

Hounds of Hell and Wolves of Sea; Part II

Echoes of metal clanging and pounding in the ears of three boys, walking down a rigid and unmaintained path towards a cabin. Made out of wood, sure, but the owner added metallic materials onto his cabin, giving it a menacing look, especially on cloudy days. One of the boys is pushing a large cart.

I curl my lips as Dhariya approaches the door ahead, metal shards jammed into the door. So many that Dhariya picks up a stick to knock on the door, dropping it right after to make sure he wasn't making a bad first impression. We wait...nothing. A cold wind blew through the cabin, making us shiver. Dhariya steps back. An ominous feeling runs through. Dhariya turns towards us.

"I don't think there's anyone here," he says.

Though just then, there is a large "THUD" as the door slams open. Dhariya slowly turns around. A large scarred man stands before him, silent.

"Hell-lo, si-ir," Dhariya stutters.

"Whadya want," he says in a deep, cracking voice.

"Transportation," I say. He pauses. "You owe me."

Sitting on the truck bed floor of a rusty and rundown Resto pick-up truck. So old that it barely floats off the ground. We travel through the nocturnal stretch. We could see sharp eyes glaring at us, but they couldn't possibly come here, in these parts of the woods - the nocturnal can only shine in the shadows. We travel along the rugged terrain for a few more minutes before we arrive at the normal woodlands. Where light flourishes everywhere, not only on the path. Birds chirp in harmony and wolves howl with pride. Wolves. I glance at the box. Blue.

After another hour of traveling, we arrived at a cabin. Not like his, this one was large and clean. An oval surrounded his territory. The

garden was growing at the front with pots placed throughout. Large stepping stones were placed above the flowing water which was part of a larger river. For this part, we'd need to let Blue out. "We couldn't possibly move the cart over that," I thought. As we turned to thank our driver, he had already left. I looked at Ethan and Dhariya and nodded.

"Well what are we waiting for?" I asked.

"Let's proceed," Ethan said.

As we open Blue's cart, he leaps out in pure joy. He scratches his limbs and as I imagine, that must feel good after all that time.

"OK," I say, getting ready to proceed.

As we cross over the stepping stones, we inhale the pollen of the exquisite flowers and the warmth from the sunshine. The overall beauty engulfed us as we reached the decorated door. Light brown wood and a ring of flowers welcomed you to the cabin. Though we couldn't just stop right now. So Ethan stepped up and knocked on the door. And after just a second of waiting, an old brown man in white opened the door. He was holding a cane, with his other hand around his slouched back. He swiveled his head around to look at us with deep midnight black glasses. He nods at Ethan and Dhariya, smiles at me. Though when he sees Blue, his somewhat squinted eyes open with a sudden jolt.

"You best come inside," he said.

We approach the door and step inside. Though to my surprise, the inside was larger than the outside. The height went at least 50 metres and it would seem to go 100 metres down. Walls lined with books and scrolls. The main floor or entrance showed a multi-level building whose length would seem to be a kilometre long and the height was, again, 50 metres.

"This is my grand escape from the real world," he said.

Ethan and Dhariya both gasped in awe. While I just stared. On the other hand, Blue was running freely as he wished. We walked and looked at the countless desks and supplies. This probably had more books than the main library in the central sphere. Though just before us appeared a platform, floating. The elder stepped on it and all of us followed. Then looking at each other, it started to move. Railings appeared to keep us safe. We started going fast, but before I could wonder where

we were going, everything went in a flash as we zipped across the room. As the real world came back into vision, a great door was before us. I looked back. We had just traveled a kilometre in five seconds. 750 km/h! Ethan and I were in awe, but Dhariya seemed more green than anything. He hung his neck over the platform and hurled. Though a hole appeared to swallow the puke. Taking that off my mind, I looked forward as we arrived. We all stepped out onto the red carpet. Right then, the grand doors appeared for us to walk through.

Many doors were through there. At least 40 doors as it would seem. We followed him through one of the doors on the right on the second floor. A small chandelier hung above a ceramic floor with four chairs and a grayish marble coffee table. He gestured for us to sit. We sat in the plush chairs.

"I am Ali," he said in a dry voice. "But when younger people say my name, I prefer for them to call me Abu."

"Ethan," he says, interrupting the silence.

"Dhariya," he says, following the pattern.

"And Mustafa," I say. "And this is Blue."

"Ah, the final Sea Wolf," he says. "Most likely the reason you came, correct?"

"Quite," Ethan responds.

"By the way Mustafa," Dhariya says. "How did you know about this place?"

I smack my lips. Wait and then raise my head.

"Abu is sort of my abu, aka, my grandfather."

Dhariya and Ethan both move back, opening their eyes to their full extent.

"Why weren't you here instead of the orphanage then?" Dhariya asks.

"Because this place is cursed," Abu says. "This place doesn't like guests staying for too long, and you don't want to know what happened to the last guests who stayed too long."

"Why do you stay here then?" Ethan now questions.

"Because this place must be guarded," Abu states. "It has one too many secrets."

Abu and I sigh and relax back into our chairs.

I have a question. "So what do we do?"

Abu looks at me with a strange face.

"What do we do with Blue?" I replied. "We can't just hand him over to the government, they'd just do tests on him. Captivity."

Everyone went silent.

"Follow me," Abu said, straining out of his chair.

Everyone also got up and waited for Abu to make a move. And that he did. He started to head to the stairs, going downward to the bottom floor of the room with too many doors. Then he waited, off center-right of the room. When we all came, he pointed to the large Anatolian carpet, a carpet mainly found in South-East Asia. We all stared at Abu, wondering with confused faces. It looked like Abu caught on to our confusion.

"Roll up the carpet," Abu said, pausing. "Under there you will find what you need."

We continued to stare for a moment, then we started to roll it. And as we rolled it up further, we revealed what Abu meant. It was a spiraled floor board. Still confused, we tried to act grateful for...a floor.

"Shukria," I said slowly. Though when I saw Dhariya and Ethan's faces, I whispered, "Shukria means 'thank you' in Urdu."

Ethan and Dhariya nodded and then we all faced Abu. Whose face was underwhelmed. Abu then took a deep breath.

"I didn't give you a floorboard," he finally said. "I gave you this."

With two taps of his cane, the spiraled floorboard fell in a domino sequence, creating a circular stairwell. Dhariya and Ethan were in awe, and I was too, just not as much. Just because why keep this stairwell hidden. As Abu started to undergo the path, Dhariya followed

and then I, followed by Blue and Ethan. As we reached the bottom, it was impossible to see because of the darkness. Though then a sound came which I supposed was the cane once more. Right then, torches lining the wall were lit. The ceiling illuminated with tiny fireflies and floating lanterns, filled with a blue flame. Abu is the first to take a lantern, and after we all do the same. It reveals a small and stoney room, filled with scrolls. Abu then proceeds to the wall in the far end. He moves his hand across the stone. Dhariya and Ethan glare at each other, though I continue watching. Then finally, Abu stops. He takes his cane off the floor, and jabs it into the wall, creating a clicking sound. Then he suddenly turns it. Nothing seemed to happen, though our thought was interrupted by the scraping of stone. The right wall rotated, leaving the wall of scrolls to show only one. A bright blue scroll with an ocean-like design. Abu takes the scroll from its glass encasing and holds it in his hands.

"This is what you need."

Back at the room with the chairs and the table, now with chai and snacks, we anxiously wait for Abu to sit down and reveal the contents of the scroll. Well at least Ethan and Dhariya were waiting anxiously. I was waiting, though also eating to pass the time. I love eating. As Abu sat down, we all learned. Abu opened the scroll and took out the piece of paper. A piece of old, slightly tinted and partially torn parchment.

Once there was a corrupt king who littered himself with riches of ransom. To seal his reign, he threatened to murder a master warlock if he did not complete his wish. And his wish was for his soul to be mixed with a Sun Seed. The one thing in his ransom that could determine his reign. And so the wizard performed the spell. Making...transforming the king into a monster of magma. Though to his demise, he had written his own death as he let the wizard free. For the wizard knew the one thing that could overtake him. A sip of water so clear, that the glass seems to be empty. So flourishing with life that it could heal the worst diseases. And so pure, that it could eradicate all corruption... Once the people had found this water, all it took was a single drop on the king's head to split the soul and the Seed of the Sun. The king had turned into a pile of bones, connected by skin from the separation of the seed. Finally, the king was thrown in prison, the seed was hidden and the map was written.

Dhariya leans back with his arms behind his head. Ethan bites his lips and I run my fingers through my hair. All of us have the solution but not the strength. All is quiet. I sigh deep and long, ushering a break of wind. Trying to think of something motivational but nothing comes. Well, we have to start somewhere, sometimes. I stand.

"Well we aren't getting that drop of water by standing here," I finally say. Everyone pauses. I close my eyes and breathe out. "We may not be able to destroy the devil, but we sure can diminish it. If the king can dim by separating him from his source, then so can the Titan of Fire."

Another pause...Dhariya stands.

"You're right," he finally says.

We smile, and then look at Ethan.

"I just don't understand the urgency, I mean we're safe in here," he says.

I mean, he is kind of right, but who knows how strong the Titan is now. The Titans were already growing at exponential rates before, but one by itself probably has an immense army! If they get through, we're over before we know it! Though before I could say anything, Abu spoke up.

"They will have the power to overcome the wall in a few days," he said in a low and somewhat shaky voice. "They will destroy the entire existence of our life. Magma has already been spotted in the eastern wing."

We all pause. Ethan looks up. Then stands up. Pause. He smacks his lips and takes a deep breath in.

"Well it looks like we have to leave soon," he finally says.

In the northern wing of the grand dome, we travel. Now with backpacks filled with supplies, supplied by Abu. And also a map. We cut through the endless pines, oaks and even more multitudes of trees. Finally, we reach the border. I take a deep breath. I turn to the other two.

"Let's hope these backpacks are truly fireproof," I say, chuckling.

"Let's hope that the fireproof potion works, the backpacks are a whole other thing," Dhariya says in an almost disoriented voice.

We all smile. Then we all open our bags to find a small bottle, stuck with a cork, containing a deep orange liquid. Upon opening, a red tall smoke comes out, blowing in front of our faces. I shake it off. Then I take a sip, putting the rest back. An orange and red zap travels through my body. And as I look around, I guess the same happened to the others as I see straight, standing hair. We all brush our hair with our fingers.

"Let's take out our weapons," Dhariya suggests.

So we do just that. Ethan had gotten a bow which creates infinite, forever frozen arrows. Dhariya has a whip of water, that creates water that takes heats of 5,000 Celsius to evaporate. Then I revealed a bamboo stick, which was enchanted to create and control all forms of water. This time taking 6,000 Celsius to evaporate. I didn't know what else to take. Ethan had professionally used a bow before and Dhariya had been trained with a whip. I was just me. So I took the simplest thing, a big stick. As we came right next to the wall, Ethan took out an orb. Which made a part of the wall disappear, making a door. We stepped through.

The barren and red, rocky terrain had no sign of life. Plateaus and mountains were outnumbered by volcanoes. Though it wasn't all empty. Twelve hellhounds. Each at least a metre tall. A muscular and yet skinny to the bone dog who had a fireball instead of an eyeball. With dragon-like claws and skin. Teeth so long and sharp that it made swords look like a piece of paper. Magma and fire flowing through the entire hound and dripping down their teeth. Their tongue seemed like a whip of fire. And not to mention their chest which glowed with blaze. A killing machine.

"Looks like we got some company," I say, cracking my neck.

"Finally some practice," Dhariya responds.

Ethan and I chuckle.

"Nice warm-up," Ethan says, concluding the talk and starting the fight.