

“The Flaming Wench”

Mathan, Mathias, Laurein, and I wandered into this good-sized town, thinking that our last job was well behind us and completed. We were road weary and thirsty. So after strolling the market place, we found a suitably sized inn. It was named the “Flame-Haired Wench” The Inn Keep was a young woman with hair the color of sunset fire. It wasn’t hard to guess where the inn got its name.

Immediately Laurein and I lost the boys.

In true Blackthorne tradition they headed straight for the gaming tables and the women. It wasn’t long till their laughter and voices rang throughout the room. Laurein and I sat across the inn, being amused at the men and counting out and dividing out profits from the last job.

We had just counted out the money for our food and rooms when I heard Mathias’ voice ring out with a suggestion that they play something more interesting. I sighed heavily as Laurein, giggling, began to count out more money. Already she was calculating what it would cost to rebuild half the inn. We always have to pay to rebuild stuff when the boys talked like that.

A few minutes later, a halfling flew into the wall beside Laurein and me.

“See Mathan, Plenty of room...” He said as he turned towards us. “Hey Sarrin draw us a target will ya?” as I tried to apologize to the small man.

“Don’t ya worry Lass, I bet him he couldn’t throw me that far.” The man said as he patted my ass repeatedly. “Maybe the landing would be softer if there were straw here... and you lasses should move.” He winked back at me as he walked back to the small crowd that was gathering.

“I am not paying for this time.” I smirked as I snatched my share of the money from Laurein and pocketed it quickly. I then began to pull a slightly blood hunk of fabric out of my saddlebags. I nailed the pre-drawn and inked fabric to the wall with two of my spare daggers.

“That saved a bit of time... Not joining us then?” Laurein asked as she eyed the bull’s eye with amusement.

“Nah, I’ll hold the wagers though.” I replied as I took a seat over by the guys. “I’m too tired to toss tonight. Do you think we should get the hay? Might be a problem later...”

“Sure, we can always pay extra if it gets too messy.... Besides it’ll add to the odds in later rounds.” Laurein chuckled as she headed out to the stables.

I began taking bets and laying odds as Mathias and Mathan taught the locals the ‘fine art’ of Halfling tossing. Amazingly we had about a half a dozen Halflings volunteer for the night’s festivities.... ‘Fools’ I thought to my self as I watched them repeatedly thump into the wall. A well paid Bar-wench marked their hits on the bull’s eye.

Behind the bar, our innkeeper quietly grumbled about stupid mercenaries and bad influences on the locals and the gullibility of people... etc.

“I bet they fly better wet.” Mathan laughed as her dumped the last of a brandy keg over the Halfling closest to him. “What are our odds Sarrin?” He called as the Halfling sputtered. I just hung my head as I shook it.

I felt the men then, as they entered the bar. It was as if their anger preceded them like a wave. Everyone in the bar fell silent as I stood fingering the hilt of the sword at my hip. I walked Laurein last winnings over to her, as if on cue the four of us turned to face the 6 or 8 men who had walked into our little party.

Mathan, who still held his drenched Halfling, screamed “Round three” as her reached for the nearest torch. The confusion on the men’s faces matched mine and Laurein amusement. I began to chuckle as I felt the flames grow at my back.

I heard the men in front gasp in shock as a flaming Halfling knocked two of them over. “Mathan, err... the targets over there... That throw doesn’t count.” Laurein giggled as she drew her sword and headed into the fray.

“Damn it... it was a good throw too.” Mathan yelled as he rushed one of the men. Mathias sighed and looked at me before facing the men... “Didn’t we just kick these guys’ asses about a week ago?”

“Yeah... these must be the left over. I answered as I grabbed a man’s breastplate and head butted him. I let him drop and pulled his sword from his belt as he fell. I pulled my sword with my other hand and searched the room for a man to beat.

Spinning, I saw Laurein pull on man towards her impaling him on her sword, while skillfully guiding his sword through the man approaching at her back. Mathan was standing on a man's chest while fighting a second. Mathias killed a second man dropping the body at his feet with the first one. He spun and caught a third mans sword. I spun back to face an empty door. With frustration I shoved the borrowed sword into the man at my feet.

“You guys did it again...” I screamed, while repeatedly stabbing the man's body. “I swear I AM GOING TO GO SOLO... You never save any of the fun for me.”

“Wow,” Laurein sighed as she wiped her sword. “Bitter much?”

“Yeah, Mathias yelled over the sound of a neck snapping. “You got one this time. You got 5 last week.” He said calmly as he stepped over the bodies to reach his ale.

“HA! Breathe now pig fucker...” Mathan giggled hysterically while holding a mans lung up to his dying face.

Laurein sighed comically and drained a mug. “I'll get him...” She said as she grabbed a mug off one of the remaining tables. “You guys start assessing the damages.” She walked slowly and carefully over to Mathan, Making sure he could see her. Just before she got into arms reach she threw the ale, mug and all, into his face. While he sputtered she hit him squarely in the jaw knocking him cold. She turned to face the inn keep and smiled...”Ya gotta love berserkers...” The inn keep growled furiously and stormed away. Laurein laughed and turned back to us...”Whose turn was it?”

“Mine, Round three” Mathias cried as he grabbed a Halfling, dunked him in brandy, lit him and threw him in one fluid practiced motion. The Halfling hit the target... dead center... rolled onto the hay and set it on fire. Before anyone could move to put out the flames a second Halfling hit the mark followed by a third.

The crowd of locals, who had fallen silent, began betting again and the party resumed as if nothing has occurred. By dawn on entire wall of the barroom was in cinders and the lovely sign out front no longer read The Flame Haired Wench, only... The Flam.

As we started out into the marketplace the next morning, weighed down with the intruder's belongings for sale or trade, Mathan giggled at the burned away sign. As usual

Laurein called...”Everyone remember where we are staying.” Without looking up, I chuckled to myself as I went in search of a carpenter. Just before they were out of earshot I heard Mathias and Mathan begin to argue.

“I remember where we are staying it’s called the Flaming Wench...”Mathias called back to Laurein, who chuckled and shook her head.

“Mathias it is not... it is called the Flame Haired Wench.”

“It is not... what kind of silly name is that? It is called the flaming wench... I remember it is named after the inn keep.”

As I rounded the corner I knew what I had to buy. I went in search of the people who could supply such things. After procuring what I needed and making sure to pay well enough to have it done on the same day, I went about my shopping and such. At sunset we rendezvoused at the inn. Laurein and I arrived first... of course. We heard Mathias yell to Mathan before they entered...

“See I told ya... The Flaming Wench... You never listen to me... Have I ever been lost in a city? No... But do you ever listen to me? No.” He whined as he opened the door. Mathan looked at us in surprise as Laurein shrugged and pointed at me, holding her hands out helplessly...”Don’t ask me, she did it.”

Glenna, our inn keep, came out from behind the bar tugging her braid and sputtering.

“You told me you took care of the Sign Sarrin!! My Inn is called the Flame haired Wench because my hair is the color of flames... The inn is named after my hair... It’s a trademark damn it!!! What will people think when they see that sign? What kind of people want to stay at a place called the Flaming Wench? Are you trying to kill me?” She screamed while Mathias looked on confused and Mathan quickly walked over to the gaming tables. Laurein giggled into her drink.

“I told ya she wouldn’t like it.” Laurein said quietly into her mug.

“Ah, it’ll grow on her” I stated as I finished my meal looking innocently up at Glenna and blinking between bites. When she was done laughing I paid double for another round for

the house and returned to my meal. Leaving Glenna to storm away sputtering about Mercenaries and insanity.

We left early the next Morning. But we often returned to our new found haven. The locals often welcomed out bounty and began looking forward to our visits. Several of them began hiring Halflings to work around their farms and businesses, not telling them what happened when the Blackthornes came to town.

With each visit we made sure to bring Glenna something special and rare. We brought her gold and jewels and trinkets of treasure. Eventually our gifts made her very rich; she began to look forward to our visits. And eventually I stopped having to buy new signs. Glenna had finally seen things our way and changed the Inns name to The Flaming Wench.