# The Minotaur’s Maze

This is a novelization of a D&D campaign, told more or less from the perspective of my character, Astalir.

# Chapter 1 – Good Hunting

A robot, a bugbear, and a dragonborn walk into a bar.

The bartender, a bearded dwarf, cleans a glass. “What can I get for you, dragon-looking dude?”

The dragonborn leans his staff against the counter. “Sweet tea, please.”

The dwarf cusses in dwarfish as he fills a cup. “That’ll be 1 silver.”

“Here.” The dragonborn plinks down a gold piece.

“He doesn’t have any silver.” The robot laughs under his breath to the bugbear.

The dragonborn looks his way. “Excuse me?”

“Thanks for the tip.” The dwarf pockets the gold.

“No I need change.” The dragonborn clarifies.

“And he’s strapped for cash.” The bugbear whispers to the robot.

“What was that?”

The robot and bugbear stop talking.

The bugbear turns to the dwarf. “I’ll have a water.”

“1 copper.” The dwarf produces a glass of water.

The bugbear searches through his coin purse. He grumbles as he hands the dwarf a gold piece.

The dragonborn chuckles. “Who doesn’t have a copper piece?”

“You want change?”

“Yes, please.” The bugbear grumbled.

“And is strapped for cash?” The dragonborn chuckles as he takes a sip of his sweet tea.

“Ignore him.” The robot squinted at the dragonborn. “I’ll have a cup of vinegar.”

“3 copper.”

The robot slides 3 copper from the bugbear’s pile over the counter.

The bugbear grumbles but continues pocketing the change.

The dwarf serves the drinks and the three sip up.

The bugbear orders a steak. The robot takes it without asking.

“Hey!” The bugbear growls. He bites the robot’s hand off. “My steak.” He chews and lets the robot’s hand sloppily fall out of his mouth.

The robot picks up his hand, reattaches it, and finds there’s meat all over it. “Mm! Steak!” The robot licks the meat off his hand.

The robot tries to steal more steak, but the bugbear slaps him away, and accidentally also hits the dragonborn.

“Hey!” The dragonborn breathes fire onto the bugbear, singing his head hair.

“How about I kill him right now?” The robot draws a dagger.

The bugbear growls.

“Enough! No brawling, no shanking, and absolutely NO fire breathing in my tavern!” The dwarf breaks up the fight.

Everyone calms down.

“Sorry, I’m not looking for trouble.” The dragonborn admits. “I’m just looking for a quest.”

“Well do I got a job for you ruffians.” The dwarf pulls out a map. “I need you to go to this location and find someone named Silvia. I’ll pay you 300gp.”

“300 gold? Sure I’ll do it.”

“We’ll join you.” The robot volunteers.

“No, thank you.”

“You’ll need the help.” The dwarf agrees. “You might need more adventurers.”

“Ok, fine.” The dragonborn walks away with the map.

“Hold on! That map costs 3 silver!” The dwarf yells.

The dragonborn pays for it. As the robot and bugbear follow him out, a mysterious figure sits in a corner watching them.

They walk to a church of Almainter, the God of Sun and Law. As they get there, the church lets out. The congregation pours out and the cleric appears to close the doors.

This cleric is also a dragonborn, and has glorious green scales.

The dragonborn walks up to him and slaps him.

The cleric dodges and shouts, “Hey! That’s attempted assault! By the law, you are hereby banned from this church!”

The dragonborn pulls his hand back. “Sorry. I’m looking for Silvia. Is she here?”

“Who’s asking?”

The party tells him about the dwarf’s quest and they go back to the tavern. As they leave the church, a peasant appears along the wall scrubbing the pure white walls.

Back at the tavern, the cleric asks the dwarf about this quest. The dwarf explains it, and the cleric writes up a contract. After it’s made official, the dwarf throws the contract into the bag of 300 gold. It’s made clear that the 300 gold is for the whole party, and not for each individual member.

They leave the tavern. As they leave, an old man in tattered robes holds out a tin cup. “Alms for the poor?”

“Look at this poor old man.” The robot remarks.

“Here, have this.” The bugbear throws a bone with meat on it into the cup.

“Thank you, young man.” The old man takes the bone and starts chewing. “Very crunchy.”

“You better not be causing any kind of disturbance out here.” The cleric scolds. “Or I’ll arrest you for loitering.”

“Well how about he joins the party?” The bugbear suggests. “Then he won’t be loitering.”

“Are you good at adventuring, old man?” The robot leans over.

“Do I look like I am?” The old man shows his arm. It’s all skin and bones.

“No.”

The old man holds out a hand. “Help me up?”

“Ok, I see. You are not fit for adventuring.”

“Maybe he has some wise words of wisdom?” The bugbear asks. “What’s your wisdom?”

“Don’t sniff your finger after you poop.”

“Good enough for me.” The bugbear picks him up. Some of the old man’s clothes clip through the bug bear’s fur, but no one notices.

“Oh, are you taking me home?”

“If you want.”

“He has a home?” The robot asks.

“Do you?”

“It’s over there.” The old man points.

The bugbear follows the old man’s pointers to behind the tavern. There’s two trees behind the tavern with a rope tied between them. A tarp hangs on the rope.

“Here you go.” The bugbear puts the old man in the tree.

“Thanks, young bear man.” The old man gnaws on the bone.

“Here, be dignified. Use this.” The robot hands the old man a dagger.

The old man cuts the bone into 4 pieces and hands the dagger back. “Thanks.”

“Ok, let’s get on with the quest.” The dragonborn pushes the party onward.

The party journeys out of town, following the map. The dragonborn leads them into a forest in the middle of the wilderness. They hear a handpan musical instrument playing next to a river. They approach the sound, and find a firbolg sitting on a rock.

The robot claps loudly. It sounds like pots and pans banging together. “Very lovely. Do you want to go on an adventure with us?”

“Oh hello.” The firbolg sets down his instrument. “I suppose I could go on an adventure. What kind?”

“Dungeoneering. We need to find someone.” The robot climbs on the bugbear’s back.

The firbolg shrugs. “I’m not sure.”

The bugbear pulls out a flute. “I really like your music. I also play an instrument.” The bugbear plays a tune.

Jodi applauds. “Very nice song. You all seem like very nice people. I think I will come along.”

“Ok, great. Let’s get on with the mission.” The dragonborn pounds his staff on the ground.

“By the way, I’m Jodi. I’m a firbolg.”

“New friend!” The bugbear picks up Jodi. “I’m Micro.”

The robot nods.

“What’s your names?” Jodi asks.

“Silber Posten.” The robot announces.

“Dralth.” The cleric states.

“I’m Trent.” The dragonborn looks at the map. “And I’m trying to use this map to see where we’re going.”

“What do we have here?” Silber the robot looks through his scope and spies a deer across the river.

The deer drinks water from the river under the shade of an oak tree. Its antlers are large and glorious.

“What a beauty you are.” Silber takes his rifle and aims it at the deer.

“Hold on, don’t kill it!” Jodi protests.

“Fine, I won’t.” Silber shoots the deer. The bullet hits its antler, breaking it off near the base. “I just wanted its horn anyway.”

“It’s called an ‘antler’.” Dralth the cleric corrected.

Jodi looked on, mouth agape.

Dralth comforted him. “It’s legal, see? It’s a buck. It’s buck hunting season.”

“I guess.” Jodi agreed.

“Now just to go across the river and collect my antler.” Silber points Micro the bugbear across the river.

But before their eyes, the unexpected happened. The deer’s missing antler magically floats up into the air and reattaches itself to the deer’s head. The deer sprints away. the damaged antler jostles in place as it runs.

Micro carries Silber across the river.

“What the?” Silber examines the place the deer was. “That was weird.”

Jodi breathes a sigh of relief as he watches the deer escape. “Ok, these people don’t *kill* wild animals, so they’re still good people.”

Trent and Jodi also cross the river, leaving Dralth alone by himself.

A random owlbear appears!

Trent runs back across the river to escape. He picks up a rock, tosses it in the air, and magically propels it through the air to the owlbear.

The owlbear dodges it, and turns its rage to Trent. It crosses the river as if it was nothing, and swings a claw at Trent.

Dralth acts fast. He shines a bright light on the owlbear, causing it to miss Trent.

The owlbear lunges forward with its teeth, taking a big chunk out of Trent’s body. Thankfully it misses the map.

Silber takes his rifle and aims it at the owlbear. BANG! A bullet gets lodged in the owlbear’s head. The owlbear survives. “Giddyup! I gotta be the one to kill him!” He prods Micro to run along the river towards the owlbear.

Micro the bugbear wields his polearm, which is a really long weapon. So long, in fact, that he can reach across the entire river and hit the owlbear. The owlbear turns to Micro just in time to see Micro scream and project an image of a spectral bear around him.

Dralth shines another light in the owlbear’s face. This one is a searing scorching ray of light. It fries the owlbear’s brain and it falls over dead.

Trent holds his gut. It bleeds profusely. “How am I going to complete this quest now?”

Out of nowhere, 2 brown bears appear behind Jodi.

Jodi speaks in a pleasant voice to the bears. “Hey, we’re all friends here. Go on about your day and we’ll go on about ours. Does that sound good?”

The bears calm down and walk away.

Jodi contemplates the situation. “Ok, they killed the owlbear mercilessly, but it’s a monster. They are good people for taking it out before it hurts people. They’re good people. They let the brown bears go about—"

“Ooh! Aren’t you a beaut!” The robot takes his rifle and shoots one of the bears. It dies instantly. “Score!”

Jodi’s mouth falls agape. “Ok, maybe they’re hungry?”

“This bear is mine! Yogi Bear demands it!” Micro roars and charges at the other living bear. “No one else is allowed to attack it! I’m so blood thirsty!”

Micro thrusts his polearm straight into the bear’s side. The bear bleeds out and roars.

“You can’t tell me what to do!” Trent takes a moment to cast a spell, ignoring his wound. “Jim’s Magic Missile!” He shoots three glowing projectiles at the bear, pelting it in its side, but not doing much.

“You ruined my challenge!” Micro angrily declares.

The brown bear, enraged, attacks Micro and severely wounds him.

A fly wanders into Jodi’s agape mouth.

Micro shanks the bear dead. “I challenged the bear! You ruined my challenge!” Micro ran across the river towards Trent.

“Oh crap.” Trent runs away. “Magnify Gravity!” He casts it on the ground on Micro, but Micro shakes it off like it was nothing, even though he gets a scratch and Silber gets a scratch. “Oh crap!”

“You’re mine!” Silber takes his rifle and shoots Trent in the leg.

“Oh shit!” Trent falls face first into the mud.

Micro stalks closer to Trent.

“Hold on!” Dralth the cleric puts up a hand. “Killing him is illegal.”

Jodi takes a deep breath. “Good. The cleric will stop them from killing him, and he will get healed. They’re not all bad people.”

Silber pulls out a scroll from his bag. “He’s my target.”

Dralth reads over the scroll. It says that there’s a bounty on this dragonborn and that Silber is a licensed bounty hunter. “Mm. So it is legal. Carry on.” He hands back the scroll.

Jodi sweats.

Micro stabs Trent through the chest, pinning him to the ground.

Trent breathes heavily, trying to stay alive.

Silber hops off Micro and lands hard on Trent’s back. He takes his dagger and slices Trent’s dragon head clean off his shoulders. “Bounty acquired!” Silber presents his prize. He bags it.

Jodi almost faints. He goes invisible and runs away. “These are NOT good people! The cleric lets anything happen, the bugbear attacks anything that moves, and the robot is a MURDERER.” Jodi breathes rapidly out of control. “I can’t… I can’t take this…”

CRUNCH

A deer appears out of the woods. It leans down to take a bite of grass.

Jodi calms down. “Oh hello.”

The deer turns to him. It continues chewing. The antler jiggles weirdly as it does so. A crack is very visible near the base.

“Oh, you’re the deer the robot shot. Are you hurt?” Jodi crouched and approached the deer. “Come here, boy.”

The deer approached and knelt his head down. It sniffed Jodi’s hand.

“That’s it, come here.” Jodi holds the deer’s head. “Oh you poor boy. Here, let me help you with that.” Jodi rips a piece of his clothes and ties it up on the antler. “There you go.”

The antler was strapped in place. The deer backed up and moved its head all around. The antler stayed in place. The deer looked at him and smiled.

“I’m glad you like it.” Jodi breathed a happy sigh. “I’m glad you’re better.”

“Thank you so much!” The deer spoke.

“Ah!” Jodi jolted.

“I really appreciate it. I wouldn’t want to have to wait another season for them to grow back.”

“Oh, no worries.” Jodi regained his composure. “You talk?”

“Ah, yes, I am a Deerkin, a sentient deer species.”

“I’ve heard of you. I haven’t ever seen your kind before.”

“We… stay hidden. Most of the time.”

“Well it’s nice to see you.” Jodi hugged the deer. “Am I sure glad to see you. And see that you’re ok.” Jodi cried onto the deer’s shoulder.

“Is everything… ok?”

“It is now.” Jodi nodded. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Yes.”

“Are people all bad?”

The deer squinted and sighed. “I’ve found that people, on the whole, are good. But there’s always a hoof-ful of people that are so bad that they bring the average down.”

Jodi cried even harder.

“But they’re mostly good. Like you!” The deer nuzzles Jodi’s backside. “You bring the average way way up. So just, keep your chin up, yeah? Things will get better.”

“Thank you.” Jodi wiped some tears from his eyes. “I’m Jodi, by the way. I’m a firbolg.”

“I know what you are. And I am Astalir the Deer.”

“It’s nice to meet you Astalir.”

“You too, Jodi, you too.”

# Chapter 2 – The Minotaur’s Maze

Apparently at some point, the party captured Astalir and tied him up with a rope so he couldn’t escape. They traveled together to the dungeon. Astalir tried using his tricks to escape, but they found him everytime. They tried talking to him, but all he would say was, “BLEAT!” He didn’t feel like he could trust them to know that he could talk. They all thought he was just a magical deer.

The party walks along until they find a traveling merchant. “Hello, fellow travelers!” The merchant greets them. “Care to test your luck?”

Suey, a dragonborn that recently joined the party, shrugged. “Why not?”

“Great!” The merchant rubbed his hands together excitedly. “I have many decks for you to choose from!”

“Did you just say the deck of many things?” Silber Posten asked.

“No, I said ‘many decks’. And those decks are: the magical deck, the weapon deck, the fancy deck, and last but not least: the random oddities deck.”

“Ooh what’s in the random oddities deck?” Suey asked.

“Draw a card and see.”

Suey takes a card. The card twists morphs in his hand into a mug of fresh hot coffee. The handle landed perfectly in his hand so he held it steadily. Suey breathed the smell in. “Coffeeeee…” He sighed, letting out a little bit of fire into the cup. He gulped it down. His eyes widened and stature rose. “Wow! I feel great!”

“Ah yes, the coffee cup of energizing. A most coveted oddity, for sure.” The merchant hands the deck of oddities to Silber.

“This looks like a good deck to draw from.” Silber draws a card. The card puffs into a cloud of air and surrounds Silber’s face. “What the…”

“The oddity of waterbreathing, truly a classic.” The merchant turns to Micro the bugbear.

“Me want hit things.” Micro grabs a card from the weapon deck. The card turns into a bomb with a laughing face drawn on it. “What do?”

The merchant cackles. “Let’s just say… it’s great for when your jokes don’t land.”

The merchant looks at Astalir for a brief second. Astalir takes the opportunity to take a card from the magical deck, which he happened to know was actually the deck of many things. The card he drew vanished and he with it.

The party gasped, trying to figure out where Astalir went.

The merchant shrugged. “He got teleported to the minotaur’s dungeon. He’ll be safe there until the minotaur comes to collect him.”

In the dungeon, Astalir sat in a cage. He looked around the dark room with his nightvision. There was a chest on the other side of the room. He couldn’t reach it with his hooves because of the cage. The cage was made of iron and couldn’t be effected by Astalir’s reality warping abilities. At least not yet. He examined the lock. It was an ordinary lock that he could very easily pick.

Footsteps.

Astalir was now aware he wasn’t alone. Perhaps this cage was designed to keep him in, but it could also keep whatever is out there out. He could use it for protection.

He surmised that he was in the minotaur’s maze somewhere. The party would come eventually to raid the maze. He had hoped that the party could be the distraction he needed to go in undetected, but now he knew that they could not be trusted.

He shrugged. Might as well use the cage while he cast Comprehend Languages. He waited until the cast time was over to unlock the cage. He found a treasure chest in the room with him. It had a nameplate on it that simply read, “Sandwich”. He picked the lock and opened the chest. It was empty, save for a single sandwich.

As he picked it up, it suddenly started glowing blue. What kind of magic was this? Whatever it was, he’d have to take it back to someone that knew how to detect magic. He wasn’t about to bite into a magical sandwich without knowing what it did. He pocketed the sandwich and took it with him.

He explored the maze, taking note of all the booby traps. He marked a red X on the ground where all the booby traps were. The maze was also riddled with monsters of all kinds. Astalir easily outsmarted them with his illusions. While they were chasing fake deer, he was running around. He led a few of them into the booby traps they were supposed to be guarding. He snuck around a lot too, staying in the shadows when possible.

Finally he searched all the rooms and didn’t find any documents. All rooms except one. He found a secret passage that led into a lobby with other rooms branching out from it. He ventured in, sensing the presence of a powerful being. And the presence—or lack there of—of magic. An antimagic field. His illusions didn’t work inside. And the room had next to no cover. The being inside was a huge minotaur—the huge minotaur.

Astalir turned back and went back to the cave entrance. A group of skeletons followed him, and this time he couldn’t shake them. He ran all the way back to the cage and locked it. The skeletons left him alone.

Fine. As much as he distrusted the party, he would need them to go in and take the brunt of the hits for him if he was going to get to the documents. He was sure the documents were in the unexplored rooms just past the antimagic field.

He waited for hours, but finally, the party did come.

“Deer!” Micro the bugbear ran up to the cage and hugged it. “Don’t worry! I free you!” Micro squeezed the cage tight, but instead of freeing Astalir, he just decreased the amount of space he had inside.

“BLEEEAT!” Astalir cried, trying to get him to stop.

“Skeletons!” Suey exclaimed, getting into battle positions. “They’re mine! I challenge them!”

“Did I hear someone say challenge?” Micro dropped the cage and stood at the doorway to the room with the skeletons. “Suey, you may not leave until you have defeated the skeletons.”

Suey nodded as he readied his bow.

“And everyone else? No one enters this room until the skeletons are dead. And no one except Suey can hit the skeletons!”

The party agreed.

Suey used the space to fire a volley of flaming arrows at the three skeletons in the room. He shot one, knocking its head off. He shot another one, shattering its arm bone. The skeletons fought back with mocks and cackles, but Suey shrugged them off. He was too focused to worry about the skeletons taunts. He was very handily defeating them.

The party had agreed to not interrupt this epic battle, but Astalir didn’t hear Micro. When Micro was announcing the challenge, Astalir was unlocking the cage and opening it when Dralf jumped on him.

“I’m going to ride you deer!” Dralf kicked his side. “Giddyup!”

Astalir bucked wildly and finally got Dralf to get off. Dralf stammered backward to regain his balance. Yep, this party was crazy. Astalir ran off to avoid Dralf, running deeper into the maze. He unknowingly crossed the threshold that Micro had laid down.

“Deer! Get back here!” Micro tripped Astalir with his polearm.

Astalir crashed into the ground. A flaming arrow shot over his head, just missing his antlers. Astalir skidded to a halt, getting serious rug burn. Micro grabbed him and pulled him back out of the room.

“I said no one is to enter! Stay put.” Micro plopped the wounded deer behind him and continued to guard the threshold.

The skeletons mocked Suey, making him lose confidence. But Micro encouraged him, and he won. He exploded the final skeleton and learned a new trick when fighting with a bow that allowed him to attack faster. Suey high-fived Micro.

The party took a short rest. Astalir licked his wounds and got up.

“BLEEEAT!” Astalir gestured for the party to follow him through the maze, but they split up and went searching down paths that had already been searched.

Micro somehow found out about the sandwich that Astalir found and hunted him down.

Astalir smiled when he saw him, but ran in fear when he heard what he said.

“Give me sandwich! Or else!”

Astalir ran away, running for a trap. If he could dodge it, maybe Micro would step on it and get slowed.

But Micro was too fast, and caught Astalir by surprise. He grabbed him and kept him from escaping. “Where sandwich?” Micro felt around Astalir. Astalir’s true form was on display, but he hid the fact that he was wearing armor and a backpack. Micro felt around inside Astalir’s invisible backpack. “I know deer have. But where?”

“BLEEEAT!”

“I speak bleat, too.” Micro’s tongue glowed and stretched. It took the form of a deer’s tongue. “BLEAT!” (“Where sandwich?”)

Astalir was taken aback. “BLEEAT!” (“You speak deer?”)

Micro responded in deer, “I speak all animal languages. Now where sandwich?”

“Oh, you mean this sandwich?” Astalir telekinetically floated the sandwich out of his bag and over a trap. “What do you want with it?”

“Need to bring back party member.”

“Who?”

“Robot sniper guy. He drew bad card, he become sandwich.”

Astalir’s eyes widened, and he smiled. “Oh. Maybe I *should* eat it then.”

“No! Give!” Micro jumped for the sandwich, catching it in his mouth. He fell into the trap. The floor gave out from under him. A deep pit threatened to swallow him whole. But Micro was strong. He clung to the edge and pulled himself onto the ledge. “So that what red mark mean.”

Astalir ran away. He didn’t want to be there when the killer robot was let loose again. Astalir ran to the lobby area and waited for the party to finally arrive.

Finally, they did. They were all battered and bruised from all the traps in the maze. They looked utterly exhausted, except for Suey, who was still energized from his morning coffee.

It didn’t matter. All Astalir need was a distraction so he could go find the documents. Once they entered the room, he had free reign to search the area. It didn’t mattered if they died, his mission could still be a success.

The party, consisting of Suey, Silber Posten, Micro, Dralf, and a big tanky dwarf, entered the minotaur’s room as expected. Astalir waited in the lobby.

“Who dares enter Timmy’s throne room?” The minotaur yelled in minotaur. “I, Timmy, will devour you all!”

Timmy roared with all his might as the party collapsed on him.

Silber Posten tried to charge a magical shot but the sniper round came out as just a normal bullet. “It’s an antimagic field!” He ran for cover.

“Huh?” Suey turns to watch Silber Posten flee as he pulls his arrow back. He tries to engulf his arrow in flames, but instead pulls a muscle and drops the arrow. He loads another arrow and pulls back, pushing through his new weird muscle pain. But he pulls too far and his bow string snaps. “Crap! Now I gotta repair this!” He retreats to a side room. For safety.

The big dwarf, Dralf, and Micro rush Timmy, overwhelming him with weapon damage.

But Timmy is no push over: he strikes the dwarf and severely wounds him.

The party is doing exactly what they need to. What they need to for Astalir to complete his mission. He rushes into a side room and ransacks it. No documents, but he did find a treasure chest with some writing on it. “Treasure” it said. Nope, not what he was looking for. Astalir ran for the other side room.

Meanwhile, the battle raged on. The three melee party members crowd around him and draw his focus.

This gives Silber an opportunity to strike very precisely. He aims for Timmy’s eye and hit dead center.

But Timmy noticed it and used a wind rune to redirect the attack. It hit Micro square in the face. He didn’t take any damage from the bullet, but it bought Timmy time to counterattack. Timmy crippled the dwarf. The dwarf limped onto the ground.

Suey retreated during all this into the room that Astalir hadn’t yet searched. He found a document labeled “Timmy’s Weaknesses” and started reading it aloud. “Timmy is weak to snipers and mages. Thus, the antimagic field and numerous walls and pillars.”

Timmy heard this and grew enraged. He ran toward Suey to stop him.

Micro chased Timmy and safeguarded Suey’s exit.

Suey ran away, carrying the documents as he ran.

Timmy angrily activated his final form. He grew twice as big and healed some of his wounds. He attacked Micro with his full force, badly wounding him.

But Silber got another good shot onto him, which allowed Micro an opportunity to stun him.

Micro swept his legs and knocked Timmy prone. One more shot would kill him.

Astalir saw that the party was not doing what they were supposed to. They were stealing the documents! Astalir ran by Suey and sneakily grabbed the documents, and ran to the room where the other secrets were. He saw Timmy on the ground and thought it was safe to run past. But he was wrong.

Timmy was not dead, just on the ground. He swung his axe as Astalir ran past, slicing the deer in the chest. Astalir flew to his landing spot but didn’t land on his legs. He bled out. He had safely landed just outside the antimagic field, which meant he could use his powers. He shaped the water in his blood to flow back into his wound, and he molded the earth beneath him to cover his wounds up. It took all his focus to concentrate on this task as he lay there, hoping the party would kill Timmy so that he might live.

And the party did so. Silber’s bullet flew through the air and killed the prone minotaur. Timmy was no more.

Astalir watched with heavy eyes.

The party found that the throne was actually a door and slid it to the side. Underneath was a huge pile of gold.

“We’re rich!” They exclaimed. “This is much more than that measley 600 gold that centaur Max had promised us!”

They carried the gold and the wounded dwarf out of the maze.

But they left the dying deer in the room to die.

Astalir concentrated, steadying his breathing and focusing on his reality bending. It was all he could do to just stay alive.

Stupid minotaur. He was on the ground, probably dead. But no, he had enough in him to get one last strike on this poor deer. This poor deer who had been hunted by this party the whole time. They had just been an inconvenience to him. The whole time. And now they probably got him killed.

But Astalir didn’t have time to focus on how much he distrusted the party and how glad he was that Timmy was dead. It turns out that there were some monsters the party hadn’t killed. And they came to investigate Timmy’s death, now that the party had left.

Astalir thought fast. He put up an illusion wall so they wouldn’t see, but included a crack in it big enough for him to see through. The skeletons carried Timmy away through the maze, not paying attention to Astalir or his wall. Stupid skeletons. But at least his illusion worked.

Several hours later, Astalir’s condition stabilized. He let the earth regain its shape, and his blood didn’t leak out anymore. He sighed in relief. He was still in terrible shape, and likely had internal bleeding still, but at least he could move around without losing any blood.

He scoured the room for documents and gathered all that he could find. Satisfied with his haul, he ventured into the maze. The skeletons were too busy tending to Timmy for them to notice Astalir sneaking through.

Astalir got out of the maze and collapsed. Is this the end? He can’t seem to go any further. At least he retrieved the secret documents from the minotaur’s maze. He could rest easy knowing he exposed these evil secrets. He took one last glance at the setting sun, then closed his eyes.

The cool breeze blew over his wound, making him cringe in pain. His ears flitted about, and his tail flapped.

“Deer!” A familiar voice came from afar. Footsteps approached. The warmth of an old friend. “Don’t worry, I got you.” The warm hug of a morning sun pulsated onto Astalir’s belly. His wound seeled up properly, and his organs stopped hurting.

Astalir opened his eyes. It was someone he recognized! “Jodi!” Astalir lept onto his feet and licked him with his long deer tongue. His tail wagged back and forth.

“Astalir!” Jodi exclaimed. “I’m so glad you’re alright!” He hugged him around the neck. “What happened?”

“That party was a real pain.”

“I’m glad I left.”

“Yeah but I needed them to fulfill my mission.”

“And what was that mission?"

“To expose these secrets to the world.” Astalir floated a pile of documents to Jodi.

“Body count for the year 1672, 1673… This is a count of how many people he’s eaten!”

Astalir nodded. “Hopefully this will bring some peace to the families who lost loved ones in there.”

Jodi nodded. “You did good work, Astalir.”

“Thank you.” Astalir wagged his tail. “Wanna go get some fruit or something?”

“Sure, I know a really good berry patch.”

Astalir and Jodi hung out a bit before Astalir had to go fulfill his mission. Lots of people found out about the extent of the minotaur’s body count. It led to new policy being implemented to prevent minotaur deaths in the future. Now for Astalir, it was a job well done. And now it was onto the next mission.

# Chapter 3 – The Goblin Camp

Sui the dragonborn dragon warden held the deck of many things in his hand. The morning sun reflected off the protective coating on the top card. Everyone was asleep, but since Micro the Bugbear had bought this deck for Sui, he couldn’t sleep. He drew a card that made it so he can rest without sleeping. Now he has to find ways to occupy his time while everyone sleeps.

He shrugged. “Why not?” He knew the risks, but he was bored. He shuffled the deck of many things and pulled the top card off the deck.

His stomache filled with butterflies that flitted about inside, giving him a bad stomache ache. They moved down his intestines and after a long, painful journey, made their way to his rear. He jumped out of his bed and pulled his drawers down. Three fairy-winged pixies popped out his pooper and fluttered around his room, shooting fairy dust everywhere. His bow and arrows started floating in the arrow, flying all over the place as the pixies darted around.

Sui managed to open a window and shooing all the fairies out without losing too many arrows. When the pixies left, all the floating objects fell to the ground. One arrow cut him on the arm.

He bandaged it up.

He sat back down on his bed. It was still not time for the others to wake up. He looked at the deck of many things, and stuck it in the bedside drawer. “Not doing that again.”

But then he got bored. “Maybe just one more card.” He pulled the top card off the deck and shoved the deck back into the drawer.

He immediately felt nauseous. He went to the window, but vomited all over himself before he could get there. The arm bandage dissolved in his stomache acid, as did part of his clothes and some of the floor board. He got some acid on his scales, but instead of dissolving, it healed the cut he got from the arrow. He looked at it inquisitively. “This is interesting!”

He went down stairs and asked the tavern keeper if he had any acid. The tavern keeper directed him to the alchemist shop in town.

Sui hustled to the shop, taking note that a strange “wild” deer was staring at him… and following him. He eyed the deer, but the deer pretended not to see.

At the alchemist shop, Sui requested the shopkeeper to throw acid on him. After some deliberation, they obliged. As Sui predicted, the acid healed him instead of hurting him. He had gained the power of acid absorption. “Thanks deck of many things!”

The alchemist requested to draw card. Sui sold him a card for 1 gold piece. The shopkeeper drew the card and became confused. It was an unlucky card; it caused the shopkeeper to lose some intelligence. Temporarily, but still. Sui put the deck away for good for the day.

Before leaving the alchemist’s shop, Sui bought a few acid potions for self-healing. Then he shut the door behind him to go back to the tavern.

Along the way, he spotted that deer again. It was definitely following him, while at the same time pretending that he wasn’t following and that he wasn’t being seen. “I see you, deer.” Siu eyed him. The deer just turned away and ate some leaves.

Back at the tavern, Sui met up with Max the centaur, who had a quest for them. No one else from the party showed; they were too worn out or debilitated by the last adventure. Some were deaf, some were unable to talk, and some were just too tired from their fight with Timmy the Minotaur. So Sui was the only one available for this new quest Max had for them.

A goblin camp had kidnapped a centaur and bound him. Max wanted them to free him. So Sui grabbed his bow and acid potions and headed out.

A deer tried to follow him discretely, but it was very obvious. “Don’t you mess up this mission, deer!” The deer looked away and ate some grass.

Sui got to the goblin camp and climbed a tree to scout the situation. The centaur was bound in the opposite corner. The brush was too thick to sneak from behind; the only way to get to him was through the goblin camp. And in the camp, there were several goblins sitting at a table. One had special markings of him and was bossing everyone around as they ate their breakfast.

“These guys look dangerous. But if I have to go through them all, I will. Just stay out of my way, deer.”

The deer flicked his tail. He scraped an antler up against a tree and pulled off a piece of bark.

“Here we go.” From his treetop perch, Sui drew his bow and shot the goblin leader in the chest.

The goblin leader got up from the table yelling in pain. He ripped the arrow out of his chest, only for another one to stab him through the head. He collapsed to the ground.

The other goblins pointed at Sui and angrily drew their weapons, which was mostly bows and short swords. One goblin shot him in the shoulder. Another shot him in the gut. A third, panicked goblin pulled back his bow so far that the string broke. He looked at his bow in panicked shock. Then he looked at Sui just in time to see an arrow hit him in the face.

“Skill issue.” Sui said smugly.

The goblins all came running at Sui, more weapons at the ready. Sui realized he was in deep trouble. He couldn’t fight all these goblins alone. So he reached out to the only one here who wasn’t actively fighting him.

“Deer! Deer!”

The deer looked at him and cocked his head.

“I need you! Help me!”

The deer shrugged. A spark of light traveled up his antlers.

All of a sudden, Sui saw two left hands, two right hands, and two bows. “What the?” It was like he was splitting in two, like mitosis. But he didn’t feel any pain. The copy of him jumped out of the tree, ran at the goblins, and hid behind a tent.

Sui stared at it in bewilderment for a moment, until he realized that the goblins were just as confused. The goblins shoot their arrows at his clone, but they all go right through it, causing no damage. Some goblins rush to the clone and strike it with a melee weapon, also going through it and causing no damage.

“Well done, deer.” Taking this moment of relief, Sui pulls the arrows out of his body and pours acid on the wounds. They seal up perfectly, no pain. He draws his bow and shoots a goblin in the back. It falls over dead. He shoots another one.

The goblins realize they can’t kill the clone and that there’s another Sui, the real Sui, that can still bleed. They run up to the tree where Sui’s at, bow drawn. He shoots it right at Sui’s head.

Sui falls over off his branch and swings on it with one arm. The arrow whizzes past his face. He looses an arrow as he drops to the ground, hitting one square in the chest. He hides behind a bush and draws his bow. He can just barely see a goblin through the bush, and aims through it. His arrow spins through the air like a drill, pushing all the bush branches aside. It contacts the goblin’s forehead and caves in its skull, popping his head like a balloon. Goblin blood and brains blew everywhere.

Sui climbs back up the tree, using the tree as a shield as he climbs. The goblin arrows hit dead center in the tree. He shoots the remaining goblins and they fall to the ground. Now that there are no arrows flying past his face, he scouts the camp again from his perch.

All the goblins in he could see were laying on the ground dead. The table had food on it, and around it were several tents. Sui waited a bit to see if there was anything in the tents, if anything would come out of it.

Something did come out, but not from inside. A strange goblin walked out from behind a tent and unzipped the front, as if to go in. But then another goblin came out and yelled at the strange goblin to get lost. A burning coal from the morning cookout floated up and into the tent goblin’s pocket. His pants caught on fire and he ran around trying to put it out.

As he did so, the strange goblin entered the tent and rummaged around, throwing things out of the tent left and right. It appeared to be looking for something. Satisfied that nothing was there, the strange goblin left the tent and the firepants goblin and headed to the next tent.

And again, there was a goblin in that tent, too. This goblin kicked the strange goblin in the rear and yelled at him.

“So it seems that all these tents have goblins in them.” Sui squinted at the tents. “But I can’t see through them. I’ll have to wait for them to come out.”

As if reading his mind, his clone started to move again. It unequipped its bow and unsheathed its short sword. It walked menacingly toward the three goblins.

The strange goblin didn’t hesitate. It pulled out its short sword and ran at Siu’s clone, giving its best battlecry.

Siu drew his bow, but had a funny feeling he should hold back. “Let’s see what this clone is made of.”

The clone swung his sword at the strange, charging goblin. The goblin fell over backwards and dropped his sword. The clone plunged his sword into the goblin, and blood poured out of its wounds.

“Holy poop!” Sui let his bow down. “This clone is brutal!”

The clone turned its attention to the other two goblins who just got out of their tents. The firepants goblin was so scared, it not only peed itself, not only pooped itself, but also backed up and tripped over backwards over the breakfast fire pit. He passed out and burned alive.

The clone pointed his sword at the other goblin. That goblin turned tail and ran, tripping over the edge of the tent as he went. He escaped the camp into the woods.

The commotion woke up the rest of the goblins. A whole half dozen more goblins appeared out of the tents.

“Bingo!” Siu readied his bow.

The goblins are stared at Siu’s clone, trying to figure out what to do from a distance. One goblin approached and realized it wasn’t real, and called it out to the other goblins. But he stepped too close to the strange goblin that the clone straight up murdered, and all of sudden that goblin wasn’t dead anymore.

The strange goblin pulled out a dagger and stabbed the yelling goblin in the foot. It yelled out in pain.

“What the? Goblins can’t resurrect themselves, right?”

Another goblin came to help, and pointed at the strange goblin lying in a pool of blood on the floor. The jig was up.

The strange goblin dissolved to reveal the body of… the deer! The strange goblin had been the deer in disguise this whole time! And there wasn’t a scratch on him!

Sui chuckled. “Clever deer!” He drew his bow. “Don’t worry, I’ll get you out of there.” Sui shoots the goblin that exposed the deer’s true form. It fell over before it could get its weapon out.

That was all the opening the deer needed. It jumped over the fresh goblin corpse and dashed into a tent. It jumped out and ran to another tent.

The goblin next to it tried to stab it as it ran past, but the deer deflected the blade with its antler. The goblins then tried shooting the deer, but all their shots missed. The deer hid in the tent and they couldn’t see it anymore.

Siu shoots both the goblins that shot at the deer. Dead, dead. No there were no more goblins in the camp. “Well done, deer.”

Siu climbed out of the tree and inspected the goblin camp. Bodies lay everywhere. The breakfast food was ruined, unless you like your food with a side of blood and guts. The tents were all intact, except for the ones the deer ran through.

“What are you doing?” Siu watched as the deer ran into all the tents, kicked all the stuff out, and then ran to the next tent. The deer ignored him and continued doing what it was doing. “You’re definitely not a normal deer. Some kind of magic deer. I trust you know what you’re doing.”

“Mmm! Mmm!” The centaur lay on the ground gagged and bound.

Siu tried to untie him, but his fingers were too sore from shooting his bow. He couldn’t undo the knots. “Screw it.” He unlatched a potion bottle from his belt. “Careful, this might sting a bit.” He dripped acid out of the bottle onto the ropes. They dissolves away in a line that circumvented the need to undo knots.

“Thank you, my dear dragon.” The centaur spoke in Sylvan as he shook off the loose ropes. “I am freeeee!” The centaur ran off, jumping over the bloodied table as he ran.

Siu approached the table. The goblin leader lay on it, spilling his guts all over it. Siu patted him down, searching for valuables. He pulled out his scimitar, his shield, and some loose change. “This will be worth selling.” He examined them. Then he found a javelin. He looked at it coyly. “I’ve got an idea.”

Siu thrust the javelin into the ground and lifted the goblin leader’s body onto the opposite end. The body drifted down, skewered on the javelin pole. Siu clapped his hands together. “Let this be a message to all who mess with us!”

No one heard it. But they would see the skewered goblin, if they ever came to the camp. Not even the deer was paying attention.

Siu approached the tent the deer was in, holding his hands up to block flying items from hitting his face. “Deer?”

The deer stopped and looked at him.

“What are you doing?”

The deer squinted at him, then after a moment, shrugged. It walked next to him, as if to be petted. Its shoulder fur parted, revealing a map. The map detailed the where abouts of an encampment, and the inner tunnel system of a cave network. There was a date and timestamp written in the corner, freshly written.

“So you found this in these tents?”

The deer nodded. It looked at the ground. There was a falcata sword on the ground next to a bag of 50 gold. A spark of magic traveled up the deer’s antlers, and the sword and bag floated up into the air.

Siu held out his hand to receive. The sword floated along and into the deer’s fur, becoming completely concealed. The bag of gold disappeared similarly.

“Wait, you’re not sharing?”

The deer cocked its head, then shook it.

“What if I gave you a free card from the deck of many things?” Siu pulled the deck out of his pocket. “Only 1 gold!”

“BLEAT!” The deer yelled. It ran out of the tent.

Siu ran out after the deer, but tripped on a shiny helmet. “What? Why would the deer throw this out?” The helmet was really fancy. Siu realized that this tent must be the goblin leader’s tent. “Hmm…” He got an idea. He found all the fancy pieces of armor strewn around the camp and put them on. He laid down in the goblin leader’s tent and went to bed. “Can’t find me…” He yawned as he fell asleep.