

Hadden

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1 Prelude

1.1 The Battle of Bloody Kithicor

Of the Battle of Bloody Kithicor, much is sung. The heroes of Light and Darkness, Firiona Vie and Lanys, are remembered for their might. But there is one man who has been forgotten, and without his sacrifice, all would have been lost.

In the dusk of peace, couriers from Qeynos begged for the support of the Barbarians of Halas. But the Elder Council denied them troops, as their race were thin in numbers, worn by the grinding ice and natural dangers of their home. However, there was one man, Hadden, who answered the call.

2 Currently

2.1 Hadden the Warrior

Hadden was a respected warrior, a follower of the Tribunal. He paid no heed to the Council's decision, instead listening to the divine guidance within his own heart. Strapping warm wolf-furs to his back and taking his mighty iron hammer, the barbarian left his home and traveled to the distant south, never to return.

In the coming weeks, Hadden earned the admiration of other warriors traveling towards Highpass Hold, clever as he was in trapping, subtle and cunning as he was in battle. With his mastery, Hadden saved the lives of a dozen men from marauding ogres, and led many others to the relative safety of their destination. By the time the barbarian reached Highpass, he had won himself Captaincy of a company of men and half elves. They called themselves Hammerfoes.

2.2 Tier'Dal Attack

When the army of the Tier'Dal pressed upon the defenders of Kithicor, the ground grew wet with thick blood. It is said that only under great duress did the warriors of Light, led by the Paladins of Tunare and Mithaniel Marr, relinquish ground to Innoruuk's hateful forces. Undefined, Rivervale was quickly sacked. There are many stories of the heroic clashes between Good and Evil at the entrance to Highpass Hold - but that is a song for another day.

Without the valiance of the Hammerfoes, the forces of Good would have been crushed by the combined weight of the Tier'Dal and the last army of the Broken Skull Clan, who designed to attack from the southern reaches of the forest and overwhelm the Paladins in their dire straits.

2.3 The Battle

As the battle progressed, Hadden led his company to victory after victory. They were the last to retreat when the horns were sounded, gathering the wounded as they fell back. Just as the Hammerfoes were in sight of the forces of Light, where they would find healing and strength in numbers, the war drums of the Trollish army sounded from the south. Doubtless, if the Broken Skull Clan reached Highpass with the Tier'Dal, the defenders would be overcome - for the forces of Tunare and Mithaniel Marr were hard pressed to hold the line.

Hadden turned to his men, many of whom had followed him from the Qeynos Hills. "Lads!" he cried, his voice ringing clear like brass, "Today the Broken Skull will live up to their name, and I will bless them their birthright with one stroke of my hammer!" Hadden raised his mighty iron hammer to the sky, and the clouds parted, and his men cheered and turned their backs on safety. To the last, they followed him to their final battle.

2.4 The Blight

Just as the blight, which will creep across a verdant field and swallow all in darkness, did the Broken Skull Clan emerge from the southern woods. And like a single lily, radiant and white like a snowdrop among the blackened ash, did the Hammerfoes stand, halting the corruption of the forest - for their wills were of diamond and the Tribunal blessed their arms with primeval strength.

As the Hammerfoes stemmed the tide from the south, Tephys and Lanys clashed. The elven heroes went toe to toe, and had there been but another ounce of power on the side of Darkness, the Paladins would have fallen, and all would have been lost.

Valiantly, the Hammerfoes crushed the Broken Skull clan. But they were weary with battle, worn in numbers and strength. One by one, the company lost their warriors. The trollish shamans poisoned and blinded, and their brutish shadowknights slew those who had been weakened.

Nalganon, the grandson of Nalikor, issued forth from the ranks of his Clan. With his great axe, he hewed a path towards Hadden, who stood like a titan among the last survivors of his company. Nalganon feared no man, for he was the leader of the Broken Skull and a mighty fighter and practitioner of dark magics.

But, Hadden, wolf-clad, darted away from each swing of Nalganon's great axe. He laughed in the face of the Troll, whose hate blinded him. And Nalganon reached out with a naked hand and brushed it against the barbarian's chest, and Hadden's flesh burned and blistered, but the warrior of the Tribunal smiled, and with his first and only strike, he stove in Nalganon's head.

2.5 Victory

Triumphant, Hadden turned to his company; they had all but fallen. For while Hadden had been detained, the strongest and most vile trollish spellcasters had assaulted the Hammerfoes.

As his last man perished, Hadden entered a berzerker rage. Again and again his iron hammer swung forth, akin in might only to the tool which Brell Serilis used to forge the race of dwarves. With each stroke of Hadden's hammer, another troll died.

In his heart, Hadden knew he had to hold the line. And it was good that he listened to this council, for Tephys was vanquished, and the High Elves wavered.

2.6 Onward

With untiring strength, Hadden wreaked havoc among the Broken Skull Clan. He moved as a blur, visible only in the moment when he took another life. A pile of corpses grew about his killing grounds, and Hadden took his stand upon this mountain of the dead. Seventy more he slew. But, the trolls were relentless, and their hateful blood corroded his iron hammer and it turned to dust. He then set upon the enemy with his bare hands, killing a dozen.

The thirteenth troll laid hands on Hadden, and then a fourteenth secured the barbarian's legs. A fifteenth whipped a rope around the hero's arms. Hadden was wrestled to the ground and taken hostage by the decimated Broken Skull Clan.

It came to pass that the Elvish battle reached its head - Firiona Vie struck down Lanys, who was saved by the Hateful providence of Innoruuk, as Nurgal's stone opened a brief and destructive portal to the Plane of Hate. This we know. But what has not been sung is that Innoruuk, perceiving the tempestuous destruction of his children, reached with his warty arm and took hold of the mighty barbarian to imprison him in the Plane of Hatred.

2.7 Imprisoned

Before the Throne of Hate, Hadden sat, covered in the filth of battle, tied like a pig ready to roast. For the rest of the Age of Turmoil, Innoruuk tortured the barbarian; it became clear that no physical torment could break Hadden's will.

At the dawn of the new age, Innoruuk summoned Hadden before the Throne again. "What you have done to my children is unforgivable," Innoruuk said. "They shall perhaps never recover from your unjust actions."

Hadden laughed in Innoruuk's face. "Free me from these chains, and I will lay waste to your entire Plane of existence," he promised.

Innoruuk placed a finger on Hadden's chest. Around the digit a soft purple light glowed, and it went in waves down the barbarian's body. "I curse you, Hadden, I curse you with undying breath - you shall live as long as the races of Norrath continue vying for their places of power." Innoruuk then conjured a Twisted Bone Earring and pierced it through Hadden's left ear. "This is a symbol of my manifest hate, and your undying life. The power of this trinket is precious to those adventurers seeking fame, and so you will be hunted for eternity. Humans will rejoice in your death, trolls will wait for you to crawl again from the ground, and even your own kind will deign to slay you for this earring. Over time, you will grow to Hate. You will Hate the ground which you must walk, Hate the water you drink, the air you breathe. And when finally you come to Hate all those races of Good which you once defended, finally I will have your soul - and you will return to me here in my Domain and forever lead my armies. "

3 And so it came to pass

3.1 Awoken

Hadden awoke in Qeynos Hills, as if from a dream. Nothing had changed, except he wore no furs, and his mighty iron hammer was nowhere to be found. He was unclothed but for a crude kilt and an earring, freshly forced through the lobe. But, his years trapped in the Plane of Hate had taken their toll. The surrounding hills had changed. His hands were pocked by scars.