

MINECRAFT

SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT

Warning! All of the subjects in this book are mildly based off of a popular game known as MINECRAFT. Many things in several dozen scenes, however, cannot be reproduced! This is because the author felt it best to make it as real life (and as completely fictional!) as possible to give you a more interesting experience. Enjoy!

Our story begins with a young man named Steve. Steve lives in a world made of perfect cubes, and these cubes make everything in his paradise-like world. In this paradise, however, there is one problem. He is the only one of his kind.

The villagers call him 'human' and 'man-child' but Steve doesn't know what the reason for this is.

Though the villagers will always allow him into their cities and towns, and they will gladly trade with him, but they still despise him for a reason they simply refuse to reveal.

Steve believes it is something that he did as a young man, because that is the only part of his life that Steve does not remember.

All Steve knows is waking up on the cold grass and dirt, in an endless forest. If not for the village he stumbled upon, he would have died.

Steve was allowed to partake of the gardens and chests in the village, so long as he gave back what he could, and was taught how to make a basic living, but the villagers would not allow him to ask for anything more than those meager scraps.

So, Steve began to make a living. He lives completely alone. He spends his days finding ways to hunt his meat, growing his garden, and picking his fruits. He learned quickly that if one does not make a bond with nature, then one will quickly perish.

But one day, nature began to change...

It has been three years since I woke up. I owe that to the Villagers. If not for them, I would have died. And yet... we still have a deep rooted dislike of each other.

As I got ready to start off my day, I heard a strange hissing noise outside. I grabbed a stick, and slowly opened my door. I had learned long ago that if you hear a

noise that you don't recognize, then it is usually best to make sure you don't have any threats to take care of. Therefore, I use a stick.

As I open the door, I make sure I have the stick directly in front of me. If something charges and it knocks the stick away, you are defenseless. If it runs into the stick, it learns a lesson.

When I peeked out of the door, I saw nothing out of the ordinary. I listened to the forest around me. My sense of danger heightened, because there was no sound. Only a predator can make the woods go silent.

I looked up to my roof in time to see something pitch black, shiny, and slim vanishes from view. Strangely, it looked vaguely familiar.

I heard a strange scuttling noise, as if whatever I saw was just one leg among many of whatever was on top of my roof. That was when I realized what I had just seen. I had seen an enormous spider leg. But what kind of spider was *that* big and hissed?!

As I shut and locked my door, I realized I would need something better than a stick to defend myself with.

Last month, I had been foraging, and I had heard a loud explosion. I then saw an amazing flash of light, brighter than the sun.

As I shielded my eyes, I immediately knew that whatever the light was coming from, it was not a product of nature, and needed to be taken away from the forest. So I waited a moment, and the light vanished.

As I marched towards the direction of the explosion, I saw a sky blue object, lying in the grass. As I walked up to it, I realized what it was. It was a weapon, something the villagers had taught me to have an utter fear of. As I came closer, I saw that it was a sword.

I had to dispose of it, immediately. If a sword was seen, it was immediately destroyed. This one would be no different. A sword was believed to be an evil object by some, because their one purpose was to kill. Some extremists would burn the bearer of a sword, out of pure hatred of the feared weapons.

Once, these had been commonplace, but that was when defense was something that kept you alive, when the world was terrorized by monsters, and almost impossible to survive in without shelter. But those were times long gone, and swords were no longer needed. So why was one sitting in the grass in front of me? That was a question I preferred not to answer.

I would take it home, if only to get it out of the forest. Afterwards, I would find a villager who would tell me what it was made of and how best to dispose of it.

As I found the hidden latch to the sword room, I suddenly felt queasy. If I grabbed this sword with the intent of harming a beast, even if in self defense, I could easily become something I did not want to become.

The villagers say that if you kill for anything but what is completely necessary, you will become like a monster, listening to the spirits of evil.

But the need for survival told me to grab the sword. When I did, I felt a rush of strength, making me lightheaded. The sword took on a violet glow, indicating it was enchanted. I also felt my courage rising inside me.

As I walked out the door, I looked at my roof. The spider was still there. It was half my size! This was obviously the work of a dark sorcerer, and against all laws of nature. This spider was an abomination.

As it turned around, I saw its eyes were red. They glowed like hot coals, and had no pupils. The eyes were devoid of emotion, and they induced a state of extreme fear in me.

As I squeezed the hilt of the sword, though, I felt the fear flow away from me, and my confidence returned. The monster jumped down at me, and I rolled sideways, and brought my sword down on its abdomen. There was a loud CRACK! Green slime oozed down the edge of my blade, and bile rose in my throat.

I had *killed*; something I rarely did, even for meat. *It would have killed me*, I thought. This made the nausea fade, and the bile left my throat. I felt better, if only because I had justified my actions. I squeezed the hilt of the sword again, and I felt comforted by it, somehow.

When I had regained my bearings and my confidence, I panned my view across the forest. Something tall and green caught my attention. I had almost missed it. It slipped from view, but I had gotten a good look at it.

It had scales, mottled green and black. It had four legs, each of them short but stocky. The creature had a torso similar to that of a man, but no arms. It moved through the forest soundlessly. I immediately dubbed it "the creeper" because of its silence and camouflage.

As it came into view, it noticed me and hissed. Then it came at me too quickly to run from. As soon as it reached me, it stopped moving and instead began to expand.

As I scrambled away from it, a bright glow began to emanate from the creeper. My sword began to vibrate, and a shield formed around me. Then the creeper exploded! There was a great flash and BOOM! I was nearly blinded, but was protected by the force-field my sword had created.

My house, however, was not so fortunate. A gigantic hole was blown in the front of it, leaving no doubt to the power of the explosion.

I decided that I should head to the nearest village, about an hours walk from my house, and see if they had found a way to defend themselves.

An hour later, I found the village. It was destroyed. The iron and snow golems that usually patrolled the streets were not exactly able to do so. I found a Snow Golem filled with arrows like a pincushion. An Iron Golem was lying on its side forlornly, a massive hole in its chest. Its normally glowing eyes were dim, showing that there was still life in it, but not much.

As I knelt beside it, it looked at me with a clueless expression on its face. "Who did this?" I asked it. In a clanging, grating voice it replied "The Dragon. The Dragon of the End is responsible." "How do I find this dragon?" "You don't. It finds you... and you run." With this warning given, the last light in the Golem's eyes died. Even though the golem was never truly alive, I still feel a loss. I decide to look for the bodies of the villagers.

After 30 minutes of searching, I find no bodies besides the iron and snow golems. This doesn't bode well. If the villagers are taken prisoner, then the monsters are indeed sentient, if only to a point. That or they were only able to follow orders.

All of a sudden, I hear a deathly moan. I whirl around, and see a villager hiding in the shadows. As the villager steps from the shadows, I see his face is a sickly green, and his eyes are the color of pus.

He... *it*... moaned again. It shuffled towards me, but stopped when I raised the sword. There were bloody gashes all over it, and the heart was replaced by a gaping hole. This was something that shouldn't be happening. The dead were supposed to *stay dead*. Instead, here was this *thing*, howling at me, calling more of its kind towards me.

I had to act, and soon. I raised the sword higher, and brought it down on the monsters neck. The head flew away, leaving the body to slump to the ground.

I heard moans all around me, coming closer every second. I was surrounded, with nowhere to go. A dead villager came lurching towards me, then three more from different angles. I wildly swung my sword, dispatching all four before another wave came towards me.

I needed a different angle of attack. I scaled the wall of a small dwelling, hoping desperately that these monsters couldn't climb. I was right.

I drew my bow, knocked an arrow, and let fly. It struck a villager in the head, felling it instantly. I let fly three more arrows before I heard something hissing behind

me. Another spider crouched on the building behind mine, preparing to spring. I drew another arrow and sent it searing through the air to the giant arachnid, but it just bounced off the armored exoskeleton.

The spider sprang, crossing the gap with ease, and tackled me. I fell on my back, holding the monster away from me. I tried to reach my sword, but it was just out of reach, having fallen from my hand when the spider jumped. I couldn't move closer either, because the spider was on top of me. I shoved my knee under the spiders' abdomen, and pushed up with my arms, effectively throwing it straight up.

I kicked the spider off of me, and rolled to my sword. As I grabbed the hilt, the spider jumped at me again, so I thrust the blade up to meet it. A loud crunch and one last hiss and the spider died.

I rolled to a kneeling position and swung the spider off of my sword into the undead throng. The fangs killed one villager, the legs had spikes for tips and impaled three more villagers, and more were knocked over.

I saw a creeper running towards my position on top of the house. This was bad because it could completely destroy the house and leave me with undead villagers on the ground. This was good because I could use the creeper to destroy the throng of undead beneath me. I would need to be precise though, because one shot was all I could get with this.

I readied my bow, and aimed for the skull. The creeper was in the center of the throng. My arrow flew true, and the creeper exploded. The entire horde was taken out, and my sword protected me from the rest of the explosion.

I jumped from my now collapsing roof to the less damaged roof next to me. I did so just in time, because then the roof collapsed on the other house. My new roof creaked and groaned, threatening to fall as well. I had to jump down, and as soon as I landed, I felt a searing pain in my ankle. I had twisted and sprained it, and it would slow me down. I wouldn't be able to run away from hordes like the last one. I couldn't walk quickly either. Even as I was thinking this, I felt the pain abating. It was as if my ankle was healing in minutes instead of days. The swelling diminished, the pain vanished, and my leg stopped shaking. My ankle had healed completely in the span of two minutes.

I didn't know if it was my (apparently heavily) enchanted sword, or if it was something else, but I had to take advantage of the new development. I had to go through this village, try to find a map and compass, or find the materials to build them. Then I had to use them to get help to the other villages. This was a large village, with many chests. There had to be *something* I could use.

I went from house to house, inspecting each carefully. Villagers were notoriously greedy for emeralds, due to their sparkling appearance, and vibrant green

hue. Thus, many had hidden chests with either A: emeralds or B: more valuable-to-me items.

I found a compass, some Redstone dust and emeralds, but no map. I saw some paper, but I didn't know the lay of the land around me, or where other villages might be. I would have to search harder.

As I left the house, I saw a small catch in the wall, like a button or pressure plate on its side. I felt it, and pressed it in. A loud grating noise echoed through the house, and something fell from the ceiling in the middle of the room. There was a map... *and a sword!* It was made of iron, glowing with violet energy and in places flickered with fire.

I grabbed the map, and looked at the sword uncertainly. I already had one sword and no sheath for it.

I looked at the spot in the ceiling where the map and sword had fallen from, and saw something stuck there. I reached up and grabbed it, then turned it so it got unstuck. What do you know? It was a sheath. I noticed it too was glowing violet, as though protected from the fire of the sword it was made for.

I strapped on the sheath, and slid the iron sword into it. I noticed an engraving on the side of the sword: *Nightfury*. Now that I had a name for the iron sword, I decided to give my blue sword a name. It would help me to avoid confusion, and I needed to think of something other than *the blue sword*. Since it had fallen from the sky, I named it *Skysplitter*.

My stomach growled. I laughed, finding it ironic that of all things to be worried about, I was worried about food. The village had numerous gardens, and there would likely be wheat, potatoes, and carrots in them. I looked around the village again, and found several gardens. A few of them had potatoes, but most of them had wheat. I could make bread, at least, and cooked potatoes, both of which would be valuable.

I gathered what I could, and left for the next village. I followed the map and compass as well as I could, and only got lost twice.

When I finally got to the next village, it was under siege. Another undead horde, twice as large as the one in the previous village, was attacking. I saw no creepers. I saw a few spiders. And I saw a skeleton.

I grabbed my bow and shot the skeleton, then grabbed *Skysplitter* and *Nightfury* and assaulted the undead horde. I killed many undead, mostly by beheading. One lunged for me but bit another instead, because I dodged. Many of the undead that I struck with *Nightfury* burst into flames, but the flames vanished as soon as the undead died. The stench of burning flesh was everywhere.

A spider jumped at me but I batted it aside with *Skysplitter*. Its legs impaled some undead attacking a Villager. I ran to his aid, slicing open the spiders' abdomens with *Nightfury*. I then threw *Nightfury* at a trio of undead in a single file line and impaled all three. I gripped *Skysplitter* with both hands, and dispatched over half of the horde.

I continued my dance of death until less than a dozen undead remained. I ran towards them, but a dagger sliced through their necks. As the undead fell, I looked everywhere for the dagger wielder, but couldn't see him. I saw a minute shimmering, and then a figure materialized. I realized two things straight away. First: it was a *she*, not a he. Second: *she was human!*

She stared at me, with the same shocked expression that I probably had, then quickly snapped her mouth shut and raised her dagger. "Who are you?" she demanded. "Steve. Who are you?" I replied. "Clarissa. Um, Claire for short. Why are you here?" "I was looking for survivors. What about you?" "I've been hunting zombies; although you seem to be ruining my hunt. You killed a LOT of them." She lowered the dagger and eyeballed me again. She seemed to trust me, but I wasn't sure.

I sheathed *Nightfury* and put *Skysplitter* in my pack. "Would you like some bread?" I asked her. "You have food?" she replied, her hunger evident in her gaze. I handed her a loaf of bread and a baked potato. "Thanks. I haven't eaten in two days. I've been following this horde and trying to find food at the same time. It hasn't been easy. I'm lucky the zombies are slow. They are raised from the dead by this guy who looks human, but he has glowing eyes." I ponder what she says, thinking about how to defeat someone who raises the dead for a living.

I tell Clarissa to stay there while I check for any remaining villagers. "They might be able to help us." I add. I walk away, and start to look for the living. I collect some potatoes from a garden, and plant another one in the ground in place of the old group. I also take some wheat and replant the seeds. I have another full meal, and Clarissa could use the food as well. I continue searching the houses, and find a single Villager. He is a young man, and holds a sharpened stick.

He points it at me and glares. "Stay away if you want to live. I have no need of your help, *human!*" He shouts. I ignore him, looking around the shack, and see a door hidden in the wall. "You didn't hide that door very well, did you?" I query.

He lunges at me with the stick, and I dodge. He's shouting again, screaming incoherently, in both rage and fear. Suddenly, a voice shouts "STOP! Anton, control yourself! If you cannot hem your anger, then I will hem it for you!" an adult Villager is red faced and shaking. Apparently, he was a librarian, although not many librarians wield a staff with a crystal on the top.

I realize that even though he is dressed like a librarian, he is actually a priest for the church. Anton is humbled by presence of the priest, and is muttering apologies. "Priest, don't be hard on him. I might have provoked him with my presence and wording. Forgive me." I said to the priest, falling to one knee. The rest of my afternoon went smoothly after that.

The priest gave me full rein in the village, saying I could take whatever crops that I wanted. I took little, and replanted what I could. I had no intention of leaving them with no food.

I went back to Clarissa, and saw how badly she needed food. It appeared she had been scratching the ground around her for whatever crumbs she could find. I pitied her. She must have been unable to eat for days at a time.

Wordlessly, I gave her another potato and loaf of bread. She eagerly grabbed them, glancing at me. "Thanks. I'm sorry to be a drag on your food supplies." I looked at her and shook my head. "You aren't being a drag on my supplies. I am an amazing forager, and for the last human on the world besides me, I am happy to share. If you want to repay me, however, you can do me a favor and show me how to make myself invisible. That is a pretty neat trick you have." "For that you need a potion of invisibility. I have two more, and then some splash potions of invisibility. The splash ones do just what you expect, and spew the potion everywhere. The effects last for about eight minutes, and make us completely invisible, magic or no magic. We could beat anything. However, it's easy to forget that even if you are invisible, you can't just let an arrow fly through you. You still make noise and have to dodge."

"I see. However, it is still a valuable ability. Next time we end up facing a horde, we should probably use it." "Agreed. Next time a horde appears, we will be ready. Where did you learn to fight like that anyways?" She asked me with a mildly curious tone. "I learned by myself. I just acted in those fights. If you want me to teach you, I can. However, you have to do me a favor in return." She looked at me questioningly. I glanced at her and laughed.

"You'll have to teach me how to craft potions, if you know how. If not, then I'll just teach you for free." She looks at me with confusion. "How did you know I had the ability to make potions?" She asked. I give her a glowering look. "Don't try and tell me a Villager gave you all those invisibility potions. They're too selfish. And who else would get you the potions?" I replied in a mildly annoyed tone.

"A witch would, if you got on their good side. A witch can give you lots of stuff. Um, mostly potions, but also good brewing recipes. I was a witch's disciple for a year. Three years later: here I am, with a pack full of potions and the abilities needed to enchant weapons, tools, and armor. However, I still need enchanted books to enchant anything. Oh, and an anvil, of course. Without those, I'm powerless." She explained all of this in a monotone, and upon looking at her face, I saw she was exhausted.

“Maybe we should rest. It is almost nighttime, and you look terrible. I have some wool; we can make some beds if we get some wood. We need the resources anyways. I have an iron axe; I can get the wood while you sit down and eat if you need to. Do you? Need to eat, I mean.” I looked at her carefully.

She hesitated, and then said “No, I’m fine. If you have a pickaxe, you could probably get some cobblestone for a furnace, and I can make it. I only need eight pieces. I can cook some potatoes, and if we can get a chicken, we should have a half decent meal tonight. You need to hurry though, because we don’t have much time left before the monsters start becoming active again. If we are sleeping, we will be safe. The monsters apparently don’t mind us being alive if we stay asleep.” I thought about it, and then remembered how to craft a pick and shovel from wood, stone or iron. “I’ll cut down two trees, and then get your cobblestone. You need eight pieces, right?” I asked. She nodded, and I went to do my job.

When I came back with about seventeen logs, and the requested eight pieces of cobblestone, I used some of the logs to make wooden planks, and then made a crafting bench and beds. The rest I left to her while I set up a temporary base.

When I was finished setting up, she had the furnace created and was starting a fire with one of the logs. I gave her an arrow, and pointed to a chicken a few dozen feet away. Then I handed her the bow, and stood back. She glared at me, and then knocked the arrow, aimed, and let loose. The chicken was hit, and killed, in a moment.

Clarissa had hit the poor avian groundling in the skull, and had killed it without causing it pain. I ran over, then butchered and prepared the meat. Clarissa cooked it in her new furnace, and we shared the meat, another loaf of bread, and two potatoes.

“Collect the feathers,” Clarissa told me. “We can get some flint from digging in gravel, and use that and sticks to make some extra arrows. You can never have too many. And we need too many.” She added. I nodded, then went over to the chicken’s remains, and collected some of the feathers.

I had seen some gravel on my way here, and decided to go there. I used a wooden shovel, and gathered about five pieces of flint. I used the flint, feathers, and sticks in my pack to craft some more arrows, and soon had a bundle of arrows. I gave some to Clarissa and crafted another bow for her to use, using some sticks and some string that I had collected from breaking spiders webs.

Once we had both been outfitted with about fifteen arrows each and a good bow, we set our weapons on the ground, and got in the beds.

When the zombies, creepers and spiders became active again, they ignored us, and went past us. When day came again, many of the zombies erupted in flames. As they burned to death, the rest hid in the shade of the trees, and many tried to chase us before combusting.

Surprisingly, none of the zombies left ashes or bones. Instead, everything melted into the ground, where suddenly, flowers and grass grew.

“Wherever the mobs die, they seem to fertilize the ground. That’s just... odd.” I remarked. Clarissa nodded, saying “When evil dies, beauty is born. That is the way of things. And that is also why I’m fighting. Whenever I kill a zombie, slay a spider, detonate a creeper, I remember that I’m not doing this just to survive, I am doing this to protect others and give back to the earth what I took from it.” I think about her words as we walk.

Why was I fighting the invasion, when I could have just stayed at home? It would have been so easy to just ignore it... maybe the creeper that destroyed my home wouldn’t have attacked me and would have just ignored me instead... but could I have really just hidden in my house from the invasion, or would the man with glowing eyes have killed me anyways, to make one more soulless beast for his deadly army? I didn’t want to think about it anymore. Instead, I concentrated on collecting the beds, furnace, and workbench, and headed off.

We had no particular direction to go in, but we followed the map and compass as well as possible, and mostly stayed on the correct path. We talked on the way, told each other jokes, and had a good time.

We met a creeper, but Clarissa turned invisible and blew it up by punching it in the back, and jumping away. It looked at me with this extremely angry look, then blew up and created a small crater. Later on, we met another one. Clarissa wanted to attack it again, but I wanted to get this one. So I snuck up behind it, and smacked it with the flat side of *Skysplitter*. The creeper fell over, unconscious. Then it melted into the ground!

In its place was a small pile of gunpowder. I could use sand and gunpowder to make explosives, and throw lit TNT at the monsters. That would provide some interesting nighttime fireworks.

So I collected the gunpowder, stored it, and told Clarissa about my plan. She looked interested, and said that we could use the potions and the TNT together, and plant lit TNT on the ground around the monsters.

We started walking again, and came across a giant crack in the ground. Moans, hisses, and the sounds of minor explosions wafted up from below. The crack was very long, so we began to build a bridge. We went to the trees nearby, gathered wood, made some wooden slabs, and started to place them in a bridge to the other side of the chasm.

I heard a strange clanking sound, and I looked at Clarissa for answers. She shrugged, and then continued placing slabs. I heard a weird plucking noise, then a whizzing noise, and then Clarissa got hit by an arrow! She stumbled back, grimacing

in pain, and ripped the protruding arrow from her thigh. Another arrow came and hit me in the arm! I wasn't as fortunate as Clarissa, and I fell off of our bridge!

The fall wasn't very long, due to a rocky outcropping. Still, I felt my ribs crack on impact. "Steve!" Clarissa yelled. "STEVE!!! Where are you?" She added. "I'm alright for now!" I spoke through gritted teeth; I was trying to pull out the arrow in my arm. "I just need to climb back up and clean up this wound." I consoled her as well as I could, but she was still hysterical. "Just finish the bridge, I'll be up soon!" I called out to her with what little strength I had left; I was falling unconscious from the fall and the arrow combined. Then I saw my attacker: a skeleton taller than me!

It had chainmail armor on, and a glowing bow was clutched in its fleshless fingers. The wood of the bow crackled with raw power, and I scrambled back in fear.

The skeleton knocked an arrow to the bowstring and pulled back on it. The arrow flew towards my head, but I rolled out of the way. Another arrow was slowly knocked, and the bowstring was pulled back again. But before the long dead monstrosity could fire, a glowing bottle with bright red fluid fell from the bridge above. It landed on the skeleton's head and exploded, covering the monster with the liquid from the bottle. The mouth of the skeleton opened and it screamed in pain. Another potion was flung down, and this one had green fluid in it. This one too had a good aim, and this one made the skeleton fall over the edge of the outcropping.

In its pain, however, the skeleton had dropped its bow. I picked it up, and discarded my old one; this new bow would do much better. It had not been fired much, besides the three fired at me and Clarissa. Mine, however, had been used for a long time, and had some cracks running up the wooden length.

"You were the thrower, I assume, Clarissa?" I asked at length. "Well, who else?" she grumbled. "I just used a potion of harming and a potion of poison on that skeleton; it should have died from the harming one! That is the last time I try and use nothing but splash potions. They disappear way too quickly. All I have left is two invisibility potions, not counting the three splash potions; two dozen harming potions, all splash; five splash poison potions; and one water breathing, splash. I am not doing you any more potions related favors until you find a way to stop nearly dying!" she ranted.

I just gaped at her, slowly taking in the number of potions in her pack. She had five invisibility, twenty four harming, five poisons, and one water breathing potion?! And she called that an "all that I have left" scenario? I quickly grew to thinking she was senile as I dug a path out of the ravine.

When I got out, the bridge was complete, so I strengthened it with cobblestone on the sides and bottom, and created railings, just in case more skeletons arrived. We lit it up with torches, and left again.

We kept on lighting things up with torches, in order to keep our path distinguishable. We intended to head back to our old homes later, if there was a home to get back to. I quickly put that thought out of my head. There *had* to be a home to return to. For if there wasn't a home, why return? What did I fight for?

Freedom. If I didn't help end this war, I would never be free of the monsters, or the guilt. Not just guilt for myself, but also for everybody that I didn't try to help. I fought because it was the right thing to do. With that in mind, and my mind at ease for the moment, I looked down at the map and compass to see how far it was to the next village.

I noticed a strange marking at the upper-left hand corner. I looked closer, not knowing what to expect. I noticed Clarissa was a ways ahead of me, and then noticed that I was no longer walking. "Wait up!" I called. "I found something on the map." She didn't respond. I noticed that she was walking as though in a trance. I ran to catch up to her. "Hey! Didn't you hear me? I found something on the map that I wanted you to..." I trailed off. There was a dim light in her eyes, and her face was slack-jawed.

I waved my hand in front of her face, hoping to elicit a response. Her normally healthy skin was pale, and she was shivering slightly. "Clarissa?" I asked tentatively. I touched her shoulder, to no effect. I walked in front of her, but she stepped around me. I grabbed her arms, and she started screaming. Not in pain, but in fury and frustration. I held her down, hoping to at least keep her from hurting herself. I looked in the direction of her gaze, and saw a tall, black...*thing*. It was standing perfectly still, and violet particles appeared in the air around it.

I quickly looked away, guessing that this creature was the cause of Clarissa's condition. However, I felt the powerful urge to look back at this creature. When I did, the stick figure looked around towards us, probably because of Clarissa's screaming. We locked eyes. The monsters glowing eyes were the same shade of violet as the particles raining down around it.

Suddenly, the creature started shaking, its mouth gaping at me, and its face contorted in anger. Then it vanished! I heard a strange sucking noise, and then another, from directly behind us. I swept around, in time to see a clawed hand swinging towards me. As though in slow motion, I drew *Skysplitter*, swung at the hand, and severed it at the wrist. Another sucking noise and the monster vanished. It reappeared beside me, lunging forwards with a vicious attack. I grabbed *Nightfury* and stabbed the creature in the gut. The monster screamed and started teleporting all over the place. For a moment, all that I could hear was that terrible sucking noise. Then it stopped.

I looked around, wondering where it was. Then I felt a weak hand on my arm. "Clarissa! What happened to you? And what was that thing?" She was drenched in sweat, freezing cold, and grabbing fistfuls of my shirt. "The Enderman. Where is the

Enderman?" She repeated that over and over again, not really listening to anything I said, until I grabbed her, and forced her to look at me, saying "Let it go. Let it go. Clarissa, relax!"

She was doing anything but relaxing. I forcibly slapped her, not hard enough to hurt her, but definitely enough to get her attention on me. "You hit me! What the heck was..." she trailed off, suddenly realizing why I had whacked her in the cheek in the first place. "Oh my God. Oh my God. Where is that thing? Did you kill it?! Tell me!" She started glancing around furtively. "Yes, I killed it. Calm down, you're safe. It's gone!" "Are you sure?" "Yes! I stuck it with *Nightfury*! It got burned to death, so you can calm down now!"

After that, she visibly relaxed. "That was an Enderman, the deadliest thing you could fight out here. Fire, however, kills it easily." That explained a lot. I set up the beds again, and we slept for the night. In the morning, I glanced over at Clarissa. She seemed fine, and was checking the number of potions she had. We set off after a decent sized breakfast, and kept on going the way we had been originally.

I looked down at the map, and stared at the strange sigil that was in the upper-left hand corner. "Clarissa, come and take a look at this sigil. Can you read this?" I waited patiently while she studied it. "It says humans, but it doesn't say where. This map of yours is weird. Where did you find it again?" In a village that had been destroyed. Right before I met you. Same place I found *Nightfury*. It was in a hidden hole in the ceiling. Why?"

"Because it says humans, but doesn't have directions to them. It has led you successfully to two villages, or just one, whichever it is. And both of those villages were under attack or destroyed when you got there. And we are staying on the path that I myself had been following in the first place. So I am wondering if we are following the same map as the mobs might be, or if this is all just coincidence. You pick. I'll keep on stabbing zom's until you have."

It did seem like an incredible coincidence. So we speculated on whether or not the human sigil was over the place the humans might be located, if there were any, or if the sigil was just saying the map was made by humans. It made no sense at all.

We decided to head to the strange sigil's location on the map, and decided to seek out the village on our general path, to see if any information could be imparted, if the village had survived the invasion. The trip was uneventful. The village was not even there, just a flat area of stone and dirt. We kept on walking, until we reached the area the sigil was located at, roughly anyways.

There was a huge stone castle, shaped like the sigil! There was a huge piston powered gate, and you could hear a huge clamor inside that gate. We approached

warily, and drew our weapons. The gate snapped open, bringing a clear vision of the inside of the castle.

There were hundreds of humans, like us, in leather, iron, chainmail, and diamond armor. All had a diamond sword that glowed like a violet star. All the swords were pointed at us. I fell to my knees out of pure awe, which only heightened as a man in a full suit of golden armor stepped from behind the ranks of soldiers. No, not stepped, but rode, for he was on a pure-white horse, clad in gold like he was. A golden sword hung at the man's waist, somehow managing to outshine all the others. I realized that this man, he who stood above all the others, must be a king, or at least a leader of some type. And he was staring right at me.

"Lower your blades, men. These are allies. Welcome, to Fort Haven! I trust you are able to fight?" He queried. "Yes, fairly well enough. We have dispatched many undead, as well as some spiders, and an Enderman."

This statement brought looks of astonishment to the faces of the men around us. "What is your name, fellow human? And who is your companion?" The king asked politely. I answered with politeness, still fearing the many blades of those before us. "Steve is my name, my Lord. And this is Clarissa. She has some skill with potions, as well as enchantment of items."

The king looked interested in this fact, and turned his attention to Clarissa. "Skill with potions, and enchanting? None of my men know how to work an anvil, or use an enchantment table. Will you teach us?" Clarissa looked astonished at the offer. "Teach all of you? I would need books, enchanted ones, and time. Surely you don't have enough resources for me to successfully teach your entire castle?" She asked. "Not the whole castle, of course, just a decent-sized group of people. That way, those who do not know can go to others for help." Clarissa looked comforted by this fact. "I would be honored to do so. However, if I may ask, if you don't know how to enchant items, why do you have such strongly enchanted swords and armor?" This seemed like a sensible question to me, and apparently the king agreed.

"Relics of the previous war are common in the ground around the castle. These are perfect examples of that. This way, we have simply hunted for relics in the ground to equip our troops, and in the mine, we have enough resources at our disposal, so we can build anything we need to survive. Now enter! Many people will want to meet two new humans, and teach you our way of life. Come with me, and I personally will give you the castle tour! Also, we may assign you a job that you find of interest. Follow me!" And with that, the king got off his horse, handed the reins to an attendant, and started off. We followed, accompanied by two guards. I thought that we were being warned not to cause any trouble, but then the pair of guards split away from us, heading down separate corridors. Paying them no more heed, we continued following the king, as he led us through various corridors, and talking cheerfully.

They led a very good life in Fort Haven that much was for certain. Everybody greeted the king with bright spirits, and soldiers patrolled regularly, hands on the diamond hilts of their swords. Our tour was paused fairly frequently, as messengers from all corners of the castle came with reports.

We met the local bakers, chefs, and butchers, as well as horse tamers, and even dragon tamers. The dragons were the size and weight of horses, and could carry men easily. They had rather large saddles, as well as teeth. The saddle was large so that the dragon could carry two fully armored men, one to steer, the other to fire arrows or swing a sword. To prove their tamed natures, the king got on top of one, a blue dragon with beige wings, and jumped into the sky with unimaginable speed. Then he landed, and the tour was continued.

We went inside armories, where I picked an excellent set of leather armor, and a dagger similar to Clarissa's. Clarissa did the same, and we left the armory feeling much better about our chances in battle.

We found our rooms, and each of us got a map of the castle, so we knew where everything was. We were also given an optional schedule, which included weapons practice, battle classes, and other interesting things to do. Clarissa's was different than mine, as hers included enchantment classes, where she would teach people with the highest chances of being able to enchant. Mine had dragon riding classes, instead of enchanting, and that really got me excited. Riding a dragon?? *Me??* It seemed almost too good to be true. I could either steer, or shoot arrows into the skulls of my enemies. Swinging my swords from dragon's back sounded exciting as well.

Suddenly, alarms began sounding from the direction of the mine, followed by shouts and screams of fear. I turned to the king, saying "What's happening in the mine? Is it an invasion?" The king was as pale as a man can get, and he was trembling. He no longer looked like a shining king, leader of the last of the human race. He looked like a scared man, old and defenseless. "This makes no sense. How did monsters get inside the mine without us noticing? We have the entrance inside the fort! How could this happen?" He repeated, as though hoping that repetition might bring answers.

"How far does the mine go out, and in which direction?" I asked, hoping to make sense of it all. "It extends out the way you came, and very far. But why does that matter? What do you know, Steve?" He queried, regaining his confident manner. My theory was confirmed, at least partially. "We crossed a ravine on the way here. If this mine extends as far as I think it does, then you might have tapped into that ravine. I almost died trying to build a bridge across the gap. That ravine went very deep, and very far. Your miners might be inadvertently responsible for the invasion." I said. The king looked thoughtful, and then called out "To the mine! TO THE MINE! THE INVASION IS FROM THERE, ARM YOURSELVES AND FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM AND SURVIVAL! FIGHT! GET TO THE MINE!" Several hundred troops gathered weapons of

every material: wood, stone, iron, diamond. The gold, apparently, was reserved for those in the position of king.

The armor, too, was collected from all of those other materials (except for wood, obviously (leather replaced it)), except stone armor had never been made because it was far too heavy and cracked too easily. So chainmail was developed to provide lightweight armor that was stronger than leather. At least, that's what I had been told. The War had been a touchy subject with my Villager mentors. My asking questions about The War had also gotten me troubled glances from the Villagers. Now I understood why.

All of that aside, I was almost to the mine, with no armor, and two swords. A horde of every monster imaginable was pouring in, creepers detonating each other in chains, destroying the houses, and damaging the fort. I grabbed both of my swords at once, and took it upon myself to defend my new home. This was going to be ugly, and I was going to be at the head of these troops, fighting for my new king, fighting for and with my fellow humans. The only thing that I lacked was armor, and Clarissa. I whispered to the soldiers near me, "Stay back for now, and let me string them out. Take on any that get behind me. Let me fight these demons alone for now. Tell the others." The soldiers looked uncertain, then told the others and formed ranks into a wall-like formation. They spread out to cover all of the exits, and prepared for battle.

One of them grabbed my arm and said "Are you insane? It looks like you're on a suicide mission!" I answered as honestly as I could: "Not really."

I let out a war cry, and charged into the mine, killing anything in my way. Creepers were detonated harmlessly, zombies were diced, and skeletons were hit with their own deflected arrows. Spiders dropped from everywhere, and were sliced in two.

Then I was in the mine, and the only light came from the torches. I spun, leaped and flipped in midair, blocked swords that were held by some of the zombies, and flung those same swords with pinpoint accuracy.

Nightfury provided some extra light with burning mobs, and *Skysplitter* batted claws away, and then sliced their owners to pieces. I started jumping from wall to wall, bouncing back and forth and spinning in full circles as I went.

A new color of light spread through the mine, a pure and clean white light, but this was replaced with a green like summer leaves. Then they both mixed, creating a purifying halo around me, speeding my feet, making my arms swifter to parry and strike, and allowing me to dispatch enemies with a new kind of deadly combat. I became like a one man army, and nothing could touch me, but I could slay anything. I felt like a god, powerful enough to break worlds, and create them.

I jumped straight up, spinning as I did, and tucked my arms in close to my body, but pointing down and slightly away from me on both sides, and remained spinning for several seconds, before falling to my feet, sweeping the legs out from under the Enderman in front of me, slicing his ribs in half, and then swiping my sword through his skull and down to his feet.

My eyes glowed, lightning arced up my arms, and my feet were an

indistinguishable blur. Nothing escaped my wrath, and my enemies fled at the sight of me. The creepers tried desperately to detonate before being butchered, but failed miserably.

Before long, I was at the Ravine, and all of the monsters had fled down to the pits where they had crawled from. I knew what to do, and how to do it, instinctively. I swept my arm across the entrance, and stone formed where it passed. With the entrance sealed, I left for the fort.

As I walked, the glow faded, the lightning fled to the ground, and my strength faded. Before long, I felt perfectly normal again, and the trek back took a long time. While I walked, I looked at the carnage that I had produced. Blood was spattered everywhere, but no bodies were laying on the ground, only various items, such as dark pearls, swords, bits of rotten flesh, gunpowder, bows, arrows, and various bits of armor. I collected the pearls, gunpowder, and arrows, and suddenly grew angry at myself. I had taken a vow long ago to never kill. Now, that oath was in miniscule pieces, and I was the only one responsible.

I threw the pearl in my hand, and it sailed far before cracking on the ground. In an instant, I was standing where the pearl had fallen. I looked back quickly, to confirm that I had indeed just teleported. I could see where my footprints stopped abruptly, and where the loot from the battle started becoming more liberal on the ground. This got me thinking, and soon I was throwing pearls every time I wanted to move forward, and soon I was back at the fort.

The soldiers were dumbfounded that I had come back unscathed, and stepped aside mutely as I walked by. I found the king, and told him what I had done. Of course, he was shocked even more than his troops, but then the shock vanished, and a troubled look came to his features. He led me to the library, and took a very old book from the shelves. The king showed me a particular story in the book, about a previous king who had been believed to have arcane powers, similar to those that I had wielded in the mine. His name was Steve, and the description was a mirror image of my face. "How can this be? I am no king, and this is but a story!"

The king outside the book shook his head, saying "This is no story; this was a prophecy for the previous war. And I saw it come true. This man, I saw him with my very own eyes, and I recognized you immediately when you came to my gates. You cannot remember your life before, can you?" He asked. I thought about what the king had said, mulling it over, then said "No, I cannot remember, but surely that doesn't mean that I have been king of humanity all along? It doesn't make sense!" the king sighed. "He told me, the day before he disappeared, that my rule would be short-lived. I had no idea what he meant at the time, but then I started thinking that he was saying that I would die early on in my rule, murdered by some minion of darkness. Now, now I know what he-you-meant. You were saying that you would return some day. And now you have. Can you not remember, Steve? Can you not remember the kingdom you ruled, the battles you fought, the demons you slayed? You are king, the one and only rightful king, and you were always destined for the throne! Take my crown, make my throne yours, and lead your people to their destiny!" The king declared.

He bowed suddenly, kneeling before me, and removed his crown, offering it up to me. I couldn't deny the truth of what he said, but I was no leader! I was the one to be led! From the very beginning, I had always needed help, always relied on others... but in battle, I shined, removing darkness from the lands ten to a dozen at a time. I reached out for the crown slowly, not sure if I should take it, and then took it gently from the former king's hand.

Suddenly, my mind was afire with images, my memories returning to me in an instant, and my previous life reclaiming me. I knew that I had only ever used *Skysplitter* before, but could not recall anything about *Nightfury*... but then I remembered, horribly. My worst enemy, Herobrine, had wielded that sword. Herobrine, the man with the glowing eyes, the one who lifted the dead from their graves and animated them, he who was now residing in a palace, at the bottom of a ravine, the same ravine that I had now visited twice... and on either side of his obsidian throne, a portal. One was upright, made of obsidian like the throne, and flickered with a violet, swirling light. The other, set in the floor, had blue, twinkling light in it.

Herobrine looked at me in the vision, then chuckled quietly to himself. "Well, well, well, if it isn't my good brother Steve come to have a peek at his lineage? Do you remember everything, brother? Do you remember how I beat you at every turn? Or have you failed to remember that?" I was enraged, shocked, fearful, and sad all at once. How dare he mock me? How could he be my brother, and part of my lineage? How could I beat him? And how had he turned so evil? "As I now recall, I beat you by so much that you were forced to not only siphon all the energy from your minions at once, but also then use it to teleport yourself away and destroy my memory. Oh yes-I remember now. I forced you to your knees on my own, without an army to back me up. And now you have found the guts to come back for Round Two. If you wish to step into the ring, *Brother*, then I will be happy to beat your teeth down your throat. I am coming for you." And with that, the vision ended. I came to on a bed in a pure white room. I saw Clarissa, asleep in her chair, and noticed that I was in restraints. "Clarissa. CLARISSA! HEY!" She jerked awake, whirling around, "Who what huh?" Then she noticed me. "Oh, you're awake! How are you feeling?" She looked closely at me, untying the restraints. "I'm fine, but why am I restrained?" She looked away, disturbed. "You were thrashing around, screaming, 'Brother, evil, brother, evil!' then you went comatose. We gave you a couple of healing potions, and let you rest. And now, you're up, so I can untie you! What fun..." She was obviously having trouble with the knots, but she stubbornly persisted, then finally just grabbed her dagger and swiped at them. I cried out, but her dagger only cut rope, not skin or clothing. Some of the ropes still had fibers holding them together, but I tore through those easily. Once I had steadied myself, I started towards the door. Clarissa looked like she wanted to protest, but then thought better of it. She knew I wouldn't want to stop. Then she appeared to remember something. "Wait here!" she said, sprinting out of the room. When she returned, she had the crown. She kneeled in front of me like the last king had. "Clarissa, just stand up. I don't feel like having servants made out of

my friends just because I'm suddenly royalty." She stood up as asked, slightly embarrassed, and haphazardly plopped the crown on my head, slightly askew. "There! Now you actually look like a king!" She proclaimed, giggling slightly. I was slightly struck by how familiar she looked, and not just from my recent memory. In the war, there had been a soldier in my army, the only female, who wore a dagger at her hip, and was my second in command. She had battled Herobrine with me the last time, stabbing him in the back while I prepared to behead him. Then Herobrine unleashed a cataclysmic blast, tearing apart our memories, and flinging us away from the battlefield. Both of our suits of armor were stripped away, leaving just our clothing, and Herobrine teleported to safety. We were flung miles, and I landed... *In a clearing of a forest, where my sword had fallen years later!* "Clarissa! Do you remember your whole life? Or is there a large blank portion, just before you wake up for the first time?" I asked her, gripping her shoulders. "Y-yes, why?" She asked, slightly frightened. I looked away, all of my new memories of her confirmed by her. "In my previous life, you were my second in command. We battled my brother, Herobrine, the one with the glowing eyes. He blew up the battlefield under us, and"-- "We were flung away from him, our memories being wiped and our armor ripped off. I still have the scar where shrapnel stabbed me in the stomach. And you were the last thing I thought of. I wanted to make sure you were okay..." she trailed off, leaving an awkward silence hanging in the air. "So, how was your landing?" She asked, scratching the back of her head embarrassedly. "On my butt, in a clearing. Yours?" I returned. "On my face, through a house. The witches hut, if you can believe it. That's why I became apprenticed, because she wanted me to fix her house. Then, she just wanted to have somebody to teach, so she used me as her basic encyclopedia. A year and a half later, my dagger slammed through her roof, and I have used it ever since I patched up the hole." She joked. I laughed with her, and we stood there for a second, each of us reveling in our own memories, long wished for, recently unlocked. I waited a moment, debating my decision, then went over and hugged her. She jumped slightly, but then hugged me back. We stayed that way for a moment longer, then separated. I looked at the spot where I had seen her impaled with a chunk of Herobrine's iron armor, and touched it, but quickly drew back. That wasn't needed. For now, we needed to fight my brother. We went to the horse stables, but after looking at several well suited for mountain climbing, decided we needed something better. Something... with wings, scales, claws and teeth. We needed a dragon. We left the stable owner, thanking him for his time, and continued on to the dragon pens. We had both ridden dragons in our previous lives, and this would be no different. We tried to pay for a golden dragon with black and blue accents, but the pen-keeper told us that if the dragon was damaged when we got back, we could pay for it then. We flew off to the ravine. The ride was amazing. Memories cannot bring back the bliss of flight, only the instructions of what to do when flying. But our bliss was short-lived. We remembered what we were flying for, and we were suddenly terrified. We arrived at the ravine in no time at all, and started to glide down. Clarissa drew her dagger, and I drew *Skysplitter*. We had both collected a shield and full suits of armor on our way out, and we were

armored with similar armor to that of our armor in the previous War. I had a golden helm, which swooped back, a diamond cuirass, leather leggings, and iron boots. Clarissa had a diamond cuirass like me, and leather leggings like me. But she had a diamond helmet, and leather boots. This was quieter than iron boots, although mine had had leather attached to the bottom before we left to keep it quiet. I commanded the dragon to dive, and we fell at amazing speeds, before I saw the light of the portals, and we swooped out of the dive, gliding down again. Herobrine looked up, saw the golden scales, and yelled up "So, you have come to kill me, brother? I dare you to try! I dare you to attack me, for I am the one with the army with me, not you, brother! FIGHT ME!" he screamed as loudly as he could. I told the dragon to return to the surface, and jumped down with Clarissa behind me. Weapons at the ready, we fell, gaining speed quickly, and falling freely. Suddenly, I felt myself falling into the well of power contained within me once more. My green and white aura shot out again, my eyes burned with life, and lightning crackled around my armor, turning it emerald green. The same lightning struck Clarissa, turning her armor the same shade of green as mine. We hit the ground with our feet pointed down, and our legs bent to absorb the shock. My aura protected us, though, so we hit the ground unharmed. We quickly gained our bearings, and dropped into our fighting stances. My brother drew the sword that had once been held at my hip, and swung it in arcs around him, warming up. Then he let it fall to his side, extended his arms slightly, and began to blur. His form darkened, and violet light began to emanate from him. The light darkened like his form, but then flickered, momentarily turning lighter, before changing back to darkness. But in that brief instant, I heard a voice in my head, screaming "*Brother! Help me! Don't let me die!*" before dying out. Herobrine shook himself, almost as if that voice had unwillingly come from his mind. I silently vowed to extinguish the evil inside of the shell of what had once been my brother. Before I could even finish the thought, however, My brother, with his dark purple aura and his swinging sword of fire and steel, charged me, winding up a severe sideswiping attack. I dodged what I could of the quick-in-succession swings, and blocked what I could not. Clarissa crept around behind him, hoping to stab him in the back with her dagger, but a blast of dark lightning shot from Herobrine, and she was thrown through the obsidian portal. She vanished from view, and I was horrified. But then that horror turned to a fury that I had never known, and I turned back to my brother. "That was unwise, brother." I stared him down, my glare penetrating to his very soul, where I saw... light? How was it possible that such a demonic person could have even a shred of decency left in them, let alone a soul that was yet untainted? I looked around his soul, and saw a demon. It was a dark dragon, black in the scales, and with glowing violet eyes. *He is possessed! Herobrine is not the fighter, but the dragon is!* I thought. I knew what I had to do. I jumped away from my possessed brother, and prepared to throw lightning at him. I charged up a huge bolt, and threw it, hitting him in the heart. Unprepared for this, he buckled, roaring in pain. Again and again, emerald lightning struck him, each time in the chest, and the dragon spirit residing in him. I knew that the roars of pain were more from him than from the dragon itself, but I still felt terrible. My brothers'

aura flickered again, and then went back to dark. Again, I heard the voice. *That's it, brother! Keep it occupied, while I try to break free. Every blast weakens it greatly, but you must make them count! Aim for the skull! Fry its brain from the inside out! END MY STRUGGLE, AND SET ME FREE!* The voice screamed. I felt empowered; each bolt striking the head like my brother had told me to. The creature's roars turned to screams, and soon my brother's aura was strobing with bands of white energy. A great beast rose from my brother's body, the dragon I had seen before, but much larger. This dragon filled the entire ravine's width, and was longer than ten of the dragons at Fort Haven. It roared at me once more, and fled to the portal set in the ground. My brother's aura was now pure white, clean and untainted by evil. Then it shifted to a beautiful shade of violet, mixed and interspersed with white, like mine. His head lifted, and his face was no longer fearsome. It was kind, it looked just like mine, and it had a look of wonder on it. Herobrine rose to his feet, looking at his body in awe. He had spent years without control of it, but he had seen everything. The dragon had been the one committing the atrocities all along, and the worst thing he had done was get picked by a dragon for its host. Herobrine picked up his fallen sword, placed it in his spine sheath, and stopped emitting his aura. I did the same, and we embraced. I had always wanted a brother, and here I had one, and I had just saved him from a demonic dragon. We stepped away from each other quickly, though, remembering Clarissa. We ran to the portal, igniting our auras again, and flew into the purple light. A sudden wave of nausea overcame me, and the whole world spun. Then it was over, and we were on our backs in a foreign landscape. At first we couldn't do anything but look around, unable to hear, feel, or even move anything but our eyes. But then the numbness cleared, and we stood up. I suddenly remembered Herobrine's armor-less state, and shot lightning at him. He shouted in surprise, but then laughed as emerald armor grew over his body. "Thanks, Steve. I thought you had gone nuts or something!" We laughed together, and then remembered Clarissa again. We hurried on, but Herobrine seemed to grow fearful, and stopped suddenly. "What's wrong, Herobrine? What is out here?" I asked. "Ghasts, which are huge floating creatures with tentacles dangling down. They shoot fireballs at you. Whither skeletons, which wield stone swords, and are taller than any man. Blazes, which also float, and create, well, blazes. When you kill them, they drop golden rods, and you can use those to create items... but there is one monster in particular that I fear, and that is the zombies that inhabit this place. Basically, they are pigs, but when they get struck by lightning, they become men with pig's features, and become zombified. They are in hordes down here, and they swarm to you as soon as you fight one of them. Or when one decides to fight you. They also wield golden swords with unrivaled skill. They are many, and vicious. They will not hesitate to kill us." He said. At the moment, I saw no such monsters, or any of any kind. This disturbed me, but more so, was the description of the pig men. They sounded rather disturbing. We continued on, despite Herobrine's warning, and tried to find Clarissa. We started hearing minute noises, which grew louder, and the noises sounded like those of open battle. We turned a corner in the red and lava filled environment, and saw the first of the horde of

enemies that Clarissa was now fighting. It seemed that every enemy in the dimension was upon her, spitting fire and swinging swords. Her emerald armor protected her from the worst of it, but not all. she was hacking and stabbing everything in reach, and dead pig men were all around her, but the skeletons, Ghosts and blazes were keeping her at bay. The blazes were mostly heads with wispy bodies, but golden bars rotating around them. The Ghosts were just as Herobrine said, pale and ghostlike, but HUGE. I shot an arrow at one, felling it instantly, but a blaze and a wither skeleton took its place. I shot more arrows, and some lightning, and then drew my sword. Herobrine did the same, and *Nightfury* and *Skysplitter* joined forces once more to do battle with evil. *Nightfury* did major damage to the monsters, but they were not harmed by fire. They were all immune to the fire their environment held in abundance. *Skysplitter* was doing more damage than *Nightfury*, but not by much. We shot lightning together, and dispatched enemies left, right, and center, but we could do nothing for Clarissa, who was still far ahead of us. "Steve, look!" Herobrine appeared to be trying to draw his power out, into a blast of energy. He succeeded, but not by much. A weak blip of energy spread away from him, hardly hurting the mobs it hit. They swarmed over him, causing me to lose sight of him. I fought my way over, and grabbed the arm that was emerging from the mass of enemies. "I am watching, and learning nothing but your overconfidence and stupidity! TELEPORT, YOU IDIOT!" I screamed at him. He did just that; he reappeared by Clarissa. He unleashed a great blast of energy, the same blast he had failed to emit before. All the mobs around him were vaporized, and he teleported again, this time taking Clarissa with him. He appeared next to me and said "We should leave here as soon as we can. If we remain in one spot for too long, then the stone beneath our feet will burst into flame. However, I think we should take some with us, as this stone never stops burning once it is lit. We can heat homes at no expense with it." Clarissa looked bewildered, looking from me to Herobrine in confusion. "He's our ally, deal with it. I'll tell you later!" I said. I quickly started mining away at the dark red stone, along with both Herobrine and Clarissa, and soon we had a sizable pile of Netherrack, as Herobrine called it. We gathered as much as we could, and headed for the portal. The monsters were slow, and couldn't catch up, so we just teleported over, and killed them all. or, rather, Herobrine and I killed them all. Clarissa ducked as we unleashed one final, cataclysmic blast, combining the colors of violet, jade, and white in a beautiful rainbow of destruction. Beautiful. Such a strange name for something so destructive. Still, it was an accurate name, so we continued on, towards the portal. We did take some of the blaze rods, as well as fire charges, which were dropped from the bodies of the Ghosts, and golden swords from the pig men. We ended up being very well laden, but since we could teleport, it didn't really matter, so we just teleported to an inch in front of the portal and stepped through. Again, we were struck by nausea, and again, it disappeared as soon as we were through the portal. I blasted the portal with lightning, destroying the frame, and the purple glow inside vanished. We felt a huge rush of air as the portal vanished, and we heard distant screams of fury. The second portal was still open. I blasted it with lightning, but the stones surrounding it were incredibly

resilient. All of the lightning was drawn into the center of each stone, which had a strange eye-like medallion in it. These medallions glowed brilliantly, and continued to absorb energy. they started pulsing, faster and faster, and then released all of the pent-up lightning into the sky, where it burned a hole in the clouds above us. I gave up, settling for covering the portal, and we called the dragon from the fort to us. It rose slowly once we had all gotten on, and we headed towards Fort Haven. The dragon flew slowly, probably because it had three fully armored human beings on top. I suddenly smacked myself. We could teleport! I told the others to stay here on the dragon, and teleported off to the gates. The soldiers were stunned to see me pop out of thin air, and immediately started attacking me. I created a shield around me, and shoved them back with just enough force to shove them about a foot away from me, and onto their backsides. "Stop!! It's me, Steve!" I shouted. I lowered my shield and my aura disappeared, so they could clearly see my face. I removed my helmet as well. I had forgotten that none of them had ever seen my aura up close, only from a great distance in the mineshaft. I chuckled lightly, thinking about the faces of the rest of the people in the castle if they saw my aura, and emerald armor. I would have to call a gathering somewhere to let everybody know about my arcane powers. Instead, I told the guards to please let their fellow soldiers know about my powers and to not attack anybody with a violet aura like that of their swords. I told them the short story of what had happened with Herobrine, and they left to tell the others. I made my armor disappear, and walked into the city to find the previous king. His name, as I had learned earlier, was Conrad, and I had to ask around a bit to find him. He was in the dragon stables, stroking one of the scaly residents. I recognized it as the one that Conrad had flown on the day we had arrived to show us how tame the dragons were. I opened my mouth to speak, but before I could, Conrad said "This dragon saved my life you know. I had fallen into a pit, with steep sides and deep water. I was drowning, for I had full iron armor on, and I couldn't swim very well at the time. Then Whitemare flew in, grabbed me by the shoulders, and pulled me out of there. We have been close friends ever since. Not only that, but this is the only dragon in the fort that was not born here. Whitemare was born out in the wild, and was never tamed. Why he saved me, I do not know. I do know this, though: We will live, fight, and die together. That much is for certain. Now, what do you need Steve?" He knew that my official title was now King but I had requested that everybody just call me Steve. Conrad had no problem with this, so he had no confusion on his part. Everybody else, though, had a fair bit of stuttering. I honestly didn't care about what they called me, so I just responded to either title. "I wanted you to know about Herobrine. As you know, we left to destroy the being that was the cause of this. We did. But," I said, as he had opened his mouth to say something, "We didn't kill Herobrine himself. My brother was possessed by a dark dragon, bigger than this castle. We defeated the dragon, which fled to it's home dimension, but the monsters are not yet defeated. I need to amass the armies of this city, and head into the portal that the dragon of the End fled through, for a final stand. My question for you is, will you fight with me?" I asked. He looked me in the eye for a moment, and then said, "I am getting old. But I am not too

old to swing a sword. I will fight for you, and with you, until the end. I will do this on one condition: I get to fly my dragon into the portal, and lead a squadron of other dragon riders, and provide air support for the foot-soldiers. I believe that I can be of the most use that way.” I nodded, saying “Of course you can. I will give you a squadron of twenty riders, and I will give you my personal type of armor. Observe.” I built my emerald armor over his form, and it moved like green lava with his every movement. I also armored his dragon, and he nodded gratefully. There need be no words here, because all was understood. I left the stables, and sent men to gather up the armies and send them to the center of the fort. I headed there myself, in time to hear the dragon that Clarissa and Herobrine land in the center of Fort Haven. I ran over to them, and noticed that Herobrine was coated in violet armor, the color of his aura. Apparently, he had learned how to craft his own armor from his aura, and had felt it necessary to get his own style of armor, rather than depend on me to get him armor. His armor had more flair to it, including a spike on each wrist that extended from his gauntlet, and a helmet that had a sleek, aerodynamic look to it. Also, his knuckles were studded with small spikes that would no doubt deal heavy damage to his enemies. I mentally noted to add my own flair to my armor, next time I went into battle. Clarissa was still wearing my emerald armor, so I made it disintegrate. She began to thank me, but the soldiers from all around the fort arrived. Many of them were too young to remember the Old War, but some of them remembered Herobrine and his role in it. They started forward, swords unsheathed, and I shoved them back, perhaps unnecessarily forcefully, with my powers. They looked on, confused, so I started talking. “I know most of you have no idea who this man is. For those of you who do know, he is on our side. I will explain in a moment. Those of you who did not serve in the Old War, you should listen carefully to what I have to say. The Old War killed many of the human race. The ones who were killed were then reanimated to fight us. I was the leader of the army that defended our fellow humans from the monsters you fight today. I fought many, whether it is creepers or skeletons, zombies, spiders, or Enderman. But no matter what you may think, these enemies CAN be beaten. They can fall, they can die, and they may come in hordes but WE WILL BEAT THEM! We may fight to our deaths, but we will NEVER surrender! I ask you to do one thing: fight! Fight with me, so that we may end this war forever! Fight with me, so that we will never live in fear again! And fight with me, for FREEDOM!” I shouted, rallying the others, who cried “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!” I spoke up again, and the others quieted. “This man who stands beside me, Herobrine, is my brother. He was the leader of the enemies in the Old War. Or, at least, so we thought. In reality, he was possessed by a dark dragon known as the dragon of the End, or the Ender Dragon. Earlier today, I defeated the Ender Dragon, and got it out of my brother. It fled, but is now in its own dimension. We need to enter that dimension, and kill that dragon. I can teleport all of you to the portal now, and give you all armor. Grab your swords, don’t bother with armor, and Herobrine and I will each take half of the forces here, outfit you with armor, and teleport you to the portal. Those of you who are dragon riders, find your mounts and go to Conrad, as he will be leading you through the portal

to provide air support to the troops on the ground. There are likely to be many enemies there, so prepare yourselves. Go! To arms!" I cried, sending them rushing to the weapons racks. Some of them got swords, some bows, some axes like those used in cutting down trees, and some grabbed nothing at all, preferring to use their hands to deal damage. Some, like Clarissa, grabbed daggers, and I noticed that many of these had robes instead of armor, which made me think about whether or not those were the people Clarissa had intended to teach. The troops divided themselves in half, and Herobrine and I began our work. We activated our powers, causing many to gasp in awe. Then we shot lightning from our fingertips, creating armor on all we hit. I added some extra bits to my armor, including small spikes on the backs of the cuirasses, and studded spikes on the fists like those on Herobrine's armor. I also added long, thin blades to the gauntlets, unlike the spikes that Herobrine had added, which were about half the length of mine and conical. I thought that the ones who preferred hand to hand combat would like those. I also made them detachable, for those who did not like them. Lastly, I made the helmets sweep back, and made them cover the majority of the men's faces. The soldiers looked on appreciatively, and some even gave me the thumbs-up. I noticed some on Herobrine's side doing the same to him. I noticed something vaguely important, and then said "Everybody link hands, so that we can teleport you. We all need to be touching. Get to it already!" I shouted in exasperation. Many of the men didn't want to touch the hand of another, and they only did so gingerly. I looked at them all, reduced from fully armored warriors to squeamish children scared of coodies. I used my powers to shove their hands together and hold them that way, and then teleported with my hand on the arm of the one nearest to me. I ended up in front of the portal, and jumped through without letting go of the man I had grabbed. The feeling of intense nausea gripped me, and I struggled not to vomit. My vision swam, and I closed my eyes. In seconds, which felt like years, I fell out of the portal and the side-effects of traveling between dimensions vanished. I stood up, unbound the men's hands with a wave of one of my own, and drew my sword. We were on a floating island, made of a strange, porous stone, in the middle of a purple void. Then Herobrine's forces turned up, on the other side of the island; apparently the portal teleported you to a random point on the island. Then I noticed what both of us were standing on. We both were on large platforms of obsidian, a volcanic glass that was nearly impossible to break. We were expected to be at either of these points, or these platforms were meant to be where the entities landed once they went through the portal. It was a trap! Suddenly, hundreds of blocks in the ground were pushed up and to the side, and monsters came pouring in from all angles. I vaguely noted that they were all Endermen, and then I was shooting lightning, swinging *Skysplitter*, and releasing small explosions. I noticed that the huge towers of obsidian dominating the island all had a strange spinning cube on top of them. I teleported to one, avoided it, and started shooting lightning down to the Endermen. Then I had an idea. I waved my hand, and Iron started forming in midair. It fell to the ground, in a tower, and I placed a sizable bolt of lightning onto the rod of Iron. It shot out in all directions, hitting everything, but the soldiers were protected by their emerald and violet armor. The

Endermen were not so lucky; they were all incinerated. The men relaxed, thinking the fight was now over. They were so wrong... Suddenly, a great roar pierced the ears of every man, woman, and dragon on the island. The black dragon had come to finish the fight that its minions had started. As the dragon flew down in a spiral towards us, fractured beams of light spiraled out of the rotating cubes on the tip of each obsidian tower. I noticed that the beams didn't seem to hurt the beast; rather, they seemed to make it stronger. I swung my sword at the cube next to me, thinking that it would break and stop spinning; Oh no. The cube exploded when I hit it. I went flying, and the dragon swooped down to attack me while I was vulnerable. I shot lightning at it, forcing it back, and continued to fall. I saw a spot that was devoid of my fellow humans, and aimed for it. My aura formed streaks of light behind me as I dived headfirst, flipping so that I would land feet first at the last second. I hit the ground with amazing force, creating an incredibly deep crater that was not necessarily very wide. I teleported out, and drew my bow. I had gone back to the ledge from the ravine that I had left my old bow on, grabbed the old one, and dropped the newer one into the ravine. The newer one had been used by a skeleton, and wasn't as familiar to me as the old bow was. I knocked an arrow to the string, and drew back. My aim would be better—I had been practicing with this bow for years, and a new bow would shift my aim. I aimed for one of the detonating cubes, and fired. The cube exploded, setting off a chain reaction, destroying several at once. There were many towers, some closer together than others. I aimed for the clusters, and blew large chunks of obsidian into the void. Only a few towers were left after the fifth shot, but the dragon had long since learned what I was doing, and swooped down at me again. I didn't know it was there until it grabbed me and threw me into the void. I teleported back, arrow knocked and ready, and shot one of the remaining cubes. The dragon was next to the cube I had selected, and was shoved sideways by the force of the explosion. I drew another arrow, and fired. Again, the dragon was shoved sideways, shards impaling its hide. I drew yet another arrow, and this time I sent a ball of emerald lightning to the tip of the arrow. I fired, this time directly at the dragon's eyes. I hit the Ender Dragon in the right eye, and the lightning in the arrowhead shocked its brain with potentially deadly force. The dragon careened for a moment, but then straightened out, soaring at me with great speed; I teleported away, onto the top of a tower that I had already cleared the cube from. The obsidian was hot under my boots, but I felt that I could hold this position for a minute or so. I drew back more lightning-charged arrows, lodging them in the skull, the stomach, anywhere that I could on the dragon's hide. I realized that I was running out of arrows too quickly, and started shooting lightning at the weak points, shoving the dragon back, teleporting to its back and stabbing it repeatedly with *Skysplitter*, and teleporting away again when the dragon tried biting me. I enraged it, taunting it, while Herobrine shot lightning and spikes from below. The soldiers on dragons shot arrows and flew their mounts close enough that the dragons could shoot fire, engulfing some parts of the Ender Dragon's body. The soldiers that weren't on dragons were either shooting spikes from launchers on their wrists that Herobrine had given them with their armor, or shooting arrows from the ground. This thing just

would not die though! Anything we hit the dragon with, it shrugged it off as best it could and kept flying, trying to kill Herobrine and myself. Every time it got close, though, we would either teleport ourselves or we would shoot thunderstorms of lightning at the dragon. I charged a sizeable ball of lightning in my hand, and spread it over my sword. I then teleported to the dragon's back yet again, and was met by a maw of shining teeth. I had used my trick too much, and the dragon had expected it. I quickly stabbed my sword through the upper palate, and released all of the lightning in one fatal strike. The dragon fell quickly, thrashing about in its death throes. All of that lightning had gone straight to the brain, causing an overload, and killing the dragon. I fell in freefall, and had to teleport to a tower before I hit the ground; I then teleported to Herobrine and Clarissa, and we all teleported to the dragon's corpse. It was no longer moving, and the former fierce glow in its eyes was gone. The dragon was clearly dead, and many of the soldiers celebrated in their victory. I didn't, because there was this nagging feeling of foreboding. I concentrated, and felt a small vibration from the stones beneath us. Suddenly, the dragon twitched. Its eyes were still dim, and it wasn't breathing, but it was moving. It slowly began to float upward like some demented balloon, and gaping wounds not there previously opened up on its skin. Light showed through the holes, and the dragon started to disintegrate one piece at a time. The light shone ever brighter, blinding some and causing others to look away. As the dragon finished disintegrating, a single, egg shaped stone stayed behind, falling to the ground. A portal formed directly underneath the spot where the dragon had died. Everybody started going through it, returning to the dimension they called home. I stayed behind, with Herobrine. We both knew what we had to do. We had to destroy this island, so that none of this could ever happen again. We both teleported to a different side of the island, and started ripping chunks off with our powers, and hurling them into the void. We shot lightning to loosen parts up, and shot the chunks again to launch them away. Obsidian was shattered, stone was crushed, and the island heaved. The portal was in danger of collapsing, but we had to completely destroy the island. So we ripped away the ground around the portal, and suspended it in midair. "I think this is good enough, don't you!?" Herobrine called. "Just about, Yeah!" I answered with a grin. We tore away a few more chunks, and headed for the portal. I grabbed a small, arm-length chunk of rock- 'Endstone', as I called it-and took it with me through the portal. After all, we might want something to remember this war by, so that mankind wouldn't forget. The nausea from going through portals gripped me again, and I shut my eyes and tried to ignore it. All at once, I was on the other side, Herobrine supporting me, and the army cheering. I looked at Clarissa, and saw that she looked immensely relieved. She must have been worrying about what had gone wrong, because we hadn't returned with the others. I walked over to her, hugged her, and told the soldiers nearby, "It's over." They all understood perfectly, and cheered. We got out of the ravine, which was still littered with monsters, and we all teleported back to the fort. We would be celebrating for days, I just knew it. "What are you going to do now?" Clarissa asked. I answered without a second thought. "Rebuild, if possible. We still have a lot of work to do..."