

*This story is set in the woodlands surrounding the city-state of Andratis, which is in the midst of a devastating invasion by the disparate cities of neighbouring Achaistos, driving it to employ all manner of warriors to defend it. Among them is the prodigal spearman Rennok. His weapon, Jormungandr, a mighty spear made from one of the fangs of the eponymous snake. He is aided by his weapons bearer Devrus. His strength drew the attention of Crown Prince Likhas, who has sent Rennok to hunt the many monsters who threaten the innocents of Andratis in its darkest hour.*

## Cyclops-Bane

In the dark woods, a fire flickered. Sitting around the fire were three hulking forms. One of them had just finished stuffing a screaming girl into their mouth. Still unsatisfied, the cyclops reached for more, only to be disappointed, as his brother had just grabbed the last captive from their raid on the human farmstead. Annoyed, the cyclops rose to his feet and loomed over his sibling, who rose in turn to defend his meal. The two Cyclopes prepared to brawl, but were interrupted by a guttural snarl, drawing their attention to the third sibling, who rose to his full height, towering over his younger brothers. He snatched the terrified human his kin were about to fight over and devoured it himself. The massive brutes sat themselves back down as they reflected on recent events. The humans had gotten up in arms about something, the Cyclopes didn't know or care why, but what they did care about was that the ones with painful things had gone somewhere else, leaving all the farms undefended, drawing the three brothers from their home in the mountains to join the increasing tide of monsters flowing into the lowlands. Of course, it wasn't without risk. There were stories, whispered among the Ogres that the brothers sometimes camped with, of a human that had been hunting their kind, one who could fell even the mightiest Giant, who had stood firm in the face of even a raging Manticore. The lesser brutes grunted that he had faced the monster that lurked in the swamps that even the brothers dared not enter. It was the memory of these stories that caused the first Cyclops to look over his shoulder, as if in fear of the hunter that had slain so many of his kind. His brothers saw this and chortled, mocking their brother for his fear in their guttural tongue, their bravado blinding them to the possibility of a human being able to kill them.

It also blinded them to the human-sized shadow readying itself to hurl a spear right into the eldest brothers eye.

The laughter came to an abrupt pause as a pair of bolts of red lightning blasted over the cautious brother's shoulder into the biggest Cyclopes eye. The first turned into a spear pulsing in red electricity just moments before the second bolt followed the firsts course, landing on the mighty Giants face where it turned into a black shape before it kicked off the dead behemoth to land between the two stunned Cyclopes, where it slowly morphed to take the form of a human wearing black armour holding the spear.

The Cyclopes stood still for a few moments, their primitive minds struggling to process what had just happened as the human smirked as he looked between them, clearly unafraid despite being outnumbered and seemingly outmatched. The stillness was shattered as the second Cyclops roared and charged the human while his more cautious brother instead fled into the woods.

As the brute ran, he could hear the sounds of a brief battle behind him. A gurgling sound followed by a loud *thump* echoed out from behind him, causing him to run even faster than he had before. A bolt of red lightning pierced through his right knee making him collapse to the forest floor. As he rolled himself onto his back, he saw the human casually striding towards him, only now he had a spray of blood across his face and torso, confirming his brother's fate. As the Cyclops tried to crawl away, the human raised his hand, and the red lightning flashed back into his hand where it retook the form of a spear.

The man easily caught up to the crippled Cyclops, nonchalantly slicing through the tendons of his arm with the spear as he walked to his head, where he stopped to stare into the giant's single, terrified eye. He gripped his spear, and thrust it through his eye, right into his brain. Another *thud* echoed through the forest.

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Rennok pulled Jormungandr out of the Cyclops' skull, already turning away as its head fell to the ground. This was the third group of monsters he had slain in just as many days, and he was starting to get bored. It was so damn repetitive. Shrugging, he looked into the darkness.

"You know, it isn't very smart, trying to hide in the dark when you're as pale as you are." He called out, smirking as he watched an albino kid, barely 13 years old, trudge into view with a disgruntled look on his face. As the boy opened his mouth to respond, Rennok quickly cut him off. "Never mind, Dev." He eyed the Cyclops he just killed. "Hand me the carving knife, will ya? We'll need proof if we want to get paid for this."