

Chapter 9 Carnage

The group of survivors continued through the town of Keilberg. So far there were no signs of any other humans in the area. Living ones that was.

Kate gulped, a flash of the corpse she had just seen going through her mind. *Stay focused.* She checked behind herself, the two men following with quiet steps, making as little noise as they possibly could.

The outskirts of the small town consisted mostly of lone standing houses much like the one they had gone into. A few of the roofs were burnt, some walls entirely broken in and every door opened with force. She wasn't sure goblins alone could've done that kind of damage. More Wargs perhaps or even Orcs. If they wielded their blades or hammers, a door made out of wood couldn't withstand an assault for long.

Compared to large cities, the people living here had little reason to add security doors to their houses. Kate hoped a group of people had managed to stay safe in the core of the town. The buildings there were larger, and she was sure a few of them had bunkers. Still there from the cold war era.

"Wait," Grey whispered from behind, pointing at a single house about forty meters to their right.

Kate squinted her eyes and saw a single goblin. The green creature wore simple brown pants and a padded long sleeved chest piece. A dagger was strapped to the string going around its waist. It looked out into the forest.

She moved forward, ushering the others to follow. A few steps and they couldn't see the creature anymore.

"S... shouldn't we kill it?" Grey asked in a whisper.

"We don't know how many there are," Kate answered. "Could be a few, could be hundreds," she added. "Thanks for the warning."

They spotted a few more single Goblins in the next minutes, growling noises from within the buildings growing more frequent as well. Blood now dotted the streets here and there. More of the houses closer to the center had been set aflame, their windows shattered, some even fully collapsed.

Her heart sank when they reached the central square. She took a step back and nearly stumbled into Grey. He just barely stepped aside, focused enough to react.

"Wh..." he got out when he saw the same thing. He was about to make a noise when Kate's hand covered his mouth.

She pointed to the building behind them. A square slab of concrete that housed the local tourism office and a few apartments above. Kate shook her head at Jon before he had rounded the corner to see the square.

The building seemed clear, no noises coming from within.

Kate gripped her crowbar and went inside, the glass door broken down like everywhere else. She checked the few rooms on the ground floor and went upstairs. The others didn't talk as she stopped

near the first apartment door, forced open.

She nodded to the others and went inside.

The living room had been turned upside down, picture frames, pots, and furniture broken and strewn about. The door to the bedroom was open but her eyes fell onto the bathroom instead. No lights were on but sunlight flickered in through a few of the windows. She walked to the door with quick steps and closed it, the person inside not someone she could help anymore. *Like a wild animal attack*, she thought and sat down on the couch, both hands gripping her weapon as she tried to stop the shaking.

“S... should I close t... the door?” Grey asked in a whisper.

She looked up and gave him a light nod. *Right. Not why we're here. Not why we're here.*

“I remember this building. We're not far from the center are we?” Jon asked.

Grey drew his sword and checked the bedroom before he came back.

“There's... I've never seen anything like it,” Kate said. The image of the square covered in blood, half eaten corpses, bits and pieces of humans. It was all she could do not to puke up her breakfast. She felt sick. Out of her depth. There had been Wargs too, more than one, still feasting on the humans. Humans she had known. Most not in a personal manner but she had seen most everyone in the small town at least a few times.

Jon grabbed both her shoulders. “Kate. We need you. Here. I can't do this.”

“R... right,” she said and took a deep breath. *If we don't move, we're just going to be adding to the bodies.* She stood up and sneaked to the bedroom. The blinds were open, two sets of windows looking out onto both the main square and the street on which all the main stores were located. She looked out onto the square, three Wargs visible within the carnage. She focused on the knight statue at the center of it all. The stone sculpture stood beheaded, his sword broken and left on the ground, blood covered just like the horse he still sat on.

She ground her teeth and sat down for a moment. An absolute slaughter and an attack on her home. Kate felt something click in her mind, as if a calm came over her. Maybe it was part of her magic, one of her skills, or her Class itself. But she knew just getting supplies wouldn't be the end of it. Not for her. She grit her teeth and took a deep breath.

A glance out onto the main street showed a similar scene, albeit less extensive. Bodies still littered the ground, some as if thrown out from the windows of their homes.

Kate walked back. Her teeth ground as she pointed towards the street. “No Wargs towards the store. Out through the back door and onward behind the buildings. The pharmacy is the fourth one,” she said and walked to the door. She hesitated. “Bodies out on the street. They're all dead,” she added, perhaps in part for herself. “We stay quiet.”

Jon nodded, his face strained and crossbow ready. Grey did the same, both waiting for her to lead the way.

She opened the door and left, down the stairs and out through the back door. A glance around showed no creatures in sight, a single body in the small field ahead. A man in his thirties, four arrows sticking out of his chest. His face looked familiar but she had never learned his name. Kate ripped her gaze off the form and moved onward, quietly through the trimmed and yellowing grass.

A cool wind picked up, the smell giving her pause. Blood and death. *We'll need those masks*, she

thought, checking for any monsters as they crept through the mostly quiet town.

It had been her home, desecrated and turned into nothing more than a ghost town. Filled with savage beasts and the corpses of her neighbors. Kate knew then that no matter what happened that day, she would come back.

The doors to the pharmacy were broken in, just like everywhere else. Blood covered parts of the floor, whatever had been injured here, dragged out and away. Most of the glass cabinets had been broken. Wooden drawers lined the walls behind the counter, some of them cracked open but the majority left alone. Medicine was strewn all about the bloodied and glass covered floor, the storefront smashed in but in the shade.

“Close the door, we have some cover behind the counter,” Kate whispered behind herself. “We need keys,” she said and got her backpack. Her crowbar still in hand, she started to chuck every intact box and pill blister she could see into her pack. “Only small glass bottles,” she said as Jon started doing the same.

Grey checked the counter itself, searching through the open drawers until he motioned towards Kate. He held a set of keys.

“Let me check,” Kate said as he handed them to her.

It took them near twenty minutes of quiet and tense work to open all the drawers and empty the contents into their packs. None of them cared for the actual list Melusine had given them. They just decided to take everything they could get before this building too was burned down or searched by someone else.

“We s... should leave... a note,” Grey said. He had reserved a single pack of near everything they had found and put it into one of the drawers, the keys returned to where he had found them. “Others might come.”

Kate glanced at him and nodded. “Good idea,” she said with a light smile, walking over as she grabbed a random piece of paper and a pen.

Come to Keilberg Castle, humans inside. She wrote the words and hesitated. *Can they read and speak English?* She didn't care. The chance of a human searching through the pharmacy was much higher than them going through everything again. Not with the lack of care they showed in their actions. She added directions, estimated walking time, and kilometers before she added the piece of paper to the collection of medicine Grey had prepared in one of the drawers. They locked it and shouldered their packs.

“Mine is nearly full,” Jon informed with a shaking voice.

“Same here,” Kate said. “But we should check the skiing store anyway. They should have larger packs. We'll circle around afterwards,” she said and checked her phone. “Half past two.”

The two men nodded.

She glanced over the counter, the door to the left slightly ajar. *A side room? Storage or a cellar?* “I'll check the door quickly,” she said and was about to go when Jon touched her shoulder.

“We go together,” he said.

She looked at him for a long moment before she nodded.

The door led into a small hallway, one door revealing a toilet. Stairs on the other side led down into

the cellar. Kate turned on the lights. They found boxes of medical and cleaning supplies ripped open and strewn about. A human corpse sat against one of the walls, her eyes open, deep cuts on her stomach with blood pooling below her legs. Kate stopped and turned off the lights. "I think we have enough for now."

Her companions didn't complain, the group moving up and out the back of the pharmacy before they made their way to the next store.

Whoever had gone through the skiing store didn't do a whole lot of damage. Some of the clothing rails were on the ground and the skis themselves were piled up on the wall they would normally rest against. The front door leaned against the hinges, sunlight coming in through the high windows but most everything inside shrouded in shadows. They checked but found no monsters.

Kate took off her ripped work pants, her jacket, and gloves. "Let's gear up," she said in a whisper and started going through the trove of high quality equipment. A pair of mountaineering pants for seven hundred bucks, a backpack worth four hundred. She moved on to thermal underwear, gloves, hunting and army knives. There was so much useful stuff in the store that they had to consult with each other on what to take. Their previous backpacks fit into the new ones, dark green colors to help obscure their large forms.

Kate strapped four large hunting knives to her belt, Grey copying her as soon as he saw it. There was enough here to equip half a town for a month long expedition into the mountains. Which was essentially what they tried to accomplish, for the smaller group they were at least. "Can you carry more?" she asked the two.

Both looked at her with strained expressions, the heavy packs already more than enough.

She didn't say a word, grabbing a large sports bag and filling it with more gear.

"Kate..." Grey whispered from near the storefront. He was crouched and looking out onto the street.

She moved over and followed his gaze.

A single goblin stood in front of the Golden Swan, the little creature shooting arrows into a nearby corpse from time to time, looking around with a lazy expression.

The large establishment was the jewel of Keilberg, the rustic restaurant and hotel attracting more tourists than anything else in the area.

"Why is it there?" she whispered. *What are you guarding?*

They moved back to Jon and told him about the goblin.

"Should we do something?" he asked.

Kate glanced at each of them in turn. "What if there are people inside?"

"You want to fight it?" Grey asked.

She hesitated. "I've... killed a lot of them already. I can take one," she said. "If you two don't want to risk it, you can wait here..."

Jon gulped.

Grey looked at her. "I'll come too."

"I..." Jon whispered.

"Watch from the storefront. If you see us running back, get the bags and move them out back. Or shoot whatever is following us," Kate whispered and put down her two bags near the back door. She took off her boots as well and motioned to Grey.

He did the same and unsheathed his katana.

Jon gave her a nod but avoided her eyes. "I... I'm sorry... I j... my daugh-"

She grabbed his shoulder. "It's fine. Time for that later. Grey, we move," she said and went out the back.

The two of them sneaked past another building before Kate glanced around the corner. She could see a piece of the bow the creature was holding up but its body itself was obscured. "I go, you follow. Once it's dead, I'll check inside. You follow half a minute later, in case I have to come out quietly. If you hear fighting, you come inside."

Grey nodded.

He listens, good, she thought and crept forward while checking her corners. It was eerily quiet. Kate didn't remember if she had ever experienced Keilberg so bloody silent. She focused and glanced around the corner. The goblin was right there, just a few meters to her left.

It snickered to itself as it prepared another arrow.

She waited until it shot, three quick steps bringing her next to the creature.

Yellow eyes turned towards her when a hunting knife slammed into its neck.

Kate moved behind it and covered its mouth with her gloved hand, the knife deep in the gurgling monster's throat. It stopped moving a few seconds later, a message appearing in the corner of her vision. The goblin was dead.

Grey had managed to grab the bow before it fell to the floor, the man now standing next to the entrance with his blade at the ready, the weapon shaking ever so slightly.

She lowered down the corpse and rested it next to the entrance. A quick glance towards the square in the distance showed no monsters on the way. And so she went inside. The lock had been broken with brute force, allowing her to simply push the heavy thing open without much effort. Inside, she slowly closed the entrance again with a last glance at Grey.

The entryway led into a small coat room, a door to the left marked with the signs of toilets. The one to the right was open, the sound of a crackling fire coming from within. *I missed the smoke*, she thought and crept inside on her socks. The room was warm, strong smells of sweat and roasted meat coming her way.

All the tables and chairs of the main room had either been smashed or pushed aside, some stacked and covering the many windows, others reduced to wooden bits and piled up. The goblin didn't guard any human prisoners. Kate froze near the door with her eyes on over a dozen sleeping monsters, all of them goblins.

She forced herself not to gulp, not to breathe. *Get out*. The thought made her take a step back. Another one, and then one more.

Kate sneaked out and put a finger to her mouth. She waited until the door closed behind her as well

as it could before she moved her face close to Grey. “A shit ton of goblins inside. They’re sleeping. We’re leaving, now.”

He nodded quickly and turned.

Kate sighed, taking a last glance towards the square when her eyes fell on the corpse riddled with arrows. A burly man, jeans and a brown leather jacket, his one remaining eye open and lifeless, his hair and stomach covered in blood. She knew him. It was Lars, the man she hoped would’ve somehow managed to hide himself away with whoever had survived.

Her lips quivered, her head slightly tilting to the side. She inhaled sharply. The sound made Grey pause and turn around. Kate looked from the corpse to the young man. A beeping sound started in one of her ears, then in both. The broken in homes, the massacre, all the blood, all the bodies. It had all seemed so surreal, a lucid nightmare, their task in the town clear and rational. She had known that she would come back, had known that she wasn’t ready, not for what she was about to do. But Kate knew that if she left here. Right now. That something would break within her.

She wanted to protect those who had survived. A part of her knew it was all she could do, all she should do. But another part demanded more. It demanded blood. Payment for what these creatures had done to her home.

She stood there for a long moment, gripping her crowbar as she stared into nothing. Her eyes focused again, her breathing steady, her heartbeat slow. “Leave,” she said in a whisper and turned around. Her magic activated, her senses sharpening as she went back inside.

Kate Lindgren

Unspent stat points: 0

Class: Berserker – lvl 2

- ***Active: Mindless Ferocity – lvl 2***
- ***Active: Furious Dance – lvl 2***
- ***Active: Reckless Charge – lvl 1***
- ***Active:***
- ***Active:***
- ***Passive: Toll for the Living – lvl 2***
- ***Passive: Courage of the Unarmored – lvl 2***
- ***Passive: Two Handed Weapon Fighting – lvl 2***
- ***Passive:***
- ***Passive:***

Support class: Locked

Status:

Vitality: 14

Endurance: 12

Perseverance: 2

Strength: 9

Dexterity: 8

Intelligence: 7

Wisdom: 10

Equipment:

Torso: -

Legs: -

Trinket: -

Food: -