

The Age of Death and Destruction (Part I)

Ten years have passed since the end of that age. Where once there was joy, there is now fear. Where once hope, now despair. Where once green lush lands, now blood soaked battlefields. Fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons and daughters all alike go forth to do their part. Some return, more do not. Beyond the reach of the safety of their tribes, their homes, there is only death and destruction.

The young join the ranks of the warriors with little fear of their own death for the whole of the tribe is wroth more than their single lives. One such group of young headstrong warriors wishes to become legends by stopping this endless bloodshed. On this day they have gathered at what remains of the settlement closest to Navisko. The warriors from Tempskron arrived first; Bakor the fighter the self-proclaimed leader, Paze a Mechanician and Manin a Pike man, Paze and Manin were brothers. They didn't have to wait long for Bakor's girlfriend Nefene to arrive. She was a priestess but a knight that the others did not recognize was following her. Bakor looked puzzlingly at his girlfriend.

"Who is this Nef?" Bakor said as he looked to the knight.

"This is Andor, I told him about the group and he wanted to join." Nefene spoke turning to Andor as she introduced him. Bakor gave Andor a cold stare but Andor smiled and nodded then repeated the same for Paze and Manin.

"I hope I'm not intruding I'm just looking for some adventure and after she mentioned what you hope to accomplish I couldn't simply stay behind, plus I couldn't let such a beautiful priestess travel here alone." Andor's smile never faded as he spoke, it even seemed to widen when he looked at Nefene, Bakor's blood started to boil.

"I don't see any reason you can't join us since the Mage in our group can't join us." Paze cut in hoping to prevent an outburst from Bakor.

"Yes that is too bad, his father Kigam won't let him out until he is more powerful, always making him study." Manin added letting Bakor settle, the smile was still full on Andor's face but at least he wasn't looking at Nefene anymore. Bakor did settle hoping to dismount the knight's proud stature.

"You don't know we wish to travel past Navisko into the lands that only veterans and the strongest have returned from." Bakor smiled just as wide.

"I do, I certainly do and I hope you know that the creatures there are even more powerful than anything you have seen or fought here since as the elders have said the portal is stronger there." Bakor's smile slipped slightly but he merely nodded before stepping over to his girlfriend.

"Why did you tell him?" He asked politely.

"It can't hurt having another member can it? Are you jealous?" She laughed brushed his cheek. Blushing he shook his head.

"Perhaps we should start heading for Navisko so that we can get there before nightfall, I'm sure you know what happens there at night Andor." Manin said as he raised his scythe to his shoulder.

"I surely do and I too agree that we get moving." Andor's face became serious for the first time since they met. The group started off toward their goal not sure exactly of what they were going to find but all confident. It was clear they were not going to make it to Navisko when the sun began to fall and shadows began to creep over the sand.

When they finally reached the high stones wall of Navisko it was already night. They entered the dark town that even during the day seemed deserted. It started as rumors that monsters appeared within the town walls but it was soon confirmed by anyone willing to wait until nightfall. The group walked carefully toward the center of the town marked by a fountain. They knew the monsters were around or they would be but they had little choice. The silence was abruptly broken as they heard footsteps approach them.

Small creatures with silver skin and smooth baldheads ran out toward them strangely turning pink before they attacked. Behind them much larger green monsters thick and bulky wielding long curved axes. Small bursts of ice were hurled at the warriors from a short monster with a very large nose.

Andor could hardly wait for the battle to begin; he actually rushed ahead tearing one of the currently pink monsters in half as well as relieving the arm of another close by. Spinning and pausing only a moment he made sure nothing had stepped in behind him. Spinning once again he came around to face a green monster, it raised its weapons above Andor's head but his weapon was faster. The sword only scrapped across the monsters hide but it cracked slightly and chipped away, it seemed to Andor that the monster was made of sand. The weapons descended but Andor only had to avoid one as he tried blocking the other with his sword. The weapons clashed and Andor's knee's nearly buckled but he managed to stay standing.

Manin spun splitting three silver creatures violently. He waited for the two green behemoths to approach as he concentrated on his next attack. Turning his scythe over in his hands he jammed it into the ground sending out a shockwave of cold that significantly slowed the two monsters. One had already raised its weapons but its attack was mostly useless now as Manin cleanly cut through its legs sending it shattering to the ground. The second creature started to regain its regular moment as Manin sliced it one, twice, three times before tapping it with his scythe causing the cracked and splits to meet and the monster to fall apart.

Bakor ran outward crushing and cutting the silver pests as he headed for the source of the ice. Seven creatures were throwing ice but having noticed Bakor rushing them, they all targeted him. Rolling away from the first wave he leapt over halving one of the thin creatures. The other six each threw another ball of ice, only two hit Bakor causing him to move faster. In one motion he beheaded a monster to his left before shifting back and ripping another open. The monster screamed as Bakor's axe nearly missed but managed to tear into its skin spilling its insides. Bakor took another hit but gave one just as hard as he kicked sending it rolling across the stone.

Nefene watched, she knew she wasn't a fighter, she knew she was more valuable to the group if she didn't waste any energy with useless fighting. Paze on the other hand was having a blast cracking his mace against the green monsters watching them fall to the ground in pieces, he didn't however like the ice that was clashing against his shield but his protective skills helped him deal with it. Three silver creatures faced him; in unison they raised their hands to their faces and stuck out what looked to be a tongues. Paze smirked before he reached for a bomb at his belt tossing it at them. As the explosion shredded them Paze stuck out his tongue.

As the numbers dwindled the group became more and more reckless almost showing off for each other. Nefene was the only one not having a good time; she knew it wouldn't always be this way. As the last monster crumbled, they regrouped.

"Well I don't think the blacksmith will open his doors till light shines upon it so maybe we should continue on." Andor said as he wiped the blood from his sword. Bakor watched Andor as he cleaned his weapon; he would let the blood dry on his weapon that night.

"I think we should move on as well, it's no safer here then there." Paze added as he kicked a silver monster whose head he had crushed. Nefene wanted to argue but she knew she was outnumbered. The group was soon walking out of Navisko just the opposite of where they had entered, leaving the stonewall and civilization behind. It was well known that beyond Navisko was the original location of the portal and that no towns or any settlements would be found there. Bakor thought it very strange that it was so quiet, after all this area should be more populated by monsters then any other. As his thought ended he wished it never occurred at all.

Growls and snarls surrounded them although their sources remained just on the edge of darkness. The group formed a circle and prepared for whatever was teasing them. Jumping out of the darkness were thin yellow skinned creatures, they snapped their jaws and arched their necks up sniffing the air. One of the monsters leaned to close to Andor so he took it upon himself to behead the beast starting the madness.

Bakor sliced one as another bit his armor, shaking it off he faced it only to be pushed from behind nearly falling. His axe tore the lower jaw from one as the other scratched at his back. He spun taking the creature in the middle splitting it before two more leapt at him nearly taking him down. His armor was all that was preventing him from taking serious bites. He ducked as a claw slashed above him; lashing out with his axe he tore the monsters legs away from under it.

Paze had problem so his own, he was surrounded and had little room for error. Reaching for a bomb at his belt he knew he didn't have many left but he need the distraction. Throwing the bomb he turned and rushed in the other direction. Reacting the yellow beasts that surrounded him moved in, the ones near the bomb were thrown and gutted. He clashed with the first creature that reached him smashing its gaping maw away and he used his shield to block slashes from others.

Andor was really enjoying the blood bath he cut and slashed and ducked and twirled all in a smooth motion that he knew must have looked magnificent. Any creature that came within reach found itself falling and bleeding from one or many wounds. If these things could look surprised then they certainly did not. He "danced" as he called it between the creatures felling them left and right, to himself, he was the greatest knight to never have been given that credit but he would more then earn it after this adventure.

Manin wasn't as crazy about battle as Andor but he did rather enjoy killing as many as six of these beasts with a single spin. He was both amused and worried about these weaker creatures, were they just fodder to weaken them? He let the thought pass as he came out of another spin watching another four yellow skinned monsters fall each in two different directions. He glanced back at Nefene who was just standing there with a look of hopelessness on her face.

Turning back he noticed that he didn't have any more creatures to slay, letting his scythe rest on the sand he let out a sigh and wondering what else he would face in battle on this journey. Nefene shook her head, these boys she thought, are reckless. The air was thick with the smell of blood but the sounds of battle were gone.

"That was certainly a rush wasn't it?" Andor said as he cleaned his blade and armor the best he could. Again Bakor watched the Knight clean his weapon and armor, he preferred to let it dry so that anything he faced be it man, beast or monster would know he had survived battle before.

"If you think a rush is almost being killed then yes." Paze said as he walked over to Bakor putting his hand on his shoulder. Bakor nodded then looked to Nefene.

"Are you alright Nef?" Bakor asked trying to sound as sincere as possible, even though he did care for her more than anything else in the world he found it hard to express it.

"I am." She said with a big bright smile. He half smiled back it seemed forced but his eyes told her what she needed to know that he loved her.

"I doubt it's a good idea to camp here." Manin said as he sat hard on the sand, the one area around them that wasn't soaked with blood.

"No it certainly wouldn't be a good idea to camp here, we shouldn't even rest here much longer." Paze said as he subconsciously played with a bomb at his belt.

"Alright lets keep moving them." Bakor said in a take-charge kind of way, he turned and started walking immediately stopping any arguments.

As they walked the darkness started to thin as the sun rose revealing only endless sand. On the horizon Bakor who was leading thought he saw something approaching them.

"Rest here a moment I think I see something coming." The others stopped but Manin and Paze came next to Bakor.

"Oh you mean that." Manin said as he pointed to something that looked like a man riding a horse but in an odd way.

"It doesn't seem right, there aren't any towns or villages around here and horses are very rare." Paze wondered if maybe there were people on the other side of this massive desert if there was another side. As the figure became clearer it began to slow and that is when they saw it for what it was.

"Its another damn monster!" Bakor yelled as he studied the odd creature, having the legs of a horse but the upper body of a man if it could be called that at all. The creature danced about in a circle glancing their way a few times before turning and running away even faster then before.

"I don't like this, I don't think any of these creatures travel alone." Paze said as he turned to see Nefene and Andor talking. He knew it would only be trouble if Bakor noticed, so he moved away to break the two up before Bakor's attention was brought away from the fleeing monster.

"Look over there, it looks like some old castle or something." Manin said looking over to their right. Everyone looked and saw that they had walked right past the ruins in the night never noticing them.

"Well let's head back and have a look then shall we, no use in chasing that damn creature out there." Andor said putting his hands on his hips and standing with pride.

Bakor glanced at Nefene who was looking at Andor's back, he felt his blood begin to rise but instead he only said.

"Alright lets go, maybe we can find something there."

He walked passed Andor making sure he arm hit his as he passed, Andor only fell in behind not giving Bakor what he really wanted. As they approached the ruins they noticed that all that was left were the walls of whatever it had once been, the floor hidden under the sand.

"Well there isn't much here." Paze said as he spun around taking in the whole area he stopped when a shadow caught his eye.

"What is it?" Manin asked noticing his brother stopping suddenly.

"I don't know I thought I saw a shadow behind that stone wall but it isn't there now." Taking a few steps forward Paze tried to look around the stones.

"You were turning its probably nothing." Manin added.

"Out here I don't believe anything can be nothing." Paze said turning to his brother with a worried look. Manin was about to wave him off when they heard a call.

Everyone jumped as the deep roar was combined many times over all around them. Pulling their weapons they looked for the source. From behind the stones stepped tall muscled one-eyed creatures, their skin was black their heads bald. The group spread out they knew they worked better if they had more room to move, especially Manin but Nefene stayed in the center for now.

Manin ducked as an oversized sword swung over his head, he was too low to swing his scythe otherwise he would have dropped that cyclops. Jumping up he slashed and split the head of the creature killing it. Even before he could land he was smashed by a shield, which sent him sprawling onto the sand. Getting up as fast as he could felt pain throughout his body, but he knew he had little time to whine over his sore body. Three cyclopes bore down on him as he readied himself, suddenly ones head exploded in a cloud of smoke and blood. Running to his side was his brother and best ally Paze.

"I saw you take a nasty hit there and since I wasn't busy myself I thought I'd help you out." Paze said light heartedly considering the situation.

Manin smiled and nodded as he ran forward dodging the downward swing of a cyclops. Passing the tall creature he ripped his scythe along its leg severing the tendon, the monster collapsed to its one good leg before its head fell to the sand. Paze took a blow hard but with his shield and special skills he hardly felt it. The cyclops took the mace hard in the eye causing it to painfully burst. It reared up and howled causing several others to turn, each died shortly thereafter from their attackers. Manin moved so his back was to his brother, the cyclops kept coming, moving from behind the stones.

"Maybe this is their home, their tribe?" Paze said as he grabbed for another bomb on his belt but released it on a second thought.

"Perhaps but that doesn't change much for us whether it is or isn't now does it?" Manin spoke as he looked about for his friends to see how they were fairing.

Andor sliced and ducked, moved and stabbed, it was a dance to him. He loved battle, how he could deal so much death and pain and feel none himself. He knew he was the most skilled of the group, he wondered what would have happened to Nefene had he not joined them. Two cyclopes who seemed to have more intelligence then most of their kind starting working together against Andor to kill him. He had little room to attack having to dodge not one but two swords at the same time.

For a moment he thought he might have to call for help but then he noticed a pattern. When one attacked the other always went to the inside where Andor had been dodging all these times. Waiting for the next attack he moved to the outside and as he predicted the other cyclops attacked inside leaving the other wide open. Stabbing upward into the monster's torso, it didn't die instantly but the pain caused it to fall and drop its weapon. The second cyclops attacked widely seemingly angry with the other's death which made it easy for Andor to kill by slicing first its leg then its stomach then its throat.

Nefene found herself the center of attention to a cyclops who had managed to get passed the others. It started at her for a moment before blinking and charging. Nefene let loose four sparks that hit the monster in its eye blinking it, it swung blindly while it blinked and tried to find Nefene again. She didn't want to have to use any of her skills for attacking because she would need all her energy if anyone got injured but she herself was in danger now. Blue lightning crackled from the sky striking five cyclopes around her, they shook for a moment before they fell smoking to the sand.

Bakor noticed the lightning and turned to see Nefene was ok, but his distraction almost got him killed when a cyclops thrust at him. Turning with hardly a moment to move he used his axe to deflect the attack. The clash of weapons caused Bakor to lose his balance, he fell backward onto the sand his grip never leaving the axe. The cyclops leaned over, Bakor played along hoping it would give him more time. The cyclops bent down looking at the small creature when its arm sprang forward and pain erupted in its head. The monster heaved backward grabbing its head as Bakor got to his feet, moving forward he planted his axe between the cyclops legs.

The remaining cyclops held their ground, they had a choice, fight to the death or flee. Time seemed to slow as the group caught their breath; the only sound for that moment was the heavy breathing. The silence was soon broken with sound in the distance, sound that was fast approaching. The cyclops didn't look worried and that made the others even tenser.

"Do you think that's more of them?" Paze said to Manin. No one could get a good look as to what was coming because of the ruins and dunes around them but above that they could see a cloud of sand.

"Only a horde of running animals could make a cloud that high." Manin said as he licked his dry cracked lips. The noise grew louder and the cyclops seemed to grow bolder. Two approached the group but both died rather quickly. Little over a dozen cyclops of the original number to attack now stood. The sound grew louder echoing filling the ruins as the fast approaching horde reached them. Around a high stonewall; the longest and most complete of them all came a green skinned half monster half horse creature. Bakor recognized it as what he had seen before, the thing that had fled.

The creature held a large sword in its grip, a fist of tight leathery green skin with black cracked fingernails. Its head had a single horn protruding upward out of its forehead, its mouth a large grin filled with long sharp yellow teeth. If seen from the sky it must have looked like water flowing into the ruins, for the horse-bodied monsters streamed into the area from all sides.

The cyclopes were pushed aside and one was even trampled to death by the horde. Manin and Paze lost site of the others as the monsters surrounded them.

"Sorry to say but this doesn't look good." Manin said as he flexed his now tightening shoulder.

He cursed under his breath for being so careless and getting hit like that. Paze knew that his brother was hurt, but he wasn't sure how badly, he didn't know if he could use his scythe as effectively as he had before.

"Does it ever brother?" Paze said renewing his defensive skills. He would have to be careful here, any wrong move could easily leave him open to an attack from behind.

Bakor stood near Nefene with Andor to her right. They couldn't see Manin or Paze and that worried them, they were no longer a full group.

"Nefene I think you should use some offense skills for this, it might help us more then healing later." Bakor said trying not to sound grim. Andor looked over to Bakor as saw he had a face of determination, he knew that determination was for Nefene's life not his own. Andor stepped over to Bakor as he turned.

"I can't live a day if she dies."

"They'll hold you to that." Andor replied turning to see Nefene looking around for the others.

"Who?"

"The Gods." Andor said as he turned and walked back to where he was before. Bakor was silent with thought for a moment but looking back at Nefene who noticed him and smiled.

It was calm, oddly the creatures had rushed in but now they waited, kicking sand, or snarling and making growling noises all around the warriors. The wind had died so the air was entirely silent. Suddenly with no known signal it began.

Bakor stood his ground as he was approached, they were large so they bumped and hit each other as they charged, he would have to use that against them. Jumping he called upon a skill that he rarely used, using his spiritual energy he created bursting flames when his weapon splashed into the sand. The flames burned four beasts causing the others behind to stop, clashing with others, some falling. Using this chaos he began slicing his way toward victory.

Andor ducked while the sword passed over his head, he separated one of the creature's legs in the process but didn't have anytime to finish it off. Rolling he avoided tow hooves meant to crush him. He found himself next to the flank of another monster; he tore its side open, his sword scratching across its ribs. Standing he moved blocking a weak attack then parried taking this ones leg as well, he found that to be the easiest way to stop them. He was hit from behind suddenly being thrust forward toward the waiting tip of a sword. Using his own sword he struck out and diverted the tip avoided being impaled, a few steps later he was steady again but the attackers were already upon him.

Manin tried to make his way toward his brother, he wasn't sure how they had been separated but that didn't matter at that moment. He spun and dodged and sliced and spun over and over again, he was starting to get dizzy. Paze wasn't as hard pressed but he didn't kill as fast as his brother either, the monsters were at least three thick all around him trying to get in. Blocking another attack he felt his arm starting to weaken, swinging his mace he broke another knee and as the monster fell another took its place. A short distance away he could see blue lighting raining down, he knew at least that Nefene was still alive.

Andor made his way to Nefene's side his armor was heavily dented and he was cut wherever his armor didn't cover.

"No I don't need healing I'm just covering you."

The number of dead around Nefene was quite impressive but Andor held that compliment back as she might not take it as so. She was getting tired as was apparent to him.

“Take a rest, I can take it from here.” Andor said with a genuine smile.

He took her arm and moved her quickly to a stonewall where he wouldn't have to worry about her back. Turning he found that already a crowd had gathered about them. Rushing forward as to take the fight away from Nefene he stabbed deeply into one creature as the others closed in.

Bakor was breathing heavy but he still had a lot of energy left, the creatures around him had stopped advancing for the moment. Those that had died were around him in almost a perfect circle mostly in two pieces, he even cut one creature down the middle. Guts and other innards were strewn about making it a little slippery. As if he had been hit he realized he had lost sight of Nefene. Turning quickly he looked all around, he thought he heard and even saw lighting before but now there was none. Suddenly all his energy was drained and he felt hopeless and lost, he had to find her.

Paze finally made a break in the attack and squeezed threw trying to find his brother. He moved toward another gathering of horse beasts just as he saw a figure launch into the air. He smirked, and thought to himself, even when he has a bad shoulder he can still do that. He ran jumping atop one of the creatures as if it were a real horse, as it turned its head to see what was on it, a mace shattered its vision. Manin saw his brother jump down from the dying creature and could help but laugh.

“Your crazy you know that?”

“No other way to live.” Paze said as he pulled the last bomb from his belt and threw it into a tight pack of monsters. The explosion killed at least five of the hideous things. Paze had failed to notice one of the monsters turning around as he threw the bomb so the kick to his back was entirely a surprise. The hit threw him more then a few feet face first into the sand. Manin noticed too late, just as the back legs of the creature kicked out and connected with his back. Before Paze even hit the sand the creature was dead. He tried to run to his brother side but a sword cut his arm causing him to stop and slice his scythe up the monsters front. Another sword tore at his back breaking the weakened armor.

Andor heard a wild scream and as he turned he saw Bakor burst through the horde. He was covered in blood some his own but most that of the enemy. When he saw Nefene on the wall with her eyes closed his own eyes widened and he ran forward. Andor wanted to call out that she was ok but he had to move fast to prevent the monsters in pursuit from reaching Bakor. As they passed each other Andor got a strong vibe from Bakor, ignoring it for the moment he engaged the enemies. Bakor reached the priestesses side and grabbed her arm, her eyes opened and she saw Bakor.

“Are you ok Nef, are you ok?” He spat out, some of the blood on his face dripping onto her white dress.

“I'm fine Bakor I was just resting are you ok?” She looked very worried. It was then he realized he must have looked almost dead.

“I'm fine don't...” He was about to say don't heal me when he felt the warmth enter his body and his energy return. He smiled to her and she nodded, they both knew what had to be done. Giving her a wink because a kiss at that time wouldn't be appropriate he rushed to Andor.

Manin reached his brother just in time as another creature had tried to trample his head. Turning him over he found that he was coming to but was still a little out of it.

"My back is killing me." He said as he sat up.

"Stay down for now I'll cover you but do try to hurry." It seemed that between these brothers even in near death situations they could never really be truly serious. Paze watched as his brother left him, he could see his back bleeding. Getting to his feet he felt just how hard he was hit, he was actually surprised he could stand, he knew that certain back injuries could leave you without the use of your legs. Manin slashed his scythe and his shoulder exploded in pain, letting go of the scythe with that hand he following through with the attack. It was certainly getting worse and he knew he couldn't swing his scythe effectively with only one arm.

Bakor and Andor didn't have a good first introduction but they both knew now that they each were very skilled warriors. They watched each other's back in turn and attacked together even sometimes when it was necessary.

"We make quite the team." Bakor said, which was strange for him.

"That we do my friend, that we do." Andor thought he had out classed any of them in battle by far but now he realized he and Bakor might even be equals, it would certainly be interesting to duel with him after all of this was over. Nefene was worried, the enemy was thinning and it seemed no more were coming but that didn't mean more weren't out there, everyone was in bad shape and she hadn't seen or heard anything from Paze or Manin.

"No!" Paze yelled as he saw his brother getting stabbed. He rushed forward but time seemed to stop, he tried to reach him but he could only see his brothers face, his eyes were wide and his mouth open. Manin pulled backward as the sword slide from his torso the pain was so intense that it disappeared as soon as the sword left his body. With the pain in his body gone he used his scythe to violently take the head of the creature that stabbed him. Carelessly though he never checked his back, another sword pierced his skin. Paze struck the creature and it withdrew its sword he bashed it till its head was only cracked bone and mashed innards. Manin was on his knees, blood flowing from him like a waterfall. His thoughts flew by, mostly of his brother, the times that spent together the times they talked about being great warriors, even returning from this adventure hero's.

Paze lifted his brother's head and saw that he was very pale.

"Paze...don't be a fool...get the others and flee...glory is only to those who know the risks...we didn't...we are all fools..." The life in Manin eyes slowly faded.

"Don't forget brother when you get to that life beyond this, tell our father that I miss him and I'll be there soon too." Paze's face was streaked with tears; his brother's body was now lifeless. Raising the flowing tears ceased, looking toward the future in his mind he saw nothing and he knew what that meant. Paze turned and judged that his friends were probably where he last saw them. With that goal fueling his existence he ran toward them right into the thickness of the enemy.

Andor saw a cyclops, strange he thought it must be the last of his kind in the area. The enemy was thinning now, but they were changing their tactics, having room to run they started charging them slicing out with their swords as they rush past. One such attack was bearing down on Bakor, he waited till the attack was upon him before he jumped the attack and cut the monster's arm off.

Andor had three on him that preferred close combat; they attacked in unison, which made it hard for him to block let alone attack. Just as he wanted to try an idea he had one of them fell, then the other, they hadn't expected an attack from the rear. Andor killed the last, when he noticed Paze.

"I thought you were dead." Andor noticed that Paze was alone, the lack of emotion in his face told him what he needed to know. Paze moved past Andor toward Nefene, she stood. As he reached her he realized what he originally wanted to do, kill her. He felt it was her fault for his brother's death; she wasn't there to heal him. His last words though, he didn't curse her for not being there, he cursed them all and himself for being foolish.

"I'm a fool, forgive me!" Paze yelled upward to the sky. Bakor heard his and turned, seeing Paze he finished his current engagement and ran back to the others. Nefene healed Paze as he began to weep and fall to his knees.

"Manin is...?" Bakor as quietly, Paze only nodded. Nefene put her hand over her mouth, her eyes began to tear, Andor and Bakor lowered their heads in respect. What was left of the horde of creatures numbered less than two dozen they gathered in small groups with a few others fleeing. Bakor, Andor and Paze stood staring at the monsters that slowly approached them. It was almost over but did it really matter anymore? Bakor had had enough and charged forward followed shortly by Paze then Andor. It was like a wild windstorm filled with blades, they cut, slashed, and bashed through the remaining creatures faster than they had before. When the last fell into a pool of blood their weapons lowered.

Paze walked over to his brother and picked him up.

"Could you get his scythe Bakor?" Bakor nodded and grabbed the scythe. They walked out of the ruins in silence wondering where to go from there.

"The destination is home then I guess?" Nefene said rubbing a tear off her cheek. The others had no objections, they just started moving back toward Navisko. As they walked they heard a commotion behind them coming from the ruins. No one turned, it was behind them now, in their past. Suddenly the air before them seemed to shift as if it were a sheet blowing in the wind. Within seconds it started to turn orange and forms began to take shape, in the wind they thought they could hear laughter. It was anything they could say was familiar it was an evil hateful laugh.

Paze laid Manin down softly then drew his weapon as the creatures finally became whole. They looked to be made of fire, their bodies moving in the wind. In their hands, if they could be called hands, they were channeling their bodies forming balls of fire.

"Watch out!" Andor yelled as he bent his knees ready to move. Bakor took a step back toward Nefene as the first attack was launched. One such fireball flew towards Bakor turning he pushed Nefene to the sand and took it in the back. It was hot and it burned his neck and singed his hair. Paze dodged the ball as he rushed to the creature striking it, to his surprise his weapon had an effect, the monster's scream almost sounded like the wind. The struck again and again as the monster gathered its fire for another attack, before it could finish its body broke the pieces of fire evaporating into the air like a fire without anything to burn.

Andor cut the monster's arm hard and it separated, floating up and away it disappeared before it passed its own head but before Andor could attack again the arm was there again. Slicing at the creature he felt his weapon getting warm but the creature already had two more fireballs in its hands. Andor jumped back but was hit with one in the chest, the flames flew up into his nose and he felt his lungs tighten he couldn't breathe.

Bakor was a berserk attacking without any care for his own safety or well-being. His hands and face were burned and most of his hair was either smoking or burnt. He attacked without emotion, without reason, his eyes could not see his enemy nor what was happening, he could only see her face.

Andor coughed as his eyes welled with tears and he tried to breathe, he forced in a breath only to cough violently afterward. He knew he didn't have time so he stood fighting with himself to breathe like he did before, he fought back another cough as he ran his weapon through the monster, it didn't have the effect he hoped. His sword was beginning to get very hot now so he pulled it back and swung at the creature. Coughing and nearly coming to his knees he saw the creature breaking apart.

Nefene could see that Andor was in trouble so she ran over to his side and healed him, and he took his first deep breath of air that didn't burn or cause him to painfully cough in what felt much longer than it was. He looked at Bakor who was attacking the last three of the creatures with Paze, Bakor's axe looked to be getting very hot. Nefene ran over to them ready to heal once the battle was over. The last creature of fire backed away as its brethren was destroyed. It called out in an odd cry that no one could identify. Bakor finished it off before he dropped his weapon; his hands were pink and horribly burned.

Nefene healed both Paze and Bakor, when she healed Bakor for the fourth time she fell to her knees with heavy breath.

"Are you ok?" Bakor said placing his healed hands on her shoulders.

"I will be, I'm just very tired." Bakor nodded knowing well that it was his fault for her being the way she was now.

"Guys, I think we should run." Andor said which was strange for him, as he would normally never run from battle. Bakor, and Nefene looked up and saw what Andor and Paze already had. A tall very muscular reddish-brown skinned monster that looked very much like a man but much larger emerged from the air like the creatures of fire had.

"I thought only they could do that." Paze said as he prepared himself.

"It's only one but it doesn't look very easy." Andor said turning and showing a concerned look to the others. The monster stood there staring, its eyes moving from one to the other. Abruptly it let out a roar that was deep and full, it filled the sky and it could probably be heard even at Navisko. Andor ran forward wanting to be the first to attack only to find the creature swinging him, the hit knocked him away like he could a pesky fly. Bakor reached for his axe only to pull away as it burned him, it was still very hot.

"Damn!" He yelled as he turned to see Paze move toward the monster. Nefene could barely stand, she wasn't sure if her lightning attack would have helped but she didn't have any energy to attempt it now. The monster stepped forward as Paze struck it in the leg, his weapon connected but it felt to him like he hit steel. He couldn't see any blood or real damage and he was knocked away before he could take a second swing.

Bakor was starting to get angry but his weapon still burned his hands, he only wished he was as fueled as he was before, then he could hold it. He tightened his fists till they hurt, looking down at them he opened them and to his surprised he could see a scar where the weapon had burned him, he hadn't notice it before. Turning he saw the monster approaching Nefene, he stood and ran toward her. Andor and Paze rushed its back each striking it but neither seeing any real damage.

"This is hopeless, we should just run its not use fighting it." Andor said to Paze who clenched his jaw and nodded in defeat. Bakor tried to move Nefene but she fell again when she got to her feet.

"Damn!" Bakor yelled as he threw himself at the monster. It grabbed him and picked him up to its eye level. He stared into its eyes; he could only see hatred, hatred for him but why? The monster started to squeeze and Bakor knew it wouldn't be long before his ribs started to crack. Unexpectedly he was free falling to the ground the monster was spinning viciously. Paze had used a skill that Mechnicians are taught; it's an attack where you first focus your energy to lash out effectively attacking once with the power of many. The attack had struck the creature in its thigh finally breaking its thick hide and causing blood to spill but he paid a high price.

The creature's fist hit him with such force he was knocked unconscious and more then a few ribs were broken. He flew twisting in the air his mace and shield flying in different directions before he crumpled down in the sand more then ten feet away. Andor couldn't believe what he had just seen, the one in the group who could take damage the best but put out of the fight with one hit. Andor sank right there, all hope he had left him he turned to see Bakor getting to his feet and running to his weapon.

Bakor grabbed his axe it was still hot but it didn't matter anymore, he gripped it hard and he felt his hands getting warmer. He let out an animalistic roar as he charged he creature. It heard the roar and turned to face Bakor as he jumped and brought his axe down into its face. The attacked split its brow and destroyed its left eye, it screamed like a wounded animal lashing out but missing Bakor only because he was falling back to the ground. Blood and puss poured from the wound down its face, the other eye became red and the veins in it became more visible.

Andor felt revived, the creature could be hurt, but the attack had to be concentrated and powerful. Running at full speed he launched himself into the air and put his sword down hands tight around its hilt and for more power he pushed it against his armor on his chest. The monster was enraged with Bakor so it never saw or felt Andor until his sword was piercing its back going deeper and deeper. The impact caused his sword to push back into his chest knocking the air from his lungs; he didn't like that feeling. The creature spun nearly shacking Andor free from his sword, he tried to get his footing on the creatures back to pull it free but with the blood and now the creature thrashing he found it impossible.

The creature reached around and was able to grab Andor's right leg and yank him around, Bakor tried to get him free by attacking the creature but it didn't care. Andor pulled himself up trying to pull the creature's fingers apart but they tightened and he heard his own bone crack. He screamed in pain, as it got tighter, Bakor dropped his axe and jumped up grabbing Andor's sword pulling it downward with his weight. The creature tossed Andor away before turning its attention to Bakor once again.

This time instead of grabbing him it quickly kicked out connecting and sending him flying with half his ribs cracked or shattered. It licked its lip, which was wet with blood from its head wound, the sword deep in its back was certainly a problem but since he could reach it he could leave it and complete his task. The priestess was still kneeling in the sand where she had been before but now she was looking up at him with fear in her eyes, it was wonderful.

She couldn't take her eyes from the monster that was standing over her, with the last of her strength she called down the lighting. The blue bolt heading jaggedly toward the creature but as it bent down toward her instead of striking its head it reached the sword in its back first. The lighting was increased because of the metal that let it reach deep within. The muscular beast clenched its teeth though the horrible pain, worse then all the attacks it had endured so far combined, its teeth started to crack. Its muscles twitched its body ached, but he pain had stopped and now it was time for revenge.

The priestess had passed out now so it wouldn't be as much fun as before but at least he could kill her in front of the others. Grabbing her in one hand it turned to find that only the man in green had gotten up so far. He was collecting his shield when he noticed what the creature had in its hand.

"Nefene!" Paze yelled running to help her.

Bakor was almost out of it, he drifted on the edge he had trouble breathing one of his lungs must have been punctured by a broken rib but when he heard Nef's name yelled out by Paze he was revived once more. Getting up he felt the extent of his injuries, standing and letting the adrenaline flow into him he noticed his axe a few feet before him.

Andor stood as best he could on one leg but he knew he was out, he had no weapon and one good leg but still he limped forward to help Nefene and the others. Paze reached the monster first as it squeezed Nefene and a cry slipped passed her lips. His lips peeled back as he put all of his energy into the next attack, the monster laughed. Swinging his mace his shield dropped and he felt his knees go weak but he stood long enough for the attack to hit.

The creature could never have guessed that such small creatures could deal it so much pain. The attack from the mace tore its skin but worse it cracked its think bone in its lower leg. Growling the monster lifted its wounded leg and brought it violently down on Paze, he was already gone though all his energy left him in that attack. The monster broke it own bone crushing the small man. It growled again as it pushed its thumb forward snapping Nefene's neck.

Bakor was just picking up his axe when he saw Paze fall then get crushed, now he was on his knees with his vision blurred. The monster tilted the priestess then dropped her, he wanted to have more fun with her but he still had those two.

Bakor coughed and his mouth filled with blood, spitting it out he stood and raised his axe, he eyes filled with rage. The pain in his chest was distant; he had no body, just his spirit, his weapon and his rage. Andor shook his head; it wasn't supposed to be like this. He wanted to attack, he wanted to take that monsters head from it and kill it forever and have the others back. The creature walked over to him even with one broken leg it still kept stride.

"Go on, take my life to, it doesn't matter anymore. You will not live though, he will not let you live!" Andor screamed with all the air he had in his lungs before the creature struck him silent.

Turning it remember the other one was still alive, he only saw a burst of red, Bakor's axe had split the creatures head. Falling to sand twisted and broken he felt all his rage leave his body. He looked to see find Nef then began crawling over to her. The monster fell backward pushing the sword upward out the front side of its chest.

He pulled Nef over to him and sat up, sitting up was painful but he did it anyway. He pulled her onto his lap and held her, the pain was fading but so was his vision.

"Its all over now, we have eternity to be together now. No more pain, no more fighting or battles just you and me." One last tear ran down his cheek before falling from his to hers.