

A fall breeze swept through the dark rugged city, a sign of the coming winter. Street lanterns, dimly lit windows, and the harvest moon lighting up the dark corners of what many called home. This wasn't exactly the safest of cities nor the cleanest, but it did hold up well for its festivities. Many skireans travel to visit ahead of any official event, quickly taking up hotels and inns alike. Flynn, a traveling cccat, recently took shelter in the nearby coastal inn for the night. Just like the others, claiming a room for themselves well before any celebration or festival takes place. When arriving in the city that very morning, the cccat could spot many of the residents purchasing or creating various costumes for Halloween. This gave him the idea to make his own. He wasn't exactly open to spending too much money, but he couldn't deny a free easy chance to torment the citizens that arrived. The idea of joining the others seemed easy enough. Before deciding what exactly he wanted to do, he chose to relax after the long sea voyage.

During the night, after Flynn woke up, he washed up and made his way out of the inn. The city was alight by the orange hue of the old twisted street lamps. Skireans were pulling out Halloween decorations as well as jack-o-lanterns. Smaller skireans could even be caught carrying gourds larger than their own body. It wasn't considered a time for costumes by Flynn's standards, it was far too early, but a few crooks and cccats that were on the same path that Flynn was taking were already testing out their costumes. Some dressed as the common witch, others dressed up as demons or unknown monsters. One cccat didn't even need a costume since their body was covered in what appeared to be large stitches. Whether those stitches were real or just fake markings, they reminded Flynn of some failed experiment. It also gave him ideas for his costume, but he needed to get to his ship first. This was his main form of transportation, and it was the main method to reach any destination he desired, including this city.

Eventually, after walking through the alleyways and the city's port, Flynn reached the public docks. A stevedore stood nearby collecting dock fees and ensuring no ships were being stolen. *Must be getting paid to cover for the usual security guard* he thought. Stevedores usually worked on the port side of the coast, handling trade ships and their cargo, not overseeing the docks that stored citizen's boats. Flynn, continuing to walk to his boat, briefly raised his hand with a little card to the stevedore to prove he owned a ship there. The stevedore, now close up, was a nautipod wearing a headband with red devil horns, He nodded to Flynn in understanding.

"Have a good night sir!" The nautipod called before turning around to continue pacing around the docks.

"You too!"

At the ship, instead of walking across the bridge, he hopped across the gap between the dock and the boat to get in. It was a medium size boat, not super large. Just large and sturdy enough to function as a long over-sea seafarer ship for a single skirean. Flynn owned many ships

far larger than the one he was currently standing on and left them securely protected at the various ports he visited, but more than half of those large ships required an actual crew. He himself could hardly get something of that size fully functioning. Sometimes he'd hire a crew, but he hardly made enough to keep them on the boat and he couldn't deny that he often enjoyed the solitude after interacting with so many skireans on the mainland.

Slipping down into the boat's bunker, he pulled out a locked chest that he stored right above his sleek bed. This was only one of many chests that he kept locked up, but this one mostly stored aimless, less important, wares that caught his eye over the years. Having been one of the first chests a visitor would see, Flynn deemed it a good distraction chest to any idiotic thief that deemed his ship worth stealing from. "Where oh where are you, you cheap pathetic knife," he mumbled. The knife he was looking for was a lightweight wooden butcher knife. Something that would be used as decoration or to hand a young child. At first glance, it doesn't look like a fake wooden knife, but a high-quality blade; however, upon closer inspection, chipped sections display the wood that would normally be hidden underneath the paint. "Ah, there you are!" He pulled out the fake butcher knife, closed the chest, and tossed it back on the shelf above his bed. Swiftly turning around, Flynn exited the room and shifted right into a hallway that connected straight to the deck. Opening a door to the left led to a small workshop, the equivalent of another human's work garage, but a small hybrid of a metalworking and woodworking shop. Flynn had his hobbies while he was sailing the sea.

"Time to break you apart and add some good ol' fake blood on ya." He said to himself as he took out a carving tool, a soft measuring tape, a plastic headband, and an acrylic paint set. "I think it's due time I add myself to the undead crew outside. Too many witches, vampires, and demons out there." Lifting the tape measure to his head, he immediately started taking measurements starting with the circumference and the frontal to nape. Transferring his measurements to the blade, he started chipping away at the wood. It took about an hour to chip it all away, attach it to the headband, and fit it snugly to his head. Looking into a small mirror, he mumbled, "Perfect," before continuing back to work. The headband was black, which may work at hiding in a dark-colored skirean or dark-haired human, it stuck out like a sore thumb on his head. To fit the theme, he started staining the blade in various shades of crimson and standard red. On top of the stain, he carefully painted blood on the blade; the headband painted a similar color to himself. Using hot glue that was stored in his workshop's desk, he carefully applied thick layers over the blade to create depth to the blood, then he carefully reapplied another layer of fake blood and added a glossy shine to the tips. Feeling proud of his work, he tried on the headband. In the mirror, it appeared as though a butcher knife had sliced through his head. *All I need to add is some fake blood to the fur on my head, add some fake wounds to my face, and a gorey outfit and I should be set to go!* Looking realistic enough to meet his standards, he cheerfully smiled and set down the finished horror headband.

Nightfall was the worst time to go shopping for clothes, or in this case costumes, but shopping wasn't always his style either. Nothing inside of his ship screamed costume in Flynn's eyes, so he nabbed his hoodie and chose to stroll through the city for something more fitting. The majority of the businesses that Flynn walked by were closed, but he window-shopped for the right attire. Nothing screamed horror costume unless you were aiming for a fancy vampire or demon. *Probably the whole reason why they were so popular and common amongst the folk.* He sighed as he stared through each of the windows, many presenting suits, dresses, and common outdoor apparel. Halloween or party shops were pretty much rid of all the costumes from what Flynn could see. Nothing good was available. *Just my luck.* After a couple of hours, Flynn eventually came across a corner of the city filled to the brim with various factories, butcher shops, and mills. The sky was filled with smoke that the stars could no longer be seen. The ground is covered with thick smog. The air here screamed hazardous. If a place could become the definition of depression, this was it. It was where Flynn felt the hopeless or lost citizens often went for economic stability. Some of the employees were generally happy, but he wouldn't dare step foot as an employee in those types of places. He was happily taking in personal clients for the more sketchy jobs that others wouldn't dare touch.

Gloomily staring through the fence, Flynn watched as a security guard with a rolled-up newspaper made his way to a restroom alongside a factory employee who appeared to be walking out of the building to seemingly leave. The employee had an all-blue work jacket and pants, nothing that would be deemed as fancy. The color was dull and covered in what appeared to be scorch marks. On the left-hand side, on the upper chest of the worktop, a company tag was listed. It was a standard outfit that all the employees seemed to wear. After only a second thought, Flynn cut the chainmail fence in the darkest corner of the factory plot, where no light hits, and snuck inside with his hoodie up. *No one was going to miss a messy old work outfit.* Walking to the main door that the employee exited out, he stopped to realize there was no lock or visible security. Expecting an internal lock, a keycard, or even a basic security camera not too far from the door, he couldn't help but whisper, "What the?". Flynn slowly pulled the door open to a dimly lit hallway covered in black signs that hung onto different sides of the hallway. Each labeling what door and hallways led to what. The locker room and lunch room were one of the first doors. *How is it possible to not have security? This is the least secure place I have snuck into so far. Is this place truly that much of a dump that the only thing they bother to do is add a generic security guard.*

Walking past a couple of doors, the cccat made a left turn and entered the door to the locker room. This was the first place to actually have a camera, though whether this camera that was cracked and angled towards the ceiling worked was a whole other ordeal. Looking at the room, a good thirty lockers with no apparent lock hugged each side of the wall, a large dirty white table with basic office supplies stood in the center, and a single metal door was located on the right side of the room. He couldn't deny that the whole room disgusted him. Poking through

each of the lockers, not much was held in any of them, not even the work garments he was searching for. Continuing his search, he strolled to the metal door and pushed it open. Inside was one massive storage room filled with plastic-wrapped uniforms, cleaning supplies, and various tools that would likely be used to make minor repairs to the factory's machinery. Snatching a couple of sets of work uniforms, Flynn was quick to sneak his way out. The security guard was still at the restroom by the time he made it past the fence.

Flynn didn't necessarily need two work uniforms, but one could always come in handy if he needed to sneak around another business in the future. Arriving back at his boat, he quickly splattered some fake blood to the suit and tore off the old company tag, replacing it with a generic name tag that he stole a while back, with the name "Josh" on it. He's used this tag quite a few times, successfully helping him with jobs that were often called dubious. All the jobs paid well, so that's all that mattered. Putting on the blood-covered outfit and headband, he stared at himself to see what was missing. Deciding against the additional fake wounds, he used charcoal to scuff up his face and uniform. To make the costume come off as threatening he took out a grease-covered wrench and doused it in his pile of red paint. Together, the whole outfit screamed psychotic undead handyman. Grabbing his original clothes, he decided to join to few that were showing their costume off in the night as he made his way back to the inn.