

Beseech the Foolish

By: Dillon Deveney

“There he is.”

“Who?”

“The one Master sent us after.”

“*Your* Master. He’s just paying me to make sure you don’t get your head squashed in by a troll.”

“Semantics, Brielle.”

“What does he look like?”

“Right *there!* The one with the pale skin, the scruffy brown hair?”

“Zezo, you have just described all men to me.”

“Fine, fine. Follow me.”

The young, human monk, Zezo, steps into the warm, mountain tavern. The gleam of the hearth reflects against her clean-shaven head and adds a light hue to her azure training Gi. She is clearly new to the tavern scene. Any scene would be new to a monk who’s never left her monastery. So many people. All different races and disciplines. All drinking, laughing and gambling... without consequence or rules. How very odd.

The fledgling monk is followed closely by Brielle, a half-orc woman clad in more spears than one would think necessary. Her fur-trimmed, leather armor means she is accustomed to the mountainous life of Blackhelm. But her many pink scars etched into her grey skin means she is more accustomed to the tavern life than any other here.

Well, any other except the one who is downing himself in their seventeenth tankard of ale. He’s a large, human man covered in hair. Brown, swoopy hair that seems to defy gravity sprouts from the top of his head. Curly hazel arm hair that adds false color to his pale skin seems to extend across his whole body. But Zezo knows it’s him by the patchy, rusty, mutton chops that cover his face. Master Gematsu was right, this man is by all accounts, a mess.

His stained green monk Gi bares no crest; there is a hole where the Monastery Sigil would have been adorned. Zezo places her hand over her heart, tracing the symbol of Monastery Seiki. Her calloused fingertips hover over the interlocked oak branches sewn into the cloth. She summons her courage. Focuses her breath. And steps forward with Brielle close behind.

The first thing they note: He’s loud! *Really loud!*

“Hey! Darla!” He belches, “Could I get another tasty beverage? That honey dew one was extraordinary!”

The hearty, dwarven tavernkeeper behind the bar rolls her eyes with a smile, "Glad you like it, love! Number eighteen, coming up."

He wipes a bit of foam from his mouth as he lets out a long sigh. Zezo seems... frozen. Intimidated by this unrefined man and his stench. Brielle rubs her temples and kicks Zezo forward. She stumbles, catching herself on the man's shoulder.

"Um!" Zezo blurts out.

The man turns around slowly. His expression is extremely cheerful. Eyes closed shut, large toothy smile, rosy red cheeks, "Hi! My name is Conoroki!"

Zezo removes her hand quickly and bows forward, composing herself, "G-greetings, Master Conoroki. My name is --"

Conoroki cuts her off with a burp, "And you can straight fuck off!" He turns back to the bar and grabs his eighteenth tasty beverage.

Zezo is stunned. Brielle is laughing. Conoroki is drinking.

The young monk retracts her bow, "Excuse me?"

Conoroki finishes his tankard and smashes it down with pride against the wooden bar top. He lets out a hearty laugh that bellows from the caverns of his soul. He turns to the monk again, "Oh man, sorry about that! That didn't make a lot of sense did it?"

Zezo turns to Brielle, who quickly stifles her laughing. She shrugs.

Turning back to Conoroki, Zezo quietly responds, "Um, no. I suppose it didn't?"

The lumbering man puts an arm on his knee and leans forward waving his other hand past his face to hide his embarrassment, "I know, right? Like, why would I introduce myself, just to tell you fuck off?" He laughs, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Let's try that again. You can go ahead and uh, poke my shoulder and we'll go from there." He turns from Zezo, pretending to drink from an clearly empty tankard.

Flustered, Zezo quickly pokes his shoulder, "Master Conoroki, I need to --"

Conoroki turns around with no laughter in his eyes, no smile across his face or tender rosiness in his cheeks, "Fuck. Off."

Zezo takes a step back into Brielle. Swiftly swapping places, the half-orc steps forward, furrowing her brow, "Alright, lad. Enough of your tricks, the lass here is just trying to deliver a message." She puts a hand on Conorki's shoulder.

Without moving, Conoroki speaks in a dull tone, "It would be best if you removed your hand from my shoulder there, sweetheart. I can't afford to break another bar stool."

Brielle tightens her grip and bares her orcish fangs, leaning into the drunken monk's face, "Boy, are you threatening me right now? Because I would love for that to be the case."

The tavern grows quiet. The air crackles with an energy familiar to Zezo. She knows a fight is about to break loose. She goes to pull her guide back, "Brielle, wait!"

But it's too late.

"I'm sorry, Darla," Conoroki puts his hands on the bar top, "But I never did say anything about not breaking a table." In a flash, the monk pushes off the bar, grabbing Brielle and swinging the mighty half-orc over his shoulder; smashing her through a large mess hall table.

Darla, the tavernkeeper, sighs into a glass of ale she has just poured herself.

Zezo, the young monk, lunges after Brielle; who at this point has already drawn one of her many spears.

Conoroki, the drunken monk, sways back and forth with his fists raised in uneven intervals. One hand is open. The other is closed.

The tavern patrons, drunken and excited, are ready to start a tavern-wide brawl all their own.

All the while, the night grows darker.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Beseech the Foolish: Part II

Chairs breaking over bones. Tables collapsing beneath unconscious bodies. Empty glasses of ale shattered across scarred-faces. A tavern brawl, like many before it's time, is currently taking place; much to the displeasure of Darla, the patron owner of this bar.

Abiding the time-honored and well-respected rule of 'No Pyromancy' in a tavern brawl, mages find themselves in the unique role of gamblers instead of playing as fighters. This is a chance for warriors, pugilists and barbarians to really shine and show their skills outside of a dungeon.

However, there is one fighter here that has nothing to prove. She only has some frustration to let out. Brielle hasn't known Zezo for very long, but something about the plucky monk has made her care. Care that she is being talked down to. Care that she is upset. This care is a good enough justification for the onslaught of attacks Brielle has unleashed on the drunken monk, Conoroki.

Spear against fist usually has a clear winner in most wagers. And if Conoroki was sober, the pain and blood loss would probably have stopped him by now. But, good ale is good ale as they say - and he has all the liquid courage he needs to win. Well, win is a strong word, but maybe enough time for Brielle's seemingly inexhaustible supply of spears to dwindle down to one.

Brielle stabs her last spear forward with an orcish roar. Conoroki deflects the last spear, breaking it in half on the spot. Wood splinters shatter across the room.

"Just fall down you big oaf!" The half-orc slashes upwards with the severed spear - ready to end the foolishness.

"Ooooookay, scary lady," Conoroki belches, trips, and falls to the ground. Brielle stops short and thrusts the splintered pommel of her spear towards the monk, who has now thrown himself into a drunken laughing fit. He sneezes and dodges the spear attack. Conoroki spins his body around on the wooden floor, knocking the spear from Brielle's grasp and tripping her in the process. As her jaw meets the floor, Conoroki drops his heel into her spine; knocking her out cold, "Look, I'm pretty sure I told you to fuck off. I am a firm believer, that the act of fucking off would have replaced the act of me kicking in your spine."

Zezo was frozen - unable to understand the chaos around her. Her prior training was organized. Fighting occurred on a schedule and was between opponents of equal understanding. This was anything but that. She should only use her martial arts for self-defense or self-betterment. But when Conoroki's drunken stare met Zezo's eyes, she felt something new. Something unique. She felt the need to ball her fist and break Conoroki's runny, red nose.

So, she did.

Conoroki leaned back and wailed in pain. It sounded a bit like stepping on an old dog's tail; alarming and pathetic, "Heeeeeey, wowwww, owwww, fuuuuuck!" He wobbled in place, attempting to wave the pain away from his nose.

Zezo immediately retracted her fist. The uncontrollable rage that overcame her... the single strike of power she just unleashed, was this a defiance of Master Gematsu's teachings? Or a new lesson from Master Conoroki? But Zezo wasn't here for new lessons, she was her by order of her Master. Greater things hung in the balance aside from Zezo's quest for wisdom, she knew that. She unclenched her fist, keeping it at her side, "Master -- Conoroki, you are... to return with me and Brielle. Master Gematsu requires your... your -- "

The smelly monk leaned forward. Drool, snot and blood dribbling down his face, "My what? My presence? My teachings? Let me guess, that bald-headed freak, Gematsu, wants me to come back to that mountaintop prison and teach little kids to drink their livers away and punch bad guys in the nutsack, right? Nah. I'm gonna pass."

In a flurry of open-handed blows, Conoroki strikes his fingertips in-between Zezo's muscles. Her bones echoed with the strength of this ridiculous monk and she felt a pain so new it was equal parts terrifying as it was curious. Conoroki raised his right leg for an attack, "If you were smart kid, you'd drop this shit and go back home to your boring-ass scrolls and incense abuse."

His roundhouse kick was predictable and even in her pained state, Zezo countered it flawlessly, "No! You don't understand! The scrolls foretell a coming darkness that will threaten all nations. That time is descending upon us quickly. We need your --"

As she held his foot and prepared to displace his weight, the drunken monk dropped like a dead fish, pulling Zezo down with him. Zezo was quick enough to let go before falling face first into the floorboard, but not fast enough to keep her balance. Conoroki spread out like a frog and launched skyward with an uppercut, connecting with the bottom of Zezo's jaw.

She stumbles backwards, clutching her jaw with both hands - exposing her chest for a direct attack. Conoroki dashes forward, spins to the floor and thrusts forward with an open-palm strike directly onto Zezo's chest. Her heart skips a beat. She chokes and falls backwards, grasping her gut - gasping for air.

The foul monk looks shadow cast, he leans over Zezo in clear victory. His words are cold, "You feel that, kid? That pain in your gut? That desperate attempt to suck some air back into your lungs? That is true darkness."

He kneels down and swiftly jabs two fingers into Zezo's side. Suddenly, she can breathe again! Starved for air, she takes in many rapid and shallow breaths. Conoroki continues, "The fear is that one day, you'll go to sleep. And when you wake up, you'll realize that

life has passed you by. That tightness in your chest swells. Your breath is forever shallow. You no longer live.”

The tavern has ceased any of the fleeting brawls at this point. All eyes and ears are on the drunken monk. Brielle has finally come to, she hazily searches for any of her spears. Conoroki kicks one of them to her. She grabs hold of her trusted weapon and listens.

“Darkness isn’t a warlock invading our lands. It isn’t some wizard with a powerful meteor spell. Those guys are just assholes. No, the real darkness, kid, is losing sight of life. And you are well on your way to walking that path.” Conoroki removes a small pouch from his hip and tosses it onto Darla’s bar. He scratches his beard and rubs his eyes in exhaustion. After a lazy, bear-like yawn, the monk makes his way towards the door.

Zezo leans forward, still pained from Conoroki’s last attack, “Master... Conoroki... where... are you going?”

Without looking back, he steps out into the cold winter night. His warm breath forms around his parting words, “I owe Darla a new table.” And he was gone into the night.

But his words, his teachings, his wisdom... rattled inside of Zezo’s mind like a clipped bird desperate to flee its cage. To fly among the clouds as it was always meant to. Maybe the broken Monk was incapable of change, but Zezo wasn’t. She would learn. She would become something better. Better than Master Gematsu. And better than Conoroki.

But that wouldn’t be for another ten years.

For now, she quickly dashes into the winter night after her new mentor. Brielle swiftly scrambled to collect the shards of her spears and gives chase after the human she has become so fond of.

Sometimes acting foolish can open new paths towards wisdom.

And sometimes that wisdom is to know when to act foolish.

END.