

Hunters

A man stepped over a body. It wasn't the first he had stepped over on his journey, but it was the first one since entering this district. Looking up, one could see a sign proudly proclaiming the area as Betrug, eighth of the nine districts of the City of Hölle. The street told a different story.

The corpse was not alone. In the man's field of vision, at least a dozen more were scattered across this street alone. All of them were identical in their horrid state, with hair that was tangled and messy and covered with dirt that seemed to try and cover every inch of their skin. He ignored the bodies, after all, they were a frequent occurrence.

Moving forward, the man would take note of the house, the surroundings being unfamiliar to him. Akin to the bodies, they all shared the same traits of age and disrepair, as though they were still clinging onto life, years after their expiration date. Most of them were wooden, although the odd house or two had some stone mixed into it. Overall, it was typical for this kind of place.

While this kind of weather was frequent, it usually did not occur in this kind of intensity. The rain was heavy. Extremely heavy. In fact, it was so heavy that the man reckoned that if he did not have his several layers, he might have actually felt some pain from the droplets.

A crack of thunder resounded from somewhere far away, most likely another district. It didn't phase him too much. He just continued walking down the street.

One street past.

Five streets past.

Nine streets past.

Just one more.

Moving past the street sign, the man noticed a minor increase of quality in the houses. They now looked as if they received some amount of care, albeit small. At the very least, they no longer hurt the eyes.

After several minutes of walking, the man suddenly stopped at a house. It wasn't a remarkable building, if anything it seemed to emanate the very concept of average. But the man ignored this. After all, a hunter must hunt, and his prey was near.

He quickly moved inside the house, not bothering to knock. They didn't deserve those kinds of niceties. His cloak dripped water onto the floorboards, the result of the conditions he had walked through.

If one were to look at the interior, they would once again see the epitome of average. As such, the man didn't dawdle any longer, and quickly moved to the stairs. From his experience, beasts preferred to cower in cellars, and it just so happened that this house came with one.

Candle flames moved rapidly, reacting to the sudden movement as the man descended the stairs. Suddenly, he was met with the familiar smell of iron. The scent was so strong that he felt as though he could taste it on his very lips, the shock of it making the man's body stiffen for the slightest moment. Experience taught him it could only mean one thing.

Disturbed by the shock of it, the man reached for his belt and pulled a contraption from it. The item had seen the deaths of countless men, and would commonly be referred to as a flintlock. However, a plate on the weapon's body bearing the name 'Kozytus' revealed the importance of the weapon to him.

Advancing further down the stairs, the candles whispered sweet lies of reassurance, giving off an aura of comfort and calmness. The man was not calm.

Finally, after a few tense seconds that felt like hours, he reached the bottom of the stairs, and was met with a hellish sight.

Bodies littered the floor.

They were everywhere, as though someone had made it their mission to slaughter everything that breathed in the cellar, meticulously making sure all that lived did not.

There was a commonality between the corpses. They all had a large, gaping hole through their chests. The holes were lined with rough pointed edges, akin to that of teeth. One did not need years of experience to know that these weren't the signs of a vampire attack.

In fact, on closer inspection, several of the bodies appeared to be vampires themselves. The deathly pale skin and fangs were telltale signs anyone had been inflicted with the vampiric curse.

The room was rather plain to be hiding such a grim truth. Several wooden supports littered the cellar, preventing the upper floor from collapsing on itself. A lone door to the north was the only thing of interest.

A cough then echoed through the room. The man quickly turned to find where it came from, only to find one of the corpses spewing blood from its mouth. It was still alive.

“H-help, pl-please help,” the voice coughed.

The man quickly moved over to the body, though whether or not he would comply with its request was uncertain.

“Name, your na-ame,”

The voice was pitiful, it could barely begin a word before it coughed the red liquid once more. The man didn’t look at it with pity. If anything, he looked at it with contempt.

“Know me as Inquisitor Sündige Neid, bauer. Now name yourself before the might of the Inquisition is struck upon you,” responded the now identified man.

“Gier, j-just Gier” He croaked

“Good. Now, tell me what happened here and you might spare yourself a meeting with the lord,” Neid’s voice was full of fury, as though the very sight of the man in front of him was sin given form.

“Oh, oh you couldn’t compre-” He was unable to finish before he once more coughed, but it was enough the Neid to understand what he was saying.

“Th-there are things, things I s-s-say. Things that w-we cann-not, may n-not, comprehend” The blood was coming out less now, presumably having been mostly coughed up.

“There is nothing that an Inquisitor cannot comprehend, heide. Now tell me what it is before I find it necessary to take action,” Neid once again responded with steel in his voice.

“We are not meant to understand it all. Nay. We are but inferior beings, waiting to be-” He wasn’t allowed to finish, as with one swift motion Neid silenced the man permanently.

“Ketzer” With this word Neid made sure that anyone that might have been watching, however low the chance, knew why he had taken this action.

A light suddenly emanated from the side room, the sickly blue glow contrasting with the comforting oranges and reds of the various candles scattered about. The blade

that Neid was about to sheath quickly came to his front, so to the flintlock that he had unconsciously put away when speaking to Gier. Advancing towards the room, he opened the door.

What occupied the room could barely be comprehended by the human mind. The man's attention was drawn to the large eye at the creature's centre which immediately filled him with a sense of unease and revulsion. It was as though it was taunting you, giving you the briefest of glances into the unknown, only to then present you with knowledge which you could not comprehend.

A mass of tentacles bearing large piranha-like teeth formed the rest of the creature's body. Upon closer inspection, it became clear that the teeth had eyes, nothing human or even alive should not be capable of having. As such, there was only one conclusion. This 'creature' was a God that had descended upon the mortal world. The sweet lies of the whispering candles could reassure Neid no longer. He was confronting a being so supreme that his life was equivalent to that of fly's.

Before he could think anymore a wet pop echoed through the room. He couldn't see anymore. His brain, faced with such superiority, had decided the best course of action to save his psyche was to prevent him from gazing upon the very thing that was breaking it. He would try and thank it, but he couldn't, he was distracted by something more important. The God had noticed him. He didn't know how, but he could tell its many eyes were gazing at him, and he knew what was next.

At lightning speed a tentacle impaled him. He collapsed, this was how he met his end. He thought he had seen it all, but in truth he had only known but a fraction of what the truth was. He tried to smile, but he couldn't.

Inquisitor Sündige Neid died that night, faced with the truest form of a hunter, something he thought he had achieved.