

A TALE

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NOTE: This short fiction is my first try at writing and it is dedicated to my family, especially to my mother who has always believed in me and who is always by my side when I need her; also my husband and my 3 and a half year old daughter whom I adore.

It is also dedicated to my friends from a video game called Celtic Heroes which we've been playing together for more than 2 years. They were my inspiration. Enjoy!

Chapter 1 : Going hunting

In the beautiful kingdom Donn there was peace and harmony for the last 500 years. All ended with the evil wizard Gelebron' s obsession for Miihah, the king' s beautiful young wife.

But let' s see how it all happened.....

Miihah is a ravishing dark haired healer . She is the mistress of the Enchanted Forest, a land feared by the evil doers and sought as refuge by honest people who suffer at the hands of the first category.

Miihah' s best friend is Bratty, a beautiful but quick tempered mage. So whenever Miihah , or the Lady of the Forest, as she is known to most of the people, needs advice, she goes to Bratty. Miihah is the protector of the Enchanted Forest, the protector of life in all forms. She always likes to see the good in everyone and if there is no good, she tries to make them see themselves the way they are, hoping to eventually turn them around.

Meanwhile, Scar, the king of Donn , the most powerful, respected and feared king that the land of Donn has ever had, decides to take a day off from his daily duties and to go hunting alone. So he tells his right hand man, his most trusted friend and counselor , the general of his army , Harry the Dwarf, to take care of the kingdom while he goes hunting.

- But my king, take me with you, you know it is not safe to go hunting alone. You never know what might happen and as I always like to say, better safe than sorry.
- What? Do you think I can't take care of myself? Scar said, wanting to have a day off of all responsibilities and just enjoy a beautiful day wandering in the woods and hunting like he used to do when he was a child and didn' t have to care for a kingdom. He had his parents back then...
- No my king, I would never imply anything like that. We have fought side by side for so many times. It is common knowledge that you are brave and honest but that is just it... I always go where you go. As Donn is your responsibility, you are my responsibility. Maybe Ulo could watch over the kingdom while we go hunting together?
- Hmmm, as much as I trust Ulo when he is sober, I can' t trust him on a Sunday.... You know as well as I do that he always drinks on Sundays.

- Ok, if you are not back till sunset, I...
- Enough Harry. I should be out hunting already. See you at sunset!
 Harry mumbled something to himself and plucked a few hairs from his beard. Then he went to have a talk with Ulo, a tall lean man whom they befriended many years ago during one of their adventures. Ulo's best talent is picking locks. He never found a door which he couldn't unlock, a skill which proved useful many times. A skill which opened many doors, including the door to Scar's castle and circle of trusted friends which Ulo knew was worth more than any riches he could find behind a locked door.
- Hey,Ulo, how are you today?
- Good, good, having a drink ..What is it Harry?
- Well,how about you refrain yourself from drinking today and see that everything stays ok within the kingdom?
- Uhm, I don't know...as tempting as it might sound, I would rather drink.
- Not today my friend. Scar is out hunting alone. I want to make sure he gets back safe!
- A little too late for that..I am already tipsy. But you know what? You stay in charge here as Scar probably assigned you and send someone else on the king's tail to make sure he returns safely.
- Who do you have in mind then?
- Mongo, of course!
- Mongo, the king's assassin!
- Yes, he works best in the shadows. So Scar won't even know he is being followed. This way Mongo will have something to do to get him out of his boredom and the king will think he is hunting alone... Everybody wins!
- You know Ulo, sometimes I wonder if the ale you drink has any effect upon you. You must be immune cause this idea of yours is going to work. I am off to see Mongo. By the way, do you know where I can find him ?
- He should be in his room , bored to death.
 Meanwhile in Mongo's private chamber.
- Sometimes I think that everyone forgets I even exist until some threat has to be dealt with. It is all very exciting but there are periods when nobody has to die, no traitor has to be punished and it gets very boring... Maybe I should get a hobby!
- Knock knock!
- Harry, come in!
- How did you know it was me?

- That is easy, by the way you knock on my door, as if afraid I am behind it with a knife or something! Mongo said while he hid his silver knife in his secret pocket sewn on the interior of his jacket.
- I hear you are bored. How about a job? Protect and follow the king today, unseen of course?
- Finally something to do! Ok, where is he?
- He went hunting half an hour ago.
- Ok then hi and bye, going after him!
- Thank you Mongo! But Mongo was already out the door, hurrying to catch up with Scar.
- Finally, a day off , I will hunt some boars and then have a nap. Scar thought to himself while he entered the Enchanted Forest without even realizing it. This is weird, how did it get so dark? And where am I? I don' t remember this path nor that big oak. There is something behind it. By the sound of it, it must be big! Scar took his trusted bow and an arrow and waited silently in a nearby bush. A rustle came from behind the oak again. Then the oak was unrooted by a huge troll. He seemed to be in a rage, knocking down trees as if sticks. Scar took aim and....nothing! The arrow had hardly scratched the troll, only making it even angrier than it already was.

Then out of nowhere Mongo screamed:

- Run my king, I will take care of the troll!
- Mongo, what are you doing here?
- Trying to save you I would say!
- Why does everybody think I need help? I can manage! And besides, I never run from a fight!
- This is a troll, not an ordinary enemy! But if you don' t want to run and save yourself, then let us fight it together!
- This answer I like better, charge!

Mongo took his swords and charged the troll. Scar dropped his bow and took his large sword from the scabbard and also charged with a fierce battlecry. The enraged troll also attacked the two . Mongo sprinted ahead of Scar and pierced the troll' s right foot. The troll , with one of Mongo' s swords still dangling from its foot, tried to step on Mongo but Mongo was swifter than the troll and managed to retrieve his sword from the troll' s foot and when he was about to hit the troll again Scar came from behind and plunged his broad sword in the troll' s back . It roared in agony. His roar was heard by Miihah, the Lady of the Forest.

- Stop , please! Miihah addressed the two, not knowing she was talking to the king.
- Who are you young lady? And what do you mean stop? We are trying to kill the beast!
- The beast as you call it is my pet! And is harmless!
- You must either be kidding or you are crazy! Scar said.
- Neither! I am Miihah, the lady of the forest and this is Snorri, my pet. You have wounded him, now just go away and let me heal him!
- Sorry my lady, we didn't know that a troll could be tamed and someone's pet. Saying that, Scar bowed to the beautiful lady.
- What happened Miihah, do you need my help? Want me to fry the two or turn them to frogs for what they did to poor Snorri? Bratty who was always by Miihah's side asked.
- Shut up witch! This here is the king of Donn and I am his personal assassin, uttered Mongo.
- No Bratty, they had no idea Snorri was harmless. No need to turn them into anything.
- Not even for a minute? Come on Miihah, it would be fun!
- No, it would be wrong!
- If you say so...
 - Then Miihah focused on Snorri's wounds and uttered a healing spell.
- Go now Snorri!
- It seems it was all a misunderstanding my lady. We are sorry for the trouble we've caused! We will be getting back to the castle , hunting is over for today I guess. I hope we shall see each other again soon my beautiful lady!
 - This is how Scar and Miihah met for the first time. On the way back to the castle she was all Scar could think about.
- Have you ever seen someone more beautiful Mongo?
- Truth be told , they were both astonishing.
- Yes, but Miihah...
- An exotic beauty!
- I wanna see her again Mongo!
- You mean now?
- No, don't be silly! We just left. But...I think I will go hunt more often in those woods.
- Ok, just be careful.
- Always. Now let's get back before Harry worries himself to death. You know how stubborn that dwarf can be and he really wants me back by

sunset so let's hurry up. I'm afraid that if we don't get back in time Harry will gather the army and come looking for me! So let's make haste!

Chapter 2: Royalty in love

- Scar, welcome back! So what did you hunt? Asked Harry, noticing that Mongo was by Scar's side although he should have kept to the shadows as they had agreed and realizing that something must have gone wrong for Mongo to have revealed himself.
- Oh, nothing, the usual stuff. A deer, a troll...
- Say what? A troll?!?
- Yes, a big ugly troll. And this is not all. That thing is the lady of the forest's pet, said Mongo a bit upset for having allowed such a vile creature to live.
- Wow, you met the lady of the forest? I heard stories about her but I thought it was all a myth. Harry said this and wanted to hear the answer from the king himself.
- Yes Harry and she is the most beautiful woman I have ever laid my eyes upon. I want to go hunting tomorrow again. Maybe I get the chance to see her again but she had a mage with her. Bratty I think was her name. She wanted to turn us to frogs, said Scar.
- In this case, if you go hunting tomorrow, said Harry, always protective of the king, then perhaps you should take our mage with you, just to make sure.
- Oh, Mean the Wizard? Asked Scar.
- Who else? Do we have another and I don't know?
- No but he is almost always so grumpy. He is no fun. Said Scar.
- Well, he won't be going to entertain you but to protect you from Bratty.
- I think it wouldn't hurt to take him along. He spent too much time among those dusty spell books anyway. He needs some fresh air and he will get some fresh air either he likes it or not.
- Well spoken, my king, both Harry and Mongo said at the same time.

In the highest tower of the castle Mean, Donn's most powerful mage, was brewing an invisibility potion.
- This should do it I hope. I will try it on this bug. Yes, it works!! I did it, this potion will surely come in handy. Now to write down the formula before I forget it.
- Mean, are you there?
- Scar, is that you? Anything wrong or you need my magic?

- Mean...I need you to accompany me tomorrow when I go hunting.
 - You never asked me to go hunting with you, you have Ulo and Mongo for that. Me and Harry have always stood by your side in battle. Are we fighting tomorrow?
 - Not that I know of. No, you can relax. But I hope to meet someone again tomorrow and she has a mage friend who didn't seem very friendly so I thought if you came along things would be equal.
 - Well, I just finished this invisibility potion. I will use it on myself tomorrow and protect you without being seen. How does this sound to you my king?
 - Even better than I hoped for . Then it is settled. Get some rest and meet me tomorrow morning.
 - Good night my king!
- Meanwhile in the Enchanted Forest Miihah talks with Bratty.
- Bratty, what did you think of that king ...Scar ...and his companion Mongo?
 - They were stupid to mess with Snorri but brave. If we hadn't interfered I am afraid Snorri would have been in trouble. Good thing we stopped them in time and you used your magic to heal him.
 - Yes, yes, not what I meant however. I mean did you find Scar handsome?
 - Well, I am just a bickering witch, not sure what to say. Is the Lady of the Forest in love?
 - Have you ever been in love Bratty?
 - Me, no.
 - I can't imagine you in love Bratty. You would probably turn him to some hideous creature just for fun.
 - Probably! Hahaha!!
 - Not sure if it is love but he was so brave to attack a troll. Did you see how he wielded that sword? How it shone in his hands?
 - If you ask me I think someone' s in love!
 - Sshh, good night Bratty, will see you tomorrow.
 - Good night my lady, sweet dreams.
- They both went to sleep, Miihah thinking of Scar and Bratty thinking of Scar's mage, Mean.

Chapter 3: Gelebron

The Enchanted Forest lies in the kingdom of Donn but beyond Donn there lies a barren land called Arcania, the land of Gelebron, an old and evil wizard who wants to conquer Donn and make Miihah his bride. Gelebron sits on his throne contemplating on a way to kidnap Miihah as he knows she would never come willingly. The proud young lady of the forest would never accept life next to an old wrinkled wizard in a dark castle surrounded by demons and evil sorcerers. Gelebron knows she wouldn't give up life in the forest to live in this barren land locked up in one of his towers but he has to have her. She has to be his one way or the other. With her by his side, with her healing powers, he would be invincible. He is determined to have her.

-Demonizer, come here! Gelebron's voice resounded across the long halls of his castle, waking up every mouse from every nook.

-Yes, my Lord?

-It is high time we did something about the Lady of the Forest. She has to be mine and you will bring her to me or your head will stand next to your feet! Everyone else I've sent so far has failed me and you know how that ended up for them... Now I will send my best wizard to get her, you! If you don't succeed you had better not return. If you don't succeed I will make sure you will suffer before I will end your miserable life. Understood?

-Yes, my Lord! You will have her before the end of the month!

-Take whatever potions you need and do not forget I will know your every move. My crystal ball can show me whatever I want to see even in the Enchanted Forest. If you can't take her, there is no place you can hide from me. So my advice to you is to do your best and get her!

- Yes my Lord, you will have her, I promise. But I want something in return...

- Name your prize Demonizer! If you get Miihah for me, you can ask for anything you want and you shall have it, although I have no idea what else you could possibly wish for. You already are my favorite general, my best wizard, you have access to everything, what else should you want Izer? Gelebron always called Demonizer only Izer whenever he was in a good mood. When he wanted to obtain something from him or he had a job for him, he called him by his full name.

-My Lord when I get Miihah for you I want her mage friend for myself. This is all I ask my Lord.

- Hahaha! You can have the witch, you just bring me the healer and we have a deal!

Gelebron smiled very satisfied with how things turned out. This is as if he works for free this time, he doesn't want riches this time, just the wench! This is great, if he wants Miihah's little mage he must be even more determined to do the job. We shall see..

Gelebron dismissed Demonizer and went to his secret room, the only room where his first mage Izer didn't have access to, the room where he kept his spell books, his own potions and the most important thing, his crystal ball, the one that revealed what the owner wanted most to see. He only had to focus on the object of his desire and look in the crystal ball. Then the ball would show him where the object of his desire was.

-So my lovely Miihah, it seems you met Scar... and you like him... doesn't matter, you shall soon be mine and no one can save you from my tower!!

Chapter 4: Hunting for love!

- Good morning your Highness, I will use the invisibility potion and will follow you up close in case Miihah's mage tries anything funny, said Mean.

- I hope you won't need to reveal yourself but let's go and see what happens!

Scar felt his heart jumping out of his chest at the thought of seeing the beautiful lady of the forest again. He put on his best hunting clothes and he took his trusted bow and quiver and was ready to impress Miihah . But how? How to find her? The Enchanted Forest is a large area and she could be anywhere. Maybe Mean could help.

- Psst, Mean, are you here?

- Of course, where else?

- Good, hmm, maybe you should whistle in a low tone so I know where you are cause I can't see you.

- Ok, how about a lullaby?
- Huh? Are you mocking me Mean? Watch your tongue wizard or..
- Oh, who's grumpy now? I was trying to lighten up the mood. You are too tensed.
- Nah, why would I? I will impress her with my charm. Ha-ha...You are right, I am a bit nervous. Do you think she will like me?
- Why not? You are the king. No worries, if she won' t like you, I will put her under a spell and she will adore you!
- Don' t you dare do anything like that Mean. I want her to like me for what I am, not thanks to one of your spells! You hear me?
- I knew you wouldn't want that, you are too honest. No worries my king, if she likes you, it will be her own will, you can rest assured.
- Sshh, I hear something!
- Oh, my ! You are right! I have never seen such an exquisite beauty! Her hair, her eyes! I am in love myself!

Miihah and Bratty were bathing in the lake unaware that they were being watched.

- What? Are you dumb? I am your king, I fell in love first, I shall marry her!
- My king, shouldn't it be wiser for you to marry some rich queen? I mean you are royalty and all...
- So you can have her?!? No, the dark-haired beauty shall be mine! I can't believe the nerve you've got Mean!!
- Huh? Dark- haired? Hahaha! You can have her, excellent choice my king. I was talking about the red- haired one Scar!
- Oh, that is Bratty, Miihah's little mage friend. What kind of a wizard are you? I thought you knew who was who. Anyway let' s go a bit further till they finish bathing and put their clothes back on. I see a hare, let' s go after it.
- You wanted me to be invisible, remember? Asked Mean, chuckling and feeling happy and so much alive or rather so much in love...
- Yes, you can make yourself useful and help me get that damned hare! I can't seem to focus my aim!
- Maybe because you are thinking of something else entirely, laughed Mean giving Scar a friendly nudge.

Chapter 5: (In)Visible

- Bratty, I don't want to alarm you or anything but I thought I saw something moving behind those bushes!
- Want me to check?
- No, I finished bathing anyway, let's get back to the palace.
- As you wish my Lady.

While they were laughing and talking they bumped into Scar who was about to release an arrow targeting a small white hare.

- I am sorry, I didn't mean to make you miss your target! Lied Miihah glad in fact that Scar had missed and the hare got away. She couldn't stand to see a poor little creature being killed. She loved the animals and the plants, she was a healer, always protecting life in all shapes and sizes.
- Oh never mind that hare my beautiful mistress! Truth is I went hunting today only hoping to see you again.

Mean, hearing the way Scar was almost babbling the words because he was too excited to see Miihah, started giggling, forgetting to keep quiet as he was invisible and Scar had made it clear to intervene only if necessary, only if he thought he was in danger.

-What was that sound? Asked Bratty. I thought I heard something. Miihah, did you hear anything?

-No Bratty. Just your imagination playing tricks on you. So Scar how about I show you my palace? We could have a cup of tea .

- You have a palace?

-What did you think? That I lived in the trees? I may be the Lady of the Forest but I don't sleep on the ground or in the trees you silly. Of course I have a palace. It is in the middle of the forest on a beautiful meadow.

Come, I will show you.

- Ok, lead the way. Just one question: how come I have never seen this palace of yours? Asked Scar, a little confused as he had never seen a palace in those woods and never heard anyone talk of a palace existing there which meant that probably nobody had ever seen it either.

- That is because it is hidden from sight. It is magic. Only after I say the magic words will it materialize for you to see. Simple answer, right?

- Now you made me curious. I would love to see it!

- Follow me and Bratty!

-Scar? I don't think they are dangerous. Whispered Mean in Scar's ear.

Want me to tag along or should I get back to the castle?

- Keep quiet. And yes, come. You will taste the tea before I drink, ok? What if she wants to poison me? But Scar only said that to make Mean come as he remembered that Mean liked Bratty.

-Ok. I will come. But I will be bored. I will have to find some amusement to pass the time.

- I have my horse Bolg here said Scar, but I don' t see your horses ladies. Where are they?

- We don' t ride horses, we have Snorri. And saying that Miih whistled from a tiny whistle and it only took a moment for the big troll to appear in front of them. I hope Bolg is as fast as Snorri! And Snorri kneeled in front of the two ladies and allowed them to sit on his palms. Then it started for the forest leaving a cloud of dust behind.

-Ha-ha, these ladies are something! Said Mean in an a tone full of admiration. Maybe it won' t be so boring after all!

In half an hour they were in front of Miih' s palace. After she said the magic words Scar saw the most wonderful palace he had ever seen take shape out of thin air right in front of his eyes. It looked as though the walls were made of gold and the large windows were shining as if the sun itself was behind them. He was agape in astonishment.

-Not quite the trees you imagined hahaha ! Laughed Miih when she saw the bewilderment on Scar' s face.

- You can say that again! Said Mean out loud forgetting he was supposed to be quite as only Scar knew he was there.

-Who said that? Miih and Bratty asked at the same time startled.

-Oh, that was or rather is me ,Mean, the king' s wizard. With saying that Mean drank a sip from another puny bottle and became visible again as there was no point in hiding now.

-Wow, have you been following us all this time? Asked Miih astounded.

-Want me to turn him into an icicle, Miih? Asked Bratty nervous for not having realized Mean' s presence. I could turn him back after we have our tea . Or let him melt himself if you' d prefer.

- How clumsy of me for having spoken aloud! I didn' t mean to offend you, was just here to protect my king. And if you are an ice mage, well you should find out that I am a fire mage so...

- What' s with boys and fire? They always like to burn stuff. Said Bratty mocking Mean.

-It is my fault! Said Scar. I asked him to come. No need to start a battle of ice and fire. I am sure he would rather have a cup of tea, isn't that so Mean?

- I would rather burn than have a cup of tea with that braggart! She thinks she can turn me to ice? I will burn h...

-Don't be grumpy again Mean. Act nice.

- Here is your tea gentlemen! Said Miihah in a soothing voice. Enjoy!

- This tea smells wonderful! Said Scar then he drank from his cup.

-Indeed, agreed Mean and he also drank. What is it?

-It is the tea of truth. Whoever drinks cannot tell a lie for the next hour, said Miihah smiling content with herself. Now tell me Scar, why are you really here?

- You didn't need the tea for this answer. I am here for you and only you. I love you from the moment I first saw you! I want to marry you!

- It must be true then. I thought that maybe you just wanted to expand your territory and conquer this piece of land.

- This territory is a part of Donn so it is already mine.

- You are wrong. You know you have no power here. This land is filled with magic, my magic, and everything and everyone is under my protection here!

- I don't want to argue... But you are right. Not even my ancestors could take this piece of land. I don't even want it. Donn is big enough without me ruling over a small forest too.

- Ok, forgive me for making you drink the tea but I wanted to know your intentions. Now we can be friends.

-Friends? That all? Marry me Miihah!

- Alright! Truth is I also like you Scar. You will be invincible with me by your side and I will always protect you my love!

-Oh hell! What about me Miihah? Asked Bratty nervously.

-What about you? You can come in my castle and choose what room you like to be near Miihah. Your friendship won't end, it will just get stronger! Said Scar in a calm voice.

-What about me Scar? Asked Mean this time. If Bratty comes I will have to see her every day and she is annoying me! She thought of turning me to ice, me, the first mage of the kingdom. Imagine the nerve of this girl!

- Ha-ha, I don't like you either Mr. first mage of the kingdom! You are so conceited. I am more powerful than you even in my sleep!

Bratty had hardly uttered the words when Mean put a spell on her which made her meow instead of talk. He started to laugh heartily.

- Miss mage , turn me to ice now if you can! Meow! Ha-ha! Mean laughed at Bratty for meowing like a cat when she stopped meowing and next thing he knew he was barking like a crazed dog!
- Who's laughing now? Said Bratty who had recovered from Mean' s spell because she too was a powerful mage. It looks like you are barking in the wind Almighty Wizard!
- Bow wow! Damn! You are good Bratty but you can't believe that your spell could last on me!
- Stop both of you! I command you to stop Bratty! Miihah ordered her.
- And I command you to cease this foolishness Mean! Act like a gentleman, be nice to Bratty! Kiss and make up , Scar laughed at both Bratty and Mean.
- Yuck! I am tired Miihah, may I be excused?
- No need ,it is getting late so we are leaving. I think the tea' s effect has worn off but I still want us to get married Miihah if you want me!

Instead of an answer Miihah leaned over and passionately kissed Scar who cupped her face in his hands and returned the kiss. They were so blinded by their love that they didn't see the dark figure lurking in the shadow. Bratty and Mean on the other hand were trying to avoid each other so nobody noticed that Demonizer , Gelebron' s puppet, was watching everything with a grin.

Chapter 6: A royal wedding

-So Miihah is marrying Scar... No matter, I will take her on the wedding day. Bratty might put up a fight though but as Gelebron wants Miihah I want Bratty. I will put Bratty under a sleeping spell and with her out of the way , taking Miihah will be a piece of cake. This invisibility cloak will help me take Bratty unnoticed out of the castle and then I can come back for Miihah. I will wait till evening when they are all drunk at the wedding party and when they are with their guard down. Will be much easier to take Miihah then. I don't think they will be coming with their weapons at the king' s wedding party especially as nobody suspects anything.

As Demonizer was thinking about all these a large distorted grin appeared on the corner of his lips. Demonizer, as his name clearly suggests, was evil in the

purest form. He was a fire mage who liked to put his enemies through the flames of hell until all that remained was ashes. He killed whoever Gelebron ordered him to and was thrilled to kill them slowly, making them suffer first. He was proud to be Gelebron's choice whenever he had some important mission that needed his magic skill and his cold blood.

Meanwhile there was a lot of agitation at the king's castle as everybody was getting ready for the royal wedding. All the servants were working without a moment's rest so everything would be perfect and ready till noon when the wedding was to take place. The king's chef, Syngates, and his best cook after himself, of course, Adi, were working on the royal cake which had to be 7 layers high. This was a real challenge as they had never made a cake that big and they didn't want to lose their jobs or their heads... It was for the king's wedding, the most important day in the king's life and everything had to be perfect.

-Enough with the sugar Adi! If you put any more sugar nobody will be able to eat it without developing a severe case of diabetes! Syngates almost yelled at Adi. Although they were just cooks, their jobs were very important and today they were under huge pressure because of the wedding. They didn't want to ruin the party with a less than perfect cake and foods.

-Calm yourself Synny my friend, cakes are supposed to be sweet. Don't be so bitter about everything. And don't put too much salt in the stew or they will be drinking more ale and not I am not in the mood to go for more supplies tomorrow after the party when I would rather sleep.

- You old goat! Not in the mood to go for supplies? And since when do you give me advice on the way I cook? Now Syngates was annoyed. He wouldn't allow Adi or anyone else criticize the way he cooks. Any other objection concerning any other subject he would take like a man. But not when it came to cooking. He came from a long line of cooks, his father had been a cook, his grandfather had been a cook, his great grandfather had been... Oh no, nobody messes with the way he cooks.

-I am sorry, didn't mean to offend you but you called me a goat? What's wrong with you? Adi said and slammed the door behind him. On his way out he bumped into a man with a hood whose face he couldn't distinguish in the dim light of the torches.

- Sorry, began Adi but hardly had he uttered the word when he felt a skinny hand with long bony fingers choking him till his face turned pale and he felt he couldn't breathe anymore.

- Show me the way to the future bride's maid's room. The mage, Bratty, which one is her room? Demonizer was so close to put his hands on the beautiful mage that he could almost feel her next to him.

- I don't know, I am just a cook. Said Adi crying his eyes out. How should I know? Please have mercy!

- I bet you know and you will tell me if you want to see another sunrise. If you think you have lived enough, I will find someone else but you won't be around for any of these to matter anymore. So what do you choose?

- Sorry, come, I will lead you. But do you promise you will let me live if I show you?

- I don't make promises because I never keep them!! And Demonizer laughed with his evil laughter.

- Then if you kill me anyway, find her yourself! And Adi waited for the dark figure to kill him but instead he heard him say :

- Ok, I want to finish this fast, lead me to her and you shall live. I will simply put a forgetfulness spell on you and it will be as nothing happened. You won't remember anything so you won't be drawing any attention upon me, so I can let you live after I get Bratty. Now move !

Bratty was arranging her hair in her room, trying to look her best at her friend's wedding. And maybe she wanted to look good for Mean although she wasn't sure how she felt about him. She wasn't sure if she liked him or hated him. Anyway looking good wouldn't hurt, right?

- May you forget everything that happened today so you can live and see another day! Demonizer said and released Adi from his grip.

- Am I getting soft? Nah, just better this way, not to leave any mess behind, grab Bratty and come back for Miihah. If I had killed him someone might have found him before I can get away with both ladies. Better keep things simple. He then slowly pushed the door to Bratty's room, hoping it wouldn't creek. It didn't. Then he saw her brushing her hair, so beautiful, so perfect. She was taken by surprise and didn't realize there was someone in her room. Demonizer took

advantage of her carelessness and put her under a spell so she fell in a deep slumber. He took her outside the city walls and put her in his carriage in a hidden spot in the forest, knowing he would return with Miihah before Bratty would wake up.

Back at the castle Scar and Miihah were excited and could hardly wait to become husband and wife, to spend the rest of their lives together.

-Ulo, I want you to behave yourself on this special day, said Scar. I know it is a wedding and people drink on such occasions but you sometimes drink too much and when that happens you usually make a fool of yourself. You can make a fool of yourself on any other day but not today. Do you think you can drink with measure today?

- Oh and I was planning on getting wasted today. Especially because it is a wedding. Want me to be sober on your wedding Scar? Where' s the fun in that?

- Hmm, instead of drinking till you get under the table maybe you could rather look for a wife, find a nice girl and settle down yourself.

- Nah, women tend to want to keep men under leash, next thing you know she would probably want me to quit drinking as if this is ever going to happen. I'd rather drink than get married, the bottle can never cheat on you.

-No, but it won' t keep you warm at night either!

-You know what Scar? Asked Ulo a bit irritated by the king' s speech about getting married and drinking. Tell me in a year how married life is and if it is all right, then I will consider finding someone too. Till then I will drink whenever I feel like it oh and twice as much on weekends.

- Ok Ulo, suit yourself. Have fun. I am going to talk with Mongo and Harry.

- Ha-ha, no offence my king but I can't imagine that dwarf dancing at a wedding even if it is yours. He is too stiff. He will probably end up next to me at my table and will keep me company for a drink. But I will enjoy watching Mongo sweep the ladies from the dance floor. He is a natural dancer and a charmer with the ladies.

But Scar was out the door before Ulo could finish his sentence. He went to Mongo, Harry and Mean and reminded them that they should be ready in an hour for the wedding. Then he went to see Miihah one more time before sealing their fates in marriage.

- Are you nervous my darling? He asked afraid that she was having second thoughts about the marriage.
- Not about marrying you, Miihah answered, reading his mind. It is just that I can't find Bratty. No idea where she is. She was supposed to help me with the dress and the hair but she is nowhere. As if she vanished. I am worried. It is unlikely that she wouldn't be by my side on the most important day of my life. I refuse to believe that. So it means that something must have happened to her. We have to find her Scar.
- Don't worry my love, I will send Mongo, my assassin, to track her down. Maybe she got jealous because you are getting married and she is still single. So maybe she just went out for some fresh air and she will be back before we say our vows.
- Send Mongo to find her, please, I have a bad feeling about all these.
- Going to talk to him right now, see you in an hour at the altar, don't be late!
- Thank you for sending Mongo and I won't miss my own wedding, no worries. Go now!

Scar left in a hurry to talk to Mongo. After letting Mongo know about Bratty, he went to talk to Mean.

- Bratty is missing? I will help Mongo, maybe he could use a fire mage's help to watch his back. Mean felt dizzy when he thought that something bad might have happened to Bratty. He would find her no matter what. He would go to the end of the world if he had to. Gosh, he loved her! All these mixed feelings about her, love her, hate her, now it was all clear as daylight. He really cared for her, he was in love. Now at the thought that she could be in peril he was determined to find her and he was finally sure about what he felt for her! It was love what he was feeling!
- Ok, Mongo agreed to take Mean with him although he usually worked alone. You can come Mean, but you will have to keep up with me, be fast and quiet. Do you think you can do that?
- Of course, let's go!
- I don't remember you being so eager to leave your dusty old books of spells before. Ok, we are leaving now, Mongo said calmly.

One hour later Scar and Miihah were married to everybody's delight. They all feasted and danced and had fun. The tables were filled to the rim with delicacies and drinks for every taste. Some were more happy with the drinking part than others. But everybody was happy for the king and the new queen, everybody except Demonizer who had to make up a plan to

kidnap Miihah before she and Scar left the party to retire to their private chamber. It was now or never Demonizer thought.

Chapter 7: Rescuing Bratty

So later that evening, when the wedding ceremony was over and everybody was tipsy and tired, Demonizer entered the castle stealthily. He kept to the shadows, unseen and unnoticed, with only one thing on his mind: getting Miihah and escaping the castle. He was determined to wait for the perfect opportunity. He was alone so he didn't want to risk a direct confrontation on enemy territory if he could help it. He didn't have to wait long for his opportunity.

-Scar, I will go out in the gardens for bit of fresh air. All this dancing and singing and drinking got me tired. I will be back in 10 minutes. I just need some air.

- All right my dear, do you want me to send someone with you?

- No need, I won' t be long. I will be back before you know it. Who would want to harm me? As I can see you are loved by your people and you have a handful of close friends who would have noticed if anyone suspicious was here. Will see you in ten minutes or so!

Saying that she went out for some fresh air. She really needed to get away for a few minutes from the noise and the smell of foods and drinks. She couldn't believe she was a married woman now. She would soon spend her first night with Scar, or at least that is what she thought. She started daydreaming about their first night together. She was so nervous, fantasizing it all. How was she supposed to know that Demonizer had other plans for her? She had no clue that she was being followed silently by the evil wizard.

When Miihah sat down on a bench admiring the stars and the shining moon, Demonizer decided to make his move and kidnap Miihah so he stealthily approached her and exactly when she was about to turn her head startled by a faint sound, he put her under the same sleeping spell as he had put Bratty a few hours earlier. She was in his grasp now, all he had to do now was to get back to the carriage which was waiting for him in the woods with Bratty also inside already.

Meanwhile let' s see what our friends Mongo and Mean are doing in their search for Bratty.

-Hey, Mongo, thank you for taking me along. I hate parties. They are so boring and the dancing and the music really gets on my nerves. It would have been impolite to fake illness on the king's wedding just to get away, don't you agree? Maybe fake death...and Mean winked at Mongo.

- No, parties are fun. I love the dancing and the music like every other human being, you are just being stubborn and grumpy like always. Maybe we should call you Grumpy from now on?

- We had better focus on our task, finding and saving Bratty. And never mention dancing or music again as we can't agree on the subject, ok? Said Mean irritated.

- Deal! Agreed Mongo. Look at these tracks. They seem fresh. And Mongo pointed to the ground but Mean was a wizard, not used to tracking down people, so he couldn't distinguish anything. But, as he wanted to seem smart, he said he saw the prints in the soft ground.

-Good, follow me and keep quiet!

After about an hour of examining the ground and the twisted twigs they got to a dead end. They stopped in front of some overgrown bushes. Mongo had lost all tracks there. He was annoyed and disappointed with himself.

- All tracks end here Mean! It is as if they vanished into thin air! I have never lost my target till now.
- Let me take a look! Said Mean thinking that maybe magic was involved, a domain which was his own.
- Nah, you are as blind as a bat when it comes to following tracks, but be my guest, try your hand! Said Mongo as he didn't want Mean to find something which he couldn't find himself. This would mean that a mage would beat him at his own game. Tracking and stealth was for assassins, not for mages but he agreed as they both had the same goal, that of finding Bratty.
- It looks like there is something weird about these bushes... I knew it Mongo! They are holograms, they are not real. Let's see what lies behind door number one!! Saying that they both went right through the magic bushes and there standing in front of them they found Demonizer's carriage with Bratty inside in a sleep as deep as a coma.
- Is she dead? Asked Mean terrified.
- No, she has a pulse. She is sleeping it seems. Can you wake her up Mean?
- Stand aside Mongo and let me try my magic. And Mean then touched her cheeks. She was so beautiful and peaceful, unlike when she was awake and bitter. Then he kissed her whispering a magic spell in her ears.

- Was the kiss necessary? Laughed Mongo.
- What kiss? Asked Bratty who was now awake. And where the hell am I? And what are you two doing here?
- What does it look like Miss? We are saving you. Now we had better return to the castle. The wedding party must be already over. Mongo helped Bratty to her feet.
- I can't remember anything. I was brushing my hair and now I am here with you two. But alright, let's get back to the castle and maybe we shall get to the bottom of all these after Miihah's wedding. Then they all left in a hurry.

Hardly had they left when Demonizer arrived carrying Miihah who was now fast asleep. But when he entered the carriage he was in for a big shock as Bratty was nowhere to be found.
- What is the meaning of this? Where is she? This can't be, I left her here asleep, she shouldn't have been able to wake up on her own. Which means she had help. Someone rescued her! Damn! I guess I will have to give up on her for the time being and leave with Miihah or Gelebron will have my head!

Chapter 8: Imprisonment

Back at Gelebron's tower he was preparing to finally meet Miihah face to face. If she won't agree to rule by his side then he will lock her up for as long as it would take till she would finally see that she had no other choice than to accept him. She was finally here but still asleep on a large bed in his room. Will she share it with him when she wakes up or will she choose imprisonment?

- Wake her up Demonizer. No point in prolonging the inevitable. Her answer will be the same either if she wakes up now or tomorrow. Wake her up and let's hear her speak!

Demonizer mumbled some incantation and then Miihah woke up.

-Where am I? Who are you?

-You are in my palace, in my kingdom, in Arcania, far from your friends and from your husband. I am the ruler of this land, I am Gelebron and you shall be my wife till the end of your days!

- It looks like someone is in a hurry but shouldn't I have a saying in all these? I don't know you and besides, you are not my type. I happen to know someone who would fit you better if you overlook the fact that she is

a troll. She can be very loving, her name is Snorri, I can introduce you to her. I will even send you a wedding gift! Said Miihah not losing her courage even in the dire situation she found herself in.

- How dare you mock me? Roared Gelebron blood dripping from the back of his palms as he had his nails in them and he was out of control at hearing Miihah' s answer. Demonizer on the other hand was giggling silently to himself at hearing the brave lady' s answer.

- Wrong answer Miihah. Lock her up Demonizer till she comes to her senses!

Demonizer grabbed poor Miihah by her wrists and locked her up in one of the rooms of the tower and left her there alone in the semidarkness. He then placed a Neon Knight to constantly guard her door. The Neon Knight was a heartless soldier who had lost his way during his life and had been resurrected by the demon Demonizer for the sole purpose of obeying his every command. The Neon Knight had no will of his own, after the resurrection he was a mere puppet in Demonizer' s hands this making him incorruptible and so trustworthy. So the Neon Knight was perfect for the job: incorruptible, strong and with no will of his own.

When she found herself all alone in the small room with but a little furniture and a small bed Miihah began to weep. She cried herself to sleep that night sobbing even while dreaming. She couldn't believe how fast things could go so wrong. From the day which was supposed to be the happiest of her life to being kidnapped and now locked up in Gelebron' s tower. Why? All she wanted was to live the rest of her life with her love, Scar, and instead she was locked in in this desolate tower all alone with the Neon Knight guarding the only exit.

The Neon Knight' s eyes were shining in the darkness like two embers. It gave him an eerie look. He was standing by Miihah' s door, unmoved, never getting exhausted, never needing sleep or drink or food, the perfect sentinel to guard her. She had no way to escape, her only hope being Scar and his friends to come and save her. She was determined to wait for him no matter how long it took. Gelebron would never have her. She would rather jump out the window than let him have her. But she was sure Scar was already making preparations for an expedition to save her. She was sure of his love and devotion to her, she was sure he would come and save her and defeat the evil Gelebron.

- Can you believe this Demonizer? She would rather suffer solitude and darkness than accept me! Me, the greatest ruler of Arcania! How can this be? Stubborn and stupid! But let' s see how long she can go on like this. You

will go once a day and ask her if she is ready to accept me till you get the right answer, understood?

- Yes, my lord. He grumbled something to himself then he left the room.

Chapter 9: All the king' s friends

- Harry, have you seen Miihah? She said she needed some air but I can't find her anywhere. I am concerned that something happened to her.
- No, I haven't seen her for the last half hour. I will ask Ulo.
- What is all this commotion about? Asked Scar while Harry the Dwarf already took his axe ready to protect the king from whoever was about to barge through the castle doors. But to everyone' s surprise it was Bratty, Mongo and Mean.
- What happened? Asked Scar. Where have you been Bratty?
- Someone kidnapped me but thanks to these two gentlemen I am back safe and sound. Sorry for having missed the wedding party but it was beyond my powers and it wasn't my fault. Where is Miihah? Is she upset with me?
- No, nobody knows. We haven' t seen her for the last half hour. But with you telling us that you were kidnapped maybe this is what happened to Miihah too. We have to find her and save her. Who is with me for a possibly dangerous journey to save my queen?
- We all are with you Scar! Ulo, Mongo, Harry, Mean and Bratty all said without a shadow of a doubt in their souls ready to do whatever it took to save their friend and queen.
- But I need someone I can trust to watch over the kingdom while we are away. Ulo can pick locks so he will go. He is very useful to open doors and find and disarm traps. He is the best in the kingdom when it comes to these things. Mongo is as silent as a shadow and he can pick up her trail and we will also need magic to fight magic so Mean and Bratty can also come. Harry, you are a warrior and a good leader. I trust you with my life. But either you keep the kingdom safe while the rest of us go on this mission or if you go then I will have to stay. They need a warrior to protect them. Maybe it is best for you to go too and I will stay and protect the kingdom myself. The people will feel safe with me here so I guess this is the best option. And I will have Harry' s brother Olekson by my side. He is as good

as Harry, although a bit younger and less experienced. And although he is also a dwarf, he is an inch taller than Harry, said Scar chuckling. Scar always liked to tease Harry about his stature. But he really loved the dwarf who was like a brother to him.

- Hah, I never noticed... grumbled Harry more to himself than for the others.
- The people don't even have to know that the queen has been kidnapped. It would only bring panic. You can tell them that she had to leave and see her parents because one of them is gravely ill until the rest of us can get Miihah back. Said Mongo always thinking ahead.
- You are right as always. Then God bless you all and I hope you will all return safely with my bride unharmed by your side. You will also need to take one of the cooks with you. I don't suppose any of you can cook, can you?
- Hmm, don't look at me, said Bratty in a hurry. I may be a woman, but I am a mage, not a cook. I don't even cook for myself, let alone for this whole bunch. It is going to be a cold day in hell before you will see me cooking!
- Ok then, with that settled, I can let you take Adi the cook with you. Syngates stays here. He will have to rely on Eto until Adi returns. From what I've heard Eto is just as good as Adi when it comes to spices and cakes.

Eto was Adi's distant cousin and he was a bit edgy all the time. That is why Scar suggested taking Adi and not Eto.

Scar was an excellent leader and smart tactician. Scar never avoided wars but he did everything in his power not provoke wars. He never started wars, he was content with what he had but when his kingdom was attacked he did everything to protect his people. This is why he decided it would be best for him to keep the kingdom safe in case Donn would be attacked and so he sent his most trusted friends to save Miihah. He knew that they wouldn't return without her. He trusted each of them with his life. He didn't know Bratty that well yet but she was Miihah's friend so he could also trust her.

So the 5 friends gathered supplies for the journey. They took the best horses from the royal stables and after a good night's sleep they were on their way, Adi also joining them.

It was a foggy morning. Dew covered the grass and the ground was damp from last night's rain. With the first rays of the morning sun they were already out the castle gates toward their mission to save their queen. It would probably be a long and dangerous journey but they were all

prepared to die if they had to for their queen. They were ready to sacrifice their own lives for her. The mood was sad when Ulo finally broke the silence:

-Hey, lighten up. We are not going to a funeral. We are going to save Miihah so let's be more optimistic! Then he sipped a bit of his favorite brew from a small bottle he always kept hidden in one of his many interior pockets of his long jacket. The other pockets were filled with all sorts of pick locks and screws. And of course a dagger.

- Ulo is right. The tracks show that they went this way, said Mongo although the others couldn't distinguish anything in the damp soil.

They travelled for a few hours till they realized the horses needed some rest and water. So they decided to find a river or a brook and make camp nearby.

- Ok, we can make camp here said Mongo. Who wants to gather some wood to start a fire?
- Mongo, are you trying to be funny? Laughed Mean. I am a fire mage in case you forgot. I could set the whole place ablaze if I chose too. So to start a camp fire is a piece of cake. And saying that he made a ball of fire which started floating in the air and emanating heat enough for them to get warm. Told you, a piece of cake...
- Ok, thank you Mean for saving us the trouble of gathering wood. Now we should all get some rest. Who wants to stand guard first? Asked Mongo as he didn't want himself to be first on guard duty.
- Do I count? Asked Adi who now saw his opportunity to be more than just a cook. When he wasn't cooking for the king he was playing in his yard with a wooden sword pretending to be a brave knight. He would hit his practice dummy till his hands couldn't pick up the sword anymore. Then he would go to sleep dreaming of saving some damsel in distress.
- I don't see any harm in that, replied Ulo. If you see anything suspicious, wake us up. Just don't fall asleep, ok boy?
- Yes sir!

Mean was the first who started snoring. Then the rest of the small group also fell asleep. This was just the first day on the road and the first night spent under the stars with no ceiling above their heads. Mean was also the first to wake up. He looked around and he saw that everybody was still asleep, even Adi. He had fallen asleep on a rock with his head on his knees

and he was snoring so loud that Mean thought it was no wonder he had waken up. He went and kicked Adi on his legs. Adi woke up startled.

- What is it? What' s wrong? And he looked at Mean and then it struck him. He had fallen asleep while he was supposed to have the first watch.
- Oh my god, I am so sorry. I must have only slept for a minute or so. I wanted to stand on guard the whole night so the rest of you could sleep. Instead I fell asleep! Please don' t tell the others or they will never let me do anything else than cook...
- Hmm, I don' t know... What the hell, we are all safe, not thanks to you, but the fact is that we are safe so I will let this slip this time.
- Thank you, thank you so much!
- Enough talking, now make us something to eat, I am starving and so will be the others when they wake up.
- Right away! Answered Adi glad he was off the hook this time.
- I will go and try to catch us some fresh meat, a hare or something, better than just the vegetables and the dried meat. Said Ulo and took some tools to try and make a rabbit trap.
- Ok, but don' t be long Ulo, we have a long road ahead. Said Mongo who didn't think Ulo would have any luck with catching anything.
 - Hey, Bratty, can you tell us something about yourself? I think I speak for all because we don' t know much about you other than the fact that you are an ice mage and Miihah' s friend, said Mean more curious for himself than he was ready to admit.
 - What would you like to know? There is not much to tell.
 - For starters, how did you meet Miihah?
 - She found me in woods when I was just a girl. My parents had abandoned me when they saw that I had magic in me. They feared me so their fear couldn't let them love me and they decided it was best for everybody if they took me to the woods and left me there. I was shivering with cold and I was hungry. I had been in the woods for two days when a wolf attacked me. I was too tired to defend myself, I couldn't focus my magic powers. That is when Miihah appeared and she , believe it or not, tamed the wild beast. Then she healed my wounds and took me in to live with her. We've been best friends ever since.
 - Ok Bratty. Nice to have you with us. Now let' s see what Ulo brings us. He can pick locks and disarm traps but I don't know about catching wild animals. This domain is alien to him. Mongo winked at rest of the group.

Meanwhile Ulo was setting a trap next to a berry bush. He was behind another bush when he suddenly heard a swish sound from a fired arrow that went right past him hardly missing his head. He turned around and saw a huge adder drop dead behind him. It would have bitten him otherwise but it had an arrow shot through its head. Somebody had saved him. Who had fired that perfect shot? He hadn't seen anyone while setting up the hare trap. He looked around but couldn't see anyone. Then he thought that whoever fired the arrow could have killed him if he wanted but had saved him instead.

- Who's there? He asked. Then he saw a slender silhouette descend from a nearby tree. He was covered in a long mantle and his head was covered by a hood.
- Thank you stranger. You saved me. I was trying to catch dinner for me and my friends and wasn't paying attention to the surroundings. May I know your name?
- Friends call me Deadly Arrows. Do you know why? Cause my arrows are deadly, they never miss their target. You will need my help to save the queen. I know where she is. She is in Arcania, Gelebron's land. It is a barren land filled with perils. You will need me if you and your friends want to stand a chance to get there. I will be your guide.
- How do you know all these? Have you been following us?
- Yes, from the moment you left the castle gates. I will help you and in return I want to be hired as the king's personal archer. I have no family and I am tired of living under the sky. So working for the king would be nice.
- Ok, let's get back to camp. Oh, but I haven't caught any hare yet. Can't get back empty handed.
- Watch and learn. Then he took an arrow from the quiver and aimed. His aim was true. A few seconds later a deer fell shot right between its eyes.
- Ok, good enough for dinner?
- Beats the hare I was going to catch anyway...

Back at the camp they were all getting nervous cause Ulo wasn't back yet when he finally got back, not with a hare but with a deer and another person.

- Who is this Ulo?
- He says his name is Deadly Arrows and he wants to help. He says he knows where Miih is. I think there is no harm if he joins us. Any objections?

But before anyone could answer, “ he” took the hood off “ his” head to reveal a pair of blue eyes and blonde hair and pointed ears and a pretty feminine face.

- A she elf! Oh my god Ulo! It is a woman! An elf! Said Bratty looking at her.
- So what? I see you have a dwarf with you and nobody’s complaining about him. Got anything against elves?
- No sir, I mean Miss. But I thought you were a man, said Ulo not knowing how to react. Saved by a girl. What a shame.
- My real name is Alyss. That is what my friends call me. And as for my enemies, I am Deadly Arrows.
- So we will call you Alyss if that' s ok with you, said Ulo.
- Unless you want to call me Deadly Arrows, ha-ha!!
- So Alyss it is! Said Mongo. How do you know the land of Arcania? Have you been there?
- I was born there. It is a barren land. Nothing grows there. It is filled with giant snakes and scorpions. There are a few mining settlements where slaves work from dusk till dawn for Gelebron. They are guarded constantly by boggans, some sort of imps, his personal army. Every settlement has these boggans, a small army of them, with a ruler, a smarter and stronger boggan to command the mindless creatures. And of course there are the humans and the elves, enslaved into mining for Gelebron. They mine for precious gem stones all day long. They are only allowed two meals a day which usually consist of bread and water. When the boggan leader wants to have fun he throws them his leftovers and lets them fight for them. It is an awful life, just surviving and working all day long. But at his tower, Gelebron is surrounded by an army of demons, not boggans, which I am sure you guessed are far worse.
- How do you know all these Alyss? Asked Mongo.
- I know because I was a slave there. Until the day I escaped. But unfortunately my friends remained there. I couldn’t save them. Truth is I will need your help to do that. You guys help me save them and I and my friends will help you save Miih.
- Fair enough, Ulo agreed with the beautiful elf.
- So what is the name of the settlement where your friends are being kept? asked Bratty.
- Carrow. That is where they are. It is the largest of the mining settlements and it is well guarded. It has two boggan generals, unlike the other smaller settlements which only have one boggan general to supervise the other

boggans and the slaves. If we manage to kill these two powerful beasts, the other boggans will surely scatter in fear. They can't act on their own, they are always ruled by a general. So if we kill Hrung and Mordris, the two generals, then all the slaves from Carrow will be free. If we can't kill them, then at least smuggle my friends out. An elfish family, Dee, a beautiful healer, her husband Al, their kid, Fakey and their daughter REXXA, a very skilled archer. So will you help me?

- The more we are, the better chances we stand against Gelebron. Yes, we will save them and then we will go together and save Miihah. If anyone of you doesn't agree with this plan, say now. But as Mongo didn't receive any answers, he took it as a yes.
- Ok, then Alyss, I guess you will lead the way. You are the one who knows how to get there faster and you must also know the safest route.
- We leave first thing in the morning, it is getting late. Let's see what Adi has cooked for us, said Mean. They all agreed and after a good meal, they all went to sleep but Alyss who stood watch till she was too tired and she woke Bratty for next watch.

It was a cold night but Mean created another ball of fire to keep them warm. Each fell asleep dreaming of the many adventures they would encounter.

- Rise and shine! Come on, wake up. Time to go, Alyss said.
- Morning already? Complained Bratty who was still sleepy.

One by one they were soon all up. It was a beautiful warm autumn morning with a little breeze. The whole forest came back to life, it was teeming with all sort of animals and insects and the birds started chirping their usual morning song, already hungry and ready to hunt the unsuspecting insects.

- We have to head North towards the end of this forest till we reach a clearing. Then we will follow the stream until the road forks. There, at the crossroads, we will have to go on the left path. It is safer but a bit longer. If we turn right, we would encounter a band of vicious goblins. They are small creatures, always ready to plunder and loot everything and everyone they encounter. They are not strong as individuals but their strength is in their numbers. So I say we had better avoid an unnecessary confrontation with the little bastards. Said Alyss who seemed to know what she was talking about.
- Alright Alyss. You will be our guide. We trust you to lead us to Gelebron's tower and so to Miihah. Said Harry. Although I wouldn't mind splitting a few

goblin skulls with my axe. While saying that Harry started sharpening his axe until it shone in the sunlight.

- No, Alyss is right. We had better go left. Said Ulo.
- All right. We will follow that path until we get to a huge bush. Behind it lies a secret tunnel which will take us directly to Arcania, near Carrow. Then we will save my friends and together we will save Miihah. If there are no objections, I would suggest going as we established. It is getting dark and I wouldn't like to meet some stray goblins on our way. The weather is also turning stormy so let's try to reach the tunnel before dark. This way we can camp there, protected from the cold and the storm.

Then they all followed Alyss. By the time they reached the crossroads they were already exhausted. Bratty was the first to complain:

- I need a break. I am too tired to go on. And I am hungry. Adi, wouldn't you like to cook something for us before we go on?
- Bratty, please, let's hurry to the tunnel. The storm will be pretty bad. You can eat and rest once we get there. And this is no place to have breaks. The goblins I told you about have a shaman leader and he is even more greedy to loot and plunder. He usually sends two scouts to find out if there is anyone to be attacked. So let's stick to the plan and get to the safety of the tunnel. Said Alyss feeling bad for poor Bratty.
- I am not afraid of some goblins. I will turn them to popsicles. But ok, I can't stop the storm that seems to be coming so I agree even if I don't like it. So let's move people!
- I could also turn them to ashes but I agree with Alyss and Bratty, said Mean not wanting to be less brave than Bratty.
- And I could turn them into dinner!! Laughed Adi to himself. He didn't dare say it aloud though.
- Ok, then pick up your bags and let's go. It started raining already. We will be soaking wet by the time we reach the entrance to the tunnel. And Alyss was the first to listen to her own words and started moving again.

In another hour and a half they were all inside the tunnel around a cozy fire and eating some hares which Alyss had shot earlier. Then they agreed on having a good night's rest before setting out again. They had to leave their horses at the tunnel entrance though as the tunnels weren't big enough in some places for them. So from now on they had to go on foot. That was a big drawback as it meant they had to carry their own bags from then on, not having their horses anymore.

Next morning they were all refreshed and started their journey again wondering what else was there to encounter and also wondering what was lurking in the depths of the tunnel which seemed to never end.

- Alyss, any idea if the tunnel is inhabited? Any dangers we should know about? Asked Mongo.
- You must have read my mind, added Harry. Should I have my axe ready?
- Yes, this tunnel is swarming with wraiths. They are the ghosts of every knight that has lost his soul in these tunnels and they aren't friendly. So be prepared. Here we will need magic to fight these abominations. So Mean, Bratty, here is your chance to prove yourselves. My quiver is magical, and so are my arrows. I can never remain out of arrows, each time I take an arrow out of the quiver, another one takes its place. And I can also kill wraiths with my arrows. But I am afraid that Ulo, Mongo and Harry's weapons are useless against them. So we'll rely on my arrows and Bratty and Mean's magic. And stick close to each other so we don't get lost in this maze of a tunnel.
- How come you didn't say anything about these damned ghosts last night before we went to sleep?
- There was no need to get you worried then. They never come that close to the tunnel entrance. They can't stand daylight. And they are afraid of fire. I kept watch all night to make sure the fire wouldn't die out.

Ulo felt the need for a drink. He took a sip from his bottle and then he took another swig. He was nervous, just as Mongo and Harry were at the thought that they wouldn't be able to defend themselves against this foe. Now they were all very happy that they had two mages with them and an archer with magic arrows. They were hoping to get to other side and to Arcania without meeting these ghosts but they weren't that lucky. They soon stumbled upon four of them.

Alyss was the first to see them. She quietly drew a magic arrow and she shot it at the one that was closest to them. The moment the arrow pierced it, the wraith wailed in agony and vanished. It was Bratty and Mean's turn now. Bratty shot ice shards at one and Mean fireballs. All four wraiths were dead, released from their agony.

- That wasn't so bad, said Adi.
- We were that good, Bratty corrected him.

They all laughed to relieve the stress. After a few more wraiths being sent back to the hell they had come from, our heroes finally arrived at the other

end of the tunnel, they had made it to Arcania. Now they had to go to Carrow and save Alyss' s friends.

Chapter 10: Solitude

Meanwhile Miihah was starting to give up hope that she would ever be saved from Gelebron' s tower. With the Neon Knight as her permanent guardian, that being without a soul, she was becoming more and more depressed. And the demonic creature, Demonizer, came every day to check if she had changed her mind and whether she was ready to accept Gelebron or not. But with her daily refusal she was getting tired and Gelebron was becoming anxious and nervous.

- Demonizer, I see I can't accomplish anything this way. She is as stubborn as a mule. Maybe a change of tactics would be in order.
- What do you have in mind, my lord? Asked Demonizer who had meanwhile gotten over his obsession for Bratty. When he saw what a pain in the you know what a relationship could be, he was glad he hadn't succeeded in taking Bratty. He wouldn't have been so patient with her, waiting for her to accept him. So he thought it was all for the best in the end.
- Maybe if I allow her a few hours of fresh air a day, out of her cell... Maybe if I am nice to her, who knows. Because I see I can't make her accept me by forcing her and by keeping her locked up in that tiny room. She would be of course permanently guarded by the Neon Knight. What do you think? Asked Gelebron more for himself than actually paying attention to Demonizer' s answer as he couldn't care less about anyone else' s opinion.
- I don't see any reason not to give it a shot, answered Demonizer who also didn't give a damn if Miihah accepted Gelebron or not. He just wanted to finish the discussion and to get back to his own business. He had his own agenda, which didn't include women anymore, that is for sure. He was anxious to get the reports from the mining colonies wondering how many gems had been extracted this month and what would be his share.
- Yes, yes, I will personally go and talk to her, said Gelebron. And he left the throne room in a hurry to Izer' s satisfaction.
- Get out of my way, Neon! Whispered Gelebron. Then he unlocked the door to Miihah' s cell. It was so tiny and depressing. He felt sorry for her.

- Hello, he said. From now on you are allowed to go out as many hours a day as you want. You will have more freedom. Let Demonizer know when you are finally ready to rule by my side, my beauty. You should know that even when you go out for your stroll you will be guarded by Neon. You can't escape and you had better not even try.
- Thank you for the generous offer. The fresh air will do me good, as for accepting you, that will never happen, said Miihah hardly restraining herself from crying. But she wanted to be strong for her and for Scar, she couldn't let Gelebron have the satisfaction of seeing her cry.
- Suit yourself! Gelebron almost yelled and slammed the door behind him. When she was finally alone she cried till she had no more tears, they had run dry. She would go out in the sun tomorrow, not now, after her encounter with Gelebron and after their little talk she wasn't in the mood to go out, although she longed for a bit of fresh air and to feel the wind through her long dark hair.

Chapter 11: A kingdom without a queen

Scar was having doubts about his choice of staying and sending Harry instead. But he had to be strong and have faith in his friends and in the choice he had made. He was hoping he wouldn't live to regret it. People were starting to ask questions, wondering why the queen hadn't returned yet. He told them that she was still with her parents who needed her but he wasn't sure if they still believed him. What was he supposed to tell them? That he had no idea where she was or who took her? That would show weakness and he couldn't afford to be weak. If the other kingdoms perceived him as being weak, they might attack. He didn't want that. So he had to be strong and focused. For the good of the kingdom, for the safety of his people.

-Hey, Olekson, any news from your scouts? Is everything quiet at our borders or are there any threats I should know about? Asked Scar thinking elsewhere.

- Everything is quiet from the Southern border. Nothing wrong at the West borders either. I haven't received the report from the Northern border and as for the East, I don't think anyone is going to attack us from the sea. All seems to be quiet for the time being.

-Ok, thank you Olek. You are excused. And then Scar went back to the loneliness of his room thinking how different things could have been if only Miihah was there with him. He missed her so much and he couldn't do anything else but wait for the news of their return. He just hoped it wouldn't be much longer and he hoped she was unharmed. If anything happened to her he wouldn't be able to live anymore either. Not now after he had met his true love. He would pray for her every night before going to sleep, God will surely hear his prayers and keep her safe even in her captivity.

Chapter 12: Carrow

After a few days of walking in the sun in the blazing heat Alyss finally recognized the walls surrounding Carrow, the mining colony she had escaped from a few years ago. She wasn't sure what she felt at seeing them. She had mixed feelings, she was glad she wasn't inside those walls anymore but on the other hand she wished her friends were with her, too. Maybe now she really stood a chance of freeing them with the help of her new friends. She was prepared to die trying at least. But of course she hoped it wouldn't come to that.

-Look, those are the walls surrounding Carrow! That is where my friends are. So how do you want to proceed? Try to smuggle them out or try to liberate the whole colony of slaves by killing the two boggan leaders? Asked Alyss with a shrinking heart. Deep inside she wished they'd choose to free the whole colony, not just her friends.

- Why do things only half way? Said Ulo. I say kill the two bastards and free everyone. Mean, Harry, Bratty, what do you think?

- I couldn't agree more, said Mongo. Ulo, you will go and scout, see if you can find any useful information so we can make up a plan. I will try to blend in among the slaves and try to find where the two leaders are.

- You will need my help, said Alyss. I know the place. We will both blend in and Ulo, Mean, Bratty and Harry will wait for our signal to attack. I will kill one of the leaders and you Mongo will kill the other. Then we signal for the rest of the team to attack from the front gates. With the leaders dead and a strong frontal attack, the other boggans will flee, trust me. Then we can find my friends and also the rest will be free. How is this for a plan?

- Sounds good in my opinion. Finally I will get to break some skulls and see what these boggans look like. It will be the first time my axe shall crack some boggan heads. Ready when you are, my dears, said Harry who always liked a good fight, especially when he had his friends to watch his back.

-Then you wait here for our signal. It will be a fire arrow shot straight up towards the sky. When you see the fire arrow, give all you've got and kill as many boggans as you can. Come Mongo, I know a way in, just follow me. And Alyss took the lead, fearless. Here Mongo, we will climb this wall and then jump on the other side. There should be a barrack on the other side. We will land on that and from there descend easily to the ground. It should be empty at this time of the day as the boggans usually eat now. They only come here at night to sleep, the rest of the day they supervise the slaves making sure they don't take breaks from work or steal the gems they mine.

- Then let's do this! Said Mongo eager to finish the job and liberate the colony and implicitly Alyss' friends.

He was watching her, admiring her every move and her confidence and loyalty to her friends. She was kind of pretty for an elf...

- This is it, climb Mongo!
- Nah, ladies first. After you my lady!
- Ha-ha, are you afraid of heights?
- Now where did you come up with that? Was just trying to be a gentleman! And Mongo laughed.
- Oh, always a gentleman! So be it then, I shall climb first. But you jump first so we are even.
- Fair enough. I will catch you when I land.
- Yeah, always a gentleman, but no need, I can land without hurting myself.
- I didn't say you couldn't! Oh what the hell, never mind, just climb and let's kill us some ugly boggan leaders. Where are they usually at this time?
- They should be dividing the food to the slaves. Up on a high platform, throwing them their bread and bottles of water. Which is why they will be an easy target for my arrows. They won't even know what hit them.
- You kill one and I will kill the other. Look, those must be them. And Mongo pointed to the far end of the large enclosure to a high platform where he saw two huge creatures which he guessed were the boggans he had been warned about. I will blend among the slaves and I will stab the large one from behind. Then you will shoot the other and they will be both dead before they know it.

- Alright, I will be up on the branches of that large oak behind the platform. I will have a clear shot from there. They have to die at the same time or they will enrage and go berserk killing everything in their way, even the innocent slaves.

So finally the time for Hrung and Mordris has come, Alyss thought with joy. She would soon kill Hrung, as Mongo had chosen the large boggan which was Mordris. It didn't really matter which one she would kill as long as they both ended up dead till the end of the day.

- Ok, got that. Then pay attention and kill your target as soon as I kill mine. Now let's split up and do this. And Mongo blended among the crowd.
- Pardon me, excuse me. And Mongo advanced slowly but surely towards his target. Hrung and Mordris were mocking the slaves again throwing them their leftovers and watching them fight. Even better, thought Mongo to himself. They will be paying attention to the mobs and it will be easier for me to get close enough to stab him. Then we shall see how deadly are Alyss' arrows. We'll see if they can find their mark. Thinking that he didn't even notice that he was already behind his mark, Mordris. He put his foot up on the platform and waved discreetly to Alyss. Then he stabbed Mordris with a strike as quick as lightning. The next moment Hrung was also down, shot right between his eyes. Both fell at the same time with a thud. The crowd stopped fighting for the leftovers and watched in disbelief. The two ferocious boggan leaders were dead, killed before their eyes. Nobody gave a damn about the leftovers anymore. Something great had just happened and the mob was starting to realize the facts. They could be free. Then chaos took over. All the boggans ran amok. Now it was the right time for Alyss aka Deadly Arrows to shoot the fire arrow which was the signal for the others to barge in and attack the disoriented boggans. She shot the arrow high into the air. Then she started shooting the boggans which were dropping dead like flies. Mongo was throwing daggers at them, pinning them to the ground. Then Ulo also joined Mongo in throwing daggers. Mean and Bratty were using their magic, ice and fire to kill whatever boggans they could. It was a real battleground. Soon there were no more boggans left. They were all lying dead. None had escaped. It was perfect as they couldn't warn the other mining colonies. Now that Carrow was free they could go and look for Alyss' s friends.

The crowd started cheering with joy thanking our heroes for their freedom. Dee was among the slaves in the front row. She saw everything, she saw Hrung fall and then Mordris. The arrow was still between Hrung's

eyes, so Dee looked up from where the arrow had been shot and to her great astonishment she saw her friend Alyss. Alyss had promised she would come back for them one day and it looked like that day had come. She had come to free them, as she had promised. She went to look for Al and the kids, Fakey and Rexxa. She found Al still in shock in the far end of the settlement. The kids were nowhere in sight.

-Al, we have to find Fakey and Rexxa. Have you seen them? Asked Dee worried sick as she had no idea where they were.

-No, I haven't seen them since morning when they left for work. They should have been here for the lunch break, but maybe they saw the chaos this turned out to be and they hid somewhere. Let's find them.

All grown-ups in the mining colonies had to dig for the precious gems while the kids had to clean and polish them in a barrack under the supervision of a few boggans. Then the gems were transported to Gelebron's tower by a caravan of well armed boggans. But at lunch break they all gathered, grown-ups as well as kids in the courtyard to have their lunch. Then everybody went back to work again. So as neither Fakey nor Rexxa were in sight and Al hadn't seen them at all at lunch break, his only guess was that they must have got frightened and hid somewhere.

-Any idea where to start looking for them? Asked Dee while her mind was already searching every possibility, every nook they could have gone to hide.

- First of all, let's stick together. I don't want to lose you too in this chaos. Let's search for them in the barrack. Perhaps they are still there.

They both ran towards the barracks, pushing people aside, making their way through the crowd. They pushed the doors slowly, not sure what to expect from the other side of the doors, thinking that maybe the boggans assigned with the supervision of the kids working in there were still inside. Dee peeked in and she was in awe: Fakey and Rexxa were gathering the other kids, instructing them how to use the weapons they had taken from the dead boggans which were lying on the floor.

-What happened here? Dee asked them almost babbling with emotion.

- We saw that finally somebody had the guts to start a riot outside, killing our enslavers so Rexxa and I decided we could also help by taking down these ones. After I stabbed one with a dagger I had made out of a knife long ago and which I was carrying in the hope I would someday get the chance to use on a boggan, then Rexxa attacked another one with the bow and arrows she snatched from the one I killed. They attacked us but to our

surprise the other boys in here started attacking the boggans to help us; they surely saw the opportunity and were just as fed up with these filthy boggans as we were. So we were all waiting to see if we would be attacked by more boggans from the outside when you two popped in. We are so glad to see you! And both Fakey and Rexxa hugged their parents, glad that everybody was safe.

- Thank God we are all safe! Now let's go and find Alyss. I saw her earlier, she started all this. Said Dee. There she is, she seems to have made some new friends. Let's greet them!

And they went straight for the group of friends to thank them for liberating the mining colony, for giving everyone hope.

- Dee, Al, Fakey, Rexxa, you are all safe! I am so glad to see you! I missed you! I told you I would come back for you sooner or later. Sorry it was later and not sooner, ha- ha!
- Ha-ha! Thank you and your friends. If it wasn't for you we would still be mining for these boggans! What do you plan to do next, Alyss? Asked Dee.
- I was hoping you would join us in saving Miihah, the queen of Donn. But as I see it now, this place needs to be rebuilt. And you have been working too much for too long, you are not in shape to fight with us. You had better stay here and help to rebuild Carrow. And heal the wounded Dee, Carrow needs you. I will go with my new friends and help them save their queen and I will visit you after Miihah is free. Fakey can train the boys, make worthy soldiers out of them to be able to defend Carrow in case of an attack. Rexxa can also train them with bows and arrows and Al will supervise everything. Make sure you stay a free settlement, don't let anyone conquer this oasis.
- It will never happen! Now that we are free we won't ever be slaves again!
- Amen to that! Said Al, agreeing with his wife.

After bidding farewell from her friends, Alyss and the others left Carrow very pleased with themselves. Now they would have to save Miihah from Gelebron's claws. If it only were as simple as it had been in Carrow....

Chapter 13: On the road again

- This heat is killing me! How long till we get to Gelebron's Tower? Asked Bratty, tired of all that walking as they didn't have their horses anymore.

- It shouldn't be more than two days now. I guess everyone is tired but I don't hear anyone else complaining. But hardly had Alyss finished her sentence when she saw something large crawling beneath the scorching sand. Run! Run as fast as you can! There is an abandoned building not far ahead!
- Why? Gosh, I just told you I can barely move and now you want me to run? Just who do you think you are telling us what to do? Said Bratty annoyed but then she saw it! A huge dragon- like snake popped from under their feet! It had humongous fangs and saliva was drooling from them. Its two red eyes locked gaze on them. It was trying to decide where to strike first!
- I take back everything I said! I can run like the wind, who said anything about being tired? And Bratty wanted to run but she tripped and fell head first into the sand.
- Too late for that now! Now we have to fight it or we' re dead! Screamed Alyss from the bottom of her lungs. Everyone attack with all you got! And don' t look it straight in the eyes or it will stun you, you won't be able to move until it will be too late. Attack!

And she drew her arrows and started firing at the giant snake! Mean focused and then he called a firestorm to rain down on the huge dragon – like snake. Harry saw that the snake was about to bite Bratty who was still on the sand so he threw his axe with all his might towards the snake' s head. It was a perfect hit and the snake left Bratty alone and turned around to see who had hit it. He saw his target and was preparing to spit venom towards Harry when Adi the cook, overcoming his fear, put the frying pan in Harry' s face and so the venom hit that. The frying pan melted as soon as the snake's venom touched it!

-Oh, yeah, forgot to warn you about that! Don't let it spit its venom on you because it is toxic, it burns everything it touches! And saying that Alyss released another arrow.

-Anything else we should know?? Like maybe a way to kill the beast? Asked Mongo hoping that Alyss would have an answer for that too.

-That we will have to find out! I never killed one!

- I have an idea, said the cunning Ulo. What if we gather some of its venom and use it against the bastard?

- Your idea is crazy enough that it might just work. If it doesn't we will just have figure out another way, said Alyss and the rest also agreed. But how can we gather the venom? It burns and melts everything.

-Leave that to me, said Mean. I will use one of my spells to harden one of the cooking pots. It will be unbreakable. But that is the easy part, the difficult part is to find the fool, I mean the brave hearted man or lady to be the bait and make the snake spit the venom in it...

- I'll do it! Offered Alyss. I can run as fast as the wind. It will never catch me. Just work your magic on the cooking pot Mean and give it to me!

Then Mean put a spell on the recipient and handed it to Alyss.

- Hey, big guy, look at me! Alyss started yelling to draw the snake's attention. The snake turned and went for Alyss. Then Alyss stood still and waited until the last moment, then when she heard the snake hiss she knew it would spit the venom so she put the pot in front of it and all the venom went in it. Now it was time to run with it and give it to Mean and then she had to keep running and to make the giant snake follow her until the two mages, Bratty and Mean, would figure a way to use the venom against the snake.
- Here, take it Mean because as you see I am in a hurry! Said Alyss finding the power to joke even in dire situations as she had the snake on her trail.
- Well done, now keep it busy until we find a way to use this poison. Said Mean who took the recipient in a haste from Alyss' hands. After deliberating on the best way to make use of the poison they agreed to imbue one of Alyss' arrows in it and then she would have to shoot it at the snake's eyes, blinding it. With the snake blind it would be a lot easier for them to chop off its head.
- Hey, Alyss, yelled Mean so Alyss could hear him, after you are done with the jogging maybe you could take this arrow and shoot it at the snake's eyes?
- Jogging, are you trying to be a wise guy?
- I was just kidding, now come for the arrow and do your part, blind the bastard!
- But if I look at its eyes it will stun me! Have you figured out anything for that?
- Yes, you will shoot it and then I will put a dispel spell on you! But you only have one chance, if you miss we are as good as dead. If you blind it, then I will dispel the stun and we will kill it!

Alyss then took the arrow, put it in her bowstring, took aim and released the arrow which went flying through the air like a bolt of lightning. Then she was stunned by the snake's gaze. She couldn't move but she could still hear everything. She heard a fierce battle cry and she recognized Harry's voice.

Then after what seemed like an eternity she heard Mean' s calm voice. Next thing she could move again! She was back! She turned her head to see what had happened and she saw the giant snake with its head chopped off. She was so relieved to see that! And also everyone was ok, not even a scratch. They had done it!

- We make a good team Alyss! Said Mongo and they all hugged her, grateful that she was such a good archer. Now hopefully we won't come across any other beats. Let us head for the abandoned building you told us about earlier and camp there. I think we've had enough adventures for one day!
- I am dead tired. You are right, let's camp there. It isn't far. And it is safe, it is camouflaged with a thin veil reflecting the sun. Nobody knows of its existence but me. So we will finally get some rest before heading for Gelebron' s tower.

Chapter 14 : Gelebron' s Tower

They left early on the following morning not wanting to waste any more time. They felt ready to face Gelebron and his army of demons with Demonizer as their general.

They were not in the mood to talk as they were looking forward to finally arrive at their destination. Even the weather was harsh, heavy clouds were already above them and the wind had turned into a blizzard. It was pinching their faces and they were shivering with cold. Then they saw Gelebron' s tower in the distance. They would get there before nightfall if nothing else prevented them from their path. Then they would have to fight the evil wizard and his whole army. They were outnumbered but they were motivated. And they were strong, the best the kingdom had to offer. They would either succeed or die trying.

-How should we proceed? Should we take the tower by storm or should we try to smuggle her out? Asked Harry who was itching for a good fight.

- Maybe it would be wise to avoid battle and try to find Miihah and rescue her with as little confrontation as possible. Let's not forget that we are badly outnumbered. I am aware that we will have to fight but let's keep it as quiet as possible, uttered Ulo. I will disarm the traps that must be scattered around the castle and will also take care of the ones inside. Meanwhile Mongo you will

stay alert and make sure no one bothers me while I disarm the traps. We will search every room until we find her. Kill whoever stands in our way and maybe get away without waking up the whole tower.

-Sounds like a plan!

Everybody agreed with Ulo. Soon they were standing in front of the tower gates. There were 2 guards in front of them and probably a lot more behind them. They decided to make a diversion to pass the guards. So Mean set a nearby bush on fire. When the guards went to check it out, they all sneaked inside and went along the walls of the fortress. There were more guards everywhere. The place was teeming with them. They were all heavily armed and had good armors on them. They were a real challenge for our brave heroes but they were so close to finding and saving Miihah that they were even more determined.

-Let' s set their asses to fire! Enough with avoiding direct confrontation! Let' s save Miihah and then burn this place of evil to the ground! No sooner had he said that when he conjured a huge fireball which he sent directly towards the bulk of the guards. Although taken by surprise, the demon guards quickly realized they were being attacked and started fighting back. All hell was set loose. Fireballs engulfing the demon army and then ice shards piercing the ones that hadn't burnt. Harry was splitting skulls, his favorite axe by his side, Mongo was throwing knives at them and Alyss was firing her arrows. During this time Ulo sneaked towards the main entrance and used his pick locking skills to open it. He managed to open the main entrance to the tower and then his friends followed him into the great hall. They shut the door after them, leaving the screams of the burning demons fade away behind it. Inside the hall Demonizer was already waiting for them, at the head of the army of demons.

-As much as I would like to chat, said Demonizer, I would rather kill you. And chat later, when you get to hell! And at his sign, all demons attacked them. An epic battle followed. Now they were also facing a mage, Demonizer, not just the brute force of the mindless demons. Demonizer was very powerful. He was also a fire mage, just like Mean. But unlike Demonizer, Mean had Bratty by his side to help him. So whenever Demonizer sent fireballs towards them, Bratty used her ice magic to put down the fire to Demonizer' s exasperation.

Meanwhile up on the highest level of the tower Gelebron was wondering what took Izer so long and why his enemies weren't dead yet. So he locked

Miihah back in her old cell and decided to go down to the first floor where the battle was taking place. There he saw half of his demon army dead and Demonizer in agony after he had been frozen in a cube of ice. His hands were shackled behind his back with a pair of magic shackles which clearly prevented him from using his magic and setting himself free. So Demonizer was as good as dead. Then he saw a big dwarf hit the cube of ice with Izer inside. It broke in thousands of ice shards, thus killing Demonizer.

The situation looked bad for Gelebron. He couldn't believe that a handful of people could defeat his army, his most powerful mage and maybe even himself. It was the first time that Gelebron felt what it was like to be afraid. He tried to intimidate them in a desperate effort to turn the tides in his favor:

-Give up now and I shall let you live! He almost yelled, losing his temper.

- Thanks for the offer, but no, thanks. Alyss said then she drew out an arrow which had been soaked in the remainder of the giant snake's venom. She pulled the string of the bow, she set the arrow into place, took aim and released it while praying it wouldn't miss the target. Then she closed her eyes in anticipation. When she opened her eyes to see whether she had hit Gelebron or not she couldn't believe it. The great Gelebron was dead, all that had remained was a pile of dust and his scepter which had fallen from his hands the moment he was hit by Alyss' arrow. The venom they had taken from the dragon- like snake had proven useful once more.

- Alyss, you are the greatest archer Donn has ever seen! Gelebron is dead. I can't believe we did it! Now let's find Miihah and get out of here! Said Mongo and they all started looking everywhere for her. They found her behind a locked door with the Neon Knight guarding her.

- Look at that huge guard. Oh, it is a Neon Knight. I heard stories about them. They are soulless creatures, powerful and mindless and they only exist to obey their master. But if the stories are true, then the Neon Knight should regain his soul and his memories from his past life if his master is killed. And I bet that we already did that, his master must have been either Demonizer or Gelebron himself. Either way, they are both dead. Let's approach carefully though, said Mongo and he took the first step towards the Knight.

The embers in the Neon Knight 's eyes had vanished and instead he had kind black eyes.

-Hello sir, are you ok? Asked Harry carefully, playing with his axe, ready to strike if the Knight gave the wrong answer.

- I have a terrible headache and I have no idea where I am. Said the knight. Oh, I am starting to remember. I died and now I am alive again. How can this be?

Mongo explained to him that he had been resurrected to serve his master but as his master was dead, he was free now. The Knight thanked them and he left the accursed place once and for all.

-Miihah must be behind that door! Said Bratty and she hurried towards the door where the Neon Knight had been earlier. Quickly Ulo, work your magic and open this door!

- It will be my pleasure! And Ulo used his pick locks and opened the door to Miihah' s cell.

- Miihah! We are so happy to see you! We've come to save you, Scar sent us. And Bratty hugged Miihah in a big bear hug. It was as if she had the power of ten bears when she hugged her.

- Same goes for me, I am so glad to see you all! I was starting to give up hope that I would ever see my husband again! Thank you so much for saving me. Now let's not tarry here for another moment. And burn the place to the ground before we leave to cleanse it from the demons. Mean, I think you are the right person for the job!

- It shall be done!

A week later they were all back in Donn. Scar couldn't believe his eyes when he saw his bride enter his castle gates, surrounded by his most trusted friends. He was so grateful! After talking with Miihah they decided to have their wedding again, this time uninterrupted and attended by their old and new friends.