

PROMPT #2: You've been raised all your life to fulfill a prophecy, only for the seer to realize they were mistaken — you have no great destiny after all. What do you do now?

The Deeds of the Great Hero

by **Holland D'Amico**

Was it all just a farce? A coincidence? No, that'd be too much. It'd have to be. Too much trouble, too much time, but now that I'm here, the light drizzle clouding my vision, I'm not too sure. That was her fault though, it couldn't have been my fault. I did it all right; I should have something to gain from it. Fifteen years couldn't just go to waste. The deeds I did, the blood I spilled, it can't just go to hell. Mom and dad wouldn't just take away my childhood for a lie, right?

The dark clouds remind me of that day. I can still hear her voice, saying the words that would change everything for me. The worst day of my life, or was it the best? No, definitely the worst. Everything I did was great, but that definitely was up there with Bruce dying. I can still hear him choking on his blood. I didn't want to kill him, but I had to. He was going to hurt people. If I didn't take the crucible away from him, more people would've died by his hand. I helped them. They were grateful for what I did, but why does it still hurt? He was my brother. Brother in arms, brother in drinks, brother in everything except blood. He was a friend of mine in school. He taught me when my parents took me out to start fighting. How long ago was that? Ten years ago? Yeah, because we were still young...gods he could still be here...maybe then I could've had a chance in this. So why did I even kill him?

The light wind brought a bit of a chill. I am a little cold now that I think about it. My eyelids are getting heavy, but I'm not tired yet - am I? No, I still have a fight in me. I can do this, but everything feels so cumbersome. The armor is supposed to be light though, that's what the orcs said six years ago. They didn't lie, did they? No, it's not their fault. They had a wendigo and wanted me to deal with it. I'm the hero of legend after all, right? So why can't I stand? That wasn't that hard of a hit. I can't look at my legs to check, I can't feel them either. That might be a problem, but where is she? The usurper can't be far, right? I can still get her back for this.

The wet grass feels nice. Maybe I can just close my eyes for a second, then jump back in. I did it before, back then against the dragon. What was his name again? Denethor? Dralgor? It was definitely a D name...Dalton? Yeah, I think it was Dalton. Gods, that was like five years ago? That's where I got the shield. He liked shields a lot. Or was he the fork hoarder? No, it was shields because his favorite was the one with his face on it. Everything is getting fuzzy. I can't even focus with the rain.

That sage, this is all her fault. She shows up one day out of the blue and says that I'm a hero of legend, destined for greatness! That I would slay the evil knight, whoever that was. She must've been talking about the usurper. Besides, she can't just take it back this far along the line. She shouldn't be able to. If she can see the future, why did she mess it up? ? How dare she mess with my destiny and then say it was all for nothing. Or was she trying to see if she could change the fates' decision? But, there was a kind of freedom when she told me her mistake. I was grateful, and I'm sure she thought it was reasonable when I squeezed the life out of her too. That was the greatest day of my life, those few months ago; the day when my destiny became my own again.

I never liked the smell of the forest, but there was something nice about these mountain pines. I don't think I had been to these specific woods before, but I recognized the charred remains. That was where mom and dad were. I don't think I was in full control of myself the other day, or any day before then. Really, it was just those three that needed to die: the ones who ruined my life, forcing me to abandon my innocence just for some false prophecy. The sage was easy, she sought me out. Mom and dad though, they ran. I don't blame them, really. Their baby turned out to be a monster, not that it was my fault or that they could've seen it coming. They were just as clueless as I was, but it was still their fault for making their love determinable by how many deeds I did. I enjoyed watching them burn, the warmth of the fire still touching my face. Dad didn't fight back, but mom, her screams were...unsatisfying. I thought if I could get them to feel what I felt that first day, I could feel at peace. Now that I did it, why do I feel so...hollow?

I hear footsteps. It's her, it has to be. I can grab her, I can still fight back. She doesn't deserve this weight. It's my job to be the hero, not hers. I can still get her back. I can still fight!

She sheathed her sword, its moonlight silver painted red from her final blow. The walk to the Black Knight felt like an eternity, the weight of his death weighing down on her before it even happened. She stepped over his shattered shield, the dragon's face forever ruined. She did that. She walked around his broken sword, the crucible's light fading away. She did that. When she finally gazed upon the damage she did to him, the rain could not beat her tears. The guilt of killing someone great just to become greater didn't seem worth the sacrifice. When she picked up his head, his thoughts were silenced by the gentle, yet firm grip. She laid his beaten body

in her lap, raising him out of the mud and wet grass. It was then that his vision became clear, finally able to see her face. She was beautiful; the rain dotting droplets on her bright face only to be washed away by her tears, painting her emerald eyes a light red. She forced herself to look at her childhood hero. She didn't want this. Any of it. "...It should have been you."

The Black Knight realized two things in that moment, the scowl painted on his scarred, pale face fading away. It formed into a small smile; they were both the same, but she had something he never did: humility. He wanted to know. No, he needed to, choking out a question. "Who...are...you...?"

"...Kallia," she said, gentle rays of light piercing through the cloud cover, the sunset transforming the clouds into brilliant oranges, reds, and purples.

He sighs, a wash of relief flowing over him, like a gentle stream over small stones. The sunlight granted him enough strength to draw in one last breath, mustering the only wisdom he had. "...Don't end up like me..."