

2nd - Magnamancy

The sun went down beyond the horizon and painted the landscape in blood red. Blood! As if he hadn't seen enough of that the last months.

His glance wandered around on the battlefield. Finally it was over. After three month, silence came back into the vale for the first time. But it wasn't a peaceful silence. It was frightening.

He shuddered and was about to go back the way he came from, but he had to walk to the other side of the valley. The smell of death normally would have been hardly endurable, but he got used to it over time. This, however, didn't apply for the sight presented to him. Dead soldiers of both sides were lying next to each other, looking at him with empty, vacant eyes, still clutching their weapons in death. He began to shiver even more.

Involuntarily his hand rose towards a pocket of his vest and opened it. His fingers fumbled around until he found...

... a small, smooth stone, tied carefully to a bit of string. He looked down at his hand, the stone shining a brilliant blue even in the growing dark.

His shivering slowed as a warmth different from the growing cold began to flow through him, and he lowered the stone to again survey the battlefield.

He could see friends, lying bent and broken, amongst the carnage, and his stomach fell. He'd lived with these people, argued with them, joked with them. They had all set out this morning confident of victory. Victory! How could we all have been so naive?!

We'd thought they had been walking out to meet an opposing army of savages of lesser numbers. An easy win, surely. In reality, we had marched out into the valley, and nothing was there to meet us. It was already too late.

The supposed savages had allied themselves with another army that was supposed to be on our side, and out of nowhere the members of that army amongst our ranks had begun attacking us. As we'd struggled to regroup and fight back, the savages had come from all sides with weapons and monsters unlike anything we'd ever seen. We'd all fought with our best, but it wasn't a war.

It was a massacre.

He looked over his shoulder at a gigantic beast's carcass. That massive, deformed creature had attacked from the left, ploughing through everyone and everything, it's eyes ablaze with a primal rage.

He'd seen it tear apart friend and foe, and in an instant of his own rage for his fallen friends, he'd charged it as it lunged at him. His katana pierced through the beast's upper jaw as the beast's teeth sunk into his shoulder. The momentum of the beast carried it over him before he could get away, and then it all went black.

When he came to, he found his armor, despite being cracked and nearly broken, supporting the bulk of the dead monster's weight. After realizing he could still move, he struggled, barely managing to get out from under the thing, and retrieved his sword as he looked around. It was all over, there was no one else.

He looked away from his friend's corpses, and began to slowly make his way forward. The dark of the night grew, The little light there was, was coming from the nearly full moon peeking through the clouds. The sickly light convulsed the scene before him as he walked into something he'd not even seen in nightmares. The dead bodies, their eyes, they seemed to scream in pain, in rage, they wanted to hurt, to kill as they had been...

He wrenched his eyes away, looking to his side. More monstrous carcasses... we're they really dead? Did it just move? The shadows were playing tricks, they had to be, everything was dead...

A shrill cry erupted from behind him. He jumped forwards, turning quickly but a little unbalanced as he landed. He couldn't see anything beyond the silhouettes of the dead warriors and beasts in the abysmal light. He blinked. A bead of sweat ran down the side of his face. His hand fell and tightly gripped the hilt of his sword that hung by his side. Nothing moved, the eerie silence felt heavy on his ears. Did he imagine it? For a moment, nothing happened.

Again shrill cry, and then another, both high pitched and wailing like the first, broke out either side of him. His eyes widened in terror as from between the dead bodies glowing yellow eyes came into view, shining in the small light from the moon. He drew his sword as a cloud moved, letting the moon illuminate the valley.

The creatures we're hunched over, almost crawling along the ground. He could hear the snarls now, the bright white fangs bared... He turned quickly, his shaking almost breaking his footing, as he swung at the monster that grew close. He missed... it jumped back, it's face contorted in rage...

There was more of them. As the one already visible grew closer, others came out from behind the dead the dead and darkness, too many... He screamed at them as he spun himself in a tight circle, his sword arcing through the air, driving them back, but not enough...

His balance wavered too much, breaking under the strain. He hit the ground, the wind was knocked out of him. His sword bounced out of his hand, he reached for it, but it went too far. He was going to die, like he should have, along with his friends...

Amidst the cries of the monsters, the thudding of their feet drawing close, his own strained breathing, he heard something else hit the ground.

His eyes looked down. A small, brilliantly blue stone sat on the dirt and crushed grass.

"... check this rock out." He'd remarked, holding the stone up for her to see. "Wow... it's beautiful." She'd replied back, smiling. He'd let his eyes catch hers, and then had gazed back at the stone, smiling himself. "Yeah, it is. It reminds me of you." She'd laughed, catching him in an embrace...

The warmth, more powerful than his fear, more powerful than anything surged through him. His shaking slowed, it stopped... He couldn't hear anything, no, yes he could, he could hear his breathing. He struggled upright and looked around. Where had the monsters gone? The dead soldiers... the monstrous carcasses...

He got to his feet, listening intently. There was nothing. Nothing moved. Not the slightest whisper of noise came from anything besides himself. There wasn't any sign of them, or any sign of anything having been here since the army's battle.

The sword still sat where it had fallen and surveyed the he blade, and then looked at the valley. The dead, his dead friends...

He drove the sword into the ground, so it firmly stuck upright. His hand reached into his pocket and pulled out the bit of string, which must have come loose after all this time... Closing his eyes tightly as tears ran down his cheeks, he began to mutter...

... he stood back up and turned away from his sword, everything he wanted to say to his friends had been said and left with his sword, along with a small blue stone, tied tightly to a bit of string...

He didn't have to die, someone back home needed him more than his friends did...