Forsaken Friends

certifiableGrimalkin

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## Will-o'-Witch

There was a soft, lazy breeze, carrying nothing but the stuffy stench of the bog. It did wonders, sending chills down our sweat drenched spines, in this warm weather, and this forsaken situation.

But, it's work, and someone has to do it.

I look down on my muddied hands, and I push a small Willie in the jar with the others, making sure none of them manage to escape.

They're relatively easy critters, Willies. They wandered around the edges of these lands, and tried to lure people onto unstable grounds, to feast on the decomposing corpses left behind. There was one corpse too many, and I was contracted. And as long as I remember, to not focus my sight on them, too much, and not follow them around, it was just a matter of picking them from the air.

They were going to get killed, but fortunately for the little ones, they didn't really leave any body, so, to prove my deed, I had to bring them to the guild live. They'd be crushed and put out, there.

It was really stupid, that someone even got out here, and got caught by these critters. Everyone in any vicinity of the bog knew, to stay away from it. That it had a magic about it. Creatures not of the gods, and people who turned their backs to them, lived there. It was a dark, labyrinthine place, that no one who entered came back to tell tales of.

And yet, tales were plentiful. People talked about an ancient being, made of swamp, that guarded the land, and cursed anyone who dared to enter. They talked about weird lights and sounds that could be heard from the middle of the swamplands. I myself have heard the thunderous crowing, that came from there, on one of my trips hither.

No one dared to go into the land, among the trees and unstable terrain, and tales of terror. Nobody, except fools like the person that started my contract. Rest he in peace.

I needed one more Willie, and I'd have enough to finish the contract. I looked around for one more, and found it, at the edge of the treeline. Taking care to not look at it.

too often, I made my way towards it. I focused mostly on the ground, to not sink too deep into the peat and mud.

Suddenly, a shadow hovered over me. I screamed, as a beastly, black talon grabbed hold of me, and I was flung into the air. I lost consciousness for a moment, and only got to, as my body hit the water of the swamp. The shadow was gone. There was a voice.

"You could have been a bit gentler with the boy, Morty."

There was no reply.

"I know he's here to kill our friends. I know he's a hunter. I'm just... too kind sometimes."

At this moment, I saw, out of the darkness, a tangle of branches, moss and mud emerge, with the face of a human woman. I shrieked at the sight, and tried to turn around to run, but found myself struggling against some vines in the water.

At that moment, she found her sight fixed to the jar in his hands. A big branch swing around, and crashed directly into the jar, shattering it, and causing all the 19 tightly packed Willies to fly out in all directions, in a mass of light. They started gently floating around, after a second, and disappeared into the forest. Then the figure faded back into the darkness.

I was pulling on the vines, and finally got my body free, when I noticed the forest ceiling closing up over me. After a few moments of me trying to to get out of the water, as the darkness was creeping in, I could no longer see anything at all.

I tried feeling my way, and tried walking straight through the swamp, in the direction I thought I had come from. I was giving up hope, thought I was as good as dead, but after a bit of blind wandering, I started seeing a bit of daylight shine through the thicket in front of me.

I walked forward, towards the light. Nothing else was important to me, anymore. I just needed to survive. I needed to get out of here

Then, the daylight moved. It floated, slowly bobbing up and down, and drew closer to me. I stopped in my tracks. And noticed, I could not move any further. I was stuck, slowly sinking in the mud. The Willie illuminated my situation, allowing me to see, how I was nearly up to my knees in the ground. I had stepped right in.

I started praying for rescue.

I started praying for a quick death

My mouth was slowly sinking under, and I could only breathe through my nose. I could not breathe. The pain. The horror. All slowly fading.