

Sharpening Duties

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D. Moonfire

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This flash fiction contains no scenes of sexual assault.

Broken Typewriter Press
5001 1st Ave SE
Ste 105 #243
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

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Chapter 1

Sharpening Duties

A man plays no riskier game than leaving a mother childless.

—Niser Higuin-Pos

Karin sat among the freshly cooked pies sharpening the sword of a murderer. The smells of apples and cinnamon were strong as was the stench of blood that still clung to the blade. It had been cleaned before it was presented to her but Karin could still tell.

Her brow furrowed in concentration as she stroked the metal with delicate strokes that moved from the center to the edge. Underneath her thumb, the nearly invisible nicks and bent metal were painfully obvious.

With each movement, the metal flowed minutely. It melted into the nicks and made them strong. It evened out the warped and bent edges into a straight line.

“Can you make it sharper?” The killer was an older woman well into her fifties. She wore a black dress and had a widower’s blade. Both the fabric and her face looked worn and exhausted.

She glanced up at the murderer and shrugged. “This is an old blade, you don’t have much more to work with.”

“Just a few more and I’m done. Please? It has to be this weapon.”

Karin didn’t quite understand but she could tell there was passion in the woman’s eyes. She nodded and continued to work. When she found a stress fracture, she almost gave up. One good twist and the entire thing would twist.

She stopped, considering her actions. She didn’t know who was being killed nor the reason.

“Something wrong?” There was a tension in the old woman’s voice. Her arm shifted slightly.

Karin glanced up to see her reaching for another knife among the apple peels. Her heart beat faster for a moment. Then she looked up and shook her head. “No, I found a crack and I need to fix it.”

“Oh.”

At the sight of desperate relief, Karin knew she had to keep going. She furrowed her brow to concentrate and focused on working the metal into the cracks, filling them in and strengthening them. She didn’t know how many more lives the blade needed to take but she was going to make sure it would last longer than the lives the old woman was hunting.

She finished with a sigh of exhaustion. Using magic always sapped her strength. Trembling, she set it down next to the old worn sheath of a Kormar infantry. “Done. Be careful, it will cut through almost anything.”

“Good.”

Karin wiped her brow. “Anything else?”

“No, I have your pies already wrapped up. A dozen for the Rats.” The old woman held up a wide basket still steaming from the freshly made pies insides. The smell of cinnamon and surge rose up and Karin’s stomach rumbled.

Karin pushed herself up from her seat. “Thank you.”

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Before Karin realized she was moving, the old woman was standing next to her and pushing something into her hand. For a moment, she was sure it was a knife but the clink of coins wrapped in fabric stopped her.

She hefted it, there felt like a lot of money in there. She frowned. “What—?”

“No, thank you,” interrupted the murderous old woman.

D. Moonfire

About D. Moonfire

D. Moonfire is the remarkable intersection of a computer nerd and a scientist. He inherited a desire for learning, endless curiosity, and a talent for being a polymath from both of his parents. Instead of focusing on a single genre, he writes stories and novels in many different settings ranging from fantasy to science fiction. He also throws in the occasional romance or forensics murder mystery to mix things up.

In addition to having a borderline unhealthy obsession with the written word, he is also a developer who loves to code as much as he loves writing.

He lives near Cedar Rapids, Iowa with his wife, numerous pet computers, and a pair of highly mobile things of the male variety.

You can see more work by D. Moonfire at his website at <https://d.moonfire.us/>. His fantasy world, Fedran, can be found at <https://fedran.com/>.

D. Moonfire

Fedran

Fedran is a world caught on the cusp of two great ages.

For centuries, the Crystal Age shaped society through the exploration of magic. Every creature had the ability to affect the world using talents and spells. The only limitation was imagination, will, and the inescapable rules of resonance. But as society grew more civilized, magic became less reliable and weaker.

When an unexpected epiphany seemingly breaks the laws of resonance, everything changed. Artifacts no longer exploded when exposed to spells, but only if they were wrapped in cocoons of steel and brass. The humble fire rune becomes the fuel for new devices, ones powered by steam and pressure. These machines herald the birth of a new age, the Industrial Age.

Now, the powers of the old age struggle against the onslaught of new technologies and an alien way of approaching magic. Either the world will adapt or it will be washed away in the relentless march of innovation.

To explore the world of Fedran, check out <https://fedran.com/>. There you'll find stories, novels, character write-ups and more.

D. Moonfire

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