

# DRAGONS OF ASH

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FADE IN:

INSERT:

A FADED MAP of a medieval countryside.

Ink writing, notations of places, regions. Four destinations come into focus: REVILLA, MURID MOUNTAINS, DARIAL KEEP and VERONA VILLAGE...

EXT. VERONA VILLAGE - DAY

A black cloak over him, JEREMIAS (early 40s) walks among the devastated village.

Remains of huts and property smolder.

The bodies of men, women and children, mixed in with bull and goat, lie about the ground.

Buzzards poke on all kinds of dead flesh.

Jeremias points to one of the large birds, motions for it to go away. The bird follows the instruction.

Jeremias squats before THE DEAD MAN (mid 20s), turns him over. Studies the face of death.

He puts his right hand over the dead man's mouth. With the other hand, he draws in the dirt, around the man's head.

Jeremias concentrates.

Moves his right hand over the dead man's eyes.

JEREMIAS

Speak.

DEAD MAN

(long moan)

Attacked.

JEREMIAS

By who or what?

DEAD MAN

Dragon Beast.

JEREMIAS

Is everyone in Verona Village  
dead?

DEAD MAN

Most everyone.

JEREMIAS

Most?

DEAD MAN

Some went after it. Towards  
Darial Keep.

JEREMIAS

Rest.

The Dead Man twitches, goes limp. Jeremias, disgusted at  
the sights around him, spots one of the vultures.

JEREMIAS

Ab ovo abyssus abyssum invocat  
exit.

The vulture explodes in carnage of blood, bone and  
feather.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP - DAY

On horses, Twelve Knights approach the Keep. All of the  
knights carry sword and shield, light armor, no helmets.

Two of them, EZRA and LOCHIA (both mid 20s) take the  
lead.

As the party gets closer to the keep's main entrance,  
they notice that the outer walls have ugly vines that  
grow over blackened stone.

A stunning maiden, CATHRYN (20s) watches the group from  
a tower window within the keep.

CATHRYN

I am Princess Cathryn of  
Revilla! Who are you?

LOCHIA

Sir Lochia of Verona, my lady.  
We are tracking a dragon that  
attacked our village.

CATHRYN

Yes.

LOCHIA

We believe the beast is headed  
in this direction, and have  
come to defend the--

CATHRYN

It's already here!

The knights stumble back in surprise.

CATHRYN

In these very walls!

EZRA

My lady, I am Sir Ezra! Is  
there anyone else inside?

CATHRYN

I am alone. Not by accident.  
Mark me, I warn you: this place  
is cursed. A witch has seen to  
it. Only a knight can enter to  
slay the beast and rescue me.

EZRA

How about several?

The men draw their swords.

LOCHIA

My brother here will come for  
you and bring you to safety, my  
lady. The rest of us will find  
the beast.

CATHRYN

Be quick.

The knights enter the main gate.

EZRA

(to Lochia)

Maybe it's better if we all go  
get her, then regroup, fight  
the dragon.

LOCHIA

No, dear brother. If it is  
still here, it will guard it's  
prize.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP. COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Once they pass the gate, they come into the courtyard. A  
light layer of smoke greets them. The haze masks broken  
stone gargoyle statues and fountains.

As the knights go further in, mounds of ash cover the  
rest of the yard.

Ezra dismounts, finds a broken post to tie the reins on.  
He nods to the rest of the knights, walks forward.

He glances back.

The thick smoke fades his friends out of view.

Ezra walks in between the piles of ash, coughs.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Ezra slowly opens the door. Smoke billows in with him.

To his left against the fall wall: a huge vat made of  
clay.

The only light comes from above, through small gaps in  
the stone.

He finds a set of stone stairs, proceeds to an upper  
floor.

UPPER FLOOR

He gets a good look at her beauty now; the princess  
stands before him, radiant. Perfectly fit.

Beside Cathryn is a bed, white silk covers..

CATHRYN

Ezra. Sir Ezra.

EZRA

Yes. Come with me.

CATHRYN

No. Come with me.

She kisses him on the mouth, leads him to the bed. She takes his sword gently away from him.

CATHRYN

I must award my suitor.

The sword falls to the floor.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP. COURTYARD

Lochia sees an image in the smoke. He gives a battle cry. He races with his horse towards the large beast. Black as coal, the head covered in lizard scales.

He jumps off his horse, and stabs into the dragon.

He falls down to the ground, gets up fast. Backs away, ready to strike.

The dragon does not move.

Lochia takes a step closer. Half of the dragon is deformed.

The folded wings, the fierce profile, lizard head and rows of teeth.

Reduced to a solid creature of ash. The deformity is where Lochia struck; the wound nothing more than a collapsed hole.

Lochia steps back. Looks around.

Piles of ash.

He runs back.

LOCHIA

Back! Back! Everyone go back!

He finds his horse, mounts it. Falls on the ground. He rolls to get back up.

Face to face with the severed ash head of his steed.

He stands up, moans in fear.

Runs through the smoke. He passes by his other knights, all of whom, along with their horses, have all turned to ash.

LOCHIA

Ezra! Ezra!

He stumbles towards the entrance, but the smoke disorients him.

One of the dark stone gargoyles blocks his way.

Like the dragon of ash, it too has rows of fangs and folded wings.

The wings spread out, shadow down on Lochia. Out of the gargoyle's mouth a plume of smoke envelops Lochia.

When it clears, he is an ash statue himself.

The beast grunts, lumbers a step forward. Taps Lochia on the head. A new ash mound.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER. UPPER FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ezra rushes towards the window. Looks down below. The thick smoke blankets the entire courtyard.

No sign of anyone.

Cathryn steps up behind him. Puts her hands on his shoulders.

CATHRYN

It's too late, they are gone.

EZRA

Gone. What kind of place is  
this?

CATHRYN

I told you. You can stay here  
with me in my bed tonight,  
break the spell. Or you can go  
down there, and die.

Ezra steps away from her, finds his sword, picks it up.

EZRA

I will kill the beast.

She reaches out, guides his arm down.

CATHRYN

You can't.

She kisses him full on the mouth. He takes it in. When  
her lips part from his, he gazes into her eyes.

EZRA

You're right. I can't do it  
alone.

CATHRYN

Yes.

Ezra grabs her by the wrist, pulls her close to him. He  
heads with her towards the stairs.

EZRA

Then we'll do the next best  
thing.

CATHRYN

No!

She struggles to get away, but Ezra's grip tightens.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

As they get to the end of the stairs, a dark gargoyle  
stands outside, smoke swirls around the monster.

Ezra raises his sword in defense.

CATHRYN

It cannot cross. We cannot  
leave. I'm sorry. But you are  
here, there is another  
alternative.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER. UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT

Lit candles illuminate the room. Ezra's armor and sword  
beside the bed, everything but his gauntlet.

Cathryn helps him take that last piece off.

She guides him down, mounts him.

She can see his reaction. Ezra's face reads confusion.  
Cathryn guides his hands to her hips.

Those hands find their way up.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP - DAY

Jeremias, on foot, approaches the keep. He stops, kneels  
down, inspects the ground.

From the tower:

CATHRYN

Who goes there?

Jeremias waves her off, checks the dirt. Finds tracks  
that lead into the keep.

CATHRYN

I know you're out there. I can  
see you.

Jeremias stands up.

CATHRYN

Who are you?

JEREMIAS

I come from Verona. My name is Jeremias.

CATHRYN

Are you a knight?

JEREMIAS

I'm afraid not. I am a-

CATHRYN

Then you can't help me. A dragon has invaded the keep, the same one which destroyed Verona. A small band of knights did make it here, but the beast has devoured them all!

JEREMIAS

I see. Who am I speaking with?

CATHRYN

Princess Cathryn of Revella. I-

JEREMIAS

Good! I will go to Revella, find some more knights to come back here for you to be rescued and the beast slain. Unless of course, you want me to rescue you right now, I can deal with the beast later.

CATHRYN

You?

JEREMIAS

You wish for me to deal with it now, then?

CATHRYN

Remove your hood.

Jeremias takes down his hood, he's handsome for his age.

CATHRYN

My father knows the problem. He sends out a few knights to do the task, all have failed.

JEREMIAS

I won't.

CATHRYN

You aren't a knight.

JEREMIAS

One need not be knighted to assist a fine lady such as yourself, much less face a threat of danger.

Approaches the entrance.

CATHRYN

You are very brave.

JEREMIAS

Or very stupid! Why doesn't the smoke fall outside of the keep?

CATHRYN

Go ask the dragon.

JEREMIAS

I will when I find him.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP. COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Jeremias walks past mounds of ash. He stops by one of them, examines.

He filters the ash through his fingers. Thinks to himself for a minute.

Looks back.

Smoke thickens enough where the entrance cannot be seen.

JEREMIAS

My lady,

Jeremias hurries through the dark clouds. Gargoyle beasts emerge in an attempt to block his way.

Jeremias disappears from all view.

Four Gargoyle beasts give chase.

JEREMIAS  
(echoes somewhere in  
the cloud of smoke)  
Dragon! Rise and breathe.

A loud roar. A massive whirlwind blows away all the thick smoke.

The exposed gargoyles see the Dragon Of Ash, elevate over them, solid wings of dark sand spread out.

They stop in a state of awe.

Jeremias, over to the side, far enough away, right arm raised in the air.

JEREMIAS  
And fall.

The Dragon of Ash topples forward, like a tree chopped down.

The thunder of the massive impact causes the gargoyles to topple over in two directions.

When all is clear, they are buried in drifts of ash along the inner walls of the keep.

The Dragon Of Ash is no more.

Jeremias casually examines his surroundings, finds a sword.

Goes up to one of the gargoyles, which frantically digs itself out.

Without further hesitation, Jeremias thrusts. The beast squeals loudly like a pig.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER. UPPER FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

From outside, another awful unholy shriek of pain. Cathryn becomes nervous, swallows her own spit.

INT. DARIAL KEEP. TOWER - MINUTES LATER

The door flings open. Jeremias carries the sword in one hand, the severed head of one of the gargoyles in the other.

He drops the head, points with the sword around the room.

JEREMIAS

Ignis, lux et mutatio gladius.

Torches pop with instant flame.

Illuminated a short distance away: the vat. The bloody, half eaten corpse of Ezra lies in his own personal herb soup.

JEREMIAS

Get thee down here, witch!

CATHRYN (O.S.)

I am a princess.

She jumps down from the top of the stairs to the floor in front of Jeremias.

CATHRYN

So you are the one who was following me.

JEREMIAS

I am Jeremias of the Murid Mountain Priests. And I am the one who will kill you, as the knights and the dragon who you had falsely accused failed to do.

With a wave of Cathryn's hand, the boiling stew rises out of the vat and tidal waves over Jeremias.

With another wave, the sword rips out of Jeremias' hand and flies into the nearest wall.

Jeremias' skin boils.

Cathryn's skin mutates into a light green. Her blonde hair goes pale white. Her eyes cat-like.

CATHRYN  
Nikto Barda Klaatu.

Stones in the walls invert to become human skulls.  
Spines of the dead emerge like worms that crawl on the  
floor.

CATHRYN  
Did you really think it would  
be easy, sorcerer?

JEREMIAS  
Yes.

Points to her, then by an object near her feet. The  
gargoyle head.

Jeremias blows her a kiss.

The gargoyle mouth opens. Smoke exhales over Cathryn's  
ankles. She takes a step forward, falls as her ankles  
and feet break like loose sand.

CATHRYN  
(shriek)  
No!

The smoke from the severed head creeps over the rest of  
her.

Jeremias goes over to the sword, picks it up. With a  
motion with the sword.

The smoke clears, and leaves Cathryn as an ashen  
sculpture in mid-scream.

With one tap on the head, she falls apart.

Spine worms cease to move.

Satisfied, Jeremias exits the tower.

FADE TO BLACK.