

Dishonored

By SP Wright

The fall was complete.

Clumps of hair fell to the floor around him. Piles of thick, knotted, and neglected locks gathered on the ground. In only a few minutes his feet were buried beneath the furry mass.

He had seen the invasion coming. Had spent countless hours studying the patterns. Wasted energy explaining the inconsistencies to his superiors. All for naught. His superiors ignored his data and shunned his suspicions.

The leaders were more interested in the advances the newcomers presented. They had come from another world and therefore had numerous technologies that could be “acquired”. The weapons they brought with them were unusual and could be “studied”. Their political systems were atypical and had “potential”. The political leaders were infighting to gain favor with the aliens in order to gain personal approval from the masses. The military was concerned with gaining control of the new technologies available for warfare; and they were convinced that the ugly visitors were not skilled enough with said weapons to pose a threat.

Even the great alchemists of the world were more concerned with the potential gains, than the dangers presented by their very presence. The invaders brought with them new knowledge of the cosmos; advances in medicine; entirely new branches of sciences; and dozens of other such thought-provoking information. The alchemists, like the military, were convinced that the aliens posed no threat as they could be easily overcome.

Everyone.

Was.

Wrong!

The hair had begun to slow in its fall to the ground. His head was nearly shaved, and the assistant would soon be moving on to the beard.

The aliens were deliberate with their actions. During the first five years they appeared to coexist with the Dwarves. Alliances were forged; technologies and advances were shared freely; there were even a few mixed partnerships that began to form. All in an effort to dig as deeply into the culture as possible. No stone was left unturned, and no minority ignored. Everyone was connected with them in some way. While slow, and almost imperceptible the gathering was complete, and the entire planet was theirs.

A tear fell from his sorrowful orange pupil as he felt the blade against his cheek. Never before had a sharp edge approached the noble beard. Alas he was no longer worthy to wear his once glorious mane. It must all be removed.

The actual invasion was swift. Within one week the major countries were laid waste. The population decimated from on high. Entire mountains brought down, and forests reduced to ash. The devastation was inescapable.

The blade had completed its work on the right and now moved deliberately across his neck to the left.

Many of the remaining citizens had been gathered into camps. Here they were segregated by gender and shipped to various locations across the globe. Upon arriving each was drugged. While semi-lucid they had limbs and organs forcibly, grotesquely removed. They were left to slowly bleed out throughout the night until noon the next day. At the height of their agony, under the heat of high sun they were brought to a heated metal table and given cybernetic

replacements for the limbs which had been removed. While screaming in pain and terror their tongues were ripped out with searing tongs.

They were corrupted mentally as well. Each being forcibly addicted to a powerful depressant. This drug made them quiet, took away their hopes, and had a nasty side effect of limiting their cognitive abilities. The end result was a drugged, depressed, zombie that followed orders without question.

The procedure was complete. His head and face were now naked before the world. By following orders, he had honored the chain of command, but doomed his world and his people.

Through his inaction his world had fallen.

He had stood by and allowed the enemy to gain access to secret knowledge which they used to irradiate the forests.

Had he acted his own parents would not have become mutilated drug slaves.

There was no higher dishonor.

Following tradition, he would remain clean cut until such time as his honor was restored. He was now a fallen dwarf. By allowing dishonor to take over his being he had lost the right to wear the beard.

As the sole surviving member of the military elite he would lead the resistance to reclaim their world. He would destroy the invaders and everything they touched. And he would do so while wearing the badge of the dishonored. The entire world would now follow the beardless dwarf on his quest to restore honor to them all. He would remain shaven for them all.