donate some money to them but after seeing so many cases like that I have grown desensitized and I can't help all the people going through the same thing.

Ultimately, I had to make a choice and chose to help out 2 families in the city who are living on the street but I can only help them, otherwise I be overwhelmed by the people in need and out of my hard-earned money.

Passing the families, I continued on my way heading to the meeting point for my party at the west city gates. While I was walking there to distract myself, I thought about how I found myself in this situation.

It was around 4 months ago my party and I had just come back from a resent job that we saw posted on the Re-Estize that an official call for aid came from the queen of the draconic kingdom asking for adventures to come save them from the invading beast men that were plaguing her nation.

I had heard from down the grape vine that that several team of adventure, including a mithril rank team named Swift Stride lead by a women named Gillian, and one of them are friends of mine. My team was friend with that party as well. After talking with my party we decided that the money being offer was too good to pass up so we packed our bags and headed to the draconic kingdom.

We have bine here for a while but had hardly participated in any big engagements like what the first group of adventures to the draconic kingdom had participated in the city of Almagda. I

heard from talk with some adventure that the adventurers had bombarded the demi-human with spell scrolls until they retreated.

After we had arrived, we had been tasked by the crown to escort supply caravans of food traveling from city to city to resupply them under order of the dragon queen herself. Some adventurer party were assigned to stay in the city to guard the wall from attack as well.

My party, the Honey baggers, have gone on several trip out with caravan and on some of them we had to fight of some beast men scout that we manage to fight off with the other adventure groups there.

However, recently thing have changed. Several adventure party have quite do to, unsavory interaction with an adamantine team in the kingdom and other have gone out with supply shipment and never made it to the city they were heading to or heard from again.

It does not take a genius to guess they were attack and one of the unlucky one to not get away. This was normal given the situation and has been going on constantly but recently both attack and disappearances have been happened more frequently.

Only a week ago a caravan from this city which had Swift stride had left and should have made it back here a day ago. It is not unheard of for caravans to be late do to delays or attack so I don't think it not something normally to be worried about, but I still hope Gillian is ok.

Seeing the main gate of the city up ahead along with several wagons I picked up the pace and jogged over. My perusal plate iron armor clinking as I ran.

Running up to the plaza by the gate I look around for a bit and spotted one of my party members.

"Hey Jacob" I said jogging up to him while waving my right arm.

"Oh, there you are Lancel. I thought you might cause us to miss the caravan. The before departing meeting is just about to start." Jacob said

Looking at Jacob he was also where Iron armor except it was both thicker than the armor I was wearing and fully plated. Since he had his helmet under his left arme at the moment it allowed me to see his long brown hair tied back into a ponytail and shining blue eyes.

Jacob saw himself as a defensive specialist with his dream being to become the "defender of the weak". I remember he had this dream since we were little kids.

Glancing to his right arm and belt I spotted two "weapons". On his right arm was a large round shield, large enough that if he where to curl up into a fetal position he would be able to fit in it.

it was made of pure iron and thank to lord Satoru magic shop it is enchanted to be much tougher than normal.

Normally Jacob would not be able to wield such a thing since it would be too heavy but thanks to a magic ring from Satoru magic shop, he has an increase in strength allowing him to carry and use the shield.

He also modified the shield and sharpened the side into a razor edge so that he can use the shield as a weapon that could cut into foes like an axe head.

On the ground resting by his left leg was a smaller heater shield made out of steel which also had an enchantment to be stronger than normal.

"Well good thing that I made it then" I said while using my right hand to move some loose strands of my red hair out of the way.

"Ok let's go find the other and head to the meeting then" I said to Jacob

"Alright, you lead and I will follow." Jacob said putting his helmet and grabbing his steel shield.

With that we both headed over to a gathering of people in front of a stack of crates with a blond-haired man standing on them.

Looking around the crowd I spotted my last two members of my party.

One was a man named Clarence he is an average height but skinny man who was wearing a steel ring mail shirt and leather armor. He also had a dark green cloak with a hood over his head and a scarf he normally wore around his face that is now down around his neck. He was a ranger and had two short swords at his waist along with a bow and quiver on his back. I could barely see his green eyes and brown hair from under his hood.

Next to him was his sister Abigail our party priest who worships the six great gods, she worships the goddess of light. Like her brother she has gorgeous green eyes and golden blond hair. In her hand was a steel staff topped with a yellow orb of gold. Over top of her normally white and yellow priestly vestment she had a steel and leather chest plate and bracers.

Walking over to greet them getting their attention.

"Hey Clarence, hey Abigail has the meeting started yet" I ask them getting their attention.

"Lancel, you finally made it" Abigail said while jumping onto me and giving me a big hug causing me to blush a little.

"Hey Lancel, to answer your question, no the guy was just about to start. Sister please get off of him you are making a scene." Clarence said grabbing her and pulling her off of me

“aaawww Clarence you always ruing my fun” she said

“Quite it about to start” he said back.

“OK, lissen up everybody.” The man on the crates said

The man then gestured to another man with a grey colored bear and a balled head next to him who got up next to him.

“I am Gareld the head merchant in charge of this caravan and this man right here is name Brex the caravan master who will be leading this caravan in my stead. He will be your leader and all you adventure and mercenary will have to lessin to him. Brex take it away.” Gareld said before stepping down

“Alright every body here how things are going to work” Brex said

“This caravan is heading to the city of Almagoda and this caravan is made up of three different defensive parts, one is the 15 mounted draconic solders assigned to defend the caravan by the dragon queen orders.” Brex said and jester over to 15 armored and mounted solders off to the side.

The 15 soldiers where mostly uniform in terms of armor except for small bit of their armor and their weapons. Sever soldiers had different type of armored on their hand and each seem to have different weapon with some having one handed sord that seem to be enchanted with different elements and other had spear, halberd and axes with similar enchantment. Two solers even had two different type of helmets that did not match their armor.

From what I hear the reason for the is because lord Satoru has made a deal the dragon kingdom to provide for there army so the variety of equipment messing with the uniformity of the army makes sense.

“Another part is the 50 mercenaries being paid for by the Gareld to guard the caravan. The last part is all of you who are the adventure being paid for by the dragon queen to guard this caravan. You all will be divided into group some will guard the rear and some will guard the side of the caravan. The 15 soldiers will guard the front. In addition, I want all adventure who are ranger or other scout type to meet me Infront of the gate you all will be set into team to scout the perimeter of the road for beast men and give use a early warning of attack. I will send somebody over to each adventure team to tell you where you will be in the caravan. With that in 30 more minutes we will be departing so do your final preparation now everybody dismissed.” Brex said before stepping off the crates

Turing to my party I looked at Clarence.

“So I guess you will be heading to the gates to meet Brex. While you do that we will get ready to go” I said to Clarence

“Ok, be back in a bit” clarence said before walking over the gate.

I turned to Jacob and Abigail.

“so what do you guys want to do while we wait to be told where we will be in the caravan” I ask

“we could drink a bit of this wine called Queens blood I bott from a fancy tavern they say it the queen prefer drink which is way it is where it got its name.” Jacob said

Abigail and I look at Jacob

“...”

“...”

“...”

“Sure, why not” I said

3 days latter

“I still can’t believe you guys got smashed in the time I met with Brex, I was literally only gone for like 15 minutes” Clarence said

Clarence was taking a break and relaxing on the cart we were marching besides.

“Well sorry but I had no idea queen choice drink was so alcoholic, I mean seriously how can she drink whole barrels of that stuff and live?” Jacob said.

“She’s literally part dragon, of course she can handle massive amounts of alcohol?” Clarence said

“Guys Please no shouting it way to loud” said Abigal how was messaging her head.

“Are you still having side effect from the drink, its bine three days, how are you still ill” I asked her

“YES, I am still sick. I don’t even know how it possible but I keep casting [light Cleans] and [cure minor effect] but it just keeps coming back?” Abigial said.

“Maybe, but remember save your magic you don’t know when we might need it.” I siad

“Yes, I am award, is there anything else you want me to do hubby?” she said in a sweet but considering manor

“Don’t start with that I will tell other what you said to me three days ago in the city about you wanting to be the “scabbard” for my “sword” or you saying you want to by my “quiver” for my “white arrows.” I said with a dusting of a blush on my face

“No, please anything but that.” Abigial said panicky while turning as red as a tomato.

“Then no more of this teasing involving you and me in a relationship” I said

“Aw but you like it, I see how you look and blush at me” Abigail said

“No, stop it.” I said

Looking ahead of the caravan I notice that the leading cart stopped and all the rest in a chain reaction stopped as well.

One of the mounted draconic soldiers broke off from the front and done down the side on our side of the caravan.

“We are stopping here for a short break, all scout are to meet at the front of the caravan to set up patrol for the surrounding area. Adventure team: Four eyes, night fury, red tops and night walkers are to be on guard for now the rest are to go on break.” The soldier showed then continued to repeat what he was saying as he rode by.

“Well look like my break is over see you guys soon.” Clarence said while getting off the cart.

“Ok see you later.” I said and watched him go as the rest of the carts stopped while going around a bend.

I turned to look at Jacob

“Jacob, you stay with Abigal just in case anything happens, I am going to go talk with some other parties and explore the area. Is that ok with you?” I ask

“Yeah, that is fine I will stay with Abigial” Jacob said while Abigail sat on the closest cart to her.

I walked between two of the carts and look around on the curved section of the bending cart on the road.

I was mildly surprised when I was greeted by the ruins of what look like an collection of homes by the road side. Judging by the farm filed close by I think this used to be a farm stead. Ther was a destroyed two-story stone house. A burnt barn and several other non-described buildings beside all of the small fields.

Looking around at the building I see a gathering of mercenary's and adventures around the burnt barn.

course I headed over there.

Right when I got to the group of people a man came bounding from out of the open barn door and slightly past me into the grass. Then he collapses and began vomiting his guts out on the ground.

I looked at the man before looking back at the barn with a morbid sense of curiosity I stepped closer to the barn.

Then one of the adventure with a platinum plate used his arm to block my path. Turning my head to the adventure I see a grizzled looking man with a white beard and a brown leather eyepatch over his left eye.

The man look at me with what dark and foreboding look.

"You do not want to go in there kid, If I where you I would just go back the way I came" He said to me.

"honestly I do believe you, however I am an adventurer and if what ever is so bad in there it caused that-" I said pointing to the guy on the ground.

"I am bound to encounter more stuff like that in the future, I think it would be best for me to see it now rather than later." I said with some hesitance in my voice.

The man look a me for a second before sighing

"Ok, but don't say I did not warn you" he said and stepped aside

Stepping into the barn I quickly spotted what caused the man to vomit outside.

The inside of the barn was rather space, as you would expect for a barn with tones of hay in piles around the place. But everything else in the barn was not so normal.

In the very center of the barn was a fire pit with a spit over top of it that would be used to cook a pig, however a pig was not on it. on the spit was the clear remains of a cook human with large chunks of it ether missing or to cook to tell its sex. The only thing that could be determine would be that it was clearly an adult.

That little mercy could not be said for what around the fire pit thought

Around the fire pit where several discarded organs, mostly intestines, and pieces of bone. Some I could clearly tell where animal bone possibly from a cow or a horse but other bones

where clearly human. Off to one of the side of the pit there where very clearly two human skull both clearly be to small to me adult and one being smaller then the other.

It was only after entering that I register the smell coming from the barn. Rotting flesh, burnt hear and flesh and other unmachinable smells hit me like a Warhammer.

Feeling bile rise in my throat I rapidly stepped out of the barn to get some air.

Doing a quick jog out of the barn I began panting heavily and lucky stopping myself from vomiting like the man I saw earlier.

“Told you, you did not want to see it” I heard from the side of me. Looking up I see the man from before staring back at me.

“No, I am good. I am not going to vomit like the last guy. I just need to catch my breath.” I spoke
Nodding his head the man then walked off.

Staying there for a minute I decided to walk back to the caravan. After a short walk I was back at the caravan and began looking around to see if I could spot Jacob and Abigail anywhere.

Not spotting my party members immediately I instead glanced out into the distant looking the surrounding territory

Most of the area around the road was nothing but open grass land except what might be a mile from off the road there was a massive forest full of trees.

The slightly peaceful atmosphere was then broken by the sound of a horn in the distant coming from toward the trees.

Everybody in the caravan then look to the forest with tense faces.

After a second five people broke thought the tree line one of them was Clarence with his dark green cloak.

With building anxiety, I relies the people I was looking at running from the wood must have bine the scouting party.

Again, the horn sound came from one of the four scouts blowing the horn again.

In my peripheral vision I notice a commotion from off to the side so I turned my head to see what was happening. I spotted one of the mounted draconic soldiers rapidly galloping down the caravan line.

“EVERONE GET INTO POSTION THE HORN SIMBILISES IMINANT BEAST MAN ATTACK, EVERONE PREPART FOR FUCKING BATTLE” the cavalry man yelled while riding down the line.

I think anyone with half a brain could probably piece together that the horn meant attack but everyone up to that point was caught in a stunned silence from the first horn blow.

After the draconic soldier showed those words, everyone seemed to break out of their stupor and a flurry of activity commenced around me with adventures and mercenaries getting ready for battle and into defensive positions.

Turning my head back to the forest I spotted that the scout managed to cover a large part of the distance between the wood and the caravan. Glancing at the wood I saw several large shapes come barreling from out of them in pursuit of the scouts.

At a glance I could easily tell that they were beast men. They were covered in fur and carrying large weapons to match their size. At first there was only a couple who seemed to be chasing the scouts but soon many, many more shapes came from the tree line.

Quickly the number of beast men rose from 5 to 10 to somewhere in the 40 maybe more and all of them were heading to the caravan at top speed.

"Fuck." I said aloud to nobody as I took out two of my steel swords in both of my hands.

"FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK" I said as I dodged a swing from a beast man with the face of a pig mask with some sort of cat.

After stepping back out of the way of his strike I took my steel sword and thrust it forward at the beast man who just over extended his reach creating an opening.

With ease my sword pierced through the beast man's eye and deep into his skull killing him instantly.

With very little time to react I pulled the sword from out of his head and prepared for my next opponent.

Just in the nick of time I noticed a half snake man gaga with four arms wielding two swords in two human sized arms and two spears in two more beefy looking arms above them.

The demi human thrust the spear at me, I managed to side step one of them and parried one with my other sword.

I then thrust with my other sword but the beast snake blocked the attack by crossing his sword and catching my blade.

I was about to step back but then an arrow from the right of my battle pierced through the unarmored head of the snake beast I was fighting killing it instantly.

Taking a quick glance to my side, I see a man in leather armor with bow to my side. He then pulls out an arrow from his quiver and quickly took aim at another opponent.

Glancing around me the battlefield was pure chaos. After the first charge beast men, more showed up and push us back from the carts and into the abandon farmstead.

There were many dead people and beast men spread across the battle field. some people had there head caved in and limbs mangled or torn off while others seem to have bine shredded by large weapons. There where also dead beast men as well but most of them were stabbed or slashed to death, very few were brutalized as the human bodies were.

Glancing at each of the body and not seeing any trait of my party members on them I sprinted around the main farm house looking for my party members. Making it around the house I spotted two of my party members Jacob and Abigial but they were in a terrible state.

Jacob was lying on the ground but I could not tell if he was dead or just unconcise. While that alone was very concerning what caught my attention was Abigail's situation. Abigail was lying close to Jacob on the ground with a large slash wound going along her chest. She seems alive given the rising and falling of her just but she might not last long in her condition.

In front of her was a large brown furred beast wearing large plates of metal which were tied to the beast by leather straps and rope. It was wielding a large two headed axe which was raised over his head ready to strike down Abigail. In his other hand was a two-handed great sword that it was wielding in one hand which looked oddly familiar

"NO, Abigial STOP!" I shouted.

Acting quickly and in desperation I cranked my right hand back and throw my one-handed sword at the beast. The thrown sword went sailing through the air and imbedded itself into the back of the beast man managing to loge itself in a space of unarmored flesh. However, despite the clean strike is seem to have little effect.

After the sword landed the beast man showed out in pain before disregarding Abigail and turning around to face me which let me see what I was dealing with.

It was a bear folk, a large bipedal bearlike species of beast men that stood around 8 feet tall.

"HA so another pathetic human come to challenge the great Gurgar of the dark forest. So human ready to die by the hand of the strongest beast man here?" it said

'Huh, it willing to talk? If so, then maybe I can buy time to assess the situation and think of a way out of this.'

“You are the strongest beast man. Then are you also the leader of this attack to?” I ask while pulling out another steel sword and a dagger.

At the start of the battle, I had three one handed sword and two dagger. Over the course of the battle one of them was destroyed and I just lost another leaving me with my final steel sword and two daggers.

“Yes, I am, unlike you human we don’t let the weak lead us.” Gurgar said while stepping toward me.

‘Shit I need to think of something, think. Wait that sword, isn’t that?’

“Wait before we fight, that sword that you have where did you get it” is ask scared for the answer.

“Oh, you mean this sword? I got it from another adventure with long blond hair. I believe they were a She and she was quite the opponent but ultimately just another pathetic pest to put in their place. I even took this souvenir from her and some other human I found interesting.” He said

Turing his body slightly to the side he showed of four severed human head. Despite the fact how rotted they where they were intact enough to tell their facial features. Three of them I could barely recognize as being members of the mithril team Swift strike who I was barely audience with. The four however I recognized with in a heartbeat.

I was the head of a girl with long blond hair its face showing despair and fear, It was Gillians head.

Seeing hear head strapped to the beast man like a sick trophy I could feel my face contort into an ugly expression

“OH, OH, did you know this foolish female? Then I guess you would like to know how she scream. At first, she was brave at the start of the fight, but after I killed her friend and had her at my mercy her true weak self-broke. OH, how she scream then begged as I tore off her armor and bite into her leg before hearing off her breast. Her pleading, screaming, crying and begging made her meat all the more exquisite”

“you... you... you FUCKING BASTARD” I said

Lifting my sword, I charged at Gurgar

After getting closer to him Gurgar lifted Gillian’s great sword and brought it down at me. Using my sword, I manage to deflect it and cos edit to clan off of me and onto the ground .

I brought down my right foot onto the sword to hold his sword down. I then jumped using my right leg and tried to swing my sword.

Gurgar however seeing this then used the flat side of his great axe that he had resting at his side to bat my body away from him. The sudden impact of the axe took the wind from out of my lung and cause me to drop both my dagger and my sword as I was launched sideways.

My surrounding then changes from the open area of the farmstead to into the farmers house through one of the farms houses destroyed wall. I then collide with a large cabinet turning it into splinters.

“Gods fuck” I said through clenched teeth while tasting blood in my mouth.

‘I am almost positive I have a broken rib’ I thought

On instinct I reach for a flask to my side that I had filled with a blue colored healing potion and took a swig from it causing some of my wounds to heal.

“Fuck I still think my rib is broken” I said to nobody.

Hearing the sound of collapsing wall, I look up at the farm house wall and see Gurgar clime through the wall.

“There you are little human and would you look you lost your fangs and claws. What will you do now” He said

Stepping closer he lifted his great axe and attempted to swing it down onto me. Barly dodging in time I ruled away and manage to role through a open door way into a hallway. Running down the hallway I barley mange to dodge again as the beast man body check his way into the hall way.

“There is nowhere to run little runt, your fait will be just like your little blond hair mate I killed. In fact, I promise you I will kill you with her sword.” he said while staring at me from down the hallway.

Getting down the hallway I shoulder check a door and enter into a room with a bunch of destroyed furniture and a discarded wood cutting axe that was embedded in an over turned table. Thinking quickly, I grabbed the axe from the table and hid behind the table.

Just as I did so Gurgar entered the room destroying the doorway into the room.

Glancing over the table I saw that he first looked away from me when he entered the room trying to find me. Seeing my chance I sprung out of my hiding spot causing Gurgar to turn his head towards me.

Taking the axe in my hand I slashed at his face. He manage to dodge slightly and prevented the axe from embedding itself into his skull but it slashed a cash into his face an destroyed his left eye.

“AAAAAAHHHHH.” he screamed.

Gurgar then pivoted backwards away from me giving me an opening to run out into the hallway.

“(Roar) Get back here you maggot.” I heard from the room.

Frantically looking around I spot in another room a improvised ramp of furniture leading to a hole in the ceiling leading to the second floor.

Running into the room I abandoned the axe in my flight and frantically climbed up the ramp into the second floor.

Getting down I tried to sneak around the second floor trying to make as little noise a possible.

Traveling around the second floor I glanced through a doorway and see another room with a completely destroyed floor reveling the first floor below it. hiding behind the door frame. One of the walls to the room caved inward as Gurgar broke through into that room.

“WHERE ARE YOU COWERD!” he yelled out and frantically began turning his head around looking for me.

As he looked the other way, his new blind side of his face was facing towards me.

“An opening.” I thought.

Without thinking I took out my last dagger from out its sheath and did a ruing jump onto Gurgar’s back.

“AUGH, GET OFF OF ME” he said and tried to reach his arms around to grab me dropping both of his weapons in the process.

In a mad frenzied I took my dagger and reached around his large throat and thrusted the dagger into his neck with all my the strength I could muster I racked the impaled dagger through his throat and ranked it all the way from one side to the other.

At that point Gurgar manage to grab my arme and through me off of his back and tossed me against a wall. With my vision swimming I look up at Gurgar only to see him collapsed forward almost crushing me as he fell directly in front of me.

Heart pounding and ears ringing I took several shaky breaths as my vision stared to swim. Taking my arm I rubbed my eye and manage to clear up my vision enough to see rapidly spreading pool of blood.

Despite the amount of blood he was losing I saw that he was still barely alive. Without thinking I grabbed a piece of stone debris and walked up to him and began beating the back of his head in until I heard a distinctive crack of his neck severing from his skull.

Letting the rock fall I tumbled back and sat down on some rubble.

"Ah... ah... fuck" I spoke in gasping breaths

Hearing noise from the hole in the house I see Jacob standing there in dented armor and missing his steel shield.

"Lancel are you ok." He asked

To tired to do much I just nodded my head.

"Ok, good is. Is that Gergar?" he asked and I nodded again.

Jacob walked slightly past me and examined his corpse.

"You know I heard that he has a substantial bounty on his head, I think if we take his head with us back, we can get a major pay day." Jacob said casually

'What, why is Jacob so casual when we lost Abigail?' I thought in rising anger despite my exhaustion.

"Why... Are you ... so calm... Abigail... is... DEAD!" I said.

"What are you talking about?" he asked

"I... saw her.. bleeding out... she has... to be dead with not healers" I said feeling tears in my eyes

"Um she is not dead?" he said

"what?"

"After you left Clearance pulled her to safety while I protected them, last I saw them before heading here she was being healed-" before he finished I sprinted out of the house.

Running like my life depends on it after five minutes of frantic searching I found her.

She was alive.

"Oh thank Shushona." I whispered.

Stepping closer with exhaustion over taking me I walk up to the healer and Abigail.

Getting down on my knees I look at Abigail as the healer, a man in his late thirties, he looks bloody and forlorn. Judging by his expression he must have lost some of his own party members.

"Is she going to make it?" I ask hesitantly

The healer look up at his work at me with the deadest eyes that I only ever seen on that of the undead.

"... Yeah, she going to be fine." He said before returning back to his work

"At least I am not entirely useless and can save some people." he said in a whisper

Knowing that I was not supposed to hear that I pretended to not hear it.

"Good, Thank Shashana. I am so fucking exhausted." I said

With my last reason to stay consciousness being gone now I let sleep take me and lied down on the dirt next to Abigial healing form swearing in my mind that this time when I wake up I will tell her how I feel towards her.