

Onion's Backstory

How I got here is a long story, but I think we have time for it. You may want to grab a beverage, perhaps some damp corn kernels, heated until they pop. I know it sounds weird, but they're good I promise. I was 16 years old when my father was killed. I wasn't sure why. Not yet anyway. In the middle of the night, a man in a dark cloak woke me. He told me that I had to get ready to go. Of course I started asking questions, but he told me there would be time for them later. He wouldn't tell me exactly who he was, but he told me he was a friend of the family. I stumbled out of bed and got dressed, and was pushed out the door. Trouble was coming; I could hear horses nearing as I stepped outside. They were close and getting closer. The man pointed towards a small carriage pulled by two horses, and told me to go. He handed me a note as I climbed into the carriage. The man told me to read it when I arrived at my destination, which I was still unaware of where it was. As the carriage pulled away I turned to see two men on horses come around the bend. They were also wearing dark cloaks and mask. And they were carrying swords.

The carriage made a few sharp turns, on nearly throwing me from the cart. The rough ride caused me to lose my bearing. I looked out the window to check on my pursuers, but I couldn't see anyone. It looked like we were in the clear, but just a few moments later the two men came out from one of the side streets and began to overtake us. The street we were on began to thin as it became an alley. Luckily, it was just wide enough for the carriage, so the two men were forced to slow down and follow behind. The alley was littered with clotheslines just overhead. At the end of the ally, the street continued, but just before it did, the driver put his sword in the air, cutting one of the lines. This caused the line to fall, and just like in a comedic play, knock one of the men off of their horse. Despite the seriousness of the situation, I couldn't help but laugh. The driver and I crossed the border of the city line, but the men had caught back up with us. As we neared the outskirts of the city, one of the men jumped onto the roof of the carriage and grabbed the driver. With one swift motion, the driver reached behind him, grabbed the man, and pulled him forward into the driver seat, stabbing him through the heart with a dagger pulled from his cloak. The attacker quickly disappeared into the darkness, but this time, his accomplice did not stop to help.

The second cloaked figure moved to the opposite side of the cart, and jumped into the driver seat. I called out to the driver, which was enough to get him to react. The cloaked figure drew his sword and swung it at my driver, but the driver had already pulled his sword in time to block the first strike. The driver then struck the man with his hilt, forcing him to the top of the cabin I was in. The driver tied the reins, and climbed on top to follow. The two men traded blows back and forth until finally, the attacker lost his footing. He fell from the cart but pulled the driver with him. With a bit of quick thinking, I swung out the door and climbed into the driver's seat, yanking on the reins. The horses came to an abrupt stop and I leapt from the cart. As I approached where the fighters were, I saw the cloaked figure impale my driver. I ran to help, but the man spun around and struck me, causing me to fall to the ground. He stepped over top of me and raised his sword in the air. I looked around to see if there was anything nearby that could help, and I spotted the driver's dagger. It was a few feet away, but any attempt to reach it would be swiftly foiled by the man trying to kill me. It was at this moment that the driver started screaming

at the man. Insulting and provoking him. The man took the bait, giving me a chance to grab a rock nearby. I threw it at the man and hit him in the face. His mask fell off, but he quickly covered it with his arm as he took a step backwards. I quickly jumped up and grabbed the dagger, and stabbed the man in the back. The man screamed and fell to his knees. I ran to get my driver's sword. As I returned to the man, he was standing up, as he was able to remove the knife from his back.

It was at this moment I saw his face. He was a friend of my father's, when he was still alive. I inquired as to why he was trying to kill me, but he scoffed, saying that I would never understand. I took a defensive stance, knowing he was weak, and the man laughed again. This was the man who taught me swordplay when I was younger. I knew he wouldn't take me seriously, which would cause him to lower his guard and attack me head on. He took a lopsided swing, which clearly caused him pain, as he grimaced and missed me very poorly. I took a step forward and sliced his arm, causing him to drop his sword, and then another slice to his leg, forcing him to the ground. With a smug look, I told the man that my brother had been helping me practice. The man started to laugh, and with a smug look on his face he pointed to the driver. As the driver lay there, I pieced together that he was in fact my brother. I was stunned, and my attacker used this to his advantage. He stood up and kicked me in the chest, knocking me to the ground. He approached me and began swinging violently with his sword in his off hand. I moved away from him and pulled myself to my feet. His attacks were uncalculated, and had no purpose, which gave me an ample chance to parry and respond with fervor. I sliced his other arm, then across the chest. He stumbled backwards and fell to his knees. I picked up his sword and advanced. I placed a blade on each shoulder, and with one swift motion, decapitated my attacker. I returned to my brother, assuring him that everything would be ok. He looked at me and told me to go. More men would be coming soon and I needed to reach my destination safely. He told me he was proud but no more hesitation could be made. There would be a man in a white cloak further down the road. Before I left, he handed me his cloak, which had a red cross on the inside. I looked more closely, and noted that the cloak was actually inside out. I asked my brother why and he said I would be told more after reach the man in the white cloak. I told my brother I loved him and I carried on down the road.

I disconnected the horse from the carriage and took off down the path. The path was lined with trees on both sides past the bridge, and continued up into the mountains that surrounded my home town. A little ways up the mountain, I could see down to the bridge that led out of the town. There were torches and I could see the silhouettes of a few men. At that moment, I heard someone call my name. I drew my sword and scanned the tree line. A man in a white cloak on a horse appeared from a small opening in the trees. He was a young man, probably no older than me by more than a month or two. He told me that he would lead me the rest of the way. I followed him down a small path dodging branches left and right. The path became a ledge on the side of the mountain, with a steep decline on our other side. Finally, the path widened into a small clearing, but it was a dead end that met us at the end of the path. The man climbed off of his horse and pulled a small torch from his satchel. The torch lit when he pressed a small button on the side. I had never seen anything like it before in my life. He held it up to the wall on our left, searching for something. Finally he placed his hand on the wall and pressed firmly. It was

then that I heard what sounded like gears turning: big, heavy gears. The wall opened and he motioned me inside. I jumped off of my horse and led him inside, following the man's direction. Inside this cave was a small stable. We tied our horses there and continued into the mountain. The man told me that I could turn my cloak right side out now. I told him it wasn't mine. It was my brother's. The man apologized for my loss. I asked him what the cross meant. And he told me that my brother, like my father before him, was a member of the Knights Templar. He told me to reach into the pocket, and there would be a ring inside, with the same insignia on it. Low and behold he was correct. He asked me to hold onto that ring, but not to wear it. I asked him why, and he told me that only fully fledged members of the Templar Order were allowed to wear those rings, but since it was my brother's I may hold onto it until that time. As we moved on, the cave began looking less and less like a cave, and more like a cathedral: vaulted ceilings, large columns, and chandeliers. I continued asking questions but the man promptly shushed me. We entered a room that looked like a courtroom. There were men seated and the back of this room facing us. The man in white bowed, so I did the same. The men explained that they were high ranking members of the Knights Templar, and they told me what happened to my father. The men chasing me were rogue members of the Order, and had betrayed my father and my brother. They were unsure why, but they knew it to be fact. They told me that the rogue members were after me because I knew something. I didn't know what, until I remembered my father's secret study. Only my brother and I knew about it. I told the men this and they all looked at each other. They asked me what else my father told me, but that was all I knew. I knew only of the existence of this study, but not how to get into it. The men told me that my father was a researcher for the Templar Order. He would hunt down and retrieve artifacts of great importance. They told me these artifacts would be quite helpful establishing more power for the Order, and to help defeat those who would oppose them. Evil men, who wanted to use this power to forward their own selfish dreams. They then told me, if I wished to avenge my father and brother, if I wanted to join the Knights Templar, I would be putting my life on the line. I would need to keep this all secret, however, if I so chose, I could give them all the info I had and leave this place, to take care of myself. I wanted to know what it was that caused my father to be killed, so I decided to accept their offer. They told me that I would have to return to my home in the city in order to retrieve my father's research, but I had to train first. I would need to be able to handle myself, because I would only be returning with one other member, as to not arouse suspicion. They informed me that I would start in the morning, and to get some rest. The man in white led me to a dormitory of sorts, where those with the title of Paige would sleep. I had climbed into one of the empty beds. I didn't fall asleep for quite a while, but finally, the adrenaline wore off and I passed out.

I was awoken by a knock at my door. It was the man in white, except now he was wearing leather armor. He told me his name was Benedict. He led me through the cave, and finally to a set of stairs that led up to a courtyard, carved out of the mountain. He told me to don a set of metal armor, and directed me to a whole collection hanging on hooks. With the help of another Paige, I got suited up and made my way to a ring. The armor was bulky and hard to move it. It was heavy and cumbersome. The man tossed me a sword, clearly a practice sword, as it was made of wood. He told me to hit him. He didn't have a sword, so I hesitated. He told me that I would not get a real sword until I could hit him while wearing armor. I slowly made my way

towards him and swung, but he sidestepped me and knocked me to the ground. Benedict helped me up and told me to try again. Each time he found a way to force me off my balance. He told me that I had to anticipate my attack failing and have a second method for attacking after the fact. I couldn't put my full force into each swing if I wanted to be able to attack a second time. He told me to take smaller steps and attack multiple times. I swung and he sidestepped, over and over again. This continued for a full day, and a few days after.

During the day I practiced and worked, cleaning the armor and weapons, cooking, and studying. Every few days I would have off and I would roam the halls of the massive structure I found myself in, never knowing that it was here. As time went on I found myself using my study of plants to help my tasks during the day. Plants had any number of useful properties, one in particular I fancied using were onions. The acidity in their juices made for a useful cleaner. I ended up finding myself being referred to as "Onion". It was customary for those in the Order to have nicknames. Mine was rather odd, but I liked it. It was distinct and I grew to enjoy it. I would even be called that while sparring with Benedict. It took me a while, but finally, I found a weakness in his style.

The next day we started as we always did: swing, and then sidestep. Finally I decided to make my move. I took one step forward, he dodged right, and I took a large step and swung at him putting all my weight on my right foot, my forward foot. He shifted behind me and attempted to kick my back foot out, believing I was using it to balance. He told me I had left myself open again. Instead I lifted my back foot and spun to my left, striking him in the chest, knocking both of us off of our feet. Benedict came over and helped me up to my feet. He said that that was enough for the day, and he gave me the rest of the day off. I used this time to question him more about the Order. Benedict taught me a lot.

The days that followed, I grew accustomed to leather practice armor, which was only used when sparring or when speed was important, and was given my own sword, which I adorned the pommel with the image of an onion, to distinguish my weapon from others. One night after practice, the night of my 17th birthday, I was making my way to my room, when I was approached by a large man I had not seen before. He asked me to follow him. He led me to courtroom that I had been in the night I arrived. There was a fire pit and the Knights who had welcomed me were surrounding it, as well as Benedict. I approached the fire and bowed. The men told me it was time to go recover my father's research. They told me we waited so long because his research was the last thing they needed to find the artifact he had been searching for. The other people researching this artifact were at a standstill, they needed it to move forward, and now was the time. They told me that Benedict and I would be going back to town to retrieve his research and would then bring it back to be sent to the other researchers. I agreed. I grabbed my sword and Benedict and I may our way to town, on foot.

I had been away for a few months, but I still remembered this town like the back of my hand. I led Benedict towards the center, where my house was, and as we neared there were torches lit. Despite being vacant for so long, guards were still keeping watch on my home. There was one on the roof, two at the door, and some lights on inside the house. I couldn't believe that they hadn't found anything yet, and was beginning to wonder how I was going to do so in one night, let alone take out the guards. Benedict assured me he had a plan for them as he moved into the alley at the side of the house and began scaling the wall. He waited for the guard to look away

and he climbed the roof and slit his throat. He returned to the alley and approached the two men, with his hood up. They asked him what he was doing walking around so late, and he told them if they knew what happened to the family, informing them he had been friends with the boy who lived there. They immediately grabbed him by his collar, and told him to tell them everything he knew about the boy. In one swift motion, he pulled a dagger from his cloak, stabbed the man who grabbed him in the neck, and as the man dropped him, he swung at the other guards throat, slicing it open. He grabbed the other guard and rotated him in the path of the blood spray. He called me over and we moved the bodies to the alley. We then made our way to the door. We pushed it open and crept inside. We could hear the men upstairs. Benedict told me to take care of the men upstairs, telling me he saw two as he had climbed to the roof. I moved quietly up the stairs and at the end of the hall, the door was ajar and the light was on in the room. It was my parent's room. I knocked on the door and quickly slipped into my room, which was next to theirs. The light was off and I could see into the hallway. One of the two guards opened the door and stepped into the hallway, the door being weighted, shut behind him. I swung my door open and grabbed the man by his shoulder. I pulled him towards me and ran my sword through his stomach. I removed my sword and he dropped to the ground. The other guard heard the sound and came to the door. I spun around and struck him with the pommel of my sword. I grabbed him, and yelled at him to tell me everything he had found, and what had happened to the two women, my mom and my sister, who had lived here. He told me that unfortunately for them, they were not there when the house had been originally raided, and had not been found. He also told me the search of the house had been fruitless. I thanked him for the info and then proceeded to cut his throat. I returned to Benedict on the first floor. We began searching the house for a way into the secret study. I instinctually moved for my father's office and went to his desk. I remember my father telling me to never to open the top drawer unless it was an emergency. The lock had been broken, so I opened the drawer and found a switch. Pressing the switch did nothing. I looked around the room and saw a painting on the wall of my parents, my father sitting at the desk, and my mother behind him, but I noticed they were not looking straight ahead. My mother was looking to the right, and my father was looking at the top drawer. I tried to follow my mother's line of sight, and it seemed she was looking at my father's bookcase. I went to check the books, and began scanning the bookcase for something out of the ordinary. It was then I noticed my father's favorite book had two copies, because there was one on his desk, and one on the shelf. I pulled the book from the top and nothing happened, but I heard a click. I told Benedict to press the switch in the drawer at the same time I pulled the book. We did so together, and a loud popping noise was heard. We could then hear what sounded like large gears turning. The bookcase slid over and behind it was a small room with a cabinet and a desk with some papers on it. The cabinet was empty but the papers on the desk were the research we had been looking for. We grabbed the papers and made our way out of the house. We returned to the cave without incident, and turned my father's research over to the Knights. After reviewing what we had brought back, they informed us that my father had been searching for an artifact that had not yet been understood, he had been searching for the Ark of the Covenant.

I had heard my father talk about an Ark before. Some people believed it to hold the 10 Commandments given to Moses. Others believed that it had a food that did not spoil and did not

produce waste. It was referred to as manna. All anyone was sure of that it held a terrible fate for anyone who opened it. Accounts told of people's skin melting off, their eyes boiling. Some said that if you opened it and were unworthy, you would be carried to hell by the Angel of Death himself. These were all secondhand accounts of course, since anyone who had opened it had not been heard from again. A few days went on and I was asked to help with completing my father's research. Shortly after continuing his work we came across a clue to Ark's location. It was in the North of the country and we have to travel. Unfortunately our long journey proved fruitless as we returned months later with nothing. This continued for a few years.

Every time we thought we had found its location we turned up nothing. One thing we did find, however, was others who were searching as well. They displayed different colors, but they were always hostile. More often than not though, they were dressed in black. They resembled the men who drove me from my home years back. My skills had increased and with little effort I dispatched them with the help of Benedict. This became a common thing for about 5 years, and when I was 22 I noticed the Order began to get a little hectic. Apparently those men in black had been discovering Templar hideouts and attacking them. My brothers were being slaughtered. Somehow they were always caught off guard. The Knights in our settlements were sending people to go help. I offered my services but they told me I could not. As it turns out, those men were searching for me. They had discovered I was still alive and knew I had become a member of the Order. The Knights told me that if I wanted to help I had to keep searching for the Ark. If we found that the war would be over. I reluctantly complied and returned to my research. I had to find where the Ark was located.

The next few nights I was up late. Not three days later I was falling asleep at my desk when there was a frantic banging on my door. It was Benedict. He told me the men in black were attacking. He told me we needed to leave. I quickly grabbed my sword and headed for the cathedral. Benedict yelled for me but I wouldn't run away this time. Men were running past us left and right as we made our way to the cathedral. Benedict was close behind me as we made our way to the altar, where there were many men fighting. As I scanned the area, my gaze was drawn towards one of the Knights, Sir Alexander, fighting one of these men. The man in black was wearing armor and had a sword with a hilt adorned with gems. He was clearly important. The man in black knocked Alexander's sword from his hand and they began to grapple, knocking the man's mask off in the process. I recognized him. He was another of my father's friends. His name was Jameson. He glanced at me, but didn't seem to realize who I was. I became filled with rage as I charged the altar.

I cut down all the men in my path, and Benedict's screams to stop went unheard. There was just a high pitched whine in my ear. As I reached the altar I tackled the man to the ground, knocking the Knight to the ground as well. I began to beat the man, hand over hand, screaming at him to tell me why he helped kill my father. My interrogation made him realize who I was, and after the initial shock passed, he knocked me in the head with the hilt of his sword, causing me to fall off of him. He stood up and took a swing, but it was blocked by the Knight. The Knight told Benedict to get me out of here. Benedict nodded and lifted me to my feet, and began pulling me away. The man in black screamed to have me captured. Men began to surround us, but were held back by a reinforcement of Knights. All men I recognized; Sir Roderick, Sir Richard, and even Father Stephanus. That's when I saw the leader of the Templar Order, Count William. He told us

that they would handle this. He then turned to Benedict and told him to get me out of here, and to find the Ark. Benedict pulled at my arm, and I reluctantly turned away and retreated.

We made it out of the settlement and got on our horses. We made our way through the woods and got as far from the settlement as possible. After riding for about 30 minutes, we slowed down to rest. As we got off of our horses, we heard men nearby. We tied the horses up and made our way towards them, as quietly as possible. They were Jameson's men, and they were sitting around a fire. They were at a road checkpoint, at a bridge over a river, therefore blocking our path. Benedict told me to turn my cloak inside out. He had a plan.

We approached the bridge slowly, both of our cloaks on. Benedict led the horses by hand while I was on mine, slouched over. The men stood up and told us to remain still. Benedict informed them that we were just on our way to an inn outside of town, as I had been thrown from the pub for being too intoxicated. They were about to let us through, when one of the men asked Benedict the name of the Inn. Benedict stopped. The man approached him and asked him again, more aggressively this time. It was at this moment he drew his sword and cut the man down. I flipped off of my horse and took out two more of the men. Two of the remaining three men charged Benedict, but he slaughtered them with ease. The last one began to flee. Benedict went after him but I told him to stop. He was curious, so he did so. I pulled out my bow, and with one shot, struck the man in his head, killing him instantly. Benedict was pleased, as I told him I had been practicing. We got back on our horses and headed north, towards where the Ark was believed to be.

After a day of travel, we were tired. As we neared the mountains, we could see a storm coming in from the east. Benedict suggested we set up camp, as night was coming. We set up camp at the base of the mountain, and went to sleep. In the middle of the night we woke up to the sound of footsteps. We chose not to light a fire the previous night, as to not draw attention to our position, and we had left the horses in a town near the foot of the mountain, so as to hide ourselves further. The voices grew louder and we could see torches producing shadows. We took cover and waited for the men to approach. They were more of Jameson's men. They were searching with purpose. They had somehow figured out where we were at. And it was then I remembered my research was still in the settlement. Luckily the conclusion of my research was yet to be recorded, so they only knew the Ark was somewhere in these mountains. They must also have assumed we were here. As Benedict moved to strike, I motioned him not to. I told him to let them pass. After they did I explained that we couldn't let them know where we were, and if these men were here, there were more on the way, and if we left bodies, they would be able to follow our trail. We decided to use the cover of darkness to move as far up the mountain as possible. As the sun rose, we were nearing the top, and unfortunately for us, the storm was coming in. Luckily this would hide our tracks as well.

The storm nearly blocked out the sun, making it seem as if it were night. We reached a flat area, which was described in my research. We were near the entrance to the shrine of the Ark. The snow was coming down hard, but oddly enough, it wasn't very cold. The snow was so heavy that we could only see a few feet in front of us. We lit a torch and began searching the ice wall that led to the peak of the mountain. After searching for nearly an hour, we spotted a symbol on the wall. It was the cherubim, the angel-like creatures adorning the Ark. The symbol was covered in perfectly clear ice. And around the symbol we could see a crack in the wall. We

scraped the ice off, and depressed the symbol into the wall. We heard a loud thud, the mountaintop began to shake. A gap opened in the mountainside, and dust poured out. When the dust finally cleared, there was an entrance. The torch illuminated the ice that covered the passageway, which was a staircase leading into the mountain.

We made our way down the staircase, and at the bottom was a large door. Next to the door was an inscription. It read:

TO THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO CONTINUE. PROCEED ONWARD WITH KNOWLEDGE AS YOUR WEAPON AND FAITH AS YOUR SHIELD. THE LAND AHEAD IS HOLY GROUND AND MUST NOT BE TARNISHED WITH THE BLOOD OF MAN. IF YOU DESECRATE THIS PLACE THERE WILL BE NOTHING FOR YOU IN THE AFTER LIFE. NO WINE OR MANNA.

We inspected the writing for a few moments. Benedict noticed that the last two words, "OR MANNA" were chiseled in a different script. Manna is one of the things believed to be in the ark so it made sense that this was something significant. After thinking for a bit, I realized that it was an anagram for, "NON ARMA" which is Latin for "no weapons." We decided to proceed onward without our weapons. We pushed the door open and light bursted through. Behind the door was what looked like a large chapel. Stained glass windows on the ceiling let light down into the room and illuminated everything, including the altar at the front of the church. And sitting on the altar, was the Ark of the Covenant. We slowly moved up the aisle to the altar. As we made it to the ark, I felt uneasy. Something seemed wrong, as if we were being watched. I motioned to Benedict to stop. We looked around and saw nothing.

We took another step, and an arrow landed at my foot. We jumped back, and suddenly we were surrounded by Jameson's men, but Jameson was nowhere to be found. They had bows and swords drawn and began closing in on us. The men suddenly stopped, as an order came from the balcony at the back of the church. It was Jameson. He jumped down from the balcony and pushed through his men to us. "Well done!" he said. "It took us a long time to find this place, but with your help, we finally have the ark. And on top of that we get to kill you! What a day for me." I moved a step to attack, and remembered I had no weapons. Jameson laughed, and he said, "Silly boy! You left your weapons outside to not disrespect your GOD? You are foolish to think you could be protected by him." As soon as he finished speaking, a man from behind thrust his sword through Benedict's stomach. I screamed for him and two others grabbed me. I struggled but it was no good. Benedict fell to his knees as the man behind him pulled his sword free. Jameson approached me and grabbed my face. I spat at him and he struck me, once with his backhand, and then on the head with the hilt of his sword. It was a solid strike, and I felt it, but oddly enough it didn't seem to hurt as much as I thought it would. Not at all, for that matter. I looked over at Benedict. He seemed more confused than hurt. He slowly stood up as the attention of the men, Jameson included was drawn to him. He felt his stomach where the sword had run him through, and there was nothing but a hole through his clothing. With everyone awestruck, I took my opportunity to break free. I freed an arm, and elbowed the man to my left, and with one swift motion I grabbed the man to my right and flipped him over my shoulder, causing Jameson to lose his balance. I looked at Benedict and screamed "OR MANNA!" He nodded and knocked out the man behind him. The other men moved towards us with weapons

drawn. Jameson ordered the archers to fire at us. We were struck with a barrage of arrows, and we felt a warm sensation wash over us, but again, no pain.

As we removed the arrows, one by one, Jameson ordered us to tell him what was going on. As we understood it, as long as we did not take up arms, we could not be harmed. But Jameson and his men had desecrated this holy place, and would have no such protection. He decided to believe us and responded, "Fine! We will not kill you. We will capture you and drag you away from this protected place and kill you after we have the ark." They charged us and Benedict and I agreed that we had no other choice. We would have to risk opening the ark. We made a swift move towards the ark and we each grabbed one side of the lid. Jameson's men all hesitated. He yelled at them to continue, but they were fearful of what would happen when we opened the ark. Jameson scoffed at us, asking us if we thought we could make him believe that we would risk our lives. We stopped for a moment, but as he bolted towards us, we both nodded and used all of our strength, and chanted together, "With knowledge as our weapons, and faith as our shield!" The top of the ark fell to the side.

There was silence for a moment and then a warm light poured out of the ark. The church began to shake and the doors slammed shut. The light got brighter, and eventually blinded everyone in the room. The light returned to its original glow, and as our sight came back, we noticed all of the men had fallen to the ground. We approached one of them and checked to see if they were breathing. They were all dead. I looked around, panicked. Benedict asked me what I was looking for. It was Jameson. He was gone. We weren't sure how he got away, but we had to tend to the ark. We went over, and inside was exactly what my research said. Two stone tablets, inscribed with the exact words of God, the rod that belonged to Aaron, Moses' brother, and a jar of manna. I reached down and grabbed the rod. When I did I could feel some kind of power flowing through it. It made my whole arm go numb. The rod was said to have incredible power, but since no one ever found it, it was unclear as to what that power was.

I held the rod up to Benedict to feel the power for himself. He grabbed a hold of the rod, and described the same sensation I did. He asked me what I thought the rod was capable of, and what was the next step. I told him we would need to find out what it could do, because that power could help us return to the settlement and rescue our brothers. As I finished my thought aloud, the rod began to glow. Benedict released it, and the glowing turned into a blinding flash of light, and a high pitched ring. I dropped the rod and held my ears, but the sound was still coming through. I closed my eyes, but I could still see the light. Suddenly, I felt light headed and lost consciousness.

When I finally woke up it was dark. Not night, but the light coming through the ceiling had faded. The ringing began to fade and my hearing returned. I could hear people talking outside but it was a language I had never heard. As my eyes adjusted, I could see stripes of light coming from the walls. I realized that I was no longer in the cathedral. I was in a small house, but it wasn't like anything I had seen. It was made of vertical pieces of wood, a crude but I assumed inexpensive house. I located the door and slowly opened it enough to see outside. There were other homes like I was in, but some were burnt down. There were people searching the homes, speaking to each other in that odd language. They had weapons. I reached for my sword, but realized that it was nowhere to be found. Neither was Aaron's rod. I was defenseless, and had no idea what was going to happen when these people found me.

As my thought finished, the door was pulled open out of my hand. Standing in front of me was a man with his hair sticking straight up in the air. He grabbed me and with one hand threw me out of the hut. He made some comment, which of course I didn't understand, but at the end I thought I heard him say the word "cross". I was wearing mine. I must have been going crazy. These people didn't speak English. I stood up and put my hands up. I had no idea how I was going to communicate with them. One of them nodded their head upwards and said something. Again I couldn't understand and I just shrugged my shoulders. Suddenly I heard footsteps behind me. I turned around and was struck in the chest by a round metal shield. It knocked me off of my feet.

I shook off the strike and looked up to a man with long red hair tied in a ponytail, and a pointed beard. He opened his mouth and said, "Well don't be rude there guy, we asked you a question." I couldn't believe it. I understood him. "I'm sorry?" I said. "Well you've got a name, don't you?" I was still a little dumbfounded, so I took a moment to speak. Before I could, the man said, "My name's Dracon. Dracon Adun. And you are?" "Oh!" I said. "My name's Onion." He smirked and nodded his head slightly. "Alright there, Onion, what were you doing in that hut. A moment ago there weren't anyone but us around here. Also, your clothing makes me think you're not from around here." I told him I wasn't really sure. I explained to him what happened before I woke up in that hut. "Oh, Iskov, you were right!" He said, "Definitely another one." I asked him what he meant. He told me that we were in the late 900's, and that they have had travelers join them before. I couldn't believe that the rod sent me back in time. He told me they were the Jomsvikings. I had never heard of them, but they seemed friendly enough, and invited me to dinner. I decided to forgo the rest of my story until I had rested.

Over dinner I explained more in depth, who I was and where I came from. I told them I had to get back. They weren't sure how I was going to do that, but Dracon said I was pretty much a goner if I tried traversing this area alone. I had no weapons or supplies, and he told me as long as I could work for them, they would help me when they could. And, I was welcome to stay as long as I could contribute to their group. As I didn't have much of an option, I decided to take him up on his offer. I couldn't do much from 200 years in the past, and until I could find a way back, it looked like I was going to be a Berserker of Jomsburg.