Righting the Wrongs

by cjpearson03

"Shoot down that bird!" An alchemist shouted from a window, shaking his old withered and weathered fist at the large eagle, who, only a moment ago, swept into his chambers, grabbed three potions from a rack, and made its way back at out the opening. Arrows flew at the bird from the fortress upon the Rock, but the eagle proved too nimble in the skies to be caught off guard by the projectiles.

It was not so much that the alchemist was terribly worried about the bird, but more that he did not particularly like being stolen from, but then, who does? Before long the bird was out of sight, leaving the old man to curse under his breath as he finished his lunch.

A hundred miles away, still far distant from the Fall River, the majestic eagle perched on a tree branch, resting itself above a medium-sized bag which hung by a strap from a lower branch. Looking around, side to side, the eagle then dropped the three potions into the bag below. Floating down from the branch, the bird spread its massive wings, and its bones began to crack and whine, until they became long slender arms. The eagle's head bucked and twisted until the feathers disappeared into a bald head. Soon the bird's body was replaced by the naked body of a young man, but that was what the bag was for.

"So stupid cold around here." H'Drin shivered as he quickly dressed. Finishing with his clothes, he placed his cap on his head and gave a smile. His hat, a gift from his father years ago, was a sort of trademark for the young man. And more importantly it covered his bald head.

"Ah, now that is much better." He looked down into the bag, which now only held the three potions and bits of food. H'Drin thought to himself that the trip had better have been worth it.

H'Drin, though an impetuous twenty-eight year old, was never fond of stealing, but desperate times indeed called for desperate measures. For weeks he snooped around the Rock, overhearing conversations about potions and cures and the like, until he found what he needed: Something that could take the bitterness from his village's water supply. Yes, he could have simply bought such a cure, but that would have taken money. Money that no one in the village had.

Perhaps they would have even given him the potion if he admitted that his village believed the corruption of the water supply came from hands of the m'teoulin, a brutal and

savage people, if indeed they could be called such. But how could he admit such a thing? To do so would be to admit that, though he was a prodigy in Shape Changing, he was a coward when it came to protecting his own. In short, he hid. When the m'teoulin came so many months ago, carrying off others, he hid in the form of a bird, perched upon a house, claiming afterwards that he did not know what had taken place.

But he did.

He saw it all.

He saw other men, weaker men, in body at least, killed as they tried to fight back. He saw women carted away into distant regions and children... The children. He could not even bring himself to think about the youth. Then, it seemed as a final injury, the monsters poisoned the water supply. More died by means of the tainted water than by the hands of the attackers. H'Drin shook his hand, waving the thought from his mind, silently wishing that he knew some form of mind sorcery to rid him of these memories.

It would have been faster to fly back to the High Hills, as the walk was well over hundreds of miles, but he heard stories of people who stayed too long in a non-human form. He shivered at the thought of being a bird forever, though the idea of forgetting he was ever human to begin with did seem, at his worst moments, an agreeable one. He rubbed his eyes. He always seemed to have trouble refocusing them after changing back to human.

Raising his hand to his brow in order to block the sun, he looked into the distance and gave an exhausted sigh, as though he could see every inch of the way he would have to take to get back to his village, but it was worth it, of course. Securing his bag and popping a small piece of loaf, now stale, into his mouth, he began his long journey home, not knowing what he would find along the way, or what he would find within the High Hills themselves.