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At the Foot of a Mountain

In a small village, at the foot of a mountain resides a hardy people of strong faith. In the village there was a smithy who went by the name Velour, while his name had a soft meaning he was built like iron and mirrored the very material he bent using his master skills. Velour took great pride in his work and the village embraced it as well. All door handles, locks and hinges were made from Velour's forge. His furnace was responsible for the guards' rapiers and armor. Velour was responsible for all the tools that craftsmen and miners used. Today, he arrived at his workshop and felt something was off. He checked the blast furnace to make sure it was at the correct temperature, inspected the tools to make sure they were in working order and verified with all his apprentices that they have the material for the day's work. With everything in order, Velour departed and took his usual walk through town. As Velour flowed through streets he wondered what it was that was bothering him, so consumed in his thoughts he almost barreled through the seamstress. After a brief and innocent bout, he apologized with a small bow and went about his way.

Upon finishing his route Velour ended at the river. This river ran louder and stronger further down, where another village was but that was a 2 day journey. It was known as the Innare River, a tribute to Inarre, the Goddess of Time. Here the river ran two horses thick and made for a calm time for thought. Velour never felt this, usually he was so sure of himself but today a feeling nagged at him, one he had never felt before.

Before he could dwell any longer, Velour heard a voice, a quiet and confident one, "here" it said, "i can feel your thoughts, you think deep, iron one". Velour could hear it but could not see it, until finally a small blue orb appeared. So this was the voice that spoke, Velour wondered what it could be, for no one had spoken of it. The orb wisped and coalesced in strange patterns, almost as if zagging towards him, then it arrived in front of him, holding steady like a candle flame.

Velour asked "What are you, I have never seen one of your kind here". The orb paused then answered "I am a fracture from a being long ago, I sense things. Sense a small emptiness in your being. What is this emptiness you feel?"

Velour questioned that, an emptiness? It didn't feel like emptiness, more like a thick fog. The creature seemed to have agreed, its orb shape pulsing larger than before. "I see... a fog, it has been centuries since I have spoken with one of your kind, so many sensations you experience." The creature drifted for some time, orb pulsing, and then said "I think I know what might cure your pain. Follow, I have something." Velour felt no ill intentions from the creature and followed in tow.

Just a little ways up the mountain and the creature stopped, signaling to an item on the river bed. When Velour stepped up to the river bed he noticed nuggets of gold lodged into the sandy banks. Velour bent down and grabbed the nugget, feeling nothing from its touch and placed it down.

“What is the matter,” the orb said in a distant tone, as if it was speaking from the past, “what makes you reject this, you humans cherish objects of this nature.”

Velour said “I do not care for gold, it does not interest me”

The orb, after some time, pushed forward by offering another item of interest. “Come, if this does not satisfy you then I know what else might” and with that, the orb led further up the mountain.

After traveling for some time the strange creature led Velour to a hidden grotto, perched high in the mountain. In the grotto, under a dim yellow light from an unknown source, were diamonds sparkling as deep as the eye could see, for a moment, Velour’s eyes lit up at the beautiful expanse but only for a moment and then the feeling faded.

Velour looked around once more and replied to the spirit “This is not what I desire. This place only brings about more answers: if I cannot appreciate a beauty such as this, then what hope is there for me?”

The spirit sat for a moment, thinking, a deep long pause Velour had not witnessed before, until finally, the spirit spoke “I know of such a place, high in the mountains, one which is said to cure all men of all ailments, both physical and mental, let us see if this destination will cure your...fog.”

Velour noticed the sun notch some spaces, marking the passing of a few hours, and just about as he was going to ask the question, the spirit relieved him of this and exclaimed “we are here”

It was magnificent, a castle high in the mountains. While every mountain top was capped in snow, this was isolated, with trees lining the exterior, spiraled peaks that looked to radiate heat. As Velour drew closer, he noticed this was no ordinary stone but that of the famous stone from the quarries of Tol Farai, a land to the north. The stone was so strong, it could last thousands of years. So smooth to the touch and the color a milky white, Velour understood now why he could not see this castle before. As a man who shaped the elements, Velour greatly appreciated the castle.

Then the spirit said “you have only seen the outside, let us venture further.” As they passed through the great doors, Velour could swear that the doors were made of timber from the lands of Celebri Felis; he was drawn back into reality when he spotted the lush gardens in the castle’s bailey. Steam rose from the pond signaling a hot spring, birds flew around unbothered by the cold air that gripped the surroundings, everything was immaculate, yet, again, Velour felt something tugging at him, what had been bothering him *all* day? This place was perfect but that desolate and lonely feeling still followed him. While Velour loved his forge and had apprentices,

he wasn't close with them, while the townspeople cherished his work, he never cherished any bonds with these people. It dawned on Velour that he had only himself and no other.

The orb, noticing Velour's mood, sighed in relief and said "ahh...i see what it is that disturbs you now. alas, this is one thing i have no control over. i am sorry iron one. i hope you find the treasure your heart is looking for" bidding adieu, the orb left and Velour lay in the bailey to rest before moving on.

Roughly an hour or two before midnight, Velour had risen before the sun to make his way to the forge. Velour walked haggardly, realizing his problem did not soothe his pain and fix it by the striking of iron or at the cost of the coin.

Upon arriving at the destination where he met the river spirit, Velour noticed someone, it was the seamstress. Confused, Velour spoke "Tis' early in the morning for you to be out here mistress, no?"

The seamstress didn't look in his direction, she looked up and said "Come sit, you will miss it".

Velour noticed her eyes, they were fixated on the sky, like a man who sees land after spending days at sea.

The Seamstress sat there for a while then spoke again "I noticed some time ago, that at this time, the stars are the brightest. There! Can you see? That is the Arch of Ahtriel and there that star pattern is the Holy Knight of Revinor, Dariel. I have waited at this location at each hour and no hour like now ever showed the stars the way it does now. Isn't it marvelous?"

Even more confused, Velour couldn't seem to take his eyes off the seamstress, what was her name again? He had seen her so many times but never once did he ask for her name, had he ever cared until now?

Before he could speak, the seamstress continued "It's funny, we have seen each other so many times in passing and yet when we last met that was the only time I ever sensed the real you, brief, but present. Tell me something about Velour, anything about you." Velour felt something deep building in him. Not a heat of rage but a genuine warmth. No, no, he hadn't ever told anyone anything about himself. At that moment, Velour felt he couldn't stop talking, Velour spoke more now than in his entire life, and before he knew it, the Seamstress and him walked down the river back to the village.

The End.