

Behind the Tapestry

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Grant stepped off the bus and inhaled deeply, finally able to breathe after being stuck amongst his noisy, rambunctious classmates for so long. Carrying his backpack in his left hand, he casually walked many feet away from the bus as hordes of people filed out the main door. Grant stretched, yawned – and then he noticed it. More impressive than it had seemed in any of the newspaper photographs, Caerhaston lay before him. Although it was not a castle, it could have passed as one. The entire structure was of stone; the large wooden double-door appeared almost menacing. Three stories high, this massive edifice was the pride of his town for many years. Once owned by Dr. Haston, it was the home and workshop of he and his family. No one ever knew what his workshop was used for, nor did anybody seem to know what type of doctor he was. But it didn't matter; the tourism industry relied heavily upon Caerhaston for it brought in spectators from all over the county. All that ended, however, with the sudden unexpected deaths of the Haston household. Murder was ruled out, and the autopsy gave no answers, yet only one body had been recovered – Dr. Haston's wife, Julia Haston. Since then, rumors and ghost stories had been formed and Caerhaston had become a place of awe and respect. It was a stroke of luck that the city rented it out.

Grant observed as the vice principal and the ASB officers entered Caerhaston and closed the massive door behind them. The school had rented Caerhaston for a tidy sum, allowing the student body to have an ASB planned activity there. The event was entitled 'Elvish' – not a very unique name but it set a basic theme for the event. The details of the event were kept a secret by the ASB, but the overall theme was medieval. Banners and flags decorated the outside of Caerhaston and Grant could not wait to see the decorations on the inside.

It was about then when the principal walked onto the overgrown lawn and called for the student body's attention. Everyone flocked over to where the principal stood as the principal laid out the rules and regulations of 'Elvish'. Everyone, that is, except for Grant and two others. One of them motioned for Grant and the other to follow, which they did. He led them off into the woods, and they traveled unnoticed. There was a large

willow tree growing nearby where they entered the thicket. The small party of three stood under its massive branches that made a leafy canopy above their heads. Bright light shown through selected spots, enabling the visibility of dust floating in the air. Grant parted the leaves which allowed him to observe the lecture occurring on the grass. He turned around and faced his companions.

“I thought we’d never find you,” declared one of the boys, known as Les. “The crowd was so huge that I felt suffocated!”

“Crowds always freak you out; that is just *one* of your many problems,” chided the boy who had led them into the woods, named Aaron. “Impatience, to name another.”

“Knock it off Aaron,” said Grant annoyed. “I’m starting to get a bit tired of your attitude. You always puff yourself up to appear better than everyone else. Just keep still and lets get on with it.” Aaron raised his eyebrows but then waved his hand dismissively. Grant later wished that he had not blown up like that. New to this school, Aaron and Les were the only friends Grant had made, and he didn’t want to alienate them. They were of a different crowd, so Grant had to do some unusual things to stay ‘in’. But still, Aaron’s self-glorifying character was beginning to make even Grant consider forgetting the whole thing.

“Fine, just don’t speak to me in that manner. I deserve better.” Grant laughed, for a lack of anything better to do. Aaron continued. “Now, let me tell you. It took me forever to find it, but...” Aaron pulled out a book from under his shirt. The cover read: *Spells and Incantations*. “I finally did.”

“Great!” exclaimed Les, snatching the book from Aaron’s hands. He flipped through it eagerly and his eyes went wide with fascination. “Whoa, this has some *weird* stuff in it!”

“Well, yes. Did you think I was joking when I made this suggestion?” asked Aaron sitting down on a hollow log nearby. “All-right then, I’ve fulfilled my half. Now Grant, did you bring it?” Grant reached into his bag. When his hand emerged it held a small, unsheathed dagger. The dagger was a thing of beauty; it was ornately decorated in gold and silver, and large gems were laid in its handle. The blade looked sharp and a word was engraved along the blade: *Tsebaoth*.

“Wow, now that is a knife!” exclaimed Les. He put the book down and took the

dagger, examining it. He then passed it to Aaron who looked at it critically.

“It’s nice, but I own better,” he declared, tossing it back to Grant. Grant let the comment slide. “Where did you get it anyway?”

“Found it,” answered Grant. He wasn’t about to tell them where he *really* got it, especially since the last words Grant heard from his mentor when he gave Grant the dagger were: “*Do not misuse it! Never use it for anything but holy purposes.*” No, he would never tell them.

About then, Grant heard the sounds of many people chatting and walking. He parted the leaves to see the student body enter Caerhaston. The three comrades in the thicket exited their concealment and got in line with their classmates. They had already hid the book and the dagger and therefore promoted little suspicion. They neared the entrance to Caerhaston, and Grant stared up in awe as he entered that legendary edifice.

The inside was just as amazing to behold as the outside. Ancient looking rugs littered the floor as people roamed around. The walls were extravagantly decorated with such items as swords, shields, knight’s armor, and tapestries of various forms. The three were handed pamphlets containing an outline of the day’s events. First floor: snacks and foods of various medieval origins were to be presented throughout the day. Second floor: Old-time folk songs were to be played constantly. Dancing permitted and urged. Third floor: Movies were to be played, again, pertaining to the theme.

Grant was enjoying himself immensely, for this was his style. But enjoyment was not foremost on his companions’ minds.

“Come, let’s get down to business,” said Aaron decisively.

“The movie room seems the best choice,” proposed Les. “It will be dark and the audience will be occupied. If we could find a small room it would be perfect.”

“I agree,” added Grant, not wanting to be left out of the decision-making.

“It’s settled then,” declared Aaron. He led them to the back of the room. Grant thought it strange that the bottom floor would be comprised of one big room and no smaller ones, but he kept this to himself. Walking up the steps, they could already hear the music playing. Upon entering the second floor they almost got knocked against the wall by a dancing couple. Aaron cursed them and said something to the effect of, “I could dance better than that!” which was promptly ignored. To Grant’s surprise, this floor also

was made up of one big room and no smaller ones. Aaron's disapproving grunt let it known that he too noticed it and predictably disapproved. Dodging the many dancers, they made their way to that floor's stairwell and climbed it. The movie was just starting when they arrived. The lights went dim and the light from the projector flickered on. They watched as the opening credits came up, but this did not ease their disappointment. For this also had no rooms.

"What is this place?" exclaimed Aaron in anger. "Who builds a house with no rooms? Where did they eat? Where did they sleep? Where did they go to the bathroom?" A chorus of "Quiet!" and "Stop talking!" answered him.

"Aw, hush yourself!" yelled Les. A linebacker from the football team stood to his feet and faced them in a threatening sort of way. The trio found that an opportune time to leave.

"Well, what do we do now?" exclaimed Aaron. They had climbed back down to the bottom floor, and Grant and Les were scouring the muffin table. "We can't go outside; the interns are guarding the door. Are you two listening?" Grant nodded, mouth full, and Les gave a knowing smile.

"You know what we could do," said Les reaching into his pocket grinning. He pulled out a tightly folded magazine and handed it to Aaron. "The perfect reading material for any emergency!" Grant took one look at the cover and cracked up laughing. When Aaron saw what it was he became angry.

"You little pervert!" he exclaimed tearing the magazine to shreds.

"Hey, I paid good money for that!" protested Les, gathering together the pieces and trying to piece them back together.

"That's your own fault," said Aaron. This made Grant laugh even harder and he began to choke on his muffin. He spit it out and chuckled, leaning against one of the tapestries hanging on the wall.

Suddenly the wall behind the tapestry slid inward and Grant screamed, jumping back frightened. He faked composure as he received stares from around the room. Les and Aaron wondered what on earth had startled him but found out upon closer examination of the wall. The area behind the tapestry where Grant had applied pressure had depressed inwards. Les and Aaron glanced at each other in wonder.

“What the heck is this?” exclaimed Grant, but they each knew. A secret passage! Grant pushed on the depression further and the portion of wall slid in more, then slipped behind the remaining wall. The ‘door’ was on well-oiled tracks that led in, then around to the other side of the wall. Grant peered into the gaping hole, but then pulled out, frightened.

“I don’t know if we should go in,” he said with just the hint of a quiver in his voice.

“Aw, don’t be such a woose,” said Aaron scoffing. “Now be a man and come on!” He entered and Les sheepishly followed. Grant’s fear was great, but his fear of rejection was greater. He glanced behind him. Amazingly, nobody noticed what had happened. They were too busy gorging themselves. He turned around, took a deep breath and stepped bravely into the darkness.

The tapestry blocked out all light. Grant couldn’t see his feet, and roamed around in the dark before stumbling over an object.

“Hey, will somebody flip the switch?” asked Les,

“There is no switch you idiot,” answered Aaron. “I swear, I seem to be the only intelligent one here.”

“I resent that!”

“You would.”

On cue, the room filled with what seemed to be bright light, but it was just Grant’s lighter. What he had stumbled over was a wooden chair. Grant stood to his feet. Against the wall to his left was a table with many chemistry instruments scattered about it. Les walked over to it, placed his bag on the table and surprised everyone by pulling out three candles.

“I thought it might add to the effect,” he explained, taking Grant’s lighter and lighting each one. The wall adjacent to the table also had numerous bookshelves full of books. Aaron immediately began to flip through these (for books were his passion) while Les began to tinker with the instruments on the table. Except for that one wall, the rest of the rather large room was completely bare. Grant began to wander over to the other side when he heard a scurrying, which made his heart jump into his throat. But it was just a rat and Aaron, of course, began to pick on him about it. Grant returned to the table

embarrassed but said nothing. Aaron pulled the *Spells and Incantations* book out from under his shirt and laid it on the table, pulling up a chair.

“Take a seat,” he said to the others.

“What? Why?” said Grant. Aaron stared at him blankly.

“Why do you think? We have the perfect opportunity right now; no one can catch us.”

“But I thought we couldn’t because...” Grant protested, but was cut short.

“Don’t jump out on me, Grant. You either with us, or against us.” Les’ eyes danced between Grant and Aaron as the standoff continued. Finally, Grant sighed in submission and pulled up a chair.

“All right! He’s in,” said Les smiling. But Aaron wasn’t as pleased.

“Funny; I had kinda’ hoped you would have pulled out. I don’t want a half-hearted member in the group.”

“I’m not half-hearted,” said Grant half-heartedly.

“All I know is that *I* would have never had a second thought. I stay true to my commitments.” Grant again let Aaron’s prideful words slide, and because Grant had no rebuttal, Aaron left it at that.

Aaron opened the book and began to thumb through the pages. Les was watching intently.

“Ah, here’s one,” exclaimed Aaron. “This should be good. Now, it’s time for the dagger.”

Grant opened his bag and took out *Tsebaoth*. The dagger was heavy in hand despite its fairly small size, compared to that of a sword. He stared, transfixed at the gleam of the blade, remembering the words of his late mentor. “*Do not misuse it! Never use it for anything but holy purposes!*” Grant tried to rationalize his actions out in his head. He failed miserably.

“Well?” said Les impatiently. Grant handed Aaron the dagger.

“No,” he said handing it back. “You do it.” Grants eyes widened. He did not expect this. Why should he go first? But he dared not refuse. He could no longer withstand Aaron’s criticism. Grant brought the blade to his wrist. He stared at the sharpness of the blade, and the thought terrified him. He closed his eyes, held his breath,

and quickly drew the blade hard across his wrist.

Grant wailed, but the anticipated pain never hit him. He opened his eyes to see Les and Aaron staring at his wrist aghast. Grant looked at his wrist. No cut. He squeaked, shocked that there wasn't even a mark. This time, watching himself closely, he drew the blade across his wrist harder and slower. Nothing.

"Give me that!" cried Aaron angrily, snatching the dagger away from Grant. Aaron slid the blade across his own wrist, cursing Grant for being weak. But he achieved the same results.

"What did you bring? A toy?" yelled Aaron. He swiped at the table in rage, fully expecting the dagger to bounce off. But to the trio's surprise, and horror, *Tsebaoth* sliced through the wood as if it were putty.

Les, who had seen enough, blew his top.

"Will you get rid of that thing!" he yelled, pulling the dagger away from Aaron. Les threw the dagger across the room. It struck the far wall and clattered to the floor.

"Hey!" said Grant getting to his feet, preparing to chase the dagger.

"Stop! Right there. Sit back down. Were not finished yet."

"What's the point?" exclaimed Les, throwing his hands into the air in exasperation. "We can't do it without the knife."

"True," began Aaron, reaching into his pocket. "But I had fully expected Grant to forget." He pulled out a small Swiss Army Knife. "So I brought this just in case." Les praised him while Grant remained silent. Aaron brought the blade to his wrist and slightly winced as trickles of blood began to run down his arm. He laden his index finger with his blood and wrote out strange signs and symbols on the table. He then looked in the book and began to murmur some incantations into the air. Grant became extremely uncomfortable, regretting that he ever came. When Aaron stopped, one could feel the tension in the room. They glanced at each other, waiting for something to happen. After several seconds, Les broke the silence.

"Heh! Nothing."

Explosion after explosion echoed through the room. The trio sprung to their feet as they watched a spiral of fire spring forth from the ground and engulf the ceiling. They

backed against the nearest wall in horror as their chairs toppled to the ground. Screams slowly reached their ears, increasingly becoming louder until they were shrill and ear-piercing. Les began to cry and Grant let forth silent screams. Aaron stood there, mouth agape. The screams became one voice, and the fire receded, revealing a figure.

The man wore a suit. His hair was slicked back and he looked sharp. In his pocket was a handkerchief, neatly folded to a point. His jacket was buttoned in the lower front revealing a tie that did not clash. He wore black dress shoes that had been polished. He wore what appeared to be an expensive, silver watch with gold designs engraved into the band. Each finger on his hand was adorned with a ring, and although he was wearing a wristwatch, the chain to his gold pocket watch was clearly visible. If you looked closely, stitched into his jacket pocket was one word: Pride.

Grant and Les cowered on the floor, too terrified to make a noise. Aaron, not expecting the summon to actually work, was in awe. He stammered, trying to speak plainly.

“Who... wh...who are you?”

“Oh, my dear Aaron!” exclaimed Pride in a suave manner. “I’m appalled! You know *me* quite well, I’m afraid.”

“What are you babbling about!” Aaron demanded. Pride frowned and Aaron reconsidered his words. “Sir.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Pride, stepping out from the charred mark the flames had left. He twirled his wristwatch by the chain and strolled towards Aaron. Aaron backed up. “I just thought I would get in touch with an old *pal* of mine – you, that is.” He looked down at Grant and Les, and they promptly hid their faces, sobbing. “I see your friends are afraid.”

“Of course they are!” exclaimed Aaron. Much of his fear had left him by now, but he did not know if it was of his own choosing. “They can not handle such traumatic situations. I always do all the work in everything we ever do while they slack off. *I’m* the one who should receive the recognition!” Pride smiled.

“Wrong.” His smile faded. “I am!” He no longer was the handsome sophisticate, but had transformed into a hideous beast. The charred circle in the floor became a gaping hole. Pride seized Aaron by the arm, his terror re-manifested, and drug him toward the

hole despite Aaron's screams. Pride squealed and laughed as he leapt into the crevasse, dropping into the orange glow while dragging Aaron behind him, screaming the entire way. Grant had remained on the floor, not able to help his friend despite his wishes, but Les had become so scared that he ran about the room searching for an exit, tears streaming down his face. Aaron's scream faded and another spiral of flame soared from the gaping hole, licking the ceiling. Les' shirt got singed and he frantically beat himself, trying to put it out. When he looked up the flames were gone, and in its place stood the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, naked.

Her long, auburn brown hair touched the floor. Her skin was tanned, perfecting her appearance. Draped about her body were long strips of red silk, and a breeze from an uncertain location made them dance about. Her legs were long and slender, and tattooed on her left thigh in red was the elegantly drawn word: Lust.

"Come," she said, motioning for him, but he just stood there, transfixed. "Come," she repeated. This time he obeyed. As he neared her, Grant called out.

"No! Les, come back! Come back!" Les looked over his shoulder in a daze, but Lust grabbed his chin and made him face her.

"Who are you?" he asked gazing into her molten eyes. She ran her fingers through his hair and wiped away his tears.

"Someone you have searched fervently for, and now you've found." She leaned over and kissed him; despite Grants cries for him to run away, Les was lost in the moment.

Suddenly his lips became hot. He broke their embrace and she was smiling devilishly. A fire broke out on his face. Les screamed in pain as he beat his face attempting to put out the flames. Lust let out a cackle and morphed into a green-skinned wartish demon with a crooked back. No description in this story would do her justice, but the sight was so traumatizing that Les no longer screamed from pain but from the terror of her figure, even though the fire had spread to his whole body. Lust also burst into flame and drug Les into the pit, the spiral of flame reappearing. About this time Grant broke through his shell and ran up to the fire-pit, attempting to save Les, but it was too late. The flames soured higher and Grant stepped back for fear of incineration. Abruptly the flames vanished, which made Grant even more fearful, for every time the flames

vanished a beast appeared. He uncovered his face, un-eager to see which monster would spell his doom.

From the pit jumped a small figure. It was the size of a toddler and had olive drab skin. Its eyes, if you could call them that, were set wide and it was bald. Despite its less intimidating appearance, numerous medals and decorations adorned its chest, pinned to its very flesh, for it had won numerous victories. Scratched across his forehead in what appeared to be ink was yet another name, or title: Fear.

Fear stared at him with a sick grin. Grant did not know whether to be afraid or to laugh, for the sight was quite humorous. But Fear stared deeper into Grant's eyes. Walking on both its hands and feet, Fear scurried around to the other side of Grant. Grant did a double take, for Fear's movement was too fast. Fear, continuing to grin, slowly advanced, forcing Grant to back up. He continued to back up until he came to the edge of the crevasse unknowingly, and lost his balance. As he teetered back and forth on the ledge, Fear gave a shout of victory.

“Ha!” it hissed. “Now your mine!”

The tapestry swung away from the entrance and in stepped the linebacker who had intimidated Aaron earlier. When the linebacker saw Fear, he froze. The distraction gave Grant enough time to get his footing, and he stumbled away from the pit. Fear roared in anger, a column of flame spewing from the pit simultaneously. Fear lunged at the linebacker like a dog at its master's table scraps. With a scream the linebacker hit the floor, struggling to get the demon off him. Fear tore into his clothes trying to get at the vulnerable flesh underneath. Grant rose to his feet watching these proceedings, unable to do anything. He quickly stole much like when he entered, he tripped over something. There away towards the exit, but, lying at his feet was *Tsebaoth*. He glanced at the dagger for a moment, then at the linebacker being torn to shreds.

A newfound horror washed over him, and he was unable to move. He was more scared than he had ever been before. But he was also watching a fellow classmate being clawed at, blood spewing everywhere. Grant's eyes began to tear and he squinted, knowing what he must do. He picked up the dagger reluctantly, his whole body urging him to simply run away, but he stood to his feet. Overcoming his last bit of fear, he stood there letting his strength build. Fear was replaced by anger; cowardice by strength. With a

mighty roar Grant hurled himself in to the air towards Fear. All Fear had time to do was to look up. *Tsebaoth* came down with a mighty force, piercing through Fear's midsection, releasing a violent scream of pain from the demon. Yelling to keep his strength and adrenaline high, Grant lifted the dagger and Fear into the air. With all his remaining strength he forced *Tsebaoth* in the direction of the pit, allowing momentum to pull Fear off the dagger and thrusting him back into the hole, screaming all the way. A column of flame again roared into the air knocking Grant backwards to the floor. The swirls of fire were accomplishing their original intent – the torment of devils.

The gaping hole slowly began to shrink until the last remnants of fire had disappeared and the ground was whole. As the dust and ash settled to the floor, the linebacker got to his knees. With his remaining strength, he crawled towards Grant and plopped his bleeding body to the ground in Grant's view. Grant met the linebacker's eyes.

“Wh...what happened?” the linebacker moaned. Grant stared off into space.

“I resisted.”

-Military term, meaning battles-