

It's hard to be a drow

Von Kushiel

Kapitel 1: The trials of a second boy

Chapter one

The trials of a second boy

"My name is Cúin Rai'shiz. I am the second boy of House Rai'shiz", said the young dark elf to his new teacher the weapons master Rukh. The old warrior nodded.

"I see", he answered, "So Matron Sael has finally decided, that you are to become a warrior. Tell me young Cúin, do you like weapons?" There was silence after thus question.

Then the boy said: "Yes. Especially those two knife-like twin short swords my brother Fe'ras uses."

"Ah...Well second boy follow me. Until you go for the fighting academy, I am your captain. You will do exactly what I say! If I say sleep, you sleep. If I command you to eat you eat and if I tell you to fight, you fight. Clear enough?"

"Yes sire", Cúin answered when he followed his teacher. The two drow came to Rukhs home: a large cave with many mushrooms in it. The young student was frozen by surprise. He had expected a room in House Rai'shiz, with stored weapons. Strange too...his teacher was smiling.

"Sire...why are you smiling?" asked the puzzled second boy.

"Because it's amusing to see your reaction of the sight of your new home..." "My home?!!" cried Cúin.

"Yes!" was the serious reply. "You will and must learn to survive", Rukh continued.

"There are monsters you cannot see yet, but you will face them soon. I'll give two swords, identically to your brother's ones, to you second boy. Fight well, survive and we will meet again..."

The older dark elf did as he had said. Cúin nodded not really exited. "Well...", the boy began, "How long do I have to survive?"

"Wait and see..." Rukh disappeared in the shadows.

The now lone young drow circled watchful in the cave. Suddenly he saw a bright red point from the corner of his left eye. The prince spun around and stood face to face with a little orc. Not thinking, just instinctely, Cúin draw his swords. They were new to him, but he blocked this motion. For a better target the dark elf outlined his foe with faerie fire. Battle lust glommed in his eyes as he lunged after the orc. The creature dodged and clawed his fangs in Cúins hand. The boy felt no pain, he was too fancied

by the battle. His other sword dived into the orcs eye. Weakened by pain the monster stepped backwards. It didn't help. The second boy swung his right sword through the throat of the orc. The creatures head dropped to Cúins feet. The boy breathed hard but was very glad. 'My first kill!' he thought.

Hungry after the fight, the dark elf took one of his swords and cut a piece of mushroom. Fortunately he knew what mushroom was safe to eat and which not. When the second boy had finished his meal he looked for a secure place to sleep in. The Rai'shiz youth found a small side cave. It was big enough for him to make a bed. There was a little rug of moss. It seemed soft, so Cúin decided to rest on it. His sleep was light, because not a single drow does ever know safety. On the next morning, the prince woke up early. He was ready for another day (and a fight too). The boy slightly wondered how long this surviving training would be. Cúin hoped that not all of his foe would be so easy to slay as this orc the day before. Else it would be simple to solve the task and the prince liked nothing less than to do annoying things.

However the dark elf had to be careful. When he went out into the main chamber, the young drow looked around. Nobody was there. Not even the infravision showed any living thing.

"That's a little bit strange", the Rai'shiz murmured to himself. About five hours of patrolling passed and he encountered no one.

But then... a drow warrior entered Cúins domain. The second boy turned toward the stranger. The unknown dark elf bore no house emblem nor showed any membership to a house. Many questions came to the youth mind. 'Is he an outcast? Or a male of my house?' Loud he said: "Who are you?!"

"It doesn't matter", answered the older warrior. Then he drew his long sword, which was hanging over his back and right shoulder. In a moment the dark elf was after the prince, who very barely managed to dodge the blow.

Cúin knew he had to kill this one if he wanted to live. So he rolled quickly to the side. The youth then jumped to his feet and unsheathed his own weapons. Eye to eye the two drow stood facing each other grimly. The stares lasted only seconds, and then the fight went on. Long sword against twin swords. Normally the air would have been full of a ringing noise, but these were drow made weapons and no sound did occur from them, thanks to a special material inside the arms. Over hours the dark elves tried to kill their opponent. Sweat glanced on Cúins forehead and he slowly began to tire. Only the knowledge that he mustn't let down his guard despite the cost held him straight. The older drow used the inexperience of his younger enemy to throw a knife after him. The prince noticed its flight and dived into another roll to the side and then forward. He stood up and at the same time strode at the unknown drow who cried silently as the tip of Cúins left sword pierced through his leathern armour and the right severed his left index finger. Brightly the blood shone in the infravision sight. 'It's near the end' Cúin thought happily. The stranger cursed at the prince in the silent hand code: 'You damned filthy little drider brut.' Full of fury the second boy glanced at him. It took only seconds for his left sword to cut through the chest of the older drow. A stream of blood floated against Cúin who watched silently as the eyes of his opponent finally went dark.

The prince stumbled away from the corpse and sank exhausted but smiling against a

mushroom. He had managed to kill a drow! Usually the second boy would have to do that when his training at home was at an end and he were sent to the famous fighting academy Melee-Magthere in Menzoberranzan. Shirukh had only a school of magic and so the priestesses and fighter had to travel a long way.

This was why surviving trainings were so important, for it was very dangerous, a journey through the tunnels. And in dark elf society, no one cared about a dead male. As the days went on, Cúin got used to his cave. He knew now how to hunt and so it was easy to him.

Meanwhile Rukh looked after his young student every second day. The prince seemed now strong enough to duel with him. At least the youth had survived in the half wilderness for a long time, a thing that didn't happen very often thanks to the weapons master.

Smiling the dark elf entered the territory of the Rai'shiz youth. The boy was patrolling at the opposite end and so didn't notice his teacher. Swiftly Rukh got behind his pupil and charged at him. Cúin let out a little cry of surprise and scarcely avoided being hit. He whirled around and stood face to face with the weapons master.

'Defend yourself', signalled the seasoned drow as he loosened another series of attack. The second boy sprang and rolled away from the slashes, then aimed a kick at Rukh, but the dark elf danced easily away and used Cúin's short misbalance to strike him with the sword.

"Aargh!" The boy fell to the ground but soon forced himself with tears in the eyes to stand up and keep on fighting. So the prince finally managed to hit Rukh's shoulder with his right sword. The weapons master smiled happily. That youth had fire now. Matron Sael would be pleased. The ambitious drow was planning a raid on house Ta'sul'ri, to get one precious clerical artefact. Such a fighter like Cúin would be very good indeed. But the Rai'shiz second boy had many things to learn yet and a battle with another drow house was still a little too big for him.

Now Cúin would have to duel every day. He would conquer tiredness, exhaustion, and learn endurance. And in ten years the prince would travel to Menzoberranzan's famed Melee-Magthere.

The second boy attacked fiercely, but Rukh easily avoided the strokes. He laughed and launched a mighty blow after his pupil. The young dark elf tried to dive away under the attack, but was hit in his back. Luckily the damage wasn't very much, so that in an instant he was in his counterblow. Cúin's strikes weren't as forcefully as Rukh's, but he was very fast and could match the skill of the seasoned warrior with swiftness. But slowly the second boy became weary, his movements lost speed. And his teacher managed it nearly effortlessly to disarm the young prince.

"Good fight", the weapons master declared after a few seconds.

"You will return to House Rai'shiz, where we train together. Cúin nodded. At least the proud warrior had accepted him. It was said, that the surviving challenge Rukh had put upon the second boy, was formed to destroy weak pupil because the weapons master hated it to spend time with lesser talents. But Cúin promised to be very gifted. Maybe the boy could become a lizard rider.

House Rai'shiz needed a new captain, since the former patron Ka'nar had been killed by Matron Mother Sael. Full of happy thoughts about the second boy's future the

drow went along with spirited steps.

Behind him the prince wasn't so happy. But the young dark elf was glad that he could return to his home. The reason why the would-be warrior wasn't as delighted as his teacher was: his mother. The matriarch would put her younger son not only under Rukhs tutelage, but under the rule of Cúins most hated sister too. Nevertheless he would also exercise with his brother Feras, a thing the second boy liked very much. The two dark elves arrived at their house complex in about a half hour.

The female part of family was already waiting in the huge audience room. Sael sat gracefully in her great onyx throne.

"And? How is he?" demanded the Matron Mother.

"He has much potential", Rukh answered. The second boy just waited what the two adults may decide. He wasn't sure if he would like lizard rider training. Then that would mean he would indeed be exhausted at the day's end. Sael only nodded.

"Train him like you would train a future weapons master for five years. I'll then choose if my younger son is to become a lizard rider or not."

"As you wish my matron." Rukh bowed deeply and went to his pupil.

"Follow me young warrior, I will lead you to our training place."

The weapons master brought the youth deep into the Rai'shiz house complex. There was a arena in a little extra cave. The second boy was elated. It looked like his surviving training. The older dark elf noticed the sparkling in the boy's eyes. Good years were lying ahead. From this day on Cúin trained nearly every minute. His sleep became more alert than it already had been.