

Chapter 6

Five minutes passed in complete and utter silence.

Adrian remained quiet and focused, his eyes closed. His breathing slowly calmed down as the smells around him once again came to the forefront of his thoughts.

He opened his eyes and looked around. The flame of his oil lamp was moving steadily. The monsters were dead and lying where he left them. He took a deep breath and checked his dagger and clothes. Everything was in order, if a little bloody.

A tap on the door made sure nothing else waited inside.

Adrian was in no physical condition to move the corpses out to the terrace and drop them down but he could explore the new room he had freed of creatures.

This one was rather long, various cabinets, tables, and dressers drawing his attention. The simple beds, lack of rugs, or decorations made him think of this as another room for servants. Servants, maids, or butlers. Whatever they had once called themselves.

The three people he had killed in the corridor only confirmed his suspicions.

He silently moved inside, opening every drawer and cabinet as he checked for anything useful. The cabinets here weren't locked, except for one but he luckily found the key on one of the tables.

The smells inside weren't much better but he fought through his urge to just leave again immediately. Adrian found a moderately fresh servant shirt that he dusted off and bound around his face, covering his mouth and nose.

It helped a little, the shirt itself less contaminated by the rot thanks to being at the bottom of a closed dresser.

Chest – Servant Shirt [Common]

The thing wasn't very useful beyond it's normal life use. The Royal shirt at least provided some stats. Not that he could really use them for anything right now.

He found more bandages, various small knives, forks, and spoons. None of it seemed too intimidating. Neither was it made of silver. He assumed the servants had used it to eat their meals here. The one plate he found on a simple round wooden table suggested as much.

It luckily didn't have more than a few rotten crumbs on it.

Something caught his eye when he moved past the table. He curiously grabbed one of the dusty cards, cleaning it off before looking at it.

It depicted a knight with a sword, a single symbol on each corner of the card. The similarity to something like poker cards was obvious. He didn't exactly want to stare at the knight however.

Adrian quickly collected all the cards, many of them lying on the floor. *What happened here?*

The thought crept up again as he looked at the room from a different perspective. *A plate on the table, a card game set up. Beds that aren't made.*

Other than the layer of dust on everything, this room could have been occupied mere moments ago.

He continued his search and finally found socks and shoes. There were quite a few sets of servant's clothes in various sizes.

Boots – Servant Shoes [Common]

The socks didn't reveal any hidden information but were surprisingly comfortable.

Adrian felt quite a bit more confident about himself now that he was wearing shoes instead of slippers, despite the make and quality being vastly inferior to his previous footwear. He didn't care about the Wisdom he was giving up by switching out his boots, not knowing how to use magic in the first place.

He felt the soreness in his body now. The bruises he hadn't noticed before. One of the beds seemed comfortable enough and he took a breather, sitting down as he continued to scan the room.

Something below a corner of the bed sheets stood out to him.

He revealed a small booklet, bound in leather with worn pages inside. A quick scan revealed more of the symbols and scribbles he couldn't comprehend. The obvious titles on each page suggested a diary of sorts. *Meaning those could be dates, numbers.*

Adrian checked the cards he had found and indeed confirmed that some of the symbols matched.

He chuckled to himself at the thought of learning this mysterious language. *Surviving should be my main concern right now.*

The thought didn't leave him however. If he could somehow unravel the language, he would surely be able to uncover some secrets about Faenhold Castle. Perhaps he could outright find out why he was here, how he got here.

He put the diary into a small flimsy cloth bag he found sitting next to the bed, adding the cards, three rolls of bandages, and a few pairs of socks.

A few minutes later, he continued his search.

One of the two closets revealed a find he hadn't expected.

There were tools inside. A hammer, saw, and most importantly, a hatchet.

None of them had a quality above common, something he assumed by now wouldn't provide any bonuses like the ones listed with adequate or high quality.

Adrian put his dagger onto the nearest bed and grabbed the thing. He found the wooden handle quite sturdy, the weight comfortable in his hand.

The blade was rather dull but with about half a meter of length to the handle, he still preferred it as a weapon compared to his tiny letter opener.

Maybe I can fasten the dagger to the hatchet somehow, he wondered but dismissed the thought again quickly. The only thing he would trust to do a reasonable job was duct tape, and he didn't have any lying around.

The forces he would unleash with a hit of the hatchet would surely rip out the dagger anyway, potentially even injuring him.

He decided to use the tool on its own. Not intended as a weapon but surely usable as a makeshift one.

Adrian gathered up everything he found and went back to the royal chambers. He spent the next half hour trying to sharpen the hatchet with his dagger. The results were quite unexpected.

He glanced at the blade of his newfound weapon and sliced it across the door of the wooden dresser. It left a tiny gash.

Before the growing confidence left him, Adrian continued with his exploration, returning to the servants quarters and finishing his search.

Nothing else immediately useful revealed itself and he was forced to push onward.

One closed door remained in the corridor. Beyond that were stairs leading down.

He sneaked past the door and checked the stairs first, finding them to be a spiral staircase made of stone. It only lead down.

He decided to keep that one for later and went back to the closed wooden door.

Once again, he placed his oil lamp to the side and gripped his weapon. This time it wasn't just a flimsy dagger anymore.

Of course he hadn't just left behind his trusty letter opener. It currently rested on the floor to his right, his confidence in both his attire and dexterity not high enough to wear it somewhere on his body. Not without a sheath.

Adrian took a deep breath and grabbed the door handle, opening it inwards with a push before he stepped aside.

He waited for a moment, preparing himself as his muscles tensed, the hatchet gripped in both hands. Then he heard a noise. A growl, quite similar to those of the servants but the shuffling sounded different. He heard metal clinking, heavy footsteps getting close to the door before the person walked out.

Fuck

He was looking at a shriveled up man clad in leather and steel armor. A crude metal helmet protected the sides and back of his head, leaving his face uncovered.

Adrian didn't hesitate, his hatchet slamming into the creature's chest with full force. He nearly lost his grip, the blade penetrating through the chest piece with relative ease before getting stuck.

That was a problem.

He watched in horror as the man lifted his right arm and with it the shortsword he was carrying.

Compared to the knight, this guard's movements seemed crude, untrained and simple.

Adrian still found himself on the defensive, letting go of his weapon to dodge sideways, avoiding the stabs before he frantically grabbed for his dagger. He missed twice before he finally managed to grip it.

Should have aimed at the throat, he reprimanded himself as he slowly walked backwards. He hoped the dried up undead would fall over the corpses littering the hallway.

The creature growled and sped up, sword kept close to its body as it prepared to stab again.

He winced as the undead stepped over the bodies and reached him.

Adrian stepped right in the small hallway and stabbed, his dagger slashing into the soldier's neck when he felt a cold pain from his left side.

He gritted his teeth and ripped at the dagger, slicing it across the monster's throat before it got stuck. He kept rattling the weapon when he felt something slide out of his side. He didn't dare look down, instead ripping out the weapon and stabbing it straight into the undead's unprotected face.

That finally seemed to have an effect as both of them hit the wall behind Adrian, slowly sliding down in a deathly entanglement.

He felt something warm on his stomach, the strength leaving him as he ripped and tore at the dagger stuck inside the monster's face. They reached the stone floor in a clatter, a blinding flash of pain going through him.

His vision went black.

Adrian woke with a throbbing headache. He felt tired, exhausted, and very much in pain.

He didn't move instantly, knowing that whatever injuries he had sustained could get worse if he moved carelessly.

There were two distinct sources of pain. One was his head, the back of it to be precise. He must have hit it when he went down. And the second one was the wound on his stomach.

He forced himself to look down and found that the bleeding had stopped at some point. The sword must have missed something important. It looked half dried but hurt with every breath.

The monster hadn't fared as well, sprawled out in front of him with a dagger stuck in its mangled face. Its upper body was lying on top of his own legs.

Still alive, he reminded himself, thinking about just taking a nap here.

Stay awake.

The thought made sense but on the other hand, the smells weren't so bad. His wound would surely heal and if he slept, the pain would be gone in an instant.

He managed to stay there, his eyes focused on the hallway before him. There were four corpses and he didn't plan to add a fifth quite yet.

A hallway in the Faenhold castle not far from the royal chambers resounded with the subdued chuckles of a man that did not belong.

Adrian winced at the pain of moving but he couldn't help himself. The reality of the situation dawned on him coupled with the blood loss and fading adrenaline. It created a mixture that temporarily overshadowed the pain and fear he still very much felt.

It took him a while to calm down. He first thought about bandaging the wound but the closest bandages were inside the servant quarters and his main problem was the undead currently lying on his legs.

He very carefully moved the corpse away from him, ignoring the gore flowing onto his legs and the increasing pain until the man finally rolled over. The sudden move hadn't been good but Adrian simply pushed his shirt harder onto the wound.

Wet blood soaked through a large part of it now, staining his hand as he grit his teeth.

As he slowly stood up with the help of the nearby wall, Adrian realized that bandages wouldn't do. They might but with a wound like this, an infection was inevitable. He didn't feel like dying again.

His vision blurred as he slowly stepped back towards the royal bedchamber. Not much time had passed since he had started the massacre in the corridor but to him it felt like hours.

He finally managed to open the door and walk inside. The magical healing potion was right where he left it. Adrian glanced back behind him, somehow sure something would come and kill him just before he could recover.

But nothing did.

You should maybe keep it for worse injuries.

The thought was but an afterthought, his shirt already lifted as he slowly dripped the potion's contents onto the nasty wound.

It hurts NOW, he thought as if to justify his wasteful behavior. A chuckle went through him as the wound closed, the thought of wasting an incredibly potent and expensive alchemical creation on a non lethal injury sounding very comical to him right now.

He sighed and carefully closed the bottle again, two thirds of its contents still in there.

"Thank you, magical red juice," he murmured and put it into his chest of drawers.

His mood still a little delirious, Adrian managed to push onward. Images of the monster stabbing him repeated in his mind but the main thing he was concerned about right now was pushing that very creature off from his bloody fucking floor.

He looked at the massacre in the hallway, his wound nearly entirely gone, only a slight itch reminding him of the deep cut. And the blood of course. His hand was still wet with it but he didn't care. It made the situation seem more real to him. The cost of the battle.

A battle he had won.

Adrian still ached, more so than before, the health potion doing nothing for his constitution. Still, he found the process of dragging the creatures out onto the balcony cathartic. As if it was a ritual to send them off.

The three servants were pushed over the railings before he inspected the last one he had killed.

He had left his dagger behind in the hallway, fully focused on his task.

A soldier maybe? Or a guard.

"Any clue magic tree?" he asked without looking at the thing.

He spent the next few minutes carefully opening the straps of the leather armor, removing each piece from the corpse before he rolled it over the railing too. He had no energy to shout after it or even care. Adrian just wanted them gone.

A glance inward revealed that his battle hadn't been entirely unfruitful.

Soulbound:

Essence – -40

Level – 0

Vitality – 10

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9

Skill – 8 [14]

Intelligence – 12 [17]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Twelve essence for that one... seems entirely unreasonable looking at the practical difference.

Dude had a fucking sword.

He ignored the feeling of unfairness, instead looking at the gear he had taken from the soldier.

It didn't take long for him to replace nearly all of his current set with the newfound equipment. Most of it provided fewer bonuses but right now he had more use for Strength than he had for Intelligence, even if the latter somehow improved his mental capability other than just boosting magic spells he did not possess.

Equipment:

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Adequate]

Vitality +1

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [High]

Strength +2

Warrior Soul Skill Damage +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Fire Magic Resistance +2%

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Royal Faenhold Belt [High]

Intelligence +2

Light Magic Mana Cost +2

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon –

2h Weapon –

Off Hand –

The gloves only provided a bonus to a warrior soul skill, something he didn't possess. The belt and pants were of common quality.

He did try and squeeze into the second pair but found them too tight to manage with his already present Knight pants.

Adrian again looked inward to see how the changes applied.

Soulbound:

Essence – -40

Level – 0

Vitality – 10 [11]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [11]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

It was the first time he had gotten a bonus to his Vitality and Strength, abilities likely much more useful to him than Intelligence or Wisdom.

For now at least.

He thought the new equipment quite comfortable, the bracers and boots giving him something solid to add to his confidence. The helmet was very tight but it didn't impair his vision and provided some protection to his head.

The chest piece still provides its bonuses, despite the cut, he thought as he walked back inside, a finger checking the damage he had dealt with his hatchet and dagger.

It still provided much better protection than just his shirts, the leather thick and sturdy. Enough perhaps to deflect a glancing blow.

The corridor was mostly clean by now, only his tools remaining strewn around the floor. The splatters of dark blood mixing with his brighter one added an eerie feel to the scene, one the smells didn't help either.

He left the door open to air the place out for a while.

The first thing he picked up was the simple shortsword the Faenhold soldier had wielded. He grabbed the handle and found it much more comfortable than expected. It had weight to it but much less than he expected. Perhaps a kilo or two.

Adrian gave it a few slashes through the air, feeling a little stupid until he was reminded of his situation. If anything, he should be practicing with the thing as much as he could.

This wasn't a tool like the hatchet or his dagger. It was a weapon made to maim and kill, with little other use than warfare. The thing wasn't particularly sharp but it had a pointy end already covered in blood. His to be precise.

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Strength +1

He smiled after reading the information, giving it a few more swings before he felt himself tiring out.

I really need to work out, he thought, not being too hard on himself with the lack of food he currently had access to.

The fighting hadn't killed him but if he couldn't secure something to eat anytime soon, his focus would lessen.

Adrian left the other weapons where they lay, knowing how much it had helped against the soldier to have a backup on hand.

Push on, he thought, unable to move for a moment before he lifted his sword and stared at it. *You can do it, you have an actual sword now.*

He smiled and took a deep breath, shivering before he tightened his grip on the weapon once more.

Soulbound:

Essence – -40

Level – 0

Vitality – 10 [11]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Equipment:

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Adequate]

Vitality +1

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [High]

Strength +2

Warrior Soul Skill Damage +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Fire Magic Resistance +2%

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Royal Faenhold Belt [High]

Intelligence +2

Light Magic Mana Cost +2

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Strength +1

**2h Weapon –
Off Hand –**

Chapter 7

Adrian tapped the side of the door again and waited.

This time the room seemed clear, the soldier having been the only occupant that reacted to the sound.

He took his lamp and checked inside, finding a small room with a simple bed and table, a wooden chair and a chest of drawers.

A wooden rack fastened to the wall to his right immediately took his attention, on it both a small wooden shield and a crossbow.

“Yes,” he said quietly, making sure the room was clear before he checked the newfound gear.

The crossbow struck him as much more interesting, the wood treated and with a variety of metal pieces built in or attached, two of which holding the string in place.

2h Weapon – *Faenhold Crossbow [Adequate]*

Skill +2

Adrian had never seen a crossbow from up close, let alone shot one. Considering there were only a few pieces to the design, he thought it more than possible to figure the thing out.

Compared to a modern rifle, it looked positively archaic.

Then again, his currently most deadly weapon was a piece of pointy steel. If he could kill monsters without engaging them from up close, his coming days might not be as dangerous as the last few.

The most important thing was ammunition. If he didn't have any bolts to fire, the thing would be useless. Adrian doubted he could just carve a few bolts from the wooden chair or one of the beds. Maybe, with enough time and practice but right now he had more pressing concerns and this one proved to be moot.

He found five wooden bolts with a steel tip resting inside a small chest below the weapons rack, both expertly made and quite deadly to his eyes.

He allowed himself a slight smile as he twirled one of the things in his hand, holding the crossbow in his other.

A man larger and stronger than himself could probably wield two of these at the same time but even then, he could likely not aim particularly well.

Beds would probably be best... put in front of the wooden gate outside, he thought, already sure that training his aim would become a top priority in the coming days.

The weapon was simple but if it still held up, it would allow him to take out creatures without even thinking of getting injured. He doubted any issues would arise looking at the sleek design and lack of rust. The string was probably the main thing he had to worry about, and the lack of more ammo.

His stomach rumbled to remind him of his more pressing issues, the man putting down his newfound toy before he checked out the shield.

Off hand – Wooden Shield [Common]

It was made of treated wood, quite thick and reasonably heavy. Not something he would even think about using against the knight that had killed him but against the servants or perhaps even another soldier, it should prove useful.

He gulped when his thoughts turned to the knight, his cold body still lying on the dusty floor, rotting more and more with each hour. His blood seeping...

He stopped himself, sitting down on the chair that he quickly turned to face the door. In his hand lay the crossbow, perhaps enough to punch through that steel helmet and through that monster's head.

No.

Adrian had no idea how much power this weapon had and how durable a steel helmet was but even if he knew he had a chance, he wouldn't face that creature again. Not ever, if he had the choice.

It felt good to have clothes now, to be armed and at least partially armored. He felt a headache coming and took off his helmet, finding the task more than a little difficult.

The thing finally ceased to squash his head as he focused once more onto the weapon.

Adrian could discern what most of the pieces did. There was a moving metal part where the cord would be set into, a steel bow to actually secure the heavy string, and another piece that would likely act as the trigger.

The only part he couldn't place was the steel handle at the front of the weapon. After fiddling around with it for a while, he came to the conclusion that it was an aid for pulling back the string.

It took him a few tries to actually pull back the thick cord, his discovery of the handle's function a mere accident.

The trigger worked as expected, a loud twang resounding as he fired the weapon. It vibrated in his hand, a testament to the forces involved.

Aiming seems pretty straight forward, he thought and tried a few times without a bolt. His hands were already aching from the repeated loading but he would get used to it.

Might actually be a good place to learn more about Strength and Skill and how they affect me.

He found a sheath for his sword too, quickly trying to fasten it to his belt. The process took longer than he would ever admit to someone but in the end he figured it out, the leather piece resting to his side with the sword stashed safely inside.

It actually felt like he was a soldier of sorts.

One without training.

But luckily he wasn't facing perfectly sane fighters, otherwise his only advantage over the servants would be his weight. Their starved and rotting forms had little to match him in that department.

The next twenty minutes were spent moving all the useful things to the royal chambers before going back to the servants quarters and pulling one of the beds out into the hallway.

It proved quite an endeavor, the wood much heavier than he had expected. Adrian still managed it with a lot of grunts and insults thrown at the designer. The thing sadly didn't have a mattress, layers of cloth and some filling kind of sewn together to make a semi comfortable bed with everything connected to the wood. At least it was movable compared to the bunk beds he had slept in before.

The tests were quite successful.

Adrian confirmed that yes, the crossbow could penetrate through a bed with ease, even digging into the wooden door out on the terrace.

The first bolt he fired was still stuck in the wood, too deep for him to remove it without breaking the thing.

Luckily, the second thing he confirmed was that aiming the crossbow was almost comically easy. There was a reason rifles with higher loading times took over bows as the preferred weapon to arm soldiers with.

As he increased the distance, it became harder, but at the same time the bolts didn't penetrate deep into the door anymore, allowing him to continue his testing without losing any more of his bolts.

Adrian spent a few minutes trying to aim and shoot without wearing some of his armor, just to see how the different stats affected him.

Strength turned out to be the most notable change, his arms quivering noticeably without the bonuses if he aimed the weapon whereas they were steady with them. He was sure it was the weight and not something else affecting it.

The same was true with simply pulling back the string.

With the Strength bonus from his chest piece active, he could pull it back with some difficulties. Without it, he nearly injured himself a few times.

He found it difficult at first to grasp the difference Skill brought to the table, until he actually counted the seconds between loading, aiming, and shooting.

With ten points in Skill, he needed about twelve to fifteen seconds to pull back the cord, load the crossbow, aim and shoot it. With fifteen in the stat, he needed about eight to ten seconds.

The actual feel didn't change much to his perception but he did think the bonuses made everything go smoother. After he actually tested with counting, he was surprised how much he was affected.

Around fifty percent faster with fifty percent more Skill. But I'm not actually moving faster, am I?

He tried a few things but couldn't discern any actual changes. With higher Skill, he fucked up fewer times, got the string in on the first try and aimed with ease, the weapon mostly pointing where he wanted to shoot right after he lifted it.

Another thing he noted was that the sword on his hip provided its strength bonus as long as he didn't carry the crossbow. Whenever he did carry the weapon categorized as a two handed model, the skill bonus would instead apply.

"Okay," he said to himself and sighed.

His training had proved to be useful, both his reloading, aiming, and shooting improving noticeably in the short span of time. Anything more would take hours if not days. What he needed to do now, was take his newfound weapon and go down the stairs.

Adrian knew it was the only way.

He had to explore more of the huge castle city if he ever wanted to find out why he was here, what all of his stats meant, what magic was, and how he could learn it. All of it to get back home, hug his friends, and get Steve. Then hug Steve.

Right now he felt a little hungry but it wasn't major. He had eaten a few of the sweets in between training. Water wasn't an issue either after he had made another fire with some wood he got by applying his hatchet to a chest of drawers.

He still lacked proper pots but the cans and plates he had were enough to get enough water. It just took ages. Time he spent working on his crossbow handling.

The sword he got was useful but he would simply attack by stabbing. Anything more fancy was entirely out of his reach right now and he wouldn't even try it. *Just hide behind that shield and stab.*

Pretty much the tactics the soldier had applied, he doubted he would need anything more than that to fight servants.

Adrian strapped the wooden shield to his left arm, the leather straps still holding up pretty well. His sword remained sheathed before he stood in front of the spiral staircase leading down with a loaded crossbow in his hands.

It felt heavy.

The helmet on his head seemed to push harder against his skull with every passing second but he wouldn't give up on the dubious Vitality bonus it provided.

He took a deep breath and turned back, entering the guard's quarters before he sat down on the chair again, carefully lowering his crossbow as to not accidentally shoot it.

What am I doing?

He cupped his face with both hands, the shield lightly scraping against his helmet.

Come on.

Do it.

Get up.

Go down and shoot whatever you see.

Then go back up.

Slow and quiet.

The plan sounded simple enough. He had no clue what waited below.

Another knight?

The question didn't need an answer. He had to go either way. If it really was a knight, he would just go back up. If he was noticed, he would shoot and hope the projectile would penetrate.

It was either continue, improve, explore, find help, or dying.

Adrian took a deep breath and stood up, grabbed his crossbow and sneaked down the stairs making as little noise as possible.

With his heavy weapon, sword, and shield, the task proved quite difficult. He managed it mostly, turning around the corner as he took in the new sights.

He saw a large hall, spanning at least twenty meters in length and ten in width. Various doors lined both sides, those on the left hand side all open, some light coming in through them. There was no furniture he could see, the floor made of stone. There were no decorations.

Most importantly however were the ten or more servants prowling around or lying on the floor. They hadn't noticed him yet, meaning their hearing and eyes were most certainly worse than his own.

He felt himself shiver as he clutched his crossbow, his hand luckily not grasping the trigger.

Adrian heard a moan to his left and turned his head, seeing a dried up man in ripped servant's clothes sitting near the wall. He looked up and moaned again.

He moved his crossbow up, aimed at the target a few meters away, and fired.

The bolt hit its target, punching through the undead's head with no noticeable resistance.

Adrian already retreated backwards into the stairwell. He rushed up, hearing a few moans from below as he put the crossbow down on the floor, unsheathing his sword right after.

He heard more moans. At least a few of them had heard the weapon.

This is your chance... use the stairs.

He was annoyed at the lack of planning, chastising himself as he rushed into the guard's room and grabbed the chair.

He threw the thing unceremoniously down the stairs, hearing a few more moans and steps on the stone floor.

Adrian took a deep breath and focused, his shield held up in front of him, his head throbbing, and his sword raised. He stepped into the stairwell.

The first undead saw him and rushed forward, slamming into the chair before he fell, hitting his head on the close wall.

Adrian waited for the man to fall before he stabbed his sword down into its head. The blade penetrated with a sickening crunch before he ripped it out again.

More undead were coming, some already falling before they even saw him according to what he heard. The additional corpse would provide another hurdle for the uncoordinated creatures.

Perhaps it was a way for his mind to protect itself but he found himself not even thinking of them as humans anymore. Just monsters that stood in his way to get back home. Or for now, to find some god forsaken fucking food.

His body was aching but he remained steady, watching the next monster approach before it sped up, its legs entangling themselves in the chair before it fell. He ended its life the same way as he had the previous one's.

Adrian was surprised how much he could actually push his body when his life was on the line. He wondered how far he could've come with the various workouts and sports he had tried if a bunch of monsters had constantly hounded him along the way.

The next undead actually managed to climb over the corpses, rushing at him with outstretched arms.

A woman, her face retaining some of the features she must have had before she turned into this creature. She slammed against his shield, her hands scratching against the wood and the wall as her belly was pierced by his sword. Another two stabs to the chest followed quickly after.

Adrian remained where he stood, the much lighter woman unable to overwhelm him.

He was starting to breathe more heavily, the onslaught not yet done.

Two more rushed at him at the same time, somehow getting over the barricade without getting into each other's way.

He took a step back and held up his shield, his sword just aimlessly stabbing forward and into their arms and bodies.

The top pair of his pants ripped a little but he didn't feel anything getting at his actual legs yet.

A clean stab into one of the monster's necks ended its life, leaving only one of them.

Adrian had reached the top of the stairs by now, slamming his shield forward with the weight of his body to push the monster back.

It stumbled as his sword pierced through its belly.

He took another step back and waited for more to come, the undead in front of him collapsing to the floor, dark blood seeping onto the stone.

That was it.

That was it.

He remained there, his sword and shield in hand, both bloodied.

I did it.

He nearly shouted, stopping himself in the process as he produced a pained squeal.

His eyes were still focused on the stairs but nothing more came.

He knew there were more creatures down there but Adrian simply sheathed his sword, grabbed his crossbow and left.

Every door behind him was closed before he pushed the chest of drawers in front of his royal bedroom door.

His helmet came off after he wrestled with it for a moment, a slight headache pounding as if the gear had prevented it before.

Adrian sat down on the bed, putting the crossbow aside and unstrapping his shield.

He unsheathed the blade again and looked at it. The thing felt heavy in his hands by now. His arm quivered a little, his eyes blurring lightly at the sight of the blood.

It smelled a little foul but after staying in that corridor for so long, he hardly cared.

You killed them all.

A slight smile spread on his lips. He had won. He had won and hadn't even gotten injured.

His pants had ripped slightly but only one pair.

He looked inward and sheathed the blade again.

Soulbound:

Essence – 8

Level – 0

Vitality – 10

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Not in the negative anymore, he thought and lied down on the bed. There was much more to do but he found himself both unable and unwilling to get up again.

Sleep took him mere moments later.

Soulbound:

Essence – 8

Level – 0

Vitality – 10

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Equipment:

Helmet –

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [High]

Strength +2

Warrior Soul Skill Damage +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Fire Magic Resistance +2%

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Royal Faenhold Belt [High]

Intelligence +2

Light Magic Mana Cost +2

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Strength +1

2h Weapon –

Off Hand –

Chapter 8

Adrian woke up with a growling stomach.

He felt parched and groggy. The memories of the previous day played back in his mind as he shifted out of the bed, finding the floor with his boots still on.

He winced at the pain in his side, the hilt of the sword still sheathed and connected to his belt must have dug into him during the night.

Doesn't matter, he thought, rather choosing to be armed in bed than unarmed when something woke him up.

“Fuck you,” he said to the general state of his circumstances.

He got up and grabbed the shield, fastening the thing onto his arm before he pulled the chest of drawers away from the door with a few grunts.

The next two hours were spent with cooking water, eating the remaining sweets, and trying to read some of the journal he had found, comparing symbols to the card game in the process.

It was a pretty hopeless process but he didn't really care. Anything other than fighting seemed like a downright vacation to Adrian right now.

He didn't even train with his crossbow, not wanting to risk losing any more bolts. He just hoped the one he used downstairs was still intact.

He cleaned himself and his sword, still hungry but feeling a little better than when he had gotten up.

Didn't dream tonight, he noted.

It really had been a good day. If one discounted the soldier that had nearly killed him. Somehow he felt those kinds of experiences would become increasingly common in the near future.

Right now however, he was groggy, pissed off and geared up. His normal state of being after being thrown into a mysterious castle with nothing but a few sweets to eat in several days.

Sword in hand, he stabbed and slashed at the trees on the terrace. He had to get more used to the weight, to the sensation of hitting things with the blade. He tried to use his shield too, testing its strength with increasingly hard hits against the wood. It held up.

The sweets had hardly made a difference. Just a few hits made him nearly tire out but he focused on the task nonetheless.

When he felt like he couldn't delay any further, Adrian donned his helmet. It plopped into place and he somehow immediately felt a little better.

Vitality.

He sighed at the lack of more stats on his gear and sheathed his sword. He loaded the crossbow with quick and smooth motions before he looked at the stairs leading down.

The corpses had remained but he lacked the strength to clean up right now, nor was he in the mood to do so.

Instead he stepped over them, slamming his sword into their heads one more time just to make sure. He wouldn't die to a monster playing dead.

When he was sure the creatures were no more, he grabbed his crossbow and stepped out into the hall.

The sunlight was faint now but he still made out several moving servants.

He had been lucky that so few of them had heard him yesterday.

At the end of the hall stood a single armored undead. Just a soldier luckily.

Not moving at all, he thought, squinting his eyes to see the thing in the slightly sour smelling dark hall.

The rest were all servants.

Ten... no, eleven. And twelve, he counted, seeing another one emerge out from an open door to the left. The woman stumbled and fell face first to the floor. She moaned and scrambled up again.

I'm doing them a favor, really, he thought and aimed at the nearest one. Adrian didn't particularly fear them anymore. They could swarm him but he had a sword and shield now, and most importantly, a tight stairwell with several obstacles in the way.

He was pretty sure the design itself was intended to prevent enemy numbers to overwhelm the defenders and he would damn sure make good use of that.

Also why there was only one guard at the top of the stairs.

It really should have been difficult to aim for a head. Adrian knew that shooting the center of mass was the way to go but many of the servants regularly just stood still or even just lay on the floor mostly not moving.

With the very close distance, he managed to pull it off. The few bolts he owned had to count after all.

He breathed out and prepared himself for what was to come. The force was released and the string shot forward, bringing with it the steel tipped bolt.

The undead turned and fell, the bolt piercing through its nose and out on the other side.

Adrian watched how everything unfolded, slowly stepping back towards the stairs behind him. He held on to the crossbow for now but was ready to let go of it in favor of his sword at any moment.

Three or four monsters had noticed the noise, walking closer to the downed creature before they continued onward towards him.

None had actually spotted him yet.

How the fuck was I nearly overwhelmed by a single one of these creatures before?

He felt almost embarrassed but focused on his task. It didn't matter anymore. Experience always made a massive difference in whatever task he had gone out to accomplish. It was no surprise that fighting monsters was similar in that vein. It also made him wary to become overconfident, lest he made a mistake that cost him his life.

This time he made sure not to rush up the stairs, instead he carefully avoided the corpses and chair, making as little noise as possible.

Adrian waited with his sword and shield ready.

Five minutes passed and then ten.

Nothing came after him.

When he arrived back in the hall, the few undead that had heard him stood a little closer to the entrance.

Adrian aimed at the closest one, shot, and missed.

"Fuck," he whispered.

This time one of them noticed him.

He ran up, stumbling on the chair himself this time and hitting his knee on the stone stairs. A piece of the crossbow nearly stabbed into his eye. Adrenaline kept him moving and he limped up the rest of the way before he waited again.

The pain in his knee, face, and hands started to throb when the first undead showed up. It didn't matter anymore. They all fell to his blade in the coming minutes.

His knee was bruised but it mostly just hurt.

Adrian ground his teeth and put the last bolt into his crossbow. The only injuries he sustained this time were his own fault. Truly a testament to his ability.

He wondered if he would've just straight up died if he didn't have bonuses to his Skill.

The morbid thought amused him as he stepped back down again, the corpses by now downright littering the tight stairwell.

He was just glad they inconvenienced the creatures more than they did himself. At least if he wasn't being an uncoordinated dumbass.

After a quick deliberation, he decided to keep the last crossbow bolt for the soldier. If he could injure or kill that thing before it even reached him, he could avoid a potentially deadly fight.

Instead he stepped to the left hand wall, moving as quietly as he could. *Into the rooms?*

No... if I get swarmed in there I might just be dead.

He gripped his sword with both hands and briskly walked to the closest undead. A single powerful stab cut through the creature's neck before it could react.

Adrian took a step back and watched as three of the servants stumbled towards him. They had heard and seen him, making him immediately rush to the stairs.

He missed a few times in the coming scuffle but successfully took down the three monsters with only a few slight scratches to his gear. It almost felt too easy.

Only three servants remained in the hall when he stepped back out. His crossbow was still loaded and on the floor to his left. He quickly checked the first servant he shot and found the bolt intact.

He ripped the bolt out of the man's head, the wet sound coupled with the sight and smell nearly making him puke. Not that there would be a lot to puke up.

Adrian sneaked up to the closest remaining undead when his stomach suddenly grumbled, making all four of them immediately notice him.

Fucking shit.

He ran back, grabbed his crossbow and turned around, aiming for the closest undead before he shot. The bolt slammed into the woman's chest, pushing her back but he already rushed for the stairs.

Adrian was careful not to trip, his sword held backwards just in case he fucked up again. He didn't.

He felt his heart beating when he arrived, each heavy breath a reminder of his lacking stamina.

The fear of pain and death kept him focused, his body pushing itself to the very limits he never cared to increase.

His eyes opened wide when he saw the first undead to reach him being the soldier. The man had somehow overtaken the others, clumsily stepping over the bodies but remaining focused on Adrian.

The soldier carried his sword in one hand.

Adrian raised his shield, waiting with his own strike as he focused entirely on the undead's weapon.

He blocked the sloppy thrust with his wooden shield, ignoring the noise as it scraped past as he thrust his own weapon into the undead's stomach from below.

The blade failed to penetrate through the leather armor, glancing off to the side as he focused to keep steady.

He instead used his shield to slam away the monster's right arm and with it the sword. With the broad area of his shield, he managed to disarm the soldier. Once again, he aimed and thrust, his weapon slashing right into the creature's neck. He slammed it with his shield one more time, both pushing the undead back into the servants stuck behind it and ripping out the blade from its neck.

The thing was still alive but apparently not intelligent enough to look for and get its weapon back. Instead it simply rushed at Adrian.

He steadied himself and pushed against it with his shield. The undead tried to wrestle him instead of just going for scratching.

Adrian just pushed, trying to free his arm and aim for the monster's face.

It snarled as the blade moved closer, its hand now holding his blade as it cut into its rotten flesh.

Adrian slowly pushed the weapon forward, ignoring the frantic movements of the soldier as the steel bit into its face, moving deeper by the second until it hit bone. He pushed on as the weapon scraped against the skull, cutting sideways, unable to penetrate the bone without an initial push.

It still had an effect, dark blood seeping down as the soldier's grip weakened.

He ripped the blade out and stabbed it forward, this time punching through the head with a wet crunch.

The undead slumped down as Adrian took a step back. He managed to retreat into the guard room and closed the door behind him, standing with his back to the wood as his breathing quickened.

He heard the undead in the stairwell scramble up behind the downed soldier, struggling up the way until they reached the door. Instead of pushing against it, they scratched and punched the wood with frantic movements, their already limited weight used in an entirely inefficient manner.

Adrian thought his chest would explode at any moment. His vision darkened as he felt tears roll down his cheek. He didn't have the energy for this. He didn't have the mind for this. He didn't have the heart for this.

Get a grip.

He repeated the words in his mind, barely managing to keep the door closed as his sword clattered to the floor.

His breathing slowed again as time went on, his weight and the door both holding the uncoordinated zombies at bay.

He felt his mouth quiver as he slid down on the door and grasped for the blade.

His grip felt weak and uncoordinated.

You're in over your head.

Give up.

Just let them in.

Die.

A part of him refused.

Slowly he calmed himself with repeated words and a few breathing exercises that had helped before. His eyes remained closed as his hands slowly steadied.

It took all the coordination he had to stand up again without letting the creatures inside. He was still terrified, exhausted, and out of fucking shape. But he was back in control.

Okay Adrian, you killed the soldier. These are just servants. You can do this.

One hand and shoulder remained on the door, the other hand holding his sword.

He opened the door and let them push, just enough for the weapon to slide through the gap.

He stabbed time and time again as he screamed, the undead pushing and trying to get their hands through the gap. All they got for their troubles were cuts on their hands and arms.

Less than a minute later, the movements had stopped. The entrance remained slightly ajar, a lifeless hand stuck between the wooden door and its frame, dark blood dripping from its injured fingers.

Adrian continued to stab for a little while, his arm already numb, his movements slowing down until he barely managed to hold on to the blade.

He turned and pushed his back onto the door, sliding down again as he looked inward.

Soulbound:

Essence – 116

Level – 0 [+]

Vitality – 10 [11]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

It took a few minutes until he felt recovered enough to think about the plus next to his Level.

His whole body was in pain by now. His knee, his wrist, his shoulder, his back, and worst of all his lungs. Every breath felt like a small fire spread in his chest.

Focus.

You did it.

They're all dead.

Again.

Again you killed them all.

He closed his eyes and just sat there, his mind solely looking at the numbers that seemed to be burnt into his very being.

When his thoughts had reached some kind of normalcy, he tried to change things. He focused on the plus but nothing happened. Instead he focused on Vitality, the stat he wanted to improve as the very first thing. Perhaps even the only thing he would ever try to improve.

If it could help with the pain or with getting injured.

He knew that if this was anywhere remotely close to one of the games he had played, he should be thinking about a build. Intelligence for magic, Strength for heavy weapons.

The pain however was real. Every soldier he faced had the ability to end his life. Perhaps the time he had returned to the white tree had been a fluke, maybe he was still dreaming, or it was a one time chance to survive a little longer in this place, this world, wherever this was.

It felt unfair.

He had fought for several days, had faced monstrous humans while armed with weapons he could barely wield, had killed and survived. All of it had led to no answers. Just to pain and death.

And hunger.

Adrian started crying, aware of his self pity but overwhelmed by his aching body and his wish to go back to the world he belonged in.

He found that it felt good. To let go and cry. His sobs were interrupted by chuckles and soon outright laughter.

Crying had never helped, not really. Now that it actually did something, it made him feel even worse. Maybe it really was just a punishment.

Don't listen to yourself.

You're being unfair.

He nodded, calming himself down as he rubbed the tears out of his eyes.

"I'm a fucking mess," he said to himself, his sight remaining blurry for a while.

He sighed, looking at the sword on the floor before he closed his eyes again.

Ten minutes passed as he just sat there and let his body rest, slowly pulling himself together. He failed a few times but that was okay.

He knew it was. The fight was already over and he had won.

More will come.

And I will take them each at a time.

What helped him this time was the small plus that had appeared in his mind. The small plus that stood for what he had accomplished. The small plus that stood for his continued survival. The pain was still real but this meant perhaps that his struggles could lead to more.

He found that he could increase any single one of his stats by one, using one hundred Essence.

His choice remained the same. Even if he tried to force himself to think of this as just a game, Vitality was never something to dismiss, especially not if his actual life was on the line.

He assumed even the most die hard players would give up their glasscannon builds if they had to actually go through the injuries their characters sustained.

This is worse than fucking Hardcore mode. If Baxter could hear me now.

He managed to confirm the selection and sighed when he looked at the changed information.

Soulbound:

Essence – 16

Level – 1

Vitality – 11 [12]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

He instantly felt a little better, as if he had taken a strong painkiller, drank a few coffees, and slept for a few hours.

The sensation faded as quickly as it had come and Adrian returned to his miserably self with a sigh.

“Fuck this sucks,” he said in a whisper, to no one in particular. He just wanted to go back to bed but his hunger started to become an issue, his body pushing him to find something, anything, to eat.

He got up again, his sword loosely held in his hand before he opened the door.

You're being stupid.

He walked over the corpses and down the stairs. He didn't check if any of the undead were still moving, nor did he care for the noise he made. He could only push his body so far.

And every step of the way, there are more of you fucking fucks, he thought as his eyes drifted over the dead he had left behind.

The hall was empty now, at least to a quick glance. He chose a random door on the left and entered a spacious room.

Two undead remained but he just walked up to the first one and slammed his blade through its chest with all the weight and energy he could conjure. It all felt numb by now.

The weapon got stuck as it fell from both the hit and his push. Adrian didn't mind. He grabbed the next best thing, a heavy pan and swung it in the general direction of the running undead that had remained and seen him.

He hit the side of its head, making it stumble and fall, its arm taking a bunch of plates and pans down with it.

The pan had flown out of his hand but there were more.

Adrian just grabbed another, heavier pan and walked to the monster. It moved to stand up when the large cast iron pan came crashing down on its rotting skull. The thing exploded in a mush of blood and bone.

He didn't let up, walking to the still slightly moving undead with a blade stuck in its belly.

He grabbed the weapon and ripped it out, stabbing down a few more times just to make sure.

“Fuck this place,” he said and threw the blade onto one of the many counters. He opened cabinets at random and quickly found something that seemed edible. Nuts. Dried berries and nuts.

Actual real nuts that didn't smell rotten. The same was true for the dried berries stored in brown burlap sacks. There were several kilograms worth of both in the two cabinets.

Adrian wasn't in a state to care and grabbed whole handfuls, eating it all like a starved animal. He didn't stop until the weight finally hit his stomach.

He puked, retching up most of everything he had eaten onto the floor as he nearly toppled. When he was done he ate some more, pacing himself a little better this time.

Energy and strength slowly returned to his body, reminding him more than anything else that he was in pain, scared, and lost in some royal's kitchen.

Things are looking up, he thought and looked at the puke next to an undead corpse. *Did I do that?*

He sighed and looked at the nuts before he ate another handful. He held some of it close to his nose, the earthy smell at least partially helping with everything else.

Soulbound:

Essence – 32

Level – 1

Vitality – 11 [12]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [12]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12 [14]

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Equipment:

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Adequate]

Vitality +1

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [High]

Strength +2

Warrior Soul Skill Damage +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Fire Magic Resistance +2%

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Royal Faenhold Belt [High]

Intelligence +2

Light Magic Mana Cost +2

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Strength +1

2h Weapon –

Off Hand – Wooden Shield [Common]

The kitchen was mostly just a long room, about half as wide as the hall right outside. Several windows lined the walls, sunlight barely managing to punch through the dirty glass.

Adrian opened them as soon as he felt a little better. He had wasted half a sack of medieval trailmix. The second half he ate and actually managed to keep down.

If there was anything wrong with it, he would surely notice soon.

The fresh air didn't do much to penetrate the combined efforts of rotting flesh, blood, and puke.

He looked at the mess and sighed.

I'll want to clean this up. Use this kitchen. If anything's still working.

There was luckily no rotten food in the pans or in any of the plates that would add to the stench and general decay. He did find the very same in some of the cabinets but simply closed them again to prevent a spread of bacteria and smells.

I need to rest.

"How many breakdowns did I have in the last hour?" he asked himself while shaking his head.

I suppose Mr. T was right. Not that it's any news to me.

He checked and found all of the faucets still worked. There were all manner of tools around and he quickly found what amounted to a small shovel to clean up his mess. The undead he left on the floor for now. He was in no condition to move bodies right now.

Adrian pushed most of the puke onto the shovel and threw it out the window.

"Take that," he said, his voice lacking in passion.

It was still morning but he already felt like a whole day had passed. Now at least he had fuel.

And there was more.

How on Earth..., he thought as he went through the cabinets. Many of them held various ingredients that still looked at least somewhat edible. Various spices mostly, and flour. There were other cabinets nearly fully covered in growing fungus.

He had no clue why the nuts and berries had survived and many other ingredients had not.

Magic maybe? Or just a lucky coincidence.

With the dust on everything else, it almost seemed like the former was more probable.

For now he just grabbed everything good he could carry and put it on a random counter.

If it stays fresh here then maybe I should leave everything where it is.

It still made more sense to him to get it into his room.

Here he finally found all the plates, cutlery, pots, and pans he could ever wish for. Water wouldn't be an issue now, as long as he had things to burn.

There were ovens too. Ovens, hot plates, even a grill. There were dials as well, with symbols on them that he had actually seen before.

Numbers, he thought.

Adrian refrained from turning any of them, not about to cause a gas leak and subsequent explosion. Not after the win of finding an actual kitchen with food.

And I reached level one.

Guess I passed the tutorial level then, he thought and laughed to himself.

“Fabulous vacation spot, hmm?” he asked one of the undead as he leaned onto one of the counters.

The creature did not reply.

He turned and looked out the window, seeing nearly the same view as he did from the terrace, his current position located below and to the left of the area he had arrived in.

Adrian decided that the earlier slaughter was enough for a day. He found his sword and rinsed it, using a dusty cloth nearby to wipe off the blood.

No dishwashers, he thought as he focused on the cleaning task for the next five minutes. The result wasn't perfect but it hardly mattered in the grand scheme of things.

He sheathed the blade and grabbed a nearby pot, one that wasn't quite as heavy as the cast iron variant he had used as a weapon.

He filled the thing with bags of nuts, dried berries, flour, and spices.

The pot ended up quite heavy. He grunted just trying to lift it but managed to power through.

The hall remained empty, Adrian carefully moving towards the stairs with his valuable newfound loot. It proved a challenge to navigate the tight stairwell littered with bodies but with time and determination, he overcame the obstacle.

He finally reached his bed again, the sun already somewhat high on the horizon.

“Shelter, food, and water,” he said to himself, looking at the pot now sitting on the floor.

“Can I go back now please?” he asked, looking up.

“Not that easy, huh?” he added when nothing happened.

If these monsters don't patrol or get reborn, I could just stay here in this room for a while. A few weeks maybe, months if I ration everything and make bread.

He knew the worries would remain. And still, he allowed himself to breathe. This wasn't a game and he would certainly not continue with the same slaughter for another minute.

Now that his most important needs were met, he could think about a more methodical approach.

Should have learned how to make traps, he thought.

Maybe I can still figure something out... there was a bunch of stuff in that kitchen and I have a crossbow.

It wasn't exactly much to work with. Not for him that was. Bruce Wayne could already conquer the world with the tools Adrian had found.

But what can't he do?

Not important right now.

He smiled, sitting down on the bed. *One thought not occupied by fear and terror.*

It was bad enough to be stuck in this place with the horrendous monsters but his behavior earlier really showed how dangerous hunger really was.

He had won those battles but that was mostly his adrenaline and pure fear taking over, pushing him forward. Most of his actions hadn't been as deliberate as he would have liked them to be.

The soldier had fallen and he had lost it, both in the physical and emotional sense. *If that room hadn't been there.*

He didn't want to pursue that thought.

His reckless charge into the kitchen could have ended far worse too. He was incredibly lucky that there were only two servants in there, unarmed and uncoordinated.

"Way more lucky to actually find a kitchen and food that isn't rotten," he said to himself.

He grabbed a bit of food, smelling on the nuts and dried berries.

Doubt there is poisonous stuff in that kitchen, he thought and ate some more.

It really just tasted like nuts and berries. Nothing too surprising but also not like any specific variants he had ever eaten before.

Maybe it was just his imagination but Adrian was somewhat sure that these weren't just raisins and cashews. They looked similar enough but foreign at the same time.

Am I really not on Earth anymore?

Somehow he could believe that there was some eccentric billionaire out there willing to build a castle city on a hidden island or valley deep in some third world country just to enjoy the suffering of some poor kidnapped soul.

Even the undead monsters could be explained with some kind of virus.

And yet he couldn't wrap his head around the reason to nurture new kinds of nuts and berries just to make the whole thing more authentic. Tolkien had come up with new languages and Jackson had added the life like sets. But did he cultivate middle earth fruit just for the movies?

Probably not.

Hell, maybe they did.

The realization was scary.

He laughed again. *Could just not know this kind. Not like I can claim to know every kind of nut in the world.*

Berries are weird but magic isn't?

He shook his head.

A simulation is probably still the most likely scenario.

Then again that's true for Earth as well.

No matter what it is, this seems to be my reality. For now. Until I break out or get back.

He wondered about how that could be possible while lying in bed and eating a few more raisins and cashews.

This being Earth is pretty unlikely by now. If it's a simulation I could just be stuck here forever. Might just be an experiment for some sick fuck. If it's a game, then I could try to beat said game.

If this is a real place somehow supported by science, then there must be something or someone out there that got me here. There are answers that I can seek, magic that could bring me back.

He didn't consider the possibilities without solutions, instead focusing on those that presented options.

I know for a fact that I can get stronger by leveling. And I can find better equipment to aid me in whatever this journey will be.

His long term goal remained the same but he was a little stumped as to his short term ones.

Adrian had found water, food, and a somewhat safe shelter. For now.

The things he had gone through in the past three days would never leave him. He knew he would wake up in the middle of the night, sweating as he would scream at the memory of the rotten faces of the monsters he had slain.

And yet he had reached a state of relative control and safety far faster than he had dared to think possible.

No that there was much time to actually sit down and think.

As much as I hate to admit it, I have to explore more, level more, train, and learn to read.

He had no clue how to go about the last thing. It was by far the most important part in his opinion but without a teacher he thought it downright impossible.

If he had been a language professor, then maybe. In a few years he could probably figure it out. As he was, the task was simply unreasonable.

So I need to find a teacher in this place.

At this point the locals weren't quite welcoming enough for him to consider asking them for help.

His body was still aching. He remained exhausted and overwhelmed. His spirits were up however, based on everything he had achieved that morning.

Adrian knew that the feeling wouldn't last. Now that his driving needs were satiated, the looming danger of falling into lethargy felt very real to him.

Instead of leaving it to chance, he got up and went to work.

First came his crossbow and the bolts. Two of them had bent or broken, one hitting the stone wall behind the first undead he shot and another hitting the wall when he had missed.

That left two bolts in working condition. Enough to kill two things.

He continued with the kitchen, leaving his charged crossbow near one of the doors and facing outwards. Just in case something ambushed him.

The kitchen itself had two entrances, both had been open already when he found the hall. On the other side there were two doors as well, both of them closed. Another circular stairwell lead down at the end of the large room.

Adrian first moved the two bodies and threw them out the window. He closed both doors and cleaned up the blood and bits of rotten brain and bone.

Whatever had inflicted these people went deep.

He had read enough about the scientific possibility of a zombie virus to know that what he found here shouldn't be possible. And yet here he was.

Baxter had often helped him clean up because he found it difficult to see the big deal with dishes that piled up, the slight smell of food, or the occasional fruit fly infestation.

Brain tissue and rotting bone was where even Adrian drew the line however. It was his only kitchen after all. He didn't want to catch whatever these people had because of lacking hygiene.

Might already be too late.

He didn't think about it. If this was a different world, it was a wonder that he wasn't already sick.

Then again... we had thousands of years of human society to get immunity to a bunch of truly nasty bugs.

It felt wrong to be happy about that particular branch of history.

He just hoped that the red magic juice would fix whatever illness might befall him.

Maybe I should try and administer it to one of the servants, he thought.

There was a slight chance that their affliction could be cured. That was if they really had been human at some point. The architecture, writing, clothes, and weapons suggested at least that the people here had been sapient, be they human or other.

He thought the chance slim, mostly due to the decay of their bodies.

Nor would he waste his last medicine on a bet like that.

Adrian considered for a moment what he would do if he actually found a sane and healthy person here. Just the speculation brought so many questions with it that he didn't want to think about right now. Instead he settled on the more simple goals of working out and exploring more of the castle.

Not today of course, he thought, instead finishing up with the kitchen. It wasn't perfectly clean but good enough for him. He simply ignored the closed cabinets, not seeing a reason to clear out the mold filled cabinets.

Maybe I should try the stove, he thought as he looked at the thing. There was no discernible opening for gas so he assumed they used something else.

The conflicting evidence he found made it unclear how long it had been since someone maintained or even used these facilities.

In the end he decided that facing monsters was quite a bit more risky than trying out a hot plate. He would save a lot of time and annoyance if he had a way to cook water here.

He crouched in front of the thing and hid behind his shield, feeling a little silly as he turned the knob to what he assumed meant one.

Adrian heard a soft sizzling noise come from within the steel contraption but nothing else happened.

He chuckled at the situation but kept his shield firmly in front of his face and chest. A quick check of the plate revealed that it indeed became warmer.

He dialed it up while filling a nearby pot with water. Here it almost looked like the liquid wasn't as rancid as upstairs. Maybe he just imagined it.

Might just be the pipes here held up better, he thought and placed the pot onto the plate.

It didn't take long for the water to start boiling.

He couldn't help but smile at all the time he would save by not building fires.

There was no discernible ventilation system but he just left the windows open. The previous search had revealed a few flasks too.

He took three of the metal containers and carefully filled them with the boiling water. Each held a little more than half a liter, he estimated.

After letting it sit, he dumped the water and repeated the process, deeming that clean enough.

The flasks had stoppers made of a material he couldn't quite place but coupled with all the other tools he found, it suggested the people here had some pretty impressive technology. Far beyond what he assumed people in the middle ages had access to.

Probably a pretty skewed view. The Greeks and Romans had some pretty advanced things already.

At least there had been no TVs, guns, and phones so far.

Perhaps it was a good thing too. If every soldier had a rifle, his endeavors would've not been quite as successful.

Thinking of soldiers, he thought and left the kitchen. He carried the hot flasks in a pan and left them to cool in his room.

Next he found the second soldier he had killed and stripped his gear, laying everything out on the terrace to get away from the stench that started to permeate the stairwell and hallway before.

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Common]

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [Adequate]

Vitality +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Magic Projectile Speed +1%

Hands – Faenhold Soldier Gloves [Adequate]

Skill +2

Belt – Faenhold Soldier Belt [High]

Strength +4

Warrior Soul Skill Cost -2%

Legs – Faenhold Soldier Pants [Common]

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Common]

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Vitality +2

Adrian felt like an idiot, holding each piece to his face as if he desperately needed a few pairs of glasses.

There were a few obvious upgrades in the bunch. With them came a few implications, answers, and new questions.

One thing was clear. The gear wasn't the exact same, despite the names suggesting such. The bonuses were different. The High quality indicator suggested the item could have more than a single property. And a higher roll too, as the belt showed.

Adrian hadn't exactly found enough gear so far to make definitive statements.

The warrior soul skill cost reduction bonus suggested that the skills would cost some kind of resource, whatever that was. Mana and endurance were the usual suspects, both things he could imagine correlated with his Endurance, Intelligence, or Wisdom stats respectively.

He wondered if there were more wacky things like the power of the moon, literal usable rage, or blood itself to power magic.

There were no numbers or mentions in his mind's eye however.

He preferred Vitality over Strength, switching out his leather chest piece and sword. Immediately, he felt like his body wasn't quite as battered. The weapon however felt significantly more heavy.

So fucking weird.

The helmet was actually a better fit but he still chose the one with the bonus.

His silk gloves were funnily enough still better than the new ones he found. The belt on the other hand was a definitive upgrade, making up for the loss of Strength on his chest and weapon.

He put on the new undamaged pair of pants above his knight pants before he looked at his weapon.

A huge upgrade, he thought with a smile.

Could I?

He glanced at the second sword and grabbed it.

It didn't show up in his off hand slot at all, not that he really deemed it a safe way to fight anyway. He much preferred his trusty shield.

Soulbound:

Essence – 32

Level – 1

Vitality – 11 [16]

Endurance – 10

Strength – 9 [13]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Equipment:

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Adequate]

Vitality +1

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [Adequate]

Vitality +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Fire Magic Resistance +2%

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Faenhold Soldier Belt [High]

Strength +4

Warrior Soul Skill Cost -2%

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Vitality +2

2h Weapon –

Off Hand – Wooden Shield [Common]

Chapter 10

Adrian felt quite confident in his new gear. It smelled positively rancid but he much preferred that over the lack of protection and stats anything else he had would provide.

He thought about washing everything but right now he didn't want to bother. With what he had to do, maybe getting used to disgusting smells wasn't the worst idea in the world.

The bonuses to his Strength and Skill made a lot of things easier than they would otherwise be. Adrian thought about training without the gear on but finally decided against it.

For now he had to get used to what he had, what he would fight in.

He stored all the excess gear in his room, just in case his current things got damaged beyond usability.

Adrian had enough experience with workouts to quickly come up with a training regime. His endurance was abysmal, so he ran laps on the terrace. He ran laps and swung his sword both at the air and the trees. He deemed it important to get used to the feel of the weapon both hitting things and just the weight of it itself.

The branches of the various trees provided ways to do chin and pull ups, the latter he didn't manage quite yet, even with his Strength enhancing gear on. He added push ups, squats, and various smaller exercises to the mix. He had never been in top shape but his current state was abysmal by any standard.

His fear of losing motivation proved to be both well founded and unnecessary at the same time. He did spend hours on end just lying in bed, uncaring for his situation. He mulled things over time and time again, cried, shouted out into the castle city, and just walked aimlessly through his room.

Most of all however, he was bored.

Other than food and masturbation, there was little else he could distract himself with. Which made actually working out and improving his situation a very attractive past time.

Part of that was learning to bake bread. He had done it before but his last attempt had been years past. He had no yeast here either which made the whole process a little more difficult. His creations were mostly quite dense but it didn't take long for him to get better.

Days passed by, spent with self pity and working out. He did still slightly prefer the former. He cleaned out the hallway, stairs, and hall below. Corpse by corpse.

He had yet to open the closed doors in the hall downstairs, instead barricading them with furniture from the kitchen. He did the same to the left hand door in his own hallway.

The various books in the study brought little new knowledge, very few of them holding any illustrations. The few there were could be interpreted in just about as many ways as the art in the small gallery and the hallway itself.

Without context, he could only grasp at their meaning.

Adrian felt thoroughly stupid. He had read and seen so many pieces of fiction where the main character grew quickly with the situation, figuring out clues and finding answers. He was honestly just glad he had something to eat.

The training showed results quite quickly. The first weeks and months usually had the fastest progression when it came to cardio and strength after all.

He could run longer, could do five chin ups instead of just one initially. The progress made the training more fun and he quickly found himself enjoying the routine.

Adrian already felt stronger and more capable after just a week.

He had tried to think of traps but simply didn't come up with any ideas that were better than just shooting his crossbow into an undead's face in the first place.

Testing with and without his gear on showed that his progress applied to both situations.

So far he hadn't gotten a single stat point from the training alone and he doubted he could even achieve such but the results were nonetheless indisputable.

He couldn't discern the math behind it quite yet, simply lacking a way to easily test it beyond a vague feel and comparing how many chin ups he could do.

It was easier to lift his body now, and the gear made it easier still. But it also added weight that affected how much he had to lift. Neither did he know how the other stats affected it all.

His current best guess was that the stats represented his potential. His base Strength had remained at nine, despite the fact that he could now do several times the chin ups than he could do before.

If he wore only his belt, adding four points in Strength, he managed to do roughly forty to sixty percent more chin ups. The bonus seemed to decrease a little over the span of the week but he wouldn't have noticed the difference if he hadn't always counted.

His theory was that the bonus stats from his gear just added a flat value on top of whatever he could already do. He simply had too little data to come to any final conclusions however. The fact remained that a belt could magically increase his strength by half.

Vitality was a little more confusing, mostly because he didn't want to seriously injure himself just for the sake of testing. However his very skin felt more durable when the bonuses were active. He did hit a tree with his fist several times, comparing the pain and slight bruises on his knuckles.

It turned out that neither Vitality nor Strength changed his perception of pain. However the bruises themselves were vastly different, his right hand showing a much healthier skin than his left after both had punched into the tree the same amount of times.

He thought it definitive proof that Vitality increased his body's toughness in a meaningful way. He was right handed, meaning those punches were likely even harder than his left. Despite that, his right hand remained mostly uninjured thanks to his Vitality gear while his left was slightly bruised without the bonuses.

There was of course a possibility that his more clumsy left arm had hit the tree in a worse angle. He deemed it unlikely however.

Adrian also found that he just generally felt better with the Vitality gear on. He couldn't put a finger on it though and just chalked it up to general vitality and healthiness. Further testing yielded noticeable results however, not something he could reasonably attribute to just working out more.

Even now, taking off his gear made him feel more queasy, more groggy, the aching in his body more prevalent.

It all meant that he really had to think about what to wear and what to level. The latter was less important for now, with so much fighting necessary to gain a hundred Essence in the first place.

His opinions didn't change however, Adrian still deeming Vitality by far the most important stat to focus on for now.

There had been many times in that week when he stood in front of the closed doors, or the stairwell leading further down. He waited with his gear ready and his crossbow loaded but never actually continued onward.

Working out would yield more results, that much was true, but every day he spent without exploration would use up more food. Food and time. He didn't know if the latter was important in the grand scheme of things but if he just remained where he was, he would simply never find out.

Another three days passed until he finally managed to push through the veil of fear and uncertainty.

He opened one of the doors and pushed it inward, carefully stepping back as he prepared his crossbow. The weight was familiar in his arms, his right hand resting casually near the trigger piece.

Adrian continued to widen the distance between himself and the door in the hall, walking backwards towards the stairwell that led up. He avoided the many pots and pans he had strewn onto the ground as simple traps.

A few seconds passed before he heard a growl from within the room.

An undead stepped out, hitting his arm on the door frame before he stepped out, dragging his legs with each step.

Soldier, he immediately thought, feeling his hands shake slightly.

He focused on his breathing and aimed. It looked the same as the two he had met before, carrying a sword and wearing a helmet.

The thing walked out of the room and took a few steps into the dark hall, looking around as if to try and find something.

Adrian breathed out and fired.

The bolt was released and slammed into and through the chest piece of the soldier.

It growled again and stumbled towards Adrian, its sword held out towards him.

He carefully put down his crossbow and drew his own blade. His shield ready as he waited.

The soldier stepped over the pans, finally entangling one of its boots in the pots. The thing slid away, costing the undead its balance.

Adrian didn't let the chance go by. He closed the distance in three steps and slammed his blade into the monster's neck. The strike was true and slid out on the other side before he ripped the weapon out again.

He watched the monster as it flailed its blade around a few times before it collapsed in a clatter of pots.

Adrian felt himself lose focus but he stuck to his plan, leaving the undead as he hastily reloaded his crossbow. He failed twice but finally got the string back far enough to hook it into the mechanism.

You never fail at that anymore.

Run away.

The thoughts came as no surprise.

With all the time he had spend in his little secluded and safe spot of the castle, he had nearly forgotten about the monsters lurking so close by. Mental preparation was one thing, reality was another entirely.

More moans resounded from within the room.

Adrian was already aiming again, his arms shaking slightly now but he didn't want to give up on the ranged advantage. *Don't miss.*

Two more soldiers stepped out.

He waited until the first noticed him.

The creature immediately sped up, slipping on one of the pans before it clattered down in a loud explosion of kitchen utensils.

Adrian aimed at the second one coming at him with a slower pace.

Wait.

Wait.

The man raised his sword when a bolt slammed into its face.

He still felt the vibration of the crossbow, the sound laying in his ear as he put the weapon down on the ground.

Adrian breathed in and unsheathed his sword, his adrenaline spiking as he rushed to the downed creature still trying to get its bearings.

He kicked down on its back, placing the tip of his blade on the soldier's neck before he pressed down with all the strength he could muster.

A sickening sound of severed flesh and scratched bone resounded before his blade hit the stone below.

He ripped it out again and watched the second monster fall to its knees, the bolt stuck in its mouth.

Adrian wouldn't leave it to chance and slashed his sword into the creature's neck as if he was wielding an axe.

A thud resounded before he ripped it out again, another hit digging even deeper.

The creature fell forward as Adrian retreated again.

The pans worked better than expected... not as large as a body and harder to dodge, even for the soldiers.

Three bodies now littered the floor and he was still standing, with no injuries.

No bolts either.

He didn't want to sheathe his weapon now to get the projectiles back, not while he wasn't even sure if they were truly dead.

Double tap, as they say.

Nothing else came however and Adrian slowly calmed down, his breathing slowing as the sweat ran down his brow.

He wiped it away and allowed himself a weak smile.

Three more sets of armor to go through, he thought before throwing one of the nearest pants towards the opened door.

No moans resounded, no shuffling, or anything else either.

He stabbed each soldier one last time, trying to ignore the sickening sounds of his weapon biting into human beings. *Monsters... monsters, not humans. Maybe they once were human but not now, not anymore.*

A shudder went through him as he considered the possibility of him going insane, killing tourists in a castle while his mind projected undead visages onto their faces.

No, that's not how that works at all, his rationale reminded him.

He took a moment to breathe, going upstairs and to the terrace.

Sword sheathed and water flask in hand, Adrian once more admired the city below. He wasn't even at the highest point, not by far.

Ten minutes passed in a flash before he nodded to himself.

The second door now. Don't stall. Keep the energy up. Breathe. You're smarter than them, stronger, and you're not afraid.

He stopped in front of the stairwell leading down.

I'm scared.

Of course I am. I'm fucking fighting monsters!

He took a step forward.

“And you’re winning,” he said to himself as he continued.

Adrian quickly realized that another one of his crossbow bolts had broken. The wood had splintered when he had shot the first soldier’s chest.

Leaves one..., he thought and reloaded.

He took the time to move all the pans and pots closer to the second door, quickly checking the three soldiers for obvious upgrades.

Only one of the pieces proved better than any of his current gear.

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Endurance +1

He exchanged them quietly, his sword and crossbow on the floor beside him.

When he was ready, Adrian sheathed his sword and stepped to the door. He opened it the same way as he had the other one and rushed back around the field of pots and pans.

He grabbed the crossbow as he felt his heart beat quicken from the run, his arms still shaking slightly as he aimed.

Should have taken a longer break.

Maybe you should have trained for another day or two before opening the second door.

Adrian ignored the voice in his mind and simply waited.

Another soldier stepped out, followed by more creatures he couldn’t yet discern.

He waited and watched.

His eyes narrowed as he took aim, the soldier stumbling closer. Behind it two servants had stepped out of the room.

The crossbow released, its payload slamming deep into the the soldier’s chest.

It moaned once before slumping to the ground, its weight cracking the bolt sticking out of its chest before all of its movements ceased.

Adrian got his sword and prepared, watching the two servants run over the pots, both of them quickly losing their balance and slamming to the ground.

He rushed to the closest one, stabbing his weapon into its back three times until it stopped moving.

His shield held up, he turned to the other creature and saw its dead body lying amidst the kitchen utensils, its head split open on the edge of a large pot. Dark blood and brain matter slowly dripped into the steel container.

Adrian took a few steps back before he started laughing.

He still kept his eyes on the two doors and all the bodies but he couldn’t stop himself.

The rush of victory felt downright intoxicating. It had been easy too. His bolts had hit, his blade had killed. Without the internal monologue and uncertainties, an outsider might have thought him a capable warrior.

Then again, who really won this fight? Me or the pots?

“Trap master Adrian,” he whispered before hitting his sword against the shield. “Yeah, that’s me motherfucker.”

Don’t get cocky.

Focus.

There might be more.

He grabbed his oil lamp from near the entrance and walked past the many corpses, stabbing the three new ones as he went. All had already been dead.

He continued with the rooms, hitting the doors with his sword a few times before he waited. Nothing reacted to the noise.

Within he found two separate rooms, both were lined with beds and simple chests of drawers. More tables and chairs were present. A few plates with rotten food coupled with a lack of windows provided a wondrous stench that quickly pushed him back out into the hall.

He closed the doors as well, not ready to face the stench for an extended period of time.

Fuck that shit.

He checked the last soldier but found no obvious upgrade.

Adrian looked at the many corpses and decided to push onward. The fights had been simple enough after all.

No more crossbow bolts.

Before his inner voice could convince him of taking a break, he took a deep breath and entered the second stairwell.

This one was much broader and not of the same design as the one leading upstairs.

Adrian went farther down, his lamp soon the only light he could see.

When he reached the bottom, he could see a faint line of light push through below the heavy wooden door ahead. Peering through the keyhole revealed that it was indeed sunlight.

He checked the handle and found the door was unlocked.

Adrian took another deep breath and walked through, checking his surroundings as he left the door slightly ajar. Just in case he had to make a quick retreat.

He found himself in a courtyard. Withered trees and statues made of stone decorated the otherwise open space. Groups of undead creatures patrolling the area as he stepped close to a pillar supporting the open hallway close to the door.

That’s three soldiers per group, or four.

His heart started beating faster but he pushed on a little further, rushing to the next pillar before he glanced out again.

There were two groups, the closest one about twenty meters away. Bushes and roots had been left untouched, now obstructing his view.

He saw buildings rise up on the other side, the area just a comparatively small open space amidst the many high structures. There were several alleys leading away. He could make out three closed doors as well.

Choose one and sneak there. You don't want to fight them out here, not with those numbers.

Adrian chose one and listened before he glanced out to check his surroundings. The groups had moved a little farther away.

He grasped his sword and stepped out.

Immediately he heard a growl to his left.

"What..." he said and took a step back, looking at the origin of the noise.

A dog. Or well, it might have been one at some point. Its fur was in tatters, missing entirely in large parts of its body to reveal several broad scars. Its rib cage pushed through the skin, not just metaphorically but in parts even literally, dark blood dried to the edges of the bones. The dog reached up to Adrian's knees in height.

Its yellow teeth were barred, some of the skin missing around its jaws but enough muscle visible to make it clear that this wasn't a harmless animal. The creature had retained both its eyes, black and bloodshot as it stared at Adrian, still growling.

"Good do-" he pleaded.

The creature didn't wait any longer, rushing at him with a mad dash and a loud bark.

Adrian raised his shield and managed to push the dog aside a little, a stab of his sword missing the low moving target.

The creature pushed on without a care, biting into his thigh.

He heard the fabric tear before its teeth pushed into his flesh.

Adrian flailed both arms, screaming as he fell. He hit the dog with both his shield and the handle of his sword as they tumbled to the ground.

The creature didn't let go, not even when he stabbed its side.

He stabbed again when something hard smashed into his right arm, another dog biting down.

Adrian tried to wrench himself free of the teeth, his bracers holding out a little longer than his pants but giving in to the powerful jaws just as much.

His sword slipped from his fingers, still stuck in the first dog that had stopped moving by now.

Pain was everything he felt, a panic taking over as he found himself unable to shake off either of the two monsters. One was even dead but its teeth remained deep inside his thigh.

Adrian hit the living creature with his shield, the frantic movements letting the dog bite down even harder on his arm.

He smashed its head, drawing blood with the second hit before his wooden shield won out against the rotten skull. Blood, bone, and brain matter covered his defensive tool as he tried to pry open the corpse's jaw.

The top came loose but some teeth remained in his arm.

Adrian looked up and found two glassy white eyes staring back at him.

The undead soldier had a crossbow lifted close to its head, with a steel tipped bolt aimed at Adrian's skull.

The last thing he processed was the familiar twang of the heavy string.

Soulbound:

Essence – 116

Level – 1

Vitality – 11 [16]

Endurance – 10 [11]

Strength – 9 [13]

Skill – 8 [15]

Intelligence – 12

Wisdom – 11

Soul skill – Slot 1

Equipment:

Helmet – Faenhold Soldier Helmet [Adequate]

Vitality +1

Chest – Faenhold Soldier Leather Armor [Adequate]

Vitality +2

Arms – Faenhold Soldier Bracers [Adequate]

Endurance +1

Hands – Royal Faenhold Silk Gloves [High]

Skill +4

Rogue Soul Skill Damage +3

Belt – Faenhold Soldier Belt [High]

Strength +4

Warrior Soul Skill Cost -2%

Legs – Faenhold Knight Pants [Adequate]

Skill +2

Boots – Faenhold Soldier Boots [Adequate]

Skill +1

1h Weapon – Faenhold Shortsword [Adequate]

Vitality +2

2h Weapon –

Off Hand – Wooden Shield [Common]