

Reminisce

Ewan sat behind his pint of ale, reveling in the tales he and his comrades were regaling at their corner table at the back of the Inn of the Purple Goblin. The place was musty, their table was uneven, and their chairs were rickety. But it felt just like old times, when they were younger men. They always met at the far back corner table, where the front wall torches didn't quite reach, and two of them could sit with their backs to the wall and have the entire hall in their sights between them. Tonight he sat with his back to the door.

"Remember when we swiped the statue of Adreas from that church in Trista?" Maji, the cat-man asked, lapping up his milk. Maji didn't drink ale. It made him loopy. More loopy than men at any rate. Sven had poured in a drop of hootch, and even that was making his whiskers ruffle.

"Aye, of course," Sven answered after gulping down the last of his brew. He preferred the heavy stuff. The more alcohol the better, so far as he was concerned. Matched his dark wrinkled skin and heavy dark beard. "They hired a constant guard after that. Shifts end every four hours."

"Why?" Archibald asked. He was drinking the same stuff as Sven, but only a half pint. He sipped. It was too strong for him to take in more than a mouthful at once. "They don't have nothin' worth stealing."

"They didn't then either. Just rotting vegetables and tattered cloth," Sven said.

Everybody laughed. Ewan cracked a smile. Those had been the days. When the four of them were the terrors of weak locks and beguilers of gullible young ladies. Now Marci and the kids were his life, and probably waiting for his return. One more drink.

"We never did rip off Rhodess Castle," Maji said, then lapped at his milk.

"That was the prize right?" Archibald chimed in. "We talked about it for years but never did it."

"Shit, we spent more time planning that caper than anything job we ever pulled," Sven said. He kicked back and groaned. It was half-sigh, half-belch.

"That would have cemented our infamy forever," Maji said.

"Why not?" Archibald said. "We could have done it. Hell, we still could I bet."

"Damn straight. Let's do it," Sven said. He reached across to Archibald's drink and downed it in a single chug. "Those bastard Rhodessians have been thinning out anyway. I could swipe the king's crown off his head and they wouldn't notice until it showed up on the black market."

"Really?" Archibald said. He didn't seem to mind his missing drink.

"Like you said, why not? Maji?"

"I could pull off one more job," he replied.

"How about it, Ewan?" Sven asked, casting his eyes toward Ewan. Ewan's eyebrows raised.

"You really want to now?"

"Yeah, we talked about it for ages, and sitting here, kicking back like old times made me realize how boring the straight life is. We could all use some excitement."

Ewan topped off his ale and looked around. First at the bottom edge of his mug. Then up to his friends. Sven and Archibald was leaned forward, staring at him. Maji was lapping the last of his milk. He looked behind him, at the grisly mantlepiece that gave the inn its name.

Two months later Ewan read about the executions of the three Rhodess castle thieves in the daily courier.