

28: Dark and forgotten – Armor.

Nashkel is getting prepared for the fair. The inn is fully booked and the grounds outside the town is becoming a small town on itself. Pavilions rise from the lands and the fair is starting. Still everybody is keeping a low profile and the bards won't perform 'till the fair has officially started. The only interesting thing there is to do is watch the contenders practice their swordplay on the court. Zhae and I were watching when an venerable old man started commenting on some flashy moves one fighter made. This man surely knows what he's talking about because he left his guard completely down. It did look flashy though, but by combining this combination head shot, parry, riposte for for the chest, then ducking low to take a shot at the armpit it's more then simple to just step aside and attack him from above in the groin area, he would be chanceless against an able competitor.

Anyway I tried to approach this man, but as usual my looks push him away. Zhae's got better luck though. While Zhae talks about his techniques I suddenly feed the man with Blade's name. Bingo, he recognizes the name and stares at my sword. It turns out that the 12 weapon masters from the circle visited Nashkel a long time ago. Unfortunately the old man can't really give me any useful information besides the fact the Blade he describes is not the Blade I remember. Dashing personality and cheerful nature are not the Blade I remember. What has happened to you my old master...

To kill the time I searched for other adventurers. A lot of them hang around the armorer so I could just hang around and see what's happening. There's a party that's supposed to be the bane of all evil, but they do give me the heeby jeebies. They called themselves the Gardinals. Well, we'll see later.

Grimwald took the time to craft some weapons for the party. I got some dragon breath bolts, a silver dagger, some runes to heal somebody and some strange bolts that are supposed to tumble and do more damage in favor for some range. Grimwald is really at his best in town, he's barricaded himself in a smithy, he doesn't talk to anybody and delivers some serious craftsmanship. I really should thank him for that once he's in a good mood.

About the tournament I'll be quick, I didn't have my day with the bow and the made me fight with a blunted long sword. How can I practice my art with a crude weapon made for the unpracticed grunt? Clearly enough I didn't make it past the first round. I faced one of the Gardinals and I lost. During the festivities at night I challenged him for a rematch with proper steel which he promptly accepted. Next morning I'll show him my true self.

The next morning I felt sorry for myself for drinking to much, my head was pounding when I walked onto the practice court. Luckily the Gardinal wasn't in a better condition. He walked onto the field wearing just a studded lather armor and the show began. Knowing this was a guy used to fight in heavy armor I decided to fight defensively, with just his leather armor I would be able to hit him anyway.

I played around, feigned a lot and never got hit once. I was able to place precision hits several time before I decided to end the game before I would kill him, with one final masterstroke I cut his hamstring and he went down like an ox. Thankfully his friends stopped the fight leaving me as the victor. Watching around I saw that a crowd had gathered to see the fight and that I had made my name here in town. The downed Gardinal was healed by one of his friends and I could hear the deity that was prayed to. It was Gauthar later on Reed told me that that's a really evil god, my hunch was correct about them.

Later that morning I was walking over the fair when I felt something pulling on my soul. I saw a trail of smoke coming from a pavilion on the edges of the fair and again this pulling on

my soul. I decided to go there and Zhae came rushing to this tent as well. Zhae tried to run through the tent while I walked to the opening where a priestly guard tried to put a spell on me. I immediately ran him through and then all hell broke loose.

Zhae was trying to slash an entrance into the tent while somebody used magic inside. I blackened the inside of the tent with my powers and shot a dragon fire bolt inside hoping that the tent would go up in flames so I could run them through when they ran out of the tent. Unfortunately that didn't work and more magic was used inside. Suddenly I felt magic eating at my mind and I came under the influence of something. I felt strangely friendly to the foes inside and entered the tent. I stopped the darkness and saw several stretchers in the tent with Cuura and Felina lying motionless. Reed was engaged in a fight with one of the enemies inside and three more were in combat with Zhae. Under the influence of the evil magics I tried to keep my friends and the enemies from hurting each other. While trying to do that one of the evil priests stabbed Zhae with a vile dagger and for a moment it looked like he was going down, then Reed practiced here strange magics and Zhae was strong as ever again. Then my luck turned for the better and one of the two lesser acolytes hit me thus removing me from the bounds of their magic. Quickly Zhae and I finished the fight with the three priests.

When the fight was over I could see that there were several people on the stretchers being poisoned by water pipes. Cuura and Felina were in a bad shape, Reed seemed to have killed one of the priests she was fighting with, while Zhae didn't seem to recognize anything. Later on we learned that he too had been poisoned by the vile priests. Seizing the opportunity when nobody looked I searched the body of the head priestess, nearly poisoning myself from a broken vial. I retrieved a fine stash of gold some poison bolts two concealing hand crossbows a box filled with the poison they used in the pipes and the poison dagger the head priestess used on Zhae.

After I quickly retrieved the loot I went out to see that the guards were enquiring about some noise they had heard, Rebecca was keeping them on a distance to draw off their attention I disguised myself as one of the priests guarding the tent and the guards took the bait and moved on.

This one was a close call, I'm really happy that we took notice of the evil pull emanating from what turned out to be an evil shrine disguised as one of Sune. How this exactly worked I must ask Reed sometime.

Later on I paid a visit to the armorer and found myself a beautiful armor. Crafted from Shadow beast hide it looks like darkness flows over it. This leather is from the deepest black I've ever seen and it should help me blend into the shadows. As a bonus it's a sort of studded leather, but it weighs not an ounce more than my old trusted leather. On times like this it's good to have friends who are willing to spend the parties gold on a nice armor for me.