

The Blacksmith's Song

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the Blacksmith's Song

Chapter 1: The Catacombs

And so the dreams begin anew
dank dark tunnels
filled with brackish pools and green light
cold ugly wind in the storm drains

I knew this place once
another dream
another time
the night that almost never ended

Can you hear the screams echoing?
they say people lived down here once
before darkness claimed the sun
mayhap they are other travelers
lost to the surface world
a cold and bitter ghost lurks down here
preying on the lost

In another age
I fought the master of this place
a war unlike this world has known
hordes of ravening beasts
glittering succubi
dancing madness
darkness ascendant

That was the time of the Darksong
rising from these tunnels
where fell creatures hide
like the engulfing gray nightfog
come to claim us

Have you never heard that call?
ringing with ugly greed and callow madness

his victims live forever in the dark places
a cold hand on your neck as you pass

I was once his tool
destroying a world for his pleasure
and my own foul purpose
I came with fire and fury
like apocalypse descending

It was a war unlike this world has ever known
when I turned on him
and wrought my justice there as well
like the fires of the blacksmith
and the blows of the hammer

There was left a place
some call it Carthage now
but any name will do
for only the ruins remain
and they tell no tales

There are only the tunnels below
still festering with the darksong
a cold ugly place
where angels never tread

It is a war never-ending
fought now in his domain
with fire and salt
blood and fury
and the angel's dream

Between us
in the wan green light
all his creatures stand
quivering with the fear of our wrath

No laughter or prayers can touch him here
safe in the folds of the darksong

he smiles wicked and proud
knowing he can be savaged here
but never truly defeated

That darkness can never be felled
never quieted
never quenched
for it lurks in every heart
singing quietly

But I have not come on the path of righteousness
no angel's dream guides me
mine is the mission of vengeance
I will be content to slay him without
because I can master him within

In a blink he knows to fear
for he is immune to the white fire
but no angel's hand has touched my blade
it still glows red with the Blacksmith's Song
seeking a heart to quench the flames

My smile no less evil than his was
just a second ago
around me those arrayed hordes quail
clamoring to flee their trap reversed
there are screams of terror and the Blacksmith's Song

It was a war unlike this world had ever known
darksong waxing and waning across horizons
content to corrupt those innocent souls
Until I learned the Blacksmith's Song
his blade lighting the tunnels a terrible red glow
swallowing the green light

There was a truce for a time
but he broke it in his greed
looking to visit me his wrath
Can you hear the screams from the tunnels?

one of those lost souls was a seer once
the dragon awakened instead
and now I bring vengeance to this place

The dreams begin anew
dank dark tunnels
filled with brackish pools and green light
and that cold ugly wind in the storm drains

He has shown me the path
and awakened the last Carthaginian
those cries of madness give way to terror
as my footsteps approach
for it will be a war unlike this world has ever known

Chapter 2: the City

In the cry of a nightbird
I heard an echo of her voice
it took me back to another age

We stood together
arms entwined and hearts racing
looking down from a balcony
as the Festival crowds danced below
somewhere in the stars and laughter and her eyes
the magic was born

It was the birth of summer in the rites
ripening fields of grain lined the roads
orchards grew heavy and fat
and our love blossomed as well

We had but a few summer months together
before a shadow crossed her heart
I felt the cold of death in her touch
and heard mocking laughter from the night

Have you ever heard of the Wars?
I sought out the master of darkness
and found him already safe in my home
laughing

In my last memory of the city
seen from that ridge north of the river
it was still burning in places
looted clean in others
ground into the soil and salted as well

In fighting the minions of darkness
I had become one myself
wreathed in fire and the steelsong
putting to torch and blade all I had known

for the betrayal I had faced
in the form of a brother

He escaped retribution
and still hides in his master's shadow
together beneath the ruins of that city

In the years since that day
I have crossed worlds and dreams
first there was Mountain
standing high and unpassable athwart my road
grinding down all who might surrender to despair
and surrendering
to those who would sacrifice yesterday for tomorrow

later I was a revenant in the Desert
beneath a killing hot sun
surrounded by the sands
watching them slowly claim my lost home
while I healed a fractured heart and soul

and then there was Sea
a blue desert and the mountain known as winterstone
no less deadly than the past
in crossing it I lost everything again
shattered on an unknown beach

I heard her voice
in the call of a nightbird
she is still quietly crying

Chapter 3: Stonedancer Vision

For eight nights I had the dream
calling my name from behind closed eyes
tonight is no different

I saw a land of darkness to infinity
lit by falling stars
dying songs

Each light that fell was gone
silver flashing to crimson
and then nothing
each day the darkness grew

I passed through this realm
lost and alone
where even angels fear to tread
beyond both hope and despair

There the dream always ended
but tonight it draws me deeper instead

At first the sound is without meaning
then it becomes a distant mountain's heartbeat
it might be an ancient engine
such an image is in my memory

Closer now it grows
leading me to a soft red glow
a cave overlooking my unmarked road
the ringing sound engulfs me
taking me down to the heart of a mountain

With no wind to blind me
I suddenly realize
how cold the night had become
cutting through me
But here I can feel the mountain's heat

leeching the cold from my bones
with the red stone warmth

A thousand miles down I find a cathedral
lit by the fireglow of the flowing lava
the ringing sound deafens me
but the origin is clear now

Legends speak of the Blacksmith
living outside the angel's fire and the darksong
answering to no power save his own

Here in the heart of a mountain
I watch a sword take shape in his hands
his anvil like an altar in this stonemight cathedral
red steel singing under his hammer

For an eternity I stand there
bound within the sound of the stonemight
lines of power pulse in the stone
answering his call

There was silence as sudden as death
the song ended
and hung echoing into this vast cathedral
as he looked up at me

His eyes were silverfire aglow
the magic that had brought me here drew me in further
for a moment we joined

His heat flowed into my limbs
rivers of power flowing from the stonemight
and I saw the road

The vision ended as the song did
I opened my eyes to darkness
a void as deep as the darksong

Nine steps brought me to the anvil
on it I found the sword
waiting as if it were an altar instead

The metal was cold until I touched it
and then a red steel glow began
lighting the cavern a pale memory

I heard the Earthmother whisper the name stonedancer
and I saw that road again
bounded by mountains and lit red

Beyond the mountains there was desert
beyond desert awaited ocean
beyond water there were mountains again
it was the red road before me

Chapter 4: Earthmother

She came down from the wilderness
seeking warriors for the apocalypse
men to fight and die for her dream
her call brought me thus

In another age
I might have remained a scholar
but there was no ignoring her call

It was like that night
so many years ago
when the Blacksmith first came for me
riding from that same wilderness

In a dream I heard her voice
a call whispered on the night breezes
calling my name among many
but each name I recognized
each phase of my existence has brought a new name
she called them one by one

The final name was one I knew not
until I heard her call

She brought me to this valley
her stonemight cathedral in the wilderness
standing alone in the first light of dawn
Warrior

The names called to the morning
rang like words of power off the trees
answered by the beast of darkness

Though many times my war has known her cause
this is the first
when I have fought under her banner
but I have been the Blacksmith's sword for so long

I no longer question my fate

It is enough that I fight the Master of Darkness
cloaked in the red light of vengeance
existing in the balance between angel's fire and darksong

The battle joined is like any other
in a lifetime of war
covering most of the world
and all of eternity

Once I was of the Lost
proud warriors gone beyond the edge of the world
and nearly forgotten

In our youth and arrogance
we fought to the heart of the darksong
seeking to break his hold
wielding the might of the angel's fire

One by one my brothers fell
twisted by the dark one to his foul purpose
through night we fought
but only I stood unbroken
when dawn crossed our ruins

I tried to return home
only to find the darkness already resident
so I burned that place to ruins as well
and turned in despair back to the wilderness

In a red cathedral I found the answer
in a vision of the Blacksmith
slowly forging a sword of many names
icons like totems down the blade
and I was each of them

With his purpose fused into my soul
I returned to the wilderness

wandering as before
but the Earthmother called
seeking warriors for the apocalypse
men to fight and die for her dream
calling my name in dream and midnight whisper

Chapter 5: Cathedral

My cathedral was the sky
a symphony as grand as the wilderness
ringing through the rocks and trees
with the unquenchable fury of an avalanche

The mountains stood sentinel
pulsing with the gathered power
trees swayed and limbs snapped taut
the first screams started in the canopy

Off in the distance I heard her song begin
mysterious harmony
and yet as familiar as my heartbeat
a ringing counterpoint to the distant thunder

For another moment I felt it rise
and then the song engulfed me
a baptism by song
followed quickly by the driving rain

I have known torture less painful
than the beauty of her song
gathering me within its folds
closer and closer to that whirling center

My cathedral had been the sky
and the altar was now a towering anvil
reaching from mountain to stars
an eerie calm settling in its shadow

But for the grace of her song
I would be lost now
hammered down by that monster
ground out like an ant

Even now I feel her caress
a glowing nimbus of power

coming between me and the storm
as the song drags me forward

I remember daylight
it was just failing when she found me
the darkness is growing thick and cold
but still her song rings

On the mountaintop a flash of silverfire
like a lightning bolt held stable
from within it her voice
calling the storm to her

Can you hear the call of the stormsinger?
Stormlady moon to the wayward sons
lover and protector on the widepath
calling me like a mighty war-horn

My cathedral was the sky
a symphony as grand as the wilderness
ringing through the rocks and trees
with the unquenchable fury of an avalanche

About the Author

Blaze has lived in many different places, including Kansas, The Ozarks, Breckenridge, and SoCal. He's also done a number of things, some of which are even past the statute of limitations now. The ones he'll tell you about (without the need for full anonymity) include being a bouncer at a cowboy bar outside a Marine base, a volunteer storm-spotter with the county fire department, and herding nerds at a small software company. He currently lives Seattle-ish and tells stories in most every form of English you can, and a few other languages.

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