Hello reader! This is the first chapter of my current novel project “Night of Silver Dreams”. It’s inspired from a D&D game I played in. It started as D&D fanfic but is rapidly becoming its own thing. Hopefully you find it interesting.. :)

**Night of Silver Dreams: Chapter 1**

**By Kayodé Lycaon**

**~1900 words, PG rating**

“Careful Silver, this looks like Urus’s library,” my uncle, Red of Sunset, whispers.

My tail flicks as I peer through the gloom into the inner sanctum which had belonged to one of the only-recently defeated Wizard Kings. Both of us try not to pant. The topical air is thick and heavy, made all the more stifling under the combined insulation of our gambesons and jack vests.

With the ease of long practice, I scan the room and note the east wall has collapsed, but the thick wooden beams that hold up the floor are still intact under all of the rubble. Broken glass of every color glitters on the floor.

The room’s architecture is new. The corridors we walked through had been build by native Dwarves using nearby stone. This room wasn’t. It was crafted by someone who had never experienced the heavy, wet heat of the jungle. The wood is the same imported ”maple” used in the buildings of the Merchant Princes who invaded half a century ago, a time before I came to this land.

I inhale deeply, nostrils flaring. The gut-wrenching stench of undeath is faint—months old… yet. The fur on the back of my neck tingles. The books on the shelves are pristine. The air is almost fragrant despite the humidity. And the dust on the floor is untouched. I look back at my golden-furred uncle and see his flattened ears.

“Magic?” I ask—more statement than question; we both can feel the static on our fur.

Sunset flicks an ear uncertainly and his paw reaches for the flute sheathed on his belt. I draw my sword, ready to defend him if his music attracts unwanted attention.

He lifts the wooden instrument to his muzzle and blows softly. The clear, high notes of *mage-eyes* begin to swill around us. They brush against my fur as a gentle summer breeze. Then he plays the notes of my name, Night of Silver Dreams, and I feel bathed in the moonlight I was born under. Then my vision blurs for an instant. When it clears, I see the faint outlines of magic. Glowing runes inscribed on the bookshelves power a *protection-against-weather-and-time* spell.

A chill runs from my hackles to the tip of my tail as I see how it lays on the broken beams. That spell is the only thing keeping the ceiling from collapsing. I have no way to know how much power remains in the runes.

“How long until the spell gives out?” I ask.

“Several months,” Sunset replies. Then he gives me a perfect feline grin. “Less if I perform an unbinding.”

I snort and sheath my sword. “I don’t see any other spells active.”

“Nor do I,” he holds his flute in one hand, ready. “You have a better eye for books. I’ll keep watch.”

I nod. He’s at least twenty rains older than I am, but it’s been a long time since I was an apprentice. I’ll never have the proficiency to cast more than minor magicks, but thanks to him, I know as much as any journeyman wizard.

Glass crunches under my boots. The first shelf is full of histories. Any book is valuable, but even with my uncle’s bag, we can’t hold everything. Full, it can weigh twenty stone or more—the *feather-weight* spell bound on it was the best our small town’s wizard could do. The cost of a proper portable library would feed our family for decades.

I move to the second shelf and run a claw along the rows of books. A hiss escapes my muzzle and my tail lashes.

“What is it?” my uncle asks, unconcerned.

“Necromancy.”

“Spellbook?”

“Looks like a researcher’s journal.”

His green eyes go distant as he consults his mental list of who we could safely sell it to. My stomach twists. One of the Wizard King’s spells had gone bad. Every creature of intelligence in the island’s interior had turned black and died. What followed still haunts my dreams. Tens of thousands of Dwarven and Kirsēn slaves and hundreds of the human servants rose in undeath. My wife was one of the few Kirsē who had been on the coast, out of the spell’s reach.

“We should destroy it,” I growl.

My uncle shakes his head. “If it’s original magical research, this will buy us three days in the Jade Athenaeum.”

My ears flatten but I don’t argue. Access to the Athenaeum and it’s thousands of shelves of every arcane work know to exist was worth more than we could ever get from the shelf of histories and the journal combined. I pull the journal out slightly, so we know to grab it after we finished going through the shelves, and continue. Four more journals and a pair of scrolls get chosen. But when I get to the fourth shelf, it shimmers. My eyes can see the haze of a *false-image* spell, but can’t see through it. The runes behind the image glow. In their shape, I can see a border separating it from *protection-against-weather-and-time*, meaning we should be able to target it specifically.

“Got illusion magic,” I say, pointing at the shelf in front of me.

“Any triggers?” Sunset asks as he looks around behind him.

“None that I can see.”

“I can’t risk any binding spells over there, unless you’re feeling especially lucky today.” He shrugs. “You’ll have to go unprotected.”

“Sure,” I grumble. “Oh well. Curiosity is a virtue.”

“Until it isn’t,” Sunset finishes grimly.

I straighten my back and plant my feet. Higher levels of magic are unforgiving. Their patterns either succeed or they don’t. Unless you carefully pluck at the threads, they have a tendency to shatter when forced. I focus and will *mage-eyes* to push through.

And audible pop startles me as the threads of the illusion unravel, then something shrieks in my head. Sunset snarls.

“Fuck,” I whisper. “Now everything within three miles around us know I tripped a ward.”

“Fortunately not,” he replies. “That one bounced off the curtain wall.”

I look at the bookshelf in front of me and sigh. There had been nothing behind the spell except an empty shelf. Whatever it had contained must be gone. I start to look at the next shelf and realize the line of runes on the empty one are slightly different. There is a seam between two bindings. Curious, I reach a paw around the lip of the shelf and feel the back of the rimmed edge. My claws catch on engraved runes.

“I think this shelf moves,” I say as I feel the pattern. “There is a separate binding inside the shelf.”

“Let me take a look.”

I draw my sword and switch places with him. Swiveling my ears around, I only hear the distant rustle of wind. Our breathing is all but silent.

“You’re right.” He grunts. “Won’t move though.” He steps up behind me and slaps a paw on my shoulder. “Figure it out.”

A few minutes later, I’m using a mirror to examine the runes my claw had felt and find a latch. It clicks open. After finding five more, the bookshelf moves when I pull it.

“Ready.” I look over at Sunset. He flicks an ear.

I pull and it slides out smoothly. Then my ears fly up and my tail puffs out. What looks like polished electrum glitters in the light. Hanging in the center of the inset wall is a full set of elven plate, flanked by a longsword and a deep midnight-blue cloak embroidered with tiny diamonds to the other. My heart catches in my throat as I take in the flowing curves of the armor. Second age high-elf work—had to be; which meant the metal was star mithril from one of the lost celestial realms.

Never would I find something like this again. Elves did not bury their dead with their possessions, but passed them on whoever would be worthy of them. No one but a Wizard King would be arrogant or powerful enough to risk the immortal ire of the Elves.

“Koros” I breathed.

Sunset’s head whips around. “What did you find?”

I just point at the wall until he comes over.

“Koros,” he gasps.

He stares that the display until I come to my senses.

“We are so fucked.” I gulp.

My uncle coughs before swallowing. “We can’t take this.”

“Nor can we leave it.”

“No. We can’t,” he agrees.

“We should send it to your lab. Can you draw a teleportation circle here?”

“Chalk doesn’t work very well on carpet.”

“Right. How about the hallway to the courtyard?”

“More exposed than I like,” he considers. “But, it’ll do.”

“Go and start drawing. I’ll bring this a few pieces at a time.”

He nods and grabs the books we’d selected. Then he wishes me good fortune before hurrying off.

I reach for the breastplate. To my amazement, it lifts easily, weighing no more than a wool tunic. Using both paws, I follow Sunset at a slower pace. I set the armor as carefully as I can in the middle of the circle he started drawing. Then I go back. Taking only one or two pieces at time, I bring the rest of the armor—praying any Elf that finds it will be in a tolerant mood and understand I treated their property with as much respect as I could. But I couldn’t resist examining the cloak more fully.

Tiny threads of silvery white mithril connect the diamonds set into it, appearing to form constellations in the night sky. The magic woven into it makes the fur on my paw tingle. I rub the beautiful fabric and the pad of my thumb glides across it like silk. Then I examine the brooch. A crescent moon nestled among stars. A sketch from a book I’d read years ago comes to mind. This must be a Night Guard cloak.

Against, my better judgment, I settle the cloak on my shoulders and feel its magic resist me. A wistful smile appears on my muzzle. The armor, while valuable, didn’t have any active magics on it. This cloak was ancient and its magic was still as strong as when it was created.

I look up at the last piece remaining, the sword. The scabbard is a deep blue leather fastened with star mithril and infused with magic. With great reverence, I lift it from the hook. Then I wrap my paw around the hilt wrapped in the same blue leather and slowly draw it. The sword appears to be no more than a steel blade, devoid of any magic.

Then suddenly, I know I’m not alone in the room. I whirl around to face… an empty hallway. My breath catches in my throat. I can see nothing—even with *mage-eyes*.

Very few things can hide from my uncle’s version of the spell. None of them are likely to be interested in our continued good health.

The presence grows menacingly. I grip the sword tighter and it settles into my paws, as if it was made for me. The cloak hangs on my shoulders like a silk robe as I slowly turn around.

The unseen menace pauses, as if in consideration. Then it vanishes and then the room is silent, except for my panting.

Thank you so much for this story! It's a really strong opening, and the fact that it begins *in media res* really works to its strength, as it immediately gives a sense of urgency. While it takes a bit to get there, I get a good sense of how the characters look and move, and their attitudes are clear from their banter.

First-person-present is something of a bold choice here. It will take some careful handling, as it takes a bit more work from the reader to follow along with. Past tense will naturally flow more smoothly as our ears are attuned to stories being a retelling. The areas where this will cause the most friction are sentences which start with 'I'. Not to say that you should avoid them entirely, but a reader coming across "I reach for the breastplate" will really get the sense of this being a retelling of an RPG setting. In instances where the POV character is performing a single, simple action, the text might be better served by leading with a subordinate clause, like "Surprised at just how light it is, I lift the breastplate". Again, no need to get rid of them all; "My breath catches in my throat. I can see nothing--even with mage-eyes" works well because the first sentence performs the same function.

I'm super interested to see where this goes, especially with how the world gets fleshed out. The magic system, the visual elements, the banter, they're all incredibly strong. Thank you!