

Interrupted Breakfast

12/8/22

Servants scrambled to assemble the small table and flat ware. They laid plates and filled the wine glass. All in preparation for the man slowly walking over. Black gems on his brow and a great coat brushing the grass by this roadside clearing. The light snow of the previous night melted and made the helm of his garment damp. The figure moved to the table as a covered dish was laid on it and his seat was provided for him and pushed in as he sat. It seemed as if the only thing that was important to the military caravan that now in the early morning began to rouse was pleasing this person's needs. This living legend. This Inquisitor.

Thorne had been in the Inquisition for some time. Hunting down rogue elementals and outlaws, ensuring the dominance of the protectorate and bringing his own brand of justice where he walked. Often people were aghast at some of his actions. He saw them as enforcing the laws and decrees of the protectorate and while active and in the field it was he who determined what they were and enforced them. All he did as a humble servant was serve. That is what he told himself.

The air was crisp and the first snow of the season had dusted the landscape the night before. Thorne knew he could not make it through the mountain passes before the snow and bad weather came more heavily. The harsh winter would strand his army here.. His aims were to seek a large town near the mountain base and reconnoiter it until the spring thaw. Staging his army to be able to lay claim to the peoples and resources of this newly opened cairn as is the right of the Protectorate.

Sitting down his servants placed the napkin over his lap and brought out a dish lifting the lid. Steam rose from the roasted meat and sparse worn looking vegetables. In spite of his own hunger Thorne took a moment before carefully sliding into his meal. As his blade first moved in a sawing motion a scream could be heard echoing through the valley on this side of the mountains. The tell tale "Vreech" sound made by creatures commonly called "hounds" by those familiar. Thorne sighed and laid down his utensils, closing his eyes as he spoke. The voice that uttered was barely above a whisper. "Fetch the outlaws... and the decoys". The camp sprang into action. Guard forming up and the servants dashing to follow the Inquisitor's orders. In short order a group of six Null (humans) and Circleborn (high Ogres) were brought before his table. He took a long moment examining them. Thorne knew that this whole time wasted would mean his food was cold. He detested cold food that had been meant to be served warm. It was against common order.

Thorne was aware, however, that drama was a key part in his job. A tool to be wielded. Another scream echoed. "You all know what that sound means... it seems to be only one. It hunts us.. So many innocents and non soldiers. A village nearby. All to be fodder and feed for these abominations. One of you could be our savior. One of you could earn a place of honor posthumously in spite of how you were brought into this world" Gesturing, Thorne waved to the side and a servant brought up a tray with six leather bags. "You know the ways. Starting on this

end.. You will choose a bag one by one. You will open the leather and place your hand inside and touch the stone. The one with whom the stone chooses will be...our salvation. A hero to the protectorate. You will lead the enemy away and possibly overcome it! Should you survive, simply return here after the creature's defeat and become rewarded. "

With a nod by the Inquisitor the servant holding the tray moved to the first person in line. A young human woman. She chose a leather bag, reached in and picked up the stone inside and then dropped it. She burst into silent, barely contained, tears as she did. Her shoulders shivering as she tried to control the relief. The next a male Null with the tan and tattoos of Haven. He also reached in the bag he chose and paused. Closing his eyes, his fingers curled around the stone inside, he brought out his hand and dropped the stone into the bag with a metallic clank.

Thorne's eyes moved to the third individual. A Circle Born who seemed to be whispering to the air. She moved to reach for a bag and then paused, changing her mind and reached for another. With surety she reached in and her eyes went wide. He brought out her hand and with the stone in her palm she turned her hand upside down and splayed out her fingers. As she did the stone remained in her palm. The link to her spirit having formed on contact "You have been chosen young outlaw. Your voices in your head seem to have led you to this great and glorious purpose. Run now. Your efforts guarantee the further success of the protectorate in these barren and uncultured lands."

The female Circleborn growled something under her breath and four of the Protectorate guard stepped forward with their pikes ready. With that she turned and began to run. After roughly 100 yards she paused and tilted her head as if listening to the wind and cackled, turning her head she dashed off in the opposite direction before disappearing into the tree line.

"Return the rest to their cages. Ready another seeking stone in case more hounds are about..." He looked down at the no longer steaming meal before him and frowned deeply. "Then prepare my tools.. I'll be speaking with the other from Haven. I need all the information I can on this "Bastian" these cairn dwellers are building. We must bash their hope. Drain it from them. Dig up the roots and burn it. They are not greater than the Protectorate. The Protectorate is ...eternal."