

Chapter 36: The Zombie Thief

Kathia and Megan finally made it back to the camp of Sundown. The car was parked and the two got out of it with the girl carrying the bag of spell books in her arm. Earlier, she had been using her cellphone to look necromancer spells on the search engine. Most of the links came from gaming websites, which were of the fictional spells. She eventually found a legitimate website where she found a few spells. The first one being the "see ghosts" spell, which required grave dirt to allow her to see spirits, which means that she would have to go back to Windfall next time to get what she needed. The girl went over to see how Jason was doing with training the people in archery. It looked like his class had ended, because Jason had told his students, "Alright folks; class is over! Y'all go ahead and eat lunch or go on with whatever business you all have in mind." The students dispersed and went separate ways. Kathia took this as a chance to go tell the man about the equipment he asked for. Going up to him as the man turned around and smiled, asking, "Hey Kathia, did you get what we need?"

The girl nodded and answered, "Yep! I got the spell books." She showed him the bag with all the books in it. Then she pointed her thumb backwards over her shoulder to the open trunk of Megan's car, which was packed with boxes. She continued, "And I got you the bow and arrows."

Jason looked behind her and saw the desired weapons. The man was satisfied as he said, "That's great! Because I had been teaching everyone how to make bows and arrows. We found the wood and rocks to make our stuff, but we couldn't find anything to make a string."

"No string?" asked Kathia, sounding surprised. "That must suck!" A bow without a string to shoot arrows would make it as useless as a broken TV.

Jason nodded in agreement and replied, "Sure does. That's why I got you to buy those things, just in case something like this happens." Then he looked at the girl's bag and asked, "So, what kind of spell books did you buy?"

"Well," the girl said as she took out one book at a time to show him before she put them back in.

The man looked at each one and nodded his head with fascination. "Wow! That's a lot of magic you're going to be teaching these people. You're going to turn the whole camp into wizards!" he joked and laughed.

"Not just wizards," said Kathia, smiling slyly. "I'm also making necromancers out of them, too."

Jason asked, "Necromancers?" The girl nodded and explained her reason for why she's teaching that. The man lifted his head up slightly and briefly as he understood what she was talking about. "Ah! I see; that sounds like a great idea. Hopefully this time, we keep these scalies in place, which I know we will."

"Oh it's going to work alright," said Kathia, pretty confident and sure of the idea. Then they smelled food being cooked, making the girl have an appetite. She asked her friend, "So, want to grab some lunch?"

The man nodded and grinned, "Oh yes, I need to fill my belly with some good food!" Then they went over to join the line and get some lunch. The cooks were making hot dogs and meat of the few animals that were caught; mostly the small ones. Since the dragons were freed, finding bigger animals like bears and deer were harder than ever since the dragons fed on them. Kathia got herself a hot dog, while Jason got himself a squirrel and they sat at the table to eat.

The movie went on and showed some funny parts, making the women laugh. Ronan didn't get some of the jokes in the movie, but some of them did make him smile and laugh. Then Whitney looked at the two and asked, "Hey, do you guys want some lunch?"

Minerva smiled at the thought of delicious food and answered, "Sure!"

The redhead rose off the couch and said, "Alright then, I'll make us some hot dogs and chips. Be right back!" Then she went to the kitchen and started cooking. Whitney and her mother cooked the hot dogs and put ketchup and mustard on it. They put them on the plates and Whitney took out a bag of chips to put on the plates. The mother went to pour some lemonade in the cups. Once lunch was fixed, Whitney came to the living room with the foods for her guests. "Lunch is ready, guys!" she said.

Minerva got off the couch and said, "Oh goodie! Thanks, Whitney!"

"You're welcome," said the redhead. Then they started eating lunch and drinking the lemonade as the movie continued on until the end.

After Jason finished his lunch, he went to go do his business in the woods. As Kathia ate her lunch and drink her water, she planned out what spells she should teach her students. The plant blessing spell was going to be first as she knew the people needed to farm their food and produce healthy crops. Then the next spell would be the anti-cockroach spell, which worked against all insects and not just roaches. Combined with the plant blessing spell, it'll further help to keep the produce as healthy and undamaged as possible. These two spells would be great for farmers and gardeners alike. Then she thought up a few more spells to teach her students like the no-wind spell and the book-blessing spell. Speaking of the latter, she thought to give this spell a short practice to refresh in her mind how to perform that spell. The girl opened up the beginner's guide to magic to see how the spell was done again. Then she started to cast that spell on each of the spell books she purchased. After she was done, she was greeted with a surprise visit from Azera, who was accompanied by a teen girl this time. She wore the swordsman's cloak and looked no more than 16 years old. She also had light purple eyes, which was an unusual color

for a human being to have. Azera said to Kathia, "About damn time I found you."

The girl swallowed the last of her hot dog and asked, "You're the same guy from before. Azera, was it? What brings you to Sundown?"

The mercenary replied calmly, "I came by to ask a favor. I was wondering if you had clothing for the girl that is with me right now. I, um, kind of found her on the road a bit ago and she seems to suffer from memory lost." The teen felt kind of sorry to hear about the girl suffering from amnesia. "That is the only reason why I'm-" Azera started to say before a shadow flickered past them from above. Then there were frightened gasps and shouts from the campers.

"Dragon!" shouted a man. Kathia, Azera, and the girl looked straight up and saw the shiny scales of a sky drake, going extremely fast, almost toward the mountains. The people went to scurry their children inside tents for their safety, while those who had been trained in archery today went to Megan's car to get the bows and arrows Kathia purchased. Even though the sky drake was gone, the students still aimed in case another one showed up.

Kathia snorted, "Hmph! Damn dragon's getting everyone get riled up. I hope that one didn't come from Windfall. That's the last kind of dragon we need here." Then she calmed down and said to Azera, "Anyway, there's a supply truck somewhere around here that has some spare clothes for her. I'll show you where it is." Then the redhead got up and led the mercenary and the girl over to the truck. "Here it is, that's where you'll what you're looking for," said the teen.

"Thank you," Azera said as the girl went to the truck and started to look though the truck bed.

"Hey, anytime," Kathia replied, happy to help out.

The mercenary said, "Honestly I don't know what to do with her in her condition." The girl continued to look though the truck until she found some clothing she chose. She walked from the truck and hide somewhere for a minute to put on the clothing and then came back. She wore a full black shirt with black shorts that came to her knees. They had scale pattern on them that looked like dragon scales.

Kathia observed how the attire looked on the girl and commented, "Hey, that looks nice on you! Skin a pelt off a dragon into a shirt and you'll be wearing the real thing."

Azera looked at the girl for a second and then turned his head to the redhead. "By the way I never caught your name," he said. The girl kind of looked at the redhead for a second before handing Azera back his torn coat.

The teen told him, "The name's Kathia and it starts with a K. I know it's not an everyday name, but that's what my parents named me."

Then a man came over to her and reminded her, "Kathia, your magic class is about to start."

Kathia replied, "Okay, I'll be right there. Just hang on a sec." As the man left, she looked back at Azera and said, "Well I got to go. These people can't learn magic by themselves."

The mercenary nodded his head and put his torn coat on as he said, "Well, best of luck with that." There was a slight shift in the wind, almost unnoticeable, almost like someone was messing with the wind around here.

The redhead walked back to the table and collected the spell books. Then she went over to the training area to see a group of students chatting among themselves. The girl got to a spot in front of them and put the spell books, save for the Beginner's Guide, down to her side. "Okay guys, be quiet!" she ordered. The conversations immediately stopped as the people turned to look at their teacher. Content with their obedience, Kathia said, "Good! Now everybody, start lining up side by side." The students did as they were told, forming a horizontal line for her to see. Nodding, the girl said, "Excellent! Now we can all get started."

Kathia instructed them how to unlock their powers with the two magic words. The students repeated these words and felt the magic energy within them. They all looked surprised and amazed at the effect of unlocking their magic. However, some were unable to feel their magic energies, no matter how hard they tried to say "Unluck magisto." One guy said to his teacher, "I'm not feeling anything. Can I still use magic?"

The teacher wasn't sure what to make of this as she said, "Well gee, I don't know. Why don't we try out a spell and see? Let's try the plant-blessing spell." She told them how to do that spell and demonstrated to them how it was done by casting the spell on the grass. "Now you guys try," she said. So the students started casting that spell. Over half of them got the spell working, but the others couldn't manage to pull it off.

One of the women complained, "I can't cast the spell."

"What?!" Kathia asked. After a few other complaints, the girl said, "Well maybe you people are doing it wrong. Hang on, let me see what this book says." She went to look up an answer to their problem and found what it was. "It says that that magic has a high mental strain and that those whose heart wavers, cannot successfully pull off the magic. It also says that different kinds of magic vary between humans and that there are some who are unable to use any magic at all," she answered from the guide said. The girl told her students, "So to all those who didn't feel anything after "unluk magisto", please leave and build yourselves a stronger mind and then come back and try again. But everyone else, please stay and see if there are other spells that you can do." So the unlucky people left the crowd with looks of disappointment on their faces. With the weak-minded gone, Kathia went back to the session at hand. "So anyway, that plant-blessing spell can be used to grow and maintain healthy plants," she informed the students. With a grin this time, she continued, "Hey, you can even a beautiful garden or a

great crop with that spell." Few of the students all smiled at what the plant-blessing spell can do and talked amongst themselves about what they would with the spell. The girl shut them up and said, "Yeah yeah, I know it's good. But let's move on to the next spells alright?" Then she started teaching them the rest of the spells from the beginner's guide she knew by heart.

After the movie ended and everyone ate their lunch, David came out of his room and said to the guests, "Okay, I got the blueprint done. Want to check it out?"

Minerva got off the couch and replied, "Sure." She followed the man back to his room and see the layout design.

David pointed to each section as he explained, "Okay, I got the front desk over at the entrance like you wanted. Then this short hallway here is going to take you to the restrooms. Also next to the front desk is the managerial office. That biggest room right here is where the dojo is at. Behind it is the storage room for the equipment. And lastly, we have the break room like you wanted." Then he looked at Ronan and said, "Does everything look fine with you, sir?"

Ronan examined each room and section as it was described. He nodded and said "Very good. How much will it cost to build?" He had his arms crossed.

David looked at the blueprint to see answered, "Well normally, it would be 30000 gold. But with the Aquarians using their powers to make free building materials, I'd lower it down to 2500 just for the land."

Minerva looked at Ronan gleefully and said, "Looks like I won't be paying too much after all."

The redhead man continued on, "And for the way the blueprint is now. I would also charge you 60 gold."

Ronan nodded and replied, "Perfect. Minerva and I can move ahead with our plans and you can get the blueprints finalized for us." Then he looked to the blonde and asked, "What's our next step?"

The woman placed a hand on her chin as she looked up thoughtfully. "Let's see..." she said, trying to remember the steps she learned. "I think we're supposed to get some business training over at a business administration office. They'll teach us everything about how to run the school."

The assassin nodded and said, "Well then, we should go get that taken care of as well. Hopefully it doesn't take too long, we do have plans tonight." He smirked at her with a wink.

Minerva giggled; feeling flattered and said, "Well maybe we can ask them to make it quick."

Then they turned to the siblings and Ronan said to them, "It was a pleasure and an honor meeting you all." He gave a respectful bow to them.

David smiled friendly and said, "No problem, man! It's nice having guests around."

Whitney grinned and said, "And I'm glad we got to hang together! I can't wait to see this school of yours."

"Me too," said Minerva, nodding a bit. Then they said their goodbyes to each other before the blonde and the assassin left the building.

Drake jumped down from the roof and Ronan asked him, "Ready to go Drake? We got another stop to make. We're heading to the inner city." The man hopped up onto Drake's back and held a hand out to help Minerva up. The woman took his hand and was lifted up onto the dragon. Drake took off into the air and headed for the inner city.

After practicing the spells they were taught, the students started to feel drained from being low on magic energy. Kathia decided it was time to let them rest, "Alright everybody, take a break. We're going to let that magic energy recharge itself while I look up more spells to teach you." Then suddenly, she heard panic screams behind her.

A random man shouted, "Oh my gods, it's coming right into our camp!"

"Huh?" Kathia said as she turned around to look for the sight of the people's fear. There, she saw a black draconic creature flying down towards the camp. Annoyed at having this beast in human territory, the girl yelled, "Oh no you don't, you wretched beast! You're not setting foot in this camp." Just after she said it, the creature landed in the camp.

A few archers, including Jason, went to shoot their arrows at it. The arrows were stuck in its sides and legs, but blood only oozed out of it on impact. The drake seemed to ignore everyone as it started to look through tents, cars, and everything. The people ran away screaming to avoid chances of getting attacked by the creature. The archers were confused as to why the beast kept on going unfazed, despite their arrows having hit it. It was unbelievable how the creature did not make a pained reaction. Jason said, "Damn, that thing ain't slowing down. It's like it got CIP or something."

Seeing as how shooting was useless, Kathia thought that magic may work instead. She went to aid the archers by casting a lightning bolt at the drake. The stench from the drake was overwhelming; it smelled like a corpse that had been left out for days. *'Wait... that smell? Is it a zombie?'* the girl wondered. The lightning was met with a wall of earth. The drake did not even look that way as it continued its search.

One of the archers asked about the earth wall, "Hey, where the heck did that come from?"

Jason shook his head and guessed, "I don't know, but I bet that thing used magic to protect itself. I guess Kathia's magic spell would have done a number on it, unlike our arrows."

Another archer pinched his nose to block out the stench that was filling the air around them. "Ugh, why does it smell so bad?" he asked.

Kathia told him, "Because that thing is a zombie. Some necromancer resurrected it for his own use." Maybe the necromancer was Spinx, but who knows?

The archers looked to her, thinking that she knows something. Jason asked, "For real? What the heck does the necromancer want from this camp?"

The girl answered, "I don't know, but we better go see." So they followed the drake to see what it's up to. They kept the distance far enough to avoid antagonizing the creature with their presence, but also close enough to see in details what it did.

Kathia felt someone tap on her shoulder and turned her head to see a black-haired man in a dark leather outfit saying, "You are Kathia, correct? The rumors don't do you justice. I am sure that you know this by now, but that is being controlled by magic. This could mean two possibilities. One, the castor is nearby; and if we take out the castor, we take out the dragon. Or two, you could attempt to use a void magic spell if you know any." Just as he said that, the drake cocked its head right to group, almost like it was intelligent to know what it was going on. It turned its head back to the search for whatever it was looking for. It soon came to a tent and went inside, not caring nor paying heed to the frightened people around it or in it. Someone inside the tent took a swing at the drake and hit the creature, but still not slowing it down. It grabbed a bag, which seem to be filled with food. Instead of just flying right then and there, it made a bull rush dash right out of camp and went back towards the mountain.

"It's stolen our food!" Kathia cried. That thief was going to pay and the girl would make sure of it. "Come on, let's stop this thing and find out who the thief is!" she said. She and the others started to pursue the drake. The girl rode on her stallion after the creature as she cast her lightning spells at it. "Yah!" she shouted. The black drake got hit by the bolt as it simply slid right at the foot of the mountain. Kathia got ahead of the group and a bit closer to the downed drake for a second. The drake laid there for a second before moving again as it staggered up the mountain. It made rock slabs, almost like a staircase. It ran right up it, making a zig-zag pattern up the mountain as it also cast rock slabs to either block it chasers or to slow them down greatly. It still dodged lightning strikes and even arrows now. The horse reared up startled by the sudden rise of the slab and whinnied in fright. Kathia fell off the stallion as she screamed. She hit the ground and rolled down the slope. "Oof!" she said after the last roll.

The archers caught up to the girl and Jason asked her, "You alright?"

Getting up as the men helped her, Kathia said, "Yeah, I'm fine. Where's my horse?"

Another archer answered, "It's still here; it's just coming down the mountain towards us." Just as he said, the stallion went back to the archers. The girl was glad to see her horse didn't run off through the woods. The same archer tried to aim at the drake and shoot another arrow. The drake got struck in the side and stumbled a bit.

Before she could do anything to weaken the creature further, Kathia saw an arrow flying towards her cohort. "Jason, watch out!" she cried as she threw herself at him and knocked him down to the ground. Her partner was safe, but not-so for the other archer who got pierced in the throat and started choking on blood. He fell over dead as the others looked at him in surprise.

"What the heck?!" said the black archer.

Kathia guessed who was behind the attack and likened it to the necromancer that Azera had warned her about. "Quick! We have to leave!" she cried, sounding panicked.

The archer looked at her confused and asked, "Leave? Why?"

As she got on the horse, the girl answered, "A necromancer; a very dangerous one. We got to go now!" Then she made the horse gallop back to Sundown. The archers didn't bother to waste any time as they figured Kathia might be right. They picked up the dead body and carried it back to camp as they fled for their lives.

After a while, the group made it safely back to the camp. The girl went to tie the horse's reins around the wooden pole and went to rejoin the group. The food storage man came over to them and asked, "Hey, did you get back the food?"

Jason shook his head and told him, "Sorry to say, but no. The damn thing just used its magic to block and slow us down. Not only that, but we also got some dangerous fool getting in their way." They showed the food storage man the dead person, which shocked him and the surrounding campers nearby.

The food storage man asked anxiously, "Whoa! You mean to tell me there's a killer out there in the woods?"

The lead archer told him in a determined tone, "Apparently so; but next time, we're going to find him and then we teach him a lesson." Then he added, "That is, after we get stronger."

Just then, a flock of black birds were seen flying towards the camp. For some strange reason, they were flying towards them. Kathia was astonished as she asked, "Oh my gosh, what's going on?!"

Jason, who was just as alarmed, said, "I don't know, but we need to scram." So they did, running away to

get out of the way of the birds. The other archer dropped the body to free himself of the burden that would slow him down. Kathia saw Azera running right into the camp at full speed and passing the group in the opposite direction they were going. Then the group stopped and turned around to see the birds gathering at the dead body.

The little black birds, though tiny and many, went straight for the body. They all attacked the body from what they could see, almost like vultures picking a body clean of meat. They saw what the birds did in a matter of seconds as the body became more of a skeleton. Kathia, the archers, and the campers all looked wide-eyed in fear and shock. "Oh my gods!" said the redhead girl, who dropped her mouth in awe.

The black archer said, "What the hell? That ain't right..." This was a very unusual and scary behavior for typical black birds. These avians were omnivores as in eating insects, berries, and seeds; but they weren't known to be crazy scavengers feeding on human flesh. The scene presented before them almost looked to be some kind of curse brought from the great devil himself. Then a large ring of fire appeared and scared away the birds. They also noticed the bolt was gone from the body. The archers looked at Kathia and Jason asked, "Kathia, did you do that?"

The girl denied, "No... I didn't." She was still shaken up by the barbaric scene. Azera came from the group, right up to the now unknown part skeleton body. Kathia looked at him, while talking to Jason, "He probably did though." The mercenary never looked at the corpse as he snapped his fingers and lit the body on fire, while still watching the birds fly back to the mountain before they disappeared.

The archers got appalled with the burning of the body as one of them asked, "Hey! What are you doing?" Azera did not look towards the person that yelled something at him as the body turned to ashes. Kathia noticed the corners of his eyes were seen as they look like a small flame was raging in them. The girl admired his spell and wanted to have it for her own. She'll have to look through one of the spellbooks to learn it later. A little girl kind of pushed and slipped her way through the crowd until she was right up to Azera. It was the same girl that had the black scale pattern clothing on. The flames soon turned a pale blue as the ashes became a crystal gem. It stopped shortly after the mercenary walked away from the group, right towards the mountain.

"What the heck?" asked one of the confused archers.

"What just happened?" asked another archer.

Kathia went to the gem and picked it up. She stared at it, wondering why the body was turned into this gem and for what purpose. The girl saw Azera walking away and went up to him. "Excuse me," she said. "Why did you turn him into a crystal?"

The man looked at her and said in an uncaring tone, "Because whoever is his family, if he had one, could keep him closer. That crystal by the way is a fragile blue quartz. And when you look at the light correctly,

it seems like water." The little girl went by Kathia as well as she came up to Azera. The man walked from the redhead as the little girl looked back at her, almost with a tilted head. She turned back around and ran to catch up with Azera. Even if it was soft to hear, it looked like the man was telling her to stay, but the little girl shook her head in a no. Azera hit his head with his hand as he simply continued his way to the mountain.

Shortly afterwards, a crying woman came running over to the scene of the bird attack and sobbed, "Oh Marcus!" When she couldn't find the man she was looking for, the woman grabbed Kathia's shoulders and pleaded, "Where is my husband? Tell me!" Her water-soaked eyes were red as if she had been crying a lot.

The girl showed her the blue quartz and answered, "He's been turned into this."

The woman looked at the beautiful object and asked, "This is my husband?"

"Yeah, kinda," answered Kathia. She placed the quartz in the woman's hand and told her, "You should keep it with you."

The woman looked at the quartz for a second before she clasped her hands around it and held it to her chest. "Oh Marcus, I'll keep you safe with me... always," she sobbed.

Everyone looked at the crying woman in pity for her loss. Kathia thought, *'Don't worry, I'll let you see your husband again. Just you wait.'* Jason decided to leave the woman alone and took his group to do some hunting to replace the stolen food. The men left as the Kathia went back to her students to resume teaching. "Right, where were we?" she said, trying to remember where she left off.

A teen boy answered, "We were resting to bring our energy back."

"Right," said the teacher. "Are you all rested yet?"

"No," answered everyone.

"Okay then, let's wait some more." So Kathia went to grab a chair to sit and went to reading the beginner's guide.