

Trinity and Liz: The Mining District

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LIZ

The smell accosted her before she saw Khama on the bed. It was absolutely putrid, the closest smell was that of the eggs she had to throw out at the behest of the Chemist and one of his “Failed experiments”. She plugged her nose, and went to her friends bedside.

“Time to wake up Khama, you need to eat something or you’ll die before this...rot I suppose takes you.” She tried to shovel some bread into his mouth.

Khama normally wore a veil that covered his nose and mouth. For Liz, seeing the full face of her fellow bounty hunter was an oddity. Khama struggled, but was able to slightly open his mouth to accept the bread. Liz’s hand slightly recoiled at what hid inside his mouth. Tied, and seemingly bolted through his two canine teeth were fangs. Large curved fangs that, as far as Liz could tell, came from some beast. At Khama’s gumline was an array of purple shoots that came from the base of the fang, and into his gumline, spreading further than Liz was able to discern. Khama took a bite from her hand and thanked her.

“First time I’ve seen those,” Liz pointed to her own mouth. “I’m not a doctor, but I think I found what’s making you sick,” Khama let out a small laugh.

“First solo kill, we take the beast...and make them us,” Khama struggled to get the words out. “It marks us in the Boglands. Elite Hunters,” He grimaced as he shortened what he wanted to say. Admittedly, Liz knew less than she cared to admit about The Boglands and their people.

“Ok, well Isaac told me my duty is to make sure you’re comfortable, and if you need anything to let me know.” Liz pulled up a chair from the nearby desk. “I’m not gonna beat around the bush like I

normally would, because it hurts you to talk. So I'll just come out and say it. Isaac told me you needed to grab something for the Chemist this week that's supposed to help. There's a zero percent chance I'm letting you leave in your state, so tell me where this package is, and I'll go get it." Liz had picked up a few small things from each bounty hunter she studied under, but her primary mentor was always Isaac, the second in command of the Bounty Hunters Guild. Isaac and Khama were best friends, and wanted to make sure that above all, Khama was in good hands. So he trusted his temporary care to Liz, his ward. It's no surprise that she also picked up his habit of being direct with people, and harsh when people were prideful. And Khama was very prideful.

"Mining District. Silver dust, and some kind of organ. From the mines. Had to be harvested specially." Khama reached up and grabbed the bread after noticing she wasn't going to present it again.

"Any contract for this?" Khama shook his head at her question. She figured there wouldn't be additional payment for what seemed like a personal job. "Consider it done. You stay here and rest. I'll leave some bread and water out for you, and have Nick stop by to check on you." Liz stood up and grabbed her sword, a long curved blade, her dagger, and her cloak, black as a raven's feather, and left the Guild of Bounty Hunters between Old Town and the Market District, and made her way to the Mining District.

TRINITY

"Alright Davey, you said you got a big score for me. So what is it? Please tell me it's some noble, I love seeing their homes and pretending I live like that," Trinity threw the door open as if she was appearing on stage and the spotlight was on her. Davis was her personal fence. He found lucrative contracts for thievery, blackmail and other such cloak and dagger type jobs. Davis used to have more clients he would dole work out too, but Trinity strongarmed him into only giving work to her. She liked him enough, but not as much as he would like.

Davis gave her the same look he always did, one mixed with confusion at her entrance, but happiness that she came through for the job.

“Please, I asked you a million times Trin, just call me Davis. In regards to the job, it’s a weird one, but the coins good. There’s a package waiting to be retrieved in the Mining District. Do you know anything about...” Davis stood about as tall as Trinity, but a little more proper in the way he presented himself. He hung up his thieving kit in favor of handing jobs out years ago, but never worked in a direct capacity for the Guild. He shuffled some papers around until he found what he was looking for. “a ‘terrestrial based bioluminescent worm’? You’ve been out there before what the fuck does that mean?”

“Bio-whatnow? And it’s a worm?” Trinity scrunched her face at the question. She knew a little about the mines, but whatever she knew, Davis knew less. “Can’t say I’ve ever even heard of worms in the mines. Then again I’ve never actually set foot inside the mountain. Don’t think I ever will either, I prefer to keep my head on straight and not ground into mush by that awful dust.”

“Regardless the package in question has some bits and pieces from one of these things, and is being held at the Foreman’s house. That’s your contract, and the details for it.” He slid the contract detailing what needed to be taken, and where it should be located in front of Trinity. At the bottom of the contract was the signature of Grandfather, the head of the Guild certifying the job was approved. “As usual, if other things disappear, or people go missing, which they often do when you’re involved, I don’t know anything about them. As for your compensation,” Davis slid a piece of paper over to her. “Is this.”

Trinity flipped the paper over.

Davis watched her eyes go from lowercase to capital as she read her cut.

"I'll be back by tonight then," Trinity left her fence and made a beeline directly to the Mining District.

LIZ

Liz had never been to the Mining District. She had never had too many major run-ins with guards, so she never had to be sent to the de-facto penal district thus far. Isaac had always hammered into her the notion of planning ahead for a job, and to always come prepared. Unfortunately all she knew of the district were from stories back when she was a street-bound orphan. Guards used to taunt her after they caught her stealing that she would "Go join her mom and dad down in the mines" before she was old enough to handle her liquor. If they were still down there would they recognize her?

When Liz approached the gate she was help up by the City Watch.

"Mining District is in lockdown miss," One of the guards to the Mining District held up a hand to bar her entry.

"I'm with the Guild of Bounty Hunter's. I need to see someone about a package waiting for me,"

"You're with the Guild? Your what, fifteen and already a fucking scab?" The guards chuckled to themselves.

"This 'scab' still wears a black cloak and needs to get in. So please, step aside and let me collect what I came for," She did her best to remain calm after having the slur hurled at her. She never understood the animosity behind the word until it was used against her.

"Alright little girl fine, let me just see the contract and you're good to go,"

"I don't have a contract, this is personal Guild business. And before you say I'm 'not allowed in' I speak with the authority of The Grandfather himself. So I suggest you choose your next words carefully,"

Liz lied through her teeth about being sent by The Grandfather, the head of the Guild, but she had tarried too long with these guards and just wanted to get this job done. She was tired of being spoken down to.

The two guards whispered to each other. One of them very openly wore a face that showed concern when she mentioned Grandfather.

“Fine, but listen here, and I’m being serious. No jokes this time. Don’t eat anything they offer you, don’t drink anything they offer you, and don’t talk to people you’re not there to see. Finally, there’s only one way that money flows in the Mining District, and that’s out. If we find out you gave someone any type of coin, or other way of circumventing their sentence, you’ll be the next addition to the mining crew.”

Liz listened intently. These guards made this place sound much more sinister than she previously thought.

The guards opened the gates, and Liz walked through. Immediately she noticed a staleness to the air that blew through the gate, it even carried a different hue to that of the rest of the city.

The place Khama mentioned was fairly deep into the district, and right outside of the entrance to the mines itself. Quite frankly, the silver dust alone would be easy enough to find even if the person she was meeting didn’t have any. The air was thick of the stuff, and made breathing difficult. The metallic taste rested on her tongue, and assailed her sinuses. Liz pulled her cloak over her mouth in an attempt to filtrate the air, even if just a little bit. She saw others wearing masks and other types of makeshift respirators. If this is what it was like above, she could only imagine the state of the mines themselves. A few of the folks wandering around had entirely different skin colors to what she had seen before, they had a greyish hue to them. Their eyes showed a similar story on closer inspection. Liz tried

to pay them no mind, but they would occasionally look towards her. She adopted the mean mug she'd been taught and they almost immediately looked away.

She made her way to the building Khama described. Had he just told her it was the Foreman's house, she probably would have found it sooner. She knocked on the front door, and a very rugged looking man answered the door. His beard stretched down to his belly, and behind that was a tight brown leather shirt.

"I'm told you have a package for Khama, this is the right house right?" Liz inquired the Foreman but he looked almost over her head and scratched his beard.

"Khama? That the guy who came by and killed the lil beasty? Shit I suppose so. Come on in little lady sit down I have some tea on the kettle, make yerself at home now," The foreman showed her inside and shut the door behind her. The first thing that hit her was the tea, a nice fragrance in a sea of a choking metallic haze that was outside. Then another smell to rival what was under Khama's veil assailed her, something that must have at once been living, and had since decayed well beyond its expiration. The juxtaposition was enough to give her whiplash and it must have shown on her face. "Don't scrunch your face up like that, it's the lil beasty yer friend killed. Had to do a little field surgery on it, but I got what he needed. Just gimme one second, I'll go and fetch the pack for ya."

TRINITY

Trinity approached the gates to the Mining District. The guards reached out a hand to try and stop her initially. She produced the contract given to her from Davis and flashed it at the guards. They snarled at how cocksure she was, but let her through regardless. Trinity donned a bandana as she went through the gates to the Mining District. Even if it wasn't there yet, she knew clouds of smoke, metal

dust, and who knows what else polluted the areas of this city. She patted herself down to make sure she had all her blades, big and small in their rightful spots. Once she was sure she could cut someone at a moments notice, she continued on. Most of the folk here were kind, and fine. But Trinity knew that was only for the moment.

She couldn't help but notice the signs of the poisoning in almost every face she passed by. Not many people show it right away. It starts with a blueish tint to the lips. Then starts to grow outwards. The rest of the mouth starts to change color. Soon after the mouth is a sickly blue-grey, the iris in the eyes turn. This new coloration has a sinister look to it, even in the most innocent of babes eyes. The whole body will inevitably turn the sickly slate coloring. All the while the silver works its way into the brain. It corrodes and causes even scholars to go mad. There's lucrative jobs in this district. But spend too much time here, and you'll likely lose your sanity for it. If you manage to live amongst the ilk that work the mines. Each person sent here did something heinous to deserve it. Attempted regicide, mass killers, rapists, and even the occasional conman made to be an example to others. Trinity quickly made her way to the Foreman's house. The less of these people she had to speak to and deal with the better.

As the house came into sight, she noticed a smaller frame standing in the doorway. A woman, no doubt about it. Notably she was wearing an oversized black cloak. *Fucking Davis. Didn't think I could pull this, so you sent another person just in case? Fuck yourself, this is a one-person job.* The Foreman let the woman inside, and Trinity made her way around back. She needed to find another way in, and fast.

A window led to what looked like a storeroom. Trinity peeked in and saw about four men, each in front of a long slimy looking albino worm. From head to tail it must have measured eight feet long. The head had a mouth on it, but no eyes. The round hole that was this creature's mouth had serrated teeth around the outside of its maw, its mouth permanently hanging agape. On a nearby counter, she saw her prize, a pile of dust glittering on a plate. Next to it was some type of organic mass. Trinity

assumed at some point it must have been pulsing. A pale ooze was dripping out of one of its orifices onto the table. The door to the storeroom was thrown open, and Trinity ducked below the window.

“They’ve come to collect. Not the big’un though, just a small girl, having tea outside. Tiny, how much you say we could get if we sold the guts o’ this thing?” Trinity could faintly hear the men talking inside. Another man she presumed to be Tiny spoke up.

“At least two hundred coins. With that we could afford a tiny place in Old Town.” Trinity began putting together what was coming next, and began checking her blades again, and formulating a plan of action.

“Right, I think just two of you should come out with them knives drawn, should be enough to scare the daylights outta her,” Trinity peaked up and each of them had their backs to the window. Three of them left the storeroom, leaving only two for Trinity to deal with. Once she heard a small argument in the other room, she made her move.

Trinity smashed out the glass window with the pommel of her knife, reached to her waist and quickly threw two daggers into her targets. They skimmed the men, hardly producing a cut, but distracted the men long enough for her to make her move. She jumped through the window and began her attack in earnest. She reached to her waist, and in a flurry threw three more knives, one after the other into her target. Each struck true, and with each impact the man closest to the door staggered backwards, until he was left against the wall, bleeding from his leg, stomach, and upper chest.

During the assault, the other man finally snapped out of his confusion and charged at Trinity. His knife, bloody with the same pale ichor to that of the organ, was slow to attack, and Trinity made a game out of evading the blows. He would stab towards her chest and she would merely turn to the side. To say that the miner was outclassed would be an understatement. She returned the failed attacks by

taking her dagger, and piercing through the mans palm, forcing him to drop the knife. He screamed and clutched his hand. She giggled to herself.

“Take what you want please just let me live,”

Trinity looked deep into the man’s eyes. The blue hue had begun to show in his iris.

“Consider this a mercy killing.” Trinity pulled a second dagger from her hip, flashed the first across his neck, and buried the second into his temple with the second. At least she was able to deliver him a swift death. She moved to the other man who was still squirming around and finished him off.

The giant worm lay on the table. She had never seen something so grotesque before. She didn’t even know these things existed, let alone lived somewhere in the mines. Trinity grabbed the fleshy chunk on the table, carefully poured the dust into a small bag in the storeroom, and made to leave the way she’d come in. However she stopped and turned towards the door. There was a commotion going on, perhaps the little girl she saw was actually putting up a fight. Curiosity got the better of her, and she cracked the door and peaked through. There was her brother’s ward, Liz, fending off three assailants at once.

LIZ

Liz was sipping her tea when she heard the door to the backroom open. To her surprise, there were two more men with the Foreman.

“Alright little lady, here’s the deal. We’re gonna keep the beastly parts, and you’re gonna go back to your little clubhouse and tell them we wuz robbed.” Each of the men had a small knife she recognized to be used for carving. They raised these knives toward Liz. She placed the tea cup down and stood up.

“Mister, I don’t want to hurt your or your companions,” She reached both hands across her hips and drew her blades. “But I’m not leaving without whatever Khama helped you catch. So turn around, grab the package and I’ll be on my way.” The three men laughed.

“We gave you the easy option little lady.” The trio slowly advanced towards Liz. She had been trained to take on multiple people at once, but this was her first time fighting off more than one person in earnest. Despite her want to, she stood back and waited for them to make the first move. The Foreman thrust towards her, she sidestepped the attack, and swung towards his outstretched arm with the flat of her sword. If he had a good grip on the blade, it wouldn’t have gone clanging to the ground. She turned to face the other two who were quickly following up. She managed to avoid one blow, but the second knife found its way into her side. The man let go of the knife and backed away from Liz, a knife now sticking out of her side. Despite the commotion she was causing, her ears perked up at a scuffle in the other room.

“All I was supposed to do was pick up the fucking package,” She started swinging her blades wildly towards the man who stabbed her. She nicked him here and there as he flailed wildly to avoid the steel. Her curved sword struck his shoulder and left a huge extending down to his sternum. She heard the Foreman whimpering in the corner, crying from his injured pride more than anything. The only man left standing had a knife shaking in his hand. When Liz took a step towards him, the man dropped the knife and ran out the door. “Now, where the fuck is the package. My friend is in dire need, and I don’t have any more time for your bullshit,” She raised her sword to the Foreman’s neck, the knife still in her side. Blood trickled out around the knife, but it was better to stay in until she could bandage it. He pointed hastily to the door that was left slightly ajar.

The door flew open. Liz instinctively raised her sword towards it in case it was another assailant. To her surprise, the friendly bubbly face of Trinity, her mentor’s sister, walked through the door.

“Well color me impressed Liz! Three guys twice your size and you managed to make them yield? Even left a nice reminder for one of them not to fuck with you again,” She pointed to the man with a gash across his chest. “I do have to ask though, why did you take a thieving contract from Davis? Didn’t Isaac tell you he’s my personal fence?”

“Who the fuck is Davis?” Liz panted. Her mind was awash from the scene, and couldn’t reason why Trinity could possibly be here, although a familiar face was certainly welcome.

“Davey didn’t send you? You’re not supposed to pick up some beastly parts and dust?”

“Trin, I don’t know who the fuck Davis is, but yes Khama sent me to pick up some type of organ from the mines, and silver dust yes.” Liz lowered her blade, and began to poke at her wound.

“I hate to say this then sweetheart, but It’s mine. Got a contract. More coin than I’ve ever seen for this thing. Not about to give that up so Khama can eat it, or whatever his people would do with something like this,” Liz pulled the knife out of her side and applied pressure and a quick field bandage to her wound.

“He’s dying Trin. Chemist told him this stuff can help. You’re like a sister to Isaac, and have been like a second mentor to me. We’re both fond of Khama, and Isaac left him in my charge. So with all due respect, I need you to give whatever they had back there, and go back to ‘Davis’ empty handed.” She stood upright and re-readied her blades in case Trinity tried anything. The two men in the room with them were quiet as church mice watching the two bounty hunters square off.

“I just saw him two days ago and he seemed fine,” Trinity made no move to draw a weapon, or attempt to run. Liz could sense the slightest bit of worry in Trinity’s voice, even though she tried to mask it. “He had a cough but nothing serious. Are you sure Liz? If I find out you’re lying to me...”

“I’m not lying. Go see him yourself when you get back, he’s been hiding it from everyone. He tried to tough it out. You know how stubborn he gets,” She reached out towards Trinity with an open hand. “Whatever you’ve collected, I need it Trin. Please.”

“Fuck,” Trinity handed over the sack containing the dust and flesh. “I’ll get this sorted on my end. You make sure Khama gets better. Give him my regards too,”

“Thank you Trin,” Liz finally exhaled. “For what its worth, If I hear anything worth looking into in the Upper City, I’ll let you know,”

Trinity winked at her on the way out.

Liz sat down on the rickety chair she was waiting in. She took a sip of the tea she poured for herself and readied herself to leave. The Chemist will fix Khama right up.

TRINITY

Trinity stormed out of the Foreman’s house. Her head was abuzz with what just happened. She left the Mining District as quickly as she could. Davis had quite a bit of explaining to do when she got back to the Trade District.

She opened the door to Davis’s building and walked over to his office. The door was already open.

“Trinity! I knew you’d make quick work of things how’d it go?” She didn’t say a word, but flipped a dagger from her belt, reached back and hurled it towards Davis. The blade stuck into the wall right above his head. “What the fuck are you doing?!”

“Did you know what those were for?” She drew her long dagger and placed it gently against his neck.

“All I knew was that something was killed that was worth a lot of money Trinity I swear,”

“Bullshit. You don’t give jobs unless you know the whole story so fucking spill it,” She grabbed his hand and placed it on the table, the blade followed until it rested on his pinky.

“They told me another bounty hunter went in, and killed the thing, and hauled it out of the mines, “ His eyes were now locked on the dagger. “They told me it was killed for medicinal reasons. But that was it,”

“Davis. I’m going to tell you this once so you understand the severity of what’s going on. That was apparently meant for my friend, who is currently on his deathbed. Had I followed this, and brought back the organ, He would likely die,” Trinity’s hand was still. Davis was shaking like a leaf. “Now to me that sounds a lot like attempted murder in a roundabout way. And I know you’re normally good with keeping client identity secret, but I need you to tell me who gave you this tip,” She pressed the dagger into his pinky to draw blood. “Or else you’re going to be the one who faces justice for this crime.

“It’s...” He started to tear up. “It was Jeremy. He gave me the tip about it, please god don’t kill me Trinity. You know how far we go back please,” He was sniffing like a child.

“Fucking Jeremy,” She wasn’t surprised. She’d stolen both for, and from Jeremy more times than she could count. A self-proclaimed philanthropist, and full blown narcissist. “If he gets back in contact with you let me know,” She removed the blade from Davis’s pinky. “Also I think this goes without saying, but if any more jobs come from him, I won’t be taking them.”

“Of course Trinity. I’ll let you know as soon as he reaches out I promise. If there’s anyway I can make this up to you just let me know,” Tears were streaming down his face. Trinity walked over to the bookcase and started removing books and throwing them to the floor, revealing a hidden safe.

“I’m still taking my cut.”