Pale grey was the dominating colour of the surroundings, manifested as a thick, wet fog that refused to release the four hunched, miserable travellers that slogged through the knee-deep mud in search of succour from the mist. Each one was clad from neck to foot in thick, leather armour that hid their vulnerable flesh, and one of them - a raven-haired youth who was positioned at the head of the party - wore a long, brown scarf that dragged along the ground behind him, covered in brown mud that weighed the woven fabric down. A weapon hung from the youths’ backs, and every one was different - a heavy-headed iron hammer, a small buckler with what looked like a machete hanging from it, a thin lance with a shining steel head, and a long, slightly curved katana that dwarfed the other tools in size. The area was devoid of life, with no trees, shrubs or greenery in sight.

Each traveller was hurrying as fast as they could, and in their eyes shone the crystalline expression of pure, unaltered terror.

"Hurry!" the leader said, turning halfway around and beckoning to his companions. "We don't have much time!"

In the struggle to increase their pace, one failed to remove his shin from the oppressive grasp of the soggy ground, and at the sudden failure of movement fell over before he could fling his arms up to brace his fall. A companion knelt down and assisted his friend in standing once more, an angry grimace marring his rough face. With a bald head, he stood out from his haired cohorts, despite his youth.

"This is all your fault," he spat, glaring at the scarfed leader. "Now we're being hunted by something far beyond our skill, and chances are we'll all be slaughtered here, where our bones will be buried and forgotten by everyone!"

As if to enforce the bald man's argument, a low, bloodthirsty growl emanated from behind the curtain of fog, but as each hunter swirled around to determine the source of the snarl the sound began to reverberate around the group, and no single man could pinpoint the location of their seeker.

Looking at the bald youth with a mixture of frustration and fear in his expression, the raven-haired leader pulled the katana from its sheath resting on his back and readied himself in a combat position.

"Whether you like how I’ve led us or not, we might as well stand and fight now!"

"No!" the lance-wielder exclaimed, raising a hand to stop the leader. "We can't beat this thing! You all saw what it did to that other hunting party as well as I did, and I don't want to end up in as many pieces as they did!"
Each member of the party looked at each other, indecision on their faces as they all hesitated. As another growl sounded in the distance, louder than the first, the leader swore violently and re-sheathed his blade.

"Then let us hurry! It's closing in on us, and our escape is still a distant thing!"

Each warrior hurriedly began running once more, faster than before. With every step the men took, a low, thudding sound could be heard behind them, growing in strength as they continued. The monotonous fog surrounding them never changed, and the slick mud beneath their feet grew deeper and deeper the further they ran.

The most afraid, the hunter with the lance strapped to his back, continually swerved his head around to gaze frantically behind him. Thoughts of curved talons and blood strewn maws filled his head as the dull thudding grew louder and louder, and with a panicked cry he put on a burst of speed. With this speed, however, came carelessness, and as a choked shout escaped his throat he fell to the ground, unable to stand as his compatriots ran ahead of him. Placing his arms beneath him, he attempted to stand once more, however, he felt a vice-like grip clamp around his leg, and with a startled outburst the fighter was dragged into the sullen mist, hands clawing at the ground in a vain attempt to stop himself.

The three other hunters halted their escape and turned, only to see the black silhouette of their friend disappearing into the grey shroud, a truly terrified cry following. Another growl split the air, and every man in the swamp flinched and shuddered as the visceral sounds of tearing flesh and breaking bone were heard.

The raven-haired leader's eyes were wide, staring into the mist for any signs of movement. More thudding was heard, and a large, dark silhouette could be seen, hunched and bulky, approaching the group. The man next to him, an auburn-haired teenager with a thin, soft face, began backing away from the others, trying to put as much distance between him and the figure in the mist as possible.

Just as ominously as it had appeared, the shadow vanished suddenly, and the grey fog was once again thickened. The raven-haired man and the balding one exchanged glances, before they heard a loud thump behind them, followed by the sick gurgling of a death rattle. They barely had enough time to see a thick, black, beak-like structure fasten around their companion's throat, serrated teeth digging deep into his flesh, before he too was pulled into the mist. No violent sounds were audible, but a sound akin to swishing air and a heavy impact penetrated the thick haze.

The bald warrior gulped once, before drawing the heavyset hammer that was resting on his abdomen. The leader similarly drew his katana, staring into the dampening cloud with a mixture of anticipation and anger on his face. "So...how will this work?" he asked his hammer-wielding friend.

"I would suppose we make it as dignified as possible," he replied.
Both men stood with their backs facing each other, staring out into the mist, awaiting the beast that had claimed their friends. Each one was determined, but that determination could not hold back their gasps of fear as a snarl, louder than the ones before it, pierced the oppressive shroud. Swallowing his fear, the bald man gazed around, and out of the corner of his eye saw a slight movement, a shadow, moving through the mist, right towards him. In retaliation, he swung his hammer with all his might, unleashing a loud war cry in the process. Feeling a huge impact in the end of the weapon, the hunter looked to see he had completely missed - the head of the bludgeon was now deeply embedded in the mud next to him. Another growl emanated from beside him, and the warrior knew his time was at an end. A roar resounded, and the last thing he felt was the force of an enormous object slamming into his hip.

Twirling around with his katana at the ready, the raven-haired leader stared in shock at the mangled, bloody body of his last cohort. Above it stood the menace that had hunted them one by one - red eyes glowering, the figure was as black as night. Twice as tall as he was, the boy knew he had no chance against this demon. As the creature bellowed, he raised his weapon high and charged at the beast, as it simultaneously swung a heavy, clawed paw at him.

A wicked crack resonated through the fog, and all was silent.