

The Legend of Ascalon

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Early in the youth of time, a child was born to a soldier of the crown. Upon the death of his father, the child and his mother returned to the land of her birth. The child's youth was spent in an unassuming river village of farmers and near crippling boredom. Not long after the hair on his chin began to sprout and the death of his mother did the boy become man set out along the river in search of his life's meaning. His travels brought him to a village whose heart is right where you stand now. The traveler's name was George and had arrived in Bristol Town.

Shortly after he arrived George heard much commotion going on in the town square. The Lord of the lands weeping at what appeared to be the base of a cauldron but no fire was present beneath it. George grabbed the attention of an elderly shop keeper and inquired to the situation. The grizzly old man scoffed at his ignorance and told the tale of the dragon's tribute.

In the forest surrounding the village dwells a dragon who threatens attack unless an offering is made each solstice of the summer. The village the elders present a virginal maiden as a payment for the protection of all. A lottery is held two moons prior to the solstice to determine the name of the young woman to be sacrificed. It appeared that this year in protest of the ceremony, the lord's daughter, Alexa had put her own name in the cauldron. As fate would have it, her name was the one drawn. Despite his protests, Lord Conal's daughter was taken away into the forest and chained to the Stone of Fire where previous tributes have been made.

Just as the old man finished his tale, the Lord Conal rose up and declared that great wealth and his daughter's hand in marriage would be granted to the hero who would face the beast and save his only child. No man spoke up. The silence was washed away only by the slight murmur of town's people and their comments. Again the prostrated father plea went out across the square. The shop keeper lurched in shock as George shouted that he would do it. All eyes turned to seek out the source of the voice. When they saw the young body from where it came, laughter started to erupt around the square. Angered by this, Lord Conal warned the boy that mocking him would result in his tongue being removed down to the roots. Disregarding the warnings of the Lord and shopkeeper alike, George again offered his services. Seeing no other to accept the challenge, Lord Conal had no choice to grant George the chance.

The shopkeeper, feeling slightly responsible, knew that in order complete his destiny George was going to need more than the rags on his back. Before his mind could stop him from doing so, the old man found himself suggesting to Lord Conal that the young boy be provided with the proper tools to take on

such a chore. Agreeing, Conal ordered his own personal armory to be opened to George along with his war-horse, Iron-hoof.

The old man took George immediately away from the protesting crowd. He knew that George was going to need more than just conventional iron to pierce the heart of the dragon. He knew that there was only one thing that existed in the armory of the Lord. He was going to need Ascalon.

Ascalon is spear that he made earlier in his life when he was the head blacksmith to the Lord. During that time, he was obsessed with making the perfect weapon. One that could neither be destroyed or ever lose its bite. Using the techniques of the ancients wasn't enough so he used the powers of the underworld to give the edge that such a weapon needed. Upon mounting the head on the lance he was struck blind. This was his penance for forging such a force from Hell itself. This weapon would be the only thing that would be able to pierce the breastplate of the dragon.....he hoped.

After two moons had made their cycle, it was time. Girded in Lord Conal's best armor and atop of his legendary horse, George looked strong. As the sun began to set, he took up the pitch black lance and rode into the wood to face his destiny. An hour into the ride, they came upon an opening in the trees. The men escorting him told them it was as far as they would go. He was left to go one alone. Just then they heard the scream of Alexa followed by the deafening roar of the dragon. As the guards fled, the sky was on fire as the dragon unleashed its breath. George could see what he was now facing. As the dragon's breath escaped, its lungs glowing the color of white hot embers surrounding a large glowing heart. He knew that if he didn't act soon, it was going to be too late.

Just as the dragon began its strike towards Alexa, George kicked Iron-Hoof in the ribs. The thundering war horse lurched forward as George let out a yell. The gigantic head of the dragon turned to George and raised up. As it began taking a deep breath to fill its lungs once again, they began to glow. Kicking Iron-hoof again, he charged faster at the dragon. His own lungs began to burn as the sulfur started coming in. George lowered the head of Ascalon and focused his energy between the lungs of the proud dragon. Just as the dragon began its exhale, George struck the dragon and drove the spear deep in the breastplate that protected its heart. Driving into the fiery heart, Ascalon snapped in half, leaving part in the dragon and the other broken in George's hand. With a loud cry the dragon's last breath went into the air like a fountain of fire and was no more.

George released Alexa from the Stone of Fire and returned her to Lord Conal. Learning of the arrangement made by her father, Alexa embraced George and kissed him long and deep. As the people rejoiced, their jubilation was interrupted by a howl so intense and sad that some were scarred by eternal weeping. They all knew. They knew that a sorrow that deep could only mean one thing.....the loss of love. They knew it was the dragon's wife. They knew that what they were hearing was the mourning cries of Bloodtharken. They knew that she would have her revenge.

Fortunately, the tradition of dragons is to hibernate during their time of mourning. This hibernation makes them vulnerable to magic. Enlisting the help of the wizard of the realm, Bloodtharken's soul was forever tied to a stone idol. As long as the idol is in one piece, she will slumber. Her wrath will never be felt.