

The Eye Of Shadow

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a steady breeze blew through my hair whipping it backwards into the sunlight creating a shimmer as though it was gold; the breeze was warm and welcoming. The sun shone down pleasantly on me and my surroundings making the flowers reach up to feed from its amazing glow. I stared around the field and placed my sword down on the floor, its black metal glinting as it caught the rays of illuminating warmth and flashed them back into my dark forbidding cloak. This cloak had been with me since I was a child and has been with me ever since, it has become a fathomless infinity which I reside containing all the memories...of battle...and of fear. I got up catching a glimpse of the blinding rays of light that was raining down from the fiery globe above making me flinch for a second. I regained my posture and reclaimed my shadowy blade placing it comfortably on my back so it blended with my irregular garments. Dressed in black and boasting a mask that covers my face and my identity from all whom cross my path. I made my way away from the picturesque area and towards the forest about one hundred meters away, this was enough to give any man a chill down his spine, but from what I've seen...there is no comparison, but I knew I had to go there to reach my destination. I reached the bushy growth that entangled around several steely rocks before the gloomy entrance to the forest.. I peered up at the towering titans of wood that were the trees of the forest, grey and overpowering thorns protruded from every possible direction as if they were stabbing fiercely at their surroundings. This startled me, but would not stop me...so I continued forwards keeping my eyes on the freakish horned trees before me. I was careful not to be struck by any of the razor like barbs as I approached; I ducked and dived over the protective layer of trees landing on the damp misty forest floor with a dull and lifeless thud.

I replaced my weary stance and continued forwards deeper into the now darkening forest where nobody dare tread. The warm breeze which lightened my heart couldn't penetrate the thick violent vegetation that was growing round what seemed to be a town, red broken rock and mouldy bits of wood littered the patchy forest floor...or that is what I thought I saw. Visibility was at a minimum on the ground due to a thick layer of mist, which was shrouding the earth under my feet. A snap in the distant darkness caught my attention and I swung round straining my ears, listening to the unbounded silence, which surrounded me. Releasing myself from my state of petrification and concentration I continued wearily down the gnarled and damaged path, which seemed to have been created...by something. I approached a large unwelcoming structure, which seemed to sway in the darkness...but my eyes must have been playing tricks on me. I entered what I would hardly class as a door; a gaping hole in the wall, which welcomed the darkness that enveloped the forest. I peered in cautiously looking for any sign of danger. A shattered table lay overturned in the corner and the floor was covered in sharpened splinters. though the forest floor was shrouded in mist, it seemed not to enter this "den of darkness", I peered back into the doorway and the mist seemed to be blocked invisibly and unnaturally from the building. Maybe that's why the building looked strange before, I thought darkly. I turned my back for a split second and a noise came rushing dully across the stone floor.

I swung round swiftly grabbed my sword with both hands and slashed fiercely downwards and struck the now shaking floor so hard it cracked in two, sending the wall in front crashing down creating a thick

cloud of dust which temporarily nullified my vision even more so. As the dust cleared I peered into the gaping hole in the floor to see what the source of the noise was. On the floor where I had cleaved the ground inwards was a small rat sliced neatly in half lying in a pool of crimson. Realizing my overreaction I quickly made it my business to depart the freshly destroyed house before my nerves got the better of me again. I vacated the scene swiftly and began to trek deeper and deeper into the forest. The deeper I got...the darker it got, and the more my insecurity rose. I couldn't help get the feeling that I was being followed. Each noise made me turn my head and listen to the nothingness around me; all I was aware of was the faint beating of my heart. After half an hour of walking aimlessly through the darkness I decided to make some sense of it all. Since no light could penetrate the dense foliage above me, I decided to make my own. While cupping my hands I muttered several words and almost immediately my hands burst into flames creating a warming glow, which flickered and lashed out at the darkness fighting it back and creating a pleasant light. I snapped a nearby branch from a dead tree and focused my flames into the end forming a torch. I began my way through the shadows again but now my heart slightly at ease thanks to my illuminating torch.

As I journeyed on I spotted a deepened part of the land which led to a grey stony floor scattered with dirt. Had I found it? Was my mission over? These thoughts flashed through my mind as I steadily approached a large building, which was wrapped in vines, as if they were protecting it. I approached the entrance, which was a tunnel that leads into the forest floor, and I stepped inside to follow the path forwards.. A room came up ahead and I entered it cautiously waving my torch at the darkness creating light in the room. There was an old pedestal located in the centre of the room; I approached it peering to see what it held. Its dazzling black surface flickered over my eyes from the light of the flame, this was it. This is why I was here. The Eye Of Shadows. In a moment of bliss I snatched it out and claimed the eye quickly stuffing it inside my pouch and turning back to make my escape before something dire happens. "He said taking it would come with a price...I hope he meant his offer." I whispered to myself as I stepped out the darkened structure with a new sense of energy.

I began to sprint through the shadows back the way I came, noises rushing past me. Branches snapping. Leaves crunching. My heart pounding. And the feeling of pursuit ever fresh in my mind. Further and further I retraced my steps backwards through the forest, my feet pounding on the hazed floor. Past the hole. Past the house. And towards the thorns. I realized what I was doing a moment too late, one of the barbs thrust itself into my shoulder painting my neck scarlet with blood. I rolled forwards, my face contorted in agony as I crashed through the rest of the thorns and burst into the brightness which stung my eyes as I lay on my back, broken, bloody and moaning. After realizing I was back in the dimming light of day I slowly got up and examined my left shoulder. It had pierced straight through and snapped off as I rolled out, I peered round to my side and saw the razor sharp tip protruding from my back. After a few minutes I began to make my way back to the small town, which I ventured from, to claim my bounty and get some hard earned rest. It was not far from the meadow, which I had rested in a few hours before, so not after too long I was met by the welcoming hustle and bustle of the townsfolk shopping in the market outside the inn.

A wide variety of things were being sold, from fruit to meat and even crude jewellery that contented the minds of the poor. I approached the large cracking oak door and pushed it open with my right arm and staggered up to the front desk.

"ohhhhhh sir what be the mater , how did yeh do a thing like that?"

came the high-pitched ramblings of the small red haired female innkeeper.

"Nothing...I just need a room for the night and some bandages...and if you could some food and drink"

I replied hazily with distaste

"ohhhh ok, will there be anything else sir?" she replied politely. "Err...yes could you inform mr McFord of my arrival"

I retorted in a slightly agitated voice. Why does she make that infernal noise every time she speaks? I thought to myself "Ohhhhhh Mr McFord , Ok I will see what I can do. Your room is all made up, it's the first on the right as you go up the stairs."

I expressed as much gratitude as possible by handing over a fistful of silver coins to avoid one more irritating moan from the inn-keep. I made my way up the neatly carpeted stairs daring not to touch the highly polished banister with my grubby hands. I reached the door and pushed it open with my shoulder...

"ARGHH"

I stumbled through the door landing on my knees only just remembering my injury. I yanked the wretched barb from my shoulder and tossed it into the war corner of the room where it clattered annoyingly. I brought myself to my feet and looked in a nearby mirror. It had pierced straight through my shoulder...and my cloak. Blood had strained it many times before so it was not much of a problem. The wound was about 2 inches wide and stung as if hot coals were poking it. I discarded my outer garment to revile a black silk shirt and baggy trousers that were countered by my dark leather boots at the ankles.