**Flickering Light**

The creatures legs cracked against the stone of the cave wall. The caravan guard ducked further behind the mushroom he was using for cover. These damned caverns were dark. So dark. All he could see was the flickering light of the campfire, and the shadows of chitinous forms scuttling around the edge of the fire's light.

The caravan guard fumbled with his crossbow. Loading another bolt, he peaked out from behind his mushroom. With a clattering rush, the giant spider charged. The caravan guard flinched back, his fingers squeezing reflexively around the trigger of his crossbow. The metal tip of the bolt pierced the front of the spider’s face, it's dark ikor spraying from the wound. The bulk of the creature’s body landed with a thump and slid through the thin matt of fungi coating the floor of the cave. It finally came to rest just before the caravan guard’s feet. He fumbled the knife from his belt and moved to the husk of the dead spider. He jammed the blade into its eye, but the thing was already dead.

The caravan guard let out a relieved breath. His heart hammered in his ears. Someone screamed from across the campfire. Metal rang and lives ended. Over all the sounds of battle, the caravan guard heard a familiar clatter of armored legs. He spun, falling and fumbling for his knife. The spider stood on the rock behind him, its legs tensed to jump. Then it stopped. Everything stopped, and the cave was silent. The spider cocked its head, as though it was listening to something. Its eyes glistened as they stared into the caravan guard. Then, as quickly as the massive spiders had come, they began to withdraw, dragging the bodies of the slain with them.

The mercenary sat back in his chair. “And you were there?” asked the half elf across the table from him, “were you afraid?”

The mercenary answered with a bashful smile, “actually, that one was a bit before my time.” His smile faltered at the half elf’s disappointed look. The mercenary recovered quickly, smile flashing back across his lips “but there was one time I went toe to toe with a powerful treachery demon….”