

## The Abyssal Cloak

*He* was coming. I waited on the precipice of a rotted wooden slab. The thrum of the machine-forge washed over my ears. Its many thousands of interlocking gears pounded and echoed down the hallway of marble. My men were uneasy. They gripped their spears and halberds like schoolboys, shaking and sweating. We were in the highest peak of the castle's tower, a lone window illuminating our slow advance. The floor was a kind of granite, scarred with a myriad of cracks and lines.

Perhaps he was not coming as soon as I had thought. My men sighed in relief. He must have been looting the larder down below for crackers and cheese.

Fool!

The Abyssal Cloak would be mine, and he would be none the wiser! I bade my men inch ever closer down the hallway of creaking white stone, taking care to pad my footsteps as much as possible. One of my men dropped his polearm, the haft clattering onto the floor.

"Dummy!" I seethed. We paused. There was no sound, no torchlight coming up from behind us.

I approached the machine-forge, its dials and porcelain form towering over me. I knew not how this ancient relic worked, nor did I care. At the very top of the machine was an abandoned orange vessel of some kind. Inlaid on it were runic words I could barely discern.

*Tide.*

At the center of the porcelain machine was a central glass eye, the perimeter of which was studded with bolts of metal. Tying ropes to the bolts, my men heaved.

The eye would not budge.

I turned behind, making out the dim torch lights coming in the tunnel behind us.

"Harder! Faster!" I yelled, grabbing one of the ropes.

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From behind echoed a chant. His footsteps rumbled up from below like thunder.

*It was mine! Mine!*

The eye swung open like a door, crying out the contents that lay within. I cast aside useless garments and pieces of armor, wading through underwear and bras as they flooded over my men. Where was it!

There.

It was a shimmering cloth of iridescent pink, blue, and yellow. I had but a moment to behold my prize. I drew my sword, steeling my men.

“He is stronger. Bigger. But not faster. Not smarter. I have the ultimate prize! Fight your way out!”

His own soldiers clogged the entrance of the hallway, rattling their clubs and maces.

“Give it to me and no one gets hurt!” He said.

I wrapped the Abyssal Cloak over my shoulders. He sneered at me, lunging forth. Spear pierced shield as mace turned aside halberd. I dove low, hacking him to the ground. He flailed, grabbing at my cloak. With a hop and a skip I tore it from his grasp, flying down the hall and into the stairs below.

He was behind me, but I was getting faster!

“Give it! Give it!”

“No!” I shouted back. Deeper I went, abandoning my troops and stumbling on rocks until I was in a wide place. Hallways criss-crossed between dank store rooms and glimmering windows of light. There were some leather boulders here, upon some of which dozed a large red drake. The scaly beast was enchanted by a black monolith, his nostrils sputtering fire and smoke

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as its eyes fluttered in hypnosis. The monolith gave the drake visions of many things. Sometimes of commercials, and sometimes of a man called “Michael Scott.”

I dove behind a leather boulder, clutching the Abyssal Cloak close to me. The drake did not care for my presence. The cloak must have shielded me from its gaze, even more testament to its power!

Then my pursuer was there and not but ten paces from me. He walked slow, sniffing for me, wary of the drake and its monolith and careful not to block its sight to Jim Halpert.

He rounded my boulder, but I was ready. I dashed past him, startling the drake as I did so. My escape, my carriage, was waiting at the end of one last final hallway.

But he stepped in front of me.

“It’s. Mine.”

“No.”

We were on the ground in seconds, hands tickling the other. The cloak was slipping off of me. I held it in my chin as I wiggled over the carpet. A booming voice in the air swept over us and we paused mid-battle. The female voice was all-powerful, all-seeing.

“Boys! Get in the car. Time for swim practice. And Nick, bring that towel with you. Stop fighting over it, we have so many in the laundry room.”

“Yes mom,” my brother and I said.

Victory.