

The Water Girl of Mordan

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A short story I've been meaning to write down for a very long time



Published on
Booksie

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The Water Girl of Mordan

Listen carefully, my children, to the words which I will tell; for they are of the Water Girl of Mordan, who is a legend among these parts.

You may have heard it said that she never existed; but whispers still tell of a girl, ever seen fetching water in the river near Mordan, with a sword at her side and a shield in her belt. They say her soul will never leave that place so long as the water flows there; but there was a time when even the great Theldhesar was dry, in the years of Ralhedanâs absence. Those were long and sorrowful years; though nothing survives of them save the tales such as these.

Mordan had always been an isolated village, resting precariously on the border near the warring tribe of Saderan. None faced the risk of them as rigidly as they; but they were the formidable and proud in their time, so that not even the Saderan wouldâve dared a challenge to their forces. That does not go to say that they wouldnât try; but it was a great many years before an attempt was even made. They plotted and planned their strategy, waiting carefully in the shadows until that fateful day when the Land-Light shone greater than ever before, and the mighty Theldhesar ran scarce.

The Water Girl of Mordan was one of many, but distinguished from her kind; for she was more cunning and intelligent than the other Water Children. At the rise of the Land-Light they would gather their ranks while each fought to take the lead, always believed to be a place of courage; but only the Water Girl, who was wise in her own way, stayed behind.

The Water Children laughed at her, claiming her to be afraid of the Saderans who lay just on the other side of the river; but she was not. It was simply that if she stayed toward the end, she would have the last look upon Saderan; and there she would be able to tell if their armies gathered in the distance. For they were most vulnerable in those times, and she held a hidden talent with the sword.

But the children called this cowardice and laughed, mocking the clever Water Girl; and she grew angry at their insults, for to be called a coward in Mordan is worse than death. So the day came when she yelled so loud that they all fell silent, and she told them of her plan to venture out into the river alone.

The Water Children gawked with wide eyes and mouths, but none spoke louder than in hushed and hurried whispers; and though they were silent at first, they soon shouted âWell, go then, and prove your worth!â so the Water Girl nodded sharply and turned away toward Theldhesar.

She had planned to go quickly so as not to be caught by the Elders (for while oneâs courage is greatly esteemed, a foolishness is scorned) and it would have been quicker had she taken the normal route; but she took instead the long one, along the rolling plains that lead to the river. For while the other children did not believe that Saderan would attack, the Water Girl would never take such risks.

She was there before long; and as she sat there, her water pot dipped low into the shallow water, it shattered to pieces before her eyes, and her blood shot to the bank on the other side of the river as a bullet was embedded in her arm.

She opened her mouth as though to scream; and though she had every reason to, the Water Girl was clever and bit her tongue instead. She fell to the ground near the river, sliding downward carefully so as to appear dead; and before long, what little water the Theldhesar gave was mingled with the colours of her blood.

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The Saderans gave a triumphant war-cry and shouted in a language she did not understand; but she stayed quiet, even as they poked and prodded her. And they did not shoot, though she been expecting it once or twice; and when they had disappeared along the long route that she had taken to the river, she fled in the direction of Mordan.

But when she arrived the children were scattered, to their houses and homes to tell of the Water Girl's foolishness. The Elders slammed their doors in anger; and since they would not open them to pleas of mercy, they would do no such thing for a cry of the Saderans.

So she did what any proud Mordan of Ralhedan would do--she cut her hair and prepared for battle.

She laced up her father's armor, watching with cold and narrow eyes as the children who had betrayed her came peeking out of their houses to watch the Water Girl and her curious actions. "What are you doing, you who are disgraced?" they called, "For women are never to fight."

"If I am disgraced, then I am woman no longer," she replied, "but even in exile I will fight for Mordan."

And as she spoke, there came upon the children a guilt-ridden respect; and they watched with a deep regret and longing as the Water Girl took up a grown man's sword and shield and prepared to meet the armies of the Saderan.

She was already deep within the plains when they called upon the Elders once again; but this time they begged their forgiveness, pleading with them for the sake of the brave-hearted Water Girl.

But the Elder's hearts were cold; they did not believe that a child (let alone a girl) would fight alone the armies of the Saderan; so they deemed it wise not to open their doors until the faintest traces of the Land-Light had left the air, and all the Plains were sleeping.

But the Water Children of Mordan wept and cried for their friend the Water Girl, alone on the battlefield; and they lamented her, for she had only ever thought of the safety of the others, and never of herself. They cut their hair and clothes, and their tears mingled with the dust; but the Elders remained firm.

When the Land-Light had gone and all the Plains were silent, the Elders opened their doors for the Water Girl; but she did not come. They said that she was merely lost, and would return with the Land-Light; but the children knew that this was not so. With heads bowed and with a shame to rival the mountains, the Water Children return to their houses and waited until it grew lighter again.

When the Land-Light brightened the sky, the children crept out of their houses to look upon the rolling hills around them. They climbed to the top of one behind which Mordan was built, in the direction of Saderan; but before them was an unexpected sight, which they would not soon forget.

Countless Saderan soldiers lay dead in the Plains, impaled or beheaded by a cruel and swift sword. The Water Children of Mordan stood with a chilling coldness in their blood as they searched for some trace of the Water Girl; but only the Saderans were to be found among the dead, so they knew not where to look.

And it was not until one recognized that the mighty Theldhesar was silent as the dead that they ventured out to see it; for it had dried up entirely, except for a cool hard blood, which flowed once from the lifeless body of the Water Girl of Mordan.

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It was a great many years before that river flowed again--its draught was the death of Mordan. Nevermore did the Saderans chance across the border; for while they claimed it to be only a fear of Ralhedanâ€™s wrath, there were still, on occasions, the faintest whispers of that fearsome warrior of Mordan, who is the first to strike, and last to fall.

And even to this day, they say you can catch glimpses of her there, gathering water in the mighty Theldhesar; but regard her quietly, for she is all that is left of the humbled Mordan.

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