

Slow, quiet, aware. The slaying of a basilisk was not something to be done with the ill sense of valiance or pride, those two traits were the greatest folly of men and would send them hurtling toward an early grave entirely absent of the glory that inspired them to dig it themselves.

Tharfiel's foot moved as slow as a sloth's, sinking into the soft soil of the marsh with the precision of a hawk eye but with the speed of feathers falling from high tower walls.

A prince, an heir young and dashing to the Imperial throne, had been slaughtered with impunity. Throat torn open and body feasted on by a serpentine beast at the dear age of ten and three. His party of five of the kingdom's finest royal knights came back with but one of them, the others left behind so that at least one of their own would be able to escape. Shortly after, the knight in question was found hanging from a noose in his personal quarters, his sworn oath broken and his pride in shambles it was only a matter of when.

The basilisk was said to be long, longer than 4 horses with a tail that landed like a whip. Sharp teeth that could shear flesh from bone and scales that were nearly as thick as a tree. Worst yet, it was said to be the most foul of creatures, tainted with dragon blood that surges from its mouth like the fires of hell, sending even the most loyal screeching into the depths of hell.

Tharfiel's body was crouched, nearly hunched over in his stealthy approach. As he continued onward the creeping green flora covered the marsh floor, he could no longer see his own feet under the weeds and ivy. He did not know where it was hiding but he could hear the buzzing of flies and more importantly he could smell the terse shift in the air, something dead was nearby. Several spoiled and maggot bloated bodies were resting somewhere nearby, half eaten most like. Unidentifiable most like. The roots of long bloated trees slowly savoring the rotting bodies as they soak and decay in the bowels of the dirty muck water

His chainmail shifted uncomfortably and his throat grew dry as he saw something glittering in the bed of leaves and plants. Instinctively he reached for his sword and planted his foot down into the soil but as his eyes grew more focused and the subject of his nervous apprehension remained unmoving he realized with a sullen clarity what he was gazing upon.

It has the mutilated head of his dear prince.

The beast had torn open his cheek either with claw or with fang and in doing so gave the prince a bleeding red smile revealing how far the teeth retreated to the skull, eyes frozen wide staring upwards at a sky not to be seen by the dead. Tharfiel could only hope that the death had been sudden so that the young royal did not suffer though if what he'd heard from the stories were not entirely fictitious then that was an impossibility and he had died in the shock of being slowly devoured. He was about to take another step when his blood went well and truly cold.

The roots moved. No. One root moved, it slipped into the water. Tharfiel heard a slow hissing noise, not like that of a threatened snake but rather the sound that a burning hot sword might make as it's dipped into an ice cold bucket, and rose his shield without seeing his prey. If he had not raised it at that exact moment, he would not have lived to see what had made the noise.

He saw a blur, and realized in haste that he'd been seen, perhaps from the very beginning. A blinding blaze of light shot forth and his shield was nearly knocked from its focus, he let out a yell as the flaming basilisk breath forced his left arm to brace against its impossible weight. He could feel the heat slip through the burning shield as his arm draped in chainmail began to blister and peel.

He slammed the shield forward and heard an utterly inhuman shrill cry as it recoiled, its tail end whirled and slapped against the water like a whip sending a spray of water into the air. Garfiel

saw his chance for vengeance, for his fallen comrades devoured by the awful twisting serpent and for his chance to avenge his prince and so he let out a roar of righteous fury and with his right hand slammed his sword into the body of the terrible serpent. In a wild retaliation Tharfiel's heavy body was thrown back and his sword arm scourged as the serpent's tail sheared through his flesh. He sat up quickly still grasping his sword, his eyes locked on the serpent.

It was bleeding, he could not tell how deep the cut was in the flurry of action but he took deep satisfaction in wounding the creature which legend told could take cannon fire and still fight with such fury to make Mars himself look a frightened girl. The Basilisk was staring at him too, the hit it had landed was a fierce one though through the adrenaline of battle he had not realised it.

Had he not been wearing chainmail his arm might have been lost to the feral beast.

The dread beast's eyes glittered with a cold yellow, this was a monster no doubt. Its mouth opened again and stayed as such as it took its time slowly approaching.

It no longer had the element of surprise on its side and Tharfiel knew that this time one of them was going to perish. There would be no retreating. He planted his feet into the water and braced himself as the hissing grew to a crescendo.

It lunged forward and the blazing light hit the shield once more, he stood firm. Better than last time. He heard the wood crackle and snap, and before he could react, a chunk of it fell out under the weight of the blaze.

His arm was wreathed in flames, the metal chains upon his arm began to melt into his boiling flesh and meld together in a twisting agony. He could see clearly, he could see now where he could strike. Through the pain of hellfire they met each other's gaze. He saw that massive yellow eye and saw a path from which victory would be gouged and cut and torn away from the hell serpent. He thrust forward with all of his might and caught the creature at the edge of its eye. It threw its head backwards but Tharfiel followed it and with his arm still smoldering he wrapped it around the Basilisk's head and began to push the sword down with all of his weight. It tossed its head back and forth as it tried to wrestle Tharfiel off, slamming him into the water and dragging him across the muddy floor even then Tharfiel didn't release his grasp.

The blade sank deeper and in the water he could hear its muffled screams as blood began to fill the small marsh pool. A single thought crossed his mind as it gave a struggle only known by creatures soon to be dead.

How satisfying.

There was a sudden give. And his blade sank deep. The red filled the Basilisk's lair plentifully and as Tharfiel rose from the wet graveyard he took a deep breath of air. His left arm was roasted and he'd be lucky if he'd get away with only an amputation. Still, the price was nothing to pay when compared to the massive task that was slaying the awful creature that stripped the prince of his life. He took a deep breath and began to collect what was left of his lord's body.