

The Legend of Sivrit and Goldenrune's Revenge

Chapter 1

The realm of Lanthis lay sprawled across several dramatically arching mountain ranges, the deep fertile valleys giving way to rolling hills further than the eye could see. Beyond that, were oceans teeming with merchant vessels sailing upon the often turbulent and treacherous waters of the Valsic Sea. The borders of the realm ended at the icy Valsic Sea to the North, the Kingdom of Orianne to the West, the Forests of Mystes to the East and to the South the great Solus Empire, known for its countless isles and countless greed for conquest.

Of all the stories of Mid-Lanthis, none compare to the greatest of heroes: the legendary Sivrit. His reputation of being a powerful warrior, a cunning strategist, honorable, loyal and passionate were well earned. For even of his enemies were many that had come to respect his prowess in battle if not also his fair treatment to surrendered foe.

It was in this age that Godron, King of Orianne, married his fair and beautiful daughter, Goldenrune, to Sivrit forming great prosperity and peace between the two nations. Though many were the merchants, warlords, chiefs and kings that knew of Sivrit's reputation and traveled to offer their daughters to wed he did not take even one to his bed. Though tempted by the beauty or riches offered to him, Sivrit stayed true to his one and only love: Goldenrune.

Of all the fair maidens that Sivrit set his eyes to, Goldenrune was indeed the fairest. It was only by chance that they even came to know one another at all. Before the times of peace between Orianne and Lanthis, many wars were fought by Sivrit's father and some even by Sivrit himself. It was one such conflict that brought an Orianne Emissary and a Lanthian Scout to become subsumed in a mysterious cave. Each others' guards stricken leaving the two of them the only choice to help each other in order to leave

the cave. Sivrit was enchanted with Goldenrune's beauty and vowed to find the mysterious Emissary once again.

At the time, their love was a betrayal of their country and so each promised to see one another when each nation no longer stood in conflict. Their honor and their commitment held true, and one day open conflict between Lanthis and Orianne ended. For each, they felt that they could truly live again and with succession the two had also become heirs to their respective thrones.

With the blessing of King Godron and approval of Sivrit's father, High Regent Arthumius, Sivrit and Goldenrune were wed. The peace of their marriage reached the ears of the Solutian Empress, who greatly feared what such an alliance would mean for his thirst of conquest and the wealth she sought. The Solutian Empress became dismayed as her attempts to subjugate and control the territories of Lanthis and its smaller allies at her border were stopped.

The Empress sought a very skillful and capable assassin to end the alliance between Orianne and Lanthis, and though Arthumius, High Regent of Lanthis, was stricken by poison to death the alliance between the two countries remained intact. The Empress then sought the council of her greatest generals and concocted a grand assault on the heart of Lanthis, to sack and destroy the capital city of Valenhall.

What followed was a series of bloody wars and conflicts, which, before their end had Valenhall sacked and burned not once, but twice. Even with the walls of Valenhall shattered,

Sivrit and Goldenrune united the lands against the Empress and led a great army, the size of which no one has seen since. It was in this last battle that the Empress's generals lay defeated and the Empress herself fled, though never to return to her Imperial Isles. Sivrit had finally vanquished the Solutian Empire, whose armies had cast a shadow over the land like a great and terrible dragon.

Though Sivrit and Goldenrune returned to Lanthis, a monument was built to watch over the battlefield should the Solutian Empire ever return to its former mountainous peninsula. There was peace once again, but it was short lived for the Empress had also sought a very wise and powerful wizard named Sycorax. This wizard learned to hide among Sivrit's people and watched him to learn his weakness. In so doing, Sycorax learned of

the true love that Sivrit shared with Goldenrune. The wizard also learned of Goldenrune's love for her aging father.

Unbeknownst to Goldenrune, Sycorax disguised themselves as King Godron and assumed their identity. No one discovered the true fate of King Godron or when he disappeared, as once Sivrit and Goldenrune returned to Valenhall Sycorax confronted them disguised as the King. He vowed that Sevrit was unworthy of Goldenrune's hand and to prove himself must climb the highest mountain in Lanthis and defeat a beast stronger than any Sevrit had faced before, in order to win his bride back.

With that Sycorax and Goldenrune disappeared from Valenhall, leaving the hero to search the castle and the city for any sign of his bride. In his heart Sevrit knew that the longer he delayed facing the magician's quest the worse it would be for Goldenrune. He could not rule Lanthis and search for his bride, so in taking up his quest Sevrit left his brother, Chelperic, as regent of Lanthis.

Sevrit traveled to a weapon-smith in the low-country named Rogan and asked for a weapon that would allow him to face the wizard. Rogan had known of few wizards, but word had traveled from the days of the Solusian Wars and fearing the return of Sycorax the weapon-smith crafted a sword unlike any other. As Rogan tirelessly worked, strange dreams troubled Sevrit tormenting him with visions of Goldenrune caged like an animal by the evil wizard, tortured, humiliated and more.

The hero's need became desperate as each successive night brought with it even more troubling visions of Goldenrune driven mad with pain and cruelty. Finally Rogan delivered the promised weapon, which even in the dim moonlight gathered a golden hue around its blade surface. The weapon-smith called the sword Gramr, and old word for Wrath, explaining that it was a weapon crafted to bring justice to evil and would have no use as a weapon of war. Sevrit believed he understood the smith's meaning, having recently awoken from more dreams of Sycorax torturing his beloved wife and left Rogan to confront the challenges set before him, slay the wizard and be reunited with his true love.



Chapter 2

Not all of Lanthis was mountainous, but the tallest of any hills and mountains in Lanthis were the Pennine Mountain Range. A string of exceedingly tall and jagged crests that were said to be ancient giants attempting to reach for the heavens, their hands outstretched in a final plea. The tallest among the Pennine peaks were known as the White Crown, where the sheer mountain face thrust into a group of three points vaguely resembling a massive crown left to top what is surely the king of all

mountain peaks. Far below the cloud covered slopes of the White Crown, at the green and lush base of the peak lay the town of Brienz.

Brienz was known in days past as a quaint village of farmers, shepherds and salt miners though salt being its' main reason for trade other than sheep's wool, and the rare strands of gold dug from the earth. As Sivrit approached the town he became disturbed by the unusual quiet that had settled in the valley. Not one man, woman or child of the village could be seen or heard at a distance where Sivrit would expect to see a wagon or two traveling on the road leading to the town square.

As Sivrit approached farms near the town the smell of old, wet fire clung to his nostrils and he beheld the sight of many a farmhouse or barn smashed and charred as if from a great siege weapon. Searching the ruins revealed no trace of the inhabitants, and not even the livestock milled about. Further advancement towards the town of Brienz Sivrit discovered a sign consisting of a few wooden slats hastily cobbled together laying in the mud, the words once scrawled on it's surface now unintelligible.

The legendary warrior had faced many evils and horrors in battle, yet there was no sign of any army that had marched through this town, even the larders were still stocked with rotten or mildewed foods. Along his journey to the White Crown the dreams of his wife grew worse, grotesque acts and perversions repeated time and again to Goldenrune and later by Goldenrune. One night the dreams simply stopped, Sivrit did not know what it meant and if the dreams or their absence filled him with more dread. His suspicion was that somehow Goldenrune and the town were connected by the sinister magic of the evil wizard.

After a thorough search of the town Sivrit was certain it was deserted, and had been for some time. There was a creeping certainty from his knowledge of warfare that this town was not plagued by any army of man, no matter how depraved but a singular beast with the strength to smash down doors, the cunning to catch it's prey by surprise, to attack with saber-like claws and rebut opponents with armor, to come and go as it pleased on the wind and most disturbing of all to spray gouts of fire.

Lore of dragons were not unknown to the people of Lanthis, Oriane or even the Solusian Empire. Their kind had been driven away from the continent thousands of years ago and were only rumored to exist in the most distant lands. Even with the war between Lanthis and the Solusian Empire the extraordinary rumors of a dragon would have spread through

the kingdoms for even children knew the cruelty and malice of a single dragon well. Sevrit believed there was more of the wizard's evil magic behind the evidence Brienz bore of a dragon's reemergence from obscurity.

One hope that the hero had for the town of Brienz was the possibility that a final resident may yet be alive. In a ruined church was a room that had the feel of life, as if someone was preparing for a journey and had departed shortly before his arrival. The room had a small cot by a bronze bathing tub turned on its side, a wall held many odds and ends tacked to the surface with a series of melted candle stubs underneath, it was stocked with good food, rations and water. In short, the room was defensible from a surprise invasion of a dragon and quite possibly the silent memorial to a town ravaged by evil.

Before dawn of the following day Sevrit began a stealthy ascent up the slopes of the nearby mountain to reach the peaks of the White Crown and with any luck, catch up to the last warrior of Brienz. He knew the dragon, if his suspicions were true, could catch him unaware on the exposed steeply climbing mountain path and sought to divide his attention between ambush from the sky and ambush from an unexpected source along the path. The wizard would surely leave some trap, magical or otherwise to dissuade him from completing his quest out of fear or simply death.

Scaling the slopes of any of the Pennine mountains to its crest is considered a great feat, reaching the summit of the White Crown is worthy of a ballad. Sevrit knew it would take days just to approach the peak and packed accordingly, though he also knew that the risk of death from even the chill wind could end his quest too soon not to mention the likelihood of a blizzard. The arduous climb left Sevrit's lungs raw, his face bitten by the cold of the wind and his hands and feet blistered from the never ending ascent up the increasingly steep mountain side.

It wasn't until two days had passed that Sevrit was certain that he had a companion ahead of him, having noted a small patch of rocks and churned earth concealing discarded equipment. His inspection of the equipment suggested the traveler did not intend on returning down the mountain, but more important how close he was to facing the wizard. He reduced his own load, stowing it with the things he found and noting an oddly pleasing floral fragrance as he disturbed the traveler's gear.

Spurred on by the prospect of making an ally of whomever sought to reach the summit with him, Sevrit continued on through the fog that had enshrouded his journey of late. His caution and alarm peaked as his sharp senses betrayed movement around him, there was someone hiding nearby but there was also movement in the air. Though he concealed himself, his exhaustion nearly cost him his life as the dragon swirled through the fog towards him with a shriek spraying the mountainside with fire so hot it set some of the rocks nearby aglow with its' heat. Again the dragon could be heard, like a shroud of silk in the breeze, making another pass spewing it's stinking, white-hot plume of fire along another stretch of the mountain side.

With a shout, an armored figure broke from cover followed by the twang of a bow string and high pitched whistle of an arrow streaking toward it's target. Sevrit could not see where the arrow had gone but the responding roar gave tell that it had found it's mark. Large, desperate wing strokes could be heard as the dragon retreated from the mountainside where the two warriors concealed themselves. The hero did not make any gesture of leaving cover or attempting to speak with Sevrit, and so he called over to their boulder which had been licked with fire.

"I did not mean to endanger you or your quest warrior, my name is Sevrit and I have come to slay the dragon of this mountain," he said. The hillside was quiet for a time, though he was certain his companion remained.

Eventually, in an unmistakably feminine lilt came the response: "Do not be fooled by your senses, Dragonslayer. This creature is more powerful and cunning than you can imagine, if not for my arrow we would both be a burned feast for it's endless hunger."

Sevrit knew not if this female warrior called him Dragonslayer because she knew of his war against the Solus Empire or to mock him for his failed attempt at hiding from the dragon that now hunted them. He could not consider it in light of the danger he faced and his need to find his bride, if anything remained of her at all.

"I tell you again my name is Sevrit because I seek to end an evil wizard that placed this dragon here. I have vowed to slay this beast and face the wizard to save my true love and have been charged by Rogan to bear this weapon he crafted, Gramr, so that the dead may have justice," He said.

The warrior then replied, "That is a woeful tale, Sevrit Regent of Lanthis, victor over the Solusian Empire. I will vow to aid you as we both know this

evil cannot spread into the world. I am the last daughter of Brienz, and I have fought for your armies only to return to my town and family to find them murdered by this dragon. My name is Brunhild and I seek revenge!"

Chapter 3

Brunhild was an infiltrator when she marched with the armies of Lanthis. Footsteps quieter than a leaf falling on bare ground, hearing as sharp as a rabbit and sight as sharp as a hawk. Her strategy was to wound the dragon and follow it to its roost, yet she had no thoughts if the dragon did not return to its dwelling in the mountain. Not even regard for how she would actually kill the beast, assuming it could be slain.

Sevrit and Brunhild found the dragon's lair, or at least where it devoured its' meals. A slope near the tip of the White Crown, shielded on one side by the continuously freezing blasts of wind that crept over the mountain top yet with a perfect view of any that would trek to the top. The bones of many farm animals and other creatures lay strewn about frozen to the rock face, but they were mere decoration for the human remains that littered the area.

Braving death from the icy winds Sevrit attempted to find any signs of his lover's remains but the field of bodies was too great, and there were many more buried under the frost. Despite the possibility of finding even a single hair off of Goldenrune's head the elements did not relent the secrets of the dead upon the mountain top and Sevrit was forced to find shelter with Brunhild.

It was near dawn when something had stirred the warriors from their slumber. The two companions had wedged themselves against the sheer rock cliff away from the wind but now alerted sought to discover the source of their disquiet. Again a sound drifted from the other side of the rock face, one unmistakable in its savagery; the sound of bones snapping and flesh tearing. The creature was back and it was feasting.

Since both Brunhild and Sevrit were experienced scouts, they could disseminate rudimentary plans silently. Brunhild could cover Sevrit with a volley of arrows while he closes distance to strike the dragon with his sword. And yet, if the two fail to surprise the dragon it could take wing or even simply burn them down with fire before Sevrit is close enough to strike. Luring the dragon to them would reduce the danger from the dragon's flame because they were shielded by the rock, but they wouldn't be able to avoid any physical attack since they were on a sheer rock face.

Their strategy would have to be two-fold: to charge the dragon to seek surprise, then cover and retreat using the rock to shield them in the hopes of reaching its throat or eyes for a possible kill. Sevrit knew a silent charge is always the hardest, once committed it was never clear if surprise was on your side or theirs until the trap was sprung. Just as Sevrit and Brunhild were preparing to cross the sheer rock-face to approach the windward side of the peak they had to stop for cover because they heard nothing.

Stopped in their tracks, they could not proceed because the dragon could be retreating or waiting for them. Brunhild moved from her hiding spot to find the dragon and with shock reported that there was nothing there! A shadow moving across the ground caught Sevrit's eye and with dawning horror he realized that the dragon could float effortlessly on the strong wind coming over the mountain peak. The question in Sevrit's mind if the dragon had been aware of their presence was already answered. The moving shadow was the dragon diving towards them on the air currents.

Sevrit shouted to warn Brunhild but he had to contend with the searing roar of dragon fire. Both heroes attempted to dodge the flames, but the great mass of the dragon was upon them having smashed a stone outcrop to bits, raining shards everywhere. The dragon scrambled for purchase on the mountain side where Brunhild once was and Sevrit leaped towards the dragon. All he could see was the waiting maw of fangs lit on top by the creature's maliciously gleaming eyes.

Time slowed as Sevrit floated through the air, his sword at the ready prepared for the one and only strike he would be able to make. A streak of something small and fast from somewhere below caught in the dragon's eye and the beast recoiled in pain; it was an arrow. The shrieking creature rolled, losing its balance and began to slide off of the cliff face down along the sheer bluff of the mountain peak. A massive clawed hand reached out to still its descent and struck Sevrit, pinning him to the ground at the waist.

His body was being crushed by the strength of the dragon and its weight; the warrior's only chance was to use his sword. Flashing gold as the weapon sliced through the wrist that held the dragon to the mountain it was without a doubt magic. The cleanly severed arm withdrew quickly as the dragon now plunged backwards without clawed hand, unable to recover by the beating of its wings.

The hero scrambled to the side of the cliff despite bitter pain from his wound, just in time to see the dragon's head smash against a rocky

outcrop. The dragon flailed uselessly in a daze plunging beyond sight. Sevrit continued to scan the cliff below him in an effort to find Brunhild, a bloodied hand was all that he could see gripping the sheer rock face. Moving as quickly as his pierced gut would allow, he tied a loop into a sturdy rope and after laying it across a solid piece of rock lowered the loop down towards the hand.

Bracing himself against the weight of Brunhild on the rope, Sevrit pulled with all of his might, pulling until complete exhaustion. Only when he saw her place her body weight on the frozen cliff side did he release the rope. The blood streaking her face and arms a testament of her will to not be thrown off of the mountain by the dragon. The pain from Sevrit's bleeding gut only drowned out by the howling of the wind.

"What is that?" Demanded Brunhild. When Sevrit looked he was shocked to see a human hand where once the dragon's had been. "Black magic," Sevrit spat. He did not know or care if Brunhild could see the tears as they rolled from his face, immediately freezing or being blown off of his cheek by the wind. Sevrit knew what he saw in the bloodied stump, the fingers and chipped nails told the story all too well. Of the tender touch, soft creases or flowers cupped in that once gentle palm, as it had belonged to his beloved Goldenrune.

"We must beware the wizard," The heartbroken warrior choked. As Brunhild gathered Sevrit to his feet she shook her head, "We must find shelter or we will die. We must also find medicine, or you will die."

Chapter 4

The White Crown was the highest set of peaks in all of Lanthis, possibly even the world. Rampaging winds continually buffeted the crests of the tall mountains that thrust themselves against the sky and blizzards were known to catch unlucky adventurers unaware. Brunhild and Sevrit found themselves descending the mountain in the midst of one such storm.

Their equipment had been scattered during the confrontation with the dragon, some of which was missing and presumed to have fallen off of the edge of the peak. Though Sevrit had obvious wounds along his abdomen, Brunhild had also emerged victorious with a cost. Her movement, stiff at first, had become more labored the further they traveled from the peak of the mountain. Brunhild was nonchalant about her physical state at first, but after a few hours down slope she could not bear to keep weight on her leg.

At first they seemed doomed only stumbling ahead out of sheer stubbornness, refusing to give in to death. In Sevrit's state his guts hadn't been torn loose yet every movement brought with it a burning, tearing pain that left him breathless and only able to move slowly. Then the fever began to set in.

Sevrit's body was flushed and suffused with warmth, then came a tightness and throbbing in his temples. Brunhild was convinced that if they reached her pack further down the slope that there would be supplies to help them. At best it was a days' travel down-slope, less because it was down-slope, but they each were only capable of half their usual pace. Their careful movement gave way to pained steps and agonized jolts from rock-face to rock-slab downward.

When Sevrit briefly saw her form he at first believed it was a trick of the light, but in seeing Goldenrune's apparition again knew he was being haunted or that his sickness had progressed further than he realized. At a particularly difficult transition between a steep rock outcropping her death mask stared at him unblinking from below, forcing him to pass close enough that he expected to feel her breath on his cheek. He only felt sweat and sickness.

As she re-appeared yet again, it was in front of a dark space in front of the mountain side. Sevrit initially mistook it as a shadow cast from the sun, which had begun to set but the crack in the mountain seemed to open further with an impenetrable darkness reaching out toward him. He stumbled and fell as dizziness over took him leaving him gasping, trying to empty the contents of his stomach. Brunhild staggered to investigate the crack, shouting something back toward him.

He tried to pick himself up off of the rocky ground, his muscles throbbed and his bones ached. He drove himself to follow Brunhild into the black maw, attempting to stand and only clinging to the rocks beside him with the last strength he had. An icy hand gripped him and jerked him forward, Sevrit thought that it was the end. Consciousness faltered, even swallowed by darkness he felt as if he had just plunged from a cliff but one with no end.

Nightmares of Goldenrune plagued him, as well as her disgust at his inability to save her in time. Countless outcomes of his fight with the dragon where he had no choice but to kill his beloved wife, if he faltered he was devoured or worse. A gnawing pain below his waist pierced the fiery

heat of Sevrit's dreams, like the huge talons of the accursed dragon attempting to claw it's way out of him.

A moment spent awake brought strange sights and smells as Sevrit attempted to lift the great weight of a cloak off of his body. It was like fighting with a bear, the cover was so heavy but he could see a cooking fire and smell food. A few paces away he heard someone speaking and as Sevrit turned all he could see was the terrifying sight of the wizard saying something to Brunhild with her staring and nodding as if she was in a trance. There was a metallic smell suddenly around him, pervaded by old fish and looking around he saw his body but it was emaciated and appeared fragile, blood still slaked his thighs.

When next he awoke it was to the overwhelming hunger he felt, there was still the ever present painful clawing sensation coming from his waist but food came first. Again, Sevrit had to fight against the weight of the blanket that covered him which appeared to be a bear or wolf pelt. He looked around suspiciously for the wizard only to find Brunhild holding out a wooden bowl of broth which smelled and tasted as the most amazing thing in the world. The dish was huge in his hands, which suddenly did not seem like his own. He studied his fingers as he ate noting how much longer and thinner they looked, capped with nails that seemed- for lack of a better word- delicate. Exhaustion quickly crept back, smothering Sevrit's awareness and forcing him back into the animal pelts to sleep once again.

Chapter 5

Sivrit awoke with a start, dreams of the dragon returning and plunging it's long talons through his body to pin him to the cliff side still echoed through his mind. The pain in his abdomen was still there, a clawing sensation as if something was inside of him scraping away at his guts. He tried to sit up quickly, having more strength to overturn the bear pelt on top of him but still struggling somewhat. He let out a gasp in pain and frustration and was shocked at how out of place it sounded.

Calling out for Brunhild only served to confuse him further, as his voice sounded very out of place; shrill, high pitched and perhaps a bit childish. Sivrit stopped to consider his hearing, a low fire still crackled in a brazier with something delicious steaming in a kettle suspended above the flame. His vision and hearing seemed fine, in fact he seemed safely in some stony house full of books and bottles, hides and oddly cobbled furniture.

The clawing in his belly re-commenced and Sivrit urgently tried to throw back the pelt to find the source of the stabbing pain.

What he saw instead filled him with shock and shame. His hands *were* delicate, capped with slender nails which were attached to slim, graceful arms. Arms which framed a chest that no longer bore his stalwart muscles and numerous scars but instead large pink nipples stood on top of modest breasts decorating his *petite* torso amidst soft, glowing skin. His ribs caved inward to a waist he thought he might be able to fit his hands around, which led to prominent jutting hips. Below that it seemed that his thighs and butt simply pooled around and under him, ballooning outward almost grotesquely. Still partially covered, long and curvy legs seemed to spring from his hips only to hide his feet under the remains of the bear pelt.

A loin cloth concealed his groin and belly but Sivrit could see two red marks to either side of it pointing towards his jutting hip bones. He then became aware of the sweat and filth from who knew how long he was sick coating his body, but also a sticky wetness that clung to his bottom from the loin cloth that caused his stomach to churn. Slowly, Sivrit gathered his awkward limbs and stood upright to further examine what had happened to him.

Upon standing he first took note that his bottom sought to stay in contact with the ground and it took more effort to balance his middle. The realization that his hips also chose to tilt to one side or the other based on which leg he placed his weight was similarly troubling. He was used to powerful hips and legs that could easily run in battle, these new hips and legs only seemed to want to move and sway awkwardly while his bottom was attempting to catch up, creating stray movements of its' own.

Leaning over to pull down the loin cloth and look at the deep wound he felt still twisting in his belly Sivrit, again, had to struggle not to fall over as his toes suddenly tried to point towards the ground. What curse had befallen him, he did not know but pulling the loin cloth away revealed that there was no wound yet a sinister marking across his belly that resembled the dragon's head except with long curling horns to either side. Below the dragon's head was a silky tuft of golden blond hair that crowned what was unmistakably a very female cleft between his legs, with a trickle of blood leaking from within.

Brunhild had been unconcerned with her own life as she climbed the mountain towards her fate with the dragon. At the time she believed it

would be her last battle, but the gods had given her a fighting chance. None other than the legendary hero Sivrit the Dragonslayer appeared just below her just when she thought that the dragon would cut her down with fire. Presumably they both had now slain a real dragon, as there was no sign of it after it had plunged off of the cliff unable to recover and fly away. Legend said that a dragon could not be killed by man made weapons, and it's death could only come about by magic or natural means. She hoped that being crushed from a great fall was enough to end the story of the dragon but it seems that some kind of magic persisted.

Descent from the mountain brought her and the hero Sivrit perilously close to death, if not for the fortune of finding the mountain-man's dwelling they would have surely perished in the subsequent blizzard. She had known of Beraht the Mountain Dweller since she was a girl, as he had traded animal pelts, horns and precious gems for supplies. She had gratefully accepted his help nursing her leg and her ailing companion. Her leg had been broken or perhaps cracked in her fight with the dragon yet Sivrit was suffering from something more severe.

She remembered that after facing the dragon she found the severed hand of a woman where she had expected to see a dragon's claw. Sivrit did not elaborate beyond saying it was magic and though she attempted to prod more details from him, it was difficult because he was seemingly overcome with grief at the sight of the hand. Later, he had become delirious with fever saying things about a wizard, the dragon and his wife. Brunhild gathered that it was possible this wizard had transformed Sivrit's wife and had forced the hero to slay her.

Magic was not unheard of but the kind of magic that could make a dragon was rare. If it was true that the wizard had done this, then he had to be hunted down. Beraht did not believe it was possible to make a dragon, as he was certain they were hatched from eggs. He also did not believe it was possible to change a man into a woman, but it had happened to Sivrit before their very eyes. Pigs or other animals, yes, but women for some reason, no.

Once her leg had mended Brunhild began to explore around the cave for signs of the dragon. Too many warriors were ambushed because they believed their enemy to be dead, she did not wish to die that way. Though it had been days and the weather was reasonably clear she could not find any sign of the beast, which could also mean nothing. While returning to Beraht's dwelling she heard the sound of anguished weeping from inside.

This part she did not relish but it must be done, she still needed Sivrit in order to find the wizard. Though, since Sivrit now had the form and physique of a girl she knew they could no longer be relied upon for battle.

The warrior found Sivrit crumpled among the mattress and covers the girl used to overcome her sickness. Her head was buried in her hands, great sobs wracking her body. Brunhild could see that the girl's loin cloth was undone and the mark upon her abdomen as exposed. Sivrit looked up to see Brunhild, her eyes full of tears and her cheeks stained as if she had been crying for some time. As Brunhild moved to comfort her companion, the girl's demeanor flashed to anger as her swollen eyes and puffy face twisted.

"My strength! My body! My life! My wife! Even my manhood are gone now!" Sivrit shouted at her. Brunhild stopped as the girl tried to stand, nearly falling over but as she reached out an arm to help her it was slapped away only to collapse again. "Sivrit!" Brunhild began, "I have stood by your side in battle, so you know I stand by you now when I say that you cannot blame yourself for this! Your wife may be dead but it was by the wizard's doing, not your own."

The girl continued to weep, and through strangled gasps still managed to claim responsibility for the death of his wife. "And don't call me that!" the girl said between sobs, "Sivrit is the name of a good man... not a murderer, and not some crying girl!"

It was some time before Brunhild could calm Sivrit to the point where she stopped crying. Though Sivrit demanded why she spoke with the wizard and accused her of betrayal Brunhild attempted to convince her that it was really Beraht that she spoke with as this was his home. She did her best to comfort the hero, not only was she rife with emotion but she also claimed the dragon was attempting to tear it's way out of her belly. Brunhild explained that it was part of having a womb, that some women experienced more pain than others when they bled once a month but it wasn't the dragon. The dragon was dead.

