A Song Of Ice And Haddock

By

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For Lyn

In a style that one reviewer has likened to 'Monty Python meets Terry Pratchett', the author continues his chronicles of the history of the Dogsbreath family with the exploits of the earliest known ancestor of the current Ivor Dogsbreath.

Ivor the Dogsbreath, so called because of his rampant halitosis which he contracted at the age of five is an itinerant tinker who with the aid of a manky old cart, which is a family heirloom, plies his trade between the settlements of the plains. 'Persuaded' to team up with a giant barbarian warrior, a foul-mouthed little dwarf and a gay elf he sets off on a quest of vengeance and to rescue the Princess Poolipong from the clutches of the Dark Lord of Cumquat.

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Prologue.

It was a time when the world was still wild and young. A time when heroes and warriors walked the land and many were the songs sung about their mighty deeds. But above them all strode one colossus. A hero famed for his cunning and intelligence as well as his bravery and fighting ability. A hero the mention of whose name would silence the most raucous of taverns, but that would also bring hope to the downtrodden. A hero whose song would be sung throughout all time.

This is the song of that hero.

This is the song of Anal the Barbarian.

1.
The Prisoner In The Castle.

The two guards dragged the barely conscious warrior through the cold, stone corridors of the castle before throwing him down in front of the Dark Lord as he sat on the throne.

"What is this interruption?" bellowed the Dark Lord glancing up from the papers in his hand.

"Milord," said the taller of the two guards, "we captured this warrior while he was attacking the castle."

"How many attacked the castle and how many did you kill?" snarled the Dark Lord.

"Err … well he was on his own milord," said the taller guard.

"One man attacked the castle on his own?" was the incredulous response from the Dark Lord. "Either he was totally foolish or … lift his head so that I can see his face," he said as he leaned forward. Grabbing the warrior's hair, the taller guard forced the captive's head back. "Well, well. Anal the Barbarian," exclaimed the Dark Lord.

The two guards looked at each other. "I'm sorry Lord, but what did you say?" asked the taller guard.

"I said 'Anal the Barbarian'," was the boomed response.

Both guards gulped then looked at each other before the taller guard gave a vicious nod to the shorter. Slowly and ever-so reluctantly the smaller guard dropped his britches while the taller guard struggled to raise the prisoner to his knees.

"What the shit are you doing?" screamed the Dark Lord.

"Err … what you ordered Lord," answered the shorter guard who at six foot six was only two inches shorter than the taller guard's six foot eight.

"And what exactly did I order you to do?" asked the Dark Lord sarcastically.

"Well, err …… you said that I should anal the barbarian," stammered the shorter guard.

"Anal the Barbarian is his name you stupid shits," yelled the Dark Lord.

"Oh, that's a relief," replied the shorter guard with a visible sigh. He lifted his britches and the taller guard dropped the prisoner with a low thud. "I've never really been into that side of my sexuality and to be honest; from this angle he's not exactly pretty."

"Do you not recognise him?" exclaimed the exasperated Dark Lord.

"Sorry, no we didn't," said the shorter guard looking at his feet.

"We don't get out much," exclaimed the taller guard thinking that some excuse was needed. "What with all the guard duty and the rampaging ……"

"And the pillaging," interrupted the shorter guard.

"Yes, and the pillaging," continued the taller guard. "Well we don't get much chance of a social life and it's very difficult to keep up to date with current affairs."

"Are you complaining?" hissed the Dark Lord.

"No milord. Certainly not milord, in fact we were only saying earlier this morning weren't we," and he nodded to the shorter guard, "that we were very grateful to you for the wonderful employment opportunity that you've given us."

"And the on the job training is excellent," added the shorter guard.

"Not to mention the pension scheme," said the taller guard.

"Humph," snorted the Dark Lord, and turned his attention back to the pitiful prisoner.

"Well, Anal, I see your much vaunted cunning hasn't deserted you even though it has become rather repetitive. I would hazard a guess that the master plan was to approach the castle, surrender yourself so that you would be imprisoned in the dungeon and then overnight you would break free and slaughter us all as we slept. A very clever plan, but having a superior brain to you I see right through it. And let's be honest it's not that difficult, after all you did exactly the same thing when you assassinated the Prince of Kamar and then again when you killed the Warlock of Bollux."

"Where's Bollux?" whispered the shorter guard.

"Somewhere to the south, I think," answered the taller guard.

"But as I say," continued the Dark Lord, "somewhat repetitive. I would hazard that when confronted by you and your men he meekly gave himself up and surrendered," the last remark being aimed at the taller guard.

"Err … well … err … not exactly milord," stammered the taller guard. "He killed fifty-seven of the castle guards."

"Oh," said the Dark Lord a bit nonplussed. "So how did you capture him?"

"Well his spear broke over the skull of Rork the Rampager then his sword got stuck between the ribs of Conan the Cun….."

"Yes," interrupted the Dark Lord, "I know Conan and yes he is. So when he had no weapon that's when he meekly surrendered."

"Err … urm … no Lord. He ripped the arm off Ivan the Impaler and beat him to death with the bloody stump. He then pulled Dork the Destroyer limb from limb."

"After that," added the shorter guard, "he garrotted Colin the Considerate with Colin's own thong."

"I thought that it was Colin the Contrary," whispered the taller guard.

"It was. He changed it this morning," was the whispered reply.

"Silence," bellowed the Dark Lord. "So what did you do?"

"We … err … broke both his arms milord," answered the taller guard.

"And I suppose that he then meekly surrendered," said the Dark Lord.

"Um … err … no milord. He then kicked Tordid the Terrible and Blood Thirsty Dave to death."

"Sorry milord," said the shorter guard shuffling his feet, "but we never noticed the steel toecaps in his sandals."

"I see," said the Dark Lord through gritted teeth. "And what did you do then?"

“We broke both of his legs,” said the taller guard, feeling that the conversation was rapidly catching the next coach to Bollux.

“So,” said the Dark Lord, “with no weapons, two broken arms and two broken legs Anal then meekly surrendered.”

“Err … no milord,” the taller guard continued, “he … err … disembowelled Poofy the Berserker with his teeth.”

“Always thought Poofy was a stupid name for a Berserker,” whispered the shorter guard.

“Silence,” yelled the Dark Lord. “So then what did you do?”

“Well, we kicked his teeth out milord,” said the taller guard now wishing that he was definitely on that coach heading to Bollux.

“And that’s when he decided to surrender,” said the Dark Lord.

“Err … um … yes,” said the taller guard thinking that the prisoner didn’t really have a lot of choices open to him.

The Dark Lord now turned his attention back to the prisoner. “And Anal I expect that you think that I’m going to throw you into our dungeons, from which you’ll escape in the dead of night and then you’ll slaughter us one and all as we sleep.”

The two guards glanced down at the prisoner laid on the floor between them. The great warrior Anal the Barbarian now weaponless, with two broken arms, two broken legs and his teeth kicked out. As they looked a gob of snot dripped from the prisoner’s nose and mixed with the blood that had pooled on the stone floor.

The shorter guard imagined the warrior rampaging through the castle that night and slicing his throat from ear to ear as he lay in bed. He shivered.

The taller guard saw the pitiful wreck and just thought that the Dark Lord had really lost it this time.

“Well Anal,” hissed the Dark Lord, “unlike the other fools who have fallen for your plans in the past I’m not that stupid. This is where your plan backfires. Guards, kill him here and now.”

The two guards looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and drew their swords.

The song of Anal the Barbarian ended.

2.
Memories.

"Mum, have you seen my sword?" the young voice came down the stairs.

"Where did you have it last?" was the motherly reply.

There was a minute's silence.

"Mum, have you seen my throwing axe?" the young voice said now.

"It's still stuck in the outhouse door where you left it," replied the mother. "And another thing, you are supposed to check whether there is anybody inside before you use the door for target practice. You gave your uncle Dirk a right turn. He nearly shit himself."

"Isn't that why he was in there," the young voice answered.

"That's beside the point. Anyway, have you had your breakfast?"

"Oh, mum," was the response.

"Now you just come down here and get yourself sat at this kitchen table. I don't know how many times I have to tell you Colon but if you don't eat your porridge you wouldn't grow into a big, strong barbarian like your brother Anal."

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The memories kept flooding back. All through his life his elder brother had been held up as an example to him of what a true barbarian was. And now he was dead, butchered on the orders of the Dark Lord of Cumquat.

But now he was a fully qualified barbarian too and like all barbarians he would have a quest. But his would be a quest of vengeance and he, Colon the Barbarian, would make the Dark Lord pay dearly. After all it was the barbarian way.

3.
An Elf By Another Name.

The tall elvish warrior stood before the leader of the council of elders. “Goldblum,” said the elder using the warrior’s elvish name. “It pains me to say this, but the council of elders wish you to leave the village.”

“But why?” asked the warrior.

“I think that deep down you know the answer to that question,” replied the elder.

“It’s because I’m gay isn’t it,” answered Goldblum.

“No, it isn’t because you’re gay,” said the elder.

“That’s what you say.”

“No, I can assure you that it is not because you are gay,” was the reply.

“What other reason could there be. It’s because I’m gay.”

“Goldblum, as elves we are a noble and enlightened race. I can assure you that it is not because you are gay,” answered the elder.

“Are you sure?”

“I am positive Goldblum. In fact how many gays are there in the village?”

“Well,” answered Goldblum thoughtfully, “there’s Weinstock, Finklestein, Laverwich, Goldlame, Klimeburg, Biderman, Burkowitz, Jones …”

“I wouldn’t include Jones,” interrupted the elder. “I don’t think that he’s a real elf. Anyway you don’t have to name them all. Suffice to say that you are not the only gay in the village. And we’re not asking any of the others to leave.”

“What other reason could there be,” replied Goldblum. “It’s got to be because I’m gay.”

“For the last time it is not because you are gay,” said the irate elder. “In fact you have a big chip on your shoulder.”

Goldblum looked and brushed off a large wood shaving from his jacket. “I must apologise for my appearance, I’ve been helping out Weinstock in the woodshed.”

“I know,” said the elder. “In fact we all know. And that’s another thing. You are a very noisy gay.”

“So you admit it,” interrupted Goldblum. “It’s because I’m gay.”

“For the umpteenth time it is not because you are gay,” said the elder raising his voice in anger. “For god’s sake I’m bloody gay and most of the village is either gay or bio.”

“Bio?” asked Goldblum.

“Bi, I meant to say bi,” yelled the exasperated elder. “You see you have that effect on people. You get them all worked up and they say the wrong things. Shit, most of the elves in this sodding village are either gay or bi. It’s just as well that we are immortal as we don’t have enough straight elves in this shithole to populate a one privy hovel.”

“So it’s not because I am gay,” said Goldblum.

“It’s not because you are gay,” screamed the elder. “If you want to know the truth then I’ll tell you the truth. It is because you are an annoying little bastard. You get on everybody’s fucking nerves. That’s why we want rid of you.”

“But what about Weinstock?” the crestfallen Goldblum asked.

“He drew the sodding short straw,” yelled the elder. “He distracted you while we packed your bags.”

“Oh,” answered Goldblum.

“Now we’d like you to leave,” said the elder starting to regain his composure.

Thirty minutes later Goldblum rode his horse to the top of the low ridge on the outskirts of the village. Turning he hoped to see some family and friends waving him a fond farewell. The entire village was on the green … having a party.

4.
A Foul Mouthed Little Dwarf.

The taller guard and the shorter guard sat astride their horses on the low hill overlooking the village. They watched as their men burnt, killed and looted their way from one end of the settlement to the other.

The taller guard sighed. “You know I’m getting bored with all this rampaging …”

“And pillaging,” interrupted the shorter guard.

“Yes and pillaging,” continued the taller guard. “It’s just not as much fun as it used to be.” He sighed again.

“You know what I’d like,” the taller guard started again. “Just once I’d like to leave the castle and … just … well … go for a picnic. You know, sit by a babbling brook, a nice bottle of Chablis cooling in the water, cucumber sandwiches, a Scotch egg, and maybe even a slice of quiche.”

“And being able to read the Sunday parchments,” added the shorter guard.

“Including all the supplements,” said the taller guard.

Both men sighed.

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The two high priests stood outside the door of the building. Bladderwort, the taller of the two, looked at Mangerot, his companion, and asked, “Do you think that the princess will be inside?”

“She better be,” answered Mangerot. “We’ve looked everywhere else in this god forsaken shithole.” For a high priest he had a colourful vocabulary.

“I still remember the young, innocent, sweet girl that we left here,” continued Bladderwort. “Do you think that she’s changed much?”

“Well considering that she was eight when we left her and that was sixteen years ago then I think that she’ll have grown a bit,” replied Mangerot with a snort.

“I still don’t think that we should have left her,” said Bladderwort.

“You know as well as I do that we had no choice. The eldest daughter of the king is always sent away so that she can be educated and kept pure and safe. Then we go and collect her in time for the ceremony on her twenty-fifth birthday. Hence we’re here.”

“Yes, but did we have to leave her with the Sisters of Ba’ark?” replied Bladderwort.

“Times are hard,” said Mangerot. “They were the cheapest boarding school and don’t forget, they had five stars on the wheretopalmoffmydaughter comparison pamphlet.”

“I just hope that she’s alright that’s all,” replied Bladderwort.

Followed by their ten ceremonial guards the two high priests went through the door into the building.

Princess Poolipong was sat in the middle of the tavern pissing in a bucket with a flagon of ale in one hand and a pickled egg in the other. “Over here you two old crows,” she yelled when she caught sight of the two high priests and spat crumbs of pickled egg over the head of the man in front of her.

“Princess … what are you doing?” exclaimed Bladderwort as he approached her.

“Saving valuable drinking time,” she replied. “Do you know how far away the privy’s are in this place?”

“Princess, how could you demean yourself so,” said Bladderwort.

The Princess stood up, belched, smoothed down her gown and promptly kicked the bucket. The two priests took a quick step backwards as the yellow liquid splashed their sandals. “Oops, sorry,” said the Princess as she sat down on a bench next to a hairy, drunken object that sat with his face resting on the table in front of the bench.

“Do you think that she’s changed more than you thought,” Mangerot sneered to Bladderwort.

By way of reply the Princess farted then turned and yelled at the barman, “Bring me another flagon of ale and a pickled egg … oh and I think I need another bucket as well.”

“Princess, how long have you been … well … a drunkard?” asked a shocked Bladderwort.

“Ever since I overheard the head sister telling one of the others about the sacrificial ceremony you had planned for me on my twenty-fifth birthday,” replied Poolipong then she belched. “I figured that if everything was going to end when I turned twenty-five then I might as well get some living in now.”

“But Princess,” started Bladderwort.

“Cut to the chase,” interrupted Mangerot. “Princess, are you still pure and innocent?”

“That boat sailed a long time ago, didn’t it lover,” and the Princess nudged the hairy mass sat next to her.

“Oh my,” said Bladderwort.

“Fucking shit,” said Mangerot.

“But … but … he’s a dwarf,” stammered Bladderwort.

“What can I say,” answered the Princess. “But dwarfs aren’t short in every department.”

At that moment Fudgepacker the Dwarf raised his head and opened one bleary, bloodshot

eye. Despite his best intentions the other bleary, bloodshot eye just couldn't be arsed. "Tucking frue," he said and then belched bringing up a whole carrot which rolled across the table. "Don't remember eating that fucker," he said before his head dropped back on the table. A rat ran across the table, grabbed the carrot and scurried off.

"Do you think the Gods will know that the Princess is not err … err," said Bladderwort unable to quite finish the sentence.

"If you don't tell them then I bloody won't," answered Mangerot. Turning to Poolipong he continued. "I think that you'd better come with us now Princess, before any more damage is done."

"And if I don't want to go?" was the reply.

"You have no choice Princess," said Mangerot and there was an edge to his voice.

"Is that right Pooli, you really a princess?" the voice came from Fudgepacker who had managed to lift his head again and had even persuaded both bleary, bloodshot eyes to open.

"Yes," answered the princess. "And these men are taking me back to Cumquat."

"Not if you don't want to go," said Fudgepacker standing and raising himself up to his full five foot two. For a dwarf he was quite tall.

Mangerot indicated for one of the guards to take the princess while the other nine moved in-between Fudgepacker and the high priests.

"Do you think ten poofs in fancy armour are going to stop a dwarf," growled Fudgepacker as he drunkenly advanced on the guards with a salt cellar in his hand. "Shit," he said, turned, put the salt back on the table and picked up his battle axe. Turning back to face the guards he took a step forward, stumbled over the rat who was trying to drag the carrot across the tavern floor and fell face first.

Crap that was close, thought the rat as the dropped battle axe cut off the last quarter inch of its tail. The rat scurried off to its hole.

As she was dragged through the door, Princess Poolipong looked back at the unconscious form of Fudgepacker laid on the floor. "Goodbye lover. I wouldn't forget you," she shouted as the door slammed behind her.

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The rider galloped his horse along the dirt track that served as a road then all of a sudden he pulled back the reins and forced the horse into a left turn. "Bastard," shouted Fudgepacker from the driver's seat of his two-wheeled cart. "I hate these bastards that don't indicate on a roundabout," he yelled at the small man cowering in the footwell of the cart.

Fudgepacker was a driver for Uder, so-called because they used cows to pull their two-wheeled carts. Uder was a taxi service that you summoned by an app on your homing pigeon and the small man cowering in the footwell was a passenger. At least he considered himself to be a passenger if he survived the journey and got off the cart at the other end.

Being a dwarf, Fudgepacker wasn't the most careful of cart drivers. He could barely see over the front of the cart for a start … and that was when he was sitting on the sack of grain that he used to feed the cow. Fudgepacker's cow had an identity problem, it thought that it was a race horse and would only eat the best grain and wouldn't touch anything else. In addition Fudgepacker also wasn't very considerate about where he stowed his battle axe, as the small man cowering in the footwell would testify. When the battle axe had fallen off the seat and took the top part of his hat off, Fudgepacker had shouted at him for trying to blunt his axe and took no responsibility for the partial scalping of his passenger.

It had been three days now since the Princess Poolipong had been taken. Three days during which Fudgepacker had not been sober much to the delight of the local innkeeper and to the absolute panic of the passengers in his cart. He missed her. He missed her too much.

As his cart ran over a chicken and the small man cowering in the footwell whimpered, Fudgepacker had a revelation. The small man now complained about the feathers and bits of chicken that covered him. But Fudgepacker didn't care, he was going to go to Cumquat and rescue Pooli. Shouting, "Feed the cow," to the small man, he jumped off the cart and started off down the road with his battle axe over his shoulder.