

Tales from an Unfinished Land

By Stratadrake

Submitted: August 5, 2004

Updated: July 21, 2010

A story involving a world of various furry races, such as moogles, foxes, and so on. Unfinished; any ideas would be most appreciated. PG, some violence.

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/Stratadrake/5690/Tales-from-Unfinished-Land>

Chapter 1 - Prologue	2
Chapter 2 - Those of a Different Color	6

1 - Prologue

Prologue

(First draft, July 2003)

The door burst open as four black-armored figures entered the house, a gust of fear blowing in with them. They quickly cornered, grabbed, and removed the four residents from the house, throwing them outside into a crowd, a crowd of their neighbors and friends. Out here, under the dark, post-rain sky, the rest of these soldiers -- sixty in all, well-armed and well-armored, had the village's entire population surrounded. Up on a small wooden platform nearby, the army's leader, a powerful general, stood facing the village's white-furred elder and family as the general watched his men go about their work. "Well...? Where is it?" The general demanded to know.

The elder gave no reply.

"Fool!" The general raised his arm to knock the elder over, but instead decided better of it. The general bent down slightly to look the elder in the eye, and then spoke more calmly. Perhaps a less forceful method would get him the information he was seeking. "Tell me, elder . . . what do you have to earn by hiding that creature?" the general asked. "You've heard the legends. You know the prophecies. Such a monster can only bring darkness to our land -- you know it must be done away with. So, why do you insist on protecting it? Where have you hidden it?"

Still, the elder remained silent, choosing only to look back at the general with a trembling, yet resolute, glare.

The general turned to the elder's family of three. "I should not have to resort to these measures . . .," the general said, as he produced a small gem from his pack, red in color, and fastened it into a particular location on his gauntlet. The elder recognized what it was. "But if you will not cooperate . . .," The general turned and raised his arm at the rest of the elder's family in preparation for something as the gem began to glow in the dim light.

"Wait!" the elder objected aloud. The general paused, smiling. He lowered his arm, and the red gem in his gauntlet returning to its darker color. The general turned back towards the elder. "Have you something to say after all?"

The elder shuddered. "You must understand, we can never betray one of our own"

"You are a fool, then," the general muttered in disdain.

"If we cannot trust our friends, our own kind...", the elder explained, an extra glint reflecting off of his green eyes, "then how can we expect anyone to trust us?"

The general chuckled. "You creatures are not lacking in intelligence. You do know the values of trust and honor, and you have my respect for that. But...", the general continued, friendship ebbing from his voice

as it returned to anger. "You do know the prophecies, too. And your values of trust and honor are placing this land into jeopardy. If you had put that creature to death in the first place, my men would not have been sent here to exterminate it."

The elder said nothing.

"Do you think I **LIKE** having to kill something that is not of proper age!?"

"Can't you see it, then?" The elder asked quickly.

"A riddle, is it...." the general paused.

"Why did you come here?"

The general turned away for a moment. "There *is* little honor in us being here..." Then the general turned back to face the elder. "But there is even less, in failing to take action against the darkness. We cannot allow the Dark One's prophecy to come to pass."

"But," the elder objected. "What makes you believe that this little one is the enemy? Why --"

"SILENCE!" The general demanded. "I grow weary of your riddles, especially since you already know the answer. You've studied the legends, the prophecies. The Dark One *said* he would be reborn. And you know how powerful he was, do you want to see him rise again, to lay claim over our lands?"

The elder shook his head. "Can't you see it?"

"Not again . . . ," the general lamented. The riddle was most disturbing, the way it kept echoing through his head.

"Don't you see?"

"Silence!" The general ordered. "Now, elder, time is short and the stakes are high. If you will but help us find and destroy the monster, then I promise that not one other will be harmed or killed. But if you do not help us, then you have to understand, that if we have to, we will burn this place to the ground." The general glanced at one of his subordinates, a commander. "Get the fire stones ready. We may yet need them."

The commander nodded and began relaying the order to the rest of the troops.

"Don't be a fool, elder. Don't force us to do this"

"But can't you see it? Yes, I have studied the legends for a long life. The Dark One said he would return . . . but is that the *true* prophecy? Is this little one really the one we must all fear? What if he's not? What if that prophecy is --"

"Blasphemy!" The general objected, and slapped the elder with the backside of his hand, knocking him down. "You cannot seriously want to risk this country, this world -- *our* world -- for the sake of some ... a

mere *supposition!*?"

The elder winced back at the general from the floor. "You... have done the same"

"Lies!" The general retorted, before picking the elder back up. "I am going to offer you *one* last chance. If you will but tell us where to find this creature, no more harm will come to you or this village. But you *have* to cooperate. No more riddles, no more excuses. If you do not, we will have to make ruin of this entire village, you, and everyone in it. So what is it going to be? Do you help us, or do we have to resort to murder?"

The elder did not reply.

"You cannot be willing to sacrifice yourself for the sake of this . . . monster?"

Still the elder, shaking his head and quivering in the knowledge of what the general would do, did not respond.

". . . very well," the general said, disappointed. "This little escapade will end one way or the other." Hesitantly, the general drew his sword. "Then have you any last words?"

"...you do not see it?" The elder riddled. "The truth?"

The general hung his head in his arm at the sound of another riddle. Just then, he noticed a peculiar reflection from the blade of his sword. He looked up, above them, up to a large tree at one edge of the village. A peculiar little green glint was coming from it.

"Wait a minute...." the general mused. "Commander, what is that?"

The general's subcommander withdrew a pocket telescope and looked up towards the tree. "General, it's..." The subcommander tossed the scope to the general and he peered through it himself. Up in the large oak, hiding behind several branches and a few leaves, was a young white-furred villager holding a brown-furred newborn in one arm and a small but shiny gem in her hand.

"THERE THEY ARE!!" The general shouted. "Up in that tree! Get up there and bring them down, now!"

The young female knew she was spotted and nearly panicked. As four of the general's men approached and one of them ignited a fire around the base of the tree. Another soldier, wearing flame-proof armor, stepped through the flames and climbed slightly up into the tree as smoke began collecting in it.

The frightened young girl looked around frantically, and tried climbing higher. The flames licked at the lowest leaves of the tree as the armored soldier began cutting down the lowest branches to make fuel for the fire. Soon, the bottom leaves and limbs were catching fire, and the flames were edging their way upwards.

After another minute, with the lower portion of the tree ablaze, the little girl now found herself at the very top of the tree, the infant still in her arm. She looked around frantically for somewhere else to go, but no luck; it's not like she could fly out of there and carry the infant at the same time -- her wings simply

weren't strong enough for the job. And even if she could, there would be no place to land. She turned her hopes to the little green gem in her possession. She gripped it tightly, and in its soft glow, she focused and closed her eyes as if to offer a prayer to the higher power.

And then, suddenly, in a blink of light, she vanished from sight and was nowhere to be found.

The general seethed; after a spell like that, there would be no way to tell where the young girl was now. "...you..." began the general, turning slowly towards the elder and his family. "... let... them es-CAPE!!!!"

Ridding himself any notions of mercy or compassion, the general took his sword and angrily, brutally, slew the village elder and family.

"*BURN this Place to the GROUND!! Leave NO Survivors!!*"

* * * * *

Come morning, no two stones were left on top of each other. All plant life had been scorched to the roots; no trees were left standing, the ground was dark with soot, and the whole area reeked of smoldering fur and hide. Here and there in this giant, black spot on the earth were the powdery remains of the villagers, killed first by the sword before being incinerated in the fire, and even now the new day's wind and rain were busy trying to wash away the evidence of brutality.

The general's army was nowhere to be seen. Though they had killed everyone, they had failed to get the very one whom the general was sent to kill -- the young, brown-furred infant, and his older sister.

2 - Those of a Different Color

Chapter One: Those of a Different Color

(First draft, July 2003)

"Little brother...." sang a small voice from below the floorboards of the loft. "Where are you?"

One could hear only a light snore in response.

"Kodiro?" sang the voice again, louder this time. "Are you up there?"

Again, only light snoring was heard in response. Then, a sound of fluttering wings echoed up from the ladder below as a white furball jumped up to the loft. It was Adira, a young moogle with well-groomed white fur, piercing emerald eyes, strong red wings, and at the age of nine, she was the youngest flyer in their entire village. She looked around the loft, from one sunlit wall to the other, trying to find ... him.

Ah, there he was. A few feet from the corner, curled up and sound asleep right next to a pile of dried straw. That was Kodiro, her brother, a younger moogle of about five years age with blue eyes. Kodiro was unique among their village for his brown fur. It was not a terribly dark or "dirty" brown sort of fur, but sort of a medium brown -- the kind of brown that, if you hold it up to direct light, glows in a golden color. Although other moogles of the village would make fun of Kodiro's brown fur, Adira never hesitated to defend her brother, her precious "golden moogle".

Adira kneeled and then sat down near the pile of straw and her brother. "I knew I'd find you here," she purred quietly.

No response from Kodiro.

Adira looked more closely at him. She shouted a single word at him -- a greeting, one of the most common words in the moogle tongue and the single most important: "Kupo!"

"zzz.... zzz... mm...wha?" came a muffled reply from her brother.

Adira giggled a bit at her brother's sleepy response. Suddenly she pounced upon and tackled him, sending herself and himself rolling across the floor as they kicked up a layer of dry straw. They hit the nearby wall and bounced off. After a few more somersaults, they stopped rolling, and Adira was on top, now pinning her abruptly-awakened brother to the floor.

"Kodiro!" Adira greeted him. "Are you awake yet?"

"Ki...!" the brother began, yawning. "What was that for?"

"You overslept again. It's almost noon! The elder sent me to get you."

The word 'elder' rang Kodiro's ears like a bell. Suddenly he sprang up, tossing Adira aside as he scrambled to get his feet onto solid floor. "The elder?"

Adira stood back up, beginning to pick some loose straw from her white fur. "Yea. The elder said he wouldn't begin today's story until everyone is there. Including you."

"Story time? Aww man... did I miss anything?"

Adira glanced a light slap off of Kodiro's face. "Silly! He SAID he wouldn't begin until everyone is ready to hear it. You kupo?"

Kodiro blinked a few times to help stay awake. "Oh. Right....," he yawned.

Adira walked over to the wooden shutters, unlatched them and swung them wide open, and light filled the room from outside. The change of lighting was intense; Kodiro had to shield his eyes from the window for almost a minute, until he was adjusted to the bright light.

"I'll meet you there," Adira said as she hopped up onto the window-sill and stretched out her wings for a quick glide down. "Last one to the elder's house is a rotten Kupo Nut!"

Adira jumped out, flapping her wings to maintain a smooth downwards glide. Kodiro ran to the window and looked out.

"Hey--! No fair flying!!" Kodiro shouted after her. Only five years old himself, Kodiro's own wings were neither large nor strong enough to support him in flight. He looked around at the outer wall of the shed. Suddenly, out of nowhere an idea of how to get down came to him. Carefully, he climbed up onto the windowsill and then hopped out. On the way down, he sunk his claws into the wall to slow his descent. After scraping down about three feet he came to a stop, his claws holding him fast about six feet above the ground.

Quickly, he looked around trying to grasp for another idea. He didn't feel he could jump down from this height, but something told him to try anyway. So after a moment's hesitation, he pulled his claws out of the wall all at once and came tumbling down.

Fortunately, it was a soft, sloped landing, and Kodiro landed rolling. For about ten feet. By the time he came to a stop, all four feet were on solid ground but he felt quite dizzy from the trip. He shook his head a few times to clear up. As soon as the ground stopped "moving" under him, he stood up and ran the rest of the way to the elder's hut.

Adira was out front of the house, looking at him concernedly. "Are you okay!?"

Kodiro stopped in front of her and brushed himself off. "Y-yeah, kipo. I'm fine."

"Why didn't you take the ladder? You could've hurt yourself!"

Kodiro looked back at the shed and the claw marks he had left on the wall. He looked back at Adira, smiling. "It was faster this way...."

"Whatever," Adira chuckled. "Come in, we're late."

Adira opened the oak door to the elder's hut and led Kodiro inside. All nine of the other young moogles in their village were settled down around the elder in a quarter circle: some sitting up, others layind down, one or two trying to catch a wink of sleep. But when Adira and her brother walked in, all eyes were open and fixed on Kodiro. Adira returned the glares with a stare of her own, strong enough in fact that some of the other kids, in particular those who liked to make fun of her brother.

Adira walked to the right and picked out a spot for her brother, and he seated himself down. Adira sat next to him on his right side, keeping a watchful eye on the other moogles in the room.

"All right, everyone," the elder spoke up. First he turned to Adira. "I see there was no trouble finding him,"

"Kupo," Adira responded. "He was just sleeping in again."

The elder gave a kupo in response, turning to Kodiro. "Not much for mornings, are we?"

Kodiro nodded. "Kipo. I was tired."

The other moogles in the room giggled at Kodiro's pronunciation. But then they noticed Adira looking back at them, staring angrily.

"That will be quite enough from you," the elder stated, standing up. The elder singled out the three kids who were giggling. "You..., you..., and you..., -- the three of you shall go to the library and look up the word 'kipo' in the encyclopedia. Return once you have finished and tell me what you learn."

The three young moogles fell silent. "Us?" One of them asked.

"Exactly," the elder replied sternly. "There will be no story today for you three. Off to the library with you! Miko..." The elder calld to his mate in the other room. She walked out into the room. "What is it?"

The elder pointed at the three moogles. "Take those three to the library and watch over their study." Miko nodded, and then escorted them out of the room.

After they left, the elder explained himself to the rest of the children. "Kodiro was, in fact, *not* speaking poorly. The word 'kipo' is a part of our tongue, just like the word 'kupo'. It is, in fact, an older variation of 'kupo', dating back very far in our books of history. It may not be used much today, but when it is, it must be respected just like the rest of our language. Kupo?"

All the moogles nodded in agreement. Kodiro spoke up. "It is? I just thought it sounds cooler..."

"Yes, it is...", the elder nodded. "Anyway, now I can begintoday's story. Who has heard of a village named . . . Mokupa?"

Adira's right hand shot up into the air, but she was alone. The elder chuckled for a moment. "Does

anyone *besides Adira* know of a place called Mokupa?"

There was a moment of silence, then the elder continued. "I thought so. Anyway. Today's story is not about that village, or what happened to it. Today's story merely begins there. In the village of Mokupa, there was an elder. A very wise moogler; he studied history, legends, and myth. But most of all, he was especially interested in the stories of the Dark One."

The elder began. "There are many versions of the story, but all of them like this. It began a very, very long time ago. Three thousand years, they say; one hundred generations, at the beginning of all history books.

"Today, we call it the Dark Era, the reign of the Dark One. No one truly knows who he was, or how he came to be the Dark One now. Some say he was a warrior. Others say he was a scholar. But both agree, that somehow he communed with one of the elements of magic itself. We say that, yes, it must have been the element of Darkness.

"Anyway. About the Dark One. They say his fur was black as a moonless sky, his wings dark as the storm cloud, and eyes as cold as death itself. His power, was unthinkably immense. Anyone who dared stand in his way, he destroyed. He sought power; oh he sought it all right. He wished to take claim over the entire world and all the races in it.

"One by one, he killed the greatest warriors in the land. They say that our kind had existed in two clans: the warriors, and the scholars. Well, they say the Dark One drove all of the ancient warrior mooglers to extinction, leaving the scholar clan among our kind.

"Could anyone stop the Dark One? No. Race by race, he sought out and eliminated warrior clans of all races throughout the world. Whomever and whatever was strong enough to threaten him, he killed them and enslaved the rest. Even the mighty dragons, the oldest, wisest, and strongest race in the land; he wiped them all out. Using entire nations as his slaves, he built his mighty citadel.

"But..., legends also say, that even while he tightened his grip over the world, there was one who rose to challenge him. They say his name was Angelus. They say that he had sworn himself to the element of Light and the force of Good. They say he was a warrior from our kind, possibly the last of that clan. They say his fur was gold, his wings silver, and his eyes blue like the sky. He worked silently at first, sowing resistance and upheaval in the Dark One's lands. Then, while the Dark One's servants were distracted, he approached the mighty citadel itself and challenged the Dark One.

"They say the Dark One recognized Angelus, but by then it was too late. As strong as the Dark One's powers, Angelus had become stronger. They say that the two warriors fought in a mighty battle. The Dark One used all his tricks, countless spells of dark magic, but they simply evaporated in the light Angelus brought forth. They fought for days. The Dark One's citadel came crumbling down all around them, yielding to the power of light.

"Finally, they say that Angelus landed a crippling blow to the Dark One, sliced off one wing and then the other, and the Dark One was near defeat. And then --"

The elder stopped and paused for a minute; the silence was deafening.

"What happened?" Kodigo asked.

The elder shook his head. "Legends and history are silent. No one knows how the battle ended. All they could find, was Angelus's sword. There were no traces of Angelus, nor any traces of the Dark One. It was as if they had both simply vanished.

"Many believe that Angelus destroyed the Dark One, once and for ever. Others believe that the Dark One was defeated, but not destroyed. Perhaps both of them perished in battle. All we know, is that they found only Angelus's sword."

The elder stood up. "Oh, yes. They also say, that one word was found carved into Angelus's sword, one word alone. It said, 'Remember'."

"That is all for today's story," the elder concluded. "Go now, and remember it well."