

Dragons Of Ash  
by  
Darren J Seeley

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 ...

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, 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 a carnage of blood 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 gate, 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.

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.

The knights mumble among themselves for a moment.

CATHRYN

Only a knight can enter to slay the beast and rescue me.

EZRA

How about several?

The men draw 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

They pass the gate, enter 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 far wall... a huge vat made of clay. Light shines from above, through small gaps in the stone. He finds a set of stone stairs, proceeds to an -

UPPER FLOOR

Cathryn: 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.  
Gently takes his sword away from him.

CATHRYN  
I must award my suitor.

Ezra's sword falls to the floor.

EXT. DARIAL KEEP. COURTYARD

Lochia sees an image in the smoke.

He gives a battle cry.

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.

Falls down to the ground, gets up.

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 wound nothing more than a collapsed hole.

Lochia steps back. Looks around.

Piles of ash. He retreats.

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!

Lochia stumbles towards the entrance, the smoke disorients  
him. A stone gargoyle 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.

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

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.

JEREMIAS

Where are the knights?

CATHRYN

They made it here, but the beast has devoured them all!

JEREMIAS

I see. Who are you?

CATHRYN

Princess Cathryn of Revella.

JEREMIAS

Good! I'll go to Revella, get more help. Unless 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.

Stops by one of them, examines.

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 of the 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.

All is clear.

Drifts of ash bury the trolls along the walls of the keep.

Jeremias examines his surroundings.

Finds a sword.

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

Without hesitation, Jeremias thrusts.

The beast squeals 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 half eaten corpse of Ezra lies in his own 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...

Cathryn hums a chant. Three eyeless ghosts appear around her, all of which bear her likeness.

Clawed fingers. Snake tongues.

JERMIAS

And I am the one who will kill you...

Jeremias tilts his sword, the sun catches it.

Reflections of the ghosts and Cathryn.

JERMIAS

...as the knights and the dragon who you had falsely accused failed to do.

(pause)

Parlor tricks...

Jeremias tilts his sword again, sunlight beams dance in the witch's face. The ghosts dissipate.

Cathryn hisses.

Waves her 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.

The witch chants, motions with her finger. Loose stones fly around, pelt Jeremias.

Jeremias clasps his hands. Blows on them.

Opens them, turns the stones to sand.

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, 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 beast's 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.

Jeremias exhales. Picks up the large pot beside him.

Scoops up one of the spines.

Selects a skull from the wall, removes it.

Places it in the pot. Spits in the pot. Waves his hands around.

JERMIAS  
Vita regula!

Blue and gold mist rises from the pot.  
Tar appears within, rises. Boils.

JERMIAS  
Vita hieratica!

A man, covered in a black tar, moans. Emerges. Afraid.

JERMIAS  
It's alright. Come forth.

Jermias offers a friendly hand. Smears away the tar off the man's face.

Ezra.

EZRA  
I'm alive...?

JERMIAS  
Yes. Listen. Get what you can carry, wash in the Crystal Lake to the east of here. Do you know it?

EZRA  
Yes. Are my men -

JERMIAS  
Nothing I could do for them.

Glances back at the wall of skulls, down to the spines by his feet.

JERMIAS  
For them... But I'll need a few things. Rest, for one. And to help you get to the lake. Oh, your name?

EZRA  
Ezra.

JERMIAS  
Welcome back.

EZRA  
The witch? Her monsters?

JERMIAS  
Defeated.

Ezra picks up the sword.

JERMIAS

You'll need more than that, Sir  
Ezra.

Ezra nods. Jeremias rubs his hand on his robe. Creates a duplicate of it, hands the magic copy over to Ezra.

Ezra slip on the tunic, exits.

Satisfied, Jeremias follows.

FADE TO BLACK.