

Another beautiful day. Saram couldn't bring himself to wear a shirt. The sun, glorious and bright against his skin, warmed him fully. The village was thriving, despite the demand from recent refugees from Pindeng, the once small jetty barely visible amongst the boats now harbouring within it.

Being son of the Lord of Drakeston meant he had free reign over his activity, but today felt like a perfect day to build some new housing for the village. Heading over, he joined the others hard at work. A quick nod, and he was quickly laden with wooden beams and instruction.

Merely an hour later, and the frame was complete. The next step would require specialist tools, and whilst Saram was capable, he let the professionals do their work with pride. After all, it was peak market hour, and no doubt there were those looking to ask him for help in the square.

A shrill, crackled voice pierced his mind. "Got a bad feeling about today, boy! No clouds for starters, the sun's almost *too* hot, and my feet ache."

Providence, his mentor, often sent him messages like this. Many of them made some amount of sense, after Saram spent a few moments thinking them through. This one, however, was confusing even for her. He sent her a mental message back.

"Not entirely sure what you mean, Providence. I'm in the market, come find me."

No response meant either she was on her way, or had fallen asleep. No matter, he would speak with her over dinner, if not before. Arriving at the market, Saram began assisting those buying more than they could carry, and making sure no trouble came about. Not that he needed to worry - the people of Drakeston were incredibly welcoming, and crime was mostly a thing done in other places. Rumour was even those visiting the village would feel less inclined to steal or fight - although these rumours were quite hard to confirm with any would-be criminals, since they tended to head off and steal from somewhere else.

"Excuse me, Sir, but may I ask a question" said a man, wearing the clothes of a man living in a single outfit - a refugee, new.

"But of course my good man," Saram said "ask away."

"That mark you bear, so openly on your chest, is it part of you? Or a paint you apply?" the man said, gesturing to Saram's torso. The mark in question was an image of a dragon from legend, twirling about the majority of Saram's chest, leaving barely any part uncovered.

"As part of me as my hands. Like my father, and all his forefathers before him, I was born with this mark, and it gives me a great strength that I pass on to the people of the village." said Saram.

The man nodded, and thanked Saram, before taking leave. He was the twelfth this week who had asked, and whilst Saram understood the curiosity, he also wondered whether he might be able to enjoy the weather more if he *did* wear his shirt.

His brief reverie was broken by a scream and a smash. He looked across just in time to see a woman struck across the body by *something*. It was reddish brown, undulating, and mildly shaped like a human. Where its skin should be, however, was pulsating globules of wet flesh-like material, rolling across its body. A *fiend*, Saram suspected, as he started to yell out to those in the market, ushering them to safety.

Withdrawing his baton from his belt, he squared up and began to approach the monster. "That's quite enough of that", he called out hopefully. "How about you turn around and I can help you find what you're looking for."

The creature seemed to ignore him, unbothered, and continued its attempts at eating the villagers. Saram sighed, and accepted the actions required. A couple of steps, a swing, and a brief flash of golden light, and the creature collapsed. Oddly enough, it began to dissolve into a red goop. Saram paused.

"Told you so!" screeched another message in his ear. "Shame about that woman though, she wasn't meant to die til, let's see, next week at least."

"How comfortably enlightening you are, Providence." said Saram, turning to face the witch. "You were aware of this attack then?"

"Of course I was, boy, or do you think my title means nothing?" She spoke both aloud and in his mind, giving Saram a certain headache he wasn't too fond of. "200 years I've watched over your family and yet you show so little faith. Humans, tsks."

"You say that like Elves are any better. I seem to recall you being sent far away from the capital before your words could cause any harm."

Providence didn't reply. Instead, she shuffled over in a hunched way, and stared down at the goop. "Should probably have put some of that in a jar, might have been tasty."

"You truly amaze me. Now, in the absence of any more of the wretches, I think it's time to see Father."

It was a short, if ceremonious, consultation with Lord Dragston. Although each heir before Saram had prepared to undertake such a journey, there had never been any inclination that it was time. Now, however, Providence had Seen a Fate, twisting Saram's future around in a distant land. Saram could feel it too. The mark of a dragon on his chest was sending a burning chill through him. He knew his father could feel it too, from his own mark.

And so it was, that Saram was handed the Heir's Heroic Hammer, the venerated weapon of the chosen heir, and with Providence, started to make his way towards the docks.