It isn’t always that a single person can change the course of history. Such tales are best relegated to the dusty anals of myth, legend and what have you; but this story isn’t like the other ones, you see? This story is real and it happened to a .

Come, sit and listen to the tale of Fahen Bravesoul.

That fateful day was like any other before it. The sun rose on a little town much like any other town one might see on the maps. A smithy hammered at his anvil already, the firepit cold yet warming up with each passing second.

A day where adventure lay in the horizon, yet no one could truly know to anticipate it. As with every morning, Fahen arose from his bed with the sun just barely gleaming in the horizon. As far as the eyes could see, there was not a cloud in sight and the dust of the road began to rise up with the hooves and boots of the citizens going about their daily tasks.

Off he went, bare paws brushing against the wooden floors, feeling the chill of the night soak up and rush through his form with the familiar shivers of morning cold.

“Damn…” A muttered curse escaped his lips as he glanced about, trying to reposition himself. Mornings were always the worst time for artists and Fahen, the town bard, was notorious for burning the midnight oil far too often for his own good. Nothing a trip to the tavern couldn’t help cure but the fact of the matter remained at his desk. Parchment papers were neatly stacked on the surface, a quill on the side with an ink well securely closed lest the ink dry and become sedimented.

He hadn’t had inspiration at all these last couple of weeks and it was beginning to show in his coin purse. The poor leather sack hung listlessly with barely a few gold pieces worth of coin within it in the form of silver talents and gleaming copper bonds.

“Damn and damn again…” Shrugging on his shirt and reaching out for his boots, the sergal sat with his bleary eyes half open and his legs stretching far to try and hold the laces before tugging at the items just close enough he could slip them on without too much movement. He had enough in his pouch to afford a good meal to break his fast on but after that he would be hard pressed to make something worth selling and singing otherwise he might be in trouble here.

Listlessly and with a disgruntled groan, Fahen realized that the boots were stubbornly and resolutely away, to far for his long legs to reach. It seemed that the day was not going to be a good one.

At last he coaxed himself to reach out and grabbed the leather flaps, tugging them over and huffing with relative annoyance as he slipped the coverings on. Just because he didn’t have feet like the more humanoid denizens of his town didn’t mean he had to go around barefoot either. The leather wraps were affectionately called boots but in reality they were more like ankle covers with some loops to fit between his toes. Up they slipped, the sergal leaning down and tying up the chorded leather that served as his laces.

That done, he rested his hands on the mattress and began to sway gently back and forth. Deeper and deeper grew the angles of his swaying until he suddenly huffed and lurched forward, standing and taking the sudden shift of position to invigorate himself. Arms up, he leaned hard and stretched his front muscles. Leaning back he did the same with his back. The muscles thus loosened, his body heat up and began to feel more wakeful now than it had before.

With a swipe of a hand he gripped his jacket and shrugged it on, ducking out lest he smack his antlers against the doorframe and then down the stairs where the hubbub of life could be heard.

It was standard practice for bards to reside at the inns where they worked at, usually given a reduced price if their songs and such brought in extra patronage as was the case with Fahen. With a nod to the keeper, the sergal approached and sat down at the table usually left to adventurers and other such foolhardy folk.

It wasn’t the adventurer’s table because of some sign or some agreement between the common folk and the more insane members of society. It was the adventurer’s table because it was covered in names, dates and claims of fame. A few were true, the majority of the carvings were fanciful lies and several were outright lies.

For instance, as Fahen blinked and forced the sleep out of his eyes, he cocked his head and saw the words ‘Ynir was here with Tarro’ which was ridiculous because no one had ever heard of such a pair of adventurers and those that claimed they had encountered the duo were also the same kind of people who believed they could commune with the Underdark if they stared at the moon hard enough.

A soft laugh rang out as Fahen entertained the fanciful notion of being in communication with such beings as the Drow or goblins or such other beasts just by staring at the moon up in the sky. Was it telepathy? Or maybe the moon winked like the stars and they took it as messages?

Gods only knew with people like that.

“Morning, Fahen.” Sandra, the jolly halfling barmaid had made her way over without the bard noticing her, such was his level of distraction regarding such useless notions.

“Morning, Sandra…” He replied with a hoarse voice. The summer heat had gotten to him that night and the sergal had slept with the windows open to let a breeze go through which, in part, was what had caused him to wake up to such a cold room in such a lethargic state. People wondered if his fur kept him clear from those elements but the truth was he was in his summer coat and it meant that sometimes he got cold just like everyone else.

“Same as usual?” She was a sweet woman, having taken a fancy to the sergal upon first meeting him and thus performing what she liked to think of as ‘motherly cares’ though in truth they were just good hospitality practices. Not that Fahen minded much. Sometimes she snuck him some barley cakes when no one was looking. Sweet woman…

He merely nodded, fingers trailing over the carved fixtures on the surface. There were many names here, some words he didn’t really understand given their strange nature and odd spellings but the writing and creative instinct told him there was a story here. A good, long story he could turn into a series of epic poems and songs just like the bards in the cities were said to write. Luckily for him, after having been struck by inspiration in the privy once, Fahen never went anywhere without a charcoal pen and some rough paper which he promptly pulled out and began to scribble over with haste.

Minutes passed by, the bard staring and then glancing back at his paper before writing with celerity and haste. The muse struck rarely and often times she did so at the worst of moments. This here was one of the less common times when she didn’t interrupt something important or time consuming. He would be a fool to waste the chance.

Sandra returned with a frosty mug of milk and a plater of apple pie as well as some freshly picked berries from the garden behind the inn. Sweet foods from a sweet woman though right now Fahen would have done just about anything for some bacon and a searing chunk of lamb.

“…” She smiled and shook her head. The sergal rarely allowed himself to focus this hard when in public. Either he was starved for inspiration or the table was a little more interesting than she had given it credit for. Perhaps she herself would see what secrets were carved on its surface.

Her thoughts, and really those of the sergal too were derailed upon the door opening wide and a panicked, pale and visibly bloody man stumbled forth.

“IT’S NOT ALIVE!” He raved and foamed at the mouth and with a start, Fahen sat up to focus on whatever it was that had been the source of such a horrendous scream.

The source in question was a frail looking, older half-elf whose hair was as white as his skin. Such a thing was not natural given the fact that all here knew the farmer.

“SHE’S GONE! GONE TO THE MOUNTAINS!” His shrieks were loud enough that they pierced the shocked stillness and elicited a gasp from the present patrons.

“Marke, calm yourself, man.” A gruff voice issued out from the resident bouncer. An orc of impressive proportions who towered above even the blacksmith who was also an impressive specimen. “Sandra, I think he’s in shock.” A wise observation from one that most would consider dull or stupid just because of his race. Slowly all present began to gather around the raving lunatic. His eyes were wide open but judging by the sharp pinprick pupils he was not seeing anything in front of him. At least, not anything real.

Fahen made his way through, gently moving his fellow patrons aside before kneeling beside the hyperventilating male. “Marke what did this to you?” He had been the only one to really notice what was wrong. The half-elf was already dead. His skin was clammy, his hair as thing as spider silk and his usually youthful features were haggard and drawn. Whatever had done this was truly terrifying.

“It watches from the dark.” He burst into giggles and shuddered. Clearly his body was catching up with his mind and the man didn’t have long to live.

“Get the apothecary!” One of the patrons shouted but Fahen merely shook his head. The apothecary was an accomplished healer but not even she could cure what ailed this man.

Marke giggled again and stared into the ceiling. Blood welled up beneath his eye, streaming down one side of his face as he began to relax and breathe just a little more calmly. “Lock the door, blow out the light… The hungry oni haunts the night. Hide and… Tremble.” At that he did indeed tremble and once again Fahen gave silent thanks to whatever god had inspired him to pack extra paper into his pockets before walking down the steps, furiously scribbling what was essentially the death throes and dying words of a good man.

“Hide and tremble, little one. The oni wants to have some fun. Hear it scratching on the door; see it’s shadow cross the floor. The sun won’t rise for quite a while… Till then… Beware the… Oni’s… Smile…”

Silence reigned, the only sounds being the still breaths of the gathered men and women and the scratchings of carbon on paper before anyone had the presence of mind to kneel and, gently, brush their fingers over the elf’s eyelids. He was dead and whatever this ‘oni’ was, it was not going to stop until they put an end to it.