

I have seen cities before, countless of them throughout my lives, but Kurzix is the first city I've seen with walls made of metal. Thick, shiny steel; the sheer quantity boggles the mind. Like, I already knew beforehand that Kurzix was a city that produced iron in enough quantity to fully supply not only Camelot, but the nearby kingdoms as well. Still, this is more metal than several aircraft carriers combined.

It's still off in the distance, but from where Jessica and I sit in the driver's seat, we can see it easily. Our enchanted masks work wonders.

"Does something seem off?" I hear Jessica ask.

I snort. "Jess, they have a wall made of fucking steel. The whole city screams 'off,'" I answer, which gets me an eye-roll.

"No, not that." She points at the front gates. "There's a lot of [Soldiers] and [Guards]."

"What do you-," I pause when I see what she means. Lots of [Guards] are at the gates formed up at the gates and high above them, [Archers] stand ready at every crenellation.

"Hmmm, you're right. Something doesn't seem right."

With a mental command, the undead horses in front of me double their speed. I then look to my right and see Trinity.

"We're going to speed up. Something doesn't seem right," I inform her.

The Amazon quickly turns her head from my direction. Her expression is as stiff as it's been since our private chat.

"Understood," she says robotically before turning to her team. "*Bladed Thorns*, we're speeding up. Keep pace with the carriage."

I turn my head away to keep an eye on the road, or so it seems. At the edge of my vision, I watch as Trinity takes quick glances at me while doing her best to stare forward. I notice anyway.

I release a sigh and shake my head.

"What's wrong?" Jessica asks and all I can do is give a small smile.

What exactly should I tell her? That I threatened Trinity with death so that she would keep her hands off? Or should I tell her that Trinity has started moaning my name every fucking night?

Really now, what the hell happened? I scared her so bad that she pissed herself. She should be afraid of me, not freaking aroused; though she does hide it very well in public.

I hear a knocking from inside the carriage. I turn around in my seat and slide open a little door. Abernick and Deflon stare out.

“Did something happen?” Deflon asks.

I shrug. “Possibly. Security seems to be tight in the city. Hopefully, things will go smoothly.”

Deflon nods slowly. The big man is apprehensive about being away from the safety of the guild, but he is ready and willing to put his life on the line to reunite Jessica with her mother.

I close the door and then lean back into the driver’s seat. I also glance at Jessica, who has been rather silent for the past few days. Understandable, considering how her world has changed now that she has a living mother and is technically a noble.

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“Sir Edwir, we’ve got a group of armed riders and a single unmarked carriage approaching. Your orders, Sir?” the [Soldier] asks nervously.

Edwir practically hops out of his seat. “Is it Shival? Is this an advanced party to sow chaos?” he asks the [Soldier], whose own panic rises further under Edwir’s razor-focused bloodshot eyes.

“Maybe, sir?” the [Soldier] says meekly.

Edwir frowns. “What do you mean, maybe? It’s either the enemy or it isn’t.”

“Tha-.”

“Never mind,” Edwir interrupts, “I’ll go see myself,” he announces. The [Iron Archknight] grabs his helmet from his table, plants it on his head, and walks out of his office without saying a word.

The [Soldier] stands stricken as the door behind him closes, left alone in the tiny office, with only the desk, chair, and the rest of the Edwir’s armor.

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Edwir curses internally as he makes his way to the top of the wall. [Captains] stare at him in amusement as he rushes up the ramparts with only his helmet. It’s not the first time this has happened, and it probably won’t be the last.

He scowls as he runs up the stairs. His skill is both a gift and a curse. Anything made primarily of iron will be practically weightless so long as he wears it. Funnily enough, that means he sometimes can’t tell if he is wearing his armor or not, like what had just happened moments ago. Hell, he doesn’t even feel the weight of his oversized helmet.

With the last step, he reaches at the top of the wall and looks off into the distance.

“Sir Edwir,” the [Soldiers] call and salute. He waves at them. At the sight of the armed escort, his first instinct is to have the gates shut, start heating the oil, and prepare the [Archers].

Thankfully, his perception is better than the rest of his [Soldiers]. He can see the riders, all of them female.

He releases a sigh and sags with relief as he realizes who they are. The exhaustion of the past week hits him all at once. His limbs feel like mush and his eyelids droop. All he wants to do is collapse to the ground and sleep

A week of endless work. Even with his high stats, the living still need sleep.

Unfortunately, he still has a job to do.

Forcing his body to move, he hops off the wall and lands with a thud right in front of the alarmed [Guards].

“The [King]’s mercenaries are arriving. Open the gates fully and allow them to enter,” he orders. The [Guards] comply while he folds his arms and waits to welcome the new bodyguards.

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Imagine taking a muscled bodybuilder and then giving him the bulkiest helmet possible. It’s weird and extremely confusing. Especially when I analyze the guy.

Edwir Gradian

Level 137 [Iron Archknight]

Edwir was born to Histra Melsen, of the legendary line of Melsen [Bakers]. From a young age, Edwir proved himself to be a complete and utter failure in all things cooking and was disowned from his illustrious family at the age of four. After toddling the countryside for weeks, eating naught but dirt and bark, he was adopted by a pack of wild raccoons led by the named raccoon, Kyle, **The Masked Terror**. Under the tutelage of the great named raccoon, Edwir learned his true aptitude: hitting things with heavy objects. Over the next ten years, he would develop techniques for hitting few had ever considered before, and fewer lived to learn.

At the age of fourteen, Edwir left the raccoons to strike out on his own. After entering the city of Kurzix, he was quickly spotted as a talent and recruited into the army. Basic training finally beat the contagious, youthful hopes and festering, infectious good cheer out of Edwin, crushed away by routine, bureaucracy, and discipline. Also, lots of beatings. Lots and lots of beatings.

Anyways, he's a grumpy guy now.

Strength	52
Dexterity	91
Stamina	56
Perception	33
Endurance	46
Vitality	222
Mana	110
M/regen	1.4
Affinity	1
Intelligence	37
Willpower	401
Soul	271

Like, his strength doesn't seem high enough for a helmet that bulky. The thing looks like he should be unbalanced, but the man is unfazed. I do wonder what skill he has that allows him to do that.

My musing is cut short as we arrive near the entrance. The line of people waiting to get inside shifts out of the way, allowing us to get at the gates immediately. Our procession and carriage stop as the helmeted man steps forward.

The [Guards] on the ground and [Soldiers] on the wall tighten their hold on their weapons but do not unsheath them. They are well trained and prepared to engage us if an order is given, even when they are stealing glances at the girls.

"I am Sir Edwir Gadian, loyal knight of [King] Enderan. If I may be so presumptuous as to ask, but would you be the mercenary teams *Merry Marrows* and *Bladed Thorns*?"

Trinity gracefully dismounts her bull and delicately plods across the cobblestone road to stand in front of Edwir. She then reaches into her bra and pulls out her guild card. Expelling a pittance of mana into the card, Trinity reveals it to be genuine.

It takes a long moment for Edwir to shift his eyes from her chest to the card. Trinity remains expressionless, used to a man's slow synapses.

Realizing what he did, Edwir blushes and quickly swallows. "Thank you Miss Trinity," he almost stumbles on his words and swiftly moves aside, "Please enter. One of the [Guards] will lead you to the royal stables for your mounts. Your living quarters have already been prepared."

The Amazon does not nod or speak. She merely turns, hops onto her bull, and then silently rides inside with her team after the guide [Guard].

Once the women enter, Edwir releases a sigh of relief.

"Heh, beautiful women can be a bit distracting, can't they," I say as I lean forward in my seat.

Edwir releases a forced chuckle as his eyes meet my mask.

"I presume you're Bone, leader of *Merry Marrows*?"

"Yup. I'm guessing you're going to need my card?"

"Yes, I will."

I grab the card from my pocket and release a bit of mana.

"So, you and your men seem to be on edge. Any reason for that?"

He nods as he looks at my card. His eyebrows raise in surprise at the class and level. Thankfully, it doesn't seem like either of those will be a problem.

“Yes, the [King] of Shival has raised an army and is marching towards Kurzix as we speak. We are expecting a siege.”

“We are hired to protect the [King],” I warn him. “We will not be joining in your war or battle, at least not without significant compensation.”

My words catch him off-guard. He frowns. “I thought the mercenary guild forbade joining any wars.” He states it almost like a question.

“They do, but my job is to protect the [King] and his family. Should an army arrive and attempt to take their lives, protecting them from it could be considered a gray area.

”Edwir slowly nods like a man now very interested.

“I will inform my [King] of your words, but for now, allow me to show you to your quarters”

“Oh? You sent Trinity with a [Guard], but you would guide me yourself...” I say with a snicker

The guy blushes but cracks a smile. “That woman is beautiful enough that I don’t trust myself not to stare. My wife works at the castle, and I’d rather not risk her anger.”

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned,” I quote.

Not a second later, Jessica elbows me in my side while she glares from behind her mask.

Edwir shakes his head. “Come,” he turns, “let me take you to where you will be staying.”

He begins walking and I order my undead horses to follow.