

THE PRINCE AND THE ASSASSIN

By

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CHARACTERS: PRINCE, young, confident, wearing armor
RED, a girl, but PRINCE thinks she's a boy. Wears cloak
and mask to hide her identity
CRAWFORD, older, grouchy castle guard

SETTING: In the deep forest late at night. They have set up camp for the night.

AT RISE: Everyone is sleep around the campfire.

(Red stretches and yawns. It's still night. He gets up and heads over to the edge of the woods. He pushes bushes out of his way and as they swing back he disappears. After a second he returns sighing.)

PRINCE:

(Sits up and yawns)

Where did you disappear off to?

RED:

(Sarcastically.)

Wouldn't you like to know?

PRINCE:

Yes I would like to know.

RED:

(Snarled, showing bright sharp teeth, and responded with an attitude)

I took a piss your highness. Want to know if it went well too? I'll make sure to announce it next time.

PRINCE:

(Sounding serious.)

That'd be great.

RED:

You know, you piss me off. If I wasn't hired to travel with you and help you slay the dragon, I'd gut you and string you up by your toes. (Red smiles viscously) Or I could string you up by yo-

PRINCE:

(Cutting RED off)

I get it Assassin. (He spits.) You're the great and dreadful Unseen Smirk. Who hired you any way?

RED:

None of your goddamn business. And my names Red.

PRINCE:

It is my business. If you're going with me, I need to know who hired you and what the job is. (PRINCE stands up and glares, resting a hand on the hilt of one of his daggers.)

RED:

Calm down pretty boy.

(Chuckles murderously and amused.)

Don't get your tights in a bunch.

CRAWFORD:

(Not even moving from his blankets.)

Both of you shut up. I'm sleeping. The sun's not even up. If you're so awake go check the perimeter and set up watch.

RED:

Lazy arse.

(RED kicks the ground sending rocks flying, nearly hitting CRAWFORD.)

CRAWFORD:

Get going boy. Don't make me angry or you'll have one heck of a fight.

(CRAWFORD begins to snore again.)

RED:

I'd love to see you try old man.

(Grumbling he follows PRINCE behind a tree. RED picks a tree to the right of the PRINCE. Where they sit and take watch)

PRINCE:

(Looking over at RED.)

You know, I really dislike you.

RED:

Well I'm not fond of you either.

PRINCE:

Well that might be because you don't know me. You have no idea what I've been through.

RED:

Whatever it is, I am sure I have been through worse.

PRINCE:

I doubt it.

RED:

I've witnessed murders. In fact, I've had to cut people into pieces myself. What's the worst thing you've seen, Prince?

PRINCE:

The worst?

(Pause to decide whether he wants to tell.)

The worst was the day the dragon attacked. I saw more death than you could imagine.

(Sounding sad.)

I can never forget that day. I had been out riding and had just posted Bailey, my horse, outside by the barn. I had just walked into the castle when I heard Bailey whinney in fright and run back towards the forest.

(Shakes his head.)

I stepped back out of the castle and started to go after her. I was so confused I didn't even notice the shadow that was now looming over me. I heard one of the servants shout a warning. I looked up and saw the biggest dragon I've ever seen. It was black and had a bluish tint. Its

wings were long and tattered like an old shirt. I was so mesmerized that I couldn't move. It was huge. Somebody pushed me out of the way. I looked just in time to see the beast land on a servant and crush his skull like a grape, covering me in his blood.

RED:

Gross. What did you do?

PRINCE:

(He is now staring up into the sky.)

I ran into the castle to warn everyone, but it was too late. I shouted at a servant to warn the rest of my family as I held back the massive beast. I cut its snout, but that's all I got in before it threw me against the wall. I must've blacked out.

(He closes his eyes and let a tear slip down his cheek.)

RED:

(Less sarcastic, actually beginning to be empathetic.)

You're braver than you seem. I'd expect someone like you to run away with their tail between their legs.

PRINCE:

Many did. I came to about three hours later. I opened my eyes to find half the castle gone and in crumbles. The blood had dried by then. I felt sticky and crusty. There were servant bodies everywhere. Some in pieces; a leg here an arm there. Others flat like. They all had something similar in common though. A look of terror, blood, and the stench of death. It wreaked and made me gag, I couldn't hold down my bile. I vomited quite a bit.

RED:

I bet you did. One man to another, after my first murder, I vomited. It's normal, don't feel special. Where was your family?

PRINCE:

After I had recovered my family. I remember I began climbing through the rubble looking for survivors and my family. The dry blood on me flaking off in some places. I eventually came across my father's body, sword in hand. He had blood dripping from his mouth. There was already a puddle of blood around his body. His eyes were open, filled with pain and the glossiness of death. He had been crushed by a falling stone. I closed his eyes and sat there for a long time. I tried to pry open his hand and grab his sword. I stealed my nerves and began my search again. I finally found someone who was hiding in the stable. She was shaking and covered in dust. Blood dripped from a cut on her forehead. She could barely speak from fright but she told me that the dragon had reached my family despite my sacrifice. My sister was

nowhere to be found during the chaos she couldn't be found. No one had seen her even before the dragon attacked. Last anyone knew was she was in her room.

RED:

Did you find her?

PRINCE:

(He opens his eyes finally.)

I rushed to where she slept. I never found my sister's body, but I found blood. A lot of it. She died or disappeared. I don't know what happened to her. She was always running off during the day, disappearing.

(RED shifts, looking uncomfortable.)

My mom was captured and carried off, but not before the dragon set fire to the village. I ran to the top of a hill that overlooked it. Everything was ablaze. I could hear the screams of people who were burning and had lost family.

RED:

I'm sorry.

(RED looks away and sighs)

I understand how you feel. I had a brother and wonderful parents that died that day. Sure my mother wasn't happy that her eldest son became an assassin but she understood that it was to help us with money. She used to tell me that I should just quit while I still could. Being the eldest son I was to inherit the farm. But when mother wasn't around my father would pat my shoulder and tell me he was proud that I'd become a man. How he was proud that I had stood up and taken responsibility for helping the family. My brother would come running to hug me whenever I returned. He always missed me when I was gone. When I wasn't on a job I worked on the farm. In the mornings I'd feed the animals. Then in the afternoon after I finished helping my mother in the garden I would go swimming in the creek. We lived on the edge of town by the east woods. When the dragon attacked, my family burned with the house. I'd been by the creek when I heard all the screams. I rode my horse home as quickly as I could, but still I was too late. All I found was rubble.

PRINCE:

Do you miss them?

RED:

Yeah, anyone would. My employer found me drinking away the loss. He offered me a fair amount of money and a job working for him.

PRINCE:

(Nodding.)

I'm sorry, man.

(Pauses, re-focusing energy on their task.)

Well getting this dragon shall make you feel better.

RED:

Sure.

(He sounds sad and looks at the ground. Here RED is considering telling the PRINCE the truth -- that she is a girl, and in fact his lost sister.)

Hey Prince, I'm not-

CRAWFORD:

(Walking toward them.)

Since you boys can't shut up and let me sleep, help me pack up and head out. You just couldn't shut up could you? Stupid kids.

PRINCE:

(PRINCE stands up.)

What were you saying?

RED:

Nothing important.

(Standing up.)

Come on let's go help pack before he comes back.

(Smirking.)

Cause if I hear one more word from him, I'm cutting his tongue out.

PRINCE:

(Chuckling.)

Wouldn't want that would we?

(Walking towards the fire and packing.)

How'd you get your nickname?

RED:

I have many nicknames. The Unseen Smirk is the worst. It sounds so stupid. I have nicknames like the Bloody Rain, Death Dragon, Veiled Demon, and more.

(Pulling out sword.)

I mean the beauty has a name too. The scarlet sword. She's finely crafted by a master blacksmith. I mean she does all the work.

PRINCE:

(Packing a pan and cup into a bag.)

What's your real name? I mean you must have a real name.

RED:

(Begins rolling up sleeping bag.)

Does it matter, my identity is suppose to stay hidden. It's not hidden if I tell you.

PRINCE:

(Dumping water over the fire.)

It's not like I'm going to tell anyone. Just tell me your name. It's not like I'm asking you to show me your face.

RED:

I am not telling you my name. It would be like laying my head down under an axe. If I told you my name I'd have to kill you, and that wouldn't be any fun for the both of us. Plus I don't want to get Scarlet all dirty; I just polished her last night.

(Raising sword and fake pouting.)

PRINCE:

You have to tell me or you're no longer allowed to travel with us. It's not safe to travel with someone you don't know or trust.

RED:

(Whips around to face PRINCE.)

You can't tell me what to do! You're not my king or my prince. I'm traveling with you whether you like it or not. I'm getting paid a good amount, no way am I passing that up. You'll just have to deal with it your *highness*.

(Sounding vicious and dangerous.)

That's final.

(Starts walking away.)

PRINCE:

It's not final.

(Grabbing RED's arm.)

I'm not done talking.

(RED whips around and holds Scarlet to PRINCE's neck)

RED:

Yes it is. I will never tell you who I am, nor anyone else. I am here to help you, not kill you. But if it comes to it I won't hesitate to slit your royal throat. Leave me alone.

(Removes sword and starts to walk away. PRINCE reaches out and grabs RED's Hood, Pulling it off. RED is back at the PRINCE's throat.)

PRINCE:

You're a girl?

(RED is wearing a mask that covers her eyes. Her hair is red and falls to mid back. She spits into the PRINCE's eyes and punches him.)

How are you a girl?

(Holding his jaw.)

RED:

I should keep my promise and slit that stupid throat. Maybe I could cut you into multiple pieces. You're a very stupid man.

(Standing thinking about her options.)

CRAWFORD:

Hurry up let's head out. We need to move. What's taking so long anyway?

RED:

The Prince is horrible at packing. We'll be there in a few.

(Thinking. Now talking to RED.)

Don't tell anyone or I'll make your death very slow and painful.

(Pulls hood over her head.)

Finish your packing *Prince*. Don't you dare say a word about this, I am still the man that everyone fears. Me being a *woman* doesn't change *anything*.

(Cut a little bit of the PRINCE's throat.)

A promise that I'll kill you if you say a word.

(Walks away. Grabs her pack and walks off stage.)

(PRINCE watches her walk away. After she disappears off stage he hold the cut at his throat)

Lights out.