

Night had fallen across Mulmaster and the Moonsea. Despite the fact that the harbor was filled with debris from the battle against the elemental cults, the tides still held their ebb and flow as they had for centuries prior. Outside the Leaning Boot – now, for better or worse, considered to be waterfront property – a swarthy female half-orc slumped against the building and stared at the nearby waterline, lost in the rhythm of the waves. She idly fidgeted with her holy symbol of Eldath.

*crackle-crunch*

She wiped the sweat from her brow with the back of her hand. Noise spilled from the open doors of the Boot as drunken patrons filed out and headed towards other destinations in the city. “Zhents,” she sniffed and returned to her watery ponderations.

*crackle-crunch*

A ragged gnome lurched out of the end of a nearby alley, shaking the half-orc from her reverie. Dragging one leg limply behind itself, the small figure was backlit but clearly injured. The half-orc shot to her feet and dashed the short distance to the gnome’s side, all indications of her previous exhaustion now gone. Clad in shadows, the gnome was clearly in need of medical aid.

She laid her hand gently atop the gnome’s shoulder, and began her inquiry: “Are you –”

*crackle-crunch*

Her question was cut short as the gnome sank its foul teeth into her forearm, biting clear down to the bone. She screamed and fell backwards, causing the now-flailing gnome to come with her into the street. As light washed across its features she recognized him as one of her own: a member of the Emerald Enclave, a gnome known as Tick Tary Tanner. But changed, now; his eyes were shrunken and discolored, and his flesh was grey. Signs of stab wounds and fire damage were obvious across his body. Whatever he was in life was now long gone, and this zombie merely possessed Tick’s face.

The zombie continued to flail at the stunned half-orc. Bony fingers sank into soft flesh, teeth gnashed at her limbs, and she knew that something very plainly wrong was happening here. The last thing she heard as her life slipped away was a gravelly, hollow voice intoning:

“Enough, Tanner. This one will join us. Such is the will of Szass Tam.”

*crackle-crunch*