# 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?”

Sui, 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?” Sui asked.

“Draw a card and see.”

Sui 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. Sui 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!” Sui 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. “Sui, you may not leave until you have defeated the skeletons.”

Sui nodded as he readied his bow.

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

The party agreed.

Sui 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 Sui 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 Sui, 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. Sui 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 Sui, 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 Sui, 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?” Sui 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.

Sui 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 Sui to stop him.

Micro chased Timmy and safeguarded Sui’s exit.

Sui 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 Sui 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 random oddities 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 random oddities 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 random oddities, 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 random oddities!”

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.” Sui 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 Sui’s clone, giving its best battlecry.

Sui 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!” Sui readied his bow.

The goblins are stared at Sui’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.

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

Sui 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?” Sui 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.

Sui 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.

Sui approached the table. The goblin leader lay on it, spilling his guts all over it. Sui 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.”

Sui 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. Sui 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.

Sui 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.

Sui 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 random oddities?” Sui pulled the deck out of his pocket. “Only 1 gold!”

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

Sui ran out after the deer, but tripped on a shiny helmet. “What? Why would the deer throw this out?” The helmet was really fancy. Sui 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.

# Chapter 4 – The Kobold Cave

The sun was coming up and his lips were getting chapped. After hours of walking through the night, it was a relief to finally find a tavern. Grarthta Swanfallow, a pale green 7ft half-orc, entered and ordered a beer. After taking some long, refreshing gulps, his stomache rumbled.

“Hungry? I can cook you up something.” The dwarf behind the counter said.

“You have meat?”

“Sure do. Would you like beef, chicken…”

“Do you have venison?” Grar licked his lips.

“I’ll check the back.” The dwarf put down the glass he was cleaning and went into the kitchen.

While he was gone, a dragonborn walked sleepily down the stairs and sat next to Grar. He nodded at him.

Grar nodded back.

The dragonborn yelled from his seat. “Hey! Anyone there! I’m hungry!”

“Wait just a bleeping minute!” The dwarf yelled from the back. Finally, he returned, empty-handed. “Sorry, we’re fresh out. We got beef though.”

Grar settled for beef and the dragonborn also order breakfast. They introduced themselves when Max came in. Grar found out the dragonborn’s name is Sui, with an *i*.

“Glad to see you both met already. Adventurers come and go, and this is your new partner, for now.” Max told the dragonborn. “We have a problem with a kobold cave. Here’s how to get there.” Max told them info they needed to know and they left the tavern.

Outside, an old man was sitting next to the steps. “Aaalms for the pooor?” He held out a tin cup to Sui.

“This is my deer friend.” Sui told Grar.

“Well it’s your choice who keep around.”

“No, *deer* friend. Who know, hooves and antlers.”

“Deer?” Grar drooled. He tried looking at the old man’s face. “He looks human to me.”

“Come on, deer, drop the disguise. We know it’s you.”

“What?” The old man pulled his hands into his hood. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Come on, out with it.” Sui reached to grab the old man.

The old man ran off, but a deer showed up where he was sitting. It stood there, staring at Sui, rather crossly.

“See? I told you. Deer.” Sui grabbed onto the deer’s antlers, but his hand passed through them. “Your antlers aren’t real?”

“I’m gonna get me some deer!” Grar grappled the deer’s neck, but his arms passed through it and he fell to the ground. He swiped his hands through the deer’s body. “It’s an incorporeal deer? What kind of species is this?”

“Wait, have you been ethereal this whole time?” Sui started questioning his sanity. “I thought for sure I saw you interact with objects.”

The deer ignored them, pointing to and stomping on a piece of paper on the ground.

“What’s this?” Sui picked it up. It was a map of the kobold cave, with certain things circled.

“Something very useful to our mission.” Grar took it.

The deer disappeared.

Grar’s stomache rumbled. “Soon.”

Grar and Sui followed the directions that Max gave them to the kobold cave. Along the way, they found a bridge of ice going across a stream. It was weird because it was summer.

Grar looked and saw a deer eating some tree bark. “Deer!” He jumped across the river and ran at the deer. The deer just ran away. Grar chased but the ground beneath him became suddenly uneven, slowing him down. The deer got away.

Sui jumped across the river and stopped Grar. “That’s my deer friend. He’s a magic deer. Don’t kill him.”

Grar holstered his axe. “No promises.”

They got to the kobold cave and Grar looked at the map one more time. “It looks like this main path is blocked by boulders. We’ll have to take this side path.”

They entered the cave. It was dark, but Grar could see just fine with his dark vision.

Sui, however, tripped over a stone.

“Are you ok?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“You didn’t see that rock?”

“It’s dark in here.”

“That’s what your darkvision is for.”

“Oh, right.” Sui chuckled. “Let me turn that on real quick.”

Grar gave him a strange look.

Sui tripped over another rock. “I knew that was there.”

“You… you don’t have darkvision, do you?”

Sui sighed. “No.”

“Tsk, tsk.” Grar pulled a piece of wood out of his bag and lit it. “Here.” Grar handed Sui a lit torch.

“Thanks.” Sui took the lit torch in his mouth so he could two-hand his bow.

“Stay behind me, things could get ugly.”

They found the side path. It was hidden behind a 10ft blockade of rock. But the ceiling was 30ft high, so they easily climbed over it. They snuck down the narrow side path.

“Get back to work!” A flying kobold spoke in draconic as it whipped something from behind a rock.

“But we’re hungry!” Some kobolds in another room complained in draconic. “Can’t we just have some of that stew brewing on the campfire?”

“Such insubordination!” The flying kobold whipped again.

Grar’s stomache rumbled. He showed himself to the flying kobold.

The flying kobold flew up to the ceiling and shouted, “Intr—”

Sui shot it out of the air. It fell to the ground.

Audible kobold gasps came from the room to their right.

“Can’t have them swarming us.” Grar ran into the intersection. Peeling off a patch from his cloak, he tossed it at the ground in front of the whipped kobolds. A door sprang up out of the patch, blocking off the flightless kobolds from reaching Grar. A handle presented itself to Grar, but he didn’t open it. He signaled to Sui that it was clear.

“What’s this door here?” Sui asks.

“Don’t worry about it.”

They stalked down a narrow corridor to the main hub room, where a bunch of kobolds were sitting around a campfire. The smell of the stew wafted into Grar’s nostrils. “Ah, venison!” His stomache rumbled. “Soon.”

Suddenly, the ground trembled. Small tremors shook the cave. Grar and Sui clung up against a wall. It felt like they were coming from the cave entrance.

“I’ll go check.” A kobold got up from the campfire and approached Grar.

Grar waited patiently.

Another tremor hit. A kobold stirring the stew lost his balance and knocked the pot over, spilling venison stew everywhere.

Sui took the opportunity to shoot an arrow through him and another kobold, who was flying above, whipping the cook. Both fell to the ground, dead.

The kobolds all got out of their seat and looked around.

The kobold investigating the tremors tripped and stumbled right into Grar. He looked up at him, terrified. “In… in… Intruders!” Then this 3ft kobold stabbed Grar in the chest. But, instead of the dagger piercing Grar’s skin, the blade bent sideways, rendering the dagger useless.

Grar grinned. “You shouldn’t have done that.” He lifted up his axe and let it fall to the ground. Along the way, it cleaved right through the kobold, splitting it in two.

The kobolds all looked on in shock as they witnessed the brutal death of one of their kin.

“Who’s next?” Grar drug his axe behind him.

“Get him!” Yelled a brave kobold. He rushed in, stabs Grar, bending his dagger. But his courage was infectious. The other kobolds grabbed their slings and hit Grar with everything they had. Stones flew across the room directly at Grar, hitting their mark.

The stones all bounced off Grar’s chest. On grazed his ear, cutting him. But no serious damage was done.

Grar yelled in rage. The pelting stones didn’t slow him down. His eyes were bloodshot, and they stared at two kobolds standing on a bench. He approached them, axe dragging behind him, and yelled, flinging spit on their faces. “Follow or die!” He didn’t speak perfect draconic, but he spoke it well enough for the kobolds to understand.

The two kobolds dropped their weapons and hugged each other. They nodded at Grar.

“Good.”

Sui shoots a few more kobolds, killing one with an arrow between the eyes.

Grar looks around the room, looking for the next big kobold group. Instead, he sees something unusual. A kobold twice the size of a regular kobold shuffles its lanky legs up the main corridor, into the main hub room, and dashes into the dearest hallway out of sight. “Weird.” He scans the room again.

A group of 3 kobolds huddled together on a bench. They shoot him with their slings. When he gets close, one shanks him with his dagger unsuccessfully. They gulp as he towers over them.

Sui follows Grar’s lead. “You better come with us if you want to live.”

The kobolds spit on him.

Grar yells at them, but the kobolds don’t cower.

“We’re not scared of you!” yells one kobold in draconic.

“Well, perhaps you’ll listen to logic then. If you don’t want to die, I’m your new leader. Got it?” Grar swung his axe onto his shoulder.

One kobold whispered to the other one, and then they both bowed to Grar. “We accept.”

“Good.” Grar was satisfied that he now had 4 kobold underlings. And he only had to kill seven kobolds to do it. “Not bad for a start.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Grar caught it again. The lanky tall kobold ran out of the side room and into another side room. According to the map, all the side rooms were dead ends. “Have you ever seen a kobold that big before?”

Sui pointed. “If I had to guess, that’s my deer friend. He does that.”

Grar licked his lips. “Deeer…” He pushed a kobold forward, speaking in draconic, “Go into that room—”

“With that big kobold?” The kobold asked.

“Don’t interrupt me! Go into that room and keep that big kobold from getting out.”

“Yes, boss.” The kobold ran and stood in the entrance. He came face to face with the most unnaturally tall kobold he ever saw. It stared intently at him. He shook in his steps, but stood firm.

“We’re getting some venison today!” Grar picked up the pot and put it back on the campfire.

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It was getting to be midday and Frill the kobold was getting hungry. He moved another rock to block the main entrance stairs. He took a rock from Sylla, and heard her tummy rumble.

“You’re hungry too?” he asked her.

Sylla nodded.

“I’ll get us something to eat.” Frill jumped down from the ledge he was on and walked down the hall to the main hub room, where a campfire was brewing venison stew.

The flying kobold stopped him. “Get back to work!” He whipped him.

“But we’re hungry!” Frill jumped back.

“Such insubordination!” The flying kobold whipped him again.

As Frill sat on the ground, he saw a shadow lurk up towards the flying kobold.

“Intr—” The flying kobold fell to the ground, an arrow in his chest.

Before Frill could react, the shadow turned into a giant orc and then a door appeared at his feet. This exit was blocked off. Frill glanced at the door, but didn’t see a handle. He yelled to Sylla, “Run!”

Sylla and the other three kobolds didn’t see what happened and had just thought Frill had gotten whipped again.

Frill climbed up the wall and over the boulders that blocked the main entrance stairs. “There’s intruders! We gotta go!”

“Intruders? Then we gotta go kill them!” A scarred kobold said. He saw the door, and instantly knew there was only one way out.

“Let’s go!” Frill looked at main hallway entrance on the other side of the rock blockade. There was a boulder on one side that wasn’t there before. “Odd…” He approached it.

“Frill! Help!” Sylla cried out. She was having a hard time climbing the rocks with the other 3 kobolds trying to push past her.

Frill reached out a hand and helped her up.

“Thanks! Wait, that wasn’t there before.” Sylla approached the boulder.

The other 3 kobolds scrambled up the blockade.

Suddenly, the boulder turned into a deer!

“Deer!” Frill licked his lips.

“Food!” Sylla smiled.

The deer jumped away as Frill tried to grab it. A yellow spark flowed up its antlers and the ground shook. The deer ran down the main entrance toward the cave opening. Behind it, the ground moved. A pit as wide as the tunnel and as deep as a kobold’s height sank down into the ground, and behind a wall the same width and height grew out of the dirt.

The ground shook, knocking Frill and Sylla off their feet. The other 3 kobolds fell off the blockade and landed at the bottom of the stairs.

“Don’t worry, brothers!” Frill yelled. “I’ll get us that deer, and then I’ll save our other brothers from the intruders!” Frill charged forward, jumping over the pit and grabbing onto the edge of the wall. He climbed up with ease.

“Frill, wait!” Sylla cried out. She jumped down into the pit and then climbed up the wall. Slowly, but steadily.

Frill got to the top of the wall and saw the deer. He pulled out his sling and shot it.

But the deer dodged and jumped over the blockade into the side path. Its antlers sparked, and the ground shook. Another pit and wall combo formed in front of Frill.

“A magic deer, huh? I bet you’ll be even tastier!” Frill long-jumped from the top of the wall to the second wall. He grabbed onto the edge, skipping the second pit altogether. Then he jumped to the blockade blocking the side path.

The magic deer was just on the other side of it. Its antlers sparked again, and again the ground shook.

Frill braced for the tremors. The ground in front of the blockade went down, and the blockade went up. It was now a 30ft drop from the top of the blockade to the bottom of the pit. But Frill didn’t have to land in the pit. He could land just beyond it, on the other side of the curve of the side path. It would be tricky, but he could do it. He jumped off the blockade and bounced off the wall, landing awkwardly on the other side of the pit. He made it, but he hurt all over. He tried to get up, but his arms wouldn’t move. Neither would his legs. “Help!” He squeaked out. He watched the deer escape down the side path deeper into the cave.

Sylla climbed down the first wall and climbed slowly but surely down the pit and up the next wall.

Two kobolds were lagging behind Sylla, trying to figure out how to climb the wall. But the third one, the scarred one, figured it out fast.

“No time to waste!” The scarred kobold raced past her, carelessly jumping over the walls with some agile movement. Sylla didn’t see, but the scarred kobold climbed the 20 feet up the side path blockade and jumped over the landing to the other side. “Ahhhhhh!” And then a *THUD!*

“I’m coming!” Sylla climbed the side path blockade and examined the situation. The scarred kobold was bleeding out its head at the bottom of the pit, and just beyond the curve of the side path, she could see a kobold tail twitch. “Frill!” She climbed down into the pit and up out of it. She ran to Frill’s side. “Are you ok?”

“Can’t… move…” Frill cried, taking big heavy breaths.

Sylla took him in her arms. “It’ll be ok, Frill. It’ll be ok.”

“I didn’t get the deer, Sylla. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. You’re going to get better, ok?”

Frill whined. His neck went limp and his heavy breathing stopped.

Sylla hugged him tighter and cried.

# Chapter 5 – The Kobold Hierarchy

“What are you doing?” Sui asked Grar.

Grar got up from his pot. “Preparing a meal.”

“No, there’s more kobolds here.”

“Right, right.” Grar pointed to an unexplored side path. “I’ll go here.” He walked noisily into the side path, fe-fi-fo’ing his way into the room at the end. In draconic, he yelled, “Alright, you cowards!” He looked into the room.

A bunch of kobolds were shivering in a corner. A yinglet slept tied up against a wall.

“You either join me or die!”

The kobolds shivered.

“All with me, stand up and come here.” He pointed in front of him.

5 kobolds do as he says, but two stay cowered in the corner.

“C’mon, one kobold whispers. He’ll kill us all if you don’t listen!”

Another kobold took the hand of the 2 scared kobolds and dragged them into position.

Grar nodded. “Very good. Keep that one tied up for now.” He motioned to the yinglet. “I’ll be back.”

“We’ll be here.”

Grar came back to the main hub room. He found the sentinel kobold sitting around the campfire, instead of guarding the tunnel like he asked. “You! What are you doing?”

The kobold fell off his seat. “I… I…”

“Why aren’t you guarding that room?”

“It escaped! You said it was a deer in disguise, right? It ran off to the main entrance.”

“You let it escape?”

“It jumped over me!”

Grar gave him a disapproving glance.

“Grar, come here!” Sui whispered from the other side path. “There’s more kobolds in this room.”

“Wait here.” Grar told the kobold, before joining Sui. “Don’t worry, I got this.”

Grar stomped into the room and frightened the whole group of 7 kobolds.

Meanwhile, the lanky kobold Grar was trying to stop poked its head out of the fishing room and into the main hub. The sentinel kobold saw it, but was to scared to disobey Grar’s last order of “wait here.” The lanky kobold walked awkwardly across the main hub room and into the room where the yinglet was being held.

Inside, the 7 kobolds were all discussing amongst each other what to do.

“We wait here, just like he said.”

“But what if he’s planning on rounding us all up and killing us?”

“If he wanted to kill us, he would’ve done so by now.”

“Yeah, he’s probably going to become our new boss.”

“Maybe he’ll be kinder than our current boss?”

“Probably not.”

Then the lanky kobold appeared in the doorway. The kobolds all gave him funny looks.

“Who are you?”

But before they could approach, things went flying across the room. Blankets and bedrolls flittered in the air, pillows hit them in the face, and barrels rolled around.

“Mm? Mmm?” The sleeping, gagged yinglet woke up for a brief moment before fading back into slumber.

The kobolds got on the ground and put their hands over their heads.

Things settled down when a bunch of bananas rose out of some bed sheets, hung in the middle of the room, and then dropped onto one of the kobolds.

“I thought I said no food in bed?” A kobold scolded.

“I get snacky at night.”

In the midst of the chaos, the ropes around the yinglet were loosened. But the yinglet didn’t move, except for its stomach while breathing.

Then the lanky kobold left, and the dust settled.

“What was that?”

“Definitely not a kobold.”

Back in the other room, Grar told his new kobold recruits to await further instructions. “And if you see a lanky kobold, let me know immediately.”

“Yes, sir.”

Sui came in after Grar and yelled at them. “You all better stay in line!”

“Is that the lanky kobold?” A kobold whispered to another.

“Stupid kobolds!” Sui yelled. “I’m a dragonborn. Clearly! You better behave or you’ll die by Grar’s hand!”

The kobolds cowered and let Sui pass.

In the next room, Grar frightened two kobolds, but the last kobold, who could fly, stood his ground.

“You’re not budging, are you?”

“No! I will not join you! You are a murderer!”

“Prove your loyalty.” Grar placed a hand on each of his two new recruits from that room. “Convince your mate.”

The two kobolds pleaded with the flying kobold to relent. He didn’t. Finally, he gave in, but with some conditions. “I want my own section of kobolds.”

“Done. Will these two work?”

“Yes. But I require a few more.”

“Ok, we’ll work out the details later. Right now, hang tight.”

Grar heard whispering, but didn’t see another room.

The kobolds fidgeted.

“But, to prove *your* loyalty, you’re going to tell me where your other kobold friends are hiding.” Grar held his axe up to the flying kobold.

The flying kobold relented and flew up to a perch 10ft off the ground. Behind it, was another tunnel leading to another room.

“You’ve done well. I’ll make sure you get your section.” Grar climbed up the wall and roared.

Behind him, Sui was waiting with a bow and arrow, and more choice words ready for the flying kobold leader. But before he could enter, a deer fell onto the ground in front of him and turned around. It pointed at the passage to the main hub room.

“Deer!” Sui shouted. “Why are you here? Can you please not interfere!”

The deer looked shocked. He continued pointing, ears down.

“Get out of our business.” Sui pushed past the deer, but his hand went through the deer. “Stupid deer.” Sui arrived in the room with the flying kobold and his two underlings. “You guys better not screw anything up!”

The lanky kobold ran across the main hub, following the sound of Sui’s shouting. It tripped once, but got back up and entered the next room.

The kobolds there popped the question. “That is one strange kobold.”

“Is that the lanky kobold?”

“I don’t know, it could be a short dragonborn.”

“Well, should we ask?”

“You ask it.”

One kobold got pushed forward to ask the lanky kobold what it was. “Are you a dragonborn or a kobold?”

The lanky kobold looked down and stared blankly. Then the room flew into chaos. Rocks darted around the room, blankets popped up and floated down, and barrel corks shot out. The kobolds all cowered in fear.

“It’s not a kobold! It’s not a kobold!”

A book appeared out from under a pillow. It gently lifted itself into the air, making a journey somewhere else.

“My bedtime stories!” The kobold closest to the book grabbed the book and held it close. It stopped moving on its own.

“What’s all that racket?” Sui yelled from the other room.

The lanky kobold hid behind a barrel, and the spectral deer stood in front of him.

Sui looked around the room. “Did you do this, deer? You better not be harming any of our kobolds!” Sui turned to the kobolds. “Did this deer hurt you?”

The kobolds gulped. “N-no…”

“I swear, deer.” Sui marched on. “I’ll deal with you later, right now I have more important matters to tend to.” Sui left to go the main hub room.

The lanky kobold moved on to the room with flying kobold leader, and tore that room apart to. From behind the wall, Grar could be heard talking to the last group.

In that room, there were a bunch of barrels, and more kobolds. One taller kobold with green scales huddled close with his most loyal subjects. But once Grar stepped in, it was every kobold for himself. All his loyalest kobolds sided with Grar out of fear, so the kobold king did too.

“Alright, now that that’s settled, follow me to the campfire. We’re going to have a meeting.”

The kobolds followed him.

The lanky kobold panicked when he heard Grar approaching from the other side of the wall. It hid behind a treasure chest.

Grar climbed over the wall and noticed that the room was a mess. “What happened here?”

The flying kobold pointed to the corner.

Grar saw the cowering lanky kobold and grabbed at it. It dodged, and jumped away, but hit its leg on the treasure chest. Grar grabbed its leg and pulled it in. “I don’t know what you are, but you’re not getting away.” He held it under his arm. It looked really weird. Although Grar was holding on tight, it looked like he wasn’t touching it at all. He carried the lanky kobold to the main hub room, with the other kobolds behind him.

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“Frill! Friiill!” Sylla cried, holding him in her arms.

“Sylla, what happened?” Another kobold appeared at the top of the wall. It approached.

“Hey!” Sylla yelled.

The kobold came closer, getting to the edge of the wall.

“Don’t! It’s too deep!”

The kobold looked confused. “What?” It shrugged, and hopped down. “Aaaahhhhh!”

Sylla gasped. She shut her eyes, so she wouldn’t see what happened to her friend. Blood splattered onto her face, including her eye lids. A scurrying sound came from the other side. It was the last kobold in their section.

“Go away!” Sylla yelled. “Run! Don’t climb! Run!”

The kobold stopped climbing and ran away, out of the cave.

“At least I saved one of my friends.” She wiped away a tear. “But this will not stand. I’m going to get that deer!”

She marched down the side path, past the iron door, and into the main hub room, where five kobolds sat around an empty pot. “What’s going on?” She tiptoed around the dead kobolds.

“We all work for Gal now.”

“No, it’s Growl.”

“I heard Bra.”

“Who?” Sylla asked.

“This big green ogre—”

“Orc.”

“Whatever. This big green orc who came in, sliced a kobold in half, and scared us.”

“You mean he’s still here?” Sylla’s brows furrowed.

“Yeah, and he’s super scary. You don’t want to mess with him.”

“How can you call yourself a kobold?” Sylla scolded. “We live and die to become dragons! Do you think some orc cares about that? No! He’s going to have us digging tunnels and gathering food while he puts his feet up and takes a nap!”

The other kobolds winced. They hung their heads in shame.

“We have to stop them. We have to get our fellow kobolds back on our side, and take care of these intruders!”

“You’re right, Sylla. We should’ve been braver.”

The other five kobolds stood up, ready to fight. “Now what?”

“Let’s go gather our friends.”

Suddenly, a dragonborn appeared from a side room. “Are you planning what I think you’re planning? You better get back in line before Grar finds out!”

The five kobolds cowered behind the stone seats around the campfire.

“On second thought, we can’t become dragons if we’re dead.”

“Please, Sylla, understand!” A kobold got his knees. “We can’t beat this guy. Our weapons do nothing.”

Sylla sighed, and shelved her fire. “Ok. I’ll join you guys.”

The kobolds sighed. “We’re going to live!”

“We’re going to survive.” Sylla whispered to herself, holding a rock that Frill had given her.

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Grar marched up behind Sui, holding the lanky kobold. “Everything ok?”

“Yeah, just keeping the kobolds in line.” Sui saw the lanky kobold. “Is that you, deer?”

“If it is, it’s going to make a good meal.”

Sui sighed. “Don’t eat him. He’s a magic deer.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. It wouldn’t be good food.”

“Hmm. Ok. I won’t eat this deer.” Grar assured.

The lanky kobold flickered and turned into a deer.

“I knew it was you.”

Grar stomped to the middle of the room, and the kobolds there looked at him expectantly, their mouths drooling. “No, we’re not eating this deer.”

They looked away.

Grar turned to the kobold king. “Gather your kobolds, we’ll have the meeting here.”

The kobold king did as told.

The kobolds guarding the yinglet brought him with them, tied up with a single rope around the arms and waist, and held onto it with the rest of the rope, like a leash.

Grar started the meeting once all the kobolds were there. He stood ontop a seat to increase his height advantage. The deer was still tightly held under his arms, which helped grab the kobolds’ attention. “I have an announcement. I am your leader now. You will do as I say and exactly as I say. I will not tolerate insubordination or disrespect towards me,” he motioned to himself and Sui, “or my colleague dragonborn here.”

The kobolds licked their lips. One started setting the pot on the campfire, another went to fetch water.

Grar shut it down. “And there will be no eating this deer. Understood?”

The kobolds hung their heads, except for Sylla, who stared angrily at the deer.

“You will be reprimanded if you even touch a hair on this deer’s back.”

Sylla didn’t drop her gaze.

“Hey, Sui. Go talk to that kobold.” Grar whispered, pointing Sylla out.

“Sure.” Sui stepped through the kobold crowd and grabbed Sylla’s wrist. “Come with me.”

Sui led Sylla to the fishing room. “What’s your name?”

“Sylla.”

He could tell she was different. She was covered in dirt and blood, and her facial expression hid a rage that made her fearless. “What happened to *you*?”

“A gauntlet of pits, walls, traps, and despair. I lost two of my close friends, and my single, very best friend. *That’s* what happened.”

“You don’t have to be so rude.”

Sylla looked away. “After Growl killed our section leader, and put up that iron door, my section ran the other way around.”

Sui nodded. “Yeah, *Grar* blocked your path so you chased us the long way around.”

“And along the way,” Sylla’s fist balled, “we ran into that deer. That very same deer that Grar is holding.”

“And?”

“And I want to rip its antlers off, chop them in half, and stab it with its own antlers.”

“But why?”

“It killed my friends!”

“But how?”

“I don’t know how it did it, but it shook the ground, and made pits to trap us, and walls to discourage us. And it made a really big wall and really deep pit. My best friend fell to his death, chasing that deer.”

“There’s no pits in the entrance.”

“I know! The deer made them appear.”

“Show me.”

Sylla started off, but Sui grabbed her again.

“But just in case, I’m going to tie this rope around you, so you don’t escape.”

“Seriously? I live here. Where do you think I’m going to go?”

“Mmm. Ok.” Sui dropped it.

Sylla led Sui to the place where Frill died. The pits were gone, but there were three dead kobolds, like she said. Two of them had went splat and had their heads cracked open.

“Well, I don’t see the pits.”

“But the bodies are still here!” Sylla pointed. “The evidence is right here!”

“Yeah, and we can’t have bodies blocking our entrance. They’re going to have to be moved, pronto.”

“You’re not the boss of me.”

“Did you hear what Grar said? Insubordination will NOT be tolerated.”

Sylla eyed him. “Ok.”

“Now move these bodies.”

“Where to?”

“Anywhere, just so they’re not blocking this path.”

Sylla picked up one of her friend’s arms, but the body didn’t move.

Sui sighed. “You’re not strong enough, are you?”

“No.”

Sui moved the three bodies easily and threw them out of the cave.

“You can’t just dump the bodies like that!”

“Why not?”

“They need a proper burial!”

“What for? They’re just kobolds.”

Sylla stewed. She started digging.

But Sui stopped her. “Come on, we’re going back to the meeting.” He dragged her back to the campfire in the cave.

“And we will be expanding this cave system.” Grar was still giving his speech. “Plans will be drawn soon, and you will follow the plans exactly.”

The deer turned into Sui. “What the deck man! Put me down!”

Grar raised an eyebrow at the Sui in his arms.

“That stupid deer switched me out! It’s getting away! Put me down so I can go after it!”

“Very clever, deer.” Grar squeezed hard, making the deer drop his disguise. “But you’re not very good at copying Sui’s voice.” He looked back at the kobolds gathered around.

Sui returned with Sylla. He seemed to have some news.

“And that is all for now. Go to your quarters and have a good rest.”

The kobolds scattered, pouring out into the side tunnels. As they left, a book floated out of one of the kobold’s hands. It floated over and into the deer’s fur. The deer smiled.

Grar got off his podium and approached Sui. “What’s up with her?”

Sui pulled Sylla forward. “Her friends died chasing that deer. Something about a pit.”

“A pit? There’s no pits there.”

“Do you remember those tremors we felt? That was probably the pits forming.”

“And you think this deer did that?”

“Well,” Sui stared into the deer’s face. “I’ve never seen it do that before, but it’s possible. Some spell like Mold Earth or something.”

“Well, deer?” Grar squeezed.

The deer hung its head in defeat. A spark flowed up its antler. The ground shook, and Grar braced himself. The column of dirt Grar stood on rose 10ft into the air. Under Sui, the ground dropped 10ft, putting him in a pit.

“So it was you. Wow, that’s… useful.” Grar smiled. “You can put me down now.”

The ground shifted back to normal, shaking the ground as it went.

“What’s your name, deer?”

The deer shrugged.

“Come on, I know you have a name.”

“BLEAT!”

“In a language I can understand.”

The deer didn’t say anything.

“Stop being difficult! Tell him your name!” Sui yelled.

“Hey don’t scare it!” Grar shut him down. “Come on deer, I know you can talk.”

The deer hung its head. A spark flitted up its antler, and letters appeared on the ground in front of Grar.

ASTALIR

“Alistar? Like that one guy?”

Astalir shook his head.

“Oh, it’s switched. Asteer… Astaril… As-ta-leer. Astalir?”

The deer nodded.

“So, Astalir…” Grar sat on a bench next to the campfire. “What do you do?”

SURVIVE

“Hmm… interesting. We’ll have to talk about that later.” Grar put a log on the campfire. “But I meant, what do you *do*? Like, as a job.”

“I think he’s a wizard or something.”

“Sui, can you go get the prisoner?”

“What?”

“The yinglet. In that room over there.”

“Hmm. Ok.” Sui left to fetch the yinglet prisoner.

“So, you were saying?” Grar took a sip from his waterskin, still holding Astalir tight under his arm.

INFO ACQUISTION

“Info acquisition? So, like a spy?” Grar held his waterskin up to Astalir’s mouth.

Astalir shook his head no.

“Well, then I’m afraid I don’t quite understand.”

Sui returned with the yinglet.

Grar untied him. “Who are you?”

“This one is called Gale, Gale Wind, of the desert.” The yinglet spoke with a timid voice.

Grar pat the seat next to him, opposite Astalir. “Sit down.”

Gale sat next to Grar.

“So Gale, why do you speak of yourself in the third person?”

“This one has always done it, since birth.”

“What happened to you? How did you end up here?”

“This one woke up here. This one was camping in woods, when kobold scum knocked this one out.”

“I’m Grar, now the leader of these kobolds. Sorry to hear that my new recruits did this to you. I’ll have a talk with them.”

“This one was wondering what was going on. This one thanks you.”

Astalir turns into the yinglet.

“What’s that?”

“Don’t worry about him.” Grar pets Astalir on the head through his disguise. Astalir turns back into a deer.

Sui shuffles a deck of cards. He holds it out to Grar. “Want to draw one?”

“What is this?”

“Deck of random oddities. I got some random buffs from it already.”

“I could use some buffs.” Grar drew a card. His eyes popped wide open, and his grogginess faded. “Wow, I feel wired!”

“Oh yeah I got that card too. I haven’t slept in days!”

“That’s good news. Not sleeping will make things easier to keep.” He gave Astalir a squeeze.

Astalir looked dismayed. His brows furrowed and his ears pinned back. He kicked the air with his hind leg.

“Now don’t try to escape. I’ll let you go when I know I can trust you.”

“How about you?” Sui held the deck out to Astalir.

A card floated off the top of the deck and to Astalir. He looked at it. He didn’t feel any different, and nothing seemed to change.

“What that do? This one not see.”

“I don’t know, but do you want to draw a card?” Sui held the deck out to Gale.

Gale drew a card. His pupils dilated to fill his whole eye socket. He got down on the ground and wagged his kangaroo-like yinglet tail. His ears flopped. “Bark! Bark!” He put his forepaws on Grar’s lap and panted.

Grar let out a big laugh. He ruffled Gale’s head a little.

“He got the dog card! He’s acting like a dog!” Sui pointed.

“Another mastiff for my collection.” Grar commented. He picked up a stick and threw it.

Gale ran awkwardly on his short forelimbs and long, kangaroo-like yinglet legs. His body wasn’t made for quadrupedal movement, but he made do. He grabbed the stick in his mouth and returned it to Grar.

“This is hilarious!”

A minute or two later, Gale’s eyes go back to normal. He looks down at the stick in his mouth and the floor he’s all fours on. “Bleh!” He spits out the stick, stands up, and dusts himself off.

“Do you want to draw again?” Sui stifled a laugh.

“Blasted cards!” Gale pushed the deck away. “This one will not be doing that again!”

“Shit man, that was probably the hardest I’ve laughed in years! Here, for your troubles.” Grar reached into his bag with his single free hand and pulled out four gold pieces, handing it Gale.

“This one did not enjoy this, but is glad you enjoyed it.”

Grar gave him a hearty slap on the back.

“I’m barbarian who grew up in this wilderness. Trust me when I say, I know.”

Astalir’s antler sparked. His pupils grew to fill his eye, his ears flopped to the side of his head, and his tail wagged enthusiastically. “Bark! Bark!”

“You too, AStalir?” Grar turned to Sui. “They both got the same card?”

“Ha! That one’s a dog minded!” Gale pointed and laughed.

“No…” Sui examined the deck. “There’s only one card of each type.”

The stick floated up to Grar’s free hand. “Bark! Bark!” Astalir’s tail wagged and his tongue hung out.

Grar stared intently into Astalir’s eyes, and eventually saw through the illusion. “Nice try, Astalir.”

Astalir hung his head, and he returned to normal.

“You really are a clever deer, though.”

After an hour or so, Gale fell asleep. While Grar and Sui talked, Astalir pulled out the book he found in the kobold’s room. It was a diary written in Aarakocra, a language the kobolds most definitely couldn’t read. It told the daily struggles of an Aarakocra living in the mountains. Astalir read through it, completely engrossed.

Grar laid down next to the campfire, and Sui did too. Grar held onto Astalir, not letting him get away.

“So what’s your plan for this cave?”

“Well it’s going to be our new base of operations.”

“So you’re staying in town?”

“It looks like it. I don’t have any home to go to. This one will do.”

“How are you going to manage all these kobolds?”

“That’s what I have you for. And we’re going to designate some kobolds to be leaders.”

Astalir shifted to get comfy despite Grar’s arms and closed his eyes, as if to go to sleep.

“Which ones?” Sui hugged an arrow close to his chest.

“Obviously, the green scaled one. He’s going to be directly below me, after you. The winged kobolds make natural leaders, and one in particular is good at inspiring others.”

“Speaking of inspiring, I have a suggestion.”

“Yes?” Grar asked.

“That blue-hooded one, Sylla. She is very inspirational. The kobolds follow her.”

“Yes, I was thinking of her as well. We will have to give her her own “section”, as they call it.”

“Yes.”

Grar and Sui didn’t fall asleep. Astalir tried to stay awake, but fell asleep after a few hours of getting comfy. He didn’t know what Grar was going to do with him, but he knew he needed to come up with an escape plan. Tomorrow. He will sleep on it and do something tomorrow.

Astalir fell asleep, laying his head on the cave floor.