



Book Wyrms

It was a special day for Sylko.

He was once again reading his favorite of all his treasure, reliving the adventure as he had so many times before. This was a tale of a human boy who had gone on a long journey in something called a canoe, over many oceans and rivers to find a sacred totem and bring it back to his village. This story was written on a long scroll made from the hide of an animal that no longer existed anywhere in all the worlds. He marveled at

the adventure again, cherishing it as he had the only copy of this story anywhere in the world. The words were in an ancient language using letters, symbols and pictures. His mother had taught him how to read this particular treasure, as he had learned to read so many more.

He knew his collection was tiny, tiny compared to the Ancients, and even to an adult dragon youth. But he loved his trove of treasures in the vault that his mother had carved out with her own dragon breath and magic.

As he relived the adventure on the hide, in this primitive but timeless book, he felt the excitement of what he knew was coming.

Several of the Elders, and even a few of the Ancients, like his mother, were on a treasure quest this very day, and anytime now they would return with more treasures. Some of the treasure would be books and scrolls that were plentiful and could be shared across the many dragon's lairs and in the different tribes. But some would be special, one of kind, in fact the last of its kind, like this book he now read. He knew his mother and the other dragons would keep the best ones for themselves. He was ok knowing that even if they brought back a small horde of the same books he would still relish the adventures. But he knew the thrill that all dragons of their kind felt when they returned with the only of its kind. Some of these books were shared in the Common Lair, to even be shared amongst the tribes and clans, but others would be secreted away, like this one, for one dragon alone to know its tales.

Sylko finished the scroll at last, imagining that he was the boy in the story looking for that special totem that would bring new knowledge and power to his tribe. It was not unlike his own mother's quest for the lost books of the human world. She had of course visited many other worlds and brought their treasures home. Even other dragon worlds had their books and stories. They were so different, those other dragons, but he thought of them as cousins. Perhaps they came from the same magical realm at one time or from the same magical cloth. But there was something different about the humans, special and exciting. Mysterious. They lived such short lives, according to all the stories he had read. Even the oldest of humans were younger than Sylko, and he was barely more than a hatchling. His own mother had lived maybe as many as a hundred human lifetimes or more, and she was not the oldest of the Ancients, not even close. The oldest of the Ancients was said to be older than the entire human race. Sylko hoped he could one day be so old. And he could not wait to go on his own quests, like his mother and the human boy.

He was smaller than some of these ancient treasures, and many a night he had snuggled up inside of a book and fallen asleep on its pages. His mother scolded him for that. He knew that the magic that flowed through his own body would keep him from damaging the book, just as the magic that had brought it here gave it a special protection from time.

They were the Book Wyrms, the last caretakers of all of the lost books, scrolls, and tomes of all the various worlds. It was their task to quest into the other worlds and retrieve these volumes before they disappeared forever. Just as this book had been. He asked his mother many times to tell him the story of how they came to have this scroll. He treasured that story almost as much as he treasured the scroll itself.

“My grandfather, now long gone from this world, had quested into the human world in one of their long ago times of change. This time of change was a great flood that took much of that world with it. It was said to be the wrath of the Creator, so great it was. Your great grandfather as you would know him, was one of many called to quest into the human world at that time. He had a special breath that was in great need, for as you know, more of our kind breathe fire than anything else. But as it was a flood, his water breath was needed, for that was how many of the books were destroyed there at that time. And so it was how they must be collected,” she had told him in such a way that he thought it was the most important thing in all the worlds.

“But couldn’t they breathe fire to bring the books here?” he had asked.

“No,” she shook her head, “it must be in the very same way of their destruction. Yes, it’s true, we can quicken it’s destruction in order to collect the treasure, but when we use a different way like fire when it should be water, things can go wrong. We might lose the book forever, or sometimes it stays in that world but cannot be read properly, and when it does eventually come here it is damaged,” she explained with sober patience.

“But couldn’t a dragon use his breath and magic to take the book before it is destroyed?” he asked.

“Yes, he could,” she continued patiently, “But such a thing can change the world that we take the treasure from. No treasure should be taken before its time. Wars have been fought between the realms and dragons killed for such offenses,” she said with sadness and warning.

“But who finds out? How can anyone stop a Book Wurm? We live between the worlds and they can’t see us, you told me yourself,” he said with a hint of defiance.

“There are the Keepers, as you know, who live beyond even our world. They serve the Creator, just as we do in our own way. It’s true, they might not always act to stop us or punish us. But we know we are always being watched, and breaking this law is one of the greatest laws in all the worlds to break. You must never think of doing these things,” she chided him.

“I know mother. I don’t want to break the laws or make the Keepers angry. But what if there are not enough dragons with the special breath, like during that flood. What if they can’t get all the books and scrolls?” he asked with a little fear in his voice.

“That’s why we usually seek the last of the books, and we harvest the treasures over time. So when there is a great harvest we don’t miss the greatest of the treasures,” she explained.

“But did your grandfather get all of the books of that time? Did they lose any one of a kind in that flood,” he asked expectantly.

“There were some lost. Although we had some warning, and could prepare to harvest some of the treasure ahead of the flood, many of the books were destroyed all at once in the flood, so acting quickly was the only way. My grandfather happened upon more than one library, some of which had more than one copy of many of the books. That treasure still stays with us this day. And this,” she pointed down to the scroll about the boy and the totem, then paused for effect, “was found not in a library but in a cave. He had mapped out some of the greatest treasures, along with your grandmother, my mother. And so he was able to get them. The waters did not hit everywhere all at once. He took the lower areas first, then went higher and higher.”

“I wish I could have seen the great flood, like he did, from the air. To have a quest like that,” he said wistfully.

“Be careful what you wish for,” his mother said. “Your grandfather might still be here today if not for such a quest. But the effort cut years from his scales,” she said sadly.

“And we would not have all of this great treasure,” Sylko said.

“No,” his mother shook her head sadly. “But I would give up all of it to share those moments I had with him again. It’s the great sadness of our lives. We can collect all the lost writings of all the worlds, but we cannot record our own stories except through our memories and the stories we can tell. And when there is no one left who can remember, then all is gone,” she said sadly.

“But the treasure goes on,” he said hopefully.

He smiled now in that memory, and he knew why he treasured this story so much. Both the story on the animal hide and the story of his grandfather. And he would tell that story to his own children, so that his grandfather would never be forgotten.

And today, soon, he would get a new story from his own mother. And so many other stories too, more books and stories than had been collected in a very long time.