

The Blood Pool

A Legend as told by Agnar Thundercrusher, Shaman of the Ox Tribe

Scribed by Zachary Sho'Indran

Many moons ago, in a time before the Kingdom existed, we wandered these lands. From the Vargrith Mountains to the Bay of Ice, we roamed the plains as they were unbroken. But, this would all change. Without warning, the sky lit up as if on fire and all of Vandlar shook. Many thought it was the end of days. For our tribe this was almost true. A great chasm had appeared in the middle of our lands. Some had thought a fiery stone had fallen from the sky and struck the earth. Others thought that lava had burst forth here like a volcano. There were other ideas as to the cause, but we knew for sure was that the earth itself had been scarred. No one would venture close to the Earth Scar as it became known as. Whatever it's cause; it had an aura of evil.

Before the next full moon people started disappearing. One or two at first, then whole families were gone. When warriors were sent forth to find out why, the survivors of these encounters told of dark creatures who were powerful and came from the Scar. We would not be chased from our own lands. We are the Ox and we have defended these lands for as long as any tribe could remember. So the clans of our tribe banded together and went to the Earth Scar to deal with this threat... permanently. We had underestimated the threat. These dark creatures spilled forth from the dark crevice in numbers beyond what any could have imagined.

We were scattered across the plains. The survivors and their families sought refuge wherever they could find it. This is how the news of what was happening spread across the land. All the peoples across Vandlar had been fighting these creatures, but what had happened to our people showed them the threat was much more than they had thought. Every tribe, barbarian, Orc, and high ogre, knew something had to be done, but no one could agree what. The Orcs wanted to throw more people at them, believing a combined force would finish it all. The Ogres made no real plans, dealing with the immediate issues. And the Tribes wanted to seek guidance from our ancestors. Separated in course the battles continued for many more moons. And the shades were winning.

A shaman of our tribe, called Halden the Stormborn, was the one who would bring us all together. Like so many others of the Ox he had lost much of his family to the shades. But, despite this, he had felt a calling and never lost hope. One evening when the wind and rain of a passing storm were pounding the shores outside the cave he was using for shelter, our totem came to him. The Stormborn was walking the grassy plains beside the Ox. Our totem explained to him that the source of the magic of the shades lay within the Earth Scar. In order to save the land this magic and that which is responsible for it must be destroyed. As there was no such magic that was known that could do this, the secret of the Blood Pool was revealed to Halden. The magic could not be worked alone, so the Stormborn set forth from his cave and began his trek to bring all together to find those who would champion the land.

His task was made simple as the totems of the other tribes had come to their shamans

and told them of his coming. The Ox had also revealed himself to the High Orc and High Ogre shamans, in forms they would know, to do the same. Despite this, travel was hazardous because of the shades. But, all would come together in the Greenward. By this time, all knew why the purpose of the gathering. Halden the Stormborn would go for the Tribes and he would take the three greatest warriors, Balorin of the Stag, Gador of the Orca and Woeryn of the Raven, with him for the high Orcs the last remnants of the Gouged Eye Tribe, the shaman Bogg, his Chieftain Grak and his son Akrim would go. And for the High Ogres the shaman Vor Bonebiter and his brothers Torek and Sadum, would go.

The Haldens party made it's way to the Earth Scar easily. It was as it's members looked into the huge gaping chasm, that they knew the hard part of their journey was about to begin. The light seemed to just stop below the lip of the Scar. It seemed to suck the warmth from the center of a person. But, these were the champions of their people and they were not about to be held at bay so easily. Guided by his previous visions, Halden was able to locate a path down. It was obvious to them as they descended that this ledge was seldom, if ever, used by the shades. So, they made their way down in silence. Even the sound of their footsteps seemed to be swallowed by it's depths along with almost everything else.

How long they traveled down, they didn't know. They sighted a pinprick of light in the darkness, like a lone star in the sky. It was a mixed blessing, because that is when the shades descended upon them. If the path had not been so narrow they would surely have died then and there. Instead, the warriors were able to change places with the two men holding the front which created a wall of flesh and iron will. Every man hacked and hewed until his arms were numb. The shades continually regrouped in an attempt to bring down our champions, but to no avail. Steadily, Halden and his group pushed on towards the light. As they fought their way closer, they could see the light was coming from a circular opening in the chasm wall. As they realized that whatever the source, the shades avoided this light, Halden's men pushed with renewed vigor.

The shades hissed as the power of what was in the grotto held them at bay. Halden and his followers although exhausted from their battle stood in awe of what they found. The men were dwarfed by three dragons. All three were in a sitting position staring down at the same point between them. The sound of three distinct heartbeats echoing through the chamber removed any doubt that these legendary creatures were alive. But, something had imprisoned them in some manner. Halden, compelled by his calling, moved to the spot where the three dragons gazed. Slowly the three heartbeats started to beat as one and Halden could hear their voices.

They revealed to him that they were long the guardians of artifacts long considered to dangerous to allow falling into the hands of others. Over time from both age and combat the guardians' numbers waned until just these three remained. In their arrogance they never went to the other races to seek help in their charge. This would prove to be their undoing. A creature they had never encountered before presented itself. It asked to be allowed to join them in their vigil. They were reluctant to include others in their duty, but

knew they needed others as powerful as they were to maintain the watch. After deliberating they told the creature they could not accept its offer. It said it understood and went away. What they hadn't realized was that there had been another creature and its presence was concealed by the others power and by their minds being more occupied by the discussion. One of the artifacts had been taken: a portal that could be used to open doorways to other worlds. But, the power necessary to open the portal was immense. When the lands were shaken and the Earth Scar formed they knew they had failed. The three used their remaining power to create this grotto as a safe haven against the shades until help could come. They told Halden that the shades had been draining what strength they had, but coupled with the knowledge he already had the portal could be destroyed. So it was with the last bit of their life they passed their strength to the warriors and their magical might to the three shamans.

All doubt of what had to happen here removed, the Stormborn and his champions emerged from the fading protection of the grotto. Even with its magic faded the shades were reluctant to move forward, sensing the sheer power emanating from the champions. All the lesser creatures that stood before the tribesmen were brushed aside. Uncountable masses of the creatures laid slain in the wake of the wrath of the dragons and the determination of Halden's men. But, they were not the only beings of power in the Scar at that moment. The two creatures that had fooled the dragons strode from among the masses of their minions. Power cascaded over their dark forms like violet lightning. Their laughter at the perceived futility of the tribes attempts to stop them echoed like thunder through the entire Earth Scar. Without pause the champions surged forward as one.

Although outnumbered the two leaders of the shades more than held their ground. After only a few minutes it became apparent that the champions were losing ground. Rather than lose hope Halden worked on another way to defeat them. It was then that he saw the magical doorway they had stolen in the room beyond them. With the magic passed to him he relayed without words his plan of action. The warriors launched themselves at their foes in an all out attack. Knocked off balance the creatures were slowly shifted to the side. By the time Halden and the other two shamans were through the door way almost all the warriors were fallen. Grak bloodied but unbeaten was the only thing between the shamans and the vile creatures. Knowing he could not defeat them with his axe, Grak unleashed the last of the dragons strength given to him and collapsed the doorway upon himself. He had saved the shamans, but only for a short while.

It would be all the time they would need. Using the knowledge given to them through Halden from the Ox and the power given them by the dragons they began the ritual. The metal doorway stood at the bottom of a bowl shaped depression in the floor. Water started to seep up through the stone like a spring. Each of the shamans cut their hands and placed them into the water. Their life's blood flowed into the now swirling pool. As the magic's they worked took their final toll on the champions the pool's magic worked itself upon the archway. The celestial magic's that infused the portal were drained away.

As the Halden's eyes closed for the last time visions were experienced by the shamans of all the tribes of all three races. They all saw how the Halden and the other heroes died.

As a final gift to all of us the shamans were shown how the Blood Pool was made and given a bit of the magic that had been given to Halden and the others. The shades attacks came few and far between in the following month until they stopped altogether. The victory won by our Chosen was celebrated for many days. Each was remembered in their own right. But, most importantly, as a lasting monument to their sacrifice all the shamans of our tribes, the High Orcs and the High Ogres were left with the knowledge to call forth the Blood Pool which was said to be able to destroy any and all celestial magic.

Here we are today though. None of those originally gifted with the power and knowledge to call the Blood Pool live today. And although we remember it in tale we do not remember how to call it ourselves. I find it hard to believe it was a thing meant to pass. I believe it merely waits for others as brave as Halden to seek the knowledge out for us once again.