

Havery and the Dragon Scale Armor

The ocean breeze swept Havery's hair behind his shoulders, a mist of salt water droplets cascade over his face. His brittle armor's by now barely kept together by some knotted leather. Though it once had a proud iron coating, its current state saw it snagged at the joints due to thick layer of rust. The sound of iron clasping together reminded him of his childhood. Growing up in Dragonia, being born the son of a Dragonslayer was not easy. His father had become ill shortly after being granted access into the utopia of Dragon Slayers, making it hard to provide his family with steady income.

Havery was born into poverty which was something that gave him great character and willpower later in life. While the other children were trained by fancy knights, Havery was reduced to wield an iron pipe as his weapon and look to the trees to fight as opponents. At the coming of age, which marks the transition from a boy into a man, boys in Dragonia are to go through a test. The ritual entails squaring up against someone of your own size in an arena. This was the first time Havery got to wield a real blade. The Dragonian's frame was quite skinny and fragile as he stood at least 6'4, but weighed only around 165 lbs. It turned out that handling a sword was much like the pipe which he had used as his practise weapon while taking on the encompassing trees in his home village. However, his opponent was not as stoic as the paralyzed wood he had fought before.

Havery took bash after bash against the weak iron breastplate that protected his torso against the sharpened blade of his rival. It took barely a minute before he was down on the dusty ground with the crowd cheering and jeering around him on the grand arena made of solid stone blocks. His rival smiled and pointed his broadsword against his throat, bending the skin inwards. Havery was now fighting against the sharp edge slowly working its way through the pores, sure to mark him for life, with a tag of humiliation. The crowd went wild as Havery's breath intensified. He waved his head, grasped his sword and then slowly proceeded to march out of the arena, a loser.

At least he got to keep his armour and the sword, Havery thought. He then went straight back into the wooded area where he had spent all those countless childhood hours practicing for this very moment, now seemingly all

for naught. With all his fury, he began chopping against the trees. Never again! He swore that he would become a fierce warrior, a master of iron and the best Dragon Slayer around.

Ten years have passed since that sad day. We now find our hero standing on the deck of his very first ship travelling from his small hometown, Clotzak. He's wielding the same sword and equipped with the same armour he wore on the day of his ultimate humiliation. Somehow, it serves to remind him of the importance of sticking to his resolve and never look back. Since then he pledged to fight bravely and with his very best not to be beaten, ever again. Most people residing within the wooden gates of Clotzak know each other by name and reputation. The town has somehow become synecdoche with "shame" for the wider populace of Dragonia. It's commonly seen as place where they gather the poor, or in other words, those who are left outside the prestigious society identified with the shining, well polished armours often wore by the elite of the nation, the Dragon Slayers.

As for Havery, he was now sailing south, straight into the Valley of Dragons. Although the valley is not part of Dragonia, it is nevertheless located on the same island.

In other nations, venturing out into the wilderness often meant the chance to face Goblins, Dire Wolves, Basilisks and other creatures, but in the Valley of Dragons there are creatures bigger in size and different in form. One of these creatures, a lizardman known to possess the powerful artifact called the Dragon Scale Armour dwell in the area.

Havery hasn't yet killed his first Dragon, and he knows all too well that he can't possibly do so with the gear he carries on his person this day. What he also knows, is that the lizardman, Gandorra, has a crowd of followers which the envious Havery want to lead. Gandorra had not treated his fellow swordsmen well, and if only Havery could slay him, he could become their new leader. Trailing along after him are a few peasants from Clotzak that decided to seek adventures afar.

- "Land ho!"

Lost in his thoughts, the captain's high pitched voice cut through the air like

nails on slate. The sun is slowly sinking down beneath the horizon as the boat silently split the ocean surface. Smoke from a campfire can be seen in the distance, the lizard man is still awake. They decide to drop the anchor at the spot and wait for night to come, the sun was too much of an aid for the lizard man. His army had enough of an upper hand for Havery to let up any other advantages.

To pass time, they share stories from the past, one of the peasants tell a story of how one of his chickens had gone missing every full moon. Another one of a finding he had made in his fields, which could've been interesting, had it been one of magical powers or a weapon of fierce might. It was nothing but a coin.

Havery started thinking back on his childhood again.

When he was outside combating trees for too long, his father always started telling stories of the fierce Barbarians of Yzathia. One of the tales were of a man called Svarthor. He was one of the Barbarian Clan Leaders. His clan was feared even in Yzathia, they went under the name Blood Brothers. One of the things that made people shiver when they heard the name was the fact that they indulged in cannibalism. Horrific deeds had been done in order to survive in the harsh lands up north, and some say that the same horrific fate had been bestowed upon other Barbarians, simply for enjoyment.

Many of the Barbarians use a mind altering plant to be able to journey through themselves, open their minds and face their fears. For some, the demons that they face become too much. It was told that Svarthor had left Yzathia after he went crazy, that some people in Dragonia had seen him wandering around the forest.

Peacefully, some said, whilst others claimed that he was infuriated, feasting of wild creatures, eating their raw flesh. Of course, this was most likely just a story to scare the children into discipline.

A fish break the silence of the ocean surface. It had gotten dark enough to be able to row the small wooden boat to shore. The sound of the oar breaking the calmness of the ocean was one of Havery's favorite sounds. There was something about it that blessed him with serenity, even though he was about to face the biggest challenge of his lifetime. He didn't feel nervous at all, he knew that this was what he was supposed to do. The Dragonian cherish the

moment when he feel the adrenaline flowing through his veins. His blood start rushing to his thick muscles, his hands grasp ever so tight around the hilt of his sword, all of his senses heighten.

They land by a small sand beach nearby Gandorra's camp. The gritty sand crunch under the Dragonians plated boots, excitement fills him as he steps out of the boat. The scent of sand mixed up with the salt of the ocean hit his nostrils, his heartbeat increases even more. The peasants had brought their own armors, or, more so leather tunics that wouldn't even protect them against the bites of Dragonia's giant mosquitos.

One of the peasants, Antho Bore, was a really weird being, but with a great looking armor. He had arrived in Dragonia from Aurolas, a land up north inhabited by humans. He had struck gold while he was planting potatoes in his farm and spent a hefty sum of his findings on getting a grand piece of armory. He had then went forth to battle some of his nation's most talented knights in order to be dubbed a Paladin, a Holy Knight.

Unfortunately, he went on to take a blow to the head and turned, to say the least, a little crazy. The day of the tournament, he had ran straight into the woods and into his boat. He started rowing, and he rowed for 4 days straight. He washed up on the east side of Dragonia after his boat hit jagged rocks outside of Radria, the land where the Wizards from Jarall send their abominations of creatures they create.

He had to live just outside of Dragonia due to the fact that he hadn't slayed a Dragon, which is a demand to be granted access behind the mountain walls of the land. Havery had recruited Antho on the way to slay Gandorra. He lived in what looked like an abandoned workshop. He slept on bare ground, his armor by his side, this struck Havery as he saw that Antho had true respect towards the iron. Something of great importance to the Dragonian.

Havery watch with jealousy as Antho put his fancy and well-crafted armor on. Soon, he would carry one that no gold in Sighisoara could buy, the Dragonscale armor, he thought to himself. Antho would be the one looking with jealousy once the scales of the defeated beast would rest upon the Dragonian's broad shoulders.

They close up on the lizardman's camp, and decide to hide in some nearby bushes. It was not the best of bushes to hide in, Havery decided after getting stung by one of its' thorns in the side of his forearm. Close to them is a flower called Esioul, it's known as the flower granting Dragons their ability to breath fire. The Esioul protect themselves by springing out seeds of thorned bushes around itself, just like the ones that the party had decided to hide in. The flower is also known to give the unprotected a mighty sting. Havery, who carry enough protection, in the form of gauntlets he had won in a drinking game back in Dragonia, decide to take the flower with him; it could grant him a good sum of coins back home on the local market.

As he focus his eyes back upon the camp, he sees something moving in another set of nearby bushes. He hush his fellow men and tell them to concentrate.

Out from the bushes sneaks a hooded figure, dressed in all black, moving almost without sound as it sweep across the barren ground. They can only watch as the figure sneaks into the tent of the lizardmen's leader. They could hear a loud hiss followed by the sound of iron slicing through skin.

Much to their surprise, it is not the hooded figure that comes back out, but Gandorra. He must be at least 7 feet tall. His skin scaly, shimmering blue with a layer of slime surrounding it. His big muscles, flexing intensely as he drag the hooded figure across the ground. Sounding an alarm, his followers quickly gather around him.

- "This pathetic little halfling just snuck up in my tent and was going to assassinate me, Gandorra snapped.

His yellow eyes glow bright in the dark night. He glared at one of the guards."

- "Where were you? Get over here, you are no more worth than the filth we stand on."

He takes a firm grip around the guard's neck, his long claws pierce his skin and blood start drizzling down his neck, over the chest and back.

- "Forgive me...", the guard hisses, his shining eyes stare towards his leader.

As Gandorra prepare to end the life of the young guard, the party decide to find another hiding spot closer to the lizard leader. They sneak their way through some bushes, but notice that Antho had not followed. Actually, he was

nowhere to be found, after looking around for a short stroke, they decide to move forth. They can't waste any time.

Gandorra's raises his sword high up in the air, the steel of the blade reflect the moonlight in all of its glory. Gandorra prepares to lower it upon the neck of the guard, a vicious blow to separate his head from the body. All of a sudden, a glass shattering shriek is heard, just behind them. The party jerk at the sound, looking back just to discover it was Antho.

Antho runs out of the bushes, charging against Gandorra, they clash their blades together and a grand noise ring out in the night. The rest of the party swiftly make their way through the terrain and manage to find a good hiding spot just in time, they see everything without being seen themselves. Gandorra use his strength to push Antho aside and down in the dirt.

- "Now watch, as I finish this pathetic excuse of a being." Gandorra growled.

He exposes his sharp teeth and Antho's eyes fill up with terror. Just as Gandorra bash his sword towards him, he rolls out of the way and manage to recover. Antho retaliates with a charge towards the torso, but his sword bounce back towards him. He has to dodge not to hit himself in his face. Havery realise the armor was impenetrable by their blades and that they would need to help Antho get out of his self created mess.

He signals to his fellow soldiers that they were to launch an attack.

- "Just keep the guards away from me, the more we have alive, the stronger we will be." They all nod and silently make their way forward, sneaking through a number of bushes, getting closer and closer.

Antho is struck once more, this time, his armor takes a blow, a deep cut could be seen in the steel. His ribcage ache from the strike, as he reflexively draw his hand towards the hurting area, another blow is dealt to his helmet, producing a dent.

He fall to the ground, through the daze surrounding his impaired sight he can make out those glowing, yellow eyes staring straight into his. Gandorra draws a dagger from his boots, getting down on his knees, making himself ready to

end Anthos life with a staggering blow.

Instead, Gandorra drops the dagger, the peasant soldier sees the glow darken in those bright yellow eyes. Havery had penetrated that slimey scale hide with his blade, one deadly strike from above had shattered the spine of the Lizardman and granted him instant death. Havery shoves the lifeless body of Gandorra to the side, stripping him of his mighty armor.

The army of Gandorra stand still, they watch as the Dragonian, Havery put the armor on himself. He grasps his newly won sword and raise it towards the sky. With a roar he proclaim himself as their new leader. He was pleasantly surprised to find that they all raised their weapons with him. He watches with pride as the variety of creatures salute him, he had freed them from the iron hand rule of Gandorra. He was their champion.

The hooded figure they saw earlier was wounded and had fainted, the Dragonian unmask the figure, it turned out to be a girl. Not an ordinary girl though, her nose resemble a cat like nozzle. As Havery carry her into one of the tents for medical care, he feel a tail whipping back and forth beneath the black cloth covering the unconscious body. He had one of the village Shamans heal the poor creature. He knows she is in good hands now. The shaman of Gandorra is known for his medical talent. His red dyed healing potions are even sought after by the priests of Dragonia.

Havery had put his first plan to execution. Now, he could see himself with a brighter future. He wait until the shaman is done with his biddings, then decide to pay the creature a visit.

-”How are you?”Havery ask her.

-”Gandorra! Release me, I will slay the lot of you!” she scream back.

The Dragonian take a firm grip around the shoulders of the cat-like being and calm her down. Asking about where she comes from, the creature tell of a land in the far east, Mychander.

Born near the border where a terrible war is ever raging on. The two nations, Mychander and Nycothia is battling each other. The creature's name is Erion, she looks like a gnoll like creature, but more of a cat than that of a hyena, and the size of a halfling. She had travelled a great distance in nothing but a raft,

seeking treasure and adventure in The Valley of Dragons.

After hours of discussions and a few drinks, Havery found that this young Mychandrian share his passion for the iron, and for battle.

-“Well, Erion, you know what? This may sound crazy.” The Dragonian says, he then scratches his stubble, taking a deep breath, before carrying on.

-“I want you to lead this village. Your bravery astounds me, I have no use of this place, as I plan to venture further.”

He proclaim her as the leader of Gandorra's old tribe, what he wanted the most, the Dragonscale Armor, is now in his possession. He doesn't need possession of land, but that of iron. Erion was thrilled to have her own base of operations where she could plan adventures a plenty and accepted her new role without hesitation.

Havery takes farewell of the creature and his newly conquered fellowship. He now feels ready for new adventures, in far away lands.

Havery and the Necromancer's Power

Havery ventured back to Clotzak, where he stayed for a short while. Various rumours and tales had told him off a relic called The Power of The Dragon Father, which he decided to seek for. His next journey would bring him to Xerphef, the land of the necromancers. Where he would search for “The Necromancer's Power”, an artifact granting its wielder magic powers. His soldiers refused to enter the cursed lands with him.

Once more, Havery find himself on a boat, on his way to explore lands afar. He had gathered an array of information about a leader in Xerphef, a nation feared by most. It's located north-east of Clotzak, and had required Havery to get a new boat, trading in nearly all his resources for it. However, it's grand, and able to carry him all the way to the god forsaken nation where he could go after the necromantic leader.

As a child, he had not only been scared straight with stories about Yzathian barbarians, but of necromancers of Xerphef. Ruled under the monarch Servillius, the land is told to be nothing but a grand barren waste. Inhabited by

walking dead and other beings that seem to be taken out of horror tales. Temples where the visitors pray to Mayon, the God of the moon, can be seen throughout the lands. Human sacrifices are considered a daily chore by most, and tales of torture are shared for laughter. Some even tell tales that they have seen a deity not known before. Only described in royal parchments and anecdotes, the God of Death. Most likely, nobody has seen it, or at least not seen it and lived to tell the tale.

The necromancers themselves are known for their dark magic, and ability to raise the corpses of the buried, however, with a twist of course. Most bodies have started rotting before the necromancers resurrect them, they stare with soulless eyes, and most lose their ability for proper communication due to their most important brain functions shutting off as they perish.

The leader that Havery gathered intelligence on is known as Shazhul. When alive, he had studied magic and became one of the masters of it, studying for a short time at High Gryffondale, the finest school of the arch mages of Jarall. He was expelled after repeatedly attacking other students, and it was more than harmless pranks that he played on his fellow scholars. Poisoning some of them and injuring others badly. He started developing a hate for the magic society and soon found himself a rebel of Jarall. He was ultimately sentenced to death after a failed try to assassinate one of the teachers of his old school (reportedly it was the teacher who got him expelled).

Shazhul had, during his living years, started tinkering with Dark Magic, or Magik, as some people refer to it. Unfortunate for those who seek to destroy evil in this world, upon his assassination, he was reborn. Once he resurrected, he mastered the way of the Lich, a grandmaster of Magik, and he quickly made his way to Xerphef.

After his recent conquer of Gandorra, Havery feared next to nothing, however, lying in his cabin at night, he couldn't help but to shiver at the thought of what was to come. What was there to come? Everytime he tried imagining, he deemed it useless to prepare his psyche for the sights to come. The Dragonian would rather keep practicing the art of steel, sword fighting.

He had yet not forgotten of his childhood's humiliation, neither had he forgot of the grueling hard work, the countless hours of fighting trees in his own backyard.

He finally got somewhere in his life, he was going to prove himself worthy of the citizenship of Dragonia. The land that had chewed him up, and was close to spitting him out.

He was more determined than ever to redeem himself, to prove that he's something special.

As a teenager, Havery could barely cope with the loss in the arena. He started trying to make excuses for being beaten. He would take his anger out on the people close to him until they couldn't stand him anymore.

In particular, he could remember his father's words after yet another teenage outburst against his mother.

- "Remember son, whenever you point your finger at someone." He then took a short pause, sighed a bit, as he wanted to dramatize it all.

- "There are always three fingers pointing back at you. Never forget that." And he never did.

The cold ocean breeze hit his face, his nose had long since turned red from cold, it was the time of the year that offered chilly nights but tepid warmth during daytime. He is on his way to a town called Umorn, located quite close to the western shore of the necromancers land. Shazhul was certainly to be found there, as he had resided there for the past 100 years or so.

Umorn is a legendary place, during the days, when either one of the seven suns in the sky shine bright (in Havery's time, people still believed that Sighisoara had seven suns. We now know that this is actually the seven positions of the sun), it is told that it can't be seen. To visit, you will have to go in nightfall, and during those hours, necromancers will surely have the upper hand. Necromancers are used to the Darkness, they eat, sleep and battle in it.

Since vampires and other creatures that shy the light reside in the area, the society of Xerphef is built around night time activity. Shops keep open at night, and the masses gather in the churches at the midnight hour.

Hours pass on the boat, another night is about to set upon the quiet ocean surface. The moon shines bright, casting its reflection in the water. The moon

glowing with such intensity is yet another sign that the followers of Mayon are strong tonight. It will take every bit of the Dragonian's focus and skill to succeed in his quest.

Havery thanked Atreus (the god of the seven suns) that he still hadn't met the beasts that lurk in these deep waters.

Living close to water like Havery has done all his life meant that there were many sailors who visited, most often they brought tales of terrifying creatures that attacked their vessels. Most often they would talk about giant sea serpents, but some of enchanting mermaids too.

All of a sudden, a big splash is heard a few feet away, judging by the ripples on the surface, this was not your ordinary fish. Yet another splash is heard, this time even closer. Havery withdraw his sword from its scabbard and run towards the edge of the boat. An ample shadow rolls underneath his ship, measuring at least 21 feet. The huge tail emerges from the dark waters and slams Havery backwards to the floor.

His sword hurls through the air and lands to far away from Havery's reach. He boosts himself up from the floor and bolts toward his sword. Once again he hears the edge of the water being broken by this majestic creatures tail. Leaping in panic towards the sword he feels something grasping his foot, yanking him back with full force.

The sea serpent's tail starts twisting around Havery's lower body, raising its tail towards its hideous mouth.

Havery tries to get out of the serpent's clutch, but is overpowered. He can now see the knifelike fangs of the animal closing in on him. It's fight or die, Havery feels the familiar rush of adrenaline through his veins as the beast launches at him with jaws wide open. The Dragonian just manages to fight back and grab the jaws of the serpent. Struggling to keep the beast's mouth open, Havery grabs one of its teeth and snaps it right off. He now has a weapon good enough to at least try to defend himself with.

The creature recoils its head and lets out a squealing outcry, it launches back at Havery, grabbing him by the torso. It would take some time, even for a creature as strong as this to break through the Dragonscale Armor. Havery sees his chance. He stab the creature again and again with the razor-sharp

tooth, penetrating its scaly hide. The Dragonian feel a burning sensation in his hand, the tooth has not only penetrated the skin of the serpent, but made a cut in his own hand as well.

Infuriated, he jabs at the creature's eyes and throat, feeling how the tail's grip turns more loose. Havery is once again thrown down on the wooden floor of the ship, the sea serpent falling back into the depths from where it came, making a huge splash.

Havery sits down on deck, blood drips from his forearm, he is too tired to pay it any attention. He decides to retire to his bed, waiting for nightfall to arrive.

As nightfall approaches, Havery tighten his leather wraps around his wrists. They will act as support when he needs his strength the most. He is going to need to be swift and be able to strike with immense power if he wants to defeat Shazhul. With his trusted blade on his back, he silently leaps into the cold water and starts swimming to an unattended bay. He walks ashore, making sure no one has spotted him.

The ground underneath him feels dry and dead. In the distance, he spots two grand beacons of light, it is the keep of Shazhul. It almost resembles two big, bright eyes, staring over the vast barren landscape, silently monitoring and watching for intruders such as himself. Havery suddenly feels anxiety strike his gut, will he really be able to overthrow a powerful spellcaster such as Shazhul?

The Dragonian suddenly feels the urge to withdraw his sword from its scabbard, grasping it firmly. He starts looking for potential hideouts along the way to the keep. Apart from a few small hills and some rubble and rocks lying scattered across the infertile planes, there seems to be nowhere to hide. Havery makes his way to a small hill and lays himself down between two rocks. Judging from the position and light of the moon, the clock nears midnight. That means the majority of the population of this god forsaken town will march towards the unholy church of Mayon before long. Havery withdraws his sword again. The anxious feeling has left and confidence starts coming back, he is a strong and proud Dragonian, with his trusted iron by his side, he is unbeatable.

It doesn't take long before the light of a hundred torches starts lighting up in

the dark village nearby. Havery, who almost went into a slumber, was now wide awake. He makes sure he is well hidden as the masses start rambling towards him. The Dragonian spots the face of one of the creatures. It looks like somebody had burnt off the flesh from the skull, leaving two empty eye sockets staring out in the night. Nobody speaks, they all just silently carry their torches towards a nearby temple. A few meters back from the rest of the pack there's another being. One of its legs seems to be hurt as it is limping forth, not really being able to keep up with the others. If Havery had a robe like them, he could easily pass himself along as one of the creatures. The Dragonian now has a plan, he waits until the creature passes him, then silently starts making his way down the slope.

He gets in, just close enough to deal a staggering blow into the neck of the being. A gurgling sound comes out of its mouth, Havery makes sure it doesn't make a noise, falling down on the ground. He swiftly strips the robe of the creature and disguises himself, hastily heading towards the rest of the group.

After a few minutes of walking, they arrive at a strange looking building. There is one large building, adorned with the symbol of a crescent moon. They walk inside, where there is nothing but an altar and benches scattered across a room with a very high ceiling. No decorations as far as the eye can see, but a few torches on the wall, some candelabras by the benches and a skull on the altar. Havery makes sure to keep his head down, not showing his face to the others. Shazhul can't be spotted anywhere amongst these robed creatures, the Dragonian decides to try and sneak out of the church and make way towards Shazhul's keep. From tales that Havery heard, some keeps have their own personal chapels where the owner can worship their God.

As Havery silently glides towards the exit, his foot gets stuck in one of the candelabras, that falls with a bang. Havery falls over, his hood slips off his head, uncovering his face. The hooded figures all turn around, their soulless eyes (eye sockets for some) glaring at Havery. One creature, with a decayed white face, starts yelling in some incomprehensible language. The Dragonian swiftly bounces back up and starts sprinting away. No matter how strong he may be, battling a hundred undead beasts is nothing of his interest. Looking back, he sees one of the creatures come to nothing, leaving a cloud of smoke in his way. Seconds later, Havery hears the sound of wings flapping behind him. Once again he looks back, the other creatures are a bit behind him, but a

bat has caught up with him. Once more, there is a cloud of smoke, and all of a sudden, the Dragonian has a creature running next to him. The bat must've been a Vampire.

It roars, exposing two big fangs as it leap towards Havery, who just manages to dodge the vampire's assault. The creature quickly recovers after missing its first launch. It springs toward him once more, this time, knocking the Dragonian down on the ground. The claws of the creature lash towards him, making a cut in his face before he has a chance to react. The Dragonian howls in pain and anger, then throws the creature by the neck, down on to the ground. They are now standing face to face. The other creatures that just moments ago raced towards him has stopped and stands still, some are pointing and talking to the others.

The Vampire smiles at Havery, then hisses, "Khamúrn". Just as Havery prepares to launch a deadly strike towards the creature's head, he hears a thunderous growl behind him. Once more, the vampire turns into a bat and retreats. Havery turns around, in the sky above him, there is a Dragon. It doesn't look anything like any of the Dragons that he has heard of before. It shimmers with a white glow, the body entirely made out of bones, no eyes, no skin, held together by some unholy magic. Rashly it takes a dive towards the Dragonian, who just eludes the fangs of yet another undead creation launching at him. The Dragon quickly snags it head, aiming it's gigantic skull towards Havery. Another blasting roar echoes through the barren wasteland. As the creature hurls itself towards the Dragonian again, he manages to strike the front of its skull with his blade, but is knocked to the ground. The Bone Dragon recovers, Havery gets a grip around one of its ribs. The creature swirls and tries to throw Havery off to the ground, but he holds on.

The Dragon flutters its wings, launching back into the air, with Havery still clinging on. The immense power of the wings almost makes the Dragonian lose his holding around the beast's rib. He just barely manages to climb up the Dragon's back, getting a firm grip around its horns. Yet again, the beast dives down towards the ground, almost slamming Havery off its back. With one hand around the horn of the creature, the Dragonian repeatedly clobbers the pommel of his sword against its skull. The Dragon sweeps its head back and forth and manages to get Havery out of balance, now scarcely hanging at the side of the Dragon's deadly jaws. Havery keeps pummeling the skull of the

beast, noticing a small crack close to its jaw.

The Dragonian turns his sword around, then smites the crack with the tip of his blade, causing the crack to open up the jaw. The Dragon's wings stiffens and its head starts sagging. They pummel down towards the ground, crashing down into the dirt.

The Dragonian's body aches from the fall and from the battles, but there is no turning back now. Luckily, he has landed closer to Shazhul's keep. Nonetheless, the creatures from the church will soon come looking for him. They are certainly backed up by even more vicious creatures who witnessed the Bone Dragon, or "Khamúrn", tumble from the sky.

Havery loots a few of the Dragon's teeth, Dragonia's legends tell of their teeth granting the wearer great luck. Some even say that they strengthen the wielder's magic powers. Once again, Havery stares towards Shazhul's keep. Those two gigantic lanterns, reminding him of two bright, yellow eyes searching for him.

Being careful and focused, the Dragonian manages to make his way to the keep unnoticed. It's guarded by two skeletal figures, Havery would cause too much of a rumble if he were to attack them; he must climb. He manages to get his grapple stuck between two bricks on the balcony of the keep. Havery makes sure that it is stable enough for his weight, then starts climbing.

The cut of the vampire suddenly starts burning in his face, once more he is struck with fear. The Dragonian climbs onwards, but starts to feel weak. By the time he reaches the balcony, his eyes are wide open, going from side to side, looking for enemies. Havery's hands are trembling and he feels a bit shaken up. This must be the work of some dark magic.

He sneaks inside the keep, now facing a spiral of stairs. Noises can be heard from below. Silently, he prowls to the stairs. There are two skeletal figures sharing a chalice of wine, talking loudly to each other. The Dragonian, taking advantage of their lack of focus, sneaks up on one of them. He stands up behind them, then hurtles his sword. The edge of the blade separates the spine and the skull of the being. Just as the other skeleton is about to call for aid, the tip of Havery's blade jabs its mouth.

Yet again, the all-familiar rush of adrenaline come flowing through his blood vessels.

He makes his way through a hallway, then comes up to a large wooden door. This must be Shazhul's chamber. The Dragonian bangs on the door, there is no answer. Once more, he bashes his pommel towards the door. Silently, it slides open.

Havery steps inside, but is immediately grabbed by two cold, brittle hands. Shazhul is well guarded of course. Havery uses all his might, forcing the two guards together with a bang, knocking them out. He kicks the door shut and locks it again. The sound of applause echoes in the grand room, a sinister laughter follows.

"So, a mortal dares to enter my keep." A dark voice booms, but no one can be seen.

"Show yourself!" Havery exclaims.

A dark figure appears suddenly in front of the young adventurer. Its eyes glow red as fire. Its face looks burnt and torn. The Dragonian raises his sword in the air, readying himself to strike. A flash of light emerges from Shazhul's hands, knocking the sword out of Havery's hands. Using his fists, he strikes back, hitting Shazhul. The Dragonian hurtles towards his sword, but Shazhul catches up. Yet again, he gets knocked to the floor, now feeling hazy. While crawling towards his blade, he can hear bones rattling. Hastily, he looks back and sees the two guards being reanimated.

"Finish the job!" the dark voice roars.

The Dragonian get a hold of his sword just as one of the skeletal guards is about to deliver a blow to his head. He blocks the attack just in time. Havery launches his boots towards the guard, knocking him backwards. He gets back up on his feet, then strikes the skeleton across the head, cracking the skull open. The other guard slashes towards Havery's body, but his armor resist the assault. In a spinning motion, the Dragonian slices the guard in half, shattering its bones. Havery bolts toward Shazhul, evading another dark magic arrow being shot towards him.

Shazhul clasps his hands together and starts rambling some magic verse. A

huge green cloud in the form of a skull comes toward Havery with full steam. He throws himself to the side, but the cloud hits his leg. It burns with pain and Havery is filled with fear. The cloud bounces off one of the walls and starts coming back towards him. He rolls away and the cloud hits another wall, this time dissolving.

Shazhul appears in front of the Dragonian again, the red eyes stare into his soul. A flash of light fills the room and Havery feels as if he is transported into another realm. Nothing but light surrounds him. In front of him, Shazhul looks even grander than before. Towering above him and once again murmuring some strange lyrics. A stream of darkness flows out of Shazhul's mouth, drizzling down into Havery's. Feeling fear and weakness that is overpowering him, the Dragonian must fight his way out of the creature's grip, before it's too late.

He focuses all of his powers, the light surrounding him starts to fade. Another flash of light strikes the room and abruptly, everything goes back to normal. Havery swings his sword towards Shazhul, cutting him over the cheek. The necromancer lets out a thunderous roar and retreats back, further into the room. A trail of dark smoke following him. Havery bolts towards him, his sword raised high, getting ready for a leaping blow. The creature evades it and teleports to the other side of the room.

Shazhul raises both hands towards the sky. Smoke and fire emerges from his very palms, forming the head of a Dragon above his own. The magical Dragon spits out a blast of fire towards Havery. In a forward roll, he evades the strike and yet again dashes towards Shazhul. Another storm of fire blazes towards him, this time hitting the Dragonians arm. Enraged and hurting, he manages to ignore the pain and races forward. He vaults toward the necromancer, piercing his heart with his blade. Shazhul lets out a loud shriek and falls to the ground. The Dragonian slashes his sword repeatedly at the necromancer, making sure that the battle is won.

Havery strip the necromancer of his ring. A surge of energy flows through him as the ring slips on his finger. Havery starts mumbling while aiming with one hand towards the wall. A bolt of energy shoots out from him, making a black mark on the bricks.

Havery, once a warrior, now also caster of spells, and initiate of Dark Magic.

No one can stop him now.

(To be continued?)

Max Ygdell
HeroOfPunk

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