

A tale? Sure. I've got one. The irony of my story isn't lost on me. I'm sure you'll see why when I'm finished. But before an end there must always be a beginning, I suppose.

I began the bastard of a merchant girl in the shadow of Prague Castle. She never wanted me it seemed as I've never met her. I was given to the castle as a baby, or so I was told, to serve the various nobles and their ladies throughout my youth. I bore cups, swept the musty hallways, fetched and found, delivered messages and recited their replies. It was a simple but hurried childhood. I learned that haste was the essence of my life, permeating every action, and without it there came consequences. No lord ever took well to the excuses of a late bastard servant. Now that I say it I suppose this is the core of my restless nature. I was reminded often of my station, though I lived well enough in the halls of the castle. The nobles insisted that their staff be at least somewhat educated, remembering the stories of St. Wenceslas, the good duke (or was it good king?). I learned to read, to write, to convince (as the lords are oft to do), and to fight. These skills would lead me on an adventure I never saw coming.

As I neared the end of my youth, on the threshold of manhood, there were whispers. Silent silky echoes down the corridors that I couldn't help but listen in on. A king was coming for the castle; The German King Henry was advancing on Bohemia. The lords were in an uproar and being caught in the confusion I made the last decision of my youth, I would run. I fled to the south and started to pursue warmer climes as I went. No one told me how lovely and warm the rest of the world could be.

The lovely and the warm did not last long, and I've only myself to blame for that. In my wanderings I met a group of men in white coats with crosses the color of blood as their symbol. They called themselves Templar's and oh my they had a holy purpose. They were marching farther south, to do holy battle with a heathen enemy. God it seems had ordained them to do this and in the fighting they would be purified. But you know of the Templar Order, and their great crusades. So we've come to the first decision I made as a man. That the bastard could be washed clean in the holy fires of anointed battle. I joined the Templar's.

The armor was heavy. That's what I remember the most. I never quite got used to the clank and grind of the metal, and how devil hot the damn things got. It kept me safe enough I suppose. We fought, and fought, and fought. It never ended but God willed it so it must be done. That is, until I grew weary. With each fight I felt no less guilt, felt no less purified, felt no less "bastard". The promise of redemption was empty and its depths grew with each arc of my sword. The crusade was empty. I began to need more and if holy anointed battle wasn't enough then maybe God wasn't my answer. Heresy? Perhaps. But I made peace with that long ago. And so the irony of my story begins to take shape. I ran again, this time from God.

There are mystics in that hot hell, explorers of the mind and forbidden magic that wander the sand. Those who were cast out, threatened with death, some possibly dead already. The last ones always unsettled me. No man should cheat time and exist for countless lives. What I'll tell you next makes my uneasiness around those "Wizards" laughable but even I have my limits. I communed with these men these wrinkles on the edge of reality. I learned from them. I performed the rituals...I played with the blood of animals and people alike...I became profane. I became heretic. There is an allure to the

darkness. I found that it truly has no depth. There will always be another incantation, another rune, another spell nuance that can be explored. I explored as far as I could go. It sounds simple but really the heat was what forced me northward again. Coupled with my desire for more knowledge, hearing tales of druids, pagans, and thunder gods in the north took me to a village. They welcomed me in Jomsburg.

The Vikings have a way about them, as you know. Their Gods are represented in all aspects of their lives. I tinkered with these Gods, their runes, their followers. But tinkering rarely pays. Unlike my desert outcasts who provided for one another, the North requires coin. I made moves to supply it. The mercenary group here is always recruiting. I joined willingly. Then the iron fell, the irony set in, and now I sit before you in a cumbersome position. God was apparently not finished with me. The fearsome Berserkers of Jomsburg made a deal, to merc for the Templar's.

And there you have the end of my tale. I read and profane quietly now all while assisting my fellow mercenaries with my blade, my shield, and sometimes my persuasion. Quiet is needed however as it's only a matter of time that a Templar remembers me. Remembers my heresy. Remembers how I abandoned the Order, and abandoned God. If there's one thing the wretches of the wasteland taught me, it's that you can live too long. I don't believe I'll have that problem.