

Angel on My Shoulder

The bandit turned to run, but stumbled and fell as his foot found a large root on the forest floor. Arms and legs akimbo, the man fell flat on his face, his sword flying from his grasp and clanging on the ground several feet away. Quickly the brigand turned over on his back and tried to scurry away, but the swordsman was already on him.

From afar, and hidden by the cover of the trees, the brigand and his comrades had been watching this one travel down the forest road headed to Rostov. Dressed in superbly crafted armor and other suitably fine accoutrements the man appeared to be nothing more than a simple country noble or knight, but what truly captured the brigands' gaze was the sword he carried on his back. Even though the massive claymore was of an antiquated styling and design, it was of exquisite quality and the bandits had figured it would catch a fair penny in Restov's market district.

Knowing these woods as well as they did, the gang laid an ambush and struck.

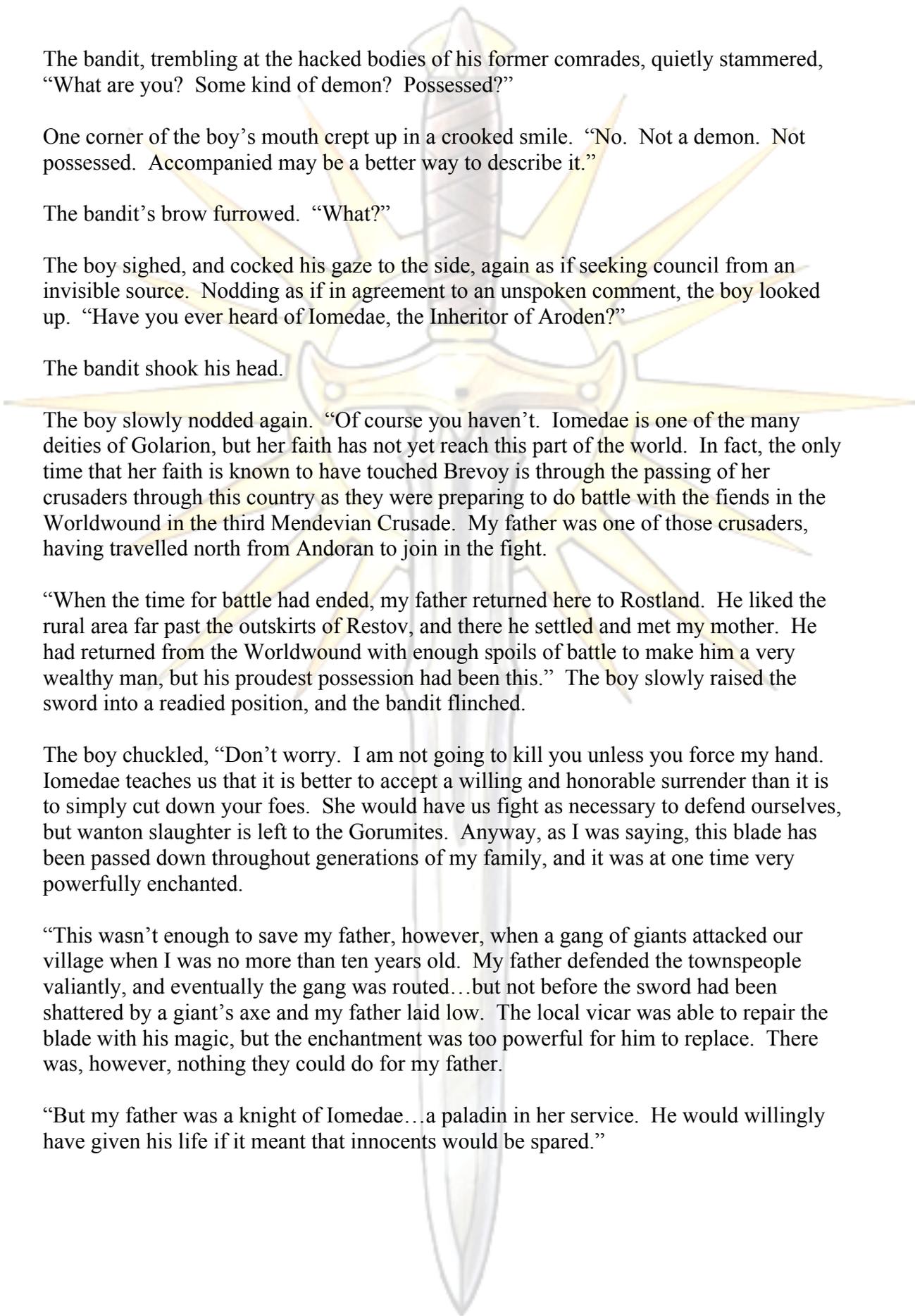
Now, the bandit found himself staring down the blade of the claymore, the end of which was within a few inches of the tip of his nose and coated in the blood of the other gang members. The hilt of the sword was a stylized eagle, with the guard the bird's wings, and the metal appeared to be of a darker hue than normal steel...cold iron, perhaps? Etched into the blade, and now clearly evident was a single word...*Judicium*.

But it was not the blade that had the brigands full attention. The knight wore a helm that covered most of his face, but a large slit left his eyes uncovered. Those eyes were white and clouded like a blind man's, but obviously not unseeing.

Disarmed and trapped, the bandit held up his arms, palms out, and stammered, "Please...please...don't kill me. I beg your mercy."

The swordsman did not seem to understand the man's words, but the gesture, one of surrender, was comprehended. The man thought for a moment, as if listening to the consult of some unseen individual. After a few seconds, the swordsman nodded, and slowly lowered his blade. The weapon, still at the ready, was no longer threatening the bandit.

After a few quick blinks, the swordsman's eyes returned to a normal, deep emerald. He removed his helmet, and the bandit gasped realizing that the swordsman was nothing more than a boy of not even twenty. Also, the bandit became aware of an odd mark on his left cheek, one that had previously been hidden by part of the boy's helmet. The mark had the coloration of a birthmark, but appeared too detailed to be random. It clearly depicted a sword overlying an image of the sun. If it were some form of religious marking, the bandit could not place it as the only faiths that he was familiar with were those of Erastil the Deadeye and Gorum the Lord of Iron.



The bandit, trembling at the hacked bodies of his former comrades, quietly stammered, “What are you? Some kind of demon? Possessed?”

One corner of the boy’s mouth crept up in a crooked smile. “No. Not a demon. Not possessed. Accompanied may be a better way to describe it.”

The bandit’s brow furrowed. “What?”

The boy sighed, and cocked his gaze to the side, again as if seeking council from an invisible source. Nodding as if in agreement to an unspoken comment, the boy looked up. “Have you ever heard of Iomedae, the Inheritor of Aroden?”

The bandit shook his head.

The boy slowly nodded again. “Of course you haven’t. Iomedae is one of the many deities of Golarion, but her faith has not yet reach this part of the world. In fact, the only time that her faith is known to have touched Brevoys is through the passing of her crusaders through this country as they were preparing to do battle with the fiends in the Worldwound in the third Mendevian Crusade. My father was one of those crusaders, having travelled north from Andoran to join in the fight.

“When the time for battle had ended, my father returned here to Rostland. He liked the rural area far past the outskirts of Restov, and there he settled and met my mother. He had returned from the Worldwound with enough spoils of battle to make him a very wealthy man, but his proudest possession had been this.” The boy slowly raised the sword into a readied position, and the bandit flinched.

The boy chuckled, “Don’t worry. I am not going to kill you unless you force my hand. Iomedae teaches us that it is better to accept a willing and honorable surrender than it is to simply cut down your foes. She would have us fight as necessary to defend ourselves, but wanton slaughter is left to the Gorumites. Anyway, as I was saying, this blade has been passed down throughout generations of my family, and it was at one time very powerfully enchanted.

“This wasn’t enough to save my father, however, when a gang of giants attacked our village when I was no more than ten years old. My father defended the townspeople valiantly, and eventually the gang was routed...but not before the sword had been shattered by a giant’s axe and my father laid low. The local vicar was able to repair the blade with his magic, but the enchantment was too powerful for him to replace. There was, however, nothing they could do for my father.

“But my father was a knight of Iomedae...a paladin in her service. He would willingly have given his life if it meant that innocents would be spared.”

The bandit, despite the earlier bloodshed and his fear, seemed to be entranced by the story. Despite his age, the boy's forthright nature had shifted the man's attitude. Still timid, the man asked, "What is that marking on your cheek?"

"What, this?" the boy asked, pointing to the birthmark. "This is a symbol of my faith, a brand of the Inheritor. When I was a babe it was just a simple blotch, a blemish, up into my childhood. Shortly after my father's death it began to evolve, until at the age of fifteen it had transformed into the symbol you see here. It is now my divine link to my Lady.

"It's funny that you should ask, but shortly after my birthmark had completed its metamorphosis I received a strange visitor. Iomedae herself had sent down one of Her own servants, an angel known as an Astral Deva, a type of being created by the deities of Good from the souls of their most deserving followers.

"The angel explained to me that I had been chosen by the goddess to be one of her servants here on Golarion. If I were to accept the calling, the Deva would be bound to me, and I to it, and together we would serve as a direct channel of Her grace...one of Her Chosen.

"The angel taught me much...how to use a sword, how to summon my Lady's protection and blessing, and how to conjure healing magic to tend my wounds. I still have much to learn, and in this learning there is much power that I can yet attain. This is why you are seeing me on the road to Restov today...I hear that Brevoy is chartering groups to foray into the Stolen Lands. There may not be a better place to hone my skills than in the wilds there."

The bandit, still listening intently, asked, "What happened to your eyes earlier...and your voice...you were speaking in some tongue that I have never heard."

Smiling, the boy responded. "Iomedae's gift comes with a price. With the direct link to the divine, during times of stress I am filled with the Celestial Fury. It does not control my actions, but during those times I can only speak in the tongue of the angels.

"Now...I think that I have probably told you enough. We have two paths here that we can go down. One, in accordance with Brevish law, I can execute you for banditry, or two, you can swear to me that you are finished with waylaying travelers and will forsake such an unlawful life. Know that you would be swearing to an agent of the Inheritor, and *she* will hold you to those words."

The bandit quickly replied, "No, no, please...I swear. I am done with this!"

The boy placed his helmet back over his head and gripped his sword. With a quick flick of the blade, he commanded the brigand, "Go." The elder man obliged, scrambling to his feet and bolting off into the woods. Within a handful of seconds, he was already out of the boy's view.

The boy heard the voice of his passenger in his mind. *Was it really necessary to tell him all of that, Velox?*

Velox shrugged and replied, “Probably not. But perhaps knowing the source and motives of the one that showed him mercy will help to mold his decisions in the future. Also, you never know, the effort at diplomacy may have won us an ally in the future...or at least an enemy that might stay his hand. Plus, who is going to believe him...it sounds crazy!”

There was a moment of silence as the angel considered the boy’s words.

Perhaps you are right. You just need to be cautious with this kind of information. Being that we are in the wilds, as far as Iomedae is concerned, we do not have any form of organized community of faith to fall back on. If it is made too common knowledge that one of Her followers, let alone one of Her Chosen, you could become a target of Her enemies...and they are not few in number. We are on our own here, but with some luck we will be able to find a group of like-minded adventurers to travel into the Stolen Lands. It is my sense that there we will be facing great challenges there. Come, the road awaits. We must move on to Restov.

The boy nodded. “Yes, father.”

Velox Vendicatori – LG Oracle of Iomedae

Traits (Four total, 2 free + 2 from extra traits feat):

Campaign Trait	Rostlander (+1 to Fort Save)
Faith Trait	Birthmark (+2 vs. charm and compulsion, acts as focus for spells)
Social Trait	Rich Parents (900 gp starting)
Equipment Trait	Heirloom Weapon (free MW, +1 to hit with that weapon)

Skills Taken:

Diplomacy
Sense Motive
Perception
Spellcraft