

**Promethisus's Tale**  
**The Paladin Goes Forth**  
By Stuart Clark

Promethisus silently nocked his arrow and drew the bowstring taut. The white ash wood of his weapon quietly creaked in protest as he pulled the string back and touched it to the deep cleft in his chin. He sighted along the shaft of his deadly missile with one of his white eyes, picking out one of the humans as his target. He had smelled the hunting party long before he had seen them.

Humans. Disgusting, vile, creatures with little regard for the other races of the Seven Kingdoms. Just their presence here, hunting on the fringe of the Suspintian Forest, paid testament to that. It would give him some brief satisfaction to put an end to one of the shortlives.

The hunting party had not seen him, nor were they likely to. Promethisus had smeared his white hide and human torso with mud and dirt, and only the keenest of eyes would pick him out among the forest's dappled sunlight. Promethisus took a steadying breath and held it, preparing to shoot.

"I would not do that, my brother."

Promethisus spun, startled. His eyes searched among the trunks of the leviathan trees that surrounded him, his readied bow following his line of sight. "Who said that? Show yourself!" he demanded.

No answer came.

"I said show yourself! Or do you wish this arrow, intended for another, to be your own?"

There was a snicker and then the voice came again. "Are you that good of a marksman that you can hit targets you can't even see?"

"I am a fine archer, as are all of my race."

"I believe you." There were footfalls behind him and Promethisus turned toward the sound. "That is why it would be unwise to challenge one such as yourself."

The centaur stepped into the clearing. He was another male, older than Promethisus but still young in centaur years, and his hide was a deep chestnut brown. He gestured toward the hunting party with a jerk of his head. "Leave them be. Their presence here is troublesome, but it would be unwise to attract their attention."

"You tolerate them?"

“We have no quarrel with the humans.”

“You would do well to remember the lessons of history.”

“You are young to talk much of history.”

“I have been schooled,” Promethisus said with a patronizing tone.

The other centaur shrugged. “That may be so, but it is not history that concerns us.”

Promethisus snorted. “Regardless, the humans come to inflict pain and misery on others, and we, as noble creatures, have a responsibility to protect those who are unable to defend themselves.”

“We? You speak for me, yet I know nothing of you. You are a stranger here in this forest.”

“Yet you would still call me brother?”

“You are centaur. That much is obvious. Why you live outside of the clan is a mystery to me.”

Promethisus turned and looked back towards the clearing, watching the hunting party disappear out of sight. “It was not a choice of mine to make,” he said quietly, a hint of regret in his voice.

“My name is Capricas.”

Promethisus turned back toward the other centaur, who stood with his bow slung over his shoulder and a hand extended in greeting. He took the hand and shook it. “Promethisus.”

“Well met, Promethisus. Come, you are a stranger here, but you are among friends. There are others who will be eager to meet you, and as we travel you can tell me something of yourself.”