

# EBERRON

## HOMELSS

By  
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It was the same thing this night as almost every other. Nightmares of death during the war invaded Indoar's dreams. He was no longer able to tell the difference between real memories and horrors his own mind manufactured. This time the dream revolved around a confrontation with Karnathi undead. On this mission, he was acting as a scout, so he gained a perch allowing him a vantage point that gave a good view of the battlefield. It was times like this that really bothered him. Watching the entire battle pass before you reveals more than when you are focused only on the opponents immediately in front of you.

The events of the battle playing out in Indoar's mind seemed to blur into quick still scenes of one horror to the next. It reminded him of walking down a hallway filled with macabre tapestries. In one scene, a still of a Karnathi zombie grappling a human soldier while simultaneously biting the soldier's neck and pulling the arm free from the dying man. The next scene showed a human's ax embedded in the chest of a zombie with a recently decapitated skeleton standing next to it, head still in the air. So it continued. Of course, from the vantage point Indoar started at in this dream, he would have never been able to see the finer details being shown to him now. It is the nature of dreams to sometimes confound and confuse, never following rules of logic. This time, it was almost as if Indoar was seeing memories that belonged to someone else.

Again the scene changed. He once more was himself, walking amongst the remains of the battle. As was standard for his unit, the undead have been piled for burning. Not only did this help stopping the spread of diseases, it also insured the undead will not walk again. It was a grim task, but on more than one occasion, a lone sentry was killed by an undead that was thought to be finally dead. The fire once started spread fast from some dry flesh on the zombies, perhaps the flammable liquids helped too. Soon enough the familiar smell of the burning rotten flesh filled the air. For some unexplainable reason, these bodies had the distinct smell of laskin beast sausage.

Indoar knew that he was dreaming, but the odor of cooking sausage caused a grumble in his belly that transcended his dream body. Being some time since he last ate, his dream self started working its way over to the pile of the corpses, intending to carve a piece of meat off one of the zombies. At that thought, Indoar shot up in his bedroll fully awake in the small cave they took shelter in for the night. The smell of laskin sausage still filled the air, only now he did not find it that inviting.

Indoar found Yappahin copying the strange marking they found on the wall that created the only light in the cave into a book. A small fire held a pan that the kobold was using to cook a couple of sausage links. Even after living with goblins for the better part of four years, the thought of a kobold reading and writing was amazing, let alone one being interested in some arcane scribbling found on a cave wall. In his sleepy state, Indoar stumbled none too quietly to get a better look at what his traveling partner doing. To his scout trained ears, Indoar realized the amount of noise he was making. One stumble, he even kicked a small stone that rolled between the kobold and the fire pit, missing Yappahin's knee by mere inches. The kobold, so engrossed in his task, he never even looked up.

“Some guard you make Yappa.” Indoar said in a mock irritated voice.

Letting out a dog like yelp of surprise, the startled artificer jumped to his feet, dropping the book and pen. He almost even kicked over his vial of ink. Yappa did not have to pretend to be irritated. “Don't do that. Must copy exactly” Yappa yelled.

“Entrance warded. Me you only in cave. Not think me need to guard myself from you. Maybe me thinks wrong.” The kobold's irritation visibly waned. “Cooked meat, some bread left, have.”

Indoar looked at the small fire pit Yappa made for the frying pan. The sight of the sausage did bring up a twinge of hunger. His mind wandered back to dream and the sausage smelling zombies. He no longer had an appetite.

Yappa sat back down to continue his work. Despite his loss of appetite, Indoar decided to at least have some bread to settle his stomach. He searched the bag that contained the rations, looking for something other than sausage to go with the bread. “Yappa,” he said with his face in the bag, “what are you doing anyway?”

“Kobold prophesy.” The artificer simply stated without even looking away from his task at hand. Several minutes of silence followed. The kobold stayed busy writing away and the human ate his hard bread and some harder cheese he found.

Indoar tilted his head in confusion. “Wait a minute, don’t you mean draconic prophecy?”

“That what me said, kobold prophecy” Yappa replied.

“There is a huge difference between kobolds and dragons my little scaly friend.”

Yappa gave Indoar a sideways glance and with a as wry of a smirk a kobold could muster returned, “About as much as the difference between goblins and humans hairy one?”

Almost instinctively, Indoar’s left hand came up to feel the scars on his forehead. He received these scars during his initiation into the goblin tribe. He didn’t have any true allegiance to the Rhukaan Taash clan, at least not in the way he once felt about Cyre. With the destruction of his home he needed to find a new way of life. Training new goblin mercenaries was an easy fit; even he was tired of battle. The decision to be initiated was born from a desire to gain respect and acceptance from the new recruits. Sure, it has worked for him, but sometimes he felt that he took the easy way to achieve the results he desired. He could not help but think there may be something to Yappa’s last statement.

“Done.” The kobold exclaimed. With that, the artificer looked back at his book one last time before he closed it. Setting the book down, he made his way over to the provisions bag and picked himself some bread off a loaf then went to recover a link of sausage from the pan. Holding the link high in the air, he let his glowing red eyes linger on the meaty morsel almost longingly. On the other hand, Indoar watched the grease drip off the hunk of dead meat and became a little nauseous.

Loosing interest in his meal of bread and cheese, Indoar walked over to the wall containing the glowing runes. Never being trained in anything arcane or draconic, he could not read them. The swirling patterns were intriguing on any account. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed an eddy in the smoke filling the cave from the cooking. Using his hand to feel his way, he traced the tiny air stream to a small natural crack near the top of the wall that contained the writing. This indicated to him another cave was just beyond the wall emblazoned with the draconic sigils. A sudden tingling in his left arm told him that the cave was inhabited. The human turned to his companion, who was finishing his bread rapped sausage, and warned, “Something there.”

The cave was soon filled with a noise that at once was both high and piercing and low and droning. The smoke surrounding Indoar was now filled by eddies, not from a breeze of air, but from sound waves. The two companions scrambled into action. Indoar went to his gear to retrieve his sword, while Yappa scampered over to the now increasingly cracking wall to retrieve the book he was writing in earlier. “An unknown aggressor is causing the walls around us to collapse, and all that he thinks about is a book.” Indoar mused to himself.

The crumbling wall fell, filling the already smoke filled cave with dust and dirt. As the wall fell, the glow coming from the runes winked out as they broke. Barely visible in the darkened cloudy air, a reptile creature entered the cave. Unlike a lizard, it stood on its rear feet, and even if it happened to be stooped over, it was still easily more than twice the height of Yappahin. The creature’s eyeless head scanned the room, unhindered by the darkness or dirt and smoke in the air.

“You just had to cook inside, didn’t you?” Indoar asked the kobold, not expecting an answer.

“Bad things outside also.” The kobold replied with a shrug.

“I think it’s time we find out.” Indoar said while moving closer to the small crawl hole that was the exit. In the darkness Indoar had a hard time finding his way around. Luckily their backpacks were left next to the exit. A length of rope was still attached to each pack they used to drag the packs in behind them. With his left hand, Indoar grabbed the rope that was attached to his pack. The kobold following close behind slipped his book into his pack.

“You first, me slow it down.” The artificer said over the noise of lizard like monster’s yell.

“That’s crazy, you are no warrior, that thing will make a snack out of you.” Indoar countered.

“No fight, magic.” Yappa said while rolling his eyes. He then pulled a wand out from his belt. “Besides, dark light me work better in. Go. Now!”

Reluctantly, Indoar dropped to his hands and knees and started to make his way through the hole. The destrachan’s sonic attack was still filling his ears; he almost missed the sound of Yappa speaking the command word for the wand the kobold was armed with. Near silence followed. For a brief instant, Indoar let himself that his little friend was able to dispatch their attacker. A few moments later, the monstrosity let out a loud screeching noise. The high pitched sound reached deep into Indoar’s body, making every nerve in his body feel as they were set aflame. His stomach already upset from the sausage incident, the new

sensations almost made him wretch. His symbiont was also dramatically affected, weakening his arm until it gave out beneath him. It took all of his will power to keep a hold on the rope to his gear and keep moving to the exit. He didn't see any light to signify the end of the tunnel, so he figured it must still be night. If it was daytime, well, he didn't want to know what the darkness would mean.

The assault on his senses ended when what could be called an unnatural silence filled the cave behind him. He now found the going a bit easier now, picking up his crawling speed to where the exit to the woods that should be ahead. The sound of Yappa scurrying down the tunnel was heard when the artificer emerged from his magically created silence. "Ward." Yelled Yappa as a warning.

It came to Idoar as barely recognizable as a word, so he asked, "What?"

"Ward!" Yappa yelled again, and again to human ears the kobold's speech sounded more like a dog barking than a spoken language.

A loud pop startled Idoar as he found himself engulfed in flame. In the sudden noise, he jumped away from the source of the noise, smashing his head against the roof of the tight crawlspace with an audible crack. The flame only lasted an instant, but the pain in his head seemed to stick with him. He felt the back of his head to find his hair warm and wet from what had to be blood from a fresh wound. Idoar felt his arms getting weak once more. It took from his internal reserves the strength to speak, "Thanks for the warning."

"See you found it, now move." Came the reply, from behind.

After what felt like an eternity, Idoar finally felt grass under his hands, indicating to him he finally made it out the cave. He cautiously stood up, not wanting to hit his head another time. It took a few moments for him to gain his bearings in the new outside environment. The fact his head still hurt, and most likely still bleeding, did not help matters. It was in fact still night; Yappa must have gotten an early start for the day Idoar reasoned. A few moments later, the kobold made his way out, onto the grass.

"We could stay right here until sunrise," Idoar started, "you started the day too early, and I could use a breather."

"Magic wear off soon, we need to go." Yappa replied while putting on his pack. "Maybe we should have taken chances with Sterngate patrols, and not have taken mountains."

Indoar wanted to protest for more sleep when a sudden flutter of darkness narrowly missed his head. By instinct, he dove to the side. The symbiont must still be recovering from those sound attacks he reasoned. He hasn't been surprised by an attacker in a long time due to the enhanced senses it gave to him. Not that the symbiont was all benefit, it did have many drawbacks, but not being surprised like that did have advantages.

A dozen or so of dire bats circled overhead in a frenzy, bothered by the destrachan's recent sonic attacks. The sound waves were just enough to draw the bats to the cave entrance. Yappa was the first to recover from the bats' sudden appearance. "See, bad things outside too."

"Let's go, run to the stream we saw last night, you lead. You can see better in this light than me." Indoar instructed and hastily put his pack on and put his sword, that was surprisingly still in his hand, into the sheath.

With a quick nod, the kobold sped away. His magical boots carried him at a pace that no kobold should ever be able to achieve. Indoar tried to follow. During his scouting days in the Cyran army, Indoar learned ways of moving through woods at speeds greater than the average soldier. That knowledge did not help the human keep up with his companion. It didn't take long for the man to lose track of his small speedy friend. "Yappa, slow down, I can't keep up! Where did you go?" He yelled.

Down hill in the distance, a small light appeared in the woods. The silhouette of a bipedal lizard carrying a huge pack was seen in the light running in between the mountain trees. The silhouette was running at full speed, the light centered on it. Indoar thought to himself that this wasn't exactly what he said. At least he now had something to run towards. Just as this thought came to mind, a feral howl split the night.

This time it was not the howling of that monster back in the cave. Living for some time with the goblins as he did, Indoar recognized this howl as a worg. Many times, worgs were used as mounts by goblin cavalry. It is not that that the worgs were used as beasts of burden, they happen to be intelligent. It was considered, rumored especially by the worgs' point of view, as more of a partnership with the goblins. Back in his days with the Cyran army, there were a few times when his unit came up against the goblin mounted worgs, and at that time, several said the worgs were smarter than their goblin riders. Soon, the

lone howling worg was joined by several other howls. It appears the worgs figured they had something to run towards also.

No goblins were riding these worgs, these may have been wild. Many worgs animals were able to speak goblin, but Indoar didn't feel luck enough to try his luck at finding one that did. Besides, there was no reasoning with a hungry worg. He redoubled his effort at running to catch up to Yappa. Several minutes of running passed. Finally, Indoar saw the first of the wolf like creatures. It was closing in on the kobold. Before he could shout a warning, the light moved up a tree, kobold shadow and all. Indoar continued to his run after the light

As he got closer, his symbiont, now recovered from the earlier ordeal, let him know that a silently moving beast was on his tail. The worg that had Yappa trapped in the tree, turned it's attention to the approaching human. Indoar was now able to see the kobold in the tree. As he got closer, the worg approaching from the front leaped into the air. Indoar dove at the ground, bringing him into a role under the flying animal. At the end of his role, he planted his feet onto the ground, and continued his run, hardly missing a beat. The worg saw it's pray escape underneath it and turned its head while it was airborne, never noticing the other worg he landed on, sending the both of them into an uncontrolled roll. Indoar was able to reach the tree before the worgs managed to untangle themselves. At the tree, Indoar was able to hear the sound of stream they were heading to. "Jump, I'll catch you and dive into the stream, worgs don't like water." Indoar yelled to the tree dwelling Yappa.

The falling artificer let out a howl of fear as he came crashing down into Indoar's out stretched arms. The magically lightened backpack Yappa was wearing made the combined weight of pack and kobold surprisingly light. Indoar placed his catch back on his feet. Yappa reached back and pulled some type of stick out of one of the many pockets of the pack. With a twist and strike of reptile hands, smoke began to pour forth from the stick. "Hold nose." The kobold said.

Indoar tried to respond in time. Despite his efforts, his eyes began to tear. The pair of worgs, now joined by three friends to bring the number to five, were affected by the noxious smoke to a much greater extent. It even managed to cause two of the newcomers to run off. While the other three remained, they backed off. This gave the human kobold some breathing space to make a run for the stream. They did not miss the opportunity.

Yappa's spell enhanced boots brought him to the edge of the stream first. Being unable to swim, he stood there not knowing what to do. When Inoar caught up, he picked the kobold with one hand on the pack and other hand between the legs. A grunt escaped Inoar while he gave the artificer a heave, sending him into the middle of the stream. The human was relieved to see the kobold didn't sink, being kept afloat by the overlarge back pack. What was not good was the floating pack forced the kobold's face into the water.

The human picked up a thick branch off the ground and dove into the water. The stream was calm at this point so he made good time to floating Yappa. He pulled the kobold's arms out of the water and over the floating branch. This had the additional effect of getting the kobold's face out of the water. Yappa was able to adjust himself so neither had to exert any energy to keep him on the wood.

The pair found themselves moving down the stream at a slow pace. Worgs were still chasing them on both sides of the stream, but they didn't enter the water. Relatively safe, Inoar lowered his head onto the branch and decided to just ride the stream for awhile. Despite the worg barking, he felt himself drift into a light sleep and was unable to tell how much time has passed.

"Inoar." The kobold said in time. Inoar did not respond. The kobold called once again, this time louder and with more urgency. "Inoar!"

Inoar looked at the kobold who was staring in the direction they were heading, his red eyes open wide with fear. "Hills end." The kobold stated blankly.

Unable to make sense of the kobold's statement, Inoar turned to see for himself. The sun was starting to come up, giving the human enough light to be certain that what the kobold said was true. The hills did end, but the course of stream went right over the end of the hills. Inoar urged them to maneuver the branch to the edge where the stream met the woods. At some point, the stream pick up pace and getting to the shore line was harder then was healthy for the pair. They never made it. Kobold, human and tree branch went over the edge, sending them down a forty foot drop the where the waterfall pooled below.

Gaining his senses after the fall, Inoar found the floating kobold. He swam over and grabbed the artificer and used a side stroke to make their way to the thankfully worg free shore.

“Yappa?” Indoar asked once they reached dry land. A grunt was all he heard for a reply.

“Welcome to Breland.”