

His hooves dangled from the top ledge of a parking garage as he looked around at the sun in the distance, seeing it shine off of the rippling waves, deep in the distance. Zavish loved the view of Khorogard. Every place in it he happened to be, there was always some beauty. He loved his home. What he loved more, however, was being actively a part of it all. Through his favorite pastime. Parkour.

Zavish stood up and sighed, feeling the gravel beneath his hooves as he looked around. He was ready for a bit of a run. He hopped down from the ledge and turned to face the neighborhood of Navianost.

He ran to the other side, the distance suitable for him to hop over the ledge with suave confidence. He dropped to the roof two stories below the top of the parking garage before launching off. His hooves propelled him forward. He looked with eager eyes at the window ledge of the apartment complex in front of him that had a small street in between the buildings. It just had a couple of meters, so he got to the edge of the roof to jump, flying through the afternoon air and grabbed onto the ledge.

He grunted as he used his hooves to climb up a bit before noticing a stairwell of the apartment complex. He made a wind up and threw himself at it, grabbing the metal. It hurt him slightly, but not too much. He then pulled his feet up and launched upwards to the next piece of metal, climbing the staircase from the outside before getting to the top level and hopping onto the roof of the apartment complex.

He looked back at the parking garage he left, surveying his performance before he turned and ran off again. Eyes aimed for the set of street houses. It was then that his earbuds buzzed, signaling the presence of a call. He clicked a button to answer it.

“Hello?” Zavish started the conversation, as he got onto individual houses.

“Greetings, Zavish,” the voice in his earbuds said. “Vitosh here.”

“What’s up?”

“I have called you, because I need your help.”

“Another job for me to do?” The goat asked, as he was sliding from the roof.

“Correct. Do you have some time now?”

“You can say that,” the horned man responded, as he jumped onto the next roof.

“Ah...,” Vitosh sighed. “You are on the run.”

“Yep. It’s only some training, that’s all.”

“Then I ask you to come to me.”

“What happened, Vitosh?” Zavish asked, as he jumped from the house and grabbed the ledge of the next building, which he later started to climb.

“It is quite important, Zavish,” the demon said with a serious tone. “The job is related to the fate of one of the districts in Khorogard.”

“And what can I do? I’m just one, not really that important man.”

“Your skills will be needed for this job. Get to my place, so we can start discussing the plan.”

“I guess I have to steal something that can change the fate of that district,” the goat speculated, as he started sprinting on the flat roof of the building he was on at that moment.

“Exactly,” the voice replied with pride in his tone. “Will you come to me?”

“I’m on my way. I should be in your place really soon.”

“I will be waiting, then. Take care.”

“See you later.”

Zavish ended the call and made another jump, after which he ended up on top of another normal house. He glanced around to notice the bridge leading to Old Town, where he needed to be. It was a few blocks off as he began running across the rugged house rooftops.

His hooves were clanking as he was jumping from roof to roof, each jump and landing as good as the last. After a while, he found a much slicker roof and slides down it and flips off onto the grass below. Before going into a light jog towards the bridge.

Soon enough, he passed the gravel bridge, and into the Old Town where he quickly remembered exactly what the layout was and where Deviant was. Bolting off in that direction, his mind clung onto what this fated mission would be. What was Khorogard in trouble with now? His thoughts would soon be answered as he made it to the house and walked up to the door and knocked.

“You got here quite fast,” the hooved demon stated.

“You’ve said that it’s important, so...,” the green-eyed man briefly extended his arms to their sides. “Here I am.”

“Come in.”

The goat entered his friend’s house and swiftly closed the door behind him. Zavish was quite impressed every time he visited Vitosh’s place. The big presence of wood and the usage of older materials instead of going for modern design where cheaper and usually not that robust materials were parts of the interior gave it somewhat a nostalgic vibe. This reminded

him of the place where his grandparents lived. They lived far from civilization, but their old, unrenovated house gave somewhat a cozy feeling, similar to this one.

He quickly stopped going into his past and started following the owner of this house. They quickly got to the next room, where a big wooden table with extremely detailed carvings was standing, surrounded by a set of chairs that were of a similar design. Two figures were sitting in that room. One was his demonic bat friend, and the other was some reptile that he hadn't seen before.

"Hey, Snovid," the goat waved at the big-eared man.

"Hey, man," Snovid stood up, briefly hugged his friend and sit down again. "I hope you're well."

"Yes." Zavish nodded and then, he turned towards the reptile guy. "And who are you?"

The green-eyed man started staring at the stranger who in return, started to eye him back. From what Zavish could see, this reptile was positively tall. A slim, but rather rugged appearance was provoking a sense of confidence. His scales shine golden under the lights of the room, black spots on top, and around his green eyes. These eyes that almost looked like gems. This accompanied his cobra head, and his long, long tail. He was standing with an elegant posture, which fit his gentlemanly business attire. He extended a hand towards Zavish.

"My name is Emond Adamovich, from the district of Lesvera. I am told you are quite the thief." Emond stated, his voice deep and slick like any snake, but also a friendly tone mixed in.

"I just do tasks as best as I can with my skills," Zavish responded calmly, with a sense of modesty, as he grabbed his hand. "I might not be the best, but I didn't get caught by authorities to this point. I assume that the task that my friend mentioned is related to you?"

Emond's face turned serious as he responded. "Yes. I am afraid Lesvera has been offered the wrong end of the stick recently. Tell me, do you love the forest?"

"Saying that I don't have anything against it would be more fitting," the goat replied, briefly touching his short beard in the meantime. "I visit it from time to time, but that's it. I don't have a deep relationship with that district."

"Well, it is my home. I have been one of its safeguards for a long time. However, I need to know that you would care enough to protect it with this mission. The failure of it could spread the suffering of Lesvera and its inhabitants, if it is prolonged." Emond explained.

"But how can I protect it?" The hooved man asked. "I'm not a fighter. I'm a thief. And thieves aren't good at defending things."

"You see that is where you are wrong. I don't need a fighter." The snake demon looked at the hooved man, his green eyes gleaming. "I need someone to steal something that can help

expose the wrong that the government is promoting. And for that I need skill, strategy... I need someone like you. Because by doing so you would be defending Lesvera's dignity."

"Well, I could help you with that, but..." Zavish paused for a moment, folding arms on his chest while doing so. "Everything related directly to the authorities is extremely risky. I'd have to get a good plan, along with making some big preparations for such a heist. Not to mention a clear reason why I'll be doing that, as well as the thing that will convince me to do that."

Emond chuckled a bit, trying to light up the moment a bit as he joked. "What... not someone interested in risky business? Heh."

"Yeah, I prefer to take jobs not related to someone that can make my fate worse than death, if I screw it up," the goat replied sarcastically.

"At least I can say you are a smart thief. That will be good. Now, you want to talk business?" Emond gestured to the chairs. "Let's all take a seat and I'll explain what is going on because I do think it will interest all of you."

"Alright, I'll listen," the horned man sat down the chair, as well as Vitosh, so all four were gathered around the table. "Would you be kind enough to explain the details? Vitosh only said that it's important."

"Of course." Emond sat down and set his hands on the table as he leaned in, and he explained. "So, here is the problem. About a month ago there was talk in politics that there would be an increase in timber and lumber removal. And that means there would be more areas of forest to be chopped down. They decided this because Greyhub has recently built itself a new couple of factories and needs it to successfully run. However, the government is trying to pass a bill to also increase supply to all of the factories. And as someone who provides for the forest, this was a clear red flag. If they were to go through with this, our trees would be completely wiped out. There wouldn't be adequate time between shipments, and they would rob Lesvera of its resources, as well as habitats, wildlife, and vegetation. I have tried to speak out about this and the legislators are adamant that this supply and demand is containable, which, considering trees can take years to grow back, that does not check."

"Something is stinky about this," Zavish shook his head. "Vitosh said that Khorogard could run quite well with the resources it has, right?"

"Correct." Vitosh nodded. "They could try to optimize it, without doing a big harm to any of the districts, from what I have gathered."

"So they're either stupid or greedy," the goat sighed. "Don't know what's worse. Any idea how to stop this from happening?"

Emond nods, as he does know one not-so-simple way. "Yes. But it is complicated and it is a time crunch. You see, they have taken what they needed for the two factories which is okay. But, they have to actually pass the bill and then it will be signed into law. Once it is law, there isn't a damn thing we can do. But, as you said, there is something rather strange. And demons as you should know like to secure our victories. If we can snatch that bill, before it becomes law, we can expose them. While simultaneously preventing the law from destroying Lesvera for what it is worth."

"And I guess bribing them into not passing it isn't an option," Zavish sighed. "I know the Khorogard's authorities aren't ideal. You've considered trying that, right?"

Emond nods his head. "I have been among those that have protested the capital in person. Those authorities have no wishes to give in to such desires. There isn't anyone doing anything to stop this."

"Okay, but I need a really good reason why I should mess up with authorities," the green-eyed goat stated with a serious tone. "It's a very important and equally risky job to pull off, so I have to be sure that I'll be safe after doing it. Because they will be looking for the stolen document, as well as the one who stole it, of course."

"Well, you are a thief, right? It is your job to not be caught." The snake demon said, before he suggested. "And that is why this mission will need to happen at night, when people aren't around and you only need to deal with security guards. There is an intricate layout you would need to use in order to enter it, but based on what Vitosh has told me about you, it won't be a problem to you. Your only risky part is getting out. All I need is that document, and I will protect you myself, you'd be a hero too. On top of getting a very large payout."

"You're right – I'm a thief," the hooved man looked at the scaled demon's face. "I'm not a miracle worker. You can be sure that they will have cameras there, possibly even magical registrators that will keep evidence of me..."

"I can work with cameras," Snovid interrupted him. "With the registrators... you'd have to work on your own. If you'd find the main stabilizer of them, you'd be safe from them. It can be in the security room, but that's not certain."

"I see," Zavish nodded, then returned his gaze to Emond. "The pay would be nice, some respect too, but I need to be sure that no one will be after me when I'll complete this. And if you say you'll protect me, then I'll keep you by your word."

"Zavish." Emond says, his gaze serious, and unwavering. "You have my word that as long as you get me the document and complete this mission, no harm will come for you. You will be saving an entire district by yourself, your skills will be frankly unmatched, and once the secrets are exposed, the only people after you will be those who want to thank you. Now if

you agree, we can discuss your payment for the job. You and your crew. So, what do you say?"

"I got here from my training session, so that's good that I can train some more," the goat chuckled. "I agree, as long as I'll have a detailed plan for me to follow. I'll be going against the government, after all."

Emond chuckled, as he listened to the hooved man's statement. "Of course. I wouldn't throw you into the sharks like that. Here's all you'll need to know. For one, there is a separate entrance on the roof of the legislature building that you will need to find and enter. Through which, there are said to be many traps and magical forces ready to go at you, so you'll need to be agile and quick. Once you are through, the rest is simple. You will need to avoid the guards as you go to find the governor's office, so either find the key or lockpick your way in. Once in there, you will find a teleporter contraption that will take you directly to the room where the bill would be. However, there is one catch, as government officials do NOT like to deal with demons. This contraption will scan your biometrics and if it detects you as a demon, the alarms will immediately go off and you'll probably have about thirty seconds to grab the correct bill and get out before the guards find you. After that, with a clean escape route, you should be able to get away easily."

"Then there shouldn't be a problem with that," Zavish smiled slightly. "I'm a mortal."

"Mortal amongst demons, huh? Fascinating." Emond stated with a grin and a nod. "Fair enough. Well, now you know that the mission isn't too bad. Just got to be careful, but I am sure you can do that well."

"You want me to do the whole thing tonight, I assume?" The goat leaned forward on the chair, supporting himself with his forearms.

"Well, actually the bill is set to be debated and most likely passed tomorrow morning. So you will need to do this tomorrow night. That should give you and your friends enough time to figure it all out." The snake demon replied with a smile.

"Alright." The horned man nodded. "I guess we won't think of anything else now. Still, I'm a bit curious about the payment you've mentioned."

"Yes. It is fair that I explain that to you. Now that I'm a herald of Lesvera, I am quite rich as I run the mining industry for gold. So I factor much of the crowns of the city. For you and your crew, if you successfully complete this will each receive a million crowns in compensation, with an additional one hundred grand for you Zavish. How does that sound?" The snake demon smiled, clearly confident with the offer.

"I know how important it is to you, Emond," Vitosh said with a serious tone. "What if this mission fails?"

"Yeah, what if we screw up?" Zavish asked.

“That is a good question.” Emond crossed his arms as he explained. “Obviously, if you get caught by the authorities, I will disavow any knowledge of you guys, and leave you to that consequence. If you should make it out, but without the documents, I will have you all work for me in the mines until you’ve gathered enough to match the amounts I am offering.”

“Emond, we know that demons can eventually come to an agreement in every matter,” the demonic goat stated calmly. “We can think of something as compensation for our failed efforts. Zavish can go to the mine, though.”

“Wait, what?” the green-eyed man was very surprised.

“Yeah, while we can offer many things in exchange, mortals don’t have much to offer,” Snovid added.

“You can’t be serious.”

“Sorry, man, but that’s how dealing with demons work.”

“Eh...,” Zavish sighed deeply. “Would I be stuck in that mine for long, Emond?”

“For more than a million crowns? You aren’t going to get out of there quickly I can tell you that.” The snake demon looks at the goat man and thinks before saying. “I’ve seen miners take from three weeks to six months. Just depends on how strong and hard working you are.”

“Hmm...,” the goat was pondering for a moment. “That certainly sounds better than “you’ll be stuck there for the rest of your life”. Not that I plan to fail this, because I’m not. You’ve asked for my help and I’ll help with that as best as I can.”

“If I was not confident in you and your crew’s abilities, I wouldn’t even have asked. You can be sure, if you do perform well in this job then you guys will be popular amongst the community from here on out.” Emond said with an authoritative tone.

“I guess my friends here are somewhat popular in the “underground” already,” the hooved man replied, as he looked at the rest of the men there. “Perhaps I’ll find some new wealthy contacts after that. Anyway... are those all things that needed a discussion to settle?”

The snake demon leans forward toward the group as he said. “Yes, it is. If I have made myself clear enough to you guys, I believe we have a set plan in order. So, deal?” Emond extended a hand towards Zavish.

“Yeah, deal,” Zavish grabbed the hand of the scaled demon and shook it. “Lesvera will be fine.”

“That is what I like to hear,” Emond stood before nodding to the other members. “This has been a pleasant meeting, I left my contact information. I will be at my place in Lesvera. Shall you succeed, you may bring the document there when you have finished, where you will also receive your rewards. Good luck.”

“Okay, see you tomorrow,” the green-eyed goat responded, smiling slightly.

The snake demon smiled and nodded in agreement. “Yes, see you tomorrow.” He said as he turned and exited out of the house.

“Eh...,” Zavish sighed deeply. “Well... we can’t really think of anything now, right?”

“I need to gather the info about the building you will be going for,” Vitosh stated. “It will not be easy, but I think you should be fine, considering your skills.”

“And I guess I’ll be saving your ass too. You may come to an agreement, but the stain will stay. At least that’s how it works in the mortal world.”

“I know... But like I said, you should be fine.”

“I agree with him,” Snovid added. “Your skills are extraordinary. And that will be an extraordinary task to test them. I’ll help you with moving there, but other than that... good luck.”

“Any specific hour you want to meet?” Zavish asked.

“We’ll call you. Good night, man.”

The green-eyed goat nodded and left Vitosh’s house. He glanced around the rural looking town as he absorbed all that just got pushed on his plate. He was facing a very dangerous mission and he had to consider a severe punishment by himself. And all skills would be tested, but as he kept walking along, he realized that he had the skill set and capability to make it easier to accomplish. He began thinking of different strategies as he made his way along.

These thoughts carried him all the way through the night, into the morning to hear that the bill was passed and set to become law tomorrow morning, and now everything was as real as it could be.