

Fantasy

Ready For Adventure

By: Josh Clark



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“Do you want another?” I asked, clunking our tankards. Gaylan nodded. “If only they came in pints.” “Wouldn’t that be something,” I muttered. The door creaked open, bringing in a draft to the Radiant Mist Inn. Quelling the nearby flames. “Heroes,” Gaylan scoffed. “Off to slay another dragon is he?” He took a drink and dropped his head. The rest of the inn’s occupants pausing their conversations and watching the new guest walk over to the bar. “Why do they get it all, Kalye? Excitement, adventure, fame, glory, true love. What do I have?” “Me,” I said. He gave me one of those looks. Aside from mud splattered on his leggings, he was a picturesque hero. A pack slung over his shoulders. Sword and knife strapped to his waist. Muscled. That fine balance of attractive yet rugged. The right amount of

stubble decorating his face. I’d wager a horse tied out in the stable.

“Evening,” the barkeep said.

“How can I be of service?”

“I’d like a room for the night, whatever warm meal you’re serving and a full mug.”

“Certainly.”

I shook my head and returned to my drink.

Gaylan elbowed me.

“Let’s commandeer his quest.”

I paused. “Can we do that?”

Shrugging, Gaylan said, “Why not.”

“Other than we’d have some wizard up our bunghole because we messed with his chosen one.”

“Wizards,” Gaylan spat.

“Insufferable, bearded know-it-alls. Tell me one time their advice leads to any good?”

“Not this again.”

He gestured to the new arrival.

“Sure, this perfect specimen of mankind has been nurtured and brought up to inherit all. Course he’s a wizard lover while the rest of us suffer from their meddling in order to make boy-wonder

happy.”

The hero was seated at the bar, awaiting his meal. Pack resting at his feet.

“We could take him,” Gaylan said.

“Oh sure. You couldn’t take Daryl in that scrap a fortnight ago.”

“That was unfair. His cronies swarmed me. Pinned me down.”

I smiled as I emptied my tankard, except for the swill at the bottom.

“My point exactly. Not only is he superior to Daryl in every way, his companions can’t be far.”

“I don’t see any.”

I slapped his chest. “Honestly, have you ever seen a hero without quest companions?”

“Maybe he’s a loner or still looking to fill out his party.”

“Aye,” I said. “Perhaps so. Maybe we should try out.”

Gaylan’s face soured, as if he’d just stepped in troll dung. “Try out? I won’t pander to him on the roads and wilderness. Get your head out of the ether. I won’t be some second fiddle.”

“Yet, you’d confiscate his quest for yourself?”

His chair creaked as he leaned back, crossing his arms.

“Absolutely. Then glory and riches will bestow themselves upon us.”

“Sounds like an awful lot of work for little immediate reward. I’d much rather stay close to this warm hearth and have another drink than hit the road.”

“You’re afraid he’d make a fool of you in a fight.”

“I have no delusions that he’d outmatch me in a fair fight, after he’s disposed of you.”

“Uncalled for, mate.”

“Here we are,” The barkeep said to the hero. “A nice meal after a long day. When you’ve had your fill, last room on the left is yours.”

“Thank you.”

Gaylan and I’s eyes met.

“If it’s not a fair fight,” I said. “We have a chance.”

“This is ridiculous,” Gaylan said, from under the bed. Propped on his elbows.

“Would you stow it? Had you incited some bar rumble, he’d of had his way with you in seconds.”

“I have enough dirt in my mouth to fill a goblin’s hovel. Why is this bed so close to the ground?”

It was hot, stuffy and Gaylan wasn’t wrong about the space.

My lips had brushed against the wooden planks countless times.

Last place I wanted a splinter.

I elbowed my way forward, feeling as if my legs were sticking out from under the bed.

Gaylan bumped me. “Watch it. You’re crowding me.”

“It was your idea to hide under the bed.”

“Did you want to stand behind the door instead?”

The door creaked and a clunk on the floorboards followed.

I put a finger over my lips.

The footfalls continued. My eyes tracked the black boots.

The hero set his pack down. His belt equipped with weapons soon followed.

A larger portion of him came into view as he knelt down, going through his pack.

“Now?” Gaylan mouthed.

I shook my head.

We scooted our way out from under the bed. Taking about as much effort to get out as getting under. It was not one fluid motion.

Screaming, Gaylan launched himself at the hero. The impact crashed his head into the wardrobe.

Unfazed, our foe threw his elbow into Gaylan’s gut. Who immediately grabbed for it.

I flung myself into the fray.

Securing an arm around his neck.

He got to his feet and flipped me over. Sinking into the feather bed.

Gaylan uttered a battle cry again.

I sprung from the bed to see his legs wrapped around the hero’s neck. He spun around the room, unable to throw Gaylan off.

I lowered myself and bull rushed our target. Smacking them both into the wardrobe.

“Watch it,” Gaylan said.

An arm swung at me, whooshing over my head. I snagged his bag as I ducked.

The hero continued to grapple with Gaylan on top of him.

“You going to contribute?” Gaylan asked. The hero flinging both of them onto the bed, Gaylan scrambling atop him. “We need

something to tie him with.” “You’re telling me.” My back bumped into the wardrobe. “You were supposed to open the door first.”

I dug through the pack and pulled I flipped the hero onto his stomach and pulled his arms behind him. Sloppily, Gaylan tied “You didn’t say anything.”

out a coil of rope. Unfortunate when such preparedness could be used against you. the rope around his hands. “How could I? You were busy talking about your Weramutt mastery.”

Setting that aside, I pulled out a cast iron skillet. Peering over my shoulder, the hero had Gaylan pinned to the bed. Hands around his throat. Gaylan held the rope end out to me. “Fine. You do it if you’re versed at it.” I dropped the hero’s legs and opened up the wardrobe myself. We then unceremoniously threw him in.

Gaylan’s legs kicked out. Squirring. Arms grasping at the strong arms holding him down. His attack unmoving. Gaylan intended to restrain him. Grabbing the remaining rope, I let it hang out onto the floor before shutting the doors. Closed, I tied it around the two handles.

I rushed over and brought the skillet back. With all the strength I could muster, I swung it against the hero’s skull. “There,” I said, cinching the rope tight against his wrists. “He won’t get out of that so easily.” “That’s going to hold him?” Gaylan asked.

A dull ping rung out. He released his stranglehold on Gaylan and slumped to the wooden floor. My lip curled as I undid his handiwork. We might as well of left him conscious if this was how Gaylan intended to restrain him. “Not forever. Ideally, we’ll have a good start before the might of the Nine Kingdoms comes bearing down on us.”

I dropped the skillet, bouncing for a second, reverberating with a clang. “I was trying to help you,” I said. “You’re not funny.” Gaylan bent down and picked up the discarded belt. It was nothing more than a strip of leather. It was the two blades it sheathed that were the prize.

Gaylan rubbed at his throat. “I thought I was dragon scuz.” Squatting down, I grabbed the hero’s legs. “Well next time we come across a hero’s quest we decide to claim for our own, I’ll let you knock him out with the skillet.” He withdrew the blade from its leather housing. “That’s it?”

I bent over and hurled the rope into his arms. “You were. If I hadn’t saved your sorry arse.” “You try taking that guy on. He has the strength of the nine kingdoms coursing through his veins.” “All I ask. It’s like trying to tussle with a Weramutt. Only have a shot for like fifteen seconds.” “Nicer than the sword you got.”

“You try taking that guy on. He has the strength of the nine kingdoms coursing through his veins.” Gesturing at him, I said, “Those kingdoms didn’t save him from his own skillet.” “You’ve never lasted on a Weramutt for even half that,” I said. “That’s not the point.” Gaylan swung it. I leapt back, nearly tripping over the sack.

Gaylan unwound the coil of rope. “That was a cheap shot. You got lucky.” Gaylan wiped at his brow. “Have so.” “Watch it.”

“Bind him before he gets up and shoves me up your bunghole.” “Ok. Ok. Get his arms would ya?” “I don’t even know if I can call this a sword. It’s like a half chiseled dragon tooth.”

“Yuck.” He did so and we lifted the hero’s prone body. “You’d be lucky to have a dragon tooth.” He jabbed it into its sheath. “What’s in the bag?” I sat on the edge of the bed and

dove my hand into it. I pulled out A map?"

an undershirt, cloak, leggings, and "Sure. How'd he know where he's whack."

pair of undergarments. going otherwise?"

Gaylan's lips thinned. "That's it. A I struck my forehead with my palm.

change of clothes? Doubt the There was a rap on the door.

brigades are giving up their "Leral, are you in there?"

conquered village because this bloke struts in with a clean pair of I shoved my back against the door. Gaylan flopped off the bed

underthings." and peered up from the other side.

"Stow it. I threw the assortment of clothing at him. "There's more than that in here."

I withdrew a pendant, whetstone, room. Are you in there? The wizard stopped by and wanted to

quill, ink, and parchment. meet with you. Forgot to tell you something about that medallion they gave ya."

"Please tell me the medallion is the wizard's calling card, otherwise we got nothing to work with."

"Uh," I said.

"Better figure something out. This "What are you doing?" Gaylan was your idea," I said, gesturing at mouthed.

the wardrobe. He was one to talk. Hiding behind the bed.

"Don't throw this on me. You I heard a groan.

agreed to it." Gaylan and I both honed in on the wardrobe.

"I thought you had an actual plan." "Leral?" The voice outside the door said.

"Thought you knew me better than that." "Uh..." Gaylan had sprung up from the floor and crashed into the door of the wardrobe.

I cast the sack aside and stood up. "Everything alright in there?" The voice asked.

"Let's get out of here. I don't want to be around when he wakes up." I cleared my throat. "Everything is fine. I'll... um... be down in a minute."

"Let me see that bag first." Gaylan I leaned against the wall. Crossing my arms. While it was an attempt at what Leral sounded like it was a foul one at that.

yanked it onto his lap and started rifling through it. Gaylan groaned and cast the hero's belongings aside. "I'm no expert but isn't he supposed to come with a map?"

"That's what you were riding on? their orchestrated plan out of whack." He wouldn't have to worry. Already had that covered. Though I'd rat out Gaylan to the wizard. I wasn't getting within a league of their staff. A developing plan since we were too close to comfort to that staff in Leral's room.

"Down soon," I said.

When I was sure he wasn't going to come barging into the room, I joined Gaylan at the wardrobe.

"Did you hear that?" I hissed "The wizard is here. At the Radiant Mist Inn."

"I know, I know," Gaylan said.

"Pulling at his hair. Maybe we can ask them where to go?"

"What? Are you out of your skewered mind? We aren't asking them anything."

Gaylan shrugged. "Why not? The hero's in the wardrobe. We got his sword and pack."

"It's a useless piece of metal in our hands, a change of clothes, and accessories. We're not equipped for dung."

"Well, when we tell them we've bested its perfect boy, there'll be no choice but to give us the quest."

I started to pace. "Or it'll kill us and whoever Leral's other companion is."

"Whose Leral?"

I punched him.

"Ow."

"The hero we have locked away in this wardrobe."

“Ah.” started. For both us and the hero
 There was a banging from the locked in the wardrobe.
 inside of the wardrobe. “Hello?” “Daw,” Gaylan said as we entered
 Gaylan and I looked at each other. into the hall. “I should have asked
 “You should have hit him harder.” him what color his horse is.”
 “That would have killed him.” “We’ve taken enough from him.”
 “And that would have been a bad Gaylan slung an arm around me
 thing?” and squeezed. “Feels good,
 “Gaylan.” doesn’t it? When do ordinary
 “Would have tied up a loose end.” guys like us ever get to set off and
 There was another strike against see the world?”
 the inside of the wardrobe. “Never cause we aren’t fit for it.”
 Gaylan waved it off. “He’s not “See, if it weren’t for me, you’d
 going anywhere.” be drowning yourself in drink
 While I appreciated his trust in after drink while Legume would
 my rope work, I didn’t expect it to be riding on his valiant steed,
 hold Leral forever. Nor the defeating darkness, and finding
 wardrobe. his true love.
 “I wonder what craftsman “We still aren’t going to find any
 made this sack. I wouldn’t mind of that,” I said. Thanks to us, Leral
 one of my own,” Gaylan said, wouldn’t either.
 stowing Leral’s belongings inside “Take heart, Kalye. Destiny calls.”
 it.
 “Are you serious right now?”
 “It’s a nice sack.”
 “Unbelievable.”
 “Stop yammering and let’s go.”
 I froze. “What about him?” I
 asked, pointing at the wardrobe.
 “He’ll be fine. His friends are
 downstairs.”
 “And we’re just going to walk
 right on out?”
 “Why not? They don’t have a clue
 who we are.”
 He opened the door. “After you.
 Adventure awaits.”
 “You’re going to get us killed one
 of these days, you know that?”
 “Naw. We always make it out just
 fine.”
 This quest was over before it