

Penitious strode down the smooth stone-laid floor of the castle corridor toward a brown door striped with steel for reinforcement. Pale moonlight lay striped in the shape of the tall, arched windows. On his plate-mailed back he wore Min, the infamous ten foot long broadsword of the Kingdom of Swarsh, one of his own designs.

Whenever he wore Min the blade left a trail of long gouges and scratches; the tip of the heavy blade dragged behind him as he walked. Tonight's letter from the king necessitated a bit of ingenuity to preserve the castle's decor.

With superior intellect he fashioned a sheath on wheels, just large enough to hold Min's enormous tip above ground. The project put him behind schedule. Even though the king made no mention of a specific time in his note, Penitious wore his punctuality with pride.

Halfway one of the wheels began to squeak, waking the guard at the end of the corridor.

The guard's sudden movement startled Penitious, distracting him from noticing the low hanging chandelier above. Continuing forward, he bumped Min's hilt against the chandelier. The candles perched upon it toppled and fell, some still alight, leaving a trail of wax as they rolled in various directions. One landed within one of the crevices in the shoulder of his plate mail, dripping hot wax down his arm.

He yelled pulling Min forward, hooking the hilt to the chandelier while reaching with his left hand to remove the candle from his right shoulder, still burning his arm with hot wax. With the candle out of reach, the guard would be the only one able to help him. Not wanting to shout due to the late hour, he waved at the guard for assistance, as he did, chains from the chandelier above rattled.

The guard cocked his full helmet, placing his armored fists at his sides. Even with Penitious' frenzied motion for help the guard simply stood, his helmet throwing a blank stare.

Frustrated, Penitious pulled the release strap to free him from Min. The hilt of the broadsword remained hooked to the chandelier, so the sword remained upright. Penitious fell backwards purposefully, then slammed his left shoulder against the ground repeatedly trying to dislodge the candle. Each slap of the metal armor on the floor rang out, one after another, until the candle rolled away dripping wax behind it.

As the pain subsided, tired faces peaked from their cracked doors along the corridor, the king's servants staring silently at Penitious on his back. Not used to this heavy armor he was unable to stand up from his current position. After a couple unsuccessful attempts he began rocking back and forth, armor still slapping loudly against the stone until he was able to roll onto his stomach. Using his arms and legs to push himself up he regained his footing and walked back over to Min.

Grasping the sheath he tilted the broadsword backwards, unhooking the hilt from the iron chandelier, which was being pushed toward the far end of the corridor under the sword's weight. Once free the chandelier swung back, dislodging the spike which hung it to the ceiling. As it crashed on the floor a few chunks of the stone floor broke, leaving cracks and gouges in the smooth stone under the twisted iron chandelier.

More doors along other nearby quarters creaked open revealing more furious, tired faces. Penitious strapped Min to his back and continued down the hallway. Min's wheels continued to squeak as he approached the guard, fully plated just as Penitious was. The guard's helmet slowly twisted, following his approach until Penitious was close enough to speak to the guard quietly, not wanting to make any unnecessary noise.

The guard's helmet slowly turned back to the direction of the dislodged chandelier, a few servants still in their sleepwear had emerged from their rooms to inspect the damage to the floor. The guard's helmet then slowly turned back to Penitious then shook back and forth before waving him through. As Min was much larger than the door frame, and the king's instructions were very clear, he unsheathed it again by removing the straps from his shoulders.

Pulling a little too hard when unsheathing caused Min to topple backwards as the wheels slid forward. One of the onlookers was struck by the hilt while inspecting the grounded chandelier. The guard threw up his arms as the woman yelped.

Penitious scrambled over to the sword, inspecting it for any signs of chips or cracks. When he was satisfied the sword was intact, he placed the tip back on the small cart. He pulled out the king's note and re-read it, making sure he was following its explicit instructions.

*Dear Penitious,*

*Be my knight in shining armor tonight. I want that big sword of yours in your hand when you walk through the door.*

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With Min's hilt in hand, Penitious wondered what special mission the king had in store for a man of his superior intellect. He squeaked through the door into the king's sleeping quarters.