

Legacy

The Guild

“Wait! We are not really going down there, are we?”

A dwarf clad in bronze armor stood trembling at the mouth of a cave that lead to gods knows where. His three companions stopped and turned around confused. The human mage started to laugh at the site of the dwarf trembling.

“What’s wrong now Ogwen? You scared of the dark or something?”

“No you cocky cross-dresser. I am just not suicidal like you lot.”

“What was that you spineless leprechaun?” The mage drew his staff. A thin smile began to spread across Ogwen’s face at the sight of the mage’s threat.

“Oh I apologize Master Nathaniel. What I meant to say is that you should probably stop wearing your mama’s wardrobe, lest you be mistaken for some lord’s lost maid.” As the mage’s face grew red from anger, the leader of the group tried to suppress his laughter.

“For the last time you uneducated gnome, *THEY ARE CALLED ROBES!*” drawing from what little mana the cave offered, the mage launched a thin spear of ice at Ogwen’s head. After a successful dodge, Ogwen drew his bow and got three shots in. The arrows not only knocked the mage’s staff out of his hands, but also caught the bottom of his robe. Startled, Nathaniel fell backwards and cursed.

“Ha! That’s what you get for wearing a dress little Nat!” Ogwen laughed as he approached the immobilized mage, bow drawn. Annoyed, the human warrior walked in between the two and glared at them.

“Enough.” Her voice was quiet from lack of use, but her tongue had a deadly steel tone to it that made the quarrelling idiots stop dead in their tracks. Putting a hand on her shoulder, the elven rouge spoke up.

“Risa’s right you two. Ogwen, I know you are still kind of new at this, but we need to complete this bounty as soon as possible if we want to earn our keep.” The dwarf sighed and put his bow away.

“You are right. Sorry Zatarra.” Risa’s eyes narrowed at as she drew her great sword.

“You will not refer to him in such an informal way.”

“Relax Risa. We are all friends here.” Everyone looked at each other then back at Zatarra. Risa even raised an eyebrow at such a ridiculous notion.

“Fine. At the very least, we are a team now. A little informality and joking around is normal. So let us all get along, okay?” His unnatural optimism was met with mumbles and heavy sighs. At the sight of this, dark energy began to swell around Zatarra’s body and his voice was no longer upbeat and light hearted.

“I said, let us all get along.” Fearing what would happen if they did not, the three forced the biggest smiles they could. Satisfied, Zatarra returned to ‘normal’ and took Risa by the hand.

“Good. Now Ogwen, help Nathaniel up and let’s be on our way.” Ogwen did as he was told and privately Nathaniel whispered “I will get you back for that, half-pint.” Ogwen ignored the idle threat and turned around.

“Come on, Nat. Zatarra and Risa are waiting on us.” Nathaniel scoffed at Ogwen and took the lead. Ogwen sighed again and brought up the rear. It had been like this from day one.

He knew it was going to be tough at first, but if Ogwen knew that it was going to be this bad all the time then he would have just joined a different guild.

Six months ago, when Ogwen heard that the Crimson Dawn guild was recruiting, he jumped at the chance. It's not every day that the number one guild in the country openly recruited new members. They said they didn't care how green the individual was, as long as they were willing to devote themselves to the guild and its master. However, the guild had a strict policy that they would only recruit already formed teams. In a desperate rush, Ogwen ran to any and every one in a hopeless attempt to form a team while there was still time.

That's when he ran into Nathaniel...literally. Ogwen was going to apologize for his clumsiness, but after Nathaniel used a few choice words towards Ogwen and his height, the dwarf decided against it.

Apparently Nathaniel was trying to woo a passing warrior, but to no avail. She was about to threaten him to make him go away when Ogwen came out of nowhere and knocked the pest down. Normally she would have thanked him, but she didn't have time to do so.

Because of that annoyingly persistent mage, she had lost track of her target. That mysterious silver haired elf with the jet black armor. She had heard rumors of this elf in passing, but she had never given any mind to them before. Not until she saw what he was capable of for herself. On her last bounty, she witnessed him single handedly kill a notorious bandit lord that had a four hundred thousand gold bounty on his head. A man that she had been after for the past month. To add insult to injury, the elf had done so after downing seven pints. You can say that he had caught her attention. Since then, she has been 'stealthily' following him.

After the female warrior had left the two arguing rookies, the elf let out a sigh of relief and leapt down from his hiding place. She was easy on the eyes and at first he found her obvious attempt of stalking him cute, but now it was becoming a pain. With how persistent she had been that past week, he knew she would follow him even if it put her at risk. The elf wished his secret admirer would just tell him what she wanted already. He was starting to grow bored of roaming towns all day.

“Hey, you boys got a minute?” the dwarf and mage ceased their argument long enough to stare down the misplaced elf before they resumed their pointless spat. The elf shook his head and snapped his fingers. Instantly, three faceless void familiars appeared around them with daggers drawn.

“Now let’s try this again. Would you boys be ever so kind as to give me a moment of your time?” The elf gave them a genuine smile, but the look in his eyes didn’t quite match. His eyes, which had been closed before, were now wide open with a cold and deadly focus. After exchanging a glance with each other, Ogwen and Nathaniel simply nodded.

“Great! You may call me Zatarra. Nice to meet you.” After an awkward bow, his eyes suddenly shifted to the side and he vanished. His familiars, however, remained behind.

“Umm...what just happened?” Ogwen asked as he equipped his bow.

“Your guess is as good as mine pipsqueak.” Nathaniel was staring intensely at the faceless figures.

“Hey short stuff. I know the practice of magic is frowned upon by your people, but have you ever see magic like this before?” Nathaniel whispered.

“What do you mean? They are just normal dark familiars, right?”

“That’s the problem. I have seen dark familiars before and these things don’t look or act like them at all. Dark familiars are extremely violent and usually attack anything that moves. On top of that, they normally are not human shaped like these ones.” Before Nathaniel could elaborate any further, the female warrior from before was tossed on the ground in front of them.

“Well aren’t you a perceptive one.” A voice emerged from behind them. Ogwen and Nathaniel slowly turned around to see Zatarra surrounded by darkness. Shadows freely flowed from every pore on his body while streams of green flames erupted from the sockets where his eyes had once been.

“They are not, in fact, familiars at all. They are the strongest souls of my past victims.” Nathaniel fell to his knees as a shock of realization came to him as he looked up at this avatar of destruction that stood before them.

“You...you are an elven demi-god aren’t you?” Zatarra let out a hearty laugh and smiled as the three cowered before him. They might as well have been children compared to his might.

“I am not so lucky, however, Death was a good father to me.” Too stunned to respond, Zatarra laughed again and snapped his fingers. Both the faceless familiars and the shadows surrounding his body dissipated.

“Now that we are all here, what are your names?” The warm smile he had given them before had returned. The shock had not worn off yet and they continued to sit in fear. Zatarra sighed and began to walk away. When she saw this, the female warrior got on her feet and said, “Stop. Who are you?”

Zatarra turned around and looked directly into her eyes. His warm smile had faded away and his eyes were almost lifeless. Looking into those eyes, a cold wave of despair overcame her. Images of death and decay flooded her mind and she could feel her body fading away into the void. Then just as her world was about to be consumed in utter darkness, a single light broke through the darkness.

The female warrior drifted for what felt like an eternity towards the faint light. As she grew closer, warmth began to return to her body and a new sense of sadness began to blossom in her chest. However this sadness was different. Woven within were sensations of joy and excitement. Then came images of a young elven woman and a small child. The images didn't flash by her like before; they lingered, accompanied with sounds of both the forest and the sea that seemed to continuously flow around her. These scenes brought a joy that she had never experienced before.

They did not last though. The final image she saw was of the child, now grown up, standing over a grave by the seaside. Behind him lingered a tall figure wrapped in black robes of shadows. He placed his hand on the boy's head and his ebony hair slowly became white as snow. With that, the image disappeared and she had returned to reality. Zatarra was now inches away from her face. Instantly the female warrior's face turned bright red, but she did not back away.

"Risa." She said. The sound of her own voice surprised her. It was timid, yet unwavering. Zatarra blinked with a look of surprise on his face.

"My name. It's Risa." This time it came out as almost a whisper. Their foreheads were now against each other's. His skin felt cool to the touch and he smelled like the gentle breeze of the sea.

“Risa. What a lovely name.” He whispered into her ear. His eyes were closed and he wore a kind hearted smile. Risa’s heart was racing and an unfamiliar desire awoke from deep within her. As she began to lean in to embrace this mysterious man, she heard a faint cough.

“Umm...we’re still here you know.” The dwarf said nervously as he gave her a little wave. The mage sat there staring in silence, his robes leaving nothing to the imagination. Risa let out a cry and pushed Zatarra away. The handsome elf sighed and smiled.

“So close.” He said. They made eye contact again and Zatarra gave her a wink. Once again her face grew bright red. Laughing, he turned to the dwarf and the mage.

“Our warrior friend and I have introduced ourselves. How about it you two? What are your names?” After witnessing what had just transpired, the fear in their hearts were gone and they answered willingly.

“My name is Nathaniel. I am the third son of the Parnell noble house.” The mage seemed quite proud of that fact. His pride was quickly shattered.

“Never heard of them. So how about you my dwarven friend?”

“I am no one really.” Ogwen tried his best not to make eye contact.

“Oh come on,” Zatarra whined, “everyone else introduced themselves. You don’t have to give your life story. Just tell us your name.”

Risa scoffed at the remark. “You’re one to talk.” She said, still blushing a little from earlier. Zatarra brushed off the comment with a chuckle.

“My name is Ogwen. I am an archer who...” then it hit him. The reason behind why he had been forced to go through all of this. He still needed a team if he was going to have any chance at getting into the Crimson Dawn guild.

“Um...Ogwen? You alright? You are kind of frozen in place.” Zatarra said as he poked Ogwen's face.

“Zatarra!” he screamed. Surprised at the outburst, Zatarra almost fell backwards.

“Yes? What can I do for you my peculiar little friend?”

“I know I just met you and that is a bit of a sudden request, but would you form a team with me?” The dwarf bowed as low as he could. Zatarra was silent at first then asked,

“What do you mean by team?”

“My dream is to join the strongest guild there is and I will do anything to make that happen.” Zatarra raised an eyebrow to that.

“Is that so? And what pray tell is the name of the strongest guild?”

“The Crimson Dawn.” Ogwen was still bowing; his face was now touching the dirt. Zatarra began to laugh.

“Ogwen, I am not going to lie. I find the very idea of teaming up with anyone to join a guild ludicrous and an utter waste of my time.” It was quiet for a long time. Finally Ogwen got up and said,

“I understand.” A smile broke across Zatarra's face. He walked over and patted Ogwen's back.

“Good man. I’m glad we understand each other. So where do we go to sign up?”

“WHAT?!” the other three yelled in unison.

“Why not? What’s a decade or two to an elf? I live hundreds of years. That and I can see that this means a lot to him. Who knows, it might turn out to be fun.” Zatarra looked over to see Ogwen beaming.

“Thank you so much! You won’t regret this.”

Zatarra laughed. “I am going to hold you to that. Just one question. I might be new to the whole concept of being on a team, but I believe we are going to need more than two members before we can actually call it a team.” He walked over and put his arms around Risa and Nathaniel.

“So how about it you two? Form a team with us. You know you want to.” Pushing away, Nathaniel refused.

“Oh no! I may not be able to become the head of the family because I am a mage, but there is no way I will stoop so low as to *join* a guild. It beneath one such as myself.”

“...Right. Well you are hopeless. How about you?” Zatarra was now addressing Risa, who was bright red due to how causal Zatarra was holding her in his arms. Pushing away, she began to protest.

“I cannot.” She replied.

“Why not?” Zatarra asked. Risa took off her pack and from it withdrew an official guild badge. She handed it to Zatarra to show him.

“See?” she said, fully expecting that this would be the end of the discussion. She was about to find out that this was only the beginning.

“Oh! So you are already a part of another guild?”

“Yes. I am alre...” She froze in horror as she watched Zatarra rip the badge to pieces. He met her gaze and gave her a sweet smile.

“Problem solved.” He left Risa fawning over what was left of her badge.

“M-my badge.” She said as she tried to gather all the pieces, but a strong wind blow most of it away before she could. Zatarra felt a little bad about that, but decided he would apologize later. Grabbing Nathaniel by the back of his robe, he dragged him to a nearby alley.

“We will be back soon Ogwen. Look after Risa for me until I get back.” All poor Ogwen could do was stand there just as shocked as Risa.

When Zatarra and Nathaniel where finally alone, he looked Nathaniel in the eye and asked,

“Last chance. Will you join Ogwen’s team or not?” Nathaniel turn around and began to walk away.

“I am not going to dignify that question with an answer and I refused to repeat myself. If that all, I will be on my way child of a demi-god.” Zatarra let out a low laugh. It seemed different from all the times he laughed before. It sounded sinister.

“You are right. I am the child of a demi-god. Do you know what that means for you?” Nathaniel froze in place. He could hear his own heartbeat.

“I tried to be nice about it. I do not enjoy killing, but I will not hesitate if I have to. You know I can’t let you walk away alive now that you know my secret? Demi-gods are forbidden from having children. If anyone found out about this, not only would my old man and I be killed on the spot but all of his followers as well.” Shadows began to pore out of his body again. His eyes were set ablaze and his familiars appeared in the dozens around them both. Nathaniel dropped to his knees and begged.

“No! Please, spare my life! I will do anything!” Zatarra paused and a cruel smile crept across his face.

“Anything?” He asked.

“Yes! Anything you want! Money, land, power; you name it.” By this point, Nathaniel had wet himself. Zatarra would have laughed if he did not need to intimidate this idiot into joining the guild.

“If you want to live, then join us. Lower yourself to our level and join the guild if you wish to remain among the living.”

“Of course. Of course. I will make the arrangements at once.” Nathaniel blubbered through sobs. Instantly, the shadows dissipated and Zatarra became friendly again.

“Good. Now let us rejoin the other.” Zatarra paused as he looked down at the sorry state Nathaniel was in.

“On second thought, you should probably go home and clean yourself up. You look awful.” Nathaniel didn’t reply at all. In fact, Zatarra was a concerned that he might not recover for quite some time from this.

“I...I will right back. You just...just stay right here.” He took a few steps and looked back. “Don’t move.”

When Zatarra rejoined the others, Ogwen was comforting Risa. She still had several pieces of what used to be her badge in her hands.

“Oh gods. Do not tell me that I broke this team before we even started.” He slowly walked over and asked,

“Is she alright?” As if responding to his question, Risa was continuously repeating the phrase, “My badge.”

“Yeah, that’s not a good sign.”

Ogwen look up at Zatarra and said, “Zatarra, I do not think you realize what you just did.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“When you join a guild, your badge is your life. You use your badge for everything. When you ripped up her badge, you basically ended her life. She just lost everything she owned and all the money she did not have on her person.” Zatarra just stood there in silence.

“Yeah, I basically broke this team before we even started.” He looked at the sorry state Risa was in and he let out a heavy sign. He scooped up Risa in his arms and began to walk towards where Nathaniel was laying on the ground. He turned around to look at Ogwen and said,

“Come on. Let’s get everyone to this guild of yours.”

“Okay, but where is Nathaniel?” Ogwen asked as he looked around.

“He is over there. Pretty sure I broke him too, but do not worry. He agreed to join our team.” Zatarra and Ogwen looked at each other and let out heavy sighs.

In the following months, Ogwen team would become one of the best rookie teams in the Crimson Dawn guild.