



THE CONTINUING ADVENTURES OF STAMP

The ongoing stories of the Tauren warrior known as Stamp, as related from time to time to Gizmik Fazzle, goblin scorekeeper at the Shimmering Flats race track in Kalimdor.

No. 1: Blood in Peril

Entry 1

Stamp never learn how to fish. Stamp just never have time. Stamp just never have patience. Stamp not think it sound fun: Stand near water; hold stick and string over water; wait and wait and wait and wait and wait; maybe catch a wriggly-splashy fish; maybe not.

But now Stamp hear that Stamp guild leader Kadingo off in Stranglethorn Vale, in fishing competition. Stamp not let Dingo do many things Stamp not do. So, Stamp think Stamp learn how to fish.

Stamp ride wind from Winterspring to Orgrimmar. Stamp jump off wind tower. OOMF! Stamp land next to crackly-burny bonfire. Stamp ride More Stamp to Valley of Honor. Stamp talk to grumbly-growly orcie fisherman by lake. Stamp get quick lesson in how to fish. Stamp get new pole. Stamp sit on dock. Stamp bait hook. Stamp cast line. Stamp sit and sit and sit and sit and wait and wait and wait and wait and ... the bobber goes up and down with a splash! Stamp reel the line back in. Stamp see hook empty. Stamp sigh.

Stamp bait hook again. Stamp cast line again. Stamp sit and sit and sit and sit and wait and wait and wait and wait and ... the bobber goes up and down with another splash! Stamp reel the line back in. Stamp see hook empty. Stamp growl.

Stamp get grumpy. Stamp been to Molten Core. Stamp help defeat Lucifron, Magmadar, Garr and Gehennas. Stamp tough! Stamp strong warrior! Stamp not want to get beaten by wriggly-splashy fish! Stamp jump off dock into lake. Stamp see school of fish. Stamp hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit water with pole. Stamp all wet. But Stamp look around and see fish not wriggle or splash. About a dozen fishies float around Stamp, not moving. Stamp grin. Stamp look up at scowling orcie on dock.

"That is one way to do it, I suppose," the orcie grumble.

Entry 2

Stamp ride wind from Undercity to Kargath. Stamp ride More Stamp from Kargath to Blackrock Mountain. Stamp try not to get dizzy walking down giant chain. Stamp go down and down and down and down until Stamp try not to get dizzy walking down *another* giant chain. Stamp make a left turn at stupid belf. Stamp not fall into lava. Stamp here-to-there to Molten Core.

In Molten Core, Stamp and bunch of Stamp friends fight rumbly-poundy Garr and all of rumbly-poundy Garr's rumbly-poundy minions. Stamp want to hit and hit and hit and hit Garr! Stamp got shield! Stamp got hit-and-hitter!

Stamp rush in with Stamp friends. Stamp hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit rumbly-poundy Garr. But rumbly-poundy Garr minions are fighting with groups in a half circle around Garr, and some Stamp friends lose control of rumbly-poundy Garr minions. Everything falls apart. Rumbly-poundy Garr minions hit and hit and hit and hit and hit Stamp friends. Rumbly-poundy Garr hit and hit and hit and hit Stamp, but healie clothies fall to rumbly-poundy Garr minions and can't heal Stamp. Stamp fall.

Stamp and Stamp friends commune with the spirit healer. Stamp treat wounds and sit on slope looking down at rumbly-poundy Garr and rumbly-poundy Garr minions. Stamp leader tell Stamp this time Stamp not hit and hit and hit Garr. Stamp growl, but Stamp listen. Stamp leader tell Stamp to stay back by two of the duos fighting rumbly-poundy Garr minions.

"Something goes wrong, you clean it up," leader tells Stamp.

Stamp sigh. Stamp know this also mean if something goes wrong and everything falls apart again, Stamp get blame. Stamp grumble. But Stamp

follow orders. Stamp go and Stamp stand at upper rim of slope with two pairs of fighters. Stamp watch other warriors run in to hit and hit rumbly-pounding Garr. Stamp watch rumbly-pounding Garr minions zoom up slope to fight teams Stamp watch.

Stamp help hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit rumbly-pounding Garr minions. Stamp help finish hit and hit and hit and hit rumbly-pounding Garr. Everything not fall apart. Stamp not get blame. Stamp not grumpy.

Stamp learn important lesson: Listen to leaders who know what they do. Smart tactics mean victory. And every hit and hit counts.

Entry 3

Stamp get bored fishing. So Stamp do something Stamp never really done much before: Stamp think up poems. Stamp used to think gushy-wordy poems waste of time, but then Stamp see how much people like work by legendary raspy blue troll Anansi.

No laughing, Gizmik. Stamp do this. Stamp try. Stamp might like.

clears throat and stomps to the top of the Shimmering Flats racetrack observation tower

Stamp call this poem: Brain Hacker.

*Wicked blade, sharp and cruel,
more than just a simple tool.
Hack and hack and slice and slice.
The Brain Hacker is really nice.
Stamp think it a treasure that Stamp wield,
even if it means Stamp can't use shield.
Cut and cut and chop and chop.
The Brain Hacker just will not stop.*

listens to the wind whistle through the rutted track and peers at Gizmik, who just hums softly to himself before a rocket car zooms past the observation tower

"The gnome team wins!" Gizmik shouts.

Stamp growl. Stamp grumpy. Stamp bet on goblins again.

Entry 4

Stamp ride More Stamp to Bloodhoof Village. Stamp find Stamp sister Raysha training young warriors.

Stamp got letter from Stamp sister Raysha few days earlier in not-deader Undercity. Stamp sister Raysha ask Stamp to help Stamp sister Raysha with training. Stamp do this. Stamp go! Stamp help!

Stamp sister Raysha tell Stamp she think Stamp look a little fat. Stamp grumpy. Stamp not fat! Stamp sigh.

Stamp sister Raysha then tell Stamp she like Stamp new hit and hits and stop-hits. Stamp tell Stamp sister Raysha that Stamp stuff not all that new. Stamp sister Raysha tell Stamp that Stamp stuff new to Stamp sister Raysha. Stamp not really think Stamp can argue this.

Stamp ask Stamp sister Raysha when Stamp sister Raysha coming back to guild. Stamp sister Raysha smile and tell Stamp soon!

"First, though, we must lead a group of Bloodhoof warriors through the canyons of Thousand Needles toward a glade in Feralas, not far from Dire Maul," Stamp sister Raysha tell Stamp. "It'll take a few days. Thank you for doing this, brother."

Stamp tell Stamp sister Raysha that Stamp glad to help.

"Good," Stamp sister Raysha say. "Now come and meet them. They have heard much about you and your adventures. It is time they see Stamp in the flesh."

A few minutes later, Stamp grumpy.

"Thought he'd be taller," warrior Blunthorn say.

"Armor's not quite as shiny as I anticipated," say warrior Swifthoof.

"Hmm," grunt warrior Mottle. "About what I expected: Another overrated basher."

"I can't believe I dropped five silver on that Stamp figurine in Shimmering Flats," sigh warrior Graypatch.

Stamp growl. Stamp turn to snarl at Stamp sister Raysha.

"Stamp is an elder and a warrior of earned rank," Stamp sister Raysha tell students. "I have taught you better than this. Show proper respect."

Young warriors bow their heads and apologize to Stamp, but Stamp not think they really sorry.

"Not the best start," Stamp sister Raysha say later while sit with Stamp alone by campfire in Bloodhoof Village. "They are valiant braves. You will see this soon enough, just as they will see that there is more to you than the veneer of celebrity."

Stamp hope so. Stamp feel strange. Stamp not feel like Stamp got something to prove in a long time. Stamp not know young warriors, but Stamp want their respect.

Stamp watch sparks pop from campfire and swirl toward the star-blanket sky. Stamp wait for morning.

Entry 5

"So, you broke a rudder and drowned a night elf," Mottle huff and roll her eyes. "Earthmother knows why they wouldn't keep you on."

Stamp, Stamp sister Raysha and warriors Mottle, Blunthorn, Graypatch and Swifthoof all sit around campfire next to grain mill just outside Camp Taurajo in the Barrens, where the road rises from Mulgore between great hills. Thumpy-crackly thunder lizards and clawy-gnashy shrieking hounds prowl the land as the sun sinks to the west at the end of our first day of riding. More Stamp and other stompy-rumbly warrior kodos lashed to posts next to patchy hide tent.

Stamp grunt at Mottle. "Stamp sorry that happened. Stamp liked being boat captain. Stamp miss it sometimes."

"You made a botch of commanding a *ferry* between the Forgotten Coast and Feathermoon Isle," Blunthorn chortle. "You can't make a gadget that doesn't blow up in your face or turn you into a beast or switch you with your evil twin."

Stamp twitch. "Stamp make green lenses for Stamp guild friend Corah. Those not go wrong. Stamp make repair bots. Stamp make far-lookers. Stamp not so bad with gadgets."

"He is also quite adept at defeating and skinning beasts that young braves such as yourselves would find impossible to overwhelm," Raysha note, munching on an apple. "He's slain vicious bears and yetis in Winterspring and fearsome bats in the Plaguelands of the Eastern Kingdoms."

"Invited them all on your boat and drowned them, eh?" Mottle ask Stamp.

"That's quite enough," Raysha say. "Mottle, you take first watch. Blunthorn, you go with Stamp and show my brother how well you stand against the raptors on the eastern side of the Gold Road."

"But it's almost dark," Blunthorn protest. Raysha just stare at him. Blunthorn not argue any more. "Yes, wise elder. I shall do as you command."

Entry 6

Shrieky-clawy raptor leap and slash, bounding off moonlit rock along the Gold Road. Blunthorn not see it, his hooves thumping on grassy ground and his eyes on the nearby chittery-growly gnoll camp while he moved along the boulder's southern face. Stamp hold Fist of Omokk hit-and-hitter. Stamp ready to help. But Stamp know Stamp sister Raysha want young brave Blunthorn to learn. So, Stamp not say anything. Stamp not do anything. Stamp just stop and watch and wait.

Almost too late, Blunthorn hear the scritch of talons on stone and the tell-tale hiss of the pouncing beastie. Blunthorn swing around in time to see the jumping lizard with a moon halo. Blunthorn shout in surprise, but Blunthorn not call for help. Blunthorn swiftly stab-and-stab with dual daggers in either hand. Belly: Stab. Dodge. Chest: Stab. Bob and weave. Spin and circle. Throat: Slash. Blunthorn bloody when fight over, but not with Blunthorn blood. Shrieky-clawy raptor on ground.

Stamp nod approval. Stamp kneel beside raptor. Stamp take out skinning knife and set to work on removing the hide. "Stamp think Blunthorn efficient warrior," Stamp say. "Stamp sister Raysha teach Blunthorn well. Stamp think just one problem."

Blunthorn blink and grumble. "What problem? I sliced and diced that raptor just fine."

"Stamp not totally disagree," Stamp say. Stamp put some salvaged hide in Stamp pack. "But Stamp think Blunthorn maybe should have slashed throat first. Raptor made noise. Got attention." Stamp nod snout toward chittery-growly gnoll camp. Blunthorn look and see six chittery-growly gnolls from camp grabbing up weapons and running toward the boulder.

"Earthmother give me strength," Blunthorn sigh dejectedly.

Stamp chuckle, shake head and rise to face the oncoming chittery-growly gnolls. "Stamp take care of these. Blunthorn stay behind rock."

The young warrior's eyes widen. "They come because of me! I should face them with you."

"Stamp sister Raysha want Blunthorn show Stamp how Blunthorn kill shrieky-clawy raptor," Stamp say. "Blunthorn do this. Stamp impressed. Stamp not grumpy. Stamp sister Raysha not say want Blunthorn show Stamp how Blunthorn get gut wounds from chittery-growly gnolls. Blunthorn not ready for them. Blunthorn get hurt, then Stamp get grumpy. Stamp handle." Stamp not wait for Blunthorn to argue. Stamp run through waving plains grass, Stamp roar, pulling Fist of Omokk back over Stamp shoulder while get closer and closer to chittery-growly gnolls. "STAMP GO! STAMP HIT!"

Chittery-growly gnolls look a little surprised as Stamp barrel into them, hit-and-hitter swinging and thumping and banging big skulls. Blunthorn keep watch from rock as Stamp hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit all the chittery-growly gnolls until all sprawl on the ground, dead ... food for hecklefangs.

Blunthorn walk over and look at all the dead chittery-growly gnolls. "I'll be able to do this someday. Right?"

Stamp laugh and nod. "Stamp think so." Stamp point to camp. "Blunthorn scour camp for supplies. Anything our camp might need. Then Stamp and

Blunthorn go back and tell Stamp sister Raysha how well Blunthorn do."

Blunthorn not argue. Blunthorn nod to Stamp and then walk toward chittery-growly gnoll camp. Stamp stand in grass and watch glowy red eyes of hecklefangs get closer and closer. Fresh meat draw them quick. Stamp not plan to interrupt their supper. They not bother Stamp, Stamp not bother them.

Stamp turn and start walk back to big rock when Blunthorn shout: "Stamp!" Stamp look toward camp and see Blunthorn next to crackling campfire. "Stamp! You need to see this!"

Entry 7

"I don't know how much more I can do for him," Stamp sister Raysha say as she finish with bandages.

Stamp look at raspy blue troll on ground of gnoll camp and shake head. Shrieky-squealy gnolls hit and hit and hit and hit and hit troll. Tied troll up. Stamp see stew pot boiling over fire. Stamp think shrieky-squealy gnolls wanted to cook troll.

"Did troll say anything?" Stamp ask Stamp sister Raysha. Stamp not speak troll native language very well, but all troll did after Blunthorn find him was babble in troll-talk.

"Not a great deal," Stamp sister Raysha say. "Kept repeating 'Must stop it,' over and over again."

Mottle point at raspy blue troll. "He's trying to get your attention, Elder Raysha."

Stamp see troll gesturing weakly toward one of the gnoll huts near the trunk of a spiraling thorn column that rose along the hillside. Stamp sister Raysha go to hut and come back soon with small leather carry-and-carry.

Stamp sister Raysha open carry-and-carry. Stamp sister Raysha take out parchment.

Troll nod, babbling more in troll, pointing at parchment.

"We must not tarry," Stamp sister Raysha say. "Not too long. This note speaks of an Alliance plot to assassinate Hadoken Swiftstrider in Camp Mojache in Feralas."

Troll get weaker, but still nod, and beckon Stamp sister Raysha closer. Troll whisper something. Stamp sister Raysha stiffen, but finally nod. Troll rasps one last time and dies.

"Stamp," Stamp sister Raysha say, "take Blunthorn, Mottle and the others. Break camp and start south toward the Great Lift."

"Why Raysha not come?" Stamp ask.

"I shall come in time," Stamp sister Raysha answer. "First, I must honor this one's last request." She motions toward the troll. "He asked that I not leave him to be food for the hecklefangs. I will burn the body and ensure that it is nothing more than ashes. I will defend him against deprivations by the wild things that dwell here. It is the least we can do to honor his sacrifice."

Stamp nod. Stamp look to young braves and then start off through moonlit shadows toward Camp Taurajo.

Entry 8

Stamp finish packing supplies, load them on More Stamp, and then Stamp see young warriors bury remnants of firepit. But Swiftthoof do it grudgingly. Swiftthoof not like the plan.

"What if it's a hoax?" he ask. "Or a trap? Awfully convenient we were able

to find that troll and his message, don't you think?"

Blunthorn laugh. "Convenient? I would not call it convenient, brother. I had to make noise, alert the gnolls and watch Elder Stamp plow through them like a hooved thresher, and then he told me to check out the camp."

Swifthoof shrug and point at Stamp. "'*He*' could be in on it! You know what he's like! Any chance to make himself look heroic."

Dust billow out around Swifthoof's figure as Stamp bound away from More Stamp, tackle young warrior and send him sprawling. Stamp kneel next to Swifthoof, placing a hand on the brave's chest. Stamp lean close and snort: "Stamp not faker. Stamp not try to be hero. Stamp not leave raspy blue troll to die and Stamp not fight gnolls for nothing and Stamp not invent stupid Alliance plot. Stamp not care if Swifthoof like Stamp. Stamp not even care if Swifthoof respect Stamp. Stamp let young warriors insult Stamp for many things, but Stamp not stand for Stamp honor in question. Stamp good Tauren brother, but Stamp just Stamp. Stamp not ask Gizmik to tell stories. Stamp not ask Gizmik to make stupid Stamp dolls! Stamp just *Stamp*! But if Swifthoof question Stamp honor again, Stamp give Gizmik new story to tell. Stamp *hit* Swifthoof. Stamp hit hard. Stamp hope Swifthoof understand. Stamp hope Swifthoof gain new wisdom."

Stamp see Swifthoof nod. Softly, Swifthoof say, "My apologies, Elder Stamp."

Graypatch put hand on Stamp's shoulder. "If it isn't a hoax, we should use the wind riders at Camp Taurajo. They're close, and it'd put us in Feralas faster so we can warn Hadoken Swiftstrider."

Stamp nod. "Wisdom." Stamp take hand off Swifthoof and stand. "Swifthoof stay in Taurajo and wait for Stamp sister. Graypatch, take More Stamp lead. Mottle and Blunthorn, take up rear."

A few minutes later, Stamp and young warriors and More Stamp roam into Camp Taurajo to find commotion: Tauren brothers and sisters, shouting in anger and surprise. Stamp ask guard: "What going on?"

"Someone poisoned our wind riders!" the guard growl angrily. "We just got word that it happened at the Crossroads, Freewind Post and Thunder Bluff too."

"Still think it's a hoax?" Graypatch ask Swifthoof. Swifthoof look stunned by news. Swifthoof shake head.

"Young braves need kodos," Stamp tell guard. "Stamp take them to Feralas to warn Hadoken Swiftstrider. Stamp think Alliance want to kill Swiftstrider. Poisoned wind riders probably part of scheme."

The guard nod and go to get rumbly-poundy kodos for Stamp sister Raysha students. Mottle look over at Stamp and ask, "How could they be so coordinated? And *Thunder Bluff*? How could the Alliance manage to get someone to the very top of a tower in the middle of Cairn Bloodhoof's domain?"

"With help," Blunthorn grunt. "Help from the inside. From *our* side."

Entry 9

Stamp dream. In Stamp dream, Stamp standing with Stamp friends in Molten Core. Stamp just finish helping hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit big grumbly-poundy fiery giants. Stamp ready to fight crackly-burny fire thingies.

Then Stamp and Stamp friends fall through rock floor. Stamp and Stamp friends fall and fall and fall and fall until come out on other side of the world and then fall and fall and fall toward the sky from the ground. Stamp and Stamp friends go SMOOSH! against puffy white clouds and die

in one big pile.

Stamp float in blue swirly haze. Stamp float above Hillsbrad Foothills. Stamp float above Crushridge Hold. Stamp float above Lake Lordaeron. Stamp float above Uther's Tomb. Stamp see Stamp sister Raysha stand on Uther's Tomb.

Stamp sister Raysha wave and say, "og ot emiT. pmatS, hguone gnol deppan ev'uoY." Stamp not think it make much sense. Stamp shake his head, bump it with his hand and then listen some more. "Hadoken Swiftstrider's counting on us, Stamp. Wake up."

Stamp open eyes. Stamp not floating in sky. Stamp in Thousand Needles, northwest of the Great Lift, in a camp at the base of a great red stone pillar. It is morning. Young warriors are awake. Stamp sister Raysha just caught up to us.

"Young warriors tell Raysha about wind riders?" Stamp ask.

Stamp sister Raysha nod. "Most disturbing. All the more reason for haste." Stamp sister Raysha glance toward students and then back to Stamp. "They behave themselves while I was gone?"

Stamp look over at Mottle, Graypatch, Blunthorn and Swifthoof. Swifthoof look nervous. Stamp shrug and smile, looking back to Stamp sister Raysha before grabbing hit-and-hit off the ground and standing. "Stamp not grumpy."

"Good," Stamp sister Raysha say. "Let's move out."

Entry 10

Stamp and Stamp sister Raysha and Stamp sister Raysha young warrior students ride More Stamp and other kodos through the rusty red pillars of Thousand Needles, past the purple nelf settlement of Thelsamaar and into

the chirpy green wilderness.

Road lead to Camp Mojache. Stamp and young warriors follow Stamp sister Raysha on circle along the river shore and the hills surrounding camp. Stamp watch for skulky Alliance-types. Stamp not see anything, except the empty wind rider roost in the Horde camp. Mojache is still alive, though, people moving about.

"Hit here too," Stamp say as More Stamp stop in a thicket on the edge of camp. The sun sinks behind a wall of leafy shadows.

Stamp sister Raysha nod. "No way any of this is merely coincidental. Stay with the young braves and keep watch. I will venture into camp and speak with Hadoken Swiftstrider."

Stamp nod. Stamp watch Stamp sister Raysha walk into camp. Stamp see Stamp sister Raysha talk to Hadoken Swiftstrider. Tauren brother Hadoken nod as Stamp sister Raysha speak to him. Tauren brother Hadoken go still at something she say. Then he push past Stamp sister Raysha to approach his tent. Stamp think Tauren brother Hadoken grabbing weapon. Stamp sister Raysha follow. Stamp see raspy blue troll follow Raysha.

"He a guard?" young warrior Mottle ask.

"Stamp not know," Stamp say. But Stamp pull hit-and-hit off back, anyway.

Young warrior Swifthoof point at another raspy blue troll coming at Tauren brother Hadoken's tent from other direction. "Trap, Elder Stamp. Ambush."

Stamp not sure. Stamp not like what Stamp see, but Stamp got not proof. Then Stamp get it. Stamp see first raspy blue troll throw something ... a knife? ... that strike Stamp sister Raysha in the back.

"NO!" Stamp shout. "RAYSHA!" Stamp roar and not even think about young warriors or Hadoken Swiftstrider or Gizmik Fazzle or Stamp dolls or glory. Stamp just think about Raysha and that treacherous raspy blue troll and the union he's about to have with Stamp hit-and-hit. Stamp charge! Stamp hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit! Stamp sister Raysha and Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider and young warriors Blunthorn, Swifthoof, Mottle and Graypatch hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and hit other raspy blue troll ambusher.

Once both raspy blue trolls are dead, Stamp check on Stamp sister Raysha. Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider already remove knife.

"Just a nick," Stamp sister Raysha say.

Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider sniff the bloody blade. "The wound is minor," Swiftstrider agree. "But it is more serious than it seems. The blade was poisoned. We must get her to the healer's tent at once, if anything is to be done."

"Why should that even be a question?" Mottle ask.

"Because," Swiftstrider say, "this poison is fatal."

Entry 11

Stamp stand outside healer's tent, with Stamp sister Raysha students Mottle, Blunthorn, Swifthoof and Graypatch.

Inside tent, Stamp sister Raysha sit on cot, with Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider on one side and raspy blue troll healer Jani'tijin on other, mixing herbs and water in a bubbling potion over a small cookfire.

"There's no other choice, I'm afraid," Swiftstrider tell Stamp sister Raysha. "It is the only available option that might allow you to live long enough

for a cure to be found."

"If a cure can be found," Stamp sister Raysha reply. "How long will this potion work?"

"Two weeks," Swiftstrider answer. "Perhaps three, if your body is particularly strong. In one case, I've seen it last as long as four weeks."

"Just how likely is it that a cure can be found?" Stamp sister Raysha ask.

Raspy blue troll Jani'tijin pour liquid into a metal cup and say, "Me whiff dat knife done cut joo, girl. Me know dat poison. Come from a verra rare plant in da Vale. Me know anudda plant might cure it. It also come from da Vale."

"Stranglethorn Vale?" Stamp sister Raysha shake her head. "That's such a long way..."

"Joo no worry about such tings, girl," raspy blue troll Jani'tijin say. He hold cup toward Stamp sister Raysha. "Joo rest and leave it all ta Jani'tijin and joo brudda and da young ones."

"I go with them, as well," Swiftstrider tell Stamp sister Raysha. "You are in this predicament because you saved my life, Raysha Bloodhoof. I will do all I can to repay this debt."

Stamp sister Raysha take cup from raspy blue troll Jani'tijin. She nod to Hadoken Swiftstrider. Then she look at Stamp. "Brother, you take care of yourself and the students. I know you will do all you can for me. But do not lose sight of the greater problem: Those we killed this day were only *part* of the assassination conspiracy. If it comes to a choice ... deal with the assassins and let the Earthmother take my spirit from this world."

Entry 12

Stamp watch shrieky-shouty goblins load cargo onto ship at Ratchet docks on eastern Kalimdor coast. "Stamp think they not move very fast."

"Patience," Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider say, standing next to Stamp on foredeck. "We will be under way soon enough."

Young warrior Graypatch sit on crate next to mast and say, "Too bad we didn't get to question those trolls before they died. Might have learned something more about the assassination plot and who was behind it."

Raspy blue troll Jani'tijin shake his head. "Joo get nothin' outta dem, mon. Dey Bloodscalp trolls. Dey vicious and evil and treacherous and ..."

"...And based in Stranglethorn Vale," Swiftstrider say.

"Joo got dat right, mon," Jani'tijin say.

Stamp hit and hit and hit Bloodscalp trolls before. Stamp know they numerous in the Vale. Stamp know they good with bubbly-broily potions and woozy-killy poisons.

"Stamp wonder why Bloodscalp trolls help Alliance kill Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider?" Stamp say.

"Me tinkin' it weren't comin' from da king hisself," Jani'tijin say. "Me tinkin' whoever behind dis workin' on dey own, widout blessin', mon."

"That should work in our favor," Swiftstrider say, smiling. "If it's an unsanctioned plot, chances are that whoever's behind it is in Stranglethorn Vale to keep tabs on the Bloodscalps and to wait on word of what's become of me. If they're not getting supplies from Stormwind in an official capacity, chances are they're getting supplies from Booty Bay."

Mottle frown. "Won't they run for cover if *you* show up in Booty Bay, alive and well?"

"Perhaps," Swiftstrider say. "So, better that I play dead and stay on the ship while Jani'tijin snoops around the Bloodscalps for information. Stamp, you and your students will be perpetuating the rumors of my demise by angrily hunting for information leading to the conspirators. If you're adequately menacing, it might actually yield useful information for us."

Stamp nod solemnly. "Stamp do this."

Entry 13

"The Hallow's End decorations keep going up earlier and earlier every year," young warrior Mottle sigh, walking down gangplank onto Booty Bay docks, which were festooned with shiny candle pumpkins and lynched skeletons and glowy lanterns.

Night already fall on Stranglethorn Vale, but Jani'tijin go into jungle just the same. Stamp think raspy blue troll crazy. Stamp not like the Vale jungle in daytime, let alone night.

Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider stay on boat. Stamp lead Mottle and Graypatch and Swifthoof and Blunthorn to hut below tavern, just over from bank, where stupid hummy fisherer Old Man Heming work. Stamp figure Old Man Heming hear plenty.

"Haven't heard a blessed thing," Heming insist.

Shiny baubles clatter and nightcrawlers squirm all over the floor after Stamp grab stupid hummy's feet, hold him upside down and shake and shake and shake and shake.

"You sure you haven't heard anything?" Blunthorn ask Heming, kneeling

next to stupid hummy. "Elder Stamp's liable to shake you all night like this."

"I might've heard that there's a little island with a cave, just off the Vile Reef, west of a Bloodscalp encampment, where this crazy paladin guy's holed up," Heming say. "Used to be a bigwig in the Chiaroscuro guild. Now he's on some personal crusade to wipe out the Horde ... even if it means doing a little business with the Bloodscalp trolls to make it happen."

"Cheery-scurry?" Stamp ask. Stamp know this name. Stupid purple nelf Stamp accidentally knocked off Feralas boat was Cheery-scurry. Stupid hummy worry Stamp kill near Grom'gol was Cheery-scurry. Now stupid spitty pally who poison Stamp sister Raysha was Cheery-scurry. Or used to be. Stamp drop stupid hummy fisherer Heming.

"They call him Cups," Heming say, brushing himself off and grumbling. "He gets supplies from the Bloodsail pirates. And those pirates help guard his cave. That about what you wanted to know?"

"Aye," Stamp say. "Stamp thank."

"It won't be easy to get past those pirates," Swifthoof say as Stamp walk toward door.

Outside the hut, little orcie orphans run around, shout "Trick or Treat!" in the smoky night haze on the docks. One chasing another wave a gnarled wooden wand and zap little orcie orphan in a puff of gray smoke ... little orcie orphan turn into black cat and yowl and yowl and yowl, chasing other orcie orphan.

Mottle grin. "Elder Stamp, I've got an idea."

Entry 14

"Ready?" young warrior Mottle ask Stamp. Stamp not really ready. Stamp not want to do this. But Stamp and young warriors Mottle, Blunthorn, Swifthoof and Graypatch in jungle on island not far from crazy dwarfy pally cave, so Stamp guess Stamp not got much choice.

"Just do it," Stamp grump. "Stamp think sun come up soon."

Mottle nod her snout and wave crooked stick at Stamp. POOF! Cloud of smoke writhe through the moonlit darkness. When it clear, Stamp gone ... now a purry-growly black cat sit. Stamp think this must be what the world look like through a squeaky-wobbly gnome's eyes. Stamp not like. Young warriors hooves look so big, so stompy and hurty ... Stamp bound away through the bushes.

Stamp slink through the shadows. Stamp find edge of clearing outside cave. Stamp see arrr-matey pirates in the clearing, up in trees, on rock ledges above cave. Crazy dwarfy pally got lot of friends watching front door. Stamp purr and purr and purr and rub against leg of one hummy female pirate. Hummy female pirate scratch Stamp ear. Stamp slink toward opening into cave. Stamp see two arrr-matey pirates, a shrieky-shouty goblin and a gnashy-bitey gnoll, flank the entrance.

"Cups oughta be glad to see that kitty coming," hummy female tell other pirates. "He won't shut up about the rats."

The shrieky-shouty goblin laugh and say, "In you go, my feline friend! The quicker you do your work, the sooner the mad paladin will stop his incessant harping!"

Young warrior Mottle idea work well! Stamp disguise as black cat do just fine! Stamp going to slink right through the front door, under the noses of the arrr-matey pirates and --

POOF! Another cloud of smoke, and Stamp turn back into Stamp in the middle of the clearing outside the cave.

Hummy female pirate growl: "I know one kitty who's about to say 'Moo-ow.'"

Entry 15

Stamp not carry any weapons. Stamp not wear armor. Young warrior Mottle thought armor and weapons look strange on plain black cat.

Stamp think in hindsight this not the best idea ever.

Stamp wake up, head achey, somewhere dark and dank. Stamp see fire-flickered shadows on rock walls. Stamp see vague figure sit against wall.

"I've heard of you," comes a gruff dwarf's voice. "You are known to me. But we have not met."

"Cups?" Stamp say. "Cheery-scurry?"

"Chee-ah-rah-scur-oh," stupid grumbly-poundy dwarf pally pronounce. "Zanthafir's big idea was to embrace elements of both light and shadow. I used to be a servant of the light. But I've seen things ... horrors ... horrors. The shadows are a comfort to me now. I can lose myself in them. I can forget about the undead atrocities and the mad orcs and the blood-drinking trolls."

"Forget about?" Stamp ask. "Or think about nothing else? Stamp think Cups gone crazy."

"I am not prone to mad frenzies of brutal abandon," Cups say. "Slow. Deliberate. Certain. I am not crazy. I am the one sane person in a *world* gone increasingly mad. I seek only to restore a sense of order and sanity to this global asylum we call Azeroth."

"Stamp think Hadoken Swiftstrider never hurt Cups," Stamp growl angrily.
"Stamp think Stamp sister Raysha never hurt Cups."

"You are here for vengeance? You seek retribution?" Cups ask. "I suppose that is only natural. It is to be expected. But consider the wrongs you have done in your life. Consider the lives *you* have taken. That warlock you killed outside Grom'gol. My old friend Zanthafir. What price should *you* pay to satisfy the debt owed in blood? How many people out there in the world are just waiting for a chance to collect on that debt? Many. Many. Such an apocalyptic cycle. I want to end that cycle. Your sister and Swiftstrider are unfortunate but necessary casualties. Tallies on a butcher's bill long overdue. I offer salvation to the world. They send a clumsy-hoofed assassin on cat's paws. But you're not an assassin. You're an errand boy, sent by the grocer to --"

WHACK! CLANG! THUMP!

"Wow, I thought he'd *never* shut up," young warrior Mottle say as she kneel over fallen form of crazy dwarf pally, binding his hands and feet with rope.

Entry 16

Stamp drag crazy dwarf pally by bound feet, out of cave and into daylight of jungle clearing.

"When things went all naga-shaped," Mottle explain while follow Stamp, "I sent Graypatch back to Booty Bay to get a few more Hallow's End wands." Mottle gesture toward the tied-up forms of a pale green squeaky-wobbly leper gnome, a shrieky-shouty gobble pirate, a clacky-chatterly skellie and a black-clad ninja. "Once we zapped that bunch, the others ran for the beach and swam toward the mainland."

Stamp grunt. "They get help."

Mottle laugh. "Not unless you consider crocolisks and sharks helpful. Swifthoof watched. They didn't make it."

Clacky-chatterly skellie shake a bony fist at Stamp. "We know who you are, Tauren! The Bloodsail Buccaneers won't forget. We *never* forget. We *always* repay." Clacky-chatterly skellie talk with woman's voice. Stamp guess she who hit Stamp after Stamp disguise fail.

Stamp drop crazy dwarf pally feet. Stamp walk over to clacky-chatterly skellie. Stamp kneel and stare into empty eye sockets. "Stamp got pretty good memory too. But Stamp hit and hit and hit and hit and hit so many Bloodsail Buccaneers that they all run together. Stamp think forget." Stamp smile thinly. "Stamp think stupid hummy pirate girl better off if not remind Stamp." Stamp grab crazy dwarf pally feet again. Crazy dwarf pally still wear a dirty old tabard - dark, with white compass markings - of Cheery-scurry guild. Stamp lead Mottle back through jungle toward shore.

"Elder Stamp!" Blunthorn shout as Stamp and Mottle arrive on beach with crazy dwarf pally Cups in tow. "So, that's the paladin who started all this mess?"

"Aye," Stamp say. Stamp watch as Graypatch drag a longboat from the underbrush along the jungle fringe.

Swifthoof glower at Cups. "What are we going to do with him?"

"Stamp let Hadoken Swiftstrider decide," Stamp answer. Stamp and Graypatch pick up crazy dwarf pally and dump him in longboat. Stamp push boat into surf after all others aboard. Stamp climb aboard and keep watch on crazy dwarf pally while Mottle and Blunthorn paddle toward the mainland.

"One thing I'm wondering," Graypatch say. Graypatch glance over at

Mottle. "We tied those pirates up nice and tight in their morphed forms. Will the ropes loosen when the spells break? Or will they ... you know ...?"

Mottle smirk. "You can stay and watch, if you want."

"I'll pass," Graypatch chuckle.

Entry 17

"Gah!" Mottle complain, jumping left this time. Mottle just barely avoid spit on Mottle's hooves. Crazy dwarf pally Cups dragged behind Stamp wake up after Stamp and Mottle and Graypatch and Swifthoof and Blunthorn come ashore in Booty Bay. Crazy dwarf pally Cups spit ever since. Crazy dwarf pally Cups spit at Mottle. Crazy dwarf pally Cups spit at Stamp. Crazy dwarf pally Cups spit on crazy dwarf pally Cups, but not on purpose.

"That's not the first paladin I've seen doing that," Graypatch note.

Stamp nod slowly. "Stamp seen it before too." Stamp stop at bottom of gangplank that lead onto boat to Kalimdor. "Stamp think Mottle take you all to quarters. Stamp take crazy dwarf pally to Swiftstrider."

Crazy dwarf pally Cups about to spit again, but it turns into a pathetic strand of drool on crazy dwarf pally chin when crazy dwarf pally hear the bit about Swiftstrider. "He's alive? How is that possible?! You lied?"

Stamp shrug. Stamp drag crazy dwarf pally up ramp onto boat. Stamp drag crazy dwarf pally to special suite set up for Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider. Stamp find Swiftstrider not alone. Stamp see another rumbly-grumpy dwarf in room, standing next to a table where Swiftstrider sit.

"Doombrow?!" Crazy dwarf pally Cups eyes get all wide and fearful and shamed.

"Been looking for you for months, lad," Beldruk Doombrow say. Not-crazy dwarf nod to Stamp. "My thanks for finding him. More importantly, my thanks for not killing him, even if he has earned such wrath for what he has done. He is not well."

Swiftstrider nod. "Doombrow calls it the 'Paladin Plague.' The symptoms manifest primarily as rampant spitting and irrational behavior. Excess use of shield-bubble magic seems to be at the root of it."

"Aye," Doombrow say. "Cups used to be such a good lad. Hate to see him fall like so many others."

"Can crazy dwarf pally be healed?" Stamp ask, dropping Cups' feet on the floor.

"Hope so," Doombrow answer. "Fire and forge, I surely hope so."

Hadoken Swiftstrider stand and say, "Doombrow will see to the ailing paladin, Stamp. We have a more pressing matter that requires our attention."

"What?" Stamp ask.

"Bloodscalps captured Jani'tijin when they found him picking flowers for Raysha's antidote," Swiftstrider answer.

Entry 18

Stamp lower far-seer glass and offer it to Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider. "Stamp see pot full of boiling water. Empty otherwise."

Swiftstrider peer through far-seer glass at Bloodscalp camp on beach, a bit north of Grom'gol Base Camp on the western coast of Stranglethorn Vale. Afternoon sun shimmer on green-blue water. "Not for long," Swiftstrider say. "They're bringing Jani'tijin out of a tent. Looks like ..."

four Bloodscalps."

Mottle gasp. "They're going to *cook* him?!"

"Some Bloodscalps believe that if you consume a captured spy, you will acquire full enlightenment as to the intentions of their masters," Swiftstrider answer.

Graypatch smirk. "That sure would save time on interrogations, I guess."

"You think it's funny?" Mottle snap at Graypatch. "Do keep in mind that Jani'tijin is the only person who can cure Elder Raysha."

"Stamp think all shut up," Stamp say. Then Stamp look at Swiftstrider. "Stamp think Stamp and young warriors save Bloodscalps trouble of cooking raspy blue troll. Stamp think Stamp and young warriors *show* them our intentions."

Swiftstrider nod. "Enlighten them, Stamp. Earthmother protect you all."

Entry 19

Stamp not stealthy. Stamp not rogue. Stamp got big stompy hoofs and clanky armor. But Stamp got one thing squeaky-wobbly gnomes make that Stamp find useful. Stamp turn on Stamp-not-here gizmo in jungle near raspy blue Bloodscalp troll camp. Stamp vanish! Stamp tell young warriors to wait until Stamp strike to charge in.

Stamp-not-here move toward bubbling pot where raspy blue Bloodscalp trolls about to cook Jani'tijin. Stamp already swinging Brain Hacker blade when Stamp-not-here effect fade. "For Stamp sister Raysha!" Stamp shout as Brain Hacker chop and chop and chop.

Young warriors Mottle, Graypatch, Swiftthoof and Blunthorn charge into the camp, swarm surprised Bloodscalp trolls. "For Stamp sister Raysha!"

young warriors shout as they hit and hit and hit and hit and hit and slice and slice and slice.

When it all over, Jani'tijin on ground, hands and feet tied, looking surprised but happy. "Joo not likin' what's on de menu, moo-man?"

"Stamp think Graypatch untie Jani'tijin," Stamp say, wiping Brain Hacker blade clean with a bit of hide cover for a Bloodscalp tent. "Then Jani'tijin get that plant and come with Stamp. Stamp sister Raysha waiting."

Entry 20

"Me almost done, moo-mon, joo best not crowd ol' Jani'tijin, aye?" the raspy blue troll say, blinking up at Stamp from boiling pot over cookfire outside healer tent in Camp Mojache, back in Feralas, in Kalimdor.

Stamp and Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider and young warriors Mottle, Graypatch, Blunthorn and Swifthoof all stand around while Jani'tijin mix potion from Stranglethorn flower.

"Stamp think Jani'tijin hurry," Stamp grunt. Boat got slowed around big swirly storm in ocean. Sandstorm blew through Thousand Needles. Stamp sister Raysha almost out of time.

Raspy blue troll Jani'tijin sigh, but nod and fill cup with potion. Stamp follow Jani'tijin into healer tent. Stamp sister Raysha still sleep on cot. "Da potion do gotta cool a bit, moo-mon, but don' joo be worryin' none. She be right as boiled gnome soon enough."

Stamp not good at waiting. Stamp want Stamp sister Raysha back. Stamp went all the way to Eastern Kingdoms for this. Stamp fought crazy pally and stupid pirates and raspy blue Bloodscalp trolls. Stamp almost not get back in time. Stamp not want to fail. Stamp not like having to rely on raspy blue troll Jani'tijin. Stamp think maybe if Stamp not make gadgets and Stamp make potions instead, Stamp sister Raysha already be up.

Maybe Stamp sister Raysha be safe.

"Here we go, moo-mon," Jani'tijin say after a few minutes zoom by. Stamp watch raspy blue troll pour warm potion in Stamp sister Raysha's mouth.

"Stamp sister Raysha wake up now?" Stamp ask.

Raspy blue troll Jani'tijin shake head. "Not yet, moo-mon. Potion jus' heal de Bloodscalp poison, joo see. Da coma-makin' poison gotta wear off on its own."

Stamp growl. Stamp grumpy. But Stamp not able to do anything about it. Stamp stomp outside. Stamp see Tauren brother Hadoken Swiftstrider by fire. Stamp say, "Stamp hate waiting."

Swiftstrider nod. "I understand. But it is a necessary evil." Tauren brother Swiftstrider frown. "But, now that the potion is administered and we have little to do but wait, I should now tell you something."

"What?" Stamp ask.

"I received word from Belduk Doombrow that Cups escaped a treatment center in Ironforge, with help from a few other paladins afflicted with the spitting psychosis," Swiftstrider say. "Doombrow does not know where Cups or the other paladins have gone, but it takes little effort to imagine that you will be high on the potential list of targets for revenge."

Stamp grumble. Stamp sigh. Stamp shrug. "Stamp not mind, as long as Stamp sister Raysha okay."

Entry 21

Stamp sit on wooden deck of inn overlooking lake near Camp Mojache. Stamp watch bobber at end of Stamp fishing line bob and bob and bob

along water surface.

Splash! Something hooked! Stamp pull back on fishing pole, but whatever on hook wriggle off and swim away. Stamp grunt.

"You're getting better, Stamp, you just need a little more practice." Stamp turn and see Stamp sister Raysha. Stamp sister Raysha look tired, but Stamp sister Raysha smile.

"Raysha!" Stamp grin and Stamp drop fishing pole and Stamp get up and hug Stamp sister Raysha. Stamp wait and wait and wait five days since Stamp sister Raysha got antidote for Stamp sister Raysha to wake up. "Stamp glad you okay."

"That makes two of us," Stamp sister Raysha agree.

"So, Stamp got to keep protecting Raysha," Stamp say. "Swiftstrider say crazy spitting pallies come after Stamp, but crazy spitting pallies might go after Raysha again too. Stamp want to keep Raysha close. So, Raysha come back to Orgrimmar to be with Stamp and Kadango and Corah and Mes and Crul'jin and..."

Stamp sister Raysha shake her head. "My place is in Thunder Bluff, Stamp, with my students. Your place is with Storm, Earth and Fire. Although," Stamp sister Raysha consider, "from what I hear, you're not a bad teacher yourself. The young braves speak highly of how you acquitted yourself. Father would be proud. I know I am."

Stamp frown. Stamp want to protect Stamp sister Raysha. But Stamp know Stamp sister Raysha right. Stamp sister Raysha belong where Stamp sister Raysha fit best. Stamp belong where Stamp fit best. Stamp sigh. "Raysha tell Stamp if Raysha need Stamp, anytime."

Stamp sister Raysha nod. "Of course, I expect frequent visits from you. Especially since one of my students seems to have taken a particular

interest in you. Mottle's absolutely smitten."

Stamp blink. Stamp look poleaxed.

"What?" Stamp sister Raysha ask. "You couldn't tell? Feh. Males!"

Stamp, a Tauren warrior on World of Warcraft's Earthen Ring roleplaying server, is played by Wes Platt, developer of online roleplaying games at www.jointhesaga.com.