

## Chapter 6 Siege

Kate dozed off again after everyone had left, her body still weak despite the caffeine it had received. She felt much better now that she had met the others, everyone bringing something to the table. Even Bert. A shotgun would surely be useful.

She dreamed of undead and goblins. Monsters coming to kill her. Kate felt she could fight this time, felt like she was armed. She had power flowing around her. Something new. An ally to help her survive, to help her fight, and kill. The monsters attacked with a loud crash, and she woke up.

The armory was dark, the air stuffy with the smells of blood, sweat, and sterile medical supplies. She could hear people breathing, voices speaking with quick words. Steps on wood. Her groggy mind couldn't decipher it all as she turned her head.

"You have children here..." a male voice said, one she didn't know.

The man was massive. Just under two meters with short black hair, likely in his forties. He wore a black shirt, wet stains visible on it. The blood was even more obvious on his jeans. He certainly weighed about twice as much as Kate but she knew it wasn't just fat. The man reminded her of her friend Maurice, a firefighter and the strongest man she's ever met. Physically that was. She hoped he had survived.

Her eyes adjusted as she rubbed them, now aware of the two people lying on the bedrolls. A young man in his twenties, mid length red dyed hair mostly obscured by a black hoodie. She noted the different shade of red on his brow. He wore green work pants just like the second person on the ground.

A woman, she saw. Her body twitched, a whimpered moan coming from her. Long blonde hair. A wound on her stomach. She wouldn't survive.

Melusine knelt next to her, emptying a syringe into the young woman's bare arm. She cradled her head and lightly brushed her hair. "It's alright," she whispered. Looking up to the man, she shook her head ever so slightly.

His body slackened before he steeled himself, his eyes going around the room. "Keys?" he asked when he reached one of the larger glass cases.

"Over there," Melusine said and pointed to a long glass cabinet. She moved over to the young man on the ground and checked him quickly without letting go of the woman's hand. Her grip was firm and she continued to say reassuring words.

"What is happening?" Kate asked. She forced herself up to rest her back on the wall. Only now did she see the two girls she already knew hiding in their corner of the room.

Nobody replied. The man grabbed the keys and started opening the glass cases. He began to rip off pieces from the medieval armor inside before he fitted it around his chest.

"Talk to me," Kate said and moved out of the bed. The action elicited a sharp look from Melusine but she didn't scold her. *Not a good sign.* She saw the crutches next to her bed and grabbed one of them. With her other hand she took the crowbar.

"Monsters at the gates," the man said, fiddling with the leather straps of the chest piece.

Kate got up. She felt a sharp sting from her abdomen but made herself walk. “You can’t put that on yourself,” she said and grabbed the straps, quickly knotting them closed. “Shoulders,” she said.

The man glanced at her for a split second and handed her the piece. He moved on to the first leg piece he could put on himself.

She finished securing the steel shoulder piece and rattled it to make sure it would hold. Kate had no idea how exactly a medieval knight’s armor would have to be assembled but knots she knew, and she had improvised enough to get an acceptable result. She made sure to glance at the leg piece too but found the man knew what he was doing. The armor was absolutely massive. Just large enough to fit him.

They worked in silence. Melusine’s reassuring words the only voice close by. Her entire focus was on the young woman now. Kate heard crying from the corner of the room.

“It will be alright. It’s okay,” Melusine said, her voice steady and calm. Kate believed her, even though she knew the words to be a lie. Nor were they meant for her.

Eloise moved out of the corner with slow steps, hands fiddling with bloodshot eyes.

Melusine looked up and smiled. “Come, hold her hand,” she said.

The girl’s eyes lit up as she moved forward. She knelt down and did as asked.

“Just keep holding on,” the woman said.

Dull pounding sounds came from outside.

The armor was done. The burly man transformed into a terrifying knight of old. He put a helmet on his head, the visor revealing light green eyes below. They looked tired.

Kate saw something else too but she wasn’t sure exactly what it meant. “Weapons are over there,” she said and pointed at another large display case.

He opened it quickly and grabbed an absolutely massive two handed sword nearly as long as he was tall. The man took a deep breath and heaved the large steel weapon onto his shoulder.

Kate already moved to the exit. Her steps were slow but steady, the pain just a dull reminder of her injuries. She wouldn’t be particularly effective but considering the circumstances, she knew her choice.

“You’re injured,” the man said as he stepped up behind her. “And in the way.” His voice was neither accusing nor belittling.

“Then you better help me down,” Kate said. She was calm. Ready. Something had changed, she knew. Perhaps it was what had happened the night before, or the weird magic she could feel within her very core, a part of her now. It didn’t matter. She wouldn’t let another person die.

He looked at her for less than a second before he stepped next to her. A massive gloved hand went under her shoulder.

They walked together down the tight spiral staircase, his sword and armor clattering against the stone as they tried to stay upright.

“I’m Kate,” she said when they reached the bottom. She continued on with her crutch and shook his hand away.

“Logan,” he said and moved past.

They came out onto the yard. An arrow whistled through the air in a high angle, coming down before it dug into the soft earth near the lone old tree to their left. The pounding came from the gate. The wooden bar put in place rattled and shook.

Kate closed the door to the ground floor of the armory and gripped her crowbar. “What’s outside?”

“Goblins. Orcs. Either they followed us, or they just happened onto this place,” Logan said.

“They were here last night,” Kate answered. “Do you have a Class?”

“No. Only Ethan had one but he’s out for now. But I have this,” he said and gripped the large handle of his oversized sword.

“A shield might’ve been better,” Kate said.

She received a stare and light nod at her crowbar.

“Fair enough. Plan to wait until they break through?” she asked.

“With an old man on the ramparts and a bunch of teens to defend the yard?” he asked.

“Right. We should find out what we’re dealing with,” Kate said and made for the tower nearest to the gate.

The man followed. They could hear goblin cries now and the occasional guttural sound from the orcs.

*More than one of them*, Kate thought and gripped her weapon.

“How injured are you exactly?” Logan asked as they entered the tower. Again he helped her up the stairs.

Kate didn’t reply at first, not until he stopped at the door to the ramparts and glared at her. “I have a Class okay? I can absorb health from creatures I kill. Now move, we don’t have time for this.”

He turned and opened the door.

They did their best to crouch, quickly reaching the wood and stone ramparts above the gate. Jonathan, Grey, and Bert sat behind cover, all waiting with loaded crossbows, bolts strewn about. Arrows stuck in the wooden wall behind them.

“T... they... they’re waiting,” Grey got out. “More t... than a dozen. Wi... with bows.”

“They’re good shots,” Kate supplied. She stood behind Logan and lifted her shirt lightly. The bandage had a darker color.

“I know,” the armored man said. “Any other way out?”

“No,” Bert answered.

“It’s not that high a jump,” Kate suggested.

“You want to go out there?” Jonathan asked in a hissed whisper.

“Too many to fight head on. We need a distraction. Go back, we go down between the towers, circle around. When they notice us, you shoot. Aim for the orcs,” Logan said and moved without waiting for a response.

Kate walked as fast as she could. She left the crutch behind and grit her teeth. The wound was open already. The longer she waited, the worse it would get. At least the pain was manageable for now and the thick bandage would keep her steady.

They reached the section between the two towers. Logan checked over the wall and threw his sword down. It landed on the earthy ground with a thud.

Kate did the same with her crowbar. "I shouldn't make that jump."

He gave her another look and started to climb. "I'll catch you," he said and climbed over. He lowered himself as far as he could and let go, landing in a heavy roll. He stumbled and stopped his remaining momentum against a nearby rock. It took him a moment to stand back up. Logan shook his head and looked around before he glanced up.

*No time to distrust his catching abilities*, she thought and climbed over. She lowered herself and glanced back. Kate aimed and jumped, pulling in her knees and elbows as she fell. She kept her back towards the ground and hit something hard a moment later.

Logan nearly fell as he softened her fall, the impact still enough to push all the air out of her lungs. She coughed, her hand coming away with blood as she stood up and looked for her crowbar.

"We separate," Logan said. "You're smaller, harder to spot. Go from the back, I come from the side."

Kate nodded and moved into the underbrush. She winced with every second step now before she remembered her abilities. Before she could question her decision making in the last ten minutes, she activated Mindless Ferocity. A flow of warmth moved through her, the pain soothed just a little. She could no longer hear her own breathing. Her focus sharpened, now entirely tuned to the excited noises the goblins made, the throaty commands of the orcs. *Almost taunting*, she thought and activated her second ability, Furious Dance.

The world around her shrunk, her thoughts dulled and limited, focused on a single task. She gripped her crowbar with both hands and moved through the trees while slightly crouched.

*Quiet.*

*Move.*

She heard the goblins, knew how far away they were. Her muscles tensed. She wanted to rush forward, to kill them all. She needed to.

*Quiet.*

*Calm.*

*Fire.*

Kate forced herself to move farther. Behind the position the goblins had taken. More arrows were loosed.

*Go.*

*Kill.*

She was behind them now. Kate didn't care to think about Logan or her allies on the ramparts. She had fulfilled her obligation. She had moved behind them and it had taken all of her willpower to do

so. And now, she was free to let loose.

Her form moved out of the trees like a shadow, her steps quiet and fast. She heard the goblins. She knew there were six of them to her left, short distances between them, bushes and trees to obscure their position. The one in front of her turned around at the noise but it was too late.

Kate struck the small creature with a horizontal blow. It slapped to the ground with a weak groan. Again, she struck, this time from above. Two times. Wet sound and a splatter of blood and goblin bits. They had come to kill them.

She stepped through the trees, tense but at a walking speed. The second one hadn't heard. They were still excited, chattering insults in a language she did not speak.

*Silent.*

Kate got the second one without it even noticing. The full force of her strike hit it in its face, half of it caved in by the steel bar. It hit the ground already dead.

*Delightful.*

Something made the creatures move, orcish commands bellowed by the monsters near the gate.

*Distracted*, she thought and felt herself grin. She waited for a few seconds with a steel grip on her weapon. Her eye twitched. *Go. Fight.*

A part of her knew she had to wait. Just a little bit. It felt like hours.

Finally she moved.

Four goblins now stood on the small field in front of the castle, their backs towards her, bows aimed at the armored figure behind the two parked cars.

She must've made a sound because two of them turned around. It was too late. She struck the first one, its small body raised from the ground before it slapped down with a wet thud. Kate saw the second creature pull back the bow string. Reckless charge activated. Power flowed through her as her body was propelled forward. She held her crowbar sideways and with both hands. Her form impacted the small being, the bar slamming into its brow with a crack, its arrow whistling up and away. She left the downed creature and moved to the next. Three heavy strikes smashed their skulls.

They had noticed her but it didn't matter. Not anymore. Kate ripped out an arrow from her chest and finished the injured one she had downed with a heavy stomp of her boot. She heard a laugh and knew it was hers. It was a good night after all.

Logan swung his massive weapon with a scream. The steel cleaved through three goblins at once, blood and guts slamming to the ground as the armored man retreated in a defensive stance.

Five more goblins tried to circle him, now more cautious than before. One orc lay dead near the gate, two bolts deep within its shoulders. The remaining two orcs moved to circle Logan, occasionally glancing back towards the ramparts.

Kate ran. She watched one of the orcs shout something in her direction before he turned away to face the armored man with its ally.

Five goblins ran at her with daggers.

*Good.*

*Come to me.*

Kate kept running, her reckless charge activating just before the first of them reached her. She moved through them with an incredible rush, her bar of steel held at the height of their heads. Blades cut into her legs but she remained standing. Two of them had been downed, another one falling in front of her when she came to a stop. She slammed her bar down with all her strength and the momentum she still had.

The remaining three goblins looked at her with wide eyes before they turned and ran into the forest.

Logan blocked a strike and swung his sword wide. He struck the first orc, a gashing wound on its side. The man brought his sword back with a heavy swing that went through the stunned monster's neck. Halfway at least before it got stuck.

The second orc rushed forward. Its blade slammed against Logan's shoulder piece, slightly denting the metal before the creature kicked against his chest. Both strikes combined made Logan stumble back and fall.

The sword was ripped out of his hands, firmly stuck in the falling corpse of the other orc.

Kate rushed at the monster when it turned around and slammed his fist into her face. She heard something break, her vision swimming as she stumbled back. She ducked to avoid a horizontal swing and gripped her weapon.

The orc returned to the downed knight and struck against his head. His blade slid off the helmet with the impact.

Logan groaned and rolled to the side, one hand to his head.

*No.*

Kate tried to use reckless charge but it wouldn't activate. She closed the distance with a few steps and managed to deflect the orc's sword with her crowbar. The two weapons were entangled as she pushed back. Its free arm struck her face. The first blow didn't come in straight but the second nearly knocked her out. More breaking bones.

Her arms didn't relent, his weapon pushed back as she saw the armored knight stumble up to his feet behind the monster. She grinned, half her vision gone and the taste of blood in her mouth. It didn't matter.

The orc moved his arm to the side when a thin blade cut through his hand. A guttural sound came from its tusked mouth.

Kate didn't think. She let go of her weapon with one hand, grabbed the shaking blade, and pushed it forward. The weapon sunk into the orc's neck but it still pushed back. Massive armored hands grabbed the monster from behind, its arms restrained.

*Good.*

*Allies.*

Kate let go of the blade and grabbed her crowbar. She slammed it down against the monster's head, her third strike cracking its skull. The armored hands let go and the blade was gone but she continued. The orc was on the ground now. Kate stood above its chest and turned its head into mush. She took a deep breath when she knew it was dead and shuddered, her attention moving to the distant sounds of running goblins. She knew where they had gone and started towards the

direction.

“Stop,” someone said, barely audible to her.

Something grabbed her arm but she ripped it away. The fight wasn't over.

“Kate,” a voice said, concerned.

It didn't matter.

“Kate,” this time the grip on her arm was firm.

She turned around and found herself looking at an ally. The armored man. *Who?* She balled her fist and slammed it against his helmet. It hurt, just a little. He wouldn't hold her back.

Someone else grabbed her other arm before she could strike again. “Kate, it's us. It's me, Grey, come back.”

The armored man moved his head back slightly before he tried to take her weapon.

Kate held on. She knew something was wrong. Why were they holding her back? The battle wasn't over, or was it? She no longer heard the enemies. Her body felt heavy. Hot. She couldn't see very well. Blood was in her mouth, her head was thrumming.

“Kate,” Grey repeated, his voice pleading, fear in his eyes.

*Fear of what?*

Her eyes opened, the tension in her body gone as Logan pulled away her crowbar. “I...,” she stammered out and tried to hold up her hands.

“You're back,” Logan said. “Come we can't stay out here.”