

The Unholy Quest

You might think that Thorain could move a mountain with his bare hands, from the way the people worshiped him. The town would buzz wildly with excitement if Thorain would be traveling their way. His whole essence personified glory. Even though he was born a mortal man, all other men paled in his comparison. His mere stature alone is more than half a yard above any other man. He is so fair and clever that some would spread rumors that he is a descendant of the High Elves. This rumor became enhanced by the look of his eyes. It was not often that people dare to look into his stare, but if they did they would notice that there is something almost unworldly about them. Maybe it is that they are a crisper blue than the sky and a deeper blue than any sea. They pierce your very soul if you get caught in their stare. You cannot look away, and you dare not lie to them.

Thorain is a Holy Paladin; an order of men that through their oaths uphold all that is right, good, and just in the world. The oath of righteousness that Thorain made was so powerful that it brought him great favor from the gods. He received great gifts, the first of which was his incredible strength. Those in battle with him say that with one blow Thorain could slay ten men. He wields a magnificent two-handed longsword, called the Oath Keeper. Along its length are Runes that read, "In death, the path of righteousness endures." As a Paladin, he has the gift of divine magic. Once the King's son, Dune, had been speared through in battle. As Dune lay on the floor dying in agony, Thorain laid his hands on the King's son. In a golden fire of light, Dune was healed.

Forty years of peace passed since battling the Maladites in the Holy Wars, during which time Thorain made an oath to King Ager to aid him in defeating this great evil. The time of darkness

has been lifted. In the battles of the seven dragons, Thorain led Ager's men to push the Maladites back into the sea, and seal them in their ocean tomb with the dragon's breath. During the battle, Thorain was able to capture a magical dagger that he gave to King Ager for safekeeping, until he can find a method to destroy it. It is a dark weapon that could inflict wounds that can never heal. This act brings a feeling of great trust between Ager and Thorain. Agar feels as if Thorain is his other son. However, the trust between Ager and Thorain brings great disdain from Dune, Agar's son, who grows jealous of Thorain.

"We must find a time when he is most vulnerable, and strike him then," exclaimed Dune.

He had gathered his loyal men to a meeting at his table.

"It must be a time when he is without his sword and armor," responded the Captain of the Guard.

"Do you have the weapon Dune?" asked another of the Commanders.

"Yes, I have taken the Maladiete dagger without my father knowing. Send a letter to Thorain asking him to my father's chamber. Tell him he is in danger. I will do the rest." Dune commanded.

That night, Thorain came to Ager's chamber. As he entered, he saw Dune and Ager talking. The fire blazed. On the table are food and three silver goblets.

"Dune believes there is a plot to kill me," Ager says to Thorain, as he enters the room.

"I have seen no sign of such a plot," says Thorain to the King.

"My men are sure of it!" Dune insisted.

"I think you're wrong," said Agar as he drinks from his goblet on the table.

The King suddenly begins to choke and sputter. Air leaves his lungs, and he cannot grasp another breath. Thorain grasps the dying king before he falls. Dune's heart begins to pound with anticipation. He turns and rams the Maladiete blade deep into Thorain's flesh.

"Your oath has been fulfilled and this shall be your reward. You can join my father in death," he says as he plunges the dagger deep into Thorain's chest.

Thorain falls to his knees. The fire of the dagger begins to glow and grows stronger as it cuts deep into his body. The moment seemed unimaginable to Thorain. His sight begins to blur from agony as he watches the King die. He could hear Dune shouting as he ran from the room.

"Thorain has killed the King! He has betrayed him with poison!"

Thorain took hold of the blood-covered blade that Dune plunged into his chest. He tries to heal himself, but it is useless against the dark powers of the blade. Hatred and rage begin to grow and consume him. He knows that he is the one whom Dune betrayed. Falling to the ground, Thorain can feel his soul begins to ascend into heaven. He calls out, "Death comes to me! Take my soul!"

Death reaches out from the ashes of the fire with its icy hand and grabs Thorain's body and soul, dragging them into the darkness and despair of the underworld. The air is thick with the floating ashes of the dead. As Death stands before Thorain, he reaches out his fleshless hand and touches the ashes that lingering in the air before him. In an instant, these remnants of life are transforming into sands of time.

"Why have you called to me Thorain?" Death echoed. "Your soul is not meant for me!"

"A great injustice has occurred! Until it is put right I cannot ascend. I ask for you to aid me in my quest for righteousness," begged Thorain.

“Death does not concern itself with the righteous! Death is the revenge of time, and overtime all will become ash.”

“Then give me the power over death and time, so that I might seek my revenge.”

“What weight does Thorain have to tip the scales of time in a bargain with Death?”

“I have my Oath and my soul that I pledge to you to command if you grant me my revenge.”

“The great Oath of Thorain the Paladin, and the soul of one whose Holiness is favored by the gods. That does have great weight as a prize to the Unholy! I will grant you the power to control the dead. Your blade shall become the Death Dealer. It will turn all it touches to ash, and ash is time.”

Death points to Thorain’s body, “But in the time it takes for you to complete your quest you will already be turning to ash. You must swear your oath to me. Only then will you be permitted to seek your revenge. If you do not find redemption before only ash is left of your body, then you must return to me to do my bidding.”

Thorain knew what he must do. The King’s burial is tomorrow. On his knees, he swore his Unholy Oath to Death. He sets off to travel through the ash and fire of the Underworld until beneath King Ager he waited. He would bide his time until all were present. Throughout the day, the court prepares for Ager’s Funeral Pyre. The wood is piled high, so that the fire can be seen by all the people throughout the kingdom. Preparations are made for a great feast. Everyone from the court dresses in their finest to pay homage to the old king and to see the crowning of the new one.

As the music plays, bearers carried Ager’s body toward the fire. They placed him on the high altar and adorned Ager with wildflowers. When all the court has been announced, Dune began to step toward the altar.

“My father, your King, was struck down by one he trusted above all others. Thorain, a Holy Paladin, betrayed his oath to kill his King. May he be forever cursed for such an act. I sought revenge for such a betrayal by stabbing him with the knife that he gave to my father to gain his trust.”

Thorain could feel the heat of hatred rise with each lie that fell from Dune’s lips. He could not act, he must wait. Then Dune stood and signaled to the guard to pour the oil onto his Father's body. He reached in and took hold of a long wooden torch. Then, he lit the pyre. It blazed with the intensity of Thorain’s rage. All he feels is hate! He will be the bearer of revenge. He will be the end of hope! He will bring death!

As the funeral fire begins to fade, and all that remains of the old King is ash, he rises. A shadowy figure in the darkness made from ash is formed. It is not Thorain who is before the King to be, but it is Agar himself! Thorain has commanded him to rise!

“This cannot be!” screamed Dune, “You are some demon!”

“I am no demon, I am the King! I am the father who held you as a boy, I am the one who taught you to fight and ride. I am Agar the King, and you are the one who has betrayed me! You poisoned me!”

Then, beside Agar, rises another figure from the ashes. Tall and ominous is this figure! Dune turned to flee, but Thorain reaches out and touches the ashes of Agar’s form. The ashes turn to sand, and time stands still. Then, Thorain raises above his head, his two-handed longsword. Its flames are black as the evening sky. Glowing bright along its length reads the Ruin letters, “In death, the path of righteousness endures!” Thorain deals one blow with the Death Dealer and it turns Dune to ash. At that very moment, Thorain’s Unholy Quest for

revenge is complete, and so is his redemption. Death rises from the ashes and stands before Thorain.

“Your blade has found your revenge, and in doing so it also has brought you your redemption. The scales of time have tipped in your favor, and I must release you from your oath,” Death says reluctantly.

Thorain starts to feel his soul-lifting toward the heavens. As he ascends, Death reaches out as the last ashes fall from Thorain’s lifeless body. With a single touch, Death transforms the glory that once was Thorain, into nothing more than the passing moments of time.