Nightmares Encased in Stone

A Dark Tale of Fantasy

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Published by Wayne C. Hannis at Smashwords

Cover Art by Ryan Hannis

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Nightmares encased in Stone

His eyes jerked open as he awoke, feeling like he was falling from a great height. All he could see was a pool of black- sounded by an impression of the darkest blue. A silver band was forming on the mountains in the distance and the stars were beginning to fade. It was just before dawn- the time the nightmares always woke him. Memories that would start pleasant, but always turned to the screams and blood, fire and ash that were so vivid within his mind. He would never forget the night when his family was torn from him.

Pushing himself up from the cold hard ground, he felt sick with the dull constant ache in his lower back. Meshan Algoric felt the despondency rise within him again- his heart beating faster and faster. The anxiety made him feel sick. With a shiver, Meshan pulled his dirty, worn blanket tighter around his shoulders and scratched his long unkempt beard removing the frost. 'Soon it'll be winter and I'll freeze,' Meshan muttered. It was a comforting thought. 'Then I'll sleep and forget.'

“Oh, Casora, my love- where are you? I can’t find you anywhere!” Meshan pleaded out loud hoping she could hear- as the memory of that night came in a bright flash to his mind.

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It had been a perfect growing season. Long hot days and enough rain to keep the crops well watered. The days were still warm but the nights were cooling off. The corn in the fields were becoming ripe and they were

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looking forward to an abundant harvest. They were already picking the vegetables in the gardens around their house; getting ready for winter. But then that night arrived.

It was a warm and cloudless night. The moon illuminated everything in a grey hue and everything gleamed in its brilliance. Their home was small but extremely comfortable, with two bedrooms and an addition that Meshan had built the previous summer. It was perfect for the five of them. The evening went by like any other. They had supper, and then Meshan continued reading the book they had been working on, followed by family talk. As the evening got late Meshan and Casora put their children to bed one at a time. The day was gone so quickly.

Savannah was the sweetest little four years old and Meshan doted on her. Small and beautiful just like her mother- she had an aptitude for learning. Casora would sit with her for hours reading or teaching her some great aspect of life. Her favourite thing to do was to get down in the dirt with her father. Savannah hugged everyone goodnight and as Casora carried her off to bed declared, ”I love you Daddy.”

Kadoric was seven and a wild young boy He was always off getting into trouble. With climbing up trees or falling down cliffs, he always had a scrape or a bruise somewhere. The farm was the perfect playground for him and he would spend most of his time with the animals. So full of life, Meshan and Casora could never settle him down at bedtime. But that night Kadoric fell fast asleep.

Mesor, the older of their two sons was strong and responsible for the age of twelve. He wanted to learn how to use the sword and join the army at

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Blackbrook Cliff- just like his uncle did. Meshan was proud of his son for his decision. Years ago, Meshan could have joined the army but had decided to stay on the family farm instead- a decision he never regretted. Mesor had worked hard that day with his father, so he went peacefully to bed as well.

After checking the farm and tying in the animals for the night, Meshan and Casora also settled into their comfortable bed. Life seemed wonderful and they would never have foreseen the horror that was about to be unleashed.

Meshan was woken by an eerie quietness. Usually the animals within their pens made noise all night and the dogs would occasionally bark, but he perceived no sound. Sitting up in bed he began to hear the faint crackle of fire, then the smell of smoke. As his eyes adjusted he began to see the flicker of orange light upon the wall. With hurried trepidation he jumped out of bed and rushed to the only window. What he saw filled Meshan with unimaginable dread- the fields were burning, and the barns and sheds were all engulfed in flames. Meshan quickly realized the house was also on fire. The roof was slowly smouldering, only a matter of moments before it burst into flames.

"Meshan- what's happening?" Casora asked sleepily, as she began to wake up with the harsh discordance of sounds that were now emanating from outside.

"Fire," was all Meshan said. "I'll get the boys- you get Savannah."

Meshan ran to retrieve their two young boys from the next bedroom. As Casora through back the covers and rushed to the little addition off the

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main bedroom she grabbed the little girl, gently but quickly. Casora flew for the front door as fast as she could. Meshan and the boys were right behind, rushing to escape the fire that was now eating away the dry shingled roof.

Outside awaited the real horror. Casora, and Savannah, stumbled right into them and were thrown to the ground. Meshan was the last to leave the house, and to his horror, was faced with his sons getting beaten to the ground. Bugbear's, with no remorse, kicked and punched the two young boys mercilessly until they lay bloody on the ground.

"Stop," Meshan yelled as he lunged at the creatures attacking his family.

While Meshan was still in mid stride, one of the seven foot creatures picked him up and violently heaved him across the yard. Meshan hit the ground solid, with his face grinding hard against the earth. In bewilderment, he shook the pain away and jumped to his feet, facing his adversaries.

"What do you want?" Meshan asked through clenched teeth and furrowed brow. Adrenaline was pumping through his body preparing him to fight.

Fire was all around them, the fields of corn shot up pillars of flame- while the out buildings, with the dry wood, were all but consumed. The house, which Meshan loving built into a home, was engulfed- the heat was unbearable. The wind that it created whipped at his hair and carried away the smoke in little tornadoes.

A dozen Bugbears faced him- snarling aggressively through a mouth full of long sharp fangs and noses that resembled a bears. Coarse brown

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hair covered their bodies and they were massive, burly creatures. Their feet, more like the paws of a bear, were covered in sharp claws. The whole group carried clubs with sharp spikes protruding from them. With the exception of one that gripped tightly to a morning star- the ball, covered with what seemed like arrow heads, which was linked to a strong chain. The Twisted Thing even had a human skull tied to its belt of thick leather. Meshan glared at the leader.

"What do you want?" Meshan repeated with anger.

The leader grunted in the strange language of the Goblinkind. Immediately, two of the other bugbears grabbed Meshan by the arms and forced him to the ground. They pushed down firmly with their clawed feet on his back- laughing in a deep guttural voice. He was only able to lift his head in order to see what was happening, as the two bugbears firmly twisted his arms back. Feeling like he about to be snapped in half, Meshan grimaced in pain and let out a cry of anguish.

He saw his wife scrambling backward, while holding tightly to Savannah in an effort to escape. A bugbear grabbed Casora and lifted her roughly to her feet. Another ripped Savannah from her arms forcibly and dragged them both away, kicking and screaming.

"Meshan," Casora yelled.

As suddenly as all of this began, they were gone. With only their screams and cry for help, echoing in Meshan's memory.

The chief bugbear turned and picked Mesor up and dragged him over in front on Meshan. Mesor had been conscious the whole time and was pushed roughly to his knees.

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“Leave him alone,” Meshan kept yelling, struggling against the bugbears holding him tight but they only pulled back harder, until something snapped.

The Creature began swinging his morning star, faster and faster- stronger and stronger. Meshan could only whimper, “Please- no- leave him alone.”

Mesor looked his father in the eyes and simply asked, “Why’s he doing this father?”

One final arc and the chief bugbear brought his morning star down with all of his might on the top of Mesor’s head, crushing it, spraying blood all over Meshan. The Bugbear began to laugh with pleasure- which sounded like a low deep growl. He slowly turned to look at Kadoric, who was still unconscious from his beating.

“No, please, he’s just a baby. Please don’t hurt him!” Meshan continued to plead.

Shrugging, the chief nodded to his fellow bugbears, who then took pleasure in stomping and kicking Kadoric till his breath left him, beaten so he was unrecognizable as a little boy.

Meshan hoped it was now his turn to die, as he was picked up off the ground and set on his feet. With two quick strides, the chief bugbear attacked him with all of his strength striking Meshan across the head with a downward thrust of his fist. Meshan went sprawling to the ground. It was at that moment Meshan saw him- along the tree line still well within the light of the fire, stood a figure. Tall and thin, just standing, watching, approving. The wind was blowing at his long hair and Meshan saw the distinct ears of

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an elf. Not the features of a Wood Elf- blonde hair and kind wise eyes. He had met a few at the market. But this one seemed dark and sinister- with hateful eyes. Meshan recognized him as a Dark Elf. They lived deep underground in the Bythontur Mountains and were only spoke of in legend. The bugbear punched him in the back of the head with all of its might and Meshan went sprawling to the ground, as sweet oblivion took him. He wondered now if he only imagined it.

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Meshan screamed at the top of his lungs, trying to relieve the anguish he felt to no avail. He sat staring over the cliff, waiting for the sun to rise, rocking back and forth.

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His neighbour found him the next morning- his skull cracked and thick wounds running down both sides of his face, it took him weeks to recover. Months had gone by now since he started his search for Casora and Savannah. The exact time he couldn't be sure, he had wandered aimlessly for so long. He knew they were alive.

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Out of the corner of his eye, Meshan perceived someone watching him. The stranger made no noise as he approached out of the darkness and only a faint outline could be seen of him. Meshan became apprehensive at this being who coalesced out of the inky blackness of the forest. He was tall and thin, dressed in a long fur cloak which ruffled in the slight breeze. His long hair matched the dark blue of the sky and his beard, blowing to the side, was grown to his chest. He held a staff with a large stone on top, which

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emanated a dim spark deep within. The stranger moved to look over the cliff and Meshan noticed the staff was covered in runes of which he could not recognize.

“Meshan Algoric?” he asked. His voice soft and fluent with a strange accent. The sound of it was as peculiar as the runes on his staff and belied a contradiction to his human features.

“Leave me alone.” Meshan said, turning his face away to watch the sky getting lighter.

“My name is Nakal Mish’Pachah,” the stranger said with a smirk. “I have heard of your... plight, and have come to grant what you desire most.”

“You’ve heard of my plight.” Meshan commented with derision. “What are you going to do? Bring my family back from the dead?”

“Well, no,” Nakal choose his words carefully. “But I can give you peace.”

“There is no peace for me.”

“Your wife and daughter are still alive- Yes? I can bring you to them!” Nakal said with smug satisfaction.

“How are you going to do that?” Meshan asked with scepticism but was becoming intrigued by what Nakal was saying.

“Come with me and I’ll show you,” he said with a smile and a nod of his head and began to lead the way.

Meshan sat a moment longer, staring out over the cliff and valley below. If only he could get Casora and Savannah back. His sons were dead but his wife and daughter were still alive- he knew it. He stood up pulling the blanket higher around his shoulders and started to follow Nakal,

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hesitantly.

Nakal smiled and turned into the trees, “Hurry before the sun fully rises.”

Nakal led the way through the trees and up the mountain following a deer path, and with unnatural determination, he did not tire or slow his pace. He moved silently- as if his feet did not touch the ground. Without disturbing a leaf or snapping a twig he moved through the bush. With uncertainty, Meshan followed close behind as he tripped over a root on the unseen ground. He watched Nekal's back and wondered why such a man would want to help him. If he could do as he said Meshan would pay any price to get his wife and daughter back. Just the thought of it made Meshan quicken his pace, and he ignored any warnings he might have heard.

It was not long before they came upon a cave in the side of a cliff. Meshan did not even see it until he was right at the entrance. The sun was beginning to reach through the trees now as Nakal ducked low and rushed inside.

The cave was more of a crack in the side of the mountain than anything- formed by eons of the weight of a shifting mountain relentlessly pushing down. A small stream emerged from around the rocks and Meshan bent down with his hands scooping up some water for a drink. He remained crouched as he entered the narrow opening. It became dark in the small passage way and the smell of moss and damp rock pervaded his senses. Just then a dim blue glow came from further inside the cave as Nakal ignited the magical gem on his staff.

Nakal slowed his pace now, allowing Meshan to quickly catch up. The

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cave was natural, with rough walls and sharp rocks on the floor. It was damp with moss covering everything. After a few minutes and couple of turns the grotto opened into a large cavern and Nakal brightened his staff so Meshan could see the whole chamber. It was large with a high ceiling and straight walls. About fifty feet in circumference, the floor was strewn with boulders. He could distinctly make out at least two more passageways that led from this chamber. And in the centre- two pillars rose up to meet the apex. They were covered with the same type of runes as was on Nakal's staff.

Nakal looked Meshan in the eyes and asked in a loud tone, "Do you want to be with your wife and daughter?"

"How are you going to do this?" Meshan replied.

"Do you want to be with your wife and daughter?" this time his tone was harsh.

"Yes, I do."

"Good, that is all I need." Nakal's grin was now one of attainment; he had succeeded in his goal. "Now, step between the pillars," he commanded.

Meshan did as he was told and stood between the pillars. Nakal made the sapphire on his staff glow brightly, the radiance of it made the metal flakes and tiny crystals within the rock of the cavern sparkle. The runes began to shine. Taking the staff, Nakal moved it down the pillars pointing the light directly at the runes while saying an incantation. The words of which were lost to Meshan.

A magical field, as clear as glass, came down to surround Meshan. Try as he might, Meshan could no longer move. His whole body seemed to be

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attached to the stone. He was trapped, circumvented within a magical barricade.

Nakal smiled sinisterly. He looked up at Meshan with hateful eyes. Suddenly, his form started to shimmer, as if a layer was being removed. Standing in the place of the wizard was a Dark Elf. His long black hair pulled back to show off his Elfish ears. He had grey skin that stood out in distinction against his dark hair. And behind his eyes was so much hate.

Meshan let out a muffled scream, when he realized he was deceived. Recognition came flooding to his senses when it dawned on him that this was the Dark Elf that was there that night. He was the one standing in approval over the death of his family. Meshan tried to struggle against his prison but to no avail.

You humans are such a delight. So easy to deceive," Nakal said with scorn. "Almost takes the pleasure out of it. Almost," he concluded.

"It is true- your wife and daughter are alive. But they have been taken to The Lehyn Empire, to be used as- shall we say- to make such wonderful creatures." he said with pleasure.

Meshan started to panic because he had heard of the things The Lehyn Empire did. The breeding programs to make the Twisted Things like the Bugbear and all he could do was tremble.

"I thank you Meshan, you have given great enjoyment. I haven't caused this much pain in such a long time. I was starting to think I had lost my touch. But I wasn't lying to you- I will bring you to your family. You will dream for an eternity. Good bye Meshan Algoric." Once again Nakal took the staff and brought it over the stone, it began to grow encasing

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Meshan within.

Nakal started to head down one of the side tunnels and within his mind- resonating off the stone- he heard Meshan scream. Terror filled screams. He started to laugh to himself.

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The place became known as Ya-ash Har: Mountain of Despair. Because those who venture upon it, tell of hearing terrifying screams just before dawn.

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If you liked this Dark Tale of Fantasy try "To Rule by Right", another Dark Tale of Fantasy.

And there's more to come.

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