

## The Quest

By Tyrece and Daryl

Once upon a time in a land far far away, lived a young boy in the city of Morpheus. A simple town. A town of farmers, bakers, warriors and peaceful merchants.

A dark shadow has been cast across the land. A tale of the great guardian is told. Who promised to return when the world needed him most. The great protector of the west. Who brought about peace and prosperity for a thousand years. A story about how a golden dagger was stolen from the great protector. Since, lost in time. This deed brought about a curse of famine and death. A curse which could only be undone by he who is of pure heart and courage. He who finds the golden dagger and returns in would bring about peace once more. It's been 200 years since the darkness came. Through the whispers of the wind, a prophecy was foretold and many a champion has sought the dagger. Many that have not returned. Should no one return the dagger in the next two moons, all hope would be lost.

Over the hill, there lived a young boy named Eden. He lived with his Uncle Jack, a close friend of his parents who had long since passed. Uncle Jack rarely spoke about them, other than mentioning that they were the bravest explorers he had ever known. He promised he would raise Eden as his own, should anything ever happen to them. Eden's last memory of them was a kiss on the cheek and a wooden carving placed in his pockets in the early hours of the morning. He waited each day for their return. Days turned into months, months into years. So it remained, a strong and gentle boy growing up in the care of his uncle.

The years brought about a special day. Eden was turning 16. This day would bring about great change and a new beginning. A day that in his lineage, he was to be a man. He had long dreamed his parents would be there to honour him that day. In their stead, he had his loving uncle Jack. Who loved him like his own son.

Later that evening, his uncle Jack had told him to meet in the courtyard around the fire. Uncle Jack often sat at the fire most days. He talked to himself a lot. Sometimes he would cry into the night. He would often curse at the flames before stoking it out. Eden rarely went there. it was a sacred place of great sadness.

Eden approached the courtyard. A bright orange flame covered the night with warm light. There on the log, sat his uncle Jack. There were other logs oddly placed, empty and unused as they always were. "Sit down son", said Uncle Jack. Eden crept forward and took his place on the log across the flame. "Closer son", beckoned Uncle Jack "sit by my side, i have something to tell you". Eden stood and shared the log that his uncle jack sat on. Uncle Jack removed his jacket and threw it over Eden's back.

"That was your fathers jacket you know", said uncle Jack. "He lost a bet to me. I told him that I knew how to find the most beautiful women in the world. That's how he met your mother, you see. I loved your parents very much"

“The day your parents left, they asked me to give this to you on your sixteenth birthday. Did you know your father and I used to sit right here? This old fireplace goes way back when your father sat here and before that his father and his father and his fathers father before him. You come from a long line of historians. Truth seekers. Which I fear is the reason they disappeared long ago. Seeking truth. Uncovering lost mysteries”, he said and paused.

“Oh dear me I almost forgot, I also have something for you”, Uncle Jack said. He reached into his pockets and extended to him an old scroll tied with string. “I found this when I went out searching for your parents when they went missing. It was the only clue I could find” he said as he sighed.

“Happy birthday Eden I also made you a cake. It's your favourite, I hope u like it”. Eden dug his hands straight into the cake and scooped it down. Smiling away as the sweet taste of strawberries filled his eyes.

“You mentioned my parents left me something?” asked Eden. “By the gods, I almost forgot”, he said as he reached down by his feet and grabbed what looked to be like an old box. A tiny chest. “This is for you”, he said. Eden opened the box, inside, was something wrapped in an old cloth. It felt quite light but solid. He peeled back the cloth to find a light glittering through the flames, a pendant of some sort. A metal cast from gold piercing through a red stone. The gold was in the shape of a knife. A pretty handle with an elegant blade. The red stone itself was shiny, yet coarse. Held at its ends with a thin piece of rope. Uncle Jack stood up to tie the pendant around Eden's neck. “It wears you well”, he said.

“I think your parents were leaving you a clue about where they last went. You are a man now and should you choose to follow their path, I shall not stop you. I never could decipher what's in that scroll but I believe that the blood through your veins holds the key” said Uncle Jack.

Eden sat silently. As the crackle of the wood flames pressed on, he said: “I shall leave tomorrow”

“I thought you'd say that. He reached into his pocket once more and pulled out a bag of gold coins. It is truly all I have but I want you to have it. I am old and getting on. And the world needs truth seekers once again.”

In the morning, Eden set out. The familiar road through the town, through to the beaten track. He packed light. His Uncle cautioned him one last time and told him of the forbidden forest where his leads grew cold. He left with his trusty steed; Gallop. Through days passing valleys and villages, the forest grew close. He sought the counsel of others to help read the scroll but no one could read it. He pressed on.

The entrance to the forest seemed to remove light and cast dark shadows to the ground. An eerie sound in the wind. “Help”, the voice whispered. Gallop pulled him towards the sound. The words turned clearer and louder. A desperate cry from the thistle of bushes. Eden unmounted his horse and through a bush, he found a man wrapped in a large serpent. Without a thought, he leaped forward and piled on top of the snake. Poking its eyes

with a sharp stone he used to cut vines. The snake slithered away leaving its victim to the cold ground. A loud gasp came from the body on the ground. The man jumped into the air. "I was just about to break free before you came along, I think... Aramis is my name. You have saved my life and I owe you a debt. Are you hungry?" he said.

The two sat around a fire and roasted a rabbit over the flame. "What's in your pocket?" Aramis asked. "A scroll" says eden. "But it's worthless. I can't read it. There are symbols here far too ancient I think. Maybe even a different language".

"I fancy myself a man of many tongues...May I have a look?" Aramis says. Eden hands him the scroll. Aramis drops the rabbit from his lips. "By the gods, is this real? This is the tale of the golden dagger. It speaks of a guardian with a head of a lion, wings of a dragon and claws of an eagle. and" ...."Wait "Eden says, my mom left me this. He pulled from his bag, the carving his mom left him. I always wondered what it was. It's the guardian. This whole time, they knew" he said. Who knew?? "My parents," Eden said. They left me these when i was only young. "Woah.." gasped Aramis.

"What do you have in your bag, Aramis?" asked Eden. "It's nothing," replied Aramis. "Just odd trinkets. I'm more interested in this scroll"

Then something peculiar happened. A light passed through the head of the trees. Moonlight cast upon the scroll, a map hidden on blank parts of the parchment. A map showing the detailed path through the forest. They studied the map in the cover of moonlight carefully tracing its markings with charcoal late into the early hours.

With Gallop they ventured upon hidden tracks that only cleared once you stepped through. Always alternating from tracks previously made by other travellers. The map seems to lead them towards the mountainside. "This will take us two days to get there," claimed Aramis. "I can see how many have tried over time but see now how impossible it is to find anything without this map. I'm glad you had it"

Eden began to notice something about Aramis. He clutched to his bag tightly and always checked its content without revealing why he kept doing so. It must have been really important. He wanted to ask but never found it in him to do so.

Soon they reached a dark cave covered in symbols like the one on the scroll. They had found the end of the map. They looked at each other and took a deep breath. "We certainly found something here. I wonder what's inside" said Eden. "I hope it's the guardian, although I fear what he may say," said Aramis. "What do you mean," asked Eden. "It's nothing. I always dreamed of this day, but now that I am here, I don't know what to do. It's getting late, we should make a fire"

They gathered some wood and made camp in the cave. It seemed to go deeper inward and had many paths. As light filled the cave, there were markings all over the walls. The prophecy was written in stone. Aramis explained as best he could. The story of plenty and wealth shared across the land. The great protector of the west- the Griffin. Then the great darkness brought by greed. Aramis paused and clutched his bag. "It's incomplete," he said. It mentions the return of the dagger and then something about a sacrifice and then it just ends. I don't understand. There must be more in these caves. I'm supposed to be the one that undoes the curse"

"I don't understand," said Eden. To undo the curse, we have to find the dagger.

"That's just it, Eden. I have the dagger." Aramis says as he reaches into his bag. I came to return what was once stolen. When I found out my family was responsible for the curse, I stole it and set out to undo the curse we brought to this world.

Eden sat back in confusion and anger. "Your family did this," cried Eden. "They are the reason I grew up without my parents. They are why we have all suffered. And you didn't even have the courage to tell me! I saved your life"

Eden lunged forward as the two began to scuffle. The dagger knocked to the side as the fight ensued. Aramis is taller and well built and took little effort to cast Eden to the floor. Eden's head hits a rock and renders him unconscious. "Oh no," cried Aramis. He held his head off the ground. "I'm so sorry. I'm sorry for everything. It was never meant to be this way." Eden opened his eyes. As tears fell, he said: "I am sorry too. I got so angry. I never should have struck you. Can you forgive me?"

Aramis and Eden sat back down at the fire. "We have to find whatever is in these tunnels. We should rest up and start searching tomorrow" said Eden. They fell asleep.

Not long after, Eden awoke. He didn't want to wake up Aramis. He made a torch and began to venture into the tunnels alone. As he moved through the darkness he slipped through a hole in the ground. A hidden chamber now filled with the light of his torch. Here he finds the statue of the Great Protector. Shining through the room is a reflection. A red light coming from the statue. A giant ruby at the heart. He presses forward and reaches out. As he touches it, a blinding light appears. He is now dressed in white robes and set on a meadow with golden wheat and melodies of birds in the sky. Beside him stands the Griffin. He does not feel fear but peace.

"You have journeyed far, little one," said the Griffin. It appears the time of this great protector is at its end. Long have men suffered. Long have I watched as the world ate itself away. I sense the time for peace will return once more. I am ready to pass on the mantle. I am ready to take my place amongst the stars"

"I don't understand," said Eden. "What are you talking about? I am here with my friend to return the dagger. Why are you leaving?"

“For the curse to end, the dagger must strike through my heart. Light shall return to the world. But he who brings forth peace must take my place in stone. On the next full moon he shall take on the mantle of protector. Awoken in times of great struggle.”

“But Aramis. He is the one that brought the dagger. I don't want to lose him.”

“He who brings about peace will take my place...The light dims till all that shines is the hand made torch and the reflections of the heart.”

“Eden im coming” cried Aramis. He slides down the hole. “I saw a bright light and ran as fast as I could. What happened? Was he here?” he asked.

“Aramis, I saw him. He spoke to me. He..” said Eden before pausing. An inscription on the statues is revealed. A symbol engraved. That looks familiar. He removed his pendant from its rope and placed it onto the markings. A distinct click is heard and the walls begin to shake. A loud voice echos the room “Peace must be brought swiftly less all be turned to dust”

They begin to panic. “We have to strike the heart!” cried Eden. Aramis stretches his arms and strikes it. He struck it again and again. “Why isnt it working? It's meant to work” said Aramis. Eden extended his hand “hand me the dagger” as soon as it touched his skin, it began to glow with a golden light. Aramis stood back with his eyes wide. Eden was conflicted with sadness. He did not want to turn to stone. He began to think of his parents, his uncle, his people. He shut his eyes and drew his courage. Imagine the green meadows with wheat fields and melodies from the birds in the sky. His memories drew his courage forward and with a single pierce, the rock exploded and the trembling began to ease.

A quiet light from the torch is all there is. “We did it,” said Aramis. “Eden, you did it. Let's go home.”

The forest feels alive this time. More light ushers in and birds have returned to fill the trees. “I think we actually did it, Aramis. We ended the curse” Gallop neighs in agreement.

“We must journey back home. I can wait to tell my uncle all about it” said Eden. “You must come with me, Aramis!” The way home is cheerful. They pass the paths they walked on their way in. Through the towns Eden stayed on his way through.

The familiar path reveals itself and they are almost home. Gallop picks up the pace till they reach the long path to Eden's home. They see uncle Jack in the distance and Eden runs and calls to him in excitement. “I'm home” he proclaims.

Later that evening Eden calls for dinner over the fire. They share the journey and tales of their adventure. Eden smiles and shares this moment with them. He notices the moon high in the sky. "It'll be full soon," he says. "I have something to tell you both."

He begins to recollect the tellings of the Griffin and what he fears it all means. Aramis and uncle Jack seem to hold back the tears and sadness as to what is to be. Eden feels the time is near and looks up. "Isn't it beautiful," he says. The moon. They all look up in silence. A light flashes in the air, as bright as the sun. They clear their eyes to find Eden smiling back at them. But his skin looks pale and still. He had transformed into stone. A bright red stone held at his chest. Sitting on the log where his father once sat, where his fathers father and his father before him once sat. A voice echoed in the wind and through the flames: "When the world needs me, I will return"

Tales are now told of a time of great darkness and the coming of peace once again. How the guardians will stand to protect the world in times of woe. How light cannot exist without darkness, but should the shadow grow, a promise will be fulfilled and should hope be all but lost, it will be once again restored.

The End