



MONSTER STORY: SHRIEKING FUNGUS

So far so good. I managed to staunch the worst of the bleeding and my strength is coming back to me, albeit slowly.

The time to mourn, the time to grieve will come later – for now I must escape at all costs. The caverns where I stumbled offered rest and some mushrooms that I could eat, once I sorted out the poisonous ones. There seems to have been a ruin of a bygone age in that cave. A rusted portcullis yielded a piece of metal that I managed to fashion into a weapon.

I heard shuffling steps and guttural voices in the distance. My assailants are not far off. While I have seen enough bloodletting to last a lifetime, I will defend myself if needed. I proceeded slowly, cautiously, trying to find my way in the darkness, cursing the cracked glass of one of my spectacles. Most unfortunate. A sharp pain pierced my leg and I slashed blindly towards it. A small disgusting mushroom-like creature was skittering, swaying across the moss, its deformed mouth-like opening smeared with my blood. A flesh wound, it bore no immediate concern.

The creature went in for another bite – awkward and stumbling it was not a formidable assailant. A strong kick sent it flying. To my utmost surprise, the impact seems to have provoked a piercing shriek from the fungus – enough to startle me as the echo carried far through the caves. This stirred a hint of knowledge – I believe I have read of such a creature. It could do little to harm me and so I rushed to carve up its robust stem for sustenance, as the wound I dealt with my initial slash was already healing rapidly.

The work was messy and so very loud as the creature emitted shrieks and yelps that I could not stifle. Despite my frenzied stabs, the little miscreant must have alerted all the denizens of these depths, erasing all my attempts at stealth. It stopped struggling. I stood up, assessing the grime and ooze covering my robes. The echoes of its screeching were still bouncing off the tunnel walls.

This was not so bad, I thought again, breathing heavily – my weapon has served me well and I was only a bit weary. With proper rest I could continue. A low, rumbling growl from around the corner made it clear I had no time for rest – proper or otherwise. The sound of claws clicking against the cavern stone and a bellowing roar announced a much more fearsome creature. I gripped my knife tightly, knowing the struggle would be futile. The time to mourn, it seems, would never come.