

The Fantasy Story

In a land, consumed with lush sceneries and mysterious creatures, there lived a prince called Prince Darius Mootka of Conchobar. It was in the fantastical land of Conchobar where the grand King Helios instructed his youngest born to be educated by the greatest scholars and philosophers of the time. Though intelligent and honorable, Darius possessed a reeling arrogance and naivety that stunned his subjects. This arrogance was of course, attributed to his prestigious lifestyle. As the youngest son of a King, he was not obligated to attain the position of kingship and thus, lived a life of pleasure and materialism. During his twenty first birthday, however, his lifestyle would change with the death of his father and the promotion of his eldest brother, Maxus to the throne. Maxus, coated in vast jewels and immersed with prudent discipline commanded his youngest brother to save the town folk and peasants from the vicious dragon, Alectrona. In return for appeasing the distressed and fearful public, Maxus conceded that the dragon's treasure would be given to Darius as reward. Darius, being a man of pleasure distained the commands of his brother but nevertheless prepared the expedition into the mountains. With hesitant hands, his body armor was snapped against his chest. His most trusted servants carefully rubbed the armor with special oils to shun the smudges made by their fingers and also admired the glorious knights that were engraved on his shimmering breastplate.

King Maxus understood that his youngest brother possessed little military experience and therefore, sent his trusted military advisor Gavin Canning to assist Darius. Canning was a man of high birth and an active participant in the nobility. Though he seemed loyal to his royal patron, Canning was extremely ambitious and desired a more prestigious position. It was outside of the castle walls where Canning would assemble his league of specialized cavalry, armed with archers and basic swordsmen. Darius would wander out, his jeweled sword perched in his holster and his shield held by his servants. He walked gleefully, enamored by his own elegance. When he reached the soldiers, he attempted to display his dominance as the general of the expedition as Canning watched in irritation. With the use of horses, it took four days to reach the cave which the dragon Alectrona inhabited. The opening of the cave was consumed with darkness despite the sun that perched heavenly in the sky. Canning made a perimeter surrounding the cave to await the dragon's exit. They waited several days for Alectrona to leave the cave so that they may ambush the dragon, not wanting to venture within. With superb deliverance, Canning eloquently spoke to Prince Darius Mootka.

“My Lord, what do you believe we should do?”

Darius rolled his eyes abruptly, irritated by the lack of progress.

“You are the damned military advisor! If we fail, my brother will have you whimpering in the gallows.”

Canning nodded slowly, peering into Darius's eyes.

“My Lord, what if you would lurk within the caves to beseech Alectrona... You could lure her out.”

“Are you insane? I am more likely to die.”

Canning stared at Darius, his eyes pleading to reconsider the proposal.

“Send another! I will not risk my limbs for my dear brother.”

“My Lordship, the dragon will speak to no other but the leader of men. This action will glorify you as the protector of men and you will achieve vast riches, not to mention the impeccable treasure of the dragon.”

There was a moment when Darius Mootka was in deep thought, eyeing the ground furiously. Then his eyes narrowed and looked towards Canning.

“What do I say to it? What do I do if it resists my proposal or attempts to kill me?”

“My Lord, you are a powerful and courageous man. You have no reason to fear Alectrona for she is a mere female. They are dull and frail creatures, unable to breathe a whiff of fire. When you demand the treasure, she will be inclined to yield.”

As Darius Mootka prepared anxiously with his servants, Canning would watch in excitement, knowing that Darius would sooner die than achieve victory. Alectrona was neither a dragon to threaten nor approach as she could easily kill a human with the mere touch of her claws. The darkness that dwelled within frightened several of the guards who stood nearby, perplexed by the idea that the young man wished to venture within. Though many assumed that young Darius Mootka was naive if he wished to attempt such a risky and frankly, idiotic plan. With his men prepared, Darius gave an opening speech which emphasized that no man follow him, if a fool may disregard this objective, Darius threatened that he would have this man's head. So there Darius went, wandered with his torch into the darkness.

In his right hand, he clutched his sword and tentatively drew it out as if to scare the invisible dragon. When he had walked for a period of time, he heard a gruff noise in the distance. With a sudden burst of impulsiveness he threw the torch at the side of the cave, drawing his shield with his left hand. He could sense the fear tangling his chest, forcing him to take deep breathes in an effort to calm himself. Sweat ran down his face as he stared blankly at the dark figure at the end of the cave. The figure came closer, the sound of its breathing echoed through the walls of the cave. Darius Mootka held the shield closer to his chest and hopelessly clung to the clammy handle of his sword. The dragon approached him and as it neared the gloom of the thrown torch, its features could be described. This Alectrona was a tall beast with large reptilian eyes which pierced green. Its scales were red, scouring its whole body like that of deathly aura. Its claws dug into the earth with ease, sharper than any warrior's blade. The wings were gigantic, nearly causing poor Darius Mootka to fall ill. And with its eyes, it studied the small knight and its

minuscule weapons that would do nothing to hinder the density of its scales. In those moments, Darius Mootka could not and would not move as he had become frozen with fear, incapable of running away. But Darius would not give up as he was a privileged and courageous knight, bound to his duty of honor. With a loud voice he yelled...

“Foul dragon! If you wish to live, give me your treasure!”

The dragon watched him for a moment, and then finally laughed.

“Dear knight, I am without my treasure.”

Darius Mootka gritted his teeth in agitation and soon rid of his fear for Alectrona as she was clearly mocking him.

“Do not play these games with me, for I know your true name, Alectrona! There are those who will admit that they have seen your treasure!”

The dragon seemed startled by Darius’s accusation but nevertheless spoke calmly.

“Alas, I am without my treasure and it now resides in the mines of Faust.”

“You possess it here! I know you do! Stop spewing your lies!”

Within several minutes the dragon would maintain its composure.

“Prince Darius Mootka... You know better than I, that I cannot lie for you will surely kill me.”

“How do you know my name?”

“We dragons possess the ability to foresee the future. I have just seen yours.”

Darius stared at the dragon, bewildered by what the dragon was saying.

“Then I will find the treasure in the mines of Faust?”

The dragon hesitated.

“As nature’s servant, I am unauthorized to speak about such things.”

Darius Mootka sneered angrily for he was not accustomed to being refused by anyone. He was the King’s son and therefore, entitled to everything he desired.

“Speak now dragon, for my patience is wearing thin.”

He held the sword up and threatened the dragon. With a sigh, Alectrona began to speak...

“You will find the treasure but at a heavy cost as the mines is a vicious and horrible place. Two weeks after this encounter with me, you will be accompanied by a dwarf named Elgin and several of your guards, Paltine and Kogner. Your guide, Elgin grew fearful and remained hesitant about returning to the mines as it was once a home to a great civilization of humble dwarves. Over two hundred years ago when I was a mere adolescent, the dwarves would find a dangerous evil within these mines and were subsequently ravaged by the deathly being called the *ciemność* or when translated from Darnovian, darkness. Despite his desire to abandon the mission, he would assist you through the mines in your attempt to find my treasure. As a brave and courageous man, you would become the driving force of the campaign and able to increase the morale of your men despite the gloom that consumed the mines. On your third day, you eventually find a secret passage that I had specified, and reach my treasure. You are immersed with such delight, erupting into tears of joy as your men celebrate in a ruckus of laughter. You rush towards the treasure, tentatively touching its casing with the tips of fingers, admiring every engraving. Then with such eagerness, you draw your sword and slash at the lock that prevents the viewing of its contents. As the lock falls to the ground, you open the case and are overwhelmed by the splendid jewels, gold pieces and beautifully crystallized sword. You dismissively drop your jeweled sword on the ground as if it had merely been a mangy wooden one and pick up the famed sword of Myriam, once in the possession of the great King, Alaric Strongbow. The sword sparkles with such invigoration despite his basic design and lack of insignias. You wield it in your hand as if it had been your birth right to attain such a magical and powerful sword. In this, you are filled with emotion and are unable to converse a single word, merely watching your companions with solace and joy.”

Alectrona paused and her words seemed to drown in the sorrow that filled her voice. Darius watched her intently, no longer defensive and fearful of the dragon. He merely listened with several tear running down his face, overwhelmed by her words. Then with sudden realization, he began to speak...

“You said that I would find the treasure at a heavy cost... Am I to die?”

Alectrona looked upon the small human with a low gruff.

“Dearest prince, sacrifice is inevitably ploy in the search for glory... Allow me to continue... Everything was good and peaceful until you and your men abandoned the room. It is there that your group heard a gasping noise that echoed through the walls of the mine, sending cold chills down your back. You merely assume and assure your men that the sound was made by the distant echoes of animals lost in the mines. Elgin, however, doubts the assumption and knows that the sound did not come from a fearful animal but from the deathly *ciemność*. With a sudden rapid eagerness, he began to lead your group from the mines and after many hours, you decide to set camp in the darkness. Elgin would disagree with your decision, begging you to continue due to his fear of the *ciemność*. But you will not heed his words as your men need rest and will not be able to continue. As your men sleep, you are consumed with anxiety of the

mysterious monster that roams the mines, excusing the dwarf's fear for paranoia. Elgin, commonly a being of calm composure and gruff exterior was now trembling with terror. This beast had in fact, murdered the whole civilization of dwarves whose bodies were never discovered. They merely disappeared in thin air, only survivors recounted the stories of the ciemność and how it killed hundreds, reminiscing the horrific sound it would make. Several hours would pass when Elgin would rise to his feet in terror when the gasping sound was heard again; this time the proximity was closer. The dwarf began to utter incomprehensible words, explaining that the ciemność was working its way through the labyrinth to kill each one of them. You woke your men at that instant and with such chaos, you all ran through the mines until fatigue overwhelmed you. With cold sweat running down your face, you discover that one of your men is missing in the darkness of the mines. You angrily mutter that the group should return to find Kogner but the dwarf quickly prevents you from doing so. He tells you to listen to the silence and perhaps, he might hear Kogner calling for help. When you do this, you are eager when you hear the calls of your frantic guard. You can clearly hear the echoes of his trembling voice in the distance and motion Elgin to lead you to it. Nevertheless, Elgin shakes his head and refuses to do so. In your anger, you begin to run towards the sound of your guard into the darkness of the mines with your torch as your only comfort. Within moments you find him, tearfully whimpering in a corner, his eyes buried in his arms. You call his name but he does not hear you, already immersed in his own insanity. With an insane amount of strength, you begin to drag him towards the direction of your group, disposing your torch to the side of the mine wall so you could haul him. But within moments, the guard's voice becomes strained and paralyzed by fear and he begins to point at the darkness near the discarded torch. He begins to cry and then scream as the ciemność gasps from meters away. In a moment, you could feel wave a heat possess you, unable to breathe or move. You hear screams in your ear and you begin to whimper, immersed with such indescribable pain. Then surprisingly, the pain is lifted and Elgin quickly pulls you to his feet. Without a seconds thought, you abandon Kogner to his death within the gloomy depths of mines, only prepared to secure your own safety. With that as your motivation, your group runs until you eventually reach the outside world.”

The dragon stopped for a moment, studying the fear that had overwhelmed the prince. Sweat poured down his face as he began to tremble nervously, his sword had lowered to the ground.

“Elgin would later explain that it was paranoia that had overwhelmed you, not the ciemność. That it was you who abandoned Kogner despite the fact that you could have saved him if you remained self assured and confident... If you still desire to find my treasure dear prince, you are welcome to venture into the mines of Faust... though be warned for you would become mentally ill after that expedition, no longer able to enjoy the pleasures of your monarchal status and luxurious lifestyle.”

Then quite abruptly, the dragon uttered a skin crawling sound that caused Darius Mootka to shutter in agony and unable to face the darkness anymore, began to run towards the exit, forgetting his objective. And in the dim of light made by the discarded torch, Darius Mootka had

not noticed the treasure at which he desired lay nestled against Alectrona's feet and that the whole thing was a mere fantasy story imagined by an observant and intelligent dragon. When the panting echoes of the young prince had ceased, the dragon merely grinned with satisfaction and blew out the remaining flickers of light from the torch, shunning the cave with everlasting darkness.