

## 30: Master Trap

Our reputation as capable adventurers has soared after our showdown with the Guardinals. Bards were already making songs about these events that shocked the common people on the fair and I was making sure that the bards heard about our efforts. A few glasses of wine for the bards and some good efforts from my side in telling the story and voilà the start of my reputation is being made.

I was sure that with the humiliation I gave Guardinal fighter the morning after the tournament and now this, that somebody would approach me with an interesting job for me. Somebody might have displaced a family heirloom, have unresolved debts with somebody etc etc. But alas, the reputation was not the problem, this small collection of houses they dare call a city is just too small for any of these things. (Or it's just too small for settling scores in such a manner) I was told that I should visit the city of Waterdeep once. One of the bards told me that there was fortune to be made for one with qualities like mine. He was so kind to even mention a few places I should visit and a few names of people I should talk to.

The traders and adventurers were leaving Nashkel quickly after the end of the fair. At the end the common room in my favourite drinking place, was empty besides from the party of Halflings that visited the fair. No doubt they were trying to catch up on the meals they were surely going to miss on the road. I decided to join them and started some small talk. They were familiar with Calimshan and had even visited that place a few years back. Anyway I ended up with one of the Halflings who started talking about Tymora, Lady Luck. He started talking about luck, making your own path, following goals, making your own luck and receiving good luck when you need it most. Before I knew it was past dinner time and the Halfling priest hastily ordered a double meal to make up for the late time.

This Lady Luck or Tymora just sounded right to me. What is better than just working towards your goals and making our own luck by just taking the gamble and trust in your capabilities and a bit of Lady Luck, despite of thinking to much about the dangers ahead. Strangely enough this way of thinking is not one I have always understood. I remember my earlier encounters with grave dangers were I always tried to minimise my exposure to risks, but somehow the last weeks I feel an inner urge dive straight into the danger. Perhaps I'm just a lot more secure about my prowess with Blade's rapier and I start to believe that I hold myself in a nasty battle, or perhaps it is the early sign of the burden of my heritage, to eventually loose myself in a blood frenzied state of utter demonic mayhem. Anyway, only future will tell which one it will be, but for now Tymora just appealed to my own self in a way I couldn't ignore.

The Halfling priest was exited to find out I was very interested in his faith and immediately proposed to make my choice official according to his faith. It turned out that the official dogma, rituals and hymnes of the Tymoran faith are really straight forward. The entire ceremony was done in a few minutes. No hour long prayers like Grimwald's faith, but plain simple understandable words. After the ceremony he asked me if I felt the urge to donate something to the faith and I gave him the intricately carved dices Cuura gave me. Somehow it felt like the correct gift and judging from the approving smile on the Halflings face it was indeed a good one.

Armed with my new faith I returned to the common room and immediately got lucky, I overheard the old venerable fighter and a friend of him talking about the 12 weapon masters again. Apparently they had a meeting place in the vicinity of Nashkel. Even more interesting was the story about a long dead farmers son who tried to find that place and returned almost

cut to pieces. His complete body covered with cuts and bruises. The wounds itself were superficial but the sheer amount of wounds made them more than life threatening. To make things more mysterious the farmer refused to speak about what happened for the remaining years of his life.

I mingled myself in the conversation and retrieved as much information as I could get from the elderly lads. With the information I went to find Zhae and try to find this place. Zhae invited Reed and Kendalan along and together we moved to the east. After travelling through a forest of tree stumps for a few hours, Reeds and Kendalan's mood turned foul. They complained about the destruction of nature and the recklessness of humans to cut down trees without proper forest management. To be honest, the thought of finding another meeting place of the Twelve intrigued Zhae and I much more than a cut down forest, so we continued with a quick pace into a hilly area crossed by a small creek. Kendalan guided us into the correct direction until we arrived at the correct spot. We started to see some shadows forming in our path. The Shadows thickened into a ghostlike figure of an armoured figure carrying a halberd blocking our path. The figure just stood there without moving and was clearly waiting for us to do something.

I approached the shadow figure with caution and it seemed to accept my challenge. I stepped in and tried to mislead the figure into overbalancing so I could score a hit. The figure acted with Lighting speed and slashed me in return. After the hit it didn't seem to pursue me, apparently happy defending the path. Next time I approached more defensively and started a quick dash forward, then a driving high thrust to the shadows throat. I retracted that thrust and changed direction to a low thrust down left. The shadow thought it detected my feint and almost started the parry for the downward thrust before I even started. Alas for the shadow because that was the real feint. I rolled my blade under the halberd hooking it, rolled down to the ground on his left and came up for the thrust into the armpit.... To find nothing, the shadow was gone.

We continued moving and after a few steps we were stopped by yet another shadow. This time it was an heavily armored figure armed with a spiked chain. Zhae took the challenge and was quickly driven backwards. It seemed impossible to approach the shadow without being hit. Zhae approached again, this time taking a minor hit but he closed in on the shadow. Still it took another few tried to find out the strategy to deal with a foe using this technique. The secret was to close in almost face to face, while accepting the first hits. Then brutally attacking with techniques akin to breaking through doors. When Zhae found that out the shadow disappeared, just like mine.

Next stop was the swirling shadow of the twin scimitar lady described by the venerable old man in Naskell. This must be the beautiful lady that was the sparring partner of Blade! Even though we were looking at a shadow we could see the inhuman beauty of the lady. I can't explain why, but somehow I think she is inhuman or even demonic. The lady stood still, her scimitars pointing tips down, waiting for someone to accept the challenge. I took the challenge and moved closer. The shadow burst into motion, twin scimitars whirling around in lightning fast arcs and whirls. She moved so fast it was difficult to follow her individual moves. The only strategy I could think of was too approach her full defensively and trying to mislead her into dropping her defences for just a few seconds. I moved in, buckler ready, not even trying to strike her with my blade. I prepared myself for the whirling blades and in they came. Block low, block on the buckler, block twice with my rapier, jump high to avoid the scimitars in the low sweep to my legs. Then before it even started it stopped, the shadow stopped, looked at me and brushed my cheek with her hand, then disappeared into thin air.

What happened there! Was this to show that I had done good approaching her like this, or was it something else. I must say that it felt out of place and even more it felt very intimate. I don't know what to think of this! This whole history between the Scimitar lady and Blade intrigues me. It seemed they were connected in a certain way, but Blade never spoke about her. The stories about Blade also describe a different Blade that I knew. What happened to him is the question I need to figure out. Perhaps I should try to find this scimitar lady, perhaps she has some answers.

This shadow was the last of the tests and we could move to the meeting place of the masters, this time placed in a cave. Getting in to the cave turned out to be a problem because it was trapped with dangerous slime. I nearly lost my boot, thankfully Kendalan remembered that alcohol killed this fungi. Reed was so good to clear the entrance using her seemingly unlimited supply of fireballs and at last we could enter the cave. This time the practise court wasn't a clear even space like the one near the lake. This one was composed of boulders, rocks, holes and all sorts of obstacles to endanger the footing of anyone fighting on top of it. Zhae and I could see chips nicks on the floor proving that the masters had fought here repeatedly. Like last place the practice court was surrounded by 12 rocks, the masters could sit and watch each other.

After a quick search of the cave we found it completely empty and because we didn't want to spend the night here, we decided to return to Nashkell. On the way out we were ambushed by a wyvern. Fortunately Kendalan spotted the beast, allowing us to prepare. A well coordinated attack dropped the Wyvern without too much trouble. We distracted the creature with ranged attacks, then ran out to attack with our blades. My first attack was placed with deadly precision severing the nerves running to the tail and taking the poisonous stinger out of the fight with one blow.