

Meeting the Monster Squad

The African-form Nim said, "And now I present you with the first Monster Squad of Nim's Grimms. First, the leader and good friend of mine, Granmarljin the Sphinx."

He glided in on a TK wing board, waved a broad furred hand with heavy pads on the palm, and set the board down. "It is good to meet my compatriots at last," he said before taking wing and landing in front of Max. "Well met sir. <He takes Max's hand in both of his.> You will tell me if that mech-eye ever gives you trouble and I will adapt it for you, run off your own inner mage."

"Uhm, well, thank you for the err... offer." Max stumbles.

"Never seen a lion with the face of a man before have you?"

"No sir."

"You can only call me sir if I can call you sir."

"Sure."

"Good. Maybe if I prove as successful as you in the Grimms I will receive a second and third group to command."

"Who... eh, oh I get you."

"Certainly General Sterling."

"Right General Granmarljin."

Nim interrupted, "Now I present you with the prettiest Shifter that I've ever met. Sergeant Thosl (prn.

Thaw-sel) the Basilisk."

The air rended open and a small wingless dragon stepped through. Her scales were the colour of corroded brass (green like the Statue of Liberty) but darker. Her eyes were crimson and they flashed brightly as she breached the barrier. She sauntered over to Max, her gait purely human feminine, and spoke in a voice like a landslide of hard rocks, "Good to meet you General Sterling. <He couldn't raise his hand.> Don't worry sir, you'll only turn to stone if I give you a dirty look with the right intent."

Nim says, "Okay, now meet Sergeant Shisen (prn. Shee-sen) the living Scarecrow."

A man stepped out from behind Nim, "Hi, nice to meet everyone. I am the only Mystic Knight from the Federation of Magic whose hand is faster than the button. <He raises his hand to one of his blue button eyes.> Eh? Eh? I guess straw is a good comedy conductor... <Silence.> Well maybe not."

He walked over to Max and the string of his mouth loosened and tightened as he spoke, "Good to meet you General Sterling. <Max nervously shook his hand.> Oh, it won't come off in your hands."

"I'm uh, sorry. If you don't mind my saying so, you're kind of freaky."

"I don't mind in the least. It's nice to know that a man made out of cloth and straw is as frightening as say a Basilisk. Does wonders for my reputation you know."

All the other Knights are jealous."

Nim then introduced a wolf with a long dragon's tail and large leathery wings, "This is Major Gerry (prn. Jerry) the Dragon-Wolf."

He spoke in everyone's mind, "Nice to meet you all."

Nim muttered to himself, "Show off."

Gerry switched to a voice not too different from a Dogboy's, "Alright already Nim. Um, sorry, it is nice to meet you. <He walked over to Max and extended the claw at the top of his left wing.> General Sterling. It is an honour to meet you at last."

Max took the extended claw. "It's nice to make your acquaintance. I'm glad to be spoken of so highly."

"He'll never admit it but Nim holds you in high regard."

"I will too." begins Nim, "Someday, when the mood strikes me, and my ego is briefly low enough to admit I need anyone beyond myself."

"Thank you Nim." said Max.

"Yes, certainly." stumbled Nim. "Now let me introduce you to Colonel Daavi (prn. Dahv-eye) the Scorpion Person."

In a flash of crackling lightning appeared a huge scorpion with a lashing poison dripping stinger, razor sharp pincers, and a man's torso sprouting from where it's head should be. The man's skin was like stone and soft feathered wings sprouted from his back and a second smaller pair halfway down the scorpion part's back. He

was wearing a robe and something was moving underneath of it over his chest. He opened it and a tentacle with teeth lashed out and turned this way and that. He skittered over to Max and the tentacle sucked at the air in front of Max, "Best to let it get its scent of you. Nice to meet you General Sterling."

"Nice to meet you too." Max said shaking his hand while ignoring the tentacle that could very easily rip his heart out in one stabbing bite.

"I heard about your efforts in the Ceramax attacks. Good work against that 'Stalker war party."

"Thank you. I barely got out alive myself."

"I know, but you saved so many of your people and they in turn saved so many of the villagers. Gintown still speaks highly of you. The town's greatest hero."

"I wasn't the greatest hero. That was Ken Stiller. No training, no weapons but his garden implements, and he bested Long Claws with a shovel. Took the bastard's head clean off."

Nim interrupted, "Sorry to break up the story but there's one more member to this monster squad. That would be Captain Yorghhi (prn. Yor-ghi) the Vernulian. Come on, Yorghhi, you won't freeze for a couple of minutes. <He turned to the others.> She claims she can't handle the cold but I've never seen that stop her at meal time."

From the ground rose an APC designed like an archaic style tank. A sweet liquid voice came out of a

speaker, "Nice to meet everyone."

Nim yelled at the tank, "You just slither on out here."

"Alright already." she answered. "Give me a second to get this armour strapped on."

Nim told everyone, "It's very hard to wear clothes when you move across the ground on your stomach. I just hope it's not too much of a fight to get her to at least take the helmet off."

A door on the side of the APC opened and out ambled an enormous bear. Nim laughed and told Thosl, "Please remove Kleese from the stage area Thosl."

The Basilisk moved to intercept the bear that was making its way towards Max. "Come Kleese, you will crush the General if you hug him. <She turned to Max.> That is how these mutated animals greet people, they hug them, tightly."

She stood in front of the bear. It was a fair bit larger than she was and significantly heavier. It came to a stop and she scratched lightly under his chin, "Good boy, come along. <He growled questioningly at her and then moved back towards the APC.> Okay, and now for Yorghi."

From out of the APC came a mechanical snake with four long tentacles part way down its body. It moved forward through the snow silently. Yorghi's voice came out of a speaker on the front of the suit, "Nice to meet everyone on this cold, bone chilling day."

Nim told her, "Take off the helmet Yorghi. Show

them those baby blues."

Two of the tentacles rose and unlatched the helmet. She pulled it forward off of her long face. As far as snakes and dragons go she was not very attractive. However she had forward facing blue eyes that were startlingly human. In a puff of snow she shot across the ground and stopped immediately in front of Max, "General Sterling, a pleasure."

Max took her offered tentacle. "The pleasure is all mine."

"Really. You're kind of cute for a biped. I wouldn't mind you wrapped in my coils."

"Um..."

"I tease. It is good to meet you. Perhaps we can swap power armour manoeuvres sometime."

"Sure, I'm always up for that."

Nim spoke, "Okay Max, I have to go and be elsewhere. Introduce your teams. The Squad will be here with you for the day. You look a little pale. Oh boy can I feel the fear coming off of you in waves. Oh well best to get it all out of the way now. Bye."

Nim disappeared instantly. Max looked at the monsters and then began introducing his people.

Chris stood expectantly as Granmarljin approached him. The Sphinx settled the wing down in front of the Line Walker. The thickness of the board brought his furred hand to normal hand shaking height. "I'm Chris

the resident Ley Line Walker. It's uh, nice to meet you."

"Good to meet you Chris."

Thosl moved in like a prowling cat. "Hello Chris. Good to meet you."

Chris seemed to fight with his hand to get it moving. She smiled a fang filled grin and leaning down took his half-raised hand in her claws. Her scales were warm and soft. "Ah." Chris begins, "You have warm hands... um, glad to make your acquaintance."

The Basilisk moved down the line and Shisen took his hand, "Nice to meet you Walker of the Lines. I know a number of your brothers in the east."

Chris let the Scarecrow shake his hand but he couldn't find his tongue. Shisen continued, "Yeah, you'll get used to it. Hand's pretty soft eh? Not that I would, but I could thread your hand through your torso like a needle through cloth."

Chris said, "I'm sure... I mean, certainly you could... <he cleared his throat> Hi. Chris. Nice to..."

Shisen let go of his hand and moved on to Rad. Gerry stopped in front of Chris, "I'd be more leery of the dragoness than the straw-man. I suppose you're own dragon tempers your fear of her though. I am Gerry and it is good to be here to greet you."

Chris shook his wing claw, "Hi good to meet you."

Next Daavi came and shook Chris' hand. "Well met Chris. Hope things are well with you."

"Sure. I'm good. You?"

"I cannot complain. My friend is well fed and so is my sword."

"I guess it doesn't get any better than that. Is your _friend_ demanding?"

"Sometimes he can be, but you give him something to eat and he's as quiet as a lamb... if lamb had fangs and a taste for blood that is."

Chris nodded his head up and down as Daavi moved on.

Yorghy slithered over and wrapped one of her armour-covered tentacles around his forearm. "So many cute bipeds. You have nice eyes Mr. _Walker_."

She clearly meant it as Ley Line Walker, not his actual family name of Walker. Chris couldn't take his eyes off of hers. On a human woman her eyes would be alluring but on her serpentine face they were magnetic. She continued speaking, "A quiet one too. All the better to hear the lines speak to you eh? I knew another Walker once, fascinating fellow. I think someone needs a hug."

She moved forward slightly and wrapped all four of her tentacles around him. His eyes glazed over and he began to shake violently. She whispered in his ear, "This _is_ a terribly cold wasteland isn't it. Ooo, I hope my armour isn't too cold."

Gerry looked back and Chris turned to look at him. Their eyes locked for a moment and then Chris stopped shaking and Yorghi backed up a bit. Chris looked at her again and said calmly and evenly, "Nice to meet you

Yorghy. I'm sorry I reacted like that."

"That's alright. People get used to those fearsome dragons and us friendlier types get the backlash."

"I'm sorry. It's your more human qualities that are um..."

"Disturbing?"

"Sure."

Rick and Joe stood side by side as usual. The inseparable duo was at it again. Rick shook his head sadly when the wolf with wings spoke to all present psychically. Joe seemed to share the sentiment but as usual let Rick be the apparent one. Granmarljin approached them and offered his hand to each of them. Joe shook it without preamble. Rick cleared his throat and told the sphinx, "I am sorry but I do not shake hands. Or more to the point I cannot. My apologies"

To prove his point he slapped Joe's shoulder and his hand passed right through the other psychic. "No apologies necessary. May I?"

"Certainly."

The sphinx carefully sank his hand into Rick's chest. It became translucent around the General's hand.

"Interesting... if you don't mind my saying so."

"Not at all. I thought it was interesting too for the first little while. Take a stroll through the forest, literally of course. Look around in places I shouldn't have been with women I should have. Then you want to grab

something or feel something and it sinks in. I get by with the everyday stuff because of my mind powers but you know, there are things I miss that the mind alone can't do well."

Granmarljin nodded and moved on to Darrien. Those slunk over. "Hello gentlemen."

Joe took her offered hand and kissed it. Rick waved congenially and said, "Nice to meet you. If you don't mind my saying so, you look mah-vellous. You're such a wonderful colour."

"Why thank you. I have to know for curiosity sake, are those the only clothes you have, I mean being incorporeal you cannot just slip on a new outfit can you?"

"Actually with a little effort I can temporarily make things like clothes become incorporeal. But this is the only ensemble that is permanently like me."

"I like the helmet."

Joe was talking to Shisen when Rick looked his way. The scarecrow was holding his hand, still. Joe told him, "You may not know this but Rick here is part bird."

"I'll try not to send him flying off then."

Rick looked at Shisen warily, "He's always on me about uh something."

Gerry stopped in front of Rick and Joe and gave them an odd look. He thrust out his wing quickly and Joe took a step back and looked at the proffered wing claw as if it was a bomb waiting to explode should he touch it. The dragon-wolf shrugged his shoulders rolling the wings

and before Gerry could move any further Rick was on his butt in the snow back-peddalling and sinking into the ground. "My apologies gentlemen." he growled, "I have this bad habit of showing off."

Joe shook his head and started, "My..."

"Your mind was closed to psychic emanations. Sorry. I couldn't resist blasting through."

Rick climbed out of the earth. "Now I know what it feels like to be on the other end."

"Keeps you sharp."

Next Daavi came and shook Joe's hand, "Well met Joe, Rick."

Joe said, "Nice wings. I've never seen anything like them."

"No you would not come across them in nature. I bought them at an exorbitant cost. They are the height of Atlantis haute couture. They are also of quality growth."

Rick asked him, "I have seen another like your friend on your chest before. May I, may I touch it with my mind?"

"Certainly. He is feeling good today and it would seem you cannot be bitten for the intrusion."

Rick raised his hand and the tentacle lashed out and through his hand snapping once and then hovered just out of reach. Rick didn't even flinch. He closed his eyes. The tentacle opened and closed its mouth slowly several times and then began to sway back and forth. Rick opened his eyes, "Friendly fellow if you get my

meaning."

"Yes it can be. One is always happiest to be the one wearing it as a part of them instead of being on the other side. As you can see it will bite even new friends."

Daavi moved on and Yorghi approached slowly. Joe raised his arms and she slithered into them and wrapped her tentacles around him. He said to the side of her head, "Yours is a friendly open race with a penchant towards touching."

"Why yes it is," she told him in that melting sunlight voice. "You are the sensitive one aren't you."

He released her and she gave him an extra squeeze before turning to Rick. He looked into her eyes and she smiled at him. "Thank you Mr. Hunter."

Next in line was Sergeant Thosl. As they shook hands, G'lishi couldn't help but ask, "You can really turn people to stone?"

With a toothy smile and a knowing look, Thosl answered, "I certainly do. That is, unless I have a mind to eat someone."

G'lishi cocked his head a little, answered her smile with a slightly uncertain smile, and introduced himself. Thosl sauntered on to R.C. G'lishi saw Sergeant Shisen approaching and froze. The Scarecrow mildly freaked the young dragon out. He couldn't think why, but something was just wrong. "Cat got your tongue?" quipped the Mystic Knight.

That jarred G'lishi, who stuck his long tongue out and looked for a cat. Not finding one, he looked around to see where the cat was. Shisen laughed and shook his head. "Right. Well, pleased to meet you. I'm Shisen."

G'lishi stumbled through an introduction and managed to shake hands with a minimum of jerkiness. Then came Major Gerry. If the Scarecrow was freaky, the Dragon Wolf was just **wrong**. A proper dragon was okay. A small Dragon would be cute. A small dragon with a wolf's body though? In fright, G'lishi stepped back. Remembering the telepathic message, G'lishi raised his mind block in defence. Gerry sensed this, and there was an awkward pause, which Gerry filled in with, "Don't worry, I was just playing with Rick."

Embarrassed, and not understanding, G'lishi looked down at the ground, mumbled an apology and his name. He repeated his name when Gerry indicated he didn't hear it, then controlled his mind enough to lower the mind block. Colonel Daavi rescued G'lishi. Hearing him approach, he looked up, and looked at the worm-like creature. "Cute," he said. "What is its name?"

Daavi pondered the question a moment. "No one has ever asked me that question. I have always just called it my friend. I cannot exactly ask it for its own given name. Perhaps I should call it Snappy."

G'lishi introduced himself, and also asked if he could talk with the creature telepathically. Daavi nodded. G'lishi introduced himself to the creature. The creature

responded with a short flurry of violent blood filled images: small white-furred animals with pieces ripped out of them bleated, scythe-like teeth gnashed smaller animals yet into paste. A wind picked up and Daavi's robe fluttered open further. Even though the worm-like appendage had teeth it led back to an even larger jaw upon the man-body's chest. The larger jaw had teeth that made the worm's teeth look like toothpicks.

Finally, Captain Yorghi approached. She offered a hug, and with a moment's hesitation G'lishi returned the embrace, albeit somewhat stiffly. Afterward he stepped back, and introduced himself with little awkwardness.

RC greeted the Sphinx respectfully, as one would a high-ranking officer. "Honoured to meet you Sir. <They saluted each other.> My name is Private 1st Class Renvar Nekoso, but everyone just calls me R.C."

"Good to meet you soldier." the General said.

"I am the group's mechanical and computer handyman, Sir. The whole combat thing is a bit new, but I am getting the hang of it. By the way, Sir, would you mind if I dropped by later and had a look at that wingboard? I think it is a rather fascinating device."

"Certainly. I bought it wholesale but I have since made further modifications to it. We can talk at length, later."

Thosl approached and R.C. just stood there staring at the Basilisk, though he couldn't quite manage to meet her

eyes. Finally he managed to stammer out: "Y-Yo-Your the most be-beautiful looking dragon I have ever met." He then proceeded to blush fiercely.

"Thank you. <She leaned in closer.> I hope that the one in your group isn't the only dragon you've met before me. Is he?" she said and then moved on without awaiting an answer.

R.C. wasn't quite sure what to make of the scarecrow. It was not "alive" in the traditional sense, and it was not mechanical, making him rather nervous for some reason. It didn't help that it's flattened form and only slightly human appearance kept reminding him of Skelebots either. Shisen raised his hand and R.C. hesitantly shook it and said, "Umm, errr, hello... My name is, err, R.C."

Shisen said, "I love this group. I feel very much like a fly, just waiting for the jaws to hang open. Cats must love you guys, no fight for the tongues at all. Someday's you wake up and you really regret having been sewn together, but others you bless your stitches and thank the powers that be for scotch-guarding. <He buffed one of his button eyes with his forearm.> Thank you for being such wonderful people."

He left when R.C. didn't say anything more. R.C. greeted the Major like any self-respecting psychic would another--telepathically. "Pleasure to meet you Sir. <He shook the wing claw offered.> Maybe some time we can compare notes. I am certain someone with your experience could teach me a lot."

"Mayhaps. Certainly I can try, though I have not done so before." answered the Dragon Wolf.

"You wouldn't happen to be a telekinetic would you Sir? I have been meaning to learn how to do some of the heavy lifting stuff, but I can't quite figure out where to start. Any chance you would be available for a pointers session?"

"Certainly," he started, "Though I can tell you it does tax the mind much as it would the body were you to do it the old-fashioned way. When hands lack though it is useful."

R.C. found the scorpion person absolutely fascinating. He had heard about bio-augmentation, but never actually seen it up close. (Not that I would ever go in for that kind of thing myself. ...Augmentations, let alone those with minds of their own, just aren't my thing.) "Hello, call me R.C. <He shook hands quite calmly.> Anything and everything mechanical, that's my deal. Pardon me for asking, but does the, umm, chest-thingy ever give you problems? You know, grab your food when you are trying to eat, try to bite your nose off, that kind of thing?"

"My friend has few manners by nature," Daavi began. "It was as you described initially though it did refrain from seriously trying to harm me. I must admit it had an embarrassing habit of drooling its venom about. It was much like being a child and having a tail-drip problem all over again. They like to introduce them while they are

still immature and less stubborn in their ways."

Next came Yorghi and while he couldn't quite bring himself to look her in the face, and was rather unsettled by her rather sultry feminine charms, R.C. was rather fascinated by her suit. "That's an incredible suit of Power Armour you have. Perhaps one day I can have a look inside."

R.C. blushed rather hotly once he realised exactly how that could be interpreted. "I mean, to find out how it works," he stammered quickly.

With a puff of snow Yorghi advanced on R.C. Frantically R.C. reached out to the armour with his mind. Yorghi was saying, "Oh, friendly biped--" when the suit seized up with its tentacles stopped in mid-air.

"I'm sorry, I'm really sorry... but I am just not terribly good with women." R.C. said somewhat lamely.

He relaxed and she dropped her tentacles to the ground. She gave what could have been a nervous smile. "Perhaps you'd prefer seeing the Holocaust instead. It's much less friendly on the enemy. What with all the stabbing and goring. Or the tearing up of the earth and the freaky falling from the sky. I can surely show you it later."