

Chapter 12 Rest

Kate sighed, a smile almost coming to her face when she put on a set of fresh clothes. Just a pair of trainers and a shirt, the supply surely running low at this point. The shower helped, it really did. She hoped the thing never stopped working. *We'll need someone versed in plumbing, and replacement parts for the future.*

Putting on her wandering boots, she went downstairs. Nobody remained in the kitchen and living room space, the lights already out. She saw a thin drizzle of rain outside. An early autumn evening. *Could just cuddle with a blanket and watch something on the TV with a hot chocolate,* she thought, looking at the thing. *Maybe later.*

Instead she poured herself a bit of coffee, heating it up in a small pan when she realized it had turned cold in the meantime. She leaned against the kitchen counter and tried to think through what had happened today. Monsters had come to Keilberg, had killed everyone? She didn't know. *Maybe there are people hiding still. Somewhere.* They had killed a lot of beings. Goblins, Orcs, half of them in some kind of magic induced haze. She hated the loss of control, hated that her abilities demanded things from her that she didn't want to do. And yet a part of her reasoned that it was rational, no, maybe even what she really wanted.

Kate didn't know if that part was her own mind or whatever magic had invaded it. What she couldn't deny was the fact that they were still alive. Both herself and the others. *Barely.* She gulped, thinking of all the blood, the panicked look in Jon's face. What would she have done if Grey had died? If Jon had died, and they had returned to his daughters and wife. Her introspection was broken by the sound of her coffee reaching a boil. She turned and filled her cup, turned off the stove, and left the home.

People had already died. She didn't have the resources to consider scenarios like that. What she had to do was focus on the now, focus on what she could and should do. What ifs and regrets were what destroyed the mind. *You're alive. You have coffee. And you fought against the monsters that dared invade Keilberg. One step forward. Through the smoke, until the fires are out.*

She reached the armory, going inside with slightly wet hair. It didn't exactly pour. Faint voices could be heard from above, the ground floor cool but not cold. They really were lucky to have the old castle, especially the wood stove. Kate walked upstairs and knocked on the closed door. "It's me."

Someone turned the key before Eloise looked at her from the other side. She smiled, looking just a little embarrassed when she stepped aside.

The two girls were sorting through the loot haul they had gathered from the town, most of it medical supplies but there were plenty of useful items from the skiing store as well. *And we'll go back for more.* Melusine sat on her knees above the still unconscious Ethan, his red hair now flowing freely, the blood she had seen on his face cleaned off. She saw the familiar look of burn scars on his brow. Something old.

Kate closed the door behind herself and locked it. She hopped up on one of the glass cabinets and leaned her back against the stone wall. *Cold. I'll gear up later.* She sipped on her coffee.

Jon lay on one of the bedrolls, same as Grey, neither of them in a state of particularly high

consciousness. They seemed calm, and alive. Logan had glanced at her once but had closed his eyes again in the meantime, a wet towel covering most of his face.

“How are you, Kate?” Melusine asked, turning her way as she stood up and wiped a bit of sweat from her brow.

“Could be better,” she admitted. “The coffee’s nice though. And I’m glad we now have all that to work with,” she said, gesturing to the large pile of medical supplies, clothing, and wandering tools.

The woman smiled. “They’re all better. Much better than they should be,” she said and paused, giving her a look. “How do you handle it? The magic? It is magic I think, or some advanced technology we don’t understand yet.”

Kate considered the question for a few seconds, drinking from her mug again. “It’s kept me alive.”

The woman chuckled into a raised hand, the image reminiscent more of a high class politician at a social event than the woman who had just saved the life of another human.

I suppose it’s unfair to think both couldn’t apply, Kate thought.

“A very pragmatic approach,” Melusine said, a knowing look in her eyes.

Kate just sipped from her coffee. She would’ve liked some music, to escape, to think of nothing for a while, get rid of the memories, but it would disturb the injured and sleeping. And she still had some things to prepare.

“Were there monsters in the town?” Eloise asked in a quiet voice.

Kate nearly snapped but she managed to stop herself. The teen just wanted to make conversation. She could handle them the day before but after everything that had happened, she could tell her batteries weren’t exactly charged. “There were,” she said simply and downed the last bit of coffee. She crouched down above the pile without another word and started looking through everything.

Thermal pants and shirt, sturdy pants with plenty of pockets, a good belt, thin skiing jacket against rain and wind. She focused on the labels and made herself a pile in her size. She added four non blood covered hunting knives as well and chose one of the larger backpacks, a dark gray color that wouldn’t stand out too much in most environments. Not as good as green but that was generally reserved for military gear.

She put the whole pile into the pack and started looking through the cabinets. The armor was right out, near all of it either made of metal or entirely too bulky for her. *No female knights in ye olden times. Sexist fucks could’ve done me a favor.* Her eyes fell on one of the weapons. It looked a little like a simple hammer, just larger. Nothing ridiculous like she’d seen in popular fantasy movies but definitely something you wouldn’t use in one hand. Not if you weren’t two and a half meters tall and four times her weight.

I am stronger, somehow. And I’d have a little more reach. Thing is made of solid steel as well and that spike on the backside looks nasty. No need to use daggers if I have that thing. The front bit of the hammer was a solid chunk of steel, one side flat, the other one a straight spike, a matte gray just like the rest of the tool. A tool quite obviously made for one purpose only. She couldn’t find any seams, suggesting the thing was a single piece of metal.

Kate grabbed the keys and unlocked the respective cabinet, the jingling of keys mixing in with small boxes being moved and the faint sound of rain pattering against the wooden ceiling above the attic.

She expected the weapon to be heavy, at least twice as much as the crowbar. Grabbing it, she raised her brows. Kate felt the weight, heard the sliding sound when she lifted it. Solid steel. And yet it didn't feel heavier than the crowbar had. Maybe a little bit, but the weight was good. When she took it out and held it with both hands, she could tell the balance was taken into consideration. *Not a toy, or a tool made to open doors.* She looked at the weapon for a few seconds, questioning if she had gone insane. *Monsters, magic, classes, a fucking war hammer.*

The top bit was maybe twice as thick as her closed fist, the spike a little longer than her index finger. The handle was as thick as the crowbar, the grip even better. She rotated it and looked at the spike. *Was this ever used? It feels real enough.* Even the spike was blunt but she assumed it didn't matter, not with the weight and momentum she could put behind it. She shook her head, thinking of the fighting earlier. It was good she didn't have much left in her stomach. *Keep the coffee down.*

"You look terrifying. Did you lose your mind yet?" Logan asked in a tired voice.

Kate looked at him and rotated the spike towards his chest. "You'll be the first to know." She locked the cabinet again and put the keys away. Her pack ready, she held the hammer with one hand. The weight felt good. Something grounding. A sense of security. Using it would be similar to a fire axe.

"Are you going to change?" Melusine asked.

"Yes," Kate replied.

"I should look after them for a while but I'm sure everyone is getting hungry," the woman said and glanced at Eloise and Celeste.

"I'll be in the house," Kate said. "And I can help with the food."

The woman smiled and gave her a nod. "You heard her girls. Get out of this sick room and go make something nice. They'll need a lot of energy."

Looks like it's gonna be me and Bert tonight. Let's hope nothing shows up, Kate thought as she left.

Dressed in her fresh and comfortable wandering clothes, she put her shoes back on and got on her jacket. Everything fit rather well, not too large or too small, except for the slightly too long sweater. Granted, except for her height at one seventy seven, everything else wasn't out of the ordinary. She liked the feel. *More prepared than just a sweatshirt.* The pants were a mix of black and gray. The thermal pants and shirt, including the sports bra were a simple gray, the jacket more going towards black. Everything was the same brand of course, and they knew what they were doing.

Were doing. Probably won't be making winter gear anytime soon, she thought as she walked down the stairs, her jacket open, backpack around one shoulder, and her hammer in hand. The coffee had helped calm her down a little, as did the warm set of clothing. The fact that most of what she wore was from the same line of clothing helped too in some weird way. She assumed it had to do with her usual firefighter uniform. *Work mindset thanks to something vaguely familiar? Hell if it works, it works.*

Eloise had started setting out ingredients, cans of beans, chopped tomatoes, spices, and a variety of cold cuts, some of the packets already open. Celeste sat nearby and played with one of the cans.

The cook nearly jumped when she noticed the sounds and turned around.

Kate tried to force a smile but could tell it didn't exactly come out perfectly. "Hey."

"H... hello. Y.. you look good," Eloise said.

"Thanks," Kate answered. "Look, sorry about before. Today was a lot."

"It's okay!" the girl said immediately, holding up a tube of tomato puree. She lowered it when she realized the absurdity of the gesture.

"Can you use the hammer?" Celeste asked and looked over.

Kate raised the thing and threw it up a few centimeters before she caught it again. "I hope so. It's not the most complicated tool."

The girl seemed thoroughly unimpressed, returning her attention to the can of beans.

"Chili?" Kate asked.

Eloise nodded. "Something like that. Not a lot of variety around."

"I'll get you more soon," Kate said and leaned her hammer against the table, her pack put on the floor next to it.

"You'll go back?" Eloise asked, gulping as she turned to look at her.

Kate started looking through the cabinets, taking out a cutting board and a few bowls. "We don't exactly have enough supplies here," she said. "Even if the military or someone else comes to help in a few weeks." She doubted that would become a reality but everyone was stressed enough as it was. A little optimism felt nice. *At least we have walls and some weapons. Most people wouldn't be that lucky.*

She focused on the onions instead of her thoughts, Celeste soon leaving her chair because of her stinging eyes. Kate didn't mind. She glanced at the pink bluetooth boxes sitting on one of the shelves but decided it would be irresponsible to listen to music right now. *Maybe tomorrow. If the others are feeling better.* Instead she started humming a tune whilst cutting onions, then garlic, and finally carrots.

Eloise worked silently, her hands moving all over the place as she put together the meal with practiced efficiency. A few minutes later a nice fragrance had already spread through the apartment.

"Celeste, can you check what movies the old man has?" Kate asked. She felt a little like a babysitter, not that she would've ever considered doing that job. *Maybe for a cat or a dog.*

"Okay," the girl said and jumped up from the armchair, falling to her knees before she started digging through the TV cabinet. "Band of Brothers, Saving Private Ryan, The Winter War, there are lots of soldiers on the pictures," she said and held up a few of the dvd boxes. "This one has women on it. The Backdoor, part four, with Extra Jui... Juicy-"

Kate grabbed the thing with her knife in the other hand. "That's... not. Let's not check these right now," she said and put them back inside. *And here I had thought him a more conservative fellow.* She wasn't particularly keen on war movies either. Not before the monsters and not after. *Will have to bring some of mine after I get to my apartment.*

"Do you two watch a lot of movies?" she asked instead, back to cutting.

"I do," Celeste said.

“What do you watch?” Kate asked, seeing the side glance from Eloise.

“Aliens is my favorite!” the little girl exclaimed before she jumped on the chair, grabbing the rests. “Get away from her, you bitch!” She looked around before she started giggling.

Kate just looked at her before she glanced at Eloise.

“I don’t know why they let her watch stuff like that. She’s seen it twenty times already,” she said. “I tried to talk to dad about it but he doesn’t think it’s an issue.”

“What about Melusine?” Kate asked.

The girl shrugged. “She thinks most of the movies Cel watches are harmless.”

“I want to fight Aliens when I grow up,” the girl said, making punching motions with her arms.

It would’ve been cute if not for the state of everything. Kate still smiled to herself, finishing the last carrots. She was a firefighter, not a parenting counselor. *Maybe it helps her rationalize the whole thing. She seems the most calm out of us three.*

Kate reminded herself that the girl was a kid. She didn’t understand the implications of these events, not to the same extent as they did. *Not that I know what the fuck is going on beyond the suggestions from Grey. The game stuff doesn’t really help with everything.*

“I’ll take over the guard duty for a while,” she said when she was done with cutting. Her jacket closed, she grabbed the hammer.

“I will bring you something when it’s done,” Eloise said. “And some coffee.” The girl smiled.

Kate smiled back, the gesture genuine now. “Thanks. I appreciate it. Look after your sister.”

“Easier said than done,” Eloise replied and glared at the child who had started going through the dvds again.

Kate sighed and quickly collected the pornographic content, putting it on top of a nearby shelf before she went outside.

The rain had intensified a little but it wasn’t particularly windy still. She put up the hood and walked to the tower near the gate. “Bert, it’s me, don’t shoot!” she shouted preemptively as she walked over the stone part of the yard.

The old man stood up on the battlements, looking out into the forest from the wood covered section, two loaded crossbows resting against the low wall. His shotgun lay on the ground behind him.

“Go get warm,” she said. “I’ll take watch for a few hours.”

“You were out there and fought, girl. Take some rest,” he grumbled, eyes focused forward.

Kate leaned against the back wall and put both hands into the jacket, hammer resting against her leg. “Yeah, but you’re ancient.”

“Back in my day, women showed some respect when talking to their elders,” he said.

“In my day, men are supposed to be less sexist, I don’t grumble about it like some bitter old shit,” she answered. “Get your ass inside before you freeze.”

He chuckled. “You remind me of my granddaughter,” he murmured and grabbed his shotgun.

“Times are changing fast for an old man like myself. First all these smart telephones, and now there

are small green monsters in the forest.” The man stepped past her and touched her shoulder. “You keep yer eyes open. A storm is coming.”

“What is that some kind of fucking prophecy?” Kate asked.

“Cursing a lot, are we?” he asked.

“Fuck off,” she replied.

He snickered before he pointed westward. “Heard thunder. Been up here for a long time, Kate. A storm is coming. Get inside when it’s here. No monster would come out in that weather.”

Kate gave him a light nod. She wasn’t so sure about that herself but she wouldn’t stand outside in the worst visibility if an actual storm came.

Bert trotted off, protecting his shotgun from the rain.

Storms had a special place in her heart. Close to heavy drinking. Enjoyable in the evening and an absolute pain the next day. *At least there’s the silver lining of not having to work tomorrow. Just well... likely going back into a monster infested forest. Can’t have everything,* she thought and pulled up the already high collar of her jacket. *This thing is amazing. No wonder it’s like six hundred bucks.* She watched the forest, rain pattering onto the leaves, the first noise of thunder rolling through the valley.

Kate Lindgren

Unspent stat points: 0

Class: Berserker – lvl 4

- ***Active: Mindless Ferocity – lvl 4***
- ***Active: Furious Dance – lvl 5***
- ***Active: Reckless Charge – lvl 2***
- ***Active:***
- ***Active:***
- ***Passive: Toll for the Living – lvl 4***
- ***Passive: Courage of the Unarmored – lvl 3***
- ***Passive: Two Handed Weapon Fighting – lvl 3***
- ***Passive:***
- ***Passive:***

Support class: Locked

Status:

Vitality: 14

Endurance: 14

Perseverance: 4

Strength: 11

Dexterity: 8

Intelligence: 7

Wisdom: 10

Equipment:

Torso: -

Legs: -

Trinket: -

Food: -