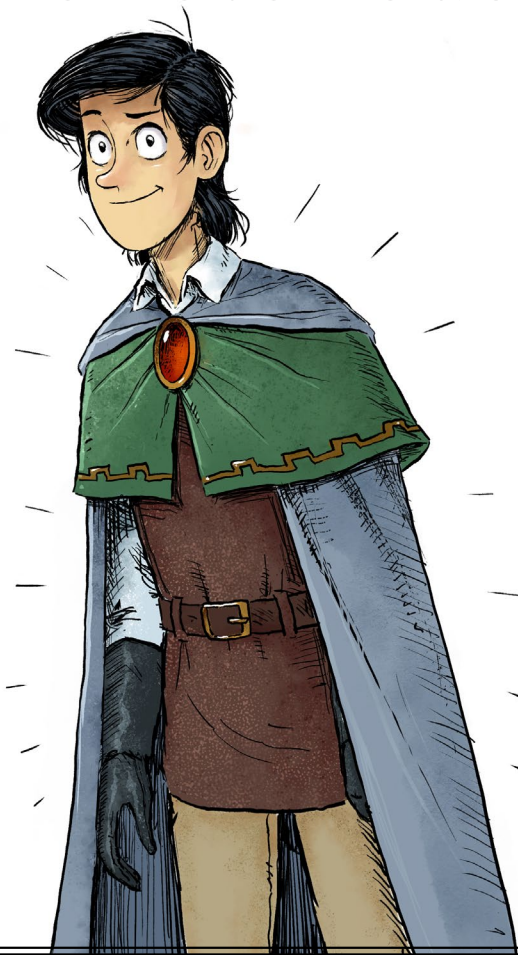


Cottonous Monotonous



The first thing I noticed was his cloak—staggeringly ordinary and overlookable. Absolutely nothing stood out or was memorable. It beamed with unembellishment.

A shoulder cape partially covered it, clasped with a gold and ruby brooch where the hood came through. His disheveled hair fell upon it as he scratched his head and shook my hand.

For weeks we'd spoken across screens about a magic treasure he was hunting down. Something that streamlined understanding of airfoils and raised comprehension of lift. I looked into it, and he decided to pay a visit.

“The X of Aeronautto isn’t from this world,” Sharlatan had explained. “But it would bring alot of prestige back to your family’s old museum.” He reached into his bag to look over his tools for the catacombs.

“Wait,” I said. “Are those things magic? They won’t let magic inside.” I explained that, long ago, a witch supposedly woke some of the residents. He wasn’t concerned as he placed his stuff back in his satchel, but I was certain they were exuding awesome amounts of extraordinary energies.

We ran into guards before even remotely near the tombs. Electricians

aimed dish antennae at us and held up meters. I thought we were in trouble when one of the needles broke. But the guards said the meter was faulty; broke trying to go lower than 'zero'. So, none of Sharlatan's implements registered, but they made a strange comment to me. "You'll have to keep it down in there."

The tunnel entrance was visible when we were next stopped. This time they had an old wizard standing by, who closed his eyes and waved his hands before us. I caught my eyes roving over Sharlatan's cloak again, trying to nail down exactly what it was that made it so commonplace. The wizard gave us the 'okay', but as we walked onward,

a guard mumbled after us, “He better quiet that horn!”

“Horn?” I asked Sharlatan. “Is there a horn in your bag?”

“I can’t remember. Don’t think so...”

The final sentries were stationed just before the crypt’s entryway. No dishes or wizards this time; just a polite cautioning that the entrance itself had powerful magic sensors. Surely we would now be found out. If the cloak was magically hiding Sharlatan’s things, shouldn’t it also set off alarms? Turns out, that wasn’t the concern.

A guard pointed at my head and said,

“Your horn is humming.”

“I’m sure you’re wrong.” I told him. I’d heard of horns emitting tones, but it was a very rare thing.

He explained that most can’t hear the sound. Only the guards are equipped to hear it since it’s on the list of things that could possibly maybe disturb the dead.

“So, I can’t go in?!”

He put something on my horn. “This will create an anti-phase wave. Dead won’t hear a thing...”

And we were in! I couldn’t understand

how they didn't detect his incredible implements, which were undeniably pulsing with prodigious power. Certainly the cloak couldn't cover them up. It was undeniably without magic of any sort. It was as far from enchantment as anything could be. Proposterously, overpoweringly, prodigiously plain. The most un-magical thing I'd ever encountered in my life. Unconveyably unremarkable.

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