



Listen to your mother

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Action/adventure, Fable, Magic

Life is a very hard life in Talimast. Seemingly, the cold could not allow any or very little indeed to live under the harsh wind upon the great shores of the eastern sea. What creatures indeed, as who would live the jagged rims, leaving the sun or billowed clouds behind for the bitter salted mists. This was the look of children to the taller man's jaded eye like broken rocks to chatter the little teeth of her Halflings. Unrelenting and wandering ever to pass by such a thing and yet one could say when these little folk share the brunt of her cutting waves. On ship or by sea they live the land and row to cut and rake these tasteless rocks. One could say is the Halfling's heart is alone over the cliff held sea, where were her tower and a flame to bring the lost home.

One could say many things of these creatures, or their being over hill and dale. There comes a time solely set aside for the purpose of just relaxing. To rest like these merry little men and find comfort in doing so as often in each season, every day. A summer's good year or folly in the winter's unrest is that one must simply prioritize one's goals.

Nothing of such dire needs or wordless inquiries did cross the mind though as one particular little Halfling set to finding his piece of heaven as he set out before this new day's dawn. The honest ware of his bare, padded feet were unaffected by the coming of the year's winter. So soon was this to be and Drylo's stride and painless steps upon the frosted stone, neither bothered him or set worry of how bleak this place could truly be for one not so suitable to its sharp entirety.

"Much emphasis is stressed on achieving some sort of achievement that is," Drylo heard his father begin to chatter to whom, Drylo was unsure as his curious head merely watched the old Halfling from afar. His voice trailing behind the old sheep farmer that continued to laugh yet with his seriousness held his son as he walked

out into the barely visible morning, “this will make any certain individual quite aware of such quality and having a special and noteworthy cause,” Balengo continued on.

Drylo tried to listen to more but he was headed himself, toward the coast and his father’s speech would ever continue even without his attention or presence. The young Halfling was merely at a loss and picked up his pace away from the darker sea. He did not think of anything much in any great way but instead simply as so seemingly unaffected Halflings were. Yet here the time does come in every Halfling’s life when even existence its self is in question. Truly, anything is and has become to be a sole way for him to contemplate. These things turning circles in Drylo’s head found him fast upon the sea’s greater shores. The overhanging cliffs, an echo still and for the most part to this world, began to fade to gray. The dampness permeated everything as to this very essence was the body’s innermost workings.

Something unseen and unheard, with and beyond such feelings to Drylo was felt all the more as the pain twinged from this outward influence. He continued to climb, now to the top of the tallest cliff beside the Parumgan Sea. The Daigatar coast stretched almost endlessly south and further north, beyond the young Halfling’s reaching eyes. This was the highest point above the city of Talimast as down the coast Drylo could not even imagine what lay beyond. Both ends of this place became hazed if there was ever such a thing.

It seemed as though the boy had come to this very place and point, every day from the very first summers of his granted thought and Drylo held, no doubt, that he would leave such a place. The sun finally began to peer out over the eastern chop led waters with summer’s final curtains. This was the beginning to befall the year and winter was fast to the horizon of Drylo’s glimmering eyes.

The great orb of life sustaining light from its once clear blue skies was still heavy pulling away the new gloom from their greyed hearths and Drylo’s appreciation of how this made him feel, made this whole existence worth the while. The air rolled in a bit cleaner than late of the climbing bluffs as Talimast sat transfixed between the evening’s last folds to the morning. This could be seen roaring in on the eastern waves like a transaction of fulfillment between the Halfling’s movements. Drylo’s legs folded and stretched upon the chilly rocks. He let the cooler, wet air sting on his tired, naked feet. Scratching under his arm as the obvious water came in hard to let him wonder to the danger beneath its black rolling flesh. This lay unknown to him in a rough, sensual sway. It stung in upon Talimast’s unmoving docks as the woodwork took on the morning’s mist. A feeling of relief spread open like a bleeding brain of jellyfish that melted into the shore’s drying sand. As if anything beyond this simpler feel to pleasure was devoid within them and this was simply left to the new

day's wind.

The black greys of the eastern sea folded into a new day with no shining blues out against the placid bluffs. The two shades becoming one as clumps of moss and chunked stone fluttered about the loosening rocks and Drylo's eyes opened to this growing storm. He barely wavered, letting the mounding earth and loose dirt fall from the cliff's edge into the churning swirls of black water below. Peering down now on his round belly, the Halfling kept still with only a sigh to the debris that took under fast. His imagination to the floe and color floated as if he was higher, still over the surface like one of the calling gulls that wafted down to snatch a fish where other things like the sharks and other creatures refused to dine.

Drylo stretched and continued his gaze with wonder past the blubbery gourmet. The distant shore so frighteningly below, he heard a voice calling his name to the far north. The Halfling stood tall looking back from the gray sky's reaching tendrils. Coming into view was his sister, and only then, she called for him to come.

Evynta was slow and hobbled with a bad leg and was nearing her seventy-eighth summer along the coast of Talimast. No longer with the youth that still held in her kind eyes.

As long as Drylo could remember, his sister had always been the one to run fastest and beat him at such games but the talk of such never came and was left to the past. The darker thoughts faded away from the pressing air as her caring face came closer.

"You are a fool to sleep out here in such weathers," Evynta said with a disappointed smile as she looked out to the sullen sea, "you do not answer when I call and it seems useless to convince any reason in that thick head of yours."

Drylo sighed again as he thought to the hypnotizing waters and even though the Halfling could not swim, the dizzy sway almost broke him to jump and feel the coldness take him under the deep currents.

"You're not even listening now," Evynta began with a laugh but she simply walked to her brother and slung the thick blanket over his shoulders as they began to walk back for home.

Drylo's mind just roamed as they went and the next good thought only came as they sat before this morning's warmer fireplace. He sat upward now with a squirm as he thought himself a rock and leaned and shook the coldness from his bones.

Evynta had also carried a basket in from outside and Drylo dangled as he watched her begin to pin up clothes and sheets to dry over the warmth of the nearby flames, "Don't you even get hungry out there or simply alone, always staring at the sea," Evynta asked him as she wiped the sweat from under her white tied bonnet.

"I eat bugs and half chewed fishies and after a quick splash to the bottom of the sea I play cards with the sharks," Drylo said with a gulp as he tapped his numb toes to the brick floor.

"Well besides such fruitless adventure, you should be learning a trade," Balengo added as they watched their father now come into the room with a serious grin to his son's dropping attention.

"What do you want sister," Drylo interrupted for he knew his father would continue this speech, "what would you say if the Talimast navy came and shot at their own shores?"

"Have you brought any wares from farmer Gweloch," Evynta added quickly as she saw the confusion on their father's face to which Drylo only shrugged with a smile as Balengo scratched his chin to think, "if you want to forget just that, well don't. We will need the extra goods before the storm comes in so go and get you to Gweloch's."

"Do you mean to say that Talimast would... would do what," Balengo piped up as the thought sat sour to his mind now, "I ... I'm not getting what you mean," his father was stumped to which Drylo had hoped just for that.

"Why, take cannonade and rumble the whole of fleets straight at the mountain side," Drylo said with a hop as he began to enact this great battle with his short arms lifting the blanket from his shaking shoulders, "increasingly, rumbling," he muttered to which his sister and father now watched with wide eyes, "the tall men ambling to take sight on this very land. Their swords from hilt and the winds called for blood, and the mounting troops and hounds hunted every grain of sand to the shores."

Evynta's eyes grew wider and began to flutter as Drylo's huffing breaths kept them in awe. Balengo started to speak but stopped and brought his head back to his son's sudden movement. Drylo said nothing as he brought

his hand back to rub at his whiskered chin to which his father then started to speak again but was cut short once more from Drylo's pointing fingers.

"..And then what happens," Evynta spoke between the two and their silent bursts of twitching movement.

"What do you mean," Drylo said as though this caught him unaware. His twiddling fingers fidgeting within the rims of his nostrils now.

"Well go on then, tell us what happens next as I am sure I haven't the slightest clue of what this all is getting to," Drylo's father managed to pipe in ignoring his son's spastic hand gestures, "or better yet what about... No," Balengo said, losing his thought, "a trade, yes. You will be a fine sailor is that what you mean, though I am sure the fact you can't swim, or can you? It wouldn't hinder that at all."

"..you best go to farmer Gweloch's and collect some wares," Evynta interrupted now having felt odd for falling into her brother's stories to which she knew held no sense and he only spoke them aloud to bait their father. Balengo's crinkled, white eyebrows aimed oddly to his daughter but Evynta's stern face kept the silence leaving Drylo so he could not begin another argument as Evynta slapped a big, empty basket into his flailing arms.

"but," Drylo chirped as Evynta pushed him out the door, but all the audience he now met was the cold chilly air and the hard wood door closing behind him, "I didn't get to eat," he added loudly and to what end though the door swung back open and his sister tossed both his warmer coat and two cold, unbuttered rolls into the wicker basket he sluggishly held. Drylo's mind continued to turn as he began to walk defiantly away. The thoughts of yelling threatening remarks out over the howling wind just sat for a bit until his mind lost all interest in such things. It all seemed quite preposterous to him though as the cold airs began to play trickily into his pointing ears. He continued to amble along about the rock twisted paths without really a thought or a care for the cold to which his coat still lay in the bottom of the basket. This more than silence and words which drifted from him if ever they were thoughts. Drylo could not tell or realize even as the scenery failed to make any impressions upon his blank led mind.

"What do you want?" Drylo heard a garbled call as the voice of farmer Gweloch echoed from up the next bend and the smell first of Gweloch's pigs made more of a harm than the old sea dog's cackling moans, "would you care if I din' bring ya food, is that it," Gweloch sourly called out as if a crowd was sure to be gathering or for the neighbors which lived further down cared to listen. Instead was a large sow who gave only squeals and haphazard grunts to the old man's crying voice, "no, no I do not care if the food is warm or tha sky is being

blue, but the mud is still fine an' dandy...? So late and still early for spring," Gweloch loudly cooed as he brashly mocked the unconcerned pig.

Drylo's smiling face was lost, though as he neared the oddly pair, and for Gweloch as blind as a rock bat and doubtfully heard much through his grime filled ears.

"..No, no... No! You wouldn't, would ya damnable beast, sow, I don't care," Gweloch squealed back at himself and then faded into sighing mumbles.

Drylo only mused to watch the giant pig begin to roll and mush into the muck, which Gweloch pressed out for her. The sheer size of the creature could be marked by the countless pig shaped holes throughout Gweloch's rotted white fences.

"This was all good," the old man began to mumble though his tone had changed some to which Drylo stopped and listened as a short rasp came from Gweloch's sinking state, "rot and worry, that's all you take me for," he spoke near anger though no feelings came past his spider webbed hairs upon his shrill face, "I only wanted to be whole, joyful and it was with you.. Living in this hell and brought out with your smile, one could only feel and do just that it was, and now it is hell again... and I am cold."

Drylo managed to shuffle a bit, but could not muster any words though for Gweloch, the old man wiped his anger like the stinging tears that did not come. His face only straightened with a brush from his pale hand.

"Your breathing is loud enough to rouse a slumbered army," Gweloch let ring his shifting voice as he turned a blind eye toward the dumbfounded boy, "and you wouldn't be listening to the pig again, my child," he coughed with a crumbling shake of his veining fist for the familiar youngster to come forth.

"Aren't you cold... out here," Drylo chirped for he could think of nothing else to say as he noticed the man's pain still clung to his wrinkled chin.

"..Are you heck? I've asked her to feed herself but I think this one ignores me," Gweloch hummed as he spoke of the lone pig who no doubt was ignoring all but the scraps of food clung into the mud, "and I'm used to it, am used to a lot of things that I never wanted use for, but the ground is parched and this bitch don't cry," he cackled with a hiss and a pointing finger up at the overhead clouds.

"That's useful, I guess," Drylo added, still trying to think what he actually came here for, but with a few more

cackles from Gweloch, like 'indeed' and random snorts, the boy was quick to follow the man who drifted now away toward his humble home. Drylo felt misplaced here, standing at the door of his old friend's quaint little home. He felt many things this day and all of them were wrong. The dark air now mixed with the seaside breezes that kept the Halfling in sway, as only with a snort from Gweloch did Drylo then come in.

"Something ain't right with you today, lad," old Gweloch huffed as he shuffled through a stock of his meager wares, "I don't know a thing but between you and that pig out 'dare..."

Drylo was not listening as his eyes darted here and there until they settled to the old man's wooden ships and then the boy lost all interest in the farmer. Such carvings did Gweloch make for being blind which Drylo gazed into the wonder of this work. The carved vessels always kept him so, but alas, a new work now sat here before the Halfling. The unfinished scrimshaw made Drylo twitch to see the large, smooth bone half done. All of this odd day's feeling arose and sank to the boy as his mind reeled to such a ship. The sea scratched away at his surroundings and if outside, something would beckon him to go.

"Pears and potatoes, it's all I'll ever see 'round here, in these parts and damned if would ever taste the likes of a strawberry," Gweloch chortled as he slammed the boy from his dreams with an overstuffed basket of pears and potatoes, no strawberries, "now get on ye out lad, is a storm brewin' and ye no part to dance it," he spat to which Drylo shrugged and moved to the blind farmer's shoving hands.

"But," Drylo tried to start in asking about Gweloch's ships but the old man was now in a foul mood again and simply shut the door in his face.

"Nigh, it'll be brewin' a sooner than later and Jese's hound be bitchin' up the storm all damned night," Gweloch growled as he shoved on past the stunned boy who stood defiant to this statement.

"Old man Jese's dog has been dead for years," he yelled down the path as Gweloch already went down to mend a part of the broken fence.

"Aye, and he'll be keepin' me up to God knows the hour, and damned if Jese'll do a thing 'bout that," Gweloch's words lingered off further down his rickety path as truly the old Halfling wasn't really fixing the tattered fence, but standing to stare blindly at the sea.

Drylo didn't argue this, nor the fact that old man Jese died before his dog, but none of that mattered as the boy stood at Gweloch's door and shifted his feet in the dirt that covered the wooden mat, "I don't know about a

storm but,” Drylo started to say amongst Gweloch’s sputtering as the old man heaved another broken part of his fence out into his dead neighbor’s field, “shouldn’t we, I mean can we have a bit more peaches and pears,” Drylo laughed as he bit the thought now as Gweloch stopped to this question.

“Peaches,” Gweloch toothlessly roared at the boy’s asking, “what the hell is wrong with you lad, and of course you can have some more as that storm is comin’,” his words drifting in and out now as he raged to pull the last plank free of the fence, “peaches, damned you are daft as a log, boy and potatoes and pears.. Ayup... I tell ya between her constant moanin’ and you’re fancy, I do not know anymore,” Gweloch, rattled toward him and the pig.

Drylo did not take any more notice or to say as he swung back open Gweloch’s door. He did not pack any more food though as his daring hands now reached for the new ship, stuffing it hard now over the bruised fruits. He started to leave as just then, though something caught his eye. Something red now flashed in behind an old cabinet that the boy had never noticed before.

Gweloch’s bickering with himself was now silent as this shimmer made the boy fumble, nearly toppling his basket with the stolen scrimshaw vessel. The sound rattling as if a storm had already arrived from the coast and Drylo could smell the salt and spray as he dared to go further into the darkened cottage.

The red glare now sheered from the half-opened cupboard and Drylo’s tiny hand never waited to see if old man Gweloch had returned, or if anything could see how wondrous this red glow now shone. Drylo’s hand quickly clasped around it and jerked as his whole arm went numb. The sudden feel of dread and his eyes flashed now as another pair looked equally as shocked from the darkness. The faded out to the sound of a metallic chime or off further; old man Jese’s dog began to wail.

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A distinct hiss, more than a snap rang out and began to pull out away from the somber, swaying trees. One almost time had forgotten, threading its way now passed the light blue hues of autumn. An ashen, almost strange pulse now begged its way in through the Halfling’s shaken form. Just the surge and sudden sight as if someone grabbed him or with this that watched when Jorsh dared to move. Startled and listening to the awkwardness of its earthly tone, Jorsh shifted his falling cap and with it sat his red, rubied brooch.

The faint glow passing away the remembered wood, ‘folk’ as they were known in Yarmon and Jorsh could not

guess how many of them now spoke. Harsh voices, which rippled the very air and almost the smell of sea salt, turned colors and waves of dying leaves that crumbled as Jorsh lifted up. Nothing now seemed right as he looked out through the horrid night's pitch and the feeling of the forest. He was surely in the old woods, though how, Jorsh was unsure.

Surety was held just beyond the feel of unknown glances that flashed to mocking the Halfling with fainter sparks. Jorsh's dimly lit eyes now orbed upward to the hovered darkness of the canopy and he could feel its utter threat. The never-ending drawl of wood and creaking trees set coldly to the night, which now confused the Halfling even more, having lost the whole day. The hiss all around with faint pops which made the Halfling gasp only to find most of the new sounds were branches and twigs, breaking under his daring feet. It was as though the Halfling had wandered here and some huge, unseen cob sat high now into this web of wood. The trees, like some spider that electrically climbed out of its invisible webbing which threaded the closing sky above.

With each step, the threads twanged in this cessation on Jorsh's exposed skin and to his next step were much worse than a broken branch. Jorsh began to lurch and pull at the imaginary goo that clung to his tiny face, as to this, the pulse began again with a roar. His jumping legs backpedaled in dismay from this sudden sensation. Someone or something now grabbed at the Halfling's head, and almost surely as a tiny hand grabbed fully to his shimmering brooch. Jorsh flailed for a moment and held fast to his hat, though this feeling was steady as a stone as the sounds mingled between the phasing sounds of a calling hound.

"Let go you prick," Jorsh called out to this unseen foe and at that, the feeling faded and geared back into the folds of the unmoved wood. His disdain though flowed upward as below another unknown source chattered into his aching head. The scuffle was from beneath and the sting was never so much as felt as the litter of leaves brought Jorsh to the shock as he came to his knees.

The sudden rip from his throbbing ankle held Jorsh at a loss as his vision began to fade and falter with his other dulled senses. The sounds squished upon the forest floor as almost the intoxication replaced that sudden blare from the lipless voices. They all ate in now from the surrounding black and Jorsh was not yet unconscious or alone as he shifted his little body. The corpse began to shake from these things unseen, which dangled in his mind's eye as was immense, this pain and a memory more so, spinning and passing the leaky tendrils. Claw like and holding, they dug deep into his softer calves and the horror inside the Halfling's hazed eyes reflected what approached from the trees above.

This pulse began to carry up through to his little head and down to his knees, which burned throughout the Halfling. Ever slowly, to regain a sense of his situation and with a stumble, he barely found his footing to flee backward, the way he had come into the forest. Jorsh's hand though, searched for something, as truly he felt lighter.

The feel of charred flesh and garment upon his forehead sent the Halfling to stop. Scared and confused, it was here that he no longer felt his rubied brooch. The small gash on his head told him nothing but for some reason he turned back to where he had fell. This seemed a circle as now, behind he could see himself standing near this gruesome scene, "What trick is this," Jorsh asked aloud as his eyes scanned the unending horizon of trees and back down upon the Halfling who held to the somber glowing ruby.

"Never enter the Sheairne," the voice of his mother rang in tone to his racing mind. How many times had she told him this? How many other times had Jorsh heard tell a drunken tale to counteract his mother's forbearance? Many a storyteller came into the pub with such tales to boaster loudly. They bellied a drink or two for what this old wood held.

Jorsh began to loosen now as he made his way toward this strange specter, as in fact it was not even Jorsh, but a boy who now looked just as scarred to see the other Halfling. Both revered the unknown and Drylo simply just stood, hand outstretched with the ruby and below him was his overturned basket of potatoes and pears.

"I don't understand," Drylo asked with a whimper as they slowed here.

Many a night had passed in the tavern with such a story on how the local patrons would love to get their hands on such a dagger. All of this though was cut short as now Jorsh slammed face first into the dirt. The sudden displacement and sound with the cold pulling the shadow, reeled the Halfling like a fish back to this point.

Jorsh barely able to lift his dried, bloody head looked about confused as if to see the boy who obviously, must have tripped him. There was no boy or much else besides the pain and the cold that swayed here beneath the old blackened trees. Jorsh spat out the dirt as he tried to speak; only finding he was hoarse now. He did not dream all of this for sure, as the boy's basket lay scattered, still before him. His whole body ached now to sit with his little head throbbing straight into the crookedness of his back.

The loud thudding sound of an enormous weight being dropped sounded from behind as the Halfling sat motionless to the scene. It stopped though as Jorsh peered around, shifting to his knees. He lost all of his previous worry when his face met this horror. With almost a drool that clung in the starving beast's mouth, here mingled the sickened warmth and smell that sank from its sharper canines, dripped down to the frosted ground before them.

All of this sudden recognition between them ceased as the heavy panting turned over into a low and hard growl for Jorsh's renewed fear. The Halfling's mind and own breath reeled to steady before this blackened shape as the hideousness of its growl began to paint the massiveness of the wolf, readying for the kill.

It stopped and stood straight to pull out those dreaded teeth as if listening to Jorsh's loss of reason and above where below the dark wood's silent song, this still played. The air rang with a 'crack' as the wolf launched and cried out with a resounded call to this death. Instead of the poor Halfling, it was the wolf that folded and stopped cold from this flight. Jorsh steadied to look at this as his mind was slower to react and the image played long after the sound ceased.

The wolf's long leg looked almost caught as if the beast were chained though no longer did any motion come from the black furred worg. So much to process, so much confusion rang in Jorsh's brewing head as he shockingly stood before the lifeless creature whose body already seemed to stiffen upon the frost held soil. It began to crumple like a drying leaf, which only drew the Halfling in all the more, as he moved to watch such awe held sight. Surely, his mind held this trick as though the faint, low lights of the forest were playing upon the unraveling corpse. Fur and bone were all but gone now as the body crumbled into the churning blackness of the wavered ash.

Jorsh, ever daring to move and bend as the air caught hold of it, his little hand reaching down to brush away the vanishing hair. He saw it there beneath the charred, dissolving mass that stuck up out of the ground.

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