**The Story of Joe**

**By Aiden Miller**

**This tale is about a short, big nosed person, or as they are more commonly known as, a gnome. Now this isn’t any normal old gnome, he doesn’t defend lawns nor does he craft powerful illusions. He is a holy man, or more commonly known as a paladin, for the god Dunus, God of the forge. This gnomes name is, Joe, a name well known in these parts for his excellent craftsmanship and chivalry, but we are not talking about modern day Joe we are talking about past Joe. Joe is currently training at a local town to become a blacksmith. He is often looked at in awe, mostly because gnomes rarely leave their villages. It has been a few years since Joe started his training and he has decided to take a break day. As he is leaving the town he is attacked by a group of Jinkan, the gnomish name for large winged lizard men, and he remembers he left his sword at home! As Joe desperately tries to fend off the beasts he witnesses a scene from the god Dunus. Dunus commands Joe to stop his training and join his temple in the local dwarven town, Dwarves are distant cousins of gnomes, Joe agrees to his new master’s demand and immediately heads off to see the dwarves. After four grueling days of travel, Joe nearly ran out of rations, he arrives. As he heads in the dwarves looked confused to see what they believe to be a beardless dwarf.**

**“What is this? A dwarf with no beard, but who is clearly male?” asks one dwarf**

**“Well actually I am no dwarf, but I am a gnome” answers Joe**

**All of the dwarves in the room gasp in shock, for no gnomes have been seen in their town for over fifty years!**

**“I am here to learn the ways of the god Dunus.” Says Joe**

**One older looking dwarf comes up to Joe and says “To work for Dunus you have to prove you got some knowledge of the forge lad. I am willin’ to have a contest with ye to see how good you are at workin’ the forge lad.”**

**Joe accepts the dwarf’s challenge. The two stand ready at their forges. Joe immediately recognizes he was given faulty metal, he should’ve expected it since dwarves never play fair. The clock dings and they begin. Joe looks at what he has to work with, rusty steel, rusty iron, rusty everything, but then he sees it a golden glimmer, he finds five pounds of gold. His face beams with happiness. He begins going hard at work making a suit of armor, a sword, a shield, and a cape. When the clock dings again, the two look fiercely at each other. The referee declares Joe the winner.**

**The dwarf stands tall and shouts “I demand we settle this in combat!”, he continues “I will use what I’ve made and he’ll use what he made”.**

**The referee allows this. Joe puts on his equipment and grabs his sword and shield. The two begin to go at hit roughly. The sound of steel smacking against gold could be heard throughout the whole town. Finally Joe sees an opportunity to attack and strikes the dwarf dead in the stomach. The dwarf begins coughing up blood. The referee declares Joe the winner once again while the dwarf heads into the infirmary. The Temple of Dunus fully accepts the gnome. When Joe arrives to the temple he realizes he is not the only non-dwarf there, for there was also a Halfling woman named Yaremin. Through his three years at the temple the two fell in love. Eventually Joe asked Yaremin to marry him, she said yes. Now Joe is living back in his old village and now has a kid. Though recently he has gotten involved with a resistance against a Benak revolt, but that is a story for another time.**