

To the next goal

On the first floor of the fort two bandits were chatting next to each other. Behind them was a locked wooden door and further inside awaited all the bandits that were scattered across the fort. Apparently they all decided to eat at the same time. With the right method Zen could trap them all in one swoop.

Still in a state of depression Zen felt no urge or sense in fighting since he was outnumbered 16 to 1. Around the corner and out of sight near the bandits Zen sat on the ground and tried to think. He looked around to give him ideas but nothing stirred his mind. One of the bandits around the corner was sitting in a chair, leaning on a wooden table with a lamp next to him, illuminating the small space around them.

At first Zen thought to take out that light and give him an attack of opportunity. He looked at the lamp and focused. From what looked like thin air, a thin cloud of ashes surrounded it and the light went off. This caused the bandits to stir at that sudden darkness but it didn't cause them deep alarm. That was the right moment.

Zen concentrated further and the ground under the two bandits began to morph from solid to liquid. Before they knew what was going on, they had already started sinking into the ground. They fidgeted and fought but were moments away from submerging. The female was about to let out a scream but her mouth was muffled by stone. Just before they were submerged Zen changed the ground again to solid and up to their top lips was covered. Paralyzed from the nose down, the bandits made no sound. The only noise they could make was a faint muffle which couldn't be heard from more than a few inches away, even in the quietest of rooms. At this point there was no point in hiding so Zen walked up to the table.

On it was the lamp which Zen relit. There he saw a few gold coins, a dagger, and to his luck a map of the area. With no pockets to carry them in Zen disintegrated all of it. Doing so, and now having it infused with his own dark matter capabilities. He duplicated the coins and made it flow from air like water. The map could also be duplicated for him to as many as he wanted whenever he wanted. Zen was pleased with this new trick he discovered and keep it to himself. Thankfully the bandits almost submerged didn't see his trick but they knew who their enemy was. Again they let out several faint attempts to scream and talk but it couldn't be heard.

Zen was now faced with a locked wooden door. He didn't want to risk checking the pockets of the bandits submerged in stone so he improvised. He looked at the keyhole and surrounded it with ashes. Silently the lock faded and the door opened. Zen opened it to a crack and saw all the bandits sitting at the table stuffing their faces, completely unaware of anything he just did.

The bandits varied. Some were tall and buff, others were skinny. There were even a few women in there whose voices overpowered the men in both a conversational tone and through laughing. Their armor also varied, the tallest one had thick armor with a giant weapon, a war hammer, a few battle scars and one blind eye. Others were equipped with bow and arrows, swords, and axes. Zen looked closely at some of them and noticed some magic enchantments they wore. This magic was on everything from jewelry, to weapons, to armor. However, Zen felt no magic radiating from the bandits themselves, only from the necromancer at the top of the fort.

The kitsune wasted no time in letting this golden opportunity pass. Zen focused and concentrated. While the bandits paid no mind to him, Zen looked at the floor under them. Same as before, Zen would turn the floor from solid to liquid just like he did with the other bandits and sink them. However, this was on a much larger scale. Zen sat behind the door and concentrated hard. It was a wide path in front of him that he had to cover. He closed his eyes and thought of his actions, taking a deep breath. The dark matter responded. A sea of ashes washed along the floor, under the door, and under the bandits. It camouflaged itself by changing its natural black color to the white and brown stone colors of the floor. It reached every bandit and slowly the solid floor morphed into a liquid.

Zen stood up and popped his head through the door. All the bandits were still occupied with eating and chatting over who killed or robbed the most people and got the most money out of it. Two however were just about to get up. That was his chance. Zen clutched his hands into a tight fist and slowly everything above the floor started sinking. Some were too drunk to realize it and sunk drinking rum. Others screamed in panic and tried to grab onto something. The two who were already leaving sunk as well but tried to grab a wall to hang onto. Zen saw this and made the walls sink with them. One of the bandits saw the kitsune and tried to fire an arrow at him quickly but the arrow hit the ground just before reaching Zen's ankle and sunk into the ground.

In addition to the bandits, the chairs, some walls, and even the table sunk. Just like before Zen stopped the moment before they were fully submerged with only their head, up to their nose, sticking out. A complete success!

Zen had ensnared all the bandits in the fort and some happiness returned to his previously depressed mood. Before going up the stairs he eyed everything. Making sure no one was left above ground. The bandits only let out annoyed and furious mumbles of anger but still not loud enough to hear at a distance. Zen proceeded up the stairs.

One more floor up stood the necromancer. In front of Zen was a wooden ladder that led to a wooden hatch on the ceiling. Zen created some x-ray goggles to see what the necromancer was doing. He was completely focused on his work; flipping through pages, holding up vials and mixing ingredients... fresh, anthro ingredients which made Zen immediately retract his eyes.