



Sharns Edge

By
Kevin Liss

Edge and Jacks spent the better part of the few hours before sunrise wandering around the sewers below Dorasharn Tower looking for a lost professor from Morgrave University. As they wandered the maze of pipes overfilled with water, they wished that it was only rainwater they trudged through. The rain continued to pour down outside, and inside the sewers the filth of the inhabitants of Sharn rained down on the two investigators.

“You take me to all the romantic spots,” Jacks said to Edge without the slightest hint of his displeasure at being there, in the sewers, before sunrise. He changed his facial features to that of a blushing blonde maiden, and twittered his eyes at Jacks.

Jacks, with his most sincere mock smile responded, “It took weeks being on the waiting list to get in. Just wait until you see our room sweetheart.”

Jacks changed back to the featureless mask-like face that was his own. His wide eyes were white like others of his kind, and he had a small nose and narrow mouth. His thin blond hair was shorn close, a typical military style cut he kept from his days in the Cyran army.

The changeling and the human, Edge Archer, were good companions. Since the signing of the Treaty of Thronehold they had worked together, with Jacks’ sister, the changeling Jinx. Together they founded Jacks and Archer Investigations in their home city of Sharn. Tonight’s assignment should have been simple; find and bring back Professor Dintlefer to the institution. He was the third faculty member of Morgrave University to get lost down in the sewers this month.

Jacks swung the magically lighted lead tube he held back and forth in front of him. The light tightened into a beam that shone out of one end of the tube since the alteration creating the illumination was placed inside the tube. He did not see any signs of the lost professor in the passage, just like he did not find any signs in any of the other passages they had searched in the past few hours. The dark pipes that made up the sewers in this section of the city had smooth edges with a flat floor and carried a slight incline on one end so that the water and filth flowed ever downward. There were few places anyone could hide in, but they could easily wander from passage to passage for days and never realize they were still near where they started. All of the tunnels were nearly identical.

“He’s not down here Edge!” Jacks hated the sewers. Like most of his kind he preferred the finer things in life. While in the process of acquiring these things he did not mind getting a little dirt on his House Cannith custom boots, however getting it in them was another matter.

“I know, I know,” Edge replied. They always found the lost professors wandering around in the sewers. The university intellectuals would receive some tip, or find some lost scroll giving them the location of some grand dragonshard horde. The normally bookish professors would suddenly become adventurers, bold and daring. And they all got lost.

“We will just head back to Morgrave and let them know that we... could... not,” Edge stopped mid-sentence, both in his stride and in his sentence, and he tried to pinpoint something. “Jacks, we may be in trouble.” A low rumble could be heard in the distance. At least the companions hoped it was in the distance. With the twists and turns of the maze-like sewers the sound could be coming from just around the corner.

All that the human heard before the rats came swarming around the corner, squealing, was, “Edge, I hate you.”

Thousands of terrified rats scurried ahead of the on-coming rush of water which soon followed them. The din of their squeals drowned out everything in the passage, and the reverberation off the walls increased the sound to a painful level.

Edge took off down the passage ahead of the rats, knowing Jacks would be right on his heels. If they kept ahead of the rats they had a chance.

As they ran across an intersecting passage a few hundred yards down the sewer pipe the human slipped to a stop and reached his hand around to slow and stop the changeling. He motioned to their right, since the cacophony of squeals had intensified which drowned out speech, and they both jumped into the side passage, still running. Behind them the rats and the water maintained their momentum by continuing down the original pipe, the edges of the rat swarm and water finding the side passage behind them.

With the moment they had to regain their bearings Edge focused in on a small object glinting off his lead tube, a copy of the one Jacks held. The object flashed across his view for only a moment, yet it looked strikingly familiar to Edge. He stepped toward the object and swung his light around the wall’s edge, just above the rising water line.

“Edge! Mr. Archer? No time to dally,” Jacks stepped up behind the human, prodding his finger in Edge’s back. “I believe the water is circling back around.”

“Really Jacks, the water has dispersed by now. Someone must have released one of the locks to keep the rains from flooding the street levels.” Archer continued searching for the pendant. Yes, it was a pendant, he thought to himself.

The changeling could see the side features of the human in his light. This was not the same man he knew during the last days of the war. Of course he's not, he thought to himself.

Not the same man at all. Edge Archer was a well muscled human of thirty-five. He stood a few fingers taller than Jacks, who stood as tall as a two-handed sword. Edge carried his weight well with sharpened features all around. He had short black hair, not as short as the changelings, with a stubbly beard growing in. His unusual eyes enhanced the rogue-like charm of the man. His left eye was bright blue, and his right eye was green.

“It sounds like more water is coming, Edge. Its coming from somewhere,” Jacks prodded.

Edge suddenly called out, “found it!” He grabbed the pendant from the water’s edge and held it up briefly just as the two investigators realized simultaneously that the sound of the water was increasing.

“Somebody has released all the locks,” Edge quickly surmised. “We have to get out of here!” Too late, they realized the water level started to rise, quickly up to their shins, then their knees.

“Edge, I still hate you,” Jacks repeated as another flood of water rushed down their original passage, but this time there was too much water rushing into the intersecting passages. In seconds the sewer would fill up with water.

Professor Dintlefer paced around the sewer cover, muttering to himself. “I can do this,” he whispered under his breath to no one at all. The short, portly human stared at the cover,

keeping his eyes on it while rain drops streaked down his face. He knew that a great treasure awaited him if he could only overcome his fear of confined spaces.

The preceding day Dintlefer had recovered an ancient scroll from a stack of papers that the university received from a recently deceased patron. Of course the university received unwanted papers almost weekly from self-important families wishing to have their family records archived. Even if it was only Morgrave University who took the material and not the Library of Korranberg or Wynarn University, it still made them feel like they had given something to the community. The scroll contained a vivid description of the path a group of adventurers followed when they located a trove of artifacts from Xen'drik. As Morgrave's leading authority on Xen'drik, Dintlefer could scarcely turn away from this information. With the competition tight, what with adventurers, treasure hunters, and fellow academics, Dintlefer had to get his hands on the artifacts first.

Soaked and after eight hours of wandering the streets, back and forth to the sewer entrance, Dintlefer mustered enough courage to finally take the cover off the street. Just as he reached down, the cover moved. Shocked, the professor fell from a squat to land on his posterior. He sat agape as the cover moved aside and a dozen rats clamored out. When he saw the hand reach out, Dintlefer did not look back once all the way back to his quarters at Morgrave University.

With the water rising almost to the top of the tunnel, Jacks heaved himself out of the hole, drawing his legs out of the sewer and landing on one of the rats' tails as they clamored

about. The rat hissed and Jacks face changed to mimic the features of the rat. He hissed back at the rat and it quickly found a dark corner to hide in. The changeling reached back into the hole and grasped Edge's hand and pulled him out as the water rushed up through the outlet. Edge sputtered and spat the water out of his mouth.

They sat there for a heartbeat when Jacks said, "Well, I think I found the professor."

"What?" Edge sputtered.

Jacks pointed to the retreating figure rounding the corner a bow shot away from them. "I guess he never entered the sewers. Just think of all the fun he missed," he said wryly.

Edge just sat there and shook his head, water dripping from the both of them, and rain pelting down on top of them.

In the shadows nearby a figure sat watching the pair of investigators. Two red eyes traced the movements of the human and the changeling as they replaced the cover to the sewers and left the area in the same direction as the portly human. The shadowed figure stroked the tail of the rat that the changeling had sat on. Silently he whispered to the rat, "Til be a right friend. Thee waters only meant to rid us of them, not to be killing them. Should they return swifter measures shall be measured against them." He skulked off into the shadows with an entourage of more rats escorting him, and the injured rat nestled on his shoulder.

Jinx sat at a small writing desk in the scenic offices of Jacks and Archer Investigations. The offices occupied the corner rooms on the thirty-third level of Dorasharn Tower facing in the direction of the Hilt. They were formerly the residence of a conjuror of aerial magic, and the

standard protective walls were replaced with large panes of transmuted glass as strong as steel which offered a breathtaking view of the city around them. Another unusual feature of the offices was the balcony ledge which jutted out from the corner office, the office of Edge Archer, the only office with closed doors.

The changeling Jinx, Jacks' younger sister by two years, looked up repeatedly at the closed doors with a concerned look on her face. She sat at the desk trying to copy some papers to no avail since the person occupying the office distracted her from her work. Jinx was of average height for a woman, and only stood up to her brother's chin when standing straight, something she rarely seemed to do since she always seemed to be reading. Reading when she sat, reading when she lay down, even reading when she walked around, which gave others the impression that she was clumsy since she often stumbled into things. Her hair was so light blond that it seemed to be white when viewed from any distance, and she always had it pulled back away from her eyes in braids or tails to keep it from obstructing her view of her books.

While Jinx loved to read, part of her behavior was an act. She appeared clumsy, but was as lithe as a cat. Her habitual reading often times coincided with her continuous training in the magic arts, arts that she pursued in order to read people. She was an accomplished wizard, yet her specialty lay in tapping into the abilities of her ancestors. Through magic and training she could read the thoughts of others. She was a mindspy. A favorite tactic of hers was to lead her subject into believing that she was engrossed in whichever tome she was reading, her pupil-less eyes not revealing where her concentration lay. While seeming to be reading, she could scan their thoughts, often finding revealing tidbits about her subject. One of the benefits of only being a changeling and not a doppelganger was that she could remain in her true form while doing her

mind spy, while the target remained oblivious. After all, only doppelgangers and not changelings could read minds.

The person in Edge's office was the cause of her trepidation this morning. Somehow she was able to deflect Jinx's abilities. Through magic or training she did not know. Being stuck in the office alone with the elf did not help matters. Where are those boys, she thought, and the question seemed to herald the entry of the two rogues. Barely a heartbeat after that the street door swung open and Edge and Jacks strolled in exchanging their usual banter.

"Nice of you two to show up this morning," Jinx called out as Jacks closed the door behind him. "How long did it take this time?"

Jacks answered sarcastically, "No time at all. We caught him before he even entered the sewers, and he ran home as soon as we found him." He briefly changed his appearance to that of Edge and wrapped his hands around his own neck in a mock strangling. "We were done so fast that we decided to head to the bath house for a quick scrub and massage."

"I said that I was sorry Jacks," Edge replied, throwing his hands up in exasperation. "I thought you were the expert on people, though. 'Sounds like an adventurer in the making' you said. 'By the time we find him he should be rolling in artifacts' and 'he will probably need to find us when we get lost'. I believe those were your words.

"Uh, guys, you may want to resume this little battle afterwards," Jinx chimed in.

At once Edge and Jacks asked, "After what?"

Jinx pointed towards Edge's closed office doors, an expression of concern on her face.

Edge asked, "A client?" quickly followed by Jacks', "A woman?"

Jinx nodded to both of their questions and replied with just one horrifying word, "Elf."

Shaking, Edge slowly entered his office. It was usually a relaxing moment, entering the simple and sparse office, especially with the view that greeted him through the tall windows. Not today, however. Outside the rain still fell from darkened skies. Water pelted the window, drumming a cadence that Edge equated with an Mroranon death march. In this case it may not be far from the truth, he thought.

Seated across from the simple desk sat an elven woman with her back to Edge. She had straight long hair the color of honey which flowed over the short-back chair Edge kept facing his desk. A light green cloak was draped over the back of the chair, and the water from the rains were pooling at the base of it. She wore a slight red dress that hugged her frail, yet muscled, frame. From behind her Edge could see the pointed tips of her ears, which suddenly made him feel light-headed.

She turned to face him as he closed the door and she asked, “Edge Archer I take it?”

Instantly Edge felt a wave of panic and exuberance as he recognized her face. A series of half-conceived thoughts and memories flooded into his mind as the room spun around him. As the moment subsided he realized that she was under his arm, keeping him upright. “Are you alright?” she asked. Her speed and strength, and magical beauty, caused his thoughts and speech to falter as he tried to reply, “I... um... yes. Yes I should be. For a moment I felt that I knew you.” He stood up straight, which allowed him to separate himself from the sweet flowery aroma of the intoxicating elven woman.

Despite his initial reaction, Edge realized that the woman before him could not be anyone that he knew. Unfortunately, he thought. He seldom dealt with members of any of the dragonmarked houses, much less with the elf controlled House Phiarlan to which she belonged,

judging from the dragonmark she bore on her upper chest. Sure, he dealt with the Shadow Marked as often as most folk since they co-controlled the Entertainers and Artisans Guild throughout Khorvaire. That as well as information brokering and espionage as most disreputable types knew. But, did she know him?, he thought to himself.

Edge Archer was a veteran of the Last War. That much he knew of himself. Who he was before Cyre was destroyed was questionable. The first thing he remembers was waking up on the border of the newly created Mournlands a few hours after Cyre was destroyed. Not knowing who he was, or where he was, he soon ran across a Brelish patrol investigating the destruction of their neighbors. They identified Edge as a fellow Breland soldier, and he was quarantined 'for his own protection' until they deemed him fit to return to duty, despite his memory loss. He met Jacks and Jinx in his new unit and they all became fast friends, a friendship which continued on after the end of the war two years later. They started Jacks and Archer Investigations in Sharn soon after that, but in that time Edge never met the elf woman before him. What he did not know was whether he knew her before the destruction of Cyre, and if she knew him.

"We have never met, yet I do know of you Edge, if I may call you by your given name," she calmly replied despite the dramatic affect she seemed to have on him.

"Of course," he quickly answered, "on both counts. I feel so embarrassed. Now that I went and made a fool of myself, how can I be of service to House Phiarlan?"

"Not House Phiarlan, Edge. This is for me. I need to find my husband. I need you to find Galifar ir'Wynarn."