

Lucan

Heart of The Warrior

By

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He was part wolf so they say the spawn of a woman and the beast from which she loved. The four legged creature gave her three children. Two were human and one was...something other. They say that this 'other' in wishing to feed from his mother's milk killed his own sister in order to gorge his fill. The surviving child and the beast grew in time and became warriors, one a noblemen to the King and the other a lost soul in search of a life where he only wished to fit in. For this brother his mother gave him the name "Lucan"; and these are his stories.

All onlookers noticed the appearance of a tall, dark, cloaked figure as he entered the village. He said not a word but only made his way toward the town pub. Few eyes moved his way as the figure entered the doorway but soon, the pub's residents saw that he was not from nearby. The straggler in the black worn out hooded cape walked up to the wooden bar but stayed far off in the corner away from all prying eyes. The barmaid, a young, pretty woman with light hair, made her way over to the dark figure and displayed a friendly smile.

"What may I serve you, my Lord?" She asked in a soft voice.

"I am no Lord....but I will take ale, my lady." A voice said from under the hood.

"Aye, my Lord." The girl said as she went to the other end of the bar to pour the cold drink.

As the caped figure waited, he stood still with head bent low as others in the room eyed him from afar. The girl returned with his ale and placed it before him. A hand covered in brownish gray hair emerged from under his covers to lay down a few small coins. One man, sitting off to the stranger's left, gasped at the sight. The girl saw it, too; she was even closer to the man before her. She tried to sneak a peek as to who was under the hood, but the man moved ever so slightly, the open hood just beyond her eye's gaze.

“I say....you there, who are you and why have you come to our village?” Someone called out sitting in the back of the pub but he was granted no reply. “He’s the Devil, I say! Just look at his hand!” called out another man who had spied the hand creeping out from under the cloak. “What are you talking about?” The big man from the back asked. “He’s the Devil; just look at his hands, it’s the hands of the Beast!” The old man called out as the dark figure just lowered his head a little more desperate to hide his face within the shadows of his hood.

“I tell you he’s the Beast!” Again, the man yelled out as the stranger drew the ale mug under the open hood to drink his fill. “You in the long cape, is that true...are you the Devil?” The big man from the back called as he stood and walked over to the bar.

“What be thy name, stranger?”

“My name is Lucan.”

“Where are thee from, stranger?”

“A land far off.” He said placing his mug upon the top of the wooden bar as if anticipating conflict at any moment.

“Tell me...Lucan; are you the Devil as this man said?” The man asked stepping right beside the robed stranger.

“No...I am not the Devil.” He replied.

“Then show me your hands if you’re not the Beast.” The big man demanded.

“Now, why should I show you my hands?”

“Why...because I asked you to.”

“And you are?” Lucan stated with a slight chuckle in his tone.

“You don’t fear me, little man, do you?”

“Now why would I do that?”

“Why...why!” he blurted out in his half drunken state. “Because I am Lord Bankman...and you should fear me.”

With a half turn towards the man beside him, Lucan spoke these words clearly. "I fear nothing...and you are not my Lord." He said as his right hand made ready upon his sword just out of sight under his robes. Lucan could hear giggles coming from across the room. His eyes set upon three little elves who seemed to be enjoying the show. He didn't care to be the center of attraction and his anger grew but his focus needed to be maintained on the brut beside him for it was he who was the threat.

"Michael, just let him be...he just came in for a drink." The young barmaid said as she stepped forward but still behind the wooden structure that served as the bar. Lucan reached out and brought the mug again to his mouth as his foe stood near. "Yes, I am only here for a drink and then I will be going." The stranger stated, still hidden beneath his hooded cape.

"Show yourself to me!" The man demanded as he caught sight of the claw like hand of the cloaked man. "Show thy face to me...now, I demand it!" The large warrior yelled out as he withdrew his sword from its holster. "Now show me your face; I wish to see who you are." The man bellowed as Lucan held one hand on his ale mug and the other upon his weapon. Turning now fully the cloaked man displayed the lower half of his face just below his eyes to his adversary. The very sight of what was revealed backed the man off. "Great Mother of God!" He cried out; his sword drawn fully and his eyes grown wide. "You are the Devil as they say." He added and with one stroke aimed his weapon in a fierce strike towards Lucan.

The sound of steel upon steel rang out throughout the pub when the two sharp blades met within the air as Lucan countered. Then the room grew still just before someone could be heard crying out a gasp as the hooded knight's face cast into full view and the candles lighting the room reflected the head and face of a brown and grayish wolf. Not a sound could be heard as the beast now stepped into mid room and the two weapons were withdrawn from one another and brought to their wielder's side.

"I beg you, I wish you and others no harm...I only wish to fill my thirst and take my leave." Lucan said as his sword was placed back within his cloak. Turning to the barmaid once more he addressed her again. "Please, my lady, one more if you will." He spoke while the girl gazed upon him with both fear and wonder for who he was. She in her nineteen years of life had yet to meet one such as he and wondered where someone like him came from.

Lucan thanked the young woman as she placed a fresh mug before him while he spoke to her. "Would you know of an inn here in the village where I may stay until morning?" He asked her as she felt oddly drawn to the creature with words so well spoken and for her ears only gently said. Placing the mug before him, his eyes met with hers but his ears were fixed upon the man who tried to attack him only moments before. "There is a small inn just down the road from this place. They

would maybe have an opening for one such as you.” The pretty thing told him as he sucked down his drink and left two coins for the girl upon the wood beside the mug before taking his leave of the room and not looking back.

Once out in the road, he heard the man’s voice once again. Turning back, Lucan saw the tall brut stepping from the pub with sword drawn and calling his name. “Face me, wolf man, face me if you dare.” Lucan heard the words but only walked away with his own weapon close at hand but still within its sheath. “Face me...fight me, Wolf Lord... face me now.” The man called out but still Lucan just walked on with his back to him as if he were not even there. With his hood placed over his face blacking out the sun and onlookers, he made his way to the inn just where the young wench said it was. Walking up to the door he heard something coming up behind him at a great speed.

With a swing of his cape his blade gleamed into the daylight and once again the swords met in mid air with a chime of cold steel. His nemesis was bigger than he but Lucan was blessed with great speed and his next move after the swords’ meeting point was his one and last swift strike. Something wet hit his right eye as with his left he saw the big man step back and then bring up a hand to his throat. The blade fell from his hand and Lucan watched as he soon dropped to his knees, blood flowing from under his hand. His breath grew strong and he fell back in the road. Replacing his weapon under his robes, Lucan stood over the man and watched while his air intake began to slow and then stop.

“The monster killed Michael!” Called out a voice from somewhere behind Lucan as he adjusted his hood over his face and made his way into the inn. Taking to his room he waited and knew that what he had just done would haunt him long into the night. It was not the first time he had to defend himself to the death and still the very act never came easy.

The moon was high in the night sky when Lucan’s keen ears picked up something at the door to his room. Reaching for his sword he went to the door; his cape remained behind upon the bedding. “It is I, Gwen from the pub.” Said a soft voice from behind the wood as Lucan reached out to open the door but still held his steel at the ready. Slowly Lucan opened the door to reveal the young maiden as she stood in the moonlight. “I beg forgiveness in disturbing you but I come to warn you of pending danger.” The young, pretty thing claimed as Lucan invited her in. “I overheard friends of the man you had to slay today about getting even with you. They spoke openly about attacking you at first light.” She went on to say in a tender voice.

“Why do you warn me?” He asked with words but in his mind he was shocked that anyone would show him any sign of kindness.

“Because what Michael did and how he treated you was wrong; he’s a cruel man and had no right to attack you like that and yet now his friends want to take action on you.” She spoke as her eyes met with his.

“You don’t fear me like the others of this town, do you?” He questioned as he stood before Gwen openly with nothing hiding his appearance from her.

“No...you seemed kind to me. I could not see your face due to your covers but it was something in your voice...I’m not sure what it was but I could hear a hint of sadness in your tone. You seem like you spend a lot of time alone.” She said with a tender, sweet voice of someone who truly seemed to care. It was a voice that he had only heard once before in the tender loving care of his own mother. For her no matter what he looked like he was her son and she raised him into the man he was. Lucan only wanted to be like the others but his beast-like features and his suppressed anger withheld him from the life of the man he so craved.

“So...what are you?” She asked hoping that she did not offend him by her sudden question.

His long snout like mouth turned up into a kind of grin only he could make. “I’m not really sure what I am.” He replied to her. “I have met many people in my short years. Many come through our little village and stop as did you at the pub for a drink before moving on, but I have seen nothing like you before. Are you a man or wolf?” She asked sweetly.

“My father was a wolf so I am told and my mother was a lovely woman who loved me greatly. I was raised in a human world in a human village much like this one. Of all the creatures living there, I was the only one like me, a man in beast form, always thought of as a monster by others.”

“I, too, am like you; my father was human and my mother elf.” She said pulling her lovely brownish hair away from her slightly pointed ears. “Bet you didn’t know that by my height, did you?”

“No, you are much taller than any elf I have met.” He said with a grin.

“Aye, I get my height from my father...my ears from my mother.” She said with a giggle and for the first time she heard Lucan chuckle. It was something that he had not done in many moons but there was something about this girl that put the lonely traveler at ease. He would have loved to talk to her until the end of time but danger was not far off and soon he sent the young lady on her way to keep her from

harm's way. He would need his rest for at dawn's light he would need to bring all of his fighting skills into action.

The day awoke over the land just as it had for millions of years while Lucan readied his sword. It was a weapon that had served him well over the years, a silver steel blade forged around a human leg bone serving as the handle. Carved into the side of the bone were notches of the people and creatures that he had to dispatch over the years. Five Knights, six robbers, two dragon warriors and one really big troll were all marked to remind him of the lives that he had to take. With each new notch, took from him a little more of his soul and although the brief fight the day before was done in pure self-defense as were all others, this fight stole just a little more of his humanity despite the fact that this kill had yet to be added to the bone.

Lucan stepped from the open door of the inn and into the waiting sunlight. Two men could be seen at the far end of the road standing with swords already in view. Not far from his right stood yet another man with bow in hand and at the ready. Two more figures could be seen coming into sight. One was a tall, beastly man with one large eye and Lucan knew him as being a Cyclops although he had never seen one before. The creature had to be a good eight feet tall or more and just standing there gave the skilled fighter a feeling of fear that he had never known. The other soldier was smaller, with a dark greenish skin tone giving away his goblin heritage. He was armed with double whips that wielded like lightning as they cracked throughout the air about his body.

The man that Lucan saw first was the one to approach and engage him before the others. His sword drawn, he came at Lucan like a madman with wild swinging blows that backed the wolf up as Lucan swung back and met his attacker's blade in mid flight. Swiftly, Lucan disrobed his dark cape freeing his bare hairy arms and giving him greater freedom to move. Now for the first time his opponents saw the creature they faced in open combat. Lucan held his eye on the man before him and the others where they stood in relation to him but it was the man with the bow that he needed to watch most closely. For it was he with the one weapon that had the greatest range and could strike Lucan down without having to approach him at all.

The man swung his saber once more but this time Lucan, much faster than mere humans, countered removing the man's sword arm with one blow. With a cry of horror in his voice, the man tried to drop to his knees but his head was taken by Lucan before his legs ever hit the ground. With the first body at his feet, Lucan had four more to face yet they were the worst of the posse. The whip goblin was next to come near as his spinning serpents thrashed about at the speed of light. Even with his keen eyesight Lucan needed to back off from the deadly whips but not before taking a hit to the side of his face. A harsh pain filled his mind as his head snapped back from the strike tousling his long dreadlocks. "You like that wolf man....do you?" The green little beast called out before Lucan felt a hit across his steel armor

chest plate. The blow backed him up a little but it was not nearly as hurtful as the face strike.

He could see out of the corner of his eye that the big one-eyed beast was moving off to his right appearing to try and get behind him but Lucan backed up until his body was up alongside the wall of the inn keeping anyone from getting behind him. Then just before he turned to face the whip man again, something struck him hard taking his breath and doubling him over. Reaching his hand up, he felt the long wooden shaft of an arrow shot into the center of his chest shield. With an inhuman howl, he thrust the wood from his chest not thinking of the harm it could have done by doing so. Although the plate armor held the projectile from sinking deep into his flesh, what did penetrate drew blood.

The other human wielding his sword rushed him fast but Lucan was able to thrust his blade forward catching the man in the face and dropping him on the spot but not before catching another crack of the whip on the back of his head. The sudden pain dropped Lucan to the ground as a whimper escaped from his lips. He looked up just in time to see the form of the giant one-eyed monster coming at him and with just one hand the beast lifted Lucan into the air and flung him ten feet hitting the dirt hard. He was able to retain hold of his saber but he was unable to stand to use it.

Again the crack of the snake rang out across his body striking him in the back where he had nothing but the straps that held his chest armor in place. His skin opened like fresh bread and a cry of pain could be heard bellowing throughout the town. From some far off place he could hear the cries of Gwen pleading with the creatures to stop their assault before hearing one of the beasts shove her aside. He readied his sword but the whip blasted over his bare back again as bits of fur and flesh flew into the air followed by the fierce warrior's cry of pain. Still the fighter held his blade and waited until the Cyclops neared him when he thrust upward catching the beast in the right side of the ribs. A roar could be heard as far as the pub down the road as the one-eyed giant backed off holding his side in pain.

Lucan tried to stand when something whistled past him. The archer reloaded the bow but before he could refire with all his might Lucan flung his sword like a dagger striking the archer dead center in his chest. The wounded Lucan watched as the man fell to the ground without a stir. The wolf turned and saw that the Cyclops was still standing at a good distance but the goblin was about to whirl his weapon once more. Taking to his feet Lucan roared a deafening bellow and rushed the smaller creature. The whip hit its mark each time but with all his rage he lunged at the creature and killed him with his two claws. Just as the goblin fell, Lucan felt the blow of a hard kick to his ribs as the one-eyed monster rejoined the fight.

“Come on wolf man, show me what you have. It’s just you and me now, little one!” The Cyclops called out as Lucan stood alone with no weapon to his aid.

“I am right hear, one eye....come and get me.” He choked out calling the beast.

Lucan backed off leading the creature from side to side as he knew that with only one eye this beast had poor depth perception and used this fact to his advantage. Moving from side to side, forward and back drove the beast mad then as the smaller warrior reached into the dirt below his boots and flung a hand full right into the face of the creature. A scream bellowed from the giant’s mouth as his large hands covered his face. Moving as fast as he could, Lucan went for his sword and pulled it from its victim and charged the behemoth with all his might. Deep went his saber into the gut of the monster. A swipe of its hand through Lucan to the ground as the Cyclops tried in vain to pull the blade from his body. It spun around yelling a frightful wail while Lucan fought to get to his feet. Then he reached out and grabbed the end of the sword and shoved it in until the bone handle prevented it from entering any further.

Stepping back, Lucan watched the eight foot being fall into the dirt road and die. Slowly the wounded warrior moved away before he too dropped to the ground. He rolled over onto his back feeling the sun upon his face. He could feel his body draining of life as he lay there ready to live among the Gods if they would have him. He closed his eyes and drifted off. The bright sun beaming into his eyes now was blocked out and all went still.

A voice could be heard from what seemed like miles away. Then it seemed to crawl nearer as light made him open his eyes. Over him was the young maiden as Lucan saw that he was now in a room with wooden beams overhead. “Where... where am I?” He spoke softly. “Rest...you are safe now. You did what all of the men in this village wanted to do for years but feared to do so. You ended the reign of terror that they have inflicted upon our little village. We are free now thanks to you.” Gwen told him as she wiped a soft cloth over his face cooling his skin.

“Where am I?”

“You are in my home; my father brought you here and my mother and I healed your wounds.” She said as she held his fuzzy hand tenderly. “Rest now, young warrior, the world has not forsaken you as you once thought.” Lucan lay still and at rest; he felt for the first time at peace as Gwen sat beside him and tended to him.