

StarCross

Avaros woke up in a startle as the cave he called home rumbled in fury. A few rocks falling from the ceiling kept Avaros from sprinting out into open world. Perhaps this would be the day he hoped for. But as the rumbling faded, he found himself safe once more and still very much alive. Of course, he'd be ok, he was the strongest of his race and could hardly be killed by some minor boulders. But he wished he could.

Every day was getting harder, testing his will, and his hunger grew ever stronger. Couldn't the gods just take him already? Well, he was alive today, so he might as well investigate what woke him. What time was it anyways? Mid-day, judging by the light angle at the cave entrance. Had he really slept in that long? It was becoming harder to tell time these days; first how long it had been since his family was slaughtered before him, then how long he had stayed in this cave, and finally how long he had given up and lay there waiting for the gods to take him. This was his curse, the consequence of his own rule: to live out his days witnessing the destruction of his own kingdom and the creation of those from his conquerors. The very thought of those monsters, who invaded his land and took away everything that was his, filled him such rage that the entire earth seemed to tremble at his fury. No, it wasn't his anger that caused the rumbling, but something from outside his cave.

Rolling over with a yawn and a stretch, he mustered the will to move. Even now, the sunshine was blinding. How many days had it been since he last tried to venture out into the world? Fighting back the pain in his eyes, he stepped outside and raised his head over the trees in search of whatever was causing that outrageous racket. He felt the icy wind blow as he shuddered from the mountain breeze. Had he really grown so weak that he was now affected by the air? "So much for thick skin. Huh, Mother?" He chuckled to himself. He quickly found his focus once more as sorrow began to find its way back into his heart, and looked on the mountainside once more for the source of the rumbling.

Thoughts of his friends and family had been haunting him for so long that he often wondered if his memories were simply dreams, wishful fantasies of a more peaceful time where he wasn't so hated. He could almost see them now, occupying the open skies, lording over every beast that crawled upon the land. One might accuse him of growing insane from his long years of solitude, but what did he care? He was alone, and forever would be.

The days of his kingdom were past, forgotten to history. What little information that did find its way to his ear seem to indicate that his conquerors had setup kingdoms of their own on top of the very foundations of the old. The one piece of solace he could find in these developments was that they squabbled about like petulant children.

The great forests that enshrined the mountain tops all were covered in snow, undisturbed and unchanged, completely ignorant of all that had happened on the plains below. Still, it was a welcome sight to see such stillness. Maybe something of the old kingdom would survive. Even after the war was won, these trees remained as they always were, quiet and still. A perfect for the rebel he was to hideout. However, the days of his rebellion were gone. His whole kingdom had been destroyed, and he alone remained, hidden in a cave to live out the remainder of his life in a peace that he never got to

enjoy. After all, what life was left for him? Where could he go? A former king, defeated and humbled, has no place in society, or so his gods had decreed.

But his trance was interrupted as the rumbling began anew. Searching once more, he finally spotted the source, and couldn't help himself from baring his teeth in anger. There they were, those monsters that simply refused to be destroyed by time, weather, or force; they defied the mighty Earth's pull and stood upon their hind legs, as if posturing to all the world of their power.

Humans.

Yes, that was what they called themselves. Ravenous beasts that consumed and hoarded whatever they could put their claws on. These puny creatures who somehow wielded rods and branches of such curious craftsmanship that could befall one of his own kind. How was it that these insignificant pests could destroy everything in their path? And yet, they were exceptional at construction, creating mountains of stone where there was but little to be found. Avaros found himself pondering over their latest ambitions: a pathway through the mountains. At least, that's what he assumed it to be. They broke rocks, uprooted trees, and changed the very earth to be flat and smooth, just like them.

To stoke his ire even further, the humans had enslaved the horse and ox to do the work for them. While it is true that Avaros and his kind did in fact hunt them for food, they were still allowed to roam free. And now, they were nothing more than simple beasts of burden, doomed to live out their lives serving a master that they neither needed nor wanted. Why did they not fight back against these humans? A perplexing question to be sure. Perhaps they too had lost the will to fight, the will to live.

The birds had told him much about how these humans lived, building great stone structures and carving out effigies of themselves to show their lordship over the land. Wretched, vile, creatures. All of them. Even when they had first landed on the eastern shores, he knew not to trust them. Their language was so strange with so many diverse sounds, that even after years of practice he was still only able to communicate with them as a fledgling trying to talk to their parents.

How foolish he was back then, thinking that they came in peace. The beasts and sea folk begged to leave them be, vowing that they would remain within their domains. Well, where were they now? These humans had taken over everything, from the oceans to the mountain peaks, slaying the great kings in their paths. Beasts, sea folk, and even his rival kingdom of the sun birds, had all perished under this plague.

If only he had been wiser, he would have drowned them in the sea from which they came. If only he had been stronger, he could have destroyed their armies and protected his kingdom. If only the other kingdoms had fought instead of fleeing. If only he had protected his subjects, and sent them away. If only he had been a better king. If only he hadn't tried to do everything alone. If only he could bring them back, and no longer be alone.

These humans and their great creations no longer garnered any interest from him. After all, that was why he came up to the mountain peaks, right? To leave them behind, and join his fallen brethren? These many long years, he had destroyed so much, slain so many of them, but he was still alive and still alone. What good was fighting anymore? There was nothing left to protect.

Dismayed, Avaros began to retreat back to his cave, content to leave his anger and these humans behind. That is, until he saw the large crest they carried. A large depiction of his own kind, hoisted above them, leading them on. They dared to use his kingdom and his people as the crest for their own? And what an unflattering piece it was, with such outrageous proportions as to mock the great nation they once were. They even went as far as to encircle the image in gold. Gold! These brutes never did have an aptitude for magic, but to flaunt the source of his magic so openly? Do they not fear us anymore? Of course, they don't. I lost. Why should they fear what they have conquered?

No! If he was going to be the last, then he would make sure that these creatures remembered the fear and power of him and his kingdom. He would not fade into history! He would make these humans pay in blood for their crimes. Death would have to wait. These humans would never let him have peace, and they deserved none. He knew he would not survive, but he would make them fear him, remember him, bow before him!

Claws digging in frustration, wings outstretched, he was ready. Weak as he might be, and without the gold to wield the elements, Avaros was determined still to bring these humans to their long overdue demise.

“My kin, this may be the last time I take flight, but I will make sure that they remember us. I, Avaros, last king of the dragons, fly to war once more!”