

Azenor

By Richard Paul

The rain took the place of the tears
Whilst Azenor dug her brother's grave,
A sibling born and raised a beast,
With beastly need to kill and feast;
Made a feral, fighting slave
Who nothing more than carnage-craved;
There were probably more of them near.

Her mother, in a noble's skin,
Which she took with the soul that dwelt there,
Raised to the Earth her succubus maids
And a single game they long have played,
Seeking for men whose hate lay bare,
Their seed and their souls to snare,
Brought to their castle and damned within.

Enraptured by lust and scorn for all,
The fallen swains grant many children;
With Hell's own fury in their veins,
Beaten, starved and kept in chains,
Sometimes sold as beasts to rend,
Sometimes loosed without to wend
A toothsome path till their violent fall.

Her father claimed to be such a man
When her mother did find him one night;
A bitter drunk sitting alone,
A heart of ash and face of stone,
Clinging to nothing but spite,
For nothing else ever fit right
For too much of his life's bitter span.

So when he found himself in service
To a beauty which shared his disdain,
Vengeance seemed proper and true,
By evil he felt renewed,
Till the sight of his firstborn lain
In a cage swift-rendered him sane
And his spite, just like that, was dismissed.

Whilst all others slept in the daytime,
He freed her and fled from the castle;
If they were caught, he would suffer,
But he'd risk all for his daughter
Who'd saved him from the dreadful
Rot of hatred and evil,
All by the sound of her frightened cries.

From the castle they came to the town
And every coin he spent for the girl,
On clothes, nourishment and passage
On a ship to the farthest edge
Of the map when fully uncurled,
There they fled 'neath sails unfurled
For the dream of new roots to set down.

In a far and scarcely settled land
They found a village in a dale
Mickle of serenity,
Far from all society,
Where none were much moved to quail
By the young girl's horns and tail
Nor the strength in her tiny hands.

For as she was raised like a child,
So became her nature as she grew;
If not for her demon form
She would seem largely the norm
From the bawling tantrums she threw
To the hatred of sleep that she knew,
And dozens of garments defiled.

The years did pass and her father's fear
Was lessened as true life o'ercame him.
As a fisherman he served
And at last grew less reserved
And less guilt-ridden and grim
As by fate's seeming-kind whim
His horizon looked finally clear.

When Azenor was all but full-grown
He told her his tale o'er dinner,
A story she'd oft asked to know,
No matter how oft he'd say no,
But at last to his daughter
He confessed, and from her
No sliver of judgement was shown.

Azenor's heart was kinder than most,
She gave no care to erstwhile sins,
And the remnants of his old ways
Fought to keep tears at bay
As forgiveness was shown him
By the daughter who'd saved him,
By relief he was wholly engrossed.

Oh would this story had ended there
But the past does not die when you run;
With Azenor gone one day,

A wolf to slay or drive away,
Her mother came for bloody fun
With a score of her children
Who smelt living flesh they longed to tear.

The sound of screams and bestial hate
Drew Azenor and her hunters back.
They found their village ablaze
And their families all slain,
And from the midst of this wrack
A handful of monsters attacked
Each one of whom shared Azenor's shape.

Her overwrought friends were slain in seconds
And the only thing which spared her life
Was the pitiful effort
From her every opponent;
They abandoned their red strife
And gave themselves to her knife
As if so compelled by someone.

As the last monster in sight fell dead,
Hope smothered sense and drove her legs home
To the sight of her father
Who had been rent asunder,
And slid between red rib-bones
Lay a scroll of simple roan
Which she numbly extracted and read.

*'You have no purpose but to serve me,
Like your every sibling, you are mine!
But this mortal has confused you
And thus I shall excuse you
If you keep yourself in line
And butcher the surplus swine,
For these days we bear far too many.'*

She felt her rage grow with every word
And, as if in answer, came a growl
From a final Demon-boy
Whom her mother wished destroyed;
She felt the dark urgings of hell,
But her pity was not quelled
And death was not what this creature deserved.

She saw, or thought she saw, a sadness
In the eyes, in flashes, 'neath the rage.
His hands, his tail, his horns
The same as herself adorned,
Had she not been freed from her cage,
She'd be, like this brother, deranged,
A tool of evil, bound in madness.

Remembering her father's kindness
She subdued and bound the mad creature;
For if he'd been raised as she had,
He would not now be mad;
Could humanity endure
A life of endless torture?
She prayed the answer prove to be 'yes'.

She would deny her rancid mother
And avenge every life she'd brought down.
If she could save this brother,
She could perhaps save others
And raise an army to allow
The justice that was her vow,
And the vengeance owed for her father.

For weeks she tried to save her brother
Whilst he fought 'gainst his bonds each moment,
Pausing only for fitful sleep
Or to gnaw at his arms and shriek,
At last Azenor's hope was spent
And her poor brother's throat she rent,
The one true mercy she could offer.

Which brings us back to the story's start
With a grave being dug in the rain,
The last her lifeless home would know,
For soon it would be time to go,
To start the quest to see slain
The beast who had wrought such pain,
To end forever her evil art.