

*Atlina Udrea*

*A Tale*

*Vol.3*



# A Tale

## Volume 3

**Note:** I want to thank my family for supporting me with special thanks to my mother who is always there for me no matter what.

And I also want to thank my friends from Celtic Heroes for being my inspiration. This book would not have been written if it wasn't for these great people whom I was lucky to meet. However it is a fiction and it should be taken just like that, a figment of my imagination.

Greetings to Concordiia!

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## Chapter 1: The wall

Two years passed after Dova's failed attempt to conquer Donn. Things were finally calm in the realm. But the battle had been a fierce one so Scar, the mighty and fair king of Donn, wanted to make sure his kingdom would be protected against any known or unknown enemies. Better be prepared for the worst while of course hoping for the best. So Scar hired the best inventor of the time, best of the realm, Scholar the Sage, to invent something to aid in the defense of his kingdom, of his people.

Scar was prepared to use all the wealth he had in the royal treasury to be able to pay for Scholar's invention. He felt it was like an investment. The money had come from taxes, from the people of Donn, his subjects, so he felt it was a good way to use it. This way the money went back to the people in the form of Scholar's invention which was meant to protect them all. His invention was a huge and thick wall which was to be built around the capital, Lir, thus protecting it as well as Scar's castle. The Wall had to be built of cement and thick iron bars through it and would have to be as thick as a millennia old tree trunk.

Scholar ordered the workers to dig deep ditches around Lir for the foundation of The Wall. The Wall would be finished in a couple of years as he reckoned. He meant it to be the highest wall ever built and the beauty of it was the fact that at times of peace The Wall would be underground. When the city would be under attack, The Wall would be raised in a matter of minutes with the help of some intricate levers beneath it. But as this cost

a lot of money, as well as the workers and of course Scholar himself who had to be paid, Scar asked for Noah's advice, his royal treasurer.

- I hope this works, Noah. The treasury is almost empty. And Scholar says The Wall is only half finished. What do you propose Noah?

- As much as you won't like it, if you want your wall to be finished, you will have to raise taxes. It is the only way. Otherwise it will all be in vain. What would be its use if it is only half built? If we don't raise taxes to finish what we started then you might as well have thrown all the money in the fire.

- Although this makes my heart bleed for my people, I am afraid you are right and it must be done. We need to finish the Wall, it is for our safety as well as theirs. They will have to understand...

- And what if they refuse? Asked Noah wondering what his king would do in that case. Or what he would have him do in that case...

After a long moment of contemplation, when Noah was prepared to ask if he could be excused as he didn't think he would get an answer, Scar finally opened his mouth and uttered in a low voice as if afraid of his own words:

- If they refuse, then they will be forced to pay! We have to finish the Wall!

- Understood, my lord, said Noah in such a low tone that it was more of a whisper than an actual answer. Your will is my command! Saying that, he turned around and left the throne room.

Miihah was upset at what she witnessed but she couldn't have contradicted her husband in front of anyone. So after Noah left the room, she approached Scar and looked straight in his eyes. They were the saddest pair of eyes she had ever seen. So she knew it must have been really necessary for him to give the order and raise the taxes. Her heart melted and she knew there was no point in adding anything to the discussion, which would have only tortured her husband even more. So instead she changed the subject.

- I have an idea my dear husband...How about a visit to Loyalis? I miss Bratty and I am sure you miss Mean... and it would take your mind off

your kingly duties at least for a while...I am sure Donn can survive a fortnight without us. What do you say?

- Tempting...I guess Noah can collect the taxes while we are away and Harry and Olek can protect the kingdom. Why not?
- Oh, you really mean it? Asked Miih surprised that she had convinced Scar so easily. On second thought, she could convince him do anything for her, he adored her. But she didn't like to take advantage of his weakness for her.
- Yes my lovely, you are right as always. A little time away from it all would do us good. Let's pay them a visit and also see how they handled their new status, that of King and Queen.
- I am so happy, my king, said Miih in a burst of joy. Will we go alone? Just the two of us?
- The roads to Loyalis might be dangerous, answered Scar contemplating the situation. Maybe we could take someone to protect us but just a small party as I don't want us to travel as King and Queen, I just want to get away from it all for a few days, just like you said, Miih.
- Oh, like an adventure. Great! Who do you have in mind?
- I was thinking...Would you like to fly, Miih?
- Fly? Hmm, I can heal any affliction but I can't fly...
- Ha-ha, of course you can't! You are a druid, not a fairy! But Aggy, Mongo's dragon can...He can accompany us to Loyalis. With Mongo and Aggy, we can rest assured that we will get to our friends fast and safe. So would you like that?
- Very much, if Mongo doesn't mind.
- He won't mind, we are the King and Queen and this is one of the advantages... I will have a talk with him after dinner.

## Chapter 2: Hizzy

- So you want to fly to Loyalis? Asked Mongo.
- Yes, will be like a little vacation. And truth be told, since you have become the master of the dragon I have wanted and have been longing for a chance to ride it. Saying that, Scar blushed although he was usually very confident and he wasn't the type to blush but now he did, he blushed and then thinking at the fact that he felt his cheeks hot, he blushed even worse.
- Then it is settled. Tomorrow morning we ride to Loyalis, said Mongo. Then he left thinking he would miss Alyss till he would be back. But the king had spoken and he couldn't have refused the king. On his way to bed all he could think of was the elf, Alyss, and how he would miss her. He would at least tell her that he was to leave for Loyalis before he left.

After half an hour of twisting in bed without getting any sleep, Mongo decided to see Alyss right away and tell her of his departure. He had to see her before he left. So he put on his trousers and a blouse and went to see her. When he got in front of her door he froze, he had second thoughts thinking that maybe he should just get back to bed. But then he finally knocked softly on her door. He heard footsteps coming towards the door and he waited. Then the handle turned and there she was in front of him, sleepy but still looking

great.

- What happened Mongo? What are you doing here this late at night? Alyss asked yawning.
- Nothing... sorry to wake you. Scar and Miihah want me to accompany them to Loyalis in the morning, they will visit Bratty and Mean. We are going to ride Aggy and we might be staying there a week or two. So I won't see you for a week or two and wanted to see you before leaving.
- Why?
- Isn't it obvious? I will miss you, I...I like you.

Alyss looked at him and then leaned forward and kissed him. He kissed her back and then she kissed his forehead and told him he had better get some sleep before the journey to Loyalis.

- I guess I'll see you when you get back Mongo.
- Yeah, sure, take care little one.

And saying that he left. He went back to his place and fell asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow. He dreamt of the journey and of how the land of Loyalis would look like as he had heard it was a beautiful land with amazing scenery.

The first warm rays of light woke Mongo from his sleep. He packed some stuff for the journey and went to meet with the King and Queen. When he arrived at Aggy's pen they were already in front of it looking eager to leave. He bowed and opened the pen. Aggy was still asleep and snoring so loudly that Mongo wondered if he could wake him. He approached the ancient creature and patted it on its nose. Then Mongo whispered in Aggy's ear and Aggy slowly woke up.

- What is it my friend? Asked Aggy telepathically.
- I need your wings. The King and Queen want to visit their friends, the rulers of Loyalis, and they want to fly so they asked me to ride you



and get them there. So can you take us there my friend?

- Of course I can. And I am also glad, will be good to spread my wings. I got lazy after the battle against your enemies. So this will do me good.

Then Aggy lifted his body from the ground and stretched its wings. He got out of the pen and waited for Scar, Miihah and Mongo to climb on his back.

- Maybe riding to Loyalis the old fashioned way using horses and not a dragon could have also been taken into consideration.... Said Miihah a little scared when she saw herself up on the ancient beast.
- Don't be afraid my darling, Scar reassured her. I am sure Mongo wouldn't have suggested riding Aggy if he felt it was dangerous in any way. Horses would have been fun too but would have taken longer to get there. And be honest, isn't this way better?
- You are right my love. I am sure Mongo wouldn't jeopardize our lives, not on purpose anyway. So let us enjoy the view!
- Everybody ready? Asked Mongo as Aggy was eager to lift from the ground.
- Yes, do your thing mister dragon tamer! Laughed Miihah and no sooner had she said the words when she felt a little dizzy as Aggy lifted and started flapping his large and powerful wings. She felt the wind through her long hair and looked down to see the castle getting smaller and smaller until all that remained was a small dot behind them.
- Oh my God Mongo! Said Scar with obvious delight in his voice. We should have ridden Aggy earlier. This is awesome! I can't believe it! When we get back from Loyalis I will want to ride Aggy at least every weekend as the rest of the days I have to deal with the kingdom's problems and affairs but not on Sundays! From now on Mongo, you will prepare Aggy every Sunday as I will want a ride!

- I am glad you like it my lord, answered Mongo with a smile on his face. Glad you like it!
- Sorry to disturb your conversation and interrupt your new found joy Scar, said Miihah with emotion in her voice, but take a look down in that clearing please! I think someone is in trouble! The last words came out of her mouth almost muffled.
- I think Miihah is right, said Mongo looking down at the spot where Miihah had seen someone in trouble. Get us down Aggy! He said in a commanding voice to Scar's surprise who at hearing him thought he would have been a good general for his armies too.

Aggy descended slowly from the height where he was and as they got closer they realized what was in front of their eyes: a lonely woman was being attacked by a pack of savage wolves which seemed very hungry and ready to tear her apart. If they had been late a single minute she would have been dead but they got there just in time to save her life. Aggy burnt the wolves and Miihah went to check on the poor girl.

- Are you OK? Are you hurt?
- One wolf bit my arm, it is bleeding badly, the poor girl could barely answer.
- Let me see. What is your name? Asked Miihah while she already took the girl's arm to inspect it.
- I am Hizzy my lady. Thank you all for saving my life. If it wasn't for you, I would have been wolf food. And if you leave me here, I will still be food for some other vile creatures. Please take me with you... and she started crying and sobbing.
- Your arm looks pretty bad. Stand still, I will stop the bleeding and heal you. And Miihah focused her inner strength and prayed in an ancient language and healed Hizzy's arm. The bleeding stopped and there was only a small scar left now as a reminder of the wolf's bite.

- You healed my arm, thank you again. I don't know how you did it but thank you. And please let me come with you or I will surely die out here.
- But where did you come from? Asked Scar looking at her and wondering if it wasn't a trap.
- I escaped from a farm nearby, I was a slave since I was a child. My family sold me when I was 7 years old to a rich family to do their chores. In return I got just enough to eat to keep me alive and I slept in the stables in a hay stack. I don't want to go back there, please. You can't have saved my life just to send me back...
- Hush, said Miihah moved by her life story. From now on you will be my personal maid. I am the queen of Donn and this here is my husband, and she pointed towards Scar. You will work for me and you will be paid weekly and will have your own room and everything you need. Do you want this?
- Thank you my queen, God bless you and everyone you love. Then she bowed her head and wiped her tears.
- And from now on everywhere I go, you go. So hop on.
- You mean on that thing? Asked Hizzy frightened at the sight of a fire breathing dragon especially as dragons were supposed to have been extinct.
- I assure you that Aggy is harmless, Mongo intervened in the discussion as Aggy was his dragon. Here, see? And asking that he went and patted Aggy on his nose. Purring like a cat! And Mongo laughed to make Hizzy feel better and less afraid of what was nevertheless an adult sized fire breathing dragon.
- What if he only acts like that with you because he knows you? Asked Hizzy still unconvinced.
- Hmm, he didn't always know me. He will know you too if you let him. His name is Aggy by the way.

- He has a name? Asked Hizzy puzzled.
- Yes, he does. Now come on up before more wolves come, ok?
- OK, she said and she let herself in their hands, trusting them completely as they had just saved her from the pack of wolves. They hadn't saved her only to feed her to the dragon, right? Then she hopped on top of Aggy and the great dragon lifted in the air again to continue the journey towards Loyalis.

The rest of the journey was smooth and uneventful and soon they arrived at the border of the great kingdom of Loyalis. First thing that captured their eyes was the field of blossomed flowers and the strong scent that got even at the height they were flying at, making them dizzy with delight. It was a mixture of colors and scents. With the evil king Dova gone and under the rule of Bratty and Mean, the kingdom was thriving and the people were happy and content once more.

The towers of the castle were glistening in the sun like diamonds on the night sky. They all descended in front of the castle gates and after answering the two watchmen guarding the entrance they were allowed to enter. Scar and Miih were admiring the structure of the castle while Mongo went ahead to announce their arrival, hoping at the same time to pleasantly surprise both Mean and Bratty. He was escorted by a guardian. The castle halls were long and high and beautifully decorated clearly showing a woman's touch, Bratty's touch, as Mean had always been a messy guy. There were vases with fresh flowers everywhere and the furniture was also nicely carved. It was so welcoming that it felt like a home. It was Mean and Bratty's home, they had managed to turn the gloomy castle to a cozy home.

Two enormous wooden doors were at the end of the halls marking the entrance to the throne room where Mean and Bratty would be sitting on their thrones instead of a laboratory with dusty spell books. It was pretty odd for Mongo to see them like that instead of just the mages he was used to but as far as he had heard, rumors about the kind and honest way they ruled the land had reached his

ears so it meant that they could really be more than just mages. He knocked on the door and entered. Bratty was wearing a beautiful sleeveless long black and blue dress and Mean had also given up his usual mage clothes and was clad more suitable for the rank of King and of course he was wearing a golden crown.

When the door opened both Bratty and Mean were agape at seeing Mongo enter their throne room. Bratty was the first to speak:

- Hi Mongo, old friend, what brings you here? And welcome!
- Hello Lady Bratty! And Mongo bowed courteously. Hello Mean! I heard only good things of you two since you have become rulers of this old piece of land. It looks like Scar has made the right decision in naming you two rulers over Loyalis.
- Enough with the flattery, Mongo! Mean cut his enthusiasm short, not because he was bad at heart but it was the way he was and he couldn't help himself. He still had some work to do when it came to diplomacy. What brings you here old friend? Good tidings I hope.
- It is not what brings me here but rather who I bring here...Scar and Miihah have come to pay you two a visit and have a little vacation from being rulers of Donn. And also a nice young lady whom we rescued on the way from a pack of hungry wolves. She will be Miihah's maid from now on.
- Well, where are they? Asked Mean always impatient. But hardly had he asked that when the front wooden door opened once again, this time to make room for the King and Queen of Donn, Scar and Miihah. Hizzy was close behind Miihah, shyly entering the throne room. It was the first time in her life that she entered a throne room and she was bewildered at all the luxury that was obviously everywhere.
- Hello Bratty darling! Said Miihah and she almost ran to hug her old friend. Hizzy not knowing what she was supposed to do as Miihah's maid, stood watching everything unfold and decided it was better to wait until she was needed.

- Hi, Bratty answered with a quivering voice. She was struggling not to cry of joy as she didn't want Mean to think that she was weak. But the moment they hugged, she let her tears loose. She decided that appearances weren't all that important.
- Oh, let's go to my private chamber and talk, said Bratty. So much has happened since Mean and I left. If you trust Hizzy, she can come too.
- Of course, she is my new maid. And Miihah, a good judge of character, smiled and took Hizzy by her arm as she was still standing coyly in a corner.

They went to Bratty's chamber leaving the men to discuss their business undisturbed. Miihah and Hizzy followed Bratty along the corridors till they got to a large and beautifully carved wooden door which Bratty opened with a key she had hanging around her neck on a silver necklace. It was a small key encrusted with a small ruby as red as blood. The door opened and they entered. The room was quite the opposite of what Miihah had expected: it was simply furnished with a bed, a rectangular table in front of a large window and four simple chairs around the table. At a closer look one could notice that one of the chairs was more used up than the rest as it was probably the one Bratty always used. It also showed that she hadn't had visitors as the rest of the chairs almost seemed stuck in their place.

Bratty asked Miihah and Hizzy to have a seat at the table and she offered them to help themselves with some cookies which were on the table and which seemed freshly made.

Bratty was so the first to talk:

- I missed you so much Miihah! I don't really have friends here. Don't get me wrong, they are all loyal to us, the people love us but I don't have a close friend to talk to like we used to talk.
- Oh, I missed you too Bratty! But Loyalis need you and Mean. The people here have been oppressed for too long under the rule of Dova and now that you two rule it is like a breath of fresh air for them.

- Yes, I know, I am not complaining...you are right, let's change the subject. So what really happened? What brought you here?
- Scar had to raise taxes on the people to be able to pay for a wall to defend the same people who complained about the taxes. But Noah said it had to be done as the treasury was almost empty after the war against Dova. That war has cost a lot of money. So Scar needed a break and thought of you and Mean.
- We are honored, answered Bratty visibly touched by Miihah's words. But our treasury is not full either. We can't help your kingdom with money I am afraid as Dova took everything from these people to pay his mercenaries and when we came here we found only poverty and desolation. So first thing we did as King and Queen was to give back to the people what was stolen from them, to give them back their lives and a reason to live.
- Oh, we haven't come here to ask for money, just to house us for a week or two, that is all, said Miihah smiling innocently at Bratty.
- In that case you are more than welcome! And Bratty hugged Miihah again in a huge bear hug.

Meanwhile Scar was talking with Mean explaining the situation in Donn and the reason they had come here, mainly telling him the same thing Miihah was telling Bratty in another room.

- So do you suspect another attack from someone? Asked Mean curious to know if his friends were in any danger and already making plans in his head to help them however he could.
- Not that I know of but I want us to be prepared. Scholar is a great inventor and I trust his invention. The Wall will only be used in case of an attack. In times of peace it will be underground.
- Sounds interesting, said Mean. Talking of interesting stuff, there is a prisoner in the castle dungeons who is probably soft in the head. He

keeps talking nonsense. He keeps repeating that he will call an army of undead to liberate him and that he will destroy us all. He claims to be a shaman of sorts but he looks ragged and as I said, he is probably as daft as a bush. But there is something about him, I can't quite put my finger on it.

- Maybe we should see him, said Scar in a good mood. If you don't have anything better to do, we can go now. You made me curious. How come he ended up in your dungeons?
- Found him one day in small cave mumbling something and he was surrounded by human skulls. Lots of skulls. So I thought he should stay in our dungeons rather than out there. He may be crazy, but he is dangerous.
- Okay...let's see this guy, said Scar and he took a flaming torch from one of the walls as they were descending the steps towards the dark and dank corridors which lead to the dungeons.
- Let me help you, said Mean, and he summoned a ball of light to light their way.
- Oh, yes, I forgot you could do that. Thanks Mean, and Scar put the torch back.
- It's nothing, just a little magic.

The more they descended, the worse the corridors reeked of human filth, mold and animal droppings. Scar began to cough obviously disliking the odors.

- What? Asked Mean peevishly. We are in the dungeons, not in a motel. What did you expect?
- You are right but the stench is unbearable. If your prisoners don't die of anything else, they will die of diseases from all this mess.
- Ok, I will have their cells cleaned tomorrow. It was only the second time Mean came here and the first time he came to see the prisoner everything was pretty neat. But then again it was known he was



going to see the prisoner and surely his guards had cleaned everything before. This time he came with Scar without letting anyone else know he was coming so nobody deemed to clean.

As they were getting closer to the shaman's cell they could hear him mumbling indistinct words, words that seemed like an incantation. Scar saw him in the middle of his dim lit cell in a yoga position mumbling to himself.

- Hey, Scar said in a commanding voice, who are you?

The man stopped his babbling and looked attentively at both men, Scar and Mean. Then after a long pause, he answered in a high pitched voice:

- My name is not that important. What I can and will do is of importance. Two nights from now it will be full moon, then you will know my name. And he started laughing like a mad man. As much as Scar and Mean tried to get any other information from him from that point forward, it only proved useless as the man totally ignored both kings and went back to his mumbling.
- So what do you think? Asked Mean a bit irritated. Is he for real or just a nut case?
- Are you afraid of a shaman? I thought you were a powerful mage yourself...
- I am a powerful mage! And Mean was now even more annoyed by what Scar's words implied. Just saying that maybe we should check on him in two days again, just in case. I am glad you are here, but if this weirdo proves dangerous, well what I am trying to say is that this is not your problem. I will deal with it, you just relax, that is why you came here in the first place, not to find other problems.
- If he proves to be a problem for you and Bratty, then we will deal with it. What? Do you think I would miss out the fun? No worries Mean, my sword is as sharp as ever, said Scar who was almost glad to have found an adventure here. This would surely take his mind off

the raised taxes. Let's get some rest now, I am tired.

- Agreed, good night and see you tomorrow my friend.

Then everyone went to sleep, everyone but the shaman...

### Chapter 3: The shaman

As soon as Scar and Mean left, the shaman began his incantations again with even more zeal.

- Hah, they think these bars can stop me? The shaman was saying while looking almost as if in a state of delirium. Nothing can stop me now! I will have my undead army in less than two days and everyone

shall tremble at hearing my name because I am the one and only Ivory Shaman!

By the time he finished his sentence he was already so worn out from anger of being in a cell in the stinking dungeons that he collapsed to the ground with a thud. The anger in his eyes slowly diminished until all that was left was a blank stare and then his voice was heard once more repeating the same incantations all over again and again.

The shaman kept repeating his magic words restless for the following two days until finally the moon was up on the night sky. It was a full moon, just as the shaman had said. When the midnight hour came, the Ivory Shaman felt an immense power in his words while he spoke them and then his eyes started to glow in the dim lit dungeon cell. Then everybody in the castle felt something which resembled an earthquake as the earth shook terribly. The shaman had indeed raised the dead who had fallen under Dova's command, all the dead soldiers who had fallen on the soil of Loyalis. They were all now under his command for him to rule as he pleased. But he couldn't bring Dova back from the dead as he had died on the soil of Donn, not Loyalis and Ivory had no power there. But on the other hand he thought that it was probably better this way as it was now his army, not Dova's. So people would remember him, not Dova.

Ivory felt the quake too and knew he had done it, he had indeed raised the dead soldiers to fight for him. He was planning to take over the world one step at a time, starting with Loyalis then Donn...

Scar and Miihah also felt the movement of the earth, just as Mean, Bratty and Mongo had. They all woke up startled wondering what was going on. Mean was first to remember the shaman's warning so he looked out the window and there it was, the full moon, just as he had predicted. He urged Bratty to put something more adequate on and they went to Scar and Miihah's room. They too were already awake and properly dressed wondering the same thing, what on earth was going on?

- This must be the crazy shaman's work! I bet my life on it! Said Mean while the two women were wondering what they were talking about.

Scar put the women up to date with what they knew and they all decided to go to the dungeons and check the shaman's cell. They almost ran down the steps and when they were in front of his cell, they were in awe: the cell was empty. Not a trace of the shaman, not a trace of any kind. Just empty.

- I thought there was supposed to be a shaman in here, said Bratty irritated.
- We thought that too, there should have been a shaman in here, said Mean contemplating everything. The crazy son of a ...!!
- And I thought he was just plain crazy, said Scar to reassure Mean in a way that he couldn't have known that the shaman was actually the real deal.
- Damn, continued Mean, this can only mean one thing.
- What? Asked both Miihah and Bratty at the same time.
- That the shaman has indeed raised his undead army. Miihah, Scar, it seems that your vacation has just turned into an adventure, if you want to help us that is.
- Of course we will help! Said Scar. Where is Mongo? He will be of great help too as he has his pet dragon.
- He didn't want a room, answered Bratty, he said he would sleep in Aggy's pen for the first nights until Aggy would feel comfortable enough with his new surroundings and only then he said he would take a room. So he must be with Aggy.
- Ok, then that is where we are going! Said Scar.

Meanwhile, the shaman was back in his small cave where he had been captured by Mean's men. He could have escaped anytime but

he wanted to see his enemies, to have their image printed in the back of his mind when he would take their lives. He wasn't in a rush to escape as he could just as well perform his incantations in the dungeons as well as in his small cave. And besides, he bet that when Mean and Scar found his empty cell they must have had a dumb look on their faces. He would have loved to see that. But one can't have everything, can he? He would have to be content with the gaze in their eyes when he would rip their hearts out for what they had done. They had killed his brother, Dova. It was true that while Dova was alive he was jealous of everything he had, power, money, armies. But now that he was dead and he had nobody to be bitter on he felt it was his duty to avenge his premature death. And no, he wouldn't raise Dova from the dead although maybe if he found his body and brought it back to Loyalis he could. But he wouldn't be the same so there was no point in doing that. He didn't care about the mercenary army of undead which he had resurrected, they were just mindless pawns in his hands to handle and command as he wished. He would finally have his long waited for revenge and it would be a bitter sweet one, just as his relationship with his brother had been.

## Chapter 4: the Neon Knight

In a small village not far from Mean and Bratty's castle, on the outskirts of the village, there lived a rather uncommon family. Uncommon because the man of the house was believed to be dead but he had come back to his wife and three children, a daughter and

two sons whom he had named Vampy, Killer and the youngest was Benny. He had named his oldest son that way, Killer, as he wanted him to be a tough man when he grew up, a man to bring fear in the hearts of his enemies. And indeed the son grew up to be just as his father wanted him and even more, he was as ruthless with his enemies as he was kind and generous with the oppressed. Then they had Vampy, their lovely daughter and a few years later, the youngest son came and they named him Benny.

The Neon Knight, the man of the house, the one returned from the dead, was proud of his three children. Killer was a skilled warrior and Vampy was a good archer. Benny was still young but he showed them that he could handle daggers pretty good.

The Neon Knight felt blessed every day for the opportunity to be back with his family and also have all his memories. He was indebted to the heroes who had released him and who had given him his life back. He took an oath to help them if the time came when they would need him. Little did he know that time would come pretty soon as Loyalis and its people was threatened to be massacred by hordes of undead.

So one day as he was relaxing with his wife taking a stroll after the family dinner he felt that something was not right. That night when he went to bed, on the full moon night when the shaman was summoning his army, the Neon Knight suddenly woke up from his sleep all sweaty and hardly breathing. Deep in the core of his heart he knew that something terrible must have happened although he couldn't put his finger on it. As much as he tried he couldn't go back to sleep. He silently left the bed which he was sharing with his wife who was still asleep and went out to take some air. Then he felt something like an earthquake and he was sure of it: something bad, something evil had happened.

He fell on his knees and when his knees touched the ground he began to have images of an army of undead soldiers in his head. He knew it in his heart that the images were as real as he was. He had to

warn his family, to find a safe place for them and then he had to warn the king of Donn. So he slowly got up from the ground and ran to the house. His wife was cooking while his two children were arguing about something but he couldn't focus his mind to find out what they were arguing about. He had only one thought on his mind: saving them, saving his family.

The Neon Knight started to struggle as he didn't know how to say what he was about to say. How could he explain that he saw images of an undead horde coming to destroy everything and everyone?

His wife, Susan, saw him in the doorway all sweaty and she immediately realized that something was wrong. So she asked Killer and Vampy to be quiet and then spoke to her husband.

- What is the matter? Susan asked him. What is wrong with you?
- Susan, I want you to listen to me. This is no joke. I want you to take the kids and hide in the basement. Block the door. You have plenty of supplies there to last for a month. An undead army is approaching.
- How do you know all these?
- I don't know. Maybe because I too have come back from the dead. I must warn the heroes who have set me free. And I will fight by their side. You hide in the basement and don't come out for any reason. The Neon Knight had such a forlorn look on his face while he was saying these that his wife was sure he wasn't kidding and that matters were as bad as he depicted them.
- Ok, I love you, take care and come back to us! And Susan started crying.
- Don't cry my love. I came back last time, I will come this time too. Take care of the kids Susan! Hope I will see you soon!
- Where are you going, father? Asked Killer with concern in his eyes.
- Father? Asked Vampy who was also concerned as she had no clue

about what was going on.

- A great danger is approaching and I have to warn the people who can defeat this army of darkness. Take care of each other and hopefully we will see each other soon.

Then the Neon Knight left in a hurry for Scar's castle. He was determined to find his friends and let them know of the danger. He owed them his life and he was ready to pay his debt if it came to that. But he would fight till his last breath to defend the ones who had released him. If it wasn't for them he would still be a brainless puppet in Demonizer's hands. He owed them the remaining of his days, all he had he owed to the courageous heroes who had also saved him when they saved Miih.

## Chapter 5: The undead

Ivory was gloating over his army and the fact that he had escaped from the dungeons. His army was standing in front of his small cave, waiting for his command. Mindless puppets in his hands, obeying his



every command, not needing to be paid, clad or fed. The perfect army. Cheap and efficient. Just the way he liked it as he was a niggard himself. He never helped anyone, he was selfish and self-centered. He never even gave money loans to his own brother when his brother needed to pay these same armies, the only difference being that these armies had been living souls back then and had to be paid. Had been Dova's mercenaries. Now he was using them as undead. He had raised them from the dead, now they were at his beck and call. A fearless and brainless horde. He would conquer Donn and take back Loyalis, he would be better than Dova had been. Too bad he was dead and he couldn't boast about it, to spite him. Even so, it was worth it. He would be the Supreme ruler.

This is how the Ivory Shaman was thinking while the undead kept coming from where they had died. They were numerous. It was a scary sight to behold: seeing bones and rotten flesh get up from the ground, take up swords and shields and whatever else they could find and marching towards the shaman's cave. They were a truly ugly sight like a nightmare come to life. A walking and chopping and slashing nightmare risen with the sole purpose of killing whoever stood in their way.

By evening, a huge army of undead soldiers was already gathered at the shaman's cave entrance waiting for orders. Ivory was thrilled in comparison to anybody else who would have been horrified. While he was alive, Dova always told Ivory that he was creepy. Ivory used to laugh at him in response which annoyed Dova even more. He was determined to succeed where Dova had failed. He didn't need motivating speeches for his army, all he needed was to command them and they would obey blindfolded. Not that they had eyes anymore anyway.

Ivory looked over his army and was satisfied. They were all armed and ready to fight his enemies so he finally gave the order:

- Attack, my pets, attack Loyalis, strike everyone down. And then we

shall attack Donn, too. Get moving!! He almost yelled the last command, drooling at the thought that he would soon be king over the realm if everything went according to his plans. Don't let anything stop you!

The undead screeched their teeth and headed towards the heart of Loyalis, the town where Mean and Bratty's castle was, Dustwither.

Ivory was riding a black stallion leading his troops towards Dustwither.

- If you could only see me now, brother, Ivory thought. Here I am, leading what used to be your army. Now they respond to my commands!! And he started to laugh loudly, his face twisting in an ugly way.

Ivory and his army attacked all the small peaceful villages that were on their way to Dustwither, killing every living being and setting everything ablaze. Then he thought that if he killed literally everyone he would be king over his undead army and just them. He didn't want that. They were stupid creatures. So he decided to order his army to maim the people and the opposing soldiers so he could enslave them. But the undead were brainless so instead of maiming, they ended up killing most of the people as they hurt them too bad for the poor people to survive.

On the second night Ivory and his army were at the Gates of Dustwither, ready to attack. Ivory got off his stallion and yelled the command to attack from the bottom of his lungs.

He was watching his soldiers attack the massive gates with a smirk on his face.

Ivory was so excited that he didn't even notice the silence from the other side of the gates. If he had been paying attention, he would have noticed that something was wrong.

## Chapter 6: The retreat

- Mongo! Wake up! And Scar shook him to wake him up. Aggy on the other hand woke in a jiffy when it felt their presence near his master. But he was calm as he knew they were friends.
- Scar? Miihah? Oh, what is wrong? Why is everybody here? Bratty, Mean?
- A crazy shaman has raised an army of undead and is coming to attack us, answered Scar. He will most certainly be here in a day or two.
- Oh, and you want me to welcome him? Said Mongo jokingly and still half asleep and yawning.
- Yeah, get Aggy ready to set his ass on fire.  
Aggy growled at hearing his name.
- Mean, said Scar, gather your army and get ready for a hell of a fight!
- About that.....I don't know how to put this...I have no army! Just two hundred loyal men, that is all! The people of Loyalis were mostly mercenaries who fought for Dova. The rest were enslaved to work the land and feed them.
- Two hundred men? Asked Scar panicked. Are you trying to be funny, Mean? You should know that this is not the time for joking around!

- Wish I was! Mean went on. Unfortunately this is the naked truth. We will have to fight the undead ourselves. Every blade counts, or in my case and my wife's case, every spell counts!
- Mongo, said Miihah, maybe it would be a good idea to get Aggy and fly above the land to make an idea of how many soldiers the crazy shaman has raised. And then report back to us.
- Aggy, ready for a night flight? Asked Mongo petting his dragon whom he started to really care about.
- You know I would do anything for you my little master, answered Aggy telepathically.
- Ok then, Mongo went on, let's do this! And he climbed on Aggy's back and they were off in the night.
- At least place the two hundred soldiers at the city gates...or maybe just order them to hide to save their lives. It will be a slaughterhouse here. With or without them our odds will be the same. And saying that, Scar touched his sword as if to make sure it was in its place. Then satisfied he decided to wait for Mongo's return.

Mongo was scanning the area searching for the undead army. He didn't have to search too long as he soon distinguished the army marching silently in the night, coming for Dustwith. They were more than he could count. He reckoned they didn't stand a chance against such an army which was already dead, by the way. So they couldn't feel any pain which made them even more deadly, meaning that no injury would stop them from attacking. They would have to be burnt or have their heads chopped off to be stopped. But could Aggy burnt them all before he would be taken down? No... He knew he couldn't, not even with Mean and Bratty's help, although they were mages. The army was too large, the shaman hadn't only raised the mercenaries from the dead, but also their own people who had

been killed by the mercenaries. So indeed the army was something to be feared. They would need help from their friends back home in Donn.

Mongo had seen enough so he decided to return to Dustwither with the bad news. His friends were already gathered in the castle yard waiting for him. The moment he touched the ground, they almost jumped on him asking him the one question that was on everybody's mind: how many are they? How large was the army they were about to face?

- I'm afraid they are a lot more than us few can handle. We will have to think of something if we want to survive this. We can take down a lot of their army but in the end, they will take us down, too. They are just too many. Try to imagine a field of grass...and now imagine that every blade of grass is a soldier, that is how many they are. And armed to the teeth.
- Not to say that every soldier will have to be killed not just hurt because an injury won't stop these from fighting. Only beheading them or burning them, said Scar putting Mongo's thoughts into words.
- Ok, then what's the plan? Asked Mean eagerly.
- What should we do? Echoed Miih.
- I say send our two hundred soldiers to escort the peasants somewhere safe, as far away from this place as possible, somewhere in the western woods, said Bratty. I heard that there are caves and tunnels there. They can hide there until we figure this out!
- Alright! As much as it hurts me to accept this, I have to agree with you, said Mean with a sorrowful look on his face.

- Truth is that after Dova's defeat nobody thought we would be attacked again so soon! Said Scar trying to appease his state of mind. It is not your fault, Mean.
- Yeah, just two hundred soldiers... oh my God. Wasn't expecting a war so soon after we had just won another. I thought I had plenty of time to gather an army. And with the mercenaries dead...who would have thought we would have to fight them again, them being even worse this time, undead...
- See? Miihah also intervened. It is nobody's fault. But better save the people and ourselves. Send them to the western woods for shelter and we should also flee this place before the undead get here.
- Hmm, the shaman will be disappointed to find an empty castle! Would like to see the look on his face, the bastard! Uttered Mean with a little satisfaction in the corner of his eyes.
- Mongo, do you think that Aggy can fly with all of us on his back? Asked Scar.
- Yeah, he will have to, answered Mongo feeling sorry for the ordeal his dragon would have to undergo, carrying them all on his back.
- OK, said Mean, hop on Aggy and wait for me. I will give the order for the soldiers to escort the peasants. And he was off.

Half an hour later the two hundred soldiers were escorting the remaining people of Dustwither towards the western woods, towards the safety of the caves. At the same time Aggy was lifting from the ground with Scar, Miihah, Mean, Bratty, Hizzy and of course Mongo on his back.

Mean was wondering if he would ever regain Dustwither and Loyalis back from the shaman's hands, if he would ever rule again. He got used to being king and have Bratty as his queen. If he won't be

able to reconquer Loyalis, then he would be Scar's mage again. And it had felt so good to be a king, to have subjects, to give orders for a change. And he had been a good king, even if for just a short period of time.

All these thoughts were making Mean dizzy with sorrow on the one hand, but on the other hand it also made him want his kingdom back with such a fervor and determination that he would do anything in his power to get it back and save the remaining of his people from the caves where he had sent them to hide.

## Chapter 7: Bearer of bad news

The Neon Knight was exhausted from the running but he was so close now. He could see Lir's walls in the distance. He had to make it, he had to warn his friends about the danger. So with a final effort, more an act of will than anything else, he got up again and barely breathing he started to run again. But he was soon out of breath and collapsed. He fainted.

When he came to his senses, the Neon Knight decided to walk at a normal pace this time. Better to get to Lir a few minutes later than not to get there at all. One more hour and he arrived in front of the city gates. There were guards by the gates. One told him to halt when he got close enough.

- Who goes there? Asked the guard.

- Please let me pass, I bring news of great importance. I must see the king at once! Answered the Neon Knight obviously very fatigued.
- What news? Asked another guard suddenly curious.
- Bad news, I'm afraid, answered the Knight again patiently as he knew they were only doing their duty.
- Oh, bad news? I was going to ask you what news so I could deliver them to the general as the king is away. But if you say they are bad news then I don't want to be the bearer. Come, I will escort you and you can tell general Harry himself what this is all about. Then he can decide for himself how bad the news are... glad I am not in your shoes. Come now!
- OK, thank you kindly, answered Neon and followed the guard.

The interior of the city was also heavily guarded. That was good. The people of Lir were doing their jobs unaware of the coming war he was about to warn the general about. He felt sorry for them, for their sense of safety which would be soon shattered to pieces. It was not his fault though, he was only the bearer of the news, not the culprit. He wished things were different and that there was no threat lurking but the facts remained. He couldn't change the facts, he could only warn them and fight by their side.

- Here, said the guard, this way! And he pointed towards the castle doors.
- Oh, sorry, my mind was elsewhere, said the Neon Knight.
- No problem, just follow me. And he lead him through some long corridors until they got in front of two large wooden doors which lead to the council room. The guard knocked on the door and after



he heard Harry answer him from behind the door, he opened it and entered, followed by the Knight.

- Sorry to disturb you, the guard addressed Harry with humility and respect, but this man here says he brings news. Do you want me to wait here until you finish talking so I can escort him back or may I return to my post lord Harry?
- No need, he doesn't seem dangerous and I think I can handle him if need be. And Harry laughed friendly as he remembered exactly who the Neon Knight was.

After the guard left the council room, Harry asked the Knight to have a seat. Olekson, Harry's brother, was also there.

- What brings you here? Asked Harry while making a discreet sign to Olekson to stay calm as everything was under control. He saw his brother with his hand on his sword as Olekson didn't know who the Knight was. But at Harry's sign, Olekson relaxed his hand and let go of the end of the sword and was now paying attention to what was being said.
- Bad news, I'm afraid. A horde of undead is probably attacking Loyalis as we speak and Donn is next.
- Bad news indeed! Agreed Harry, concern in his voice. Are you sure my friend?
- Positive! We have to prepare at once, maybe there is still time to save Loyalis.
- We will divide the troops. A part stays here under your command, my brother, said Harry addressing Olek, and the rest will be under my command. We leave for Loyalis at the break of dawn. Send word to the troops and I will get Alyss and Adi.
- What about me? Asked Neon. I want to fight with you!

- Of course! Laughed Harry and patted his shoulder. I had no doubts that you wouldn't fight with us! You didn't go all this way just to warn us, I was sure you would join us and you are most welcome my friend!
- OK, answered the Neon Knight relieved.
- You should get some rest tonight, you look exhausted. Come, I will show you to a room, uttered Olek who was sure of his good intentions by now.
- Yes, I have been on the road for the last day and a half and have had no rest since then.
- I will also have some food sent to your room, added Olek in a pleasant voice.
- Thank you so much, now that you mention it, yes I think I am hungry as well!!
- This will be your room for the night, said Olek showing him a cozy room lit by a few candles and with a comfy bed on the left side of it. See you in the morning!
- Yes, definitely, answered Neon.

Olek left him and went to order the maids from the kitchen to get him something to eat and he also told them to be quick or he might fall asleep before he could eat. He also told them he held them responsible if their guest fell asleep on an empty stomach.

## Chapter 8: Disappointment

Ivory was watching his army bring down the city gates of Dustwither. He was grinning so wildly that all his gross yellow teeth were seen. Half an hour later the gates were down and so was the smirk on his face when he saw it: the city was deserted, not a soul in sight.

- What the hell is this? He screamed so loud that even the undead stopped to watch him. His voice seemed unearthly.

Nobody answered him though as his army was brainless and untouched by his disappointment. He wanted a war, a battle to be remembered but instead he got it all free: Dustwither was his without the epic battle he had been expecting and so Loyalis was his.

After the initial shock of finding a deserted place he thought maybe it was even better this way. It didn't matter, he would have his epic battle, he would attack Donn next because that is where they must have fled. But not yet, first he would sit on the throne of Loyalis, on Mean's throne. He could attack Donn tomorrow.

With these thoughts on his mind, Ivory walked proudly among his undead army. He entered the castle, Mean and Bratty's castle. It was his castle now, all his. He walked from chamber to chamber examining everything. He had to admit at least to himself that the castle was looking gorgeous, nice and clean and beautifully decorated. So the more he thought about it the more he was glad the battle had been avoided and the castle remained untouched. Way better than if it had been destroyed during the battle. Then he would have had to rebuild it from rubble. But he wasn't in the mood to celebrate such a victory as it didn't feel like one.

Ivory was tired even if his army didn't have any feelings at all, he needed rest. He was human. So he went to sleep with a sour taste in his mouth while his undead army was waiting outside the castle for his next command.

It was a terrifying sight to behold: an undead army filling the whole city of Dustwither, a city which had been filled just two days ago with happy people, people who had just got their hopes up for a better life back under Mean and Bratty's rule. Now nothing reminded of them, of their lives; everything was so spooky now. As far as the eyes could see there were just these unholy creatures, these abominations.

Meanwhile the people of Dustwither were led by the two hundred soldiers under the command of a young general, Lucas. Lucas was young but brave and he loved his job. He loved the feel of a sword in his hands especially as he knew it was used for a just cause, to serve and protect the remaining people of Dustwither and of Loyalis as the others from the other smaller towns had been wiped out by the undead. So he felt it was his sacred duty to save these people. They were all relying on him which made it a bit stressful but even so he worked just as well under stressful conditions as he did in normal conditions.

Next in rank among the soldiers was officer Potz. It was his nickname as nobody knew his real name. He too was young and brave and ambitious. He liked his military career and was hoping that maybe one day he too would be made a general, just as Lucas.

Lucas and Potz were both respected and loved among the soldiers as well as among the people of Loyalis. In spite of their young age they had both proven themselves many times on the battlefield which had earned them their ranks and the respect they were

enjoying.

They all entered the western woods and headed for the maze of caves which were supposed to shelter them from the undead. By nightfall they saw the caves and entered carefully, Lucas and Potz ahead, making sure it was safe. Some of the people had torches to light the way while the soldiers, with their weapons ready to be drawn, were making sure there were no dangers inside.

The inside of the cave was dark and dank. It was a large cave which led to a maze of tunnels. Lucas and Potz decided it was best to put sentinels at the entrances of the tunnels and stay in this cave for shelter. They feared that if they ventured through the maze of tunnels they might get lost or even worse, some of them might stray from the rest. So it was best if they all stayed in the first cave with the sentinels guarding the tunnel entrances. This way if something came from there they would be warned and if something came from the woods they would see for themselves.

Everyone was tired so besides from the sentinels, 5 more soldiers stood watch while the rest laid down to get some rest. Soon everybody started snoring as they were fast asleep. After midnight even the sentinels dozed off while on guard. Then the 5 soldiers who were supposed to stay on watch duty also snoozed off one by one. So there was practically nobody awake to warn the rest in case of any peril. This is how nobody noticed the thin shadows creeping in the darkness.

The 10 sentinels who were asleep on duty fell to the ground one after the other, dead almost at the same time. They had their throats slit in a swift movement. One of the 5 watchmen heard a thud and woke up just in time to give the alarm as he saw some creatures that looked like a combination of lizards and men as they were killing the sentinels. Lucas and Potz were already up and armed. Then the rest of the soldiers woke and armed themselves, ready to defend the people who had entrusted them with their lives.

- What in heaven's name are these creatures? Asked Lucas as he had

never seen anything like it.

- Lizard men, answered Potz with certainty in his voice.
- How do you know, Potz? Asked Lucas while still agape in wonder.
- I have fought such creatures a few years ago... or rather watched them kill my mates as I was too young to defend them. I tried to fight them off but in the end I had to run to save my life. I am so ashamed but this is the truth.
- Oh, Potz, said Lucas trying to make his friend feel better, it wasn't your fault. You are still very young so a few years ago when you say you first saw these creatures you were just a boy. You couldn't have fought them. It was the wisest thing you could have done at that time and under those circumstances. But you know what? Here is your chance to avenge your mates. So what do you say, Potz? Kill these bastard lizard men? Now you can save these people, Potz, and have your revenge.
- Yes, you are right. There is no use in crying over spilled milk. What's done is done and cannot be changed.
- Nope, but we can change the fate of these innocent people of Dustwither. Their fates haven't been sealed yet, added Lucas full of wisdom although he was pretty young himself. But he had lead a rough life which had hardened him.
- You know Lucas, your words mean a lot to me. Ok, let's kill these things! And Potz cried a fierce battle cry which made the lizard men be afraid for a split second.

Then the battle started. The people of Dustwither all gathered in a corner of the cave as they weren't fighters, they were peasants who had only worked the land their entire lives. The soldiers on the other hand were already engaged in battle, Lucas and Potz at their lead.

The lizard men were armed with long spears while the soldiers had swords and shields. And also a few archers. The lizard men had the advantage of surprise but the soldiers were also well trained and quickly made up for their initial drawback of having been taken like from a pot.

The battle was fierce, blood was everywhere from both sides. The pressure on the minds of the soldiers was huge as they weren't only defending their own lives but they were also defending the last people of Loyalis. It was the nation's future at stake, they had to be victorious.

Lucas and Potz were fighting back to back, protecting one another. They were glad that the lizard men were not attacking the peasants and were only attacking them and the soldiers. The peasants weren't seen as threats so the lizard men reckoned to deal with the soldiers first and afterwards deal with the peasants.

Everyone fought his best but in the end there were only a few of the soldiers still alive and of course Lucas and Potz. But the lizard men had all been killed. The people of Loyalis were safe at least for now.

## Chapter 9: Reunion

Mongo was softly patting Aggy as he felt his poor dragon was getting tired from the heavy burden on his back. It wouldn't be long now before they would arrive to Donn, to Lir, home.

- Are you tired, my friend? Asked Mongo telepathically.
- What do you think? Answered Aggy wanting to appear grumpy. But Mongo knew him only too well by now to realize he was just messing with him.
- We are almost there. Then you can rest as much as you want...not too much though as the undead will soon be upon us.
- Ha-ha, are you trying to be funny, my little human friend?
- Yeah, I thought I was funny, not just trying to be funny! And now it was Mongo's turn to act grumpy. Then he started to laugh loudly.
- Are you having secret conversations with Aggy again? Asked Bratty wondering what the two had been laughing about.
- Just trying to get Aggy in a good mood, make him forget about the cumber on his back, uttered Mongo in a friendly voice.
- And is it working? Asked Miih who loved life in all forms and who cared about every life, be it a human life or an animal's life.
- I hope so! Yes, no worries Miih. Aggy is OK.
- Good, and Miih smiled content.
- Look, Scar interrupted their conversation, our castle! We are almost there!

Everybody was relieved to see Lir and Scar and Miih's castle. Soon they were inside the castle, going straight for the council room.



Harry and Olek were busy making rescue plans and were in the seventh heaven when they saw them safe and sound in front of their eyes.

Scar gave word for Alyss, Ulo and Adi to be informed regarding the current events as they were also needed. Everyone who could fight was needed in the fight that was to come. He also sent for his inventor, Scholar, to be brought in the council room.

- I will get Alyss up to date with everything and will get her here, offered Mongo.
- Ok, agreed king Scar, who will get Adi, Ulo and Scholar?
- I can go get Adi, offered Harry, Scar's general. He is probably training in the courtyard. He is the most ambitious young man I have ever seen, added Harry who really cared for the young boy.
- Ok, I will get Ulo, said Olek. He is most likely fishing. He seems to enjoy fishing very much lately.
- Who is Scholar? Asked Mean as Scar had hired Scholar after his departure with Bratty. So neither Bratty nor Mean knew him.
- He is my inventor, said Scar simply. When you and Bratty left I had no more mages at court so I hired something different, an inventor.
- Ok...sounds legit, said Mean after thinking for a minute or two.

Mongo left to bring Alyss. She was surely at home not knowing that they had returned already and not knowing that they were about to fight a powerful foe pretty soon. He knocked on her door. He heard her footsteps tread lightly towards the door.

- It is me, said Mongo, open up Alyss!
- Mongo? She said and opened the door. I thought you were away with Scar and Miah in Loyalis.

- I was, we were. We just got back.
- Why so soon? Asked Alyss puzzled as she remembered clearly that Mongo told her they would stay there for about a fortnight. Did anything happen?
- Kind of... and Mongo told her about the undead army and the crazy shaman who controlled them.
- As I see it, said Alyss, we kill the shaman and problem solved.
- You might be right but for that we have to be able to get near him. And he is surrounded by his army.
- I guess we will have to find a way!
- OK, let's go to the council room, Scar is gathering everyone.

One hour later everyone was in the council room: Scar, Miihah and her maid Hizzy, Harry, Olek, Mean, Bratty, Adi, Ulo, Mongo, Alyss, Scholar and even Noah the treasurer.

## Chapter 10: Battle plans

- So Scholar, how far is the Wall? Asked Scar.

Scholar took a step forward shyly and answered in a low voice:

- It is almost done on the southern and western sides of Lir. On the eastern and northern sides it is just half way built, my lord.
- It will have to do. Any other inventions you've been working on, Scholar? Or just this wall... please say you didn't spend all the money Noah gave on a single invention...
- There is one more thing, answered Scholar while examining the new faces in the room, finding one particularly beautiful. He was looking at Hizzy while he spoke, trying to get her to notice him.
- Speak up man! Burst Harry eagerly.
- I can't take all the credit for this second invention as I had some help in developing it, Scholar went on when he was abruptly interrupted again, by Olek this time.
- Who cares about that? All that matters is to be something useful and to work. So what is it?
- Knowing that Ulo is the the best trapper of the land I asked for his advice to set some traps, not to rely only on a defensive wall. And Scholar felt a bit irritated by Olek's words as he had cut him short earlier and he wanted to impress the new girl.
- Should be fun then, said Mongo with a cunning smile. Ulo can also be very inventive so let's hear it!
- OK, the trap works like this: when the enemy has breached the front gates, they will be in for a surprise. Once they step foot on the ground beyond the gates, they will fall in a deep pit through the ground which is only put on planks above the pits, masking them. The beauty of it is the fact that the planks are designed to swallow them so to say, letting them fall into the pit and then the planks are pulled back up with the same decoy ground on them, ready to send the next wave of unaware enemies into the pits which by the way are filled with very long and sharp metal spikes so whoever falls down there

surely won't get up anymore. Some of them will walk on the ground above the planks until the planks will give in to their weight and will let them fall next to the others.

- And what happens when the pit gets full? Asked Mean.
- When it reaches a certain level, then an iron slab will automatically be switched on, closing them in the pit for eternity or for how long you want, your highness, answered Scholar proud of himself.
- Sounds good I guess, said Scar pondering. So we have an unfinished wall and a pit of metal spikes.
- And don't forget about us, added Alyss, your soldiers. We should win this, my king. And if we don't and this is our final battle and we die here, then it won't matter anymore anyway, right?
- Yeah, but let this be their final battle, not ours, said Scar.
- Well, they died once, they will die again, for good this time, mumbled Mean who was very upset about having been forced to abandon his throne.
- I want Alyss to lead the archers, to supervise them. Every archer be up on the wall, quivers full and ready to shoot. Also I want them to have their arrows imbued with oiled cloth set ablaze before shooting them. We have to burn them to stop them.
- Yes my king, answered Alyss.
- And I want you Mongo to set the undead on fire from the sky, with Aggy.
- Wouldn't have it any other way, Scar. Aggy can hardly wait to cook some undead butts.
- Mean, Bratty, you will use whatever spells you know to dwindle their numbers. Scholar, you will make sure your wall and your traps work properly. You can take Ulo with you if you both worked on those traps.

- Yes, your majesty, answered Scholar and Ulo.
- Harry, Olek and Adi and Neon, you will fight side by side with the rest of the soldiers, commanding them and inspiring them to be just as brave as you are! Scar went on giving out orders.
- What about me? Asked Miihah pouting, pretending to be upset for not having been included in the battle plans.
- You, my darling, answered Scar, will do what you best: heal our wounded soldiers. It will be an epic battle so there will be many who will need your help, Miihah.
- Yes, said Miihah, and Hizzy can help me with the wounded. She can change their bandages, clean their wounds and so on. Is this ok with you, Hizzy?
- Of course, my lady, answered Hizzy while starting to love Miihah because Miihah, unlike her old masters, always asked for her opinion, never forced her to do anything. And she also paid her for her services which had never happened before with her old masters.
- So everybody knows what he has to do? Asked Scar making sure that everyone knew what he or she was supposed to do when the time came. Scar was the best king when it came to strategy. Donn had never had a better tactician than Scar before. In spite of his young age, he was the smartest of the Kings that had ever ruled Donn. He knew when to push forward just as well as he knew when it was time to retreat and fight another day when the odds would be in his favor again.
- Yep, all clear, said Mongo to reassure Scar that everything was clearly understood.
- One more thing, said Scar with a sly smile, from now on we have a few more generals among our ranks besides Harry... Olek, Adi, Neon, Mongo and Alyss! Congratulations to all! Now get going!

Everyone left the room in a hurry and headed for their assigned posts. The tension, the waiting was almost unbearable. Everyone's nerves were on edge. They were all wondering whether they would make it this time too. Nobody was expecting another war so soon, they were finally enjoying life when this new threat came like lightning on them.

Alyss gathered all the archers and made sure that they knew what they had to do, reminding them to send the arrows ablaze towards the enemy, to set them on fire. If they used common arrows, those would only pierce the undead and that would be useless as they were immune to any pain. They had to be destroyed.

Soon the outer wall, Scholar's wall which was surrounding the city of Lir, Donn's capital where Scar and Miihah had their residence, was teeming with archers. They were waiting patiently at their posts for the enemy to arrive and the battle to begin. Alyss was just as nervous as they were but she was trying her best to hide it. She knew she was the one they looked up to so she had to be brave, to be their inspiration. All archers were under her direct command so she wanted to make them proud because she was indeed the most skilled of all.

Harry, Olek, Neon and Adi were standing fearless in front the armies, people they grew up with, people they were friends with, people who might die in the coming battle against the crazy shaman and his undead army. Harry, as he was the king's general, felt it was his duty to hold a speech in front of the armies:

- You, said Harry pointing his hand towards the army, you are the last hope for the battle to come. Loyalis is already under the shaman's control, only a few of the people managed to fled and hide in the woods. If we fall, then all is lost! But we won't fall! We are the best warriors on the face of the realm, best than the ones before us and better than the ones to come! We fight for freedom, for our loved ones' lives, for all there is and that is to come and for our future! For

our children's future! If we fail, they will have no future, they will either be the shaman's slaves or killed by his army! We fight for Donn and Loyalis, we fight for our families and friends!

When Harry finished his speech, tears were rolling in the corner of his eyes. He too had been inspired by his own words.

All soldiers applauded Harry. They were good honest people, trying to make Donn a safe place for their children and their children's children. They were all ready to die to defend Donn, to protect each other. They were hard trained warriors, used to hardships and to what a battle meant. They knew there was no room for mistakes or hesitations, one tiny slip or a moment of being distracted could cost them their lives.

Harry decided to divide the armies into four equal troops, each lead by one of them, by himself, by Adi, Neon and Olek. This way each of them was responsible for his own soldiers and orders were given as well as followed easier.

Olek and Harry were used to commanding troops but for Adi and Neon, it was something new, it made them feel important but at the same time responsible for each life that was under their command.

They decided for each one of the four to take his assigned soldiers and defend one side of Lir: Harry the Northern side, Olek the Southern side, Adi went to defend the Western side and Neon the East side. All they had to do now was wait. Their wait wouldn't be a long one.

## Chapter 11: Under attack!

Ivory was leading his army towards Lir. He was feeling particularly good this morning. Soon he would get to Lir and destroy it! He would be king! At least this is what he was thinking.

After marching for hours Ivory and his army finally arrived at the Wall surrounding Lir. It was an impressive wall, too high to climb. So he reckoned he would have to bring it down. Then suddenly he saw it: a huge dragon flying above his army raining fire on them.

- Now where did that come from? Ivory asked himself. Then he roared from the bottom of his lungs for everyone to hear:
- I am Ivory, late king Dova's brother! And I will do something he couldn't: I will destroy you all, starting with your pet dragon!! And no sooner had he said that when he started casting a spell of freeze towards Aggy. But Mongo saw it and dodged just in time. However, his next spell didn't miss and it froze poor Aggy in midair. Mongo nevertheless managed to jump off Aggy just in the nick of time otherwise he would have been frozen too.

Aggy fell to the ground with a noisy thud. He was lucky because he hadn't been too high in the air or he would have smashed to smithereens when touching the ground. As it was, he was enveloped in a thin layer of ice which cracked at the edges when he hit the ground beneath.

Mongo on the other hand fell a few meters away from Aggy and made himself unseen in the high grass while cursing Ivory for what he had done to Aggy.



- Behold! Yelled Ivory with a huge grin on his face. Your dragon is no more!

At that point a swarm of fire arrows flew over his head. Alyss had given the signal for the archers to start shooting their fire arrows towards the enemy. Arrows were buzzing continuously while some hit their targets and others didn't.

Ivory started to hurl huge rocks at the Wall until finally he managed to breach it. The wall took many hits until it finally gave in. Then his swarm of undead rushed through the opening while they were being shot at by the archers on the wall. Many of the undead were burnt by Alyss and her archers but many passed through. Then it was Ulo and Scholar's turn to intervene. When the first wave of undead stepped on the trap, Scholar activated it sending the undead to the bottom of the pit to be pierced by the iron stakes. Then Harry and his troops attacked the ones who surpassed the pit.

Harry was fighting bravely, his trusted ax and a hammer in his hands. He was smashing their heads, swirling in their midst. Then the next wave of undead entered through the breach in the Wall.

- Get ready Scholar, uttered Ulo.
- Yes, I will activate it in a minute, just let them gather a bit more to send as many as possible to the pit.
- They are coming, Scholar! Activate it now!
- OK, and Scholar pulled some levers which activated the trap sending almost half of the second wave of undead to the bottom of the pit.
- It is almost full, said Ulo, we cannot send anymore to the pit! Our generals will have to kill the rest!
- Yep, the pit has reached its limit, agreed Scholar.
- But Alyss and her archers has also taken out a lot of the undead. Now

it's up to Harry, Adi, Olek and Neon I guess.

- That is right, repeated Scholar while wishing he had had more time to finish his wall before having to fight a horde of undead.

The undead were fighting just as fierce as Scar's soldiers were. And they kept coming. Even after many of them had been sent back to hell by the archers and by Scholar and Ulo's trap, still they kept coming. Scar's soldiers were fighting the best they could to kill the abominations but many of them lost their lives in the battle. Something had to be done, Ivory had to be destroyed. With him dead, his army would probably return to the ground where they should have stayed.

- Miihah, have you seen Mongo and Aggy? Asked Scar worried.
- I saw them earlier burning the undead from the sky. But then...
- What? Asked Scar more worried when he saw Miihah also worried. Then what, Miihah? What happened?
- I saw Aggy fall from the sky. He fell behind the Northern side of the Wall. I was wondering if you could take me there and see if I can save Aggy and find Mongo.
- Ok, let's do this, answered Scar contemplating the situation. We have to find them. Stay close to me, Miihah, my love.
- Mean, Bratty, said Scar addressing his two friends, I will need your help.
- Of course, anything you need, answered both of them. How can we be of help?
- I want you two mages to burn and freeze the undead that will be attacking Miihah and me. We will go find Mongo and Aggy. I will protect Miihah with my life but I want to make sure we survive this. So

I want you two to cover us till we get behind the gates where Miihah saw Aggy falling earlier.

- Sure thing, Scar, answered Bratty. We will be right behind you.

Scar took Miihah's hand and they fought their way through the undead soldiers that were everywhere. Scar was slashing the undead with swift moves, chopping off their heads to make sure they stayed dead this time. Meanwhile Bratty and Mean were sending fireballs and ice shards towards the undead that were getting too close to Miihah and Scar. And he killed the ones that Bratty and Mean missed.

They saw a small breach in the Wall but it was large enough for them to go through if they went on by one.

- Let's hurry towards that opening! Said Scar addressing Miihah. Bratty, Mean, thank you for your help. We go alone from here. You two can stay here and keep killing undead. We might need your help again if we will have to come back using this same breach in the Wall, so stay here, ok?
- OK Scar, no worries, answered Mean. Go find our friend, find Mongo!
- And Aggy, added Bratty.
- That is our intention. We will find them, dead or alive, we will find them. A dark cloud passed over Scar's face when he thought that his friend might be dead somewhere.
- Scar, listen to me, uttered Miihah when she saw Scar so worried, I am sure Mongo is fine. And if he is wounded, we just have to find him and I will heal him. You know you have the best healer of the realm by your side, don't you? And when we find Aggy I will see if I can also help him.
- Yes, you are right! Let's find them! Let's find our friends, said Scar referring to Aggy as a friend, too.

They advanced easily through the high grass as all the undead were rushing into the city of Lir, not outside where they were. They walked at a speedy pace looking every direction for Aggy and Mongo. Then they saw Aggy frozen solid in the grass a few feet away from them.

- Look, said Scar. Aggy is down there in the grass. Let's hurry!
- Oh, said Miihah hardly audible, I hope I can save him too...

As they approached Aggy they saw something in the grass next to him.

- Mongo! Cried both Scar and Miihah with relief. Are you OK, Mongo?

Mongo raised his head and they could see he had been crying. He could hardly speak when he answered them.

- Scar, Miihah! What are you doing out here?
- Looking for you two, she answered. And she took his hands in hers to comfort Mongo. I am so glad you are OK, Mongo!
- I am but Aggy is not! The crazy shaman did this to him! I managed to jump off just in time to save myself but for Aggy it was too late. Can you do something to save him, Miihah? He asked with new found hope in his eyes.
- Stand back and let me see what I can do, Miihah answered in the softest voice.

Mongo and Scar stood aside to let her work her magic. Miihah touched Aggy and began to recite ancient healing spells which only she knew. The thin layer of ice that was surrounding Aggy started to melt until there was no more. But Aggy wasn't breathing yet. And Miihah seemed tired from the effort.

- Are you OK, Miihah? Asked Scar worried about his wife.

- Yes, don't worry. Just a bit tired.
- Rest a bit and then you can try again if you want, said Mongo feeling guilty for the state Miihah was in.
- No, I have to try now. Or he dies because the ice that was keeping Aggy frozen but alive has melted. Stand aside please, she said. Then she immediately began to recite her healing spells again. She could feel her own energy leaving her but she wasn't ready to give up, not yet. She knew how much Aggy meant for Mongo. She had to save Aggy for Mongo's sake. Then suddenly she could feel a faint heartbeat in Aggy's chest. She had saved him!! She continued to say the healing spells until she felt his heartbeat strong enough to be sure he was saved and then she swooned.
- Miihah? Said Scar worried to death for his wife who was lying in the grass beside Aggy.
- Miihah? Uttered Mongo too, worried for her life and thinking that if anything happened to her then it would be his fault.

Scar took her pulse to make sure she was alive. She had a pulse so he relaxed a bit. He took her in his arms.

- We need to get her back to the castle, said Scar, she has a maid whom she has been teaching some of the art of healing, Hizzy. She might be able to help her.

Meanwhile Aggy woke up like from a slumber. He stretched his wings and looked at them. He read Mongo's mind and realized what had happened and how Miihah had saved him, putting her own life at risk. He communicated to Mongo telepathically to get her up on his back as he would fly with them to the castle where she would get the help she needed.

When they were all safely on Aggy's back, Miihah in Scar's arms, Aggy lifted from the ground. He flew over the Wall and landed at the castle steps. Mongo jumped off when Aggy was down and he helped Scar get Miihah down. Mongo fought off a few undead that had come

near them, protecting Scar and Miihah.

Scar took Miihah back to her room where Hizzy was waiting.

- What happened? Asked Hizzy worried at seeing Miihah that way. What's wrong with Miihah?
- She is exhausted from saving Aggy. Can you help her, Hizzy?
- Yes I can. Then Hizzy took some spices and made Miihah smell them. Slowly Miihah came back to her senses.
- Thank you so much, Hizzy! And gratefulness was filling Scar's eyes.
- Thank you Hizzy, said Miihah sweetly. I knew you would be a great healer, too. Thank you!
- I thank you for saving me from those beasts and for teaching me all that I know! If I will ever be a great healer like you, Miihah, then I will owe it to you for being a great teacher and a friend!
- I want you two to stay inside now, said Scar. Mongo and I will stop Ivory while our armies are busy fighting each other. Can you do that, Miihah, Hizzy? So I won't have to worry about you?
- Yes my love, answered Miihah in her pleasant voice, go stop him!

With that Scar left them in their chamber and went back out to look for Mongo.

## Chapter 12: Victory!

- Mongo, here you are! And Scar cut an undead in half as it was about to stab Mongo in the back. It fell at Mongo's feet, the dagger raised in his hand as it had been ready to strike.
- Oh, wow, that would have hurt I guess! Thank you!
- Don't mention it! Now let's make our way near Ivory, we have to kill him to stop this madness! The dead should stay dead!
- But how are we going to do that? Scar, he is surrounded by his army.
- Yes, might be so but you are the most skilled assassin of the realm. I will distract him and you will finish him off!
- At least we can try... but Mongo wasn't convinced that they would be successful in their demeanor.
- It is the only way I am afraid! But my guts tell me that if we take Ivory out of the picture his entire army will go back to their eternal sleep.
- I hope you are right Scar. If we are wrong and we kill him but his army remains, it will shred us to pieces.
- Trust me, this will work. We just have to deal with Ivory.
- How will you distract him?
- Leave that to me, said Scar, you just make sure you are ready to strike him down when the time comes.

Then Scar left to get Bratty and Mean from where he left them earlier. He found them at the same spot where he left them.

- Scar, you are back! How come you are on this side of the Wall? Asked Bratty.
- And did you find Mongo and Aggy? Asked Mean.
- Yes, they are both safe and sound. We flew with Aggy back to the

castle as Miihah needed help after she used up all her energy to save Aggy. Miihah is also safe now, Hizzy helped her.

- Thank goodness! Said Bratty relieved.
- I want the two of you to help me distract Ivory so Mongo can kill him.
- Sure, uttered Mean, anything just to stop all this!
- OK, the three of us will make our way through the undead until we get close enough to him. Shouldn't be too difficult now as many of the undead have been destroyed already by our army and by Scholar's trap. Then you two start sending your lovely magic to greet him properly. And while he will be busy defending himself from your spells I will signal to Mongo to finish him off. How is this for a plan?
- Alright, we give it a shot, agreed both mages. And they began sending fireballs and ice shards all over the place making sure they would be noticed by the shaman.

Ivory indeed saw the two mages destroying his army and he got nervous. His army was diminishing in numbers as they were being killed by Scar's warriors and these two were making things worse by taking out even more. Things weren't looking too good for him now. So he focused his attention towards the two mages standing right outside the Wall. They were keeping the rest of the undead out with their spells. He would show them for messing with him.

A battle of magic spells followed, sparks flying everywhere. It was like ping-pong. Bratty and Mean looked majestic in their robes, sending fire bolts and lightning towards Ivory and putting up a protection shield whenever he would send magic spells back in response. The night sky was lit up with their magic. It was a sight to remember.

Scar, seeing them engaged in a battle of will and magic, looked for Mongo to signal him. He saw him up on Aggy flying low right above



the battlefield. It was now or never. He made the signal. He saw Mongo take out his golden dagger and aim towards Ivory's heart. If this wouldn't work then they would still have to fight the remaining of the undead to save Donn. And everybody was damned tired by now so he hoped it would work. He closed his eyes afraid that Mongo might miss his target. Then he heard a very loud shriek coming from where he knew Ivory was standing so he opened his eyes just in time to see Ivory struck dead, a perfect shot, the dagger straight into his dark heart.

Then it happened: the moment the shaman breathed his last breath, his army of undead started turning to dust. It was all over, victory was theirs. A well deserved victory. A victory to be celebrated.

The soldiers from their side who died for the rest to live were given a proper burial and would always be remembered.

With the threat gone, Bratty and Mean could return to their throne in Loyalis. They were overjoyed at the thought that they could take their kingdom back. It had been a team effort but in the end the good were victorious over the evil.

Mean and Bratty returned to their own kingdom and brought the remaining people of Dustwither back from the cave they had been hiding in. Potz was also given the rank of general beside Lucas and they were both decorated for their bravery in battle and for having saved the people of Loyalis.

The people of Lir also returned to their lives and everything went back to normal again.