

Questing Chronicles. V Reprieve

Sunday, 14 August 2011

Last Updated Friday, 26 August 2011

The Roth Saga

Reprieve

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The pristine white dove perched on one fragile pink hued leg. With infinite care the delicate beak preened and cleaned the already immaculate feathers of it's right wing, which was lifted overhead to better access the finer feather quills. It paused from it's fastidious ministrations to pass eyes of liquid jet across the mossy floor of the stone circle. With a sense of anticipation growing within the exquisite bird, it began to tread back and forth across the ancient standing stone on which it stood. Small coo's began to sound from the tiny throat of the dove as it's head bobbed in eager anticipation.

Lord Roth opened one cold blue eye and gazed at the dove that was hopping about on the rough hewn pillar of granite. He opened his other eye, and studied the dancing bird further. Even as he lifted his head to gain a better vantage, the small avian hopped off the stone, seemed to blur and grow in shape, until finally an impossibly beautiful woman materialised before him and landed lightly upon the moss covered ground. Of the dove there was no sign. Lord Roth gave a swift series of covert glances to his left and right assure himself of that fact. Once satisfied he looked up into the face of the fey maiden and said quietly to himself.

"You can sod off, right now."

Speaking with the same sweet, feminine voice he remembered, and with that same beautiful and dazzling smile she always wore, the Damsel greeted him with genuine affection.

"Ser Roth, it delights my heart to see you so.....robust. And at your advanced age too."

Lord Roth quickly sat upright from his prone position, and quickly deduced that he was naked. Naked and sporting what his Bretonnian manners would refer to as a "sign of mounting ardour". Swiftly he leapt to his feet and stood before the Damsel without any sign of embarrassment and making no effort to hide his modesty.

"And where, pray tell. Are my clothes and armour exactly?" demanded the increasingly irate knight.

"Why Ser Roth, such a show of propriety." exclaimed the Damsel with a playful grin.

"Your clothes i burned, and later cast their ashes on the wind." She smiled wickedly.

"What was left of your armour stands behind you." gestured the Damsel with a tiny wave of her hand.

Glancing quickly behind him, and trying his best to keep an eye on the Damsel, he beheld his armour. Made from rare black steel, and inscribed with a silver dragon skull on the chestplate, stood Lord Roth's armour. It was rent and breached in many places, each perforation a dangerous and deadly wound that had been recieved. With a look to the armour and then upon his naked self, he traced the scars on his body where the rents on the armour confirmed the strike of the Bloodied One's axe had landed. Running a sword callused hand across the scar to his chest and the other jagged scar that ran across his stomach, the elderly knight knew that he should be dead. Turning to face the Damsel, he growled

"What the sodding hell, have you done this time?!"

Her sweet smile grew sweeter still.

"Lord Roth of Bastonne, Questing Knight and Paragon." She began. "You serve Her well. As you always have. And as you always will. And yet you did not heed Her calling for you, to take up the Quest." She admonished in a mock serious tone.

"I've dragged my wrinkled arse across the entirety of the Old World and beyond in Her name for over Fifty bloody years!" exclaimed the old knight. "I only asked for Five of them for myself and my family."

"And your family will prosper and achieve greatness because of your extra nurturing and guidance." replied the damsel with a smile. " They would have done so regardless, for the Roth's are a favoured clan. More so than you could ever know. And you more than any other of your line." She explained.

With a frustrated gesture of his hand that encopmassed the stone circle, the old knight asked

"So what was all of this about, eh? Everytime i see you, i've been bloody dying someplace or other. And all i get from you are coy smiles and cryptic bloody clues." raged the irate knight.

"All of your life has been a test Ser Roth, as is every Bretonnian knight's." She purred. "You have simply passed more of them. And that makes you not only useful, but infinitely entertaining" laughed the damsel. "But you were ready for this test Five years ago, and because of your stubbornness this holy place of Hers has been tainted longer than it should have been." Spoke the Damsel more seriously. "Your lack of action allowed the Evil Ones more time to grow stronger. And caused Four other knights to fail this challenge in your stead.

The Damsel cut him off as he was about to protest.

"Chaos must be challenged at all times, with all the strength that can be found. Those knights are proof of that and died worthy in Her eyes for their bravery." The Damsel had lost her smile and was now deadly serious.

"You fought and prevailed against two of the Evil Ones who were left to guard this place against Her servants. You later fought a third warp entity on an astral plane. A task that was set to me, and a task that you took upon yourself as you lay dying. Even then your will to serve Her, even when the test was not your own, broke you free of your physical being and allowed you to manifest your spirit in an astral form.

"You were the Song that fought the Storm!" Excaimed Lord Roth. Whose answer was another of the Damsels smiles.

"You were only able to do this because you were willing to give your very life to do so, before the test had even begun. Where others sought to sell their lives as dearly as possible or attempted a suicidal attempt to win, you were the first to give all of yourself selflessly to defeat evil. And that is why you still live. And why you must seek out the two others who abandoned their guardianship." She proclaimed in a voice heavy with command.

"It never bloody ends, does it!" moaned Lord Roth to himself.

As he turned towards his armour the Damsel called for him to stop.

"The corrupted armour that was the vessel of the guardians of the stone circle was destroyed." Explained the lass. "After the Bloodied One fell, there was no other entity to preserve and animate it. It collapsed into a pile of sand fine rust that was washed away by your astral construct returning to the forest."

With a wide smile the Damsel raised a hand towards Lord Roth's own armour.

"I think that this will make a fine replacement."

With an incredulous look the old knight was about to debate that presumption, when the Damsel made a small movement with her hands.

"I believe you will find these, adequate replacements." She laughed as a cloth wrapped bundle appeared next to her.

Lord Roth muttered something darkly to himself as he opened up the parcel and began to dress.

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Now fully clothed with a fine steel suit of the highest quality chainmail, and a black tabard bearing a silver dragon skull in metallic thread. The knight walked over to the Damsel.

"Ye know that i could have used this fresh garb when i awoke. Instead of letting me prance about in the scud." Grouched the newly kitted out knight.

"Where would the fun have been in that." She giggled.

Sighing heavily the elderly knight tapped his chest and gestured to his suit of chain.

"Ye do know that plate is more traditional for a Questing Knight, right?" he asked

"True, but i think that looks a lot better on you." She smiled wickedly.

Lord Roth could only shake his head. He had been through this sort of thing with her before.

"So how do i find these Chaos git's?" Enquired Lord Roth.

"While they are creatures of Chaos, they have abandoned their tasks. They will be hiding somewhere within the mortal realm, for their masters displeasure will not allow them to return to the warp. Their very beings would be forfeit" She told him in an educating tone.

"Trust in Kalidus, for he shall be your guide." She instructed.

"Wonderful, the single greatest threat to my health and sanity is going to show me the way." Moaned the sceptical knight.

With those muttered words the old knight set off to where he had left the old horse. Behind him he heard the damsel call out.

"You will find Kal where you left him, and i left your sword with the rest of your saddlebags."

With laughter heavily evident in her voice she called.

"Goodbye Ser Roth. And you're welcome."

With a small sigh Lord Roth whispered.

"Goodbye, Eleanor."

Behind him the tiny sound of wingbeats sounded and he knew that she was gone.