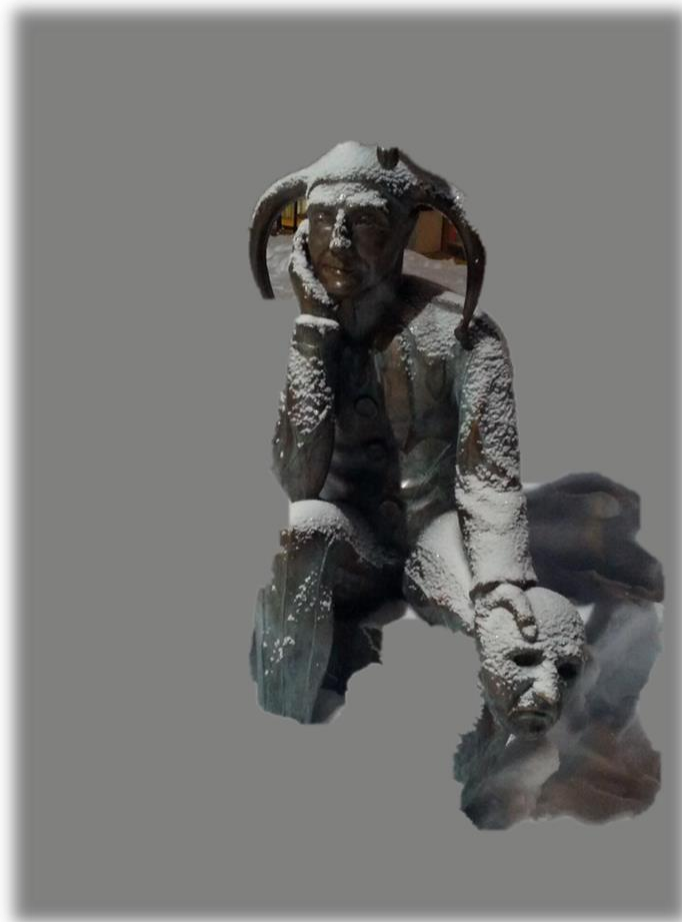


The Jester and the Fool

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Story Premise:

Chosen One(no one else wanted the job) Sir Frederick lives in the peaceful kingdom of Edhinthia. He's bored with having nothing to do. His arrogance outweighs his actual abilities. When a rumor of a cursed castle with a princess stuck inside sweeps through town, Frederick jumps at the opportunity to upgrade his place in life. Accompanied by his loyal friend Radapat, the court jester, Frederick journeys out to find his bride. However, she isn't so sweet, willing, and innocent. Follow our "heroes" as they face off with dragons, traps, and ultimately the advancing troll horde in this dark comedy fantasy.

Timeline:

“Bless with the right hand of Thy majesty this sword, that it may be a defense of churches, widows, orphans, and all Thy servants.” These words were spoken seven generations ago during the climax of the Troll War. Iron Tooth, the fabled longsword, was blessed by priests to slay the Troll horde. Successful in its mission, it has been passed down to a chosen warrior each generation.

Peace has been had since the days of the war. The humans built Castle Asinorum in the Stultus mountains as a monument to their victory. It serves as the central hub of human society. The fey, nature worshipers as they are, built their home in the forests of Edhinhia. The spirit alliance that was performed during the Troll War keep the fey loyal to the humans, despite their ever expanding presence. The fey use their healing magic to help those in need. It is not uncommon for a human mother, especially a peasant, to take their sick child to the fey instead of a doctor.

Smash, destroy, conquer in the name of Dolgoth the warrior god, the trolls fight for survival in the swamps they were banished to. Many of their numbers were lost when they acted on the desire to rule the land of Edhinhia but, slowly, they build their race back to what it once was. The driving force of a troll is to avenge their defeat at the hands of the human/fey army. For now, they keep to themselves far away from their sworn enemies.

Main Characters:

Radapat:

A sly trickster, Radapat is the court jester for castle Asinorum and leader of the thieves guild, Children of Loki. Having been raised in the court, he is a well educated, charming character. He is trained in gymnastics, stealth, sleight of hand, and light weaponry. His downfalls are his propensity towards mischief and his unwavering loyalty to himself. He has paid the price for his mischievous ways on various occasions but none more so than a prank pulled on a humorless King's Guard. The knight didn't take kindly to sliding across the pub floor on waxed boots, ultimately ending up on his backside when he tried going to the privy. Radapat walked away from that night with a slash across his left eye and a solidified hatred for the King's Guard. The only knight he trusts is his friend Sir Frederick, mostly due to feeling sorry for the guy. It also helps that Frederick laughs at Radapat's antics.

Being the leader of the thieves guild, Radapat is a master thief. He has performed heists on visitors to the town, nobles, and the King's Guard. His actions are driven by boredom and a desire to add the most luxurious items to his home. He lives in the southern tower of the castle and can often be found as a patron at the Flying Feather pub, both of which give him ample opportunity to scout new jobs.

Radapat can most often be found dressed in white puffed shirts, a long black overcoat, leather boots, and patchwork pants that match his fool's hat. When on a job, he dons a dark cloak and a white mask that mirrors the scar on his eye. His weapons of choice are his mind, daggers, short sword, and crossbow.



Sir Frederick:

Born to be a knight, Sir Frederick carries the blessed sword, Iron Tooth. He is the chosen one of Asinorum, mostly due to no one else wanting the title. His skills outweigh his intellect. He is all heart and no brains.

A blonde maned, blue eyed giant of a man, Sir Frederick wears his suit of armor with pride. The crest of Asinorum shines bright on his breastplate and kite shield. His longsword, Iron Tooth, is always at his side (he would lose it if it wasn't attached to him.) Sir Frederick is highly trained in combat, being especially adept at swords, lances, and maces. He may not be the brightest torch on the wall or the most agile but, he can swing a sword with the best of them. Just point him in a direction and say "go."

Sir Frederick is driven, bound by honor, and enjoys knitting and smashing things. He spends his time looking for a quest to get him out of the kingdom. Longing for adventure because of the boredom peace brings, Sir Frederick jumps at any chance for a quest. Rescuing damsel dogs, finding lost princesses, no task is too great for this bumbling hero. He drags his best friend Radapat on most of his journeys, luring him along with tales of some shiny treasure to be had.

Outside of Radapat, Sir Frederick's best friend is his tan war horse, Betsy. He takes special care of Betsy, feeding her only the finest of grains and providing the best ales for her to drink. No one can stand in the way of the Sir Frederick/Betsy combo... at least not in Frederick's mind, anyways.



Supporting Characters:

Helena:

Helena is the “princess” that Sir Frederick thinks is being held captive. She is actually the secret child of a fey mother and troll father. Helena was hidden away in Mori Keep. Neither race would accept a halfling so, she has been in seclusion for most of her life. She is beautiful like her mother, bearing bronze skin and long flowing hair, and has the anger of her father. She has studied the ancient ways of both her races and has plans of her own to rule the land. Angry and lonely after her mother’s death, she spends her time with her only companion, a talking dragon named Sturhgal.



Sturhgal:

Sturhgal is a purple and silver ancient dragon that has chosen to spend his time with Helena at Mori Keep. He is intelligent and speaks all the languages of Edhinthia. Being over 300 years old, he remembers the Troll War well. He relays the stories of battles to Helena, fueling her desire to rule. Sturhgal believes she would be the perfect ruler due to her dual nature. He has a great hatred towards humans, they have hunted his kind to low numbers, killing them mindlessly and without provocation. Descended from great dragon kings, Sturhgal yearns for the day when his species can fly freely again.



Ziben:

Ziben is the current leader of the trolls. He fights every day for his role of Warlord. Big, gray, and ugly, he is the perfect troll. Able to smash a tree with another tree and out drink any other troll, Ziben is just the hulking brute that the troll horde needs to lead them on their conquest. With an iron crown on his head, Ziben carries a war club and dresses in a tattered loin cloth. He is intelligent for a troll, something kept hidden from the other members of the horde. Intelligence is a weakness in troll culture. He is currently working on his plan of attack from his tree palace in the swamps.



Drea:

At 600 years old, Drea is the queen of the fey and friend to the forest. She spends her days watching over all that is in her queendom. She has the greatest magic of all the fey, being able to revive forests and other lost souls. Drea is the only fey that is able to reach into the grasp of death to bring a being back to life. This power is limited though, after reviving a being, she loses a piece of herself. She was the leader of the fey army during the war. Due to her experience on the battlefield, she does everything she can to ensure peace lasts. Drea is terrified of losing more of her race to senseless war.



Locations:

Kingdom of Asinorum:

Asinorum is the grand achievement of the human race. A giant castle with four towers, it towers above the surrounding mountainous landscape. The north and south towers act as sleeping quarters for guests and lower members of the court, the east tower holds the barracks and dungeon, and the west tower is the learning center. The main sleeping quarters and throne room is located within the walls of the castle. The seal of Asinorum, a red dragon rearing fire from its fanged mouth, drapes down the side of the towers. The town of Asinus lies to the south of the castle.



Fey Forest:

Drea, the queen of the fey, calls this forest home. It is located in the central section of Edhinhia, dividing the trolls from the humans. The forest is full and lush, containing a plethora of plant and animal life. Oak, elm, ash, and beech trees pack together to create a dense canopy. Heather, grasses, and gorse grow wildly. A variety of flowers such as roses, lilies, and sunflowers speckle the landscape with their vibrant colors. Squirrels and chipmunks scurry about their day in this forest while the doves and cardinals sing their songs of narration. The wolves and foxes watch closely, awaiting their next meal. This forest is the only place that unicorns still run wild. They are under the fey protection after the war.



Mori Keep:

Mori Keep is isolated in the south eastern peninsula of Edhinthia. It is a large square tower that lies in the Ydjit swamp. The former stronghold of the trolls during the war, Mori Keep is far from its former glory. Fungus covers the outside walls, stones have crumbled and fallen from the tower, and the little metal left on the structure is rusted through. It holds a makeshift library, sleeping quarters, and main hall. Believed to be abandoned after the trolls were banished to the southern most swamps, it became the perfect spot for Helena to be hidden away. Raised by her mother in this wretched spot, Helena grew to love the dark waters and strange beasts that roam the surrounding area.



Additional World Information:

Languages:

The common language, what we would know as English, is Edhinthian. This is spoken predominantly by the humans. Latmerian is the native tongue of the fey. It sounds like a mixture of Latin and French. The fey are fluent in all the languages of the land but prefer to speak their own. Rusk is the grunting, guttural language spoken by the trolls. It is primitive and limited. Among these major languages, the followers of certain deities have created their own language to use while worshipping. Flokism is one of these languages. It is a combination of all the languages of the land, leading to a confusing jumble of words and sounds. Proper for worshipers of the mischief god, Loki.

Religions:

The religions of Edhinthia are as varied as its inhabitants. The humans have a pantheon of gods that is a mixture of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Norse gods. Each god has a sect of followers that exclusively worships that one god. Every sect has their own language to use while worshipping. For instance, thieves and tricksters worship Loki, the mischief god. The followers call their language and religion Flokism. Radapat is among their ranks.

The fey are nature worshippers. They honor and love the natural world. It is the source of their magic. Shrines to nature are spread throughout the forests of Edhinthia. Located by the springs, lakes, and rivers, the shrines are used for celebrations and ceremonies.

Believing the world was created through fire and war, the trolls worship Dolgoth the Warrior. Trolls sacrifice their conquests to Dolgoth, who requires a feast of flesh. Blood Rock is located in the main swamp of Trog at the southernmost point of Edhinhia. This spot is where all the sacrifices occur.

Magic:

The magic system in Edhinhia is simple. It revolves exclusively on healing and boosting options. The fey are the only creatures that use this magic. Every fey is able to do some sort of this magic but, the High Priestess is the only one able to bring creatures back from death. She does this by giving a piece of herself to death in trade for the intended soul. Due to this limitation, it is rare that anyone is brought back.

The fey perform their miracles with a combination of spoken words and potions. These potions are highly sought after and can be sold for a pile of gold. Due to the demand for their services, the fey are careful with who they help. Children and elderly are always welcome but, teens and adults have to prove themselves worthy of the help the fey provide.

Creatures:

Aside from the normal fauna of the land, unicorns and dragons roam Edhinhia. The unicorns stay in the forests with the fey, hiding from the humans and trolls. Humans want to tame and dominate them while trolls want to eat them. The fey keep these magical creatures safe while they roam free in the forests. They are intelligent and caring creatures. They communicate

their feelings through auras. If a unicorn is happy, all beings around it will feel an inner euphoria, if one is angry, the surrounding beings feel that fire inside them.

Hunted almost to extinction because of misconceptions, dragons are rare and tend to stay far away from humans. They are sentient beings that have a high intelligence. They range in colors and sizes, influenced by the surrounding area that a dragon calls its habitat. Dragons tend to roam the swamps, occasionally aligning themselves with the trolls, the only other creatures that hate humans as much as them. Before the war, dragon numbers were in the thousands. Now, the numbers have dwindled to under fifty.



Story Synopsis:

Act 1:

Sitting at the Flying Feather tavern, Radapat and Sir Frederick hear about a princess held captive outside the troll swamps. Sir Frederick convinces Radapat into going on the adventure. In the forest, they meet Drea and her fey. Once shown to have good intentions, Drea joins the group and they journey to Mori Keep.

Ziben is shown with his troll horde planning an attack on the fey. He mentions Mori Keep as the former base for the trolls. The horde marches toward the keep.

Act 2:

The heroes enter the tower and encounter traps on the way to the top. After making it through the traps, they meet Helena at the top of the tower. She laughs at the thought of being held captive and sets her dragon on the group. After a grueling battle between fire and steel, Drea stops the fight between Sturhgal and Sir Frederick. Sturhgal refuses to harm a fey and backs down.

Act 3:

The horde arrive and are surprised to see the tower occupied. They proceed to attack. Sir Frederick and his companions join with Helena and Sturhgal to defeat the horde. Sir Frederick is victorious in his fight with Ziben. Drea gives a part of herself to revive Ziben from death. She refuses to see anymore senseless death. Ziben is informed that he is now bonded with Drea.. He brokers peace in return for getting Mori Keep. Helena leaves with Drea, Sir Frederick and Radapat return home. Radapat ends the story with “Guess your princess is in another castle.”

Story Excerpt:

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By Tyler Patrick

A jester, a knight, and an elf queen barrel their way over brush and fallen trees. The gallops of their horses thunder through the swamp. Dead leaves launch from under the horses' hooves then cascade back to the ground. Squirrels and rabbits scurry out of the way. Snakes slither into their dens.

The trio burst through the overgrowth and find themselves in a clearing. The ground is level and more solid. The grass is lush and a deep shade of green. Wildflowers sprinkle throughout the landscape.

Mori Keep, a crumbling old tower, peeks above the horizon to greet the motley group of riders. They push their horses harder.

The ancient building looms above them when they arrive. Its shadow brings a chill to the area. Brambles and fallen stones block its entrance. Vines and moss compete for dominance of the exterior walls. The machicolations have crumbled from years of abandonment.

Radapat, the jester, hops off his horse and flips through the air. His long overcoat flows behind his thin frame. He lands with acrobatic grace.

Drea, the elf, slides her svelte frame off her horse and shakes her head at Radapat. "A little much, don't you think?"

Radapat removes his jester hat and bows to Drea. "What can I say? I'm a showman," he says with a wink from his left eye. The scar over his right flexes with the motion.

"You're an odd one, Radapat," Drea says with a frown.

“That’s why I’m a jester.”

Sir Frederick lands with a thud. Small craters form from the impact of his feet. His massive, armored frame rises above his companions. Light glints off of the metal plating of his suit. Drea and Radapat shield their eyes from the glare.

“I swear you’re not human, my friend,” Radapat says.

Sir Frederick chuckles and grabs his gear from his horse. He motions toward the tower. The group stare up at the structure in front of them.

“You think your princess could be in another castle, Freddy?” Radapat asks.

“Could be princess, could be dragon. Either is fine by me,” Sir Frederick replies.

“Princess, dragon, what’s the difference? They both end up fat and open their mouth too much. One for fire, one to nag,” Radapat says.

“You two are incorrigible. That type of talk makes me wonder why I even came with you,” Drea says. She glides past her male counterparts. Her pale hair drifts behind her.

“Point proven,” Radapat says under his breath.

Drea spins around and slaps him across the face. He falls flat on his ass in the muck. His eyes grow in surprise. Sir Frederick laughs.

“What the hell was that for?” Radapat asks.

“These pointy ears aren’t just for looks, you idiot,” Drea responds. She winks and continues her approach to the tower. “Are you two coming, or are you just going to stand there and let me do everything?”

“Stop bothering strange lady. She scares me,” Sir Frederick says while he helps Radapat up.

“She scares you, but you want to fight a dragon? You are just a walking bucket, aren’t you?”

Sir Frederick looks down at his armored body. “I can’t hold water.”

“You’re a bloody idiot. You’re lucky you’re strong and have a friend like me,” Radapat says, “Now come on. We can’t let that treehugger get to our prize first.”

Radapat and Sir Frederick join Drea at the dilapidated entrance. Drea moves her hands over the bramble and it recedes away from the door. She pushes on it, but the door won’t budge.

“Allow me to give it a try,” Radapat says with a bow. He knocks on the door to test its strength. He nods his head and mutters to himself. A moment passes and he turns his attention to his giant knight friend.

“Freddy, you’re up. Remember the bulls?”

Sir Frederick jumps up and down with glee. “Oooh, the bulls. I loved the bulls.”

“Be the bull, Freddy,” Radapat says.

Sir Frederick squares his stance a few feet from the door. He leans forward, digs his right boot into the ground, and pushes himself forward. He runs headfirst into the oak door. A thud echoes through the clearing. Sir Frederick falls on his ass and shakes his head to regain his senses.

“That’s the way to use your head ole boy!” Radapat says.

The door slowly creeps open. The musk of old stone and rotten vegetation rush out to meet the trio. Radapat bends over and gags. “Loki’s beard, that stinks! Why are we doing this again?”

“Princess and dragon, of course,” Sir Frederick says. He bounces back to his feet.

“Yeah, yeah. You and your chivalry bs is going to get me killed one day,” Radapat says.

“Enough bickering. Let’s go, a young lady needs our help in there,” Drea says. She pushes the jester and knight out of her way.

Radapat and Sir Frederick follow Drea into the tower. They enter a long hallway. The stone walls are damp and moldy from the years of negligence. Shuffling through the hall, hands on the wall to steady their way, the group inches toward the large wooden door ahead of them.

The sound of stone grinding roars through the room. Sir Frederick looks down at his feet. His left boot sinks down.

“Oopsie,” he says.

“You dolt! Are you trying to kill us all?” Drea screams as she punches Sir Frederick in the arm.

The ends of the hall are blocked off by falling gates. A whirring is heard overhead as blades start spinning down towards the group. Radapat pulls Sir Frederick off the stone switch and shakes the hulking brute.

“This is all your fault, if you hadn’t talked me into this, I would still be drinking at the Flying Feather. But no, you had to come save a princess. Now I’m going to be turned into mincemeat pie with an idiot and a tree hugger,” Radapat says.

“I’ll just swing my sword and break the blades. Nothing can stand in the way of the Chosen One,” Sir Frederick says.

“You’re only the chosen one because no one else wanted the job. They all had better things to do than carry some stupid old sword,” snarks Radapat.

Rolling her eyes, Drea proceeds to look for access to the wall. As the jester and knight argue back and forth, she notices a small panel on the left wall. Prying it open, she finds a series of gears spinning.

“Radapat, get over here,” Drea screams.

Sir Frederick starts swinging his mace, cracking the blades coming down. Faster and faster he swings, sparks and metal shards rain down as Radapat scurries over to Drea’s side.

“How can I be of service? Need a kiss before we die?” Radapat asks with a wink.

“No, you idiot. I need one of your daggers,” Drea says.

Handing over a dagger, Radapat watches as Drea shoves it into the gears spinning in the wall. With a loud clunk, the blades stop.

“Told you nothing could stop the Chosen One,” Sir Frederick says proudly while standing in a pile of metal.

“Chosen One my rosy red ass,” Radapat says, “That was her doing. Tree hugger for the win. With a little help from myself, of course.”

“You’re both idiots. Now, let’s see what’s behind that door,” Drea says.

Sir Frederick steps out of the metal pile with a clatter and leads the group to the fallen gate blocking the door. He clasps his huge hands around the bottom and slowly lifts the gate. Radapat turns to Drea and bows.

“After you, m’lady.”

“It’s about time you showed respect,” Drea says.

“I’m always respectful. We can go to the shadows and I’ll respect you for hours,” Radapat says with a smirk.

Drea scoffs at his proposal.

Sir Frederick’s muscles start to shake from their exertion. Sweat beads along his brow.

“Less talky, more walky, please.”

Drea ducks quickly under the gate and through the thick wooden door. Radapat follows behind. His head swiveling to keep aware of his surroundings. Sir Frederick steps forward and let's loose of the gate. The metal slams to the floor. The sound echoes through the dark, narrow room the trio finds themselves in. Drea's ears twitch, Radapat covers his with his hands.

Sir Frederick shrugs his broad shoulders, not affected by the noise. He bumps into Radapat.

“Hey! Watch it, will ya!” Radapat exclaims.

“Sorry,” Sir Frederick says, “can't see.”

“Are you poking me with your sword?”

“Can't see, don't know.”

“Allow me,” Drea says. She claps her hands together and the room grows brighter. One by one the torches lining the room ignite. Their flames dance with the shadows on the wall.

Radapat finds his head next to Sir Frederick's crotch. He jumps back.

“I could give you boys some time,” Drea says, “Sir Frederick deserves something for getting us this far.”

“Oh no. No, no, no. Let's just move on,” Radapat says.

Sir Frederick points to the carved stone steps ahead of them.

“Up we go.”

“You first, big and brawny,” Radapat says.

The group cautiously climb the spiraling staircase. They reach another massive wooden door. Sir Frederick puts his giant hands against the door and pushes. The door slides open with ease. Drea and Radapat stop in their tracks.

Beyond the door, piles of gold and jewelry glimmer and shine. Radapat's face lights up like a child's.

"Sweet mother of all, that's a lot of money," Radapat says, "happy days, happ—"

He's interrupted by an evil laugh. The group quickly looks around for the source.

"Thought you could just waltz right in and take what you want, eh?" The voice asks. It's high pitched feminine.

"We don't wish to take anything from you," Drea says.

"Tell that to the one loading his pockets," the voice responds.

Radapat looks at Drea, his hands in his pants. His pockets bulge with coins and other loot. He shrugs. "It's shiny! Everyone loves a shiny!"

"Enough," the voice resumes, "everyone thinks they can walk in and do what they want. This is OUR domain."

"Our?" Radapat asks Drea. It's her turn to shrug.

"We're here to save the princess. Stand back fiend!" Sir Frederick yells.

Laughter bursts through the room. "Really? A rescue mission for little ole me?" The voice asks in a mock damsel voice.

"Just let the princess—" Sir Frederick says.

"I AM the princess!" the voice exclaims, "and I need no rescue. Let me introduce my friend, Sturhgal."

The piles of coin and jewelry start to flow. They lift and fall as a giant being rears itself up from a slumber. Huge eyes the color of blood blink open and stare down at the potential heroes. Purple scales line its body. Two horns protrude from its reptilian head. Black leathery wings stretch out, blanketing the chamber.

“Dragon!” Radapat yells as he dives behind Drea, “Treehuggers love animals. Go talk to that one!”

Drea shakes Radapat off her and faces the dragon. Sir Frederick draws his sword and squares his stance.

“Are we really doing this?” Radapat asks.

Neither Drea or Sir Frederick answer. He lowers his shoulders in defeat and stands beside his companions. “I hope I get eaten first. That way I can say I told you so when I welcome you to his stomach.”

Sturhgal roars. The commotion shakes the entire tower. Dust, rock, and wood tumble to the ground. The dragon swoops its head toward Sir Frederick.

Sir Frederick pulls back his sword and swings...

End of chapter

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