

Black Rose

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Submitted: April 3, 2007

Updated: April 3, 2007

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20th of the 15 month in the year 1172 of the second age,

He thought that the last hour had lasted a life time. The constant droning of the seemingly endless rain, the clashes, screams, shouts and drums of the battle not a league from where he stood and the tension. Like a spring coiled to tight he thought. He had once again run over the many options that he had had. He could simply flee from the castle, using the secret tunnel under his bedroom, but that would mean leaving everyone that he loved and cared about to their own fate. Never, not while there is still breath in me. That limited his options. He could take the easiest way and end his life by himself, but he would only do that if he absolutely had to. He had told no one but his fiancé, Arielle, of his immense fear of death. He feared the nothingness that would indefinitely come after his life force was abolished. He had multiple guards posted around his room each night in fear of an attack, even though he was loved by all the kingdom and castle. He could always go along with the leader of his defense, Seron's idea and defend the city and fight on. But he knew that that was insane. Even an unskilled child could tell that if they continued to fight they would be slaughtered down to the last dog or chicken. That only left him with the choice he would have chosen any way. That was to surrender. He would have to personally take the white flag to Char Shan, the leader of the rebel army battering his castles walls. That would also mean him being taken hostage and probably death. He hated that idea but that was the only way to protect and serve the people who had protected and served him all 20 years of his life.

Prince Dagrör, now king, pulled himself out of his memory and began striding back to the main hall to announce his decision. How he wished that Arielle was still here to comfort him. She was the calmest person that he knew and had an answer to everything. Alas, she had been sent away at the first sign of discord, though she pleaded to stay. She knew it was for her own good but she had argued for many hours. When she finally left it was none too early, for 5 minutes later the castle was surrounded. He at least still had Seron, but Seron was bent on defending the castle to the last man. It seemed like he had gone insane with all his talk of 'defend your country' and 'be courageous and honorable'. Dagrör had suggested that he stay in bed for a while, but instead of agreeing, gave Dagrör yet another lecture. Today will be different he thought, it has to be.

But he could not have been more wrong. The moment Dagrör entered the room, he was barraged with cruel insults from Seron. He was amazed. What on earths going on? Seron was raving about how Dagrör's father had been the better ruler and how the kingdom was now in shadow and how it was all Dagrör's fault. ??????? He then went on to say that because of Dagrör's choice to surrender, they were all doom to a life of harsh labor and unimaginable torture. How did he know? I haven't said anything yet! "He doesn't deserve to live if he even thinks such a thought" was the last thing Seron screamed as he was dragged off by the royal guards. The rest of the people gathered there were as stunned as Dagrör. He decided he had stalled too long already. "My dear people" he called "may I forever be remember not as the one who was weak but as the one whom loved his people more then his own life" . The assembled crowd was silent. With this, Dagrör turned from the hall, opened the gates and walked out into the courtyard to face Char Shan. He took the personal banner of his father, three silver rings linked together as a triangle, with him as he strode forth. He then got his first glimpse at the creature that called himself Char Shan.

He was not the largest of men. In fact, Dagrör himself stood several inches taller. He did not look overly strong and Dagrör wondered how a sniveling worm like him could command an army so vast. He realized why the moment Char Shan spoke, “hail, not so mighty king. It seems to me that you aren’t the man your father was” he jeered. There was a sly, deceitful air about him.

So that’s how he leads them. “The same could be said of you, Brian,” he said in what he hoped was a calm sounding voice, “he was a good man.” This remark made Char Shan’s face stiff and his eyes screamed murder. “Enough with this idle chit-chat.”

It was then he heard the screams of the women inside

He turned just in time to see the sinister, twisted eyes of Seron and the broadsword that stabbed through his chest in a burst of screaming pain. The last thing he heard was Seron’s harsh ragged breath and the snarled “your father would be ashamed” before he drifted into the internal nothingness he had feared for so long.

By the next day, the castle was nothing more than a pile of rubble and the only living creatures left in the scarce remains were the carrion birds. And the sky wept. Soon what was left of the castle was washed away by the constant rain. And where the body of the young king had fallen, grew a single black rose.