

DOROTHY'S FORBIDDEN GRIMOIRE

Chapter 2: Dragon Shouts

The river at the bottom of the gorge continued its relentless rush into the night, its sound echoing through the narrow space. Along the riverbank, faint lights flickered as they moved forward.

Four men advanced along the dark, rain-soaked riverbank, lanterns in hand. Three of them led the way, clad in coarse, rain-drenched clothes, wielding knives and clubs. They were in their twenties or thirties, their burly arms adorned with tattoos visible beneath rolled-up sleeves.

Trailing behind them was a man dressed far more elegantly. He wore a dark red suit, black trousers, and a jacket beneath, his complexion pale, with a gaunt face, deep-set eyes, and a hooked nose. His short brown hair was damp, and his cold eyes betrayed a calculating demeanor. In one hand, he held an umbrella to shield himself from the rain.

Accompanying the man were two bizarre hunting dogs, one on either side. These creatures were almost hairless, with no visible ears, their dark red flesh

grotesquely exposed. They were tall, reaching up to the man's knees, but emaciated to the point of deformity, unlike any normal dog.

This man was Edrick, a bandit—or more accurately, the notorious gang leader of the nearby town of Vulcan, known as "Mad Dog Ed."

Edrick was a cunning and ruthless man, the undisputed overlord of Vulcan. Feared by all in the town, he had climbed the ranks of the gang world through brutal struggles, aided by his two monstrous hunting dogs. These creatures, as fierce as wild beasts, were said to be unkillable despite their injuries, instilling fear in both his enemies and his subordinates.

Typically, Edrick wouldn't stoop to something as blatant as directly ambushing a caravan. However, this time was different—he needed something from that caravan.

"Boss, there's light ahead! They're overturned just up there!" one of the men in the lead reported after peering into the distance. Hearing this, Edrick nodded and replied coldly.

"Keep moving. Let's hope the target didn't fall into the river..."

Edrick, his three men, and his two hunting dogs followed the riverbank until they reached the site of the overturned caravan. The scene was grim: corpses of people and horses lay scattered along the riverbank amidst the wreckage of the carriages. It was the result of their relentless pursuit that had driven the caravan to such a fate.

Surveying the carnage, Edrick barked orders to his men.

“Spread out and search. Look for a white-haired girl, about thirteen years old. Dead or alive, bring her to me—preferably alive.”

“Yes, boss!” the men replied before dispersing to search the area. They began rifling through the corpses and wreckage for their target. Being gang members, they couldn’t resist pocketing valuables as they searched, stripping the dead of anything of worth.

Edrick’s sharp eyes noticed this and he snapped at them.

“Forget the loot! Find the target! If you don’t want to be dog food, get moving!”

The men, begrudgingly abandoning their pillaging, stole resentful glances at Edrick, only to recoil in fear upon seeing his hunting dogs. They knew all too well that Edrick, or more precisely, his dogs, were not to be defied.

These were no ordinary dogs—they were the devil's hounds.

Amidst the tension, two gang members reached a carriage teetering on the sloped riverbank, barely held in place by a rope tied to a nearby horse's corpse wedged between two rocks. Peering inside the overturned carriage, their eyes lit up—coins and jewelry lay scattered beneath the seats, a veritable fortune.

Overcome with greed, the men glanced at Edrick in the distance. Seeing him preoccupied, they eagerly reached into the carriage to grab the treasures. However, the valuables were in an awkward position, just out of reach. Frustrated, the two began climbing further into the narrow carriage to retrieve them.

Unbeknownst to them, a pair of crimson eyes watched from behind the nearby horse's corpse.

The white-haired girl moved swiftly. Pulling out a knife she had found earlier, she sliced through the rope holding the carriage in place. The rope, already weakened beforehand, snapped easily under her blade.

“Ahhh!”

The carriage, now untethered, slid down the slope and plunged into the raging river. The two men inside screamed as they were swept away along with the carriage and the bait of treasures Dorothy had deliberately planted.

Humans die for wealth, Dorothy thought grimly. She didn't believe for a second that bandits wouldn't fall for such a trap.

“Baker! Wood!”

The other gang member, hearing the screams, rushed to the riverbank to check on his comrades. One leaned over the edge to see if they could be rescued.

Seizing the opportunity, Dorothy charged at the distracted man from behind, slamming into his lower back with all her strength. Though she has not fully grown, her surprise attack was enough to throw him off balance...

"Ah!"

With another startled cry, the gang member near the riverbank, thrown off balance by Dorothy's shove, toppled into the river. He was swept away by the rushing waters, joining his earlier comrades. Dorothy, stumbling slightly, barely managed to steady herself.

Three down... now, for the rest...

Suppressing the tumult of fear within her, Dorothy turned her gaze along the riverbank toward the distant figure of Edrick, who was glaring angrily at the sudden turn of events.

"Where did this little brat come from... daring to..."

Edrick, teeth clenched in fury, drew a revolver from his waist and aimed it at the girl standing no more than ten meters away. Just as he prepared to pull the trigger, the dim lamplight illuminated the figure before him.

"A white-haired girl..."

Edrick hesitated, his anger giving way to calculation. He lowered the gun slightly and barked a command to his hunting dogs.

"Subdue that brat for me!"

At Edrick's order, the grotesque dogs bolted forward, racing toward Dorothy at full speed, ready to pounce.

Facing the snarling beasts charging through the rain, Dorothy stood her ground. She took a deep breath, her focus razor-sharp. Slowly, she spoke.

What came from her lips was a low, ancient intonation, like the echoes of a language from a distant era.

"—fus—"

In that instant, the word Dorothy uttered reverberated through the air like a war drum struck with force. It rippled through the rain, whipped the wind, and triggered a strange phenomenon as though summoned by the primal language of another world.

An invisible, powerful shockwave surged from Dorothy. It scattered the rain and sent the two monstrous hunting dogs flying backward. Even Edrick, standing at a distance, was caught in its force. He lost his balance, slipped, and fell to the ground, his revolver knocked from his hand.

Seizing the opportunity, Dorothy sprinted forward, snatching up the fallen revolver. She gripped it tightly with both hands and aimed it at the struggling figure of Edrick as he tried to get back on his feet.

Looking up, Edrick found himself staring into the dark barrel of the gun. The cold, calculating expression he wore moments ago gave way to panic, and he hastily began to speak.

"Wait! I didn't—"

Bang!

Dorothy pulled the trigger without hesitation. The cylinder rotated, the hammer struck down, and flames erupted from the barrel. The bullet flew straight into Edrick's chest at close range, piercing through him.

The gang leader collapsed, his eyes wide open, meeting his end in a way he could never have imagined.

“Hah... hah...”

The recoil knocked Dorothy onto the ground. She stared at the man’s lifeless body, her breathing heavy and uneven. Her hands trembled uncontrollably as she clutched the revolver. Her heart churned violently. No matter the circumstances, taking a life for the first time was not something one could easily accept.

‘They killed everyone in that caravan... they killed Dorothy... this is their just deserts...’

Clinging to this justification, Dorothy steadied her shaking body and slowly rose to her feet. She touched her throat with one hand, recalling the ancient word she had just spoken—a word that had triggered such a powerful phenomenon.

She understood now what it was.

It was the *Thu'um*—the "Voice," the Dragon Shout from the game *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. It was the language of dragons, imbued with immense power!

The shout she had uttered earlier was none other than the most iconic of them all—the first word of *Unrelenting Force*, "fus," meaning "Force."

The dragon's *Thu'um*—words so potent that even a single syllable could cause devastation. In the world of *Skyrim*, dragons wielded this language as a weapon in battle, engaging in destructive "verbal duels" that could annihilate entire battlefields. Only dragons, gods, and a select few gifted mortals—Dragonborn—could master such power.

There was no doubt: this was a mystical ability. But such a powerful word, composed of just three letters, had cost Dorothy dearly. She had to exchange it for the knowledge she had painstakingly acquired over the years—a vocabulary of over 3,000 words in the Pritish language.

Now, Dorothy understood the nature of the ability she had gained after crossing into this world.

It was...

To exchange knowledge for knowledge.

Exchange the knowledge of this world for knowledge of another world...