

The Tail of a Tiny Dragon

Once Upon a Time ... Deep in an Elven forest, there was a waterfall. Hidden

behind the waterfall was a small cave. And in that cave there lived a tiny baby kobold. Zz'akk was so young he had another name, and another family. For in this moment he was a kobold. And, like many of his tribe he was red with reddish-brown highlights and a tan underbelly and he wanted nothing more from life than to live peacefully in the cave that was his home.

But being a young hatchling of not yet two years old he knew little of the world other than eating, sleeping, exploring, and playing. It was one such time he was exploring deep in the cave, in parts too small for the older kobolds that the settlement was set upon by Orc slavers. Kobolds yipped, yapped, and tried to run, but eventually all were caught and taken very very far away.

All but the littlest one; for he had wandered just far enough to be unseen by the slavers. And in the swift snatching and slaughter that ensued he did not even know what had happened. Even if he had been close enough to witness the horror, he would have only understood fear, sadness, and tears.

When he came back through the small places, everyone was gone. He wandered alone in the deep parts of the cave confused. The first day he slept reasonably soundly, for he had his choice of bedding piles. And with everyone gone there were plenty of fresh fruit around to keep his belly full. But as the days turned to a week the food was gone. He began to know hunger, and with no other kobolds around he had become all too familiar with loneliness. As he began to wander out of the cave towards the forest he quickly began to know fear, as corpses lay rotting, or half eaten; torn apart by beasts. He quickly retreated away from the entrance, back to the familiar comfort of the cave.

More and more he spent his time crying; hungry, alone, and afraid. Until one morning a patrolling group of Elves heard his cries above the crashing waterfall.

Kobold No More

... "Be cautious Anyara. I don't know where that cry is coming from, nor what kind of creature is making it." Trelane said, motioning for the hunting party to stop. While the other four stopped, hid, and readied weapons, Anyara replied, "If you were a parent you would know that is the scared cry of a young creature in need of help." She led the party cautiously forward.

Checking the tracks and corpses, Trelane continued, "Dead kobolds. The Orcs definitely came this way. Less than a week ago. They would be clear of our lands by now."

Anyara pressed forward to the cave entrance. There she found a lone kobold thinned from starvation, crying in a bed in a corner. "There there little one." She said, quietly putting her bow down to approach. The young kobold was too weak to move away, but quieted his cry to a whimper as she began to sing softly. "Oh you are so very little." She said cautiously and carefully petting its side.

"The others all seem gone or dead", said Drax as he returned from scouting the cave. The young kobold had quieted enough Anyara could begin to feed him a few berries. He could barely eat he was so weak. He took only a few berries before passing out into a quiet still sleep. After a moment she bundled him up.

"You can't intend to bring that back to the village." Drax challenged as Anyara began picking up the little kobold bundle for travel. "It is a helpless child on the verge of starvation. You know very well it was lucky to live this long alone. That is surely a sign the gods watch over him." Drax scoffed. "The gods do not care about those vermin." Trelane placed a cautioning hand on Drax's shoulder and said, "He may not be so without his tribe." Walking past them both Anyara said, "Exactly so. And I am hunt mistress, so it is I who determines what becomes of the lost or wounded beasts." She gently placed the sleeping bundle onto the saddle sack atop her bear mount. "This one will be under the watch of my daughter. She is ready for her Trial of Mercy. This little one will make an interesting test."

The hunting party turned away from the cave, and from that moment on the little one was a kobold no more.

The Little Dragon

... Nelyani was a young Elf of 17, of thin build and blond hair, which when braided, as it was now, reached to just the bottom of her shoulder blades. She was reading stories in the light of the study in her treehouse home, as she often did on Thursday. She had just settled in with her dinner meal when she saw her mother coming in to the stable below.

"Nelyani," called Anyara quietly so as not to wake the sleeping bundle in her arms. "There is someone here you must meet." "Oh?" Inquired Nelyani, closing the storybook and leaving it on the windowsill couch. She walked out to the hall and peered over the banister. Anyara gracefully assented the spiral staircase, still speaking softly. She said, "This little one is for you. He will serve as your Trial of Mercy." Nelyani approached. She peeked curiously at the sleeping bundle. "But he will be no ordinary challenge," Anyara continued. "For this little one is no mere beast." "Oh?" Asked Nelyani, as she peeked more closely at the bundle. Anyara carefully moved the wrapping to reveal the sleeping bundle's head.

Nelyani gasped quietly with delight. "A baby dragon?" Anyara gently placed the bundle in her arms. "Of sorts. This one is the last of his tribe. This morning was his last as a normal kobold. There are no others in our lands that we know of. Do you know what that means?" "I'm not sure." Nelyani replied.

As they slowly descended the stairs together and headed to the main chamber Anyara explained. "Trials of Mercy are about tending the physical wounds, and after that the emotional, so that the beast returns to its normal temperament." Nelyani added, "And if the creature cannot recover I must give it a merciful death." "Exactly so," confirmed Anyara.

The bundle wiggled a little in his sleep. "Oooh. I don't know that I could, he is so very adorable. What is wrong with him? I see no blood or wounds." Anyara moved close. She pointed, "See here, near the eyes. That is caused by incessant crying. And here, the wrists, and here at the shoulders, that much bone is a sign of starvation."

Nelyani hugged the bundle gently, continuing to cradle the head carefully. "Then I will be sure to feed him, and hug him when he cries, until he is all better again." "But it will be more." Anyara said, as she set her bow on the rack and began to take off the outer layers of armor, settling into a high back chair near the fire. "This little one, much like a dragon, is intelligent. This trial will be more than just a physical and emotional recovery. Since he is too young to know how he would have behaved normally, you must teach him how we would behave."

"I understand." Nelyani said, settling onto some skins that served as a padded seat near the fire. "As the only daughter of our noble house I will do my best to earn my name and make you proud, mother." She opened the bundle a bit more to pet the young dragon as he slept now that he was safely cradled in her lap.

And as the last light of the sun began to set and shadows crossed the room Zz'akk blinked and opened his eyes. Nelyani smiled down at him, "Hello little one." He looked up, and asked, "Mamma?"

The Trial of Mercy ...

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The Shadow of the City ...

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Age: 19

Alignment: Chaotic good

Appearance; Red with reddish brown spots and a tan underbelly. Somewhat frail form.

Eyes: Violet

Physicality; Curious, often smiles and quirks his head 45 degrees.

Personality; Shy in unfamiliar or unknown situations, curious when feeling comfortable. Zz'akk will often refer to himself in the 3rd person due to feeling like an outsider.

Clothing / equipment; This small person is dressed quite fancy. He is wearing basic studded leather armor, but that is where the basics end. On his feet are specially made knee high cuffed boots. Across his chest is a bandolier with hand crossbow bolts and a few daggers. At his right hip a hand crossbow. At his left, a storybook protected by the belt case sling that keeps it in place. Over the armor is a dark brown duster. And riding on his back, what would be a small lute to an average sized person. Atop his head is a dark purple wide brim bard's hat with red feathers coming from its fold on the right side.

Favored deities;

Corellon Larethian, elf deity of art and magic. For this is where the stories come from.

Bahamut, dragon god of good. For if a dragon made Zz'akk it must have been a good one.

Moonshadow Tribe History

1800 years go the Moonshadow family settled in what is now the area where the Moonshadow tribe lives. In the 150 years that followed four other families joined them; Darkclaw, Tinderbranch, Goldleaf, and Silverwind. In the 250 years following that a dozen other families joined, yet it was these first five who established the core of the settlement and its support structure in terms of hunting grounds, gardens, and treetop homes. So it was agreed these five would form a council to rule the settlement, with a member from each house on a seat.

Since different families came from different tribes, each with their own traditions it was decided that each family would decide on a trial for the citizenry and those trials are still performed to this day.

Trial of Ascension

The most political of trials, this takes place when a noble family line has ended and a council seat opens, or in the rare case a noble family's morals and intent is in question.

If the family has been changed the remaining council members will judge the evidence. If the evidence is proven just and valid the family loses their nobility (and if severe enough may receive banishment).

Following that there is a period of two seasons where other families petition the city folk for votes. At the end of the period the votes are counted and the top three families are elevated. In the following season the members of the families are watched. True behavior and intent is determined. And the council votes which one of the three shall ascend. (In the event of a tie the one with the highest popular vote is given the seat.)

Trial of Belonging

This trial is given to any outsider born, or raised, in the city. It is extremely rare this trial happens, as there are so few who qualify.

The Trial of Belonging tests if someone's heart is truly of Moonshadow.

The trial involves someone who is coming of age (typically in young adulthood). The person must set out of the city to adventure for an undetermined amount of time. This can take months, but in some cases has lasted years. When they are at the point where their heart can settle in a land they will either settle, proving they do not truly belong with Moonshadow, and henceforth always only be a visitor. Or they will pass on settling and return. They present the tales of their adventures to the court and citizenry; which if accepted ends with a celebration, and gift of a family name and place.

Trial of Forgiveness

When one party has their honor or integrity challenged to a damaging degree in front of their peers, they may make amends through both parties agreeing to a Trial of Forgiveness.

When on the trial the offending party often accompanies the offended. This is agreed upon at the time of the trial start by both parties and cannot be changed for the duration. The offender must complete three requests by the offended. These are most often emotionally difficult tasks. Sometimes it can be simple, such as preparing and serving a meal, or walking through town naked. But difficult tasks, such as traveling to other cities and establishing trade or storefronts are not unheard of.

The offended can request anything, but tasks which are dangerous or deadly can be refused. And, during any request fulfillment the offender is expected to be under the offended's protection.

The trial will last no longer than a period of 15 years, and completion of the tasks means prior relationship status is restored. Failure to complete the tasks results in extreme shame for the offender, and they are often labeled as outsiders.

Needless to say that this trial is more often done in good spirits than true recourse to serious offense, as someone truly offended would do their best to disassociate with the offender or seek outright revenge.

Trial of Mercy

Every young elf in the noble families does this trial. (Typically in what is considered late childhood.) It is thought lower families do not need this for several reasons, but any are allowed to take part, and it is often after this trial a young elf can take their family's name.

The Trial of Mercy reveals a person's true path. One path is not considered better or worse than another, but it is believed no matter what your desire you will always be true to your path.

The trial involves a wounded creature, most often a beast of livestock. The creature is to be brought back to health in a way that it resumes its old lifestyle, or at least what it can depending on the wound. If it cannot, or does not heal, it may need to be given a merciful death. How the young one tends the creature, how and if they recover, how and if they are killed, will all reveal the young one's path. At the end of the trial there is a review before the council in open court.