

The Secrets of Havenfall Forest || Fantasy Series Episode 13

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After a *very* much needed rest in the soft beds of the inn, I have to admit... It felt pretty good to sleep in a little for once. Normally I wouldn't allow it, the frivolous action of wasting time in bed, getting more sleep than you even need.. But after spending nearly a week tossing and turning in those shitty excuses for beds, I think we damn well deserved an extra hour of rest.

It took us a bit to pry our whining dragon out of his bed, but once we did, the three of us headed downstairs for breakfast. It was a very hearty serving of grilled salted fish, a huge bowl of buttered porridge with a bit of cream and some small rolls of rich brown bread. It was a more than welcome change from mystery meat jerky that had the consistency of tree bark.

Once our bellies were full, we gathered the crate of furs from our room and headed out into the marketplace to find somewhere to sell them. I'd taken a peek at them, and that shitty pirate hadn't been joking when he said they were valuable. Silvergleam Deer hides were highly sought after, mostly because you needed the permission of the elves to even get near the damn things, let alone hunt them. The pelts you get from them are beautiful, soft as angel wings and whiter than freshly fallen snow. How that pirate got ahold of these, I'll never know.. But I wasn't in any position to question him after he gave us an entire crate of 'em.

We asked around, but all the merchants we tried turned us down. I started to lose hope, but we got pointed to the nearby Adventurer's Guild. They were probably the only ones that would have enough coin to actually buy the damn things. Took a bit of waiting, but once we showed the girl at the front desk what we were trying to sell, she ushered us back to their merchant to talk things out.

**Vendor:** My MY! How on earth did you get your hands on Silvergleam pelts, let alone this many?

**Bakugou:** We have our ways. Now, tell us how much they're worth. We're in a hurry.

**Vendor:** The elves really don't like to share when it comes to the resources in their forests. This is impressive. Mmmm.. Judging by the fact that all of them seem to be in fantastic condition, and you've brought me about thirty of 'em... I'll part with three thousand gold.

Kirishima: (shocked) Th.. three..

Bakugou: Uh- Holy shit.... (stunned for a moment, before shaking it off) ngh, guess it'll have to do then.

**Vendor:** Purrrfect! Just give me a moment and I'll go fetch your payment, hang tight here for me.

**Kirishima:** Think about all the delicious, high quality meals we can buy with that kind of money! Oh my gods, we're gonna be almost kinda rich!

**Bakugou:** Tch, don't get ahead of yourself, shitty scales. We'll be far from rich but.. Yeah, I gotta say. This'll.. Be the most coin I've ever had on me..but we're not gonna waste it all on food, hear me?

Kirishima: (Disappointed) Yeaaaah I hear ya...

(footsteps as the vendor returns)

**Vendor:** Alright, here you go. Six platinum as promised~ Just sign right here and we'll be square, meow!

**Kirishima:** (in the bg) Eeeee this is so exciting!

Bakugou: Mn.. Gimmie that quill. (scribbling his name) Oi, you lot have courier services right?

Vendor: Indeed we do! Just up front near the check in.

**Bakugou: (grunt)** Good. There. Take your paper...these are ours. **(he picks up the coins)** C'mon you two, stay close.

**Kirishima:** (to the vendor as they are walking away) Pleasure doing business with you! Ahh man I can't believe how much we have now-

**Bakugou:** Will you shut up? The last thing you EVER wanna do is announce how much coin you have on you, who knows who could be listening right now idiot.

**Kirishima:** Oh! Right, sorry..! Hm? Oh! I guess we never really explained how the coins work here huh? I suppose you'd have a different system back home... Well..500 gold is a platinum..you need 100 silvers to make a gold aaand you need 100 coppers to make a silver...most jobs only pay a couple copper....maybe a silver if you're lucky.

Bakugou: (pointedly) and AGAIN that is WHY we don't talk about how much coin we have.

Kirishima: Right right...I said I was sorry!

After acquiring this much coin, I.. knew I needed to do one thing before we set off from Havenfall. Gods know when I'd ever see my people again, so... I used some of the 50 gold coins the pirate had given back to us to hire the courier services.. To send two of the platinum coins back to my family. We'd be perfectly fine with 4 of them anyway.. We'd be more than set for the rest of the journey if things were to go smoothly..hell Kirishima and I might even be set for the next few YEARS after we got you back home.

It was something I needed to do. Something that was important to me... Despite leaving my people to have a life of my own, I could never have the heart to leave 'em *too* high and dry. After that was taken care of, we bought some new supplies to replace the ones we lost and made our way out of the port town, and into the beautiful forests of Havenfall.

Havenfall was a beautiful country...small, but prosperous with its lands locked in eternal autumn. The stories said that long ago, the celestials that ruled over spring were extremely fond of their brother, who ruled over autumn. So much so that when they took their positions within the sky to watch over the world, they wept, heartbroken to know they would never again see their brother. These tears flooded the land and almost killed the races that lived there. So to ease their sorrows, their brother blessed the land with his magic, so that when his siblings traveled overhead, they could look down and see the reminder of their brother's love...and weep no more.

The forest certainly felt magical as we walked through it. The trees were tall, covered in leaves of orange and rusty crimson that fluttered down to coat the ground, crunching under our boots as we walked. The air was cooler here, a gentle breeze ruffling through our clothes and hair, carrying with it the scent of loamy earth, mushrooms, moss and old, damp leaves with the faintest hint of fresh hay. It wasn't unpleasantly cold... But with each exhale, we could see our breath condensing in the air, even as the sun warmed us through our clothes.

Kirishima: So... Now that we're in Delalin, how much longer do you think it'll take us to get to the mountains?

Bakugou: ..Depends.

Kirishima: ... Onnn?

**Bakugou:** Depends on the terrain. The monsters. The obstacles. Also depends on how much we gotta stop cause SOMEONE needs to eat every waking hour.

**Kirishima:** (sheepish chuckle) Ahhh yeah.. Well, good food is what makes traveling with your friends all the more fun. There's really nothing that beats curling up by the campfire and sharing food you all work hard to catch and make!

**Bakugou:** Tch... As long as we don't dilly dally and waste time, we should *get* there on time. Maybe even early..if it's safe for you to fly.

**Kirishima:** early is good. We can always set up camp near the altar and just.. wait it out, until the night that the stars align. It'll.. give us some time together, you know.. before you go home traveler.

(Silence for a moment as they keep walking)

**Bakugou:** Oi... Don't go getting all sad on me, you two. I need you both clear headed. We have a lot of ground to cover today.. we're not setting up camp until we get out of Havenfall forest.

Kirishima: yeah.. I know. Ah.. hey Katsuki..?

Bakugou: .. Yeah?

Kirishima: I just.. I'm really proud of you.

Bakugou: ... Huh?! Where the hells is this coming from all of a sudden? Shut up...

**Kirishima:** (sweet laugh) It's just..! When you sent some of the money we got from the furs to your family it.. made me realize just how considerate you really are. After all this time, you still care about your people a lot...

Bakugou: (embarrassed, grit teeth) I said shut up...

**Kirishima:** And you just being here, helping this traveler on their way.. all the way to the treacherous Straihorn mountains.. just to get them home. You have a really big heart, Kats...

**Bakugou: (growl)** I'm doing it cause it.. gh- it.. benefits me!! We've made tons of money so far and.. Tch. Gained a lotta traveling experience.

Kirishima: hah.. yeah. We sure have, haven't we? ... ah.. huh.? Traveler, your satchel is glowing..!

(Some shuffling as traveler takes the gem out of their bag to see it glowing with magic)

**Bakugou:** .... The gem. ... The hell's it glowing like that for?

**Gem:** There is a place of importance in this forest, Traveler.

Kirishima: h-huh..? Traveler? You look shocked, is everything okay?

**Bakugou:** .... What do you mean it's speaking to you? The gem is?

**Gem:** you must follow the magic of the stone. It will lead you to where you must go.

Bakugou: Oi, you hearing me? What the hells do you mean the gem is speaking to you?

Kirishima: ah- Where are you going! Wait up!

Bakugou: What are you doing! We gotta stay on the path! Hey.. You hit your head or something?

**Kirishima:** Katsuki.. Let's just put our trust in the Traveler okay? I.. sense some very strong magic, I.. think it's coming from the gem. Let's just see what's happening..

**Bakugou:** Tch... It's leading you somewhere? .. How the hell.. Is it some kind of sentient magic?

**Kirishima:** Who knows.. Maybe we'll get some kind of answer once we see where it's leading us to.. Is it still speaking to you, Traveler? ... I see.

Bakugou: (huff) I don't like this. It better be worth our time...

(they keep rustling through the rough path, before emerging to see a large, abandoned but beautiful building)

Kirishima and Bakugou: (same time, in awe) Woah...

**Kirishima:** What.. is this place? It's massive.. I've never seen a place like this before.

**Bakugou:** Looks like an abandoned manor of some kind.. It's covered in vines... The windows look like they haven't been cleaned in a decade or two..but whoever owned this place had money...look. Some of 'em are stained glass. Don't see much of that outside churches and palaces. Not to mention the damn thing's built out of granite. Precisely *cut* granite at that...

**Kirishima:** Mn... I.. I don't know what it is exactly, but.. I'm sensing some very bad energy from this place.

**Bakugou:** I am too... But that stupid rock led us here. We should probably see why. We'll go inside, but we'll be cautious... You two are to stay close to me, and be ready for anything. Hear me?

Kirishima: (nervous) .. Yeah. I.. I hear you. (Soft breath)

(they start walking forward, pressing on and heading up to the building)

Bakugou: Here- the entrance.

**Kirishima:** These doors are huge...Look at the carvings on them. Whoa...

Bakugou: Huge, but old... I got this. (Soft grunt as he kicks the doors open with a crack of the old wood)

Kirishima: ... Woah. (They walk inside slow, cautious)

Bakugou: It's... A library?

**Kirishima**: It looks to be... Or perhaps maybe the study of somebody who really liked collecting books.

**Bakugou:** ... It's a mess in here. Cobwebs.. Dust. Just breathing in feels.. *Thick*. Shit there's even plants growin' inside of this place. It's as if the forest has taken it over, even on the inside. Hope these books didn't have anything important in 'em cuz they're nothing but trash now...

**Kirishima:** ... It almost doesn't look like human architecture with how big everything is. The doors, the shelves.. The furniture. Everything looks to be made for a giant or.. Maybe even someone like me.

Bakugou: mm?

**Kirishima:** (softly) .. A dragon. ... The magic feels kind of familiar here.

**Bakugou:** (Exploring a bit, in awe. They walk further in) This place is huge.. Everything's so deathly quiet. I wonder just how far it goes...

Kirishima: Guys... Look.

Bakugou: (soft, nervous) Stairs. Big ones..Does this place have some sort of underground basement?

Kirishima: W-wait.

Bakugou: Ah?

**Kirishima:** The magic emanating from down there is.. Really strong. It's.... It feels similar to the magic that saturated the Hadera Forest.

**Bakugou:** .... Hmph. Look at the gem, though. It's glowing brighter than ever. It's like it wants us to go down there.

**Kirishima:** (softly, nervous) ... Okay. But please, please just.. Be careful, and.. Be ready for anything.

**Bakugou:** Yeah don't have to tell me twice Shitty Scales. Traveler....you ready? Let's see what this dumb rock wants to show us huh? Just watch your step, the stairs look like they've got moss on them. Last thing we need is for anyone to break an ankle or something so...take it slow. Both of you.

Kirishima: Got it...

**Bakugou:** You go first Traveler. You've got the only light source here, and I'm not about to light a torch. **(Huff)** our luck this place'll go up like a tinderbox.

**Kirishima: (quiet but encouraging)** Don't worry hun, we're right behind you. One foot after the other.. Watch your step.

(They descend down the stairs)

Bakugou: ... Holy shit. Just how deep does this go..?

Kirishima: (Grunt in surprise, the sound of something triggering)

(The torches along the wall light ablaze, leading down to illuminate the whole study)

**Bakugou:** Don't move. It's just the torches, they're.. Lighting. You must have stepped on something that activates the magic.

Kirishima: (Nervous) ..R..right.. Scared me.

Bakugou: .. Look.

**Kirishima:** Woah... it.. Really does look like it's some library, or archive.. It's huge down here.

**Bakugou:** Even the bookshelves down here are enchanted. Look...the sigils on the sides of em are glowing like they're self-sustaining or something. (Low and confused) Who the hell did this place belong to?

**Kirishima:** There's some open books on the table here.. Maybe we can figure that out. **(they head over there, Kirishima gasps softly)** It's draconic... Some of these books are written in my language! Maybe this place did belong to a dragon, maybe that's why the magic feels so familiar here... Maybe it was someone's hoard? Hm... Oh, this one's written in common tongue! I wonder why....

**Bakugou:** There's a scroll here... This looks newer than the book...and it's in draconic too. Can't make out most of it, ...Here, move over. Lemme see this book, I can actually read this one.

## (Shuffle)

**Bakugou:** What Traveler? I'm trying to read this damn thing...huh? On the floor? (Small intake of breath)

Kirishima: What? What?!

**Bakugou: (tense)** There's blood on the floor...a lot of it. It's long dried though so..whoever or whatever it came from is long gone.

**Kirishima:** (uneasy breath, steadying himself) .. I think... Something bad might have happened here. While the magic feels.. Familiar, it.. It also feels wrong. As if it were.. Tainted somehow.

Bakugou: (huff) .. You might wanna listen to this.

Kirishima: Hm..?

**Bakugou:** The page this book was open on, it's about the gem.

Kirishima: Wait.. what?!

**Bakugou: (Sharply)** Shhh! ... Let me read it.. See if it makes sense of anything. This is probably what the gem wanted us to find..

Kirishima: What does it say ..?

**Bakugou:** (reading) ... It is with great thankfulness for the Ebon Flight's disdain for the common tongue that I write this. To any who may read this, know that my flight is..(he hesitates) My flight is in danger of extinction. Already our city and homeland is under siege from the Ebon Flight as they plunder it in search of the most sacred of our gifts, the magic of Time.

In their vicious search, none have been spared, even the eggs know no mercy from our shadow scaled brethren. I pen this knowing that my time is short. I am called the Timekeeper. A role given to me by our beloved Queen Nishra The Wise, ruler of the Azure flight and its lands...and I hold that which the Ebons seek. Their King wishes an end to this world and a return to a time when none but dragons existed and for that, he requires this jewel that has been entrusted to me.

We call it.. 'The Azure stone.' A rather witty quip from Her Majesty given the jewel's crimson color. But, it was given the name to represent our flight, as the Azure's were first to harness the power it now holds. Within its facets, it holds the gift of the Knower, our blessed Celestial Delyon, given up by our Queen and locked into

tangible form to preserve our very realm. They must not find it. I have fled our capital for my archive deep within Havenfall, far from the conflict, but even here I fear I am not safe. That we...are not safe.

I must make preparations for the worst, especially since we suffered the loss of one of our secret magics: the art of necromancy. It was carefully guarded among our most wise and most trusted by the Queen and only used with the utmost care in the most extreme of circumstances. But...the Ebons have captured some of our magi and extracted their secrets..I am fearful of what the future may bring.`

**Kirishima:** The book.. It mentioned something about the ebons stealing the magic of Necromancy? H-hold on a second. I think I saw something about that in the scroll!

**Bakugou:** Ah? You better have a good reason to be interrupting this, shitty scales.

Kirishima: I promise I do. This scroll..it's a military report..

Bakugou: (Serious, almost a bit grim) What?

**Kirishima:** Mm..it's from an Ebon Lieutenant... Here, let me read it..**(nervous intake of breath)** Captain Dawnflayer, it is imperative that the Azure known as the Timekeeper is found. We have included a map to his supposed whereabouts within Havenfall. His archive may be protected by barriers, so we are deploying spellbreakers to your position.

**(Swallows)** Along with one of our new deathspeakers. You are to eliminate him and secure the gem. If he will not talk, torture him. If he still will not talk, then the deathspeaker shall handle things from there.

And...there's a reply from the captain at the bottom. Looks like he never got the chance to send it back.

Bakugou: Well? What's it say?

**Kirishima:** (shaky exhale) Lieutenant Shiverwing, I write this report to inform you that the Timekeeper has fallen and the Jewel is lost. We located his study, hidden in the deep woods of Havenfall. We awaited his return, and ambushed him in his archive. We discovered that he did not possess the jewel and refused to give into our methods. So the deathspeaker was utilized.

Due to his size, a new method of raising was used, that of spell tags which proved extremely effective. He was compelled to speak but would only give vague answers, his will being strong even after death. The most we could extract from him is that the jewel has been sent away, across the veil of space to somewhere different. Another plane of existence, outside of Solterra. I doubt such a fanciful answer could be true, but I am unsure if it's possible for a corpse to tell falsehoods. I request additional deathspeakers to try and extract more information from him. Captain Dawnflayer.

**Bakugou:** They.. Killed the dragon who wrote this journal.

Kirishima: (sadly, voice a scared whisper) Katsuki...they killed him...and...they didn't let him stay dead..

Bakugou: It's... (Serious, slight dread) Necromancy, Traveler... They brought him back from the dead...

Gem: Flee this place. Quickly.

## (Low unnatural scary dragon growly sound)

**Bakugou:** Shit.. I'm taking this journal, we need to get out of here, *now*.

Kirishima: He's.. still here..

**Bakugou:** Come on! Grab some of the books and put them in the pack, quick. We need all the damn information we can get about this stupid gem!

Kirishima: Right..!

(Shuffling as they quickly do so, stomping growing closer, a low growl)

Bakugou: Shit.. He's- .. (Fear) .. A lot faster than I thought he'd be.. Is he hostile?

**Kirishima:** By the gods... He's all bone and paper. He's.. definitely not who he was when he was alive.. We need to get out of here. You can't kill what is already dead... **(scared breaths)** Quickly, I'm going to transform, get on my back and hold on tight.

## (Kirishima transforms)

Bakugou: Ngh-! Quick traveler, on his back! Hup-! Go, Kirishima! (Braces himself as Kirishima runs, heading up the large staircase back up to the ground level. The undead dragon is hot on their tails)

**Kirishima:** (huffs and rumbles)

Bakugou: (Grunts here and there as he's trying his best to hold on) Ngh-! Over there! There's part of the roof back there that's caved in, it's a straight shot to the sky! GO! He's right behind us!

(Scrabbling as Kirishima climbs the wall and kicks off into the air, heavy flapping wings as they fly, the angry roar of the beast in the distance)

**Bakugou:** (panting and catching his breath, whispers kinda shell shocked) holy shit... (dazed) He's not flying after us. He's either bound to that place, or wings made of bone aren't very aerodynamic.. Thank the gods for small mercies I guess.

**(Some silence as Bakugou calms himself)** .... Traveler, We'll.. We'll talk later. Just.. rest up for a bit. Kirishima, fly us out of this damn forest.. And we'll find somewhere to set up camp... **(soft huff)** ..

(It's silent for a moment, before the audio fades out and back in to the sounds of the camp being set up)

**Kirishima:** Mn.. I hope no poachers saw me flying. We really didn't have much of a choice though, I mean.. Fighting an undead dragon would have been a death sentence for us. Ah.. Bakugou do you think we're safe here?

**Bakugou:** (Irritated, there's obviously something he's hiding) Ah? .. Yeah we're tucked away enough. Now stop yapping and finish setting up the damn camp.

**Kirishima: (Noticing Bakugou's attitude)** Oh, um.. Okay. mm.. Here traveler. Here's your bedroll. Just lay it out by the fire.. If you want you can put it next to mine and I'll cuddle you, 'kay?

**Bakugou:** (A little more aggro than usual) Oi! Shitty scales get over here and light this fire, m'done setting it up.

Kirishima: Um, right. Easy, blasty... I'm comin. (He goes over and breathes fire, lighting it)

Bakugou: ... (huff) Good. Bread and meat is in my bag.. ONE Ration's worth tonight, you hear me?

Kirishima: M..mhm. Just one, I promise.

**Bakugou:** Better keep it. M'gonna just.. Stretch my legs a bit.

Kirishima: Oh, a nighttime walk before supper? That always helps ya work up an appetite-

Bakugou: (Harshly) Alone. (huff) .. I'll be back. Eat, you idiots.

(he walks off)

**Kirishima:** ... I. I don't know, Traveler. Maybe he's just.. Shaken up from the undead dragon? ... Mm.. He seems more on edge than usual. (soft sigh, before he starts going through the pack to get the food. Traveler gets up and follows where Bakugou went) Did you want some bread and smoked meat?~ ... Traveler?

**Bakugou: (Startled)** Gh-! The hells are you doing, coming after me? I could have been- .. tch. What. What do you want?

.... You seriously came after me to ask if I'm 'alright'? Yeah, I'm alright, idiot. Pile of bones didn't put a scratch on any of us, I'm good. .... (growl) If I wanted to be interrogated I would have stayed by the fire with you both! Just- .. (Breath, tries to steady himself) Go. Go and eat. I told you I'd be back.

I just need a godsdamned minute to myself, you gonna allow that you nosy little-

**Kirishima: (Stern, hurt)** Katsuki! ... Stop. Why are you being so harsh towards them? Traveler has done nothing to you..! They're just worried about you.. we both are.

**Bakugou:** Then that's *your* problem, not mine. You can't even give me a moment to clear my head for gods' sake!

**Kirishima:** Clear it of what?? Was it the dragon that scared you?

**Bakugou:** (incredulous) Tch..?! Scared me?! Hah- You're kidding me. No, I've seen sights *far* more horrendous than a dragon made of bone.

**Kirishima:** Then.. What is it? Why are you acting this way?

**Bakugou: (Scoff)** Maybe, just maybe, if you ever considered using the brain in that thick skull of yours, you'd actually think about the situation we're in right now! For ONCE, Kirishima!

Kirishima: (Sadly, getting yelled at) Mn..- ...

**Bakugou:** Put two and two together- That little *gem* our little friend showed up here with is FAR more powerful than I ever could have imagined. It's sought after- by not just bandits. Oh no, we could handle those bastards. But this- **(huff)** .. Learning that this stone is wanted by the Ebon dragon KING?! This changes this little excursion of ours.

**Kirishima: (Sadly)** I.. I know. **(Sternly)** But that doesn't change what we have to do! We promised Traveler we'd help them get back home! That means we need to keep-

**Bakugou:** Are you hearing yourself right now?! We have to keep going? Have you maybe stopped to think even once that maybe, just maybe- This isn't worth it anymore?

**Kirishima:** Bakugou..! You don't mean that..! Let's- let's just sleep all this off and wake up tomorrow with a fresh perspective..!

**Bakugou:** (incredulous) Fresh- (Incredulous laugh) Are you *serious*?! Already this trip was life threatening. I uprooted my entire life for a godsdamned *stranger*.. and now we uncover that the gem that *mysteriously* brought them here, is actually a weapon that can be used to destroy the entirety of Solterra?! This was already too much.. This was a charity, something I only agreed to because I thought it'd be a relatively simple journey. I'm NOT going into this shit knowing what I know now.

Kirishima: What are you saying..? You just what- want to quit NOW? Midway into everything?

**Bakugou:** (furious) Don't you give a shit about anything other than this Traveler?! Ever since they fell outta the gods forsaken sky, they're all you care about!

(Listener starts to slink away into the woods, unbeknownst to the fighting pair)

Kirishima: Bakugou...! I just..! I have a connection with traveler! They need our help-

**Bakugou:** I've heard that over and over and over from you! What about *US*?! What about you, and your own life? Do you not value it anymore?! You're willing to throw everything away to help this person we're never going to see again?!

Kirishima: Please-! Listen to me-

**Bakugou:** I'm not listening to your preachy lunacy, not one more word! That gem has the ability to kill us ALL in the hands of that tyrant king! Don't you understand that? Just by having it on us, it could be a beacon for ebon dragons.. It's not safe!

**Kirishima:** Then what do we do?! We can't just leave them here.. We can't just abandon them! Not now.. Not ever!

Bakugou: (Furious groan) You.. You're so exhausting! That damn gem needs to be destroyed if anything!

**Kirishima:** No..! No we can't do that, if we destroy it Traveler loses all chances of going home.. Of seeing their family again! We can't-

**Bakugou:** I don't CARE! That's not my godsdamned problem! We'll find them a home in the city- or.. Or Deku has enough room in his shitty little hut, he'll take them in. They'll just have to suck it up and get used to life here from now on.

Kirishima: I can't.. I can't believe you! Traveler I'm- ...... Traveler..? (Calling worriedly) Traveler!

(By now, Traveler has run off into the woods sadly. They feel as if they're a burden to them now after Bakugou's outburst.)

Kirishima: (Distant calling) Traveler..! Please! Come back to us!

(More running, until finally listener comes to a stop, slumping down in the grass to cry a bit. Eventually, there's some rustling, a strong flap of wings as a stranger lands in front of them.)

**Hawks:** Why hello there, little birdie. **(sound of a sword being drawn)** What's someone like you doing out here all on your own...?