

Foreword by the writer

I was young when this all happened, I seemed to be young for such a long time. Life has caught up with me in many respects but I carry on regardless. My mission is still clear in my mind and nothing wavers. The world around me has however changed in so many ways.

I still believe in my heart that what I, we, all of us, what we did and in some respects still do is right and wholesome. Many of you, reading my memories may believe the opposite but you have been taught a set of values contrary to the truth and the way I learned. I think that maybe I prey on you whilst praying for my own way of life. That is the truth that is true for me.

I have read of the other way, this man who walked among you and showed you his way. I never knew this man, nor did I ever know of him. I suppose through the years of being amongst you I have grown to understand him but not believe that he in any way has relevance to my life.

We the Silves, my people, have all but disappeared and I am the last of my kind living a shadow of a life, keeping to the shadows and not participating in this 'Modern world'. I write this with anticipation of re-opening the first chapters of my memories and re-call how this journey all began.

My memories begin with the beginning.

Memories from over the edge by Merith

Please note, this text uses some words, which are unfamiliar in these more enlightened times, I, will try to elaborate on these here.

Majick – Now written as Magic.

Majickal, majickally – something that is of Majick in nature.

Maji – A person who uses Majick to create effects.

Silves – Like an Elf of popular culture.

Darksight – The ability to see heat emissions as another colour, only visible in the dark.

Unus - Pullus nocturus

Someone once said to me, “Everything goes silent before the storm,” and tonight the silence was unearthly. The night was black as the deepest well as thick clouds obscured the light of the dance of the night sky. Across the town I could see the heat trails of the multitude of houses as they cooled down in the night. The swirling vortexes of the air trailing off from the chimneys as the fires burned low. The airspace was still, untroubled by wind or even birds. The heat of the day now trapped under the blanket of clouds, which promised a welcome rain. The thunderstorms, which would follow this gathering, would throw the fields asunder, but the days that followed would dry the crops that were the lifeblood of the land.

I loved the danger, gambling my life on the edge of the precipice.

The thrill of the risks spinning through my head.

The more precarious the moment, the higher the elation.

The only sound to be heard was my heart trying to leap out of my chest. The pounding of the blood as it pulsed through my body, loud and distinct, as it pumped in two distinct phases and the roar of it in my ears and I was certain that everyone within a mile could hear it.

Goddess this was exhilarating!

Twenty feet up in the air, dangling from a thin ledge with my fingertips screaming to be released of the pressure. The effort of trying to be as silent as the wind as I bore the pain was excruciating. The wall, rough against my ear, was sheer, almost un-climbable to most people.

It wasn't that I had stopped to have second thoughts about what I was doing. The merchant was, I had found to be, far richer than he should have been and as he was out of town for a while, I thought I might lighten his worries of keeping all of his ill gotten gains. He wasn't using it and I believed that I could help him find a better use for it, or at the very least it would be a good sacrifice.

I didn't need the money.

I was rich already.

It was the challenge that I was after and I suppose that it was ingrained into me that I was required to do this every so often to keep my skills up and to please my Goddess. There was also the chance of finding the prize I was after.

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No, it was not second thoughts. It was the Chipping Walden watch. This town was big enough to employ some old buggers who, instead of guarding the town gates, wandered the streets at night. They weren't a physical threat at least not to any capable thief. You had to be pretty useless at virtually everything else to become one. The pay was terrible and the hours were long. Many a watchman has been found curled up on the street due to violence, or the elements. They were however good at running away and blaring a whistle or shouting. One alarm and the whole town were upon you, after you, chasing your heels.

He was standing with his lantern on the doorstep, sorting a pipe out. In the darkness his lantern lit a wide space in which he could see. He stood, almost hunched over, peering down at it.

Taking an age over it.

Knocking it against the doorframe.

The stench of him wafted up to me, stale tobacco, dried sweat, cheap alcohol, and the worst of all crimes! - Bad breath.

He took out a small folding knife and scraped out the bowl.

Knocked it out again.

Blowing down the pipe.

Knocking it out again.

AHHHHHHHHHGH get on with it!

I almost screamed with the agony of hanging on. My muscles were beginning to rebel against me so I began to gently flex the muscles to keep the blood flowing. This was something my climbing instructor Cherish had taught me to do. In training I could keep this up for hours holding onto a ledge smaller than this and have done so loads of times but not for a while. There always seemed something else to do.

The watchman began to push his tobacco into the pipe. It was a harsh smelling cheap tobacco probably with several cheap blends and a bit of hemp within it no doubt. I never really got into pipe smoking, it hurt my lungs and I have only ever done it for show. It was a thoroughly disgusting habit that was obviously doing him no good. He paused to look around him. He seemed to think for a while and then slowly sat down.

I could have killed him right there, I was so angry with him. Killing can be a part of my life, I have been trained to defend myself and with sharp reflexes I could easily have taken down a less experienced fighter. In this position I could have dropped a throwing knife straight into his neck, this would certainly kill him but not immediately and if he moved suddenly, it may just injure him. I toyed with the idea for some time, and although it would be interesting to watch, I certainly wouldn't

want to have it on my conscience, nor would I like to give up this opportunity so easily.

He lit it from the lantern!

Son of a AHHHHHgh!!

The smell of the pipe, sweet, cloying smoke curled up from below.

How dare he! How dare he light up on duty! How dare he do it whilst sitting on this rich merchant's step? He should be going around protecting the town's property from the thieves and vagabonds? Well, other thieves and vagabonds. At that moment I hated him for being a lazy old git. He should be getting on with his job and if I were employing him I'd fire him and fine his final wages.

Thankfully he got up. I thought a silent prayer up to Ichmarr for this little task. He stretched his arms out wide, gave a yawn, picked up his lantern and mumbled off into the night taking his light with him. When he was out of sight, I continued waiting until his steps were a distance memory and relaxed.

Finally the darkness enveloped me, I had chosen this night well. My muscles needed to be flexible for the next movement, so I released one arm and shook it out, then did the same with the other. There is a ledge for my feet somewhere, my feet felt around, eventually they found it and I continued my climb up to the window ledge I had been aiming for. All of the other openings in the building were shuttered firmly shut, some with bars to stop intrusion into the building. This window, crafted out of the finest Ash, was small too small for most people to get through and at this height, with an almost sheer face to climb, was practically impossible for most thieves to get to. With a thin blade I checked around the window to find the way to open it, there was a small catch and I pushed it across to release the window. When I released it I swung the window open and struggled through the tiny hole. This man was so rich he was able to glaze some of his windows, what luxury. I carefully pulled myself through and placed my feet onto the floor.

No noises, no-one in the room and I strained my ears to hear if there was any noise in the whole building. Where would he keep it? Carefully, I moved around the room placing my feet, tensed against the pressure. Time and time again I had practiced moving across the ground in specially prepared rooms that had boards set to creak at the slightest pressure. It was in moments like these that the training paid off. I automatically tensed each footfall sensing whether the board would move and counter the movement. Moving noiselessly in case of others in the house I concentrated my search of this room.

I had been in this room before. I had heard from a contact, that a merchant, a nobleman had acquired a special and remarkable hat. This hat, she assured me, would make the wearer appear to be someone else, whomever they wanted to look like. This would be useful to someone who was wanted in five counties for theft and conspiracy to theft. Not that I had any thing to do with it!

The easiest part was to get this man's attention. I was blessed with a slim build and a remarkable figure, long brown hair and with some chemical help, sparkling eyes. For me it was easy to lead him astray. We laughed and joked about the other merchants and their woes, and as the evening wore on he invited me back to his house where he continued to ply me with fine wines. His manners were impeccable and it took real determination for him to forget his wife for the evening. He even showed me the hat, to entertain me, he impersonated important men from the town, it was remarkable and it could even change the voice of the individual. He was such a kind man, such a stupid man, and such a short experience.

His servants kicked me out in the morning. He woke with a start and had risen so quickly from the bed. Without a word he left the room and I was barely able to open my eyes from my meditative state before his exit. While they were locking up the place they slated me for every evil under the sun, I was a slut, a whore, and a harlot! He deserved this and more the coward!

Ahh!, there it is, a crevice behind a picture of himself. It was so vain of the man to hide his most valuable possessions behind a visage of himself, was it so that he would still be looking after them, when he was not there? Only a silvesi could have found this so easily. Darksight is a wonderful ability to possess and it is said that when the gods made the earth they hadn't remembered to light the sky – only to heat the stones. When the Silves arrived, being the first, they had to adapt to their surroundings and they developed this ability to see the heat from their surroundings. Some fish and snakes have kept this ability and the creatures that developed from them, but by the time the humans arrived, the Gods had remembered to light the world with the sun for the day and the moon for the night.

The picture was fixed to the wall somehow, obviously a hidden hinge with a catch. Where would he have hidden it? Would it be in plain sight, right in front of me? But where?

His signet ring – he was wearing it when he left me to go into this room, but not when he came back?

On the mantle below the painting, a mason had carved an ornate archway out of marble with a large keystone. This had a large and clumsy brass plate, which seemed out of keeping with the grandness. The brass plate had a depression in it similar in shape to the signet ring. There was a round crack around the depression and in the manner in which I was looking at it the plate was more pronounced than it otherwise would be. This was meant to be turned, but how without the ring?

There are a few tools of the trade, which we are not allowed to divulge otherwise the crown and its representatives would get a little more pissed off with us than we would wish. Hard putty is one of these. If they could find out how to make it themselves they might ban the materials it is made from. An Alchemist, many years ago, had first made it, but had stuck her hand to the bench with the first compounded material. Luckily for her a priestess had been going about her devotions in the bedroom above the workroom and had heard the cries of the alchemist. She was so grateful to her and with a little persuasion, she agreed to join the temple and work for us making the substance. It came in two sticks, mix the two together in equal quantities, and the putty would go ROCK hard! Mixing it in my hands, I placed it onto the cavity, carefully, to ensure the putty would only stick to the depression and not the rest of the plate. I sculpted it into a small mound and set a chain link into it to form a perfect key. The mixture hardens and turns grey, all I had to do was wait!

It is in moments like these that my mind tends to wander off and do a bit of window-shopping. It is a wonder that I ever get anything done. The room had luscious red walls finished with dark oak panelling, it was furnished with opulent furniture the kind of office a merchant doesn't really need but wants to show off to his friends. He had obviously had a penchant for metal trinkets as I could see that the desk was littered with the gold plated equipment of a lord's office. From their heat patterns I could tell that they were not real gold. The patterns of how the metals released their heat in the dark allowed me to distinguish, which metal they were and with my darksight, I could see that the majority looked like, lead with a hint of gold. Often, during the long nights of the temple, I would heat up different materials just to see what they looked like as they cooled. I loved to watch the flow of heat off the metals, the eddies and vortices as the heat rose off from the surfaces. I remember sitting in the dark for hours watching the shifting forms that only a Silvesi could see or comprehend. Jewels have always interested me in the way that they can look completely different in normal light but look strikingly similar in this lack of light. Only through careful and patient analysis could they be told apart from

cheap paste and glass imitations. For this reason I avoid taking jewels unless I have a useful heat source to shine through them. In this way all of the differences become apparent as they do scatter the heat differently.

I left off my reverie to check for traps around the mantle and the picture. This was a necessary precaution as many merchants, nobles and rich people are generally very distrusting of those around them. Once during a particularly easy devotion I opened up an innocent looking chest with a simple ward lock on it, only to be thrown back by the searing pain and force of a blow. A crossbow trap with an incredibly obvious latch, if I'd bothered to look for it, was set on the box. It had hit me in the shoulder. The bolt had luckily passed under my collarbone and gone straight through to hit the ceiling. Merely a flesh wound, a deep one, but at least I didn't black out through the pain. Luck was often made by careful preparation, not found through the roll of the dice. It was, however, unlucky for the owner of that house as it mysteriously burned down while standing empty that night.

Finding nothing on or around the mantelpiece to impede me I decided to go ahead, but cautiously. This was a worry, with such a valuable cargo and with such an elaborate way of hiding each part of the crevice and lock it would seem stupid to not trap it. So in turning the 'key' I strained every sense to give me a chance to react to Whatever?

Sensing rather than hearing a click! I spun out of the way in time to see three spinning metal discs shoot out between the cracks in the archway. From their starting point I could see that these were meant for the chest of the casual thief. Fortunately, they only hit the particularly unpleasant painting of what presumably was the merchant's father.

I searched again for any traps around each of the stones of the mantelpiece, in the floor and all around the painting. Painstakingly, I looked in vain for any other sign of a trap, finding none I continued. Grasping the key again I turned it slowly, with all the patience, every sense straining to hear any sign of impending doom. Suddenly, there was a CLick and I dropped to the floor. As I looked up I saw the picture slowly slide left out of place to reveal the hiding hole. Greedily I investigated the contents, inside it I found some papers, five bags of metal coins and a small wooden box. Hmm interesting, I felt into the bags of coins, they were probably gold, but I'd have to look at them properly. The box had the hat I had seen in the merchant's greedy hands, I took a moment to dance around the room. The box also had a few jewels in it, which could be useful in the future, big ones too. Carefully, I recovered the discs that had flown out of the mantelpiece. By close examination of the heat trails and

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the smell, I could tell that they were coated in paralysing poison number three, no antidote, expensive and rare. Death within four minutes with the owner of the body choking on his own juices. Nasty! I left the discs strategically placed in drawers of the desk and in the hiding hole, I also placed two bags of coins back into the crevice, you have to give the mark a chance to live. I didn't want to steal too much from him and you never know. He might get some of his own medicine. Slipping all of the contents into small pockets in my clothing, I reset all of the mechanisms, replaced the picture and pulled off the makeshift key.

Leaving was even easier. Slide myself back out of the window. Close it tight and wiggle the catch back in place. You might never know I'd been there. It would be a delicious mystery to the merchant to find out that he had been burgled without any sign neither of ingress nor of access. I picked my way down the wall, slid on a night cloak and made my way back to the temple. As I landed on my feet the patter of rain began to fill the streets, light at first then the heavier drops began, throwing the dust of the day into the air.