

## One (Scott) Message in the Night

*Rap, rap, rap.*

His ears shot up even before his eyes opened. It was instinct, nothing more. Not even sure there was a sound to be heard but the senses react sometimes even before the brain does.

Rap, rap.

This time the eyes opened. Green as the purest emerald they shone, even in the pale light of the moon coming through the window. Looking first this way, then that way, searching the darkness for where the sound came from. Was there an intruder in the house?

Slowly, cautiously, as if all eyes were watching but not knowing what they were seeing, he crept forward. His belly barely lifting itself off the wood floor while his forelegs pulled him along.

Still his eyes moved back and forth, darting in whatever direction his ears would pick up a sound. Like a finely tuned machine, his senses worked together, sound, sight, even smell as his nose sniffed at the cool evening air of fall.

Rap, rap, rap.

No doubt now, it was a sound he heard and it was coming from his master's front door. Like someone pounding, the sound seeming aggravated and impatient. Was someone trying to break in? Did this would be intruder not know what awaited behind the door they now worked?

Whatever the answer, they were about to find out.

Moving through the shadows like an unseen spirit, his own coat nothing more than a shadow itself, he made his way towards the front door. Each paw touching the cold floor without a sound, the deadly claws extending only after it left the ground. Now he could see something outside. From the window near the front door he caught a glimpse of a shadow flicker in the moonlight. The moonlight that was now just nails from his own shape, it's revealing caste trying in vein to reach out and give up his position. But he was too smart for that, he knew how to use his cover and he would wait were he was. Wait right here until this intruder made his entrance. Only then would he give up his position and by then it would be over.

*Rap, rap, rap, rap, rap.*

"Hello in there..."

Waiting. Rear legs shifting into the right position. Shifting, crouching, ready to strike...

"Who's out there?"

This second voice startled him. It came from behind him and he senses were so fully tuned to the matter before him that the sound of this voice made him lurch.

"Nyrin?" Called out a sleepy and startled voice. "What are you doing? Is that you making this racket out here? Hush ere you wake the child."

Nyrin had let his rear legs get the most of his master's surprise and he leapt into the square of moonlight that shone through the front window. In doing this, he knew he'd given up his position and bolted back into the darkness, catching a corner of a table in the meantime. The table rocked over to the point of overturning but then merely fell back, causing nothing more than a *thump*. Now surly the intruder was aware of the occupants and had fled off, unable to be greeted by the feline guard inside.

"Hello...? Is anyone at home?"

The voice was coming from the front door and the feline's master was about to step through the sitting room to answer when he stopped suddenly.

*Who would be calling on me at this time of night?* Was the thought that first came to him as he glanced over at the window to see if he could get a look at whoever was at his porch. When he

could see not a shape from his vantage point he side stepped.

*Rap, rap, rap.*

Again the late night visitor knocked at the door. Now the man in his sitting room had a better view and he could make out a single man on his doorstep. The pale light the moon cast was not enough to tell anything more about this stranger and a glance across the room saw Nyrin again ready to strike, tail flipping back and forth.

"Steady now old boy." He said without moving his lips. "Let us see just what our midnight caller wishes from us ere we go spilling his blood on our stoop."

"*I don't trust this caller.*" Came a return voice in his head as the green eyes from the panther met his own. "*His scent is not familiar to me.*"

"Hello...?" Came the voice on the other side of the door, sure he heard someone inside. "Is anyone t' home?"

"Who is there?" Came the reply at last. The accent was not local, more like the tongue of the Wessfields. That land lay beyond the Ceatuer River and even past the Ustainia Mountains, a far journey for one to come simply to deliver a message. His suspicions rose.

"I have traveled far and wish only to deliver a message." Came the thick speech of the Wessfieldian.

"A message you say." There was hint of suspicion in his voice, something that came from his own experience from the past. "Why have you come at this late span with your message?"

"I ask your forgiveness for disturbing you but my orders were precise and my employer adamant on the fact that I deliver it as soon as I reached Arnen. So if you would be so kind as to answer my question, I will deposit the letter and leave you."

"Answer *your* question? 'Tis I who have questions to ask."

"Please sire, I mean you no disrespect, but my employer wants to be certain that his message is delivered to the proper hands."

The man inside thought for a moment about this. It was possible that this was a mere messenger and was harmless, on which accounts he does have some pressing information in his hands that requires his immediate attention. Then on the other hand, he may have come for something else all together... He looked over at his large feline familiar across the room, seeing he was still perched, ready to lunge at the door at his master's signal or the first sign of danger.

"Very well then, ask your question."

"First off are you Arat Trador Magmus?"

"Aye, that is my given name." Arat answered, searching the room for a weapon.

"Good. If that be true then if Tars is not a Dwarf, what be he?"

"What sort of riddles do you speak?" Arat replied back, snatching up a dagger from an end table.

"I am only reciting the phrase told to me by my employer. He said that only Arat can give the proper answer."

"Aye, I can, Tars is no Dwarf, he is a Dwarvitt."

"That is the answer told to me as well." The messenger sounded relieved, and even Nyrin seemed to relax at the tone of his voice now. "I have a letter here from Rathcar the Winged to Arat Trador Magmus. Shall I leave it outside your door or will you take it personally?"