

Kyne's Challenge: A Hunter's Companion

PART I: NORTHERN TAMRIEL



A Prayer To Kyne

Hear me, goddess of storms, and the bringer of rain,
The Mother of Men and Shor's Warrior-Wife,
Your Sons and your Daughters implore you again,
Protect those that hunt, for they savor their life.
Your wind at our backs, we seek the faintest of tracks,
Your blessings alone exalt our fury in attacks.
We watch for the Hawk, on the grayest of days,
Your servants and advocates, trained in the Old Ways.



MOON SUGAR PRESS
DUNE, ELSWEYR



Embarkation INVOCATION AND MERRIMENT

OUR TIME OF STRIFE and troubles blankets the land in fear. They say the dead rise to claim Cyrodiil. That Daedra intrusions grow common. Within a year, Molag Bal will be baying at the gates of Whiterun. But there is much merriment and tradition to be had in Tamriel. Nords fear no trespasser into the nine holds. Our mead is envied by all men and mer. And our wilderness is abundant with life to hunt for amusement or necessity. But what of the loathsome and the monstrous far from our fields of heather, away from the White? I am astonished when a recruit from Elden Root hasn't the knowledge to proficiently hunt a snow bear. And I worry our Nord cubs would face a wamasu of Black Marsh without proper guidance of its more dangerous defenses. Our libraries are filled with histories, but what of tomes less musty, and more beneficial to our current predicament?

Naturally, Kyne provided the answers. A challenge to test the finest huntsmen: A volume of parchment to attest to the ferociousness of our prey, and the capabilities of our company. We seek one example of every beast that roams through Mundus, whether imbecilic or guileful, tracked to their lair, and brought down by our cunning. Artistry most fine shall accompany the depictions of our actions and the ferocity of our quarry. The gift of fine hides or warm innards will be gathered and offered for sale to trade elder Zagon-ra (our benefactor), who pays for the printing and distribution of this knowledge. What if we encounter creatures unnatural or cursed? They too shall be dismissed with a similar vigor, as if Kyne herself had summoned them.

Our journey may be fraught. The armies of revenants seek to choke and turn our livelihoods to darkness. The politics of the three great alliances may threaten our freedom. But Kyne's light shines on. Let us teach you preparedness, and the skills of survival. And the benefits of a mug of Frost River mead.

—GRUNDBVIK COLD-FIST

*Guildmaster of the Fighters Guild of Sentinel,
Nord of Windhelm; 4th of First Seed, 2E 578, Riften*



*The revelry in Riften began at sun's fade on Fredas, and continues deep into Loredas morn.
If our assembled hunters can track as well as they drink, Kyne's bounty is assured.*

❧ GRUNDBVIK COLD-FIST

I hail from Windhelm, but currently oversee the Fighters Guildhall in Sentinel, in the baking sun of Hammerfell. I am fortunate, then, to have been given this grand challenge, where I can return to the lands of my youth, where I am closer to Kyne. My bestiary is to serve the Guild, as our methods of hunting may help my brothers and sisters facing the monstrous of Tamriel. I hunt with my trusted Ingjard, and select brethren, chosen to further our forays across Mundus. My paths are well traveled, and I tolerate Orcs, Elves, and other beast-men. I prefer finesse over force, the company of bards, and enjoy both hand-drawn art as well as hand-forged axes. But my artistry and wordsmithing does not diminish my

ferociousness with a blade, as my foes have found, to their cost.

❧ FENRIG THE UNSTEADY

I have knowledge of Fenrig's brother Roggvir the Ready (the protector of Rorikstead). But I was surprised to learn of his twin, Fenrig. My trusted companion Ingjard remarked on the considerable talents of both siblings, when tracking or violently performing with an axe. Alas, Roggvir is indisposed, but Ingjard's recommendation convinced me to bring Fenrig and his war dogs into our fold. The fellow seems strangely gloomy and reserved, keen to speak only about how he tracks wild animals through swamp and snow. During these festivities in

Riften, his actions perplex me; he declines to partake in mead. Is he ill?

☒ FANG AND MAULER

Fenrig brings with him two feisty familiars: his war dogs. They are fiercely loyal and usually by his feet. Judging by their coats and faces, these are more wolf than dog. Mauler's temperament seems relatively docile; he is oblivious to the festivities and content to slobber on a large bone of marrow. Fang, however, seems skittish; she stays by her master flashing a distrusting look and sharp teeth, growling at the Argonian.

☒ INGJARD STONE-HAND

My trusted friend and an exceptional tracker, Ingjard has recently returned from a month of hunting across the Velothi Mountains with the formidable Holgunn One-Eye. Not only are her arrows true and her axes sharp, but her paintings of Skyrim are most pleasing to the eye. These skills are all the more impressive as she is beset with only one good hand (the other hidden inside a gauntlet, mangled after defending herself from a werewolf). Clad in furs, with a row of daggers across her chest, Ingjard clanks mead mugs with Skald kings, murders trolls before breakfast, and has her art hanging from the rafters of Dragonsreach. I am proud to call her my friend.

☒ FOOTFALLS-IN-SNOW

This Argonian Boot professes to be a spellword of some repute, and comes with a letter of reference from Armory Sergeant Belderi Llenim of the Mournhold Guildhall, but I have little reason to trust this lizard. He rasps in a singsong voice, speaks in nature allegories, and sips his mead like an Imperial. He swears he is here to learn the ways of the Nord

hunter, and has promised to provide safe passage through Black Marsh and much of southern Tamriel. The Orc and Fenrig's dogs have already taken a dislike to him. I have reserved my judgment, as his skill with a skinning knife is ruthlessly competent.

☒ BASHNAG GRO-GORZOTH

A fellow member of the Fighters Guild, he is an impressively bulky Orc, favoring a cladding of the heaviest armor even on the most sweltering of days. He takes to hammering mead down his gullet like a slaughterfish to water. Although one would favor a slobbering troll over this specimen when attempting delicate diplomacy with a Dunmer, if you wish something to be struck so hard the crack can be heard in Oblivion, using a mace that a giant would have trouble wielding, seek out this Orc. Usually the picture of jocular, Bashnag is no simpleton, and boasts blood kinship to the blacksmiths of King Kurog of Orsinium. He certainly hits harder than any man or mer I've met before.

☒ KISHRA-DO

A somewhat aloof Khajit, hailing from the trading settlement of Dune in distant Elswyr. She is the House Cat of trade elder Zagun-ra, a powerful merchant (and our benefactor) who also resides there. A formidable assassin by all accounts, Kishra-do seems to have an air of irritation about us Nords: Perhaps it is the weather? She carries a variety of satchels and daggers, and wears leathers to accentuate her natural feline litheness. I have witnessed her slit a giant from ear to toe; the lumberer was dead before he realized his attacker had pounced. She now acts as a courier and collector of ingredients, returning intermittently to gather the spoils of our hunt.



Morrowind





Perhaps Kyne had others to watch over; our hunt begins with squabbling I would not normally tolerate, and a kill that reveals not the skill of the hunter, but the boot speed of an Orc.

SKEEVER | At the edge of the Autumnal Forest with the Velothi Mountains at our backs, our previous night's joviality had lessened considerably. Kishra-do joined us before departing for Mournhold, away from our hunt. Fenrig sat apart from us, bathed in a shaft of light from Secunda, keeping his dogs away from the Argonian and the Khajiit. Ingjard sat pensively, quietly murmuring prayers to Kyne. Bashnag was out collecting firewood, his nighttime foraging exhibiting all the silent cunning of a mammoth in an apothecary. Kishra-do stopped chatting to Footfalls-in-Snow, and leaned in to my ear.

"Your dungmer attracts noise as well as fleshflies," she noted with her barbed tongue, eliciting a rasping chuckle from the lizard. "Perhaps Kishra-do will offer him a chiming bell to wear so he might alert all the woodland beasts?" I was about to explain we'd face no dangers in this neck of the woods, when a hissing squeal interrupted her insults. Kishra-do leapt up, swiftly reaching for her staff, and brought it down with considerable force, piercing straight through the head of a huge rodent. Its tiny red eyes glared up at us for a moment, before Kyne gathered up the skeever's spirit to give to Peryite.

I narrowly missed receiving a furry face of jagged yellow teeth and disease, as a skeever leapt out into our clearing. Three, perhaps four, encroached on the camp, probably attracted by the

fire. Or the lumbering nocturnal noises of our Orc friend. He attended to a skeever by bringing his hefty armored foot down, driving both boot and beast into the soggy soil. Ingjard's arrows finished the rest of the vermin. Fenrig barely looked up. A brief and rowdy lull between conversation.

Before we slept, Bashnag offered Kishra-do some skewered skeever he'd been roasting. "This must be fortuitous, Khajiit!" he shouted (although we found out subsequently this was his speaking voice).

"How so, idiot?" Kishra-do responded. A little harshly, I felt.

"Ha! I'd wear your coat as a winter cloak if I thought you serious," Bashnag continued.

Ingjard looked up from her painting as I rose from my seat. Ingjard flashed me a look of concern, but I shook my head; these were the teething troubles usually present when others are brought to the hunt.

The Orc waved the hindquarters of a charred skeever skewer in Kishra-do's face. "You didn't think you'd be eating your principal diet? How many different ways do you cat folk eat rat?"

"None, you feeble-minded mongrel. We refrain from playing with balls of yarn, and mark our territory with flags, not secretions. Though I'm happy to make an exception with you, yes?"

"Fellow hunters!" I stood to my full height. "Your bickering, though amusing, offends Kyne." I produced a bottle of Ashfire mead (it seemed apt, based on our first destination), and handed it to the Orc. For the Khajiit, a skin of Moon Sugar double rum.

"A spot of Nord diplomacy?" I offered. #

A SKEEVER, SKEWERED AND SKINNED, SIZZLING MERRILY ON THE CAMPFIRE. NOT A TASTE I PERSONALLY CRAVE; I WOULD EAT THE WEEVIL FROM AN OLD APPLE BEFORE I FORCED THIS DOWN MY THROAT.

