

Chapter 2 Human

Another arrow came through the window, more hitting the wooden wall.

I get it, I get it, Kate thought, her hands shaking despite her firm grip on the crowbar. She had been in plenty of dangerous situations but none of her training or experiences could have prepared her for this moment. The occasional games she had played a few years back were the closest thing really and as the media might be shocked to learn, games had little to do with reality.

“It’s self defense...,” she muttered to herself. *They’re monsters. They’re monsters. Focus on that. You can think of the consequences later. For now you have to survive. Whatever they are, they’re trying to kill you.*

The door rattled, the table pushed back slightly.

“I’m a living thinking being you pieces of shit! Fuck off!” she shouted. Kate knew the sound would give away her position, but right now she simply didn’t care. A small part of her knew she had to try, knowing what would follow.

The creatures didn’t stop, hitting the door as another arrow whistled in through the open window.

Kate locked eyes with one of the beings when the door was pushed back further, a small blade in its hand as it looked at her with a grin, sharp teeth showing in its mouth.

It’s so small, she thought, focusing as much as she could. *They have bows. Why are they pushing inside? They should just wait for me to come out and shoot me.*

Her eyes opened wide. She realized how confident the creatures were in their hunt, even now two of them pushing against the door, barely able to move the table. *Monsters. They’re monsters. And if they realize how dangerous a human is, they’ll wait me out or set this hut ablaze.*

She tightened the straps of her backpack and gripped her crowbar. *Forget it all. Don’t think*, she thought, preparing herself much like she did whenever she rushed into the flames. Her boot came to rest on the side of the rattling door, and then she pushed.

The table slid away, the door opening with two of the small green creatures falling forward.

Kate hesitated for just a moment, her body tensing as she brought down the crowbar. She had trained to use an axe to both cut down doors and other obstacles, but she had never thought that she’d ever seriously attack a living creature. A dull sound came from the impact, the goblin going down with its eyes rolling back. The second one looked up, its smile turning to confusion as it looked at the much larger human, its head ripping to the side when the heavy chunk of steel hit it with enough force to send it flying.

Kate didn’t look back, running out of the hut in a zigzag, finding two more goblins staring at her, one more to the side with a bow. An arrow whistled past as she stepped sideways, reaching the small creature with three steps before her knee slammed into its chest.

The being was flung backwards, its companions rushing her with their small blades.

Kate used her weapon to keep them at a distance, stepping over to the downed and wheezing goblin before she brought the iron down, imagining a log she would split for firewood. Or a tent peg to slam down into the ground.

Something bit into her leg, Kate swinging her crowbar behind herself as she turned, the force sending the goblin stumbling before her next hit connected with its overly large head. Teeth were flung to the side as blood splattered onto grass. She swung again, the wet impact silencing the groaning creature.

Kate stared at the last one with wide eyes, an arrow released before it struck her leg. Adrenaline and panic pushed her forward. *I'm killing these creatures*, something in her mind realized, a scream resounding as she tackled the creature, her metal bar slamming down into the struggling being, its movements stopping after the third hit. The screaming lasted until Kate noticed the wet sound of her weapon impacting the bits and pieces of torn flesh that remained of the goblin's head.

She looked down and stumbled back, doubling over before she puked up her sandwiches and coffee. Her left leg hurt. She looked around and walked away, limping on the leg without an arrow sticking out of its thigh and a cut on her calf. *You killed them. You... why did you scream, you idiot. Everyone heard that. Everyone*, she thought, her mind swimming as she brushed tears from her eyes.

Kate faintly noticed distant sounds of fireworks and screams much like the one she had just heard so very close by. *That was you*, she reminded herself, stumbling down the slope and back into the forest. She stopped a few meters into the underbrush behind the remains of a fallen tree, crouching down as she got her pack. *Wounds*, she thought and got out her first aid kit.

She fiddled with the opening latch before it sprung open, all the contents luckily strapped down to prevent them from spilling out. Finally, she looked at her leg, seeing an actual real life arrow sticking out of it. *Like some kind of larping accident*, she thought to herself and ripped open her pants a little more to see the wound. Blood had already seeped into the fabric. *Artery and I'm dead*, she thought, feeling herself getting lightheaded.

Infection will fuck me too, she thought and checked the wound. There was blood, yes, but she didn't think it had hit anything major. Kate grabbed a nearby branch and bit down on it. She closed her eyes and ripped out the arrow, wincing as she tried to make as little noise as possible. More blood flowed out before she pressed a bandage onto the wound. She winced again, using one hand to look for the disinfection spray.

Sitting as still as she could, she cleaned away as much of the blood as she could before she liberally sprayed the area with the antibacterial mixture. Another layer of pain. She pressed down a second, clean bandage, wrapping it around her leg before she pulled hard. She screamed into her branch, the wood partially giving in against her teeth as she wrapped her leg once more. She made a practiced knot before she nearly passed out, her eyes going black for a second before she came to once more.

Kate carefully moved her leg, checking the cut on her calf. It was deep, but had missed any major blood vessels. She doused it with the spray too, trying a few times until she got the angle right without moving her leg too much.

God what a shit day, she thought with a sigh, spitting out the piece of mangled wood. She noticed the earthy taste, glad her mind bothered to inform her about it. She might actually survive this. And then the world turned black.

Kate woke up with a sore throat, coughing a few times before she winced, the pain from her calf reminding her of what happened. It was evening, she noticed, the sunlight only faint. She didn't know if a full day had passed or only a few hours.

Meds, she thought and checked the first aid kit again. *Ibuprofen... blood thinner. Fuck. Should I? Could help against infections too.*

She decided the risk was worth it and downed two pills, gulping before she grabbed a sealing band aid, spraying the wound on her calf again before she covered it, sitting back with a sigh.

I fought. And killed, she thought, gulping as she shoved the memories away. Instead she checked her pack, finding a bloodied bandage spread on the ground. The canteen was there, the smell of incredibly strong coffee waking her from her doused and pained state. She took a sip and found it still warm. *Same day*, she thought, just now noticing something in the corner of her vision. She focused on it and found it expanding. Letters, written in English, inside of her eyes like some kind of digital lenses.

'ding' 'You have defeated [Goblin Scout]

'ding' 'You have defeated [Goblin Scout]

'ding' 'You have defeated [Goblin Scout]

'ding' 'You have defeated [Goblin Scout]

'ding' 'You have defeated [Goblin Scout]

What

The

Fuck

This isn't like some kind of rpg, it literally fucking is one, she thought, resting her head against the fallen tree behind her. *What kind of wicked shithead of a Norse god thought up this masterpiece of misery?* she asked herself, checking if she could summon a fireball or lightning. Her hand remained painfully covered in dried blood. Her own blood, perhaps some from the goblins.

She wiped them off on the grass and checked her phone. No new messages or calls, still a connection but nothing loaded and another quick call brought her only the same lack of answer. Her weapon lay bloodied next to her, Kate grabbing the chunk of steel just in case. She sighed, lifting herself up a little with a moan before she glanced towards the hut. There was no movement. Nor were there any unusual noises.

Should I check the radio again? she wondered, deciding to do so later, just in case the sound would attract more monsters. *Monsters. Actual fucking monsters here to kill me.*

Her stomach grumbled and she needed to pee. *There's too much going on*, she thought. What had happened to her friends, her dad? What had happened to the world? What did the messages in her vision mean? Was she a murderer now? Were there more creatures hunting for her?

She slapped herself, the movement straining her leg as she hissed at the pain. *Pee. Food. Castle*, she thought, focusing on those three things only. The longer she stayed here, the more dangerous it would become. Blood and corpses would attract predators, or worse. She packed her bag, taking the bloodied bandage with her too before she forced herself to stand up. It hurt, but that just meant the nerves were still there and working as intended.

Kate carefully lowered her trousers and peed on the forest floor, a few drops hitting her pants but she had bigger things to concern herself with. Pulling them back up, she put on her backpack and grabbed her bloodied crowbar. *If anything hunts by smell, I'll be a bloody beacon.*

She grinned to herself before she winced again at the pain. The next few minutes, she searched the surrounding bit of forest for a suitable branch, finding one with a helpful angled top. Not exactly a professional crutch but it would help take some weight off her injured leg.

Kate bit down on another piece of wood, noticing the noises she made with each step. It would help her keep a grip against the pain. She knew where the castle was located, about a two hour walk southeast, a little higher up the slope and closer to the Willow river.

She walked slowly, staying off the dirt road and making as little noise as possible. Her injuries forced her to go slow, any additional fight she'd get involved in now far more dangerous and more than likely to be her last.

The sunlight sent long shadows onto the leaves covered ground, Kate struggling to move without producing noise from both her own pained groans and the twigs and leaves rustling below her boots.

She didn't encounter another creature for about half an hour, the occasional distant gunshot echoing through the valley, Kate unable to determine how far away the shooter was located. The frequency made her worry. A military unit would surely fire more regularly. *Where are the tanks and jets?* she wondered, freezing up and hiding as best she could when she saw a moving figure walking through the bushes ahead of her.

Kate sighed when she realized it was a man, medium length black hair falling onto a hoodie of the same color, something colorful depicted on its front. He seemed young, probably in his teens. She was about to call out when she hesitated, seeing the weapon he held in his hand.

Is that. A fucking katana?

The man glanced around, his eyes wide as he turned around and held the blade up with shaking hands, a random noise having startled him.

"Stay calm," Kate said finally. "I'm human. Are you from around here? Keilberg or Falstadt?" she asked, hoping to calm him down with the familiar names. It was a risk but she was damn glad to have found another human.

The man now turned towards her, finally noticing the two brown eyes staring back at him. He took a step back, his blade still raised. "W... who are you?"

"I'm Kate, from Keilberg. I'm a firefighter who worked in Falstadt, was out wandering when this thing started, whatever it is," she said, stepping out of the bush but keeping a healthy distance to his weapon. "Can you take that thing down?"

He hesitated for a moment but obliged. "This... is not... this isn't at all what I thought it'd be," he said, sobbing once.

"What's your name? And why the ka...," she said, now seeing the gundam depicted on his hoodie. "I see," she said. *At least it's not some enormously voluminous anime girl.*

"I'm... Grey," he said. "I...," he stuttered and looked at the katana, moving it away slightly as he stared at the ground.

“Don’t worry about it, it’s good that you have a weapon. I have my own, see,” Kate said and showed him the crowbar.

His looked up before his eyes opened wide. “Is that... blood?!”

She hissed. “Quiet it down. We don’t want to attract any of the monsters.”

“Wait... y... you’re... injured,” he said.

“Oh no! Where?” she asked, her eyes wide open.

“Your leg,” he said in a quieter tone.

“Ah yes, I nearly didn’t notice the horrific fucking pain and blood loss. Thanks for pointing that out, Grey. Do you have a plan? Because if not, then you should come with me. There’s a castle this way, maybe we can get there before nightfall,” she said quickly, checking around them to see if any goblins had sneaked up on them. “And keep moving, the goblins had bows.”

“G... goblins?” he asked, gulping.

“So you don’t have a plan?” Kate asked, walking past him while gritting her teeth.

He shook his head slightly.

“Then come with me. Better chance to survive if we work together,” she said.

Grey followed without another word, keeping a few meters distance between them. “You’re from... here... a... aren’t you?”

“I told you I live in Keilberg,” she said in a whisper.

“I’m from Falstadt,” he said quietly. “So it’s not an isekai,” he whispered to himself.

Kate glanced back but continued onward. “What do you mean?” she asked. “Do you have an idea of what’s happening?”

His eyes opened wide as he moved his hands into a defensive gesture, nearly stabbing a close by tree with the weapon. “I... there... stories. About... it’s fantasy,” he got out before he looked to the ground.

“Fantasy stories? I was more thinking of an rpg myself, but I’m not super versed in all that anymore,” Kate said. “There were messages before... in my eyes, as if it’s some kind of hud.”

His eyes lit up a little. “Yes!” he said and forced himself to continue in a whisper. “Yes... in isekai people are transported into a fantasy world where they often get stats and rpg like elements, like skills and magic. What are your stats? Did you get anything else yet?”

“What do you mean stats? Like strength and intelligence?” Kate asked.

“You have to focus on your own person, I figured it out when I thought of my own name,” Grey said.

Kate tried. After her day she wouldn’t think anything ridiculous anymore.

Kate Lindgren

Class: None

Status:

Vitality: 10

Endurance: 12

Strength: 9

Dexterity: 8

Intelligence: 7

Wisdom: 10

Equipment:

Torso: -

Legs: -

Trinket: -

Food: -

“Awesome. Mostly hovering around ten. That Intelligence score is insulting,” she murmured. *And I’m clearly wearing clothes.*

“That’s good, I think,” he said. “Mine are seven vit, six end, seven str, eleven dex, nine int, and six wis.”

“You’re pretty comfortable with this whole thing, hmm?” Kate asked, avoiding the road as she continued to check for monsters.

“I... eh... I read and watch... stories with this... stuff,” he murmured. “D... do you... want the... sword?”

Kate glanced back. “No. I’d just hurt myself. You trained with it?”

He turned a little red. “Y... yes... b... but only... with youtube tutorials... and stuff,” he said, trailing off.

“Good, then you’re the best one we have to wield that weapon,” Kate said with a smile. “Just remember that there are monsters. If they try to kill you, go for it, or at least don’t get in the way. That acceptable?”

“Of c... yes,” he said quickly.

They walked in silence for a few minutes, Kate checking the road to both sides before she gestured to Grey. “We get over as fast as possible,” she whispered, hopping over with her injuries before they hid again on the other side. *Nothing moving*, she thought, waiting for about half a minute before she gestured to her blade wielding companion. “Up here, and then we circle back to the castle.”

She paused a little further up, carefully leaning her side against a tree, panting at the exertion. Grey seemed worse off but powered through. “Anything in your stories that could help us here?” she asked.

“I don’t... I don’t know. They’re all... a little different. It seems like... a system apocalypse,” he said.

“Apocalypse doesn’t sound good,” Kate mused, the radio messages sadly suggesting he wasn’t entirely wrong.

“No... b... but we have the system. Stats... w... which means...” he said, trailing off.

“There’s levels and stuff to gain. Magic to help fight whatever these creatures are,” she surmised.
But if they’re all different, we’ll have to figure out most of it ourselves.