

The Shade of Y'vandhra

By Richard Paul

A battle twixt a brace of warring lands
Left thousands dead on a misty plane,
And down on them like vulture's claws came hands
Seeking out the treasures of the slain.

The swords, the helms, the armour and the rings,
Whatever would sell, the starvelings would take,
Then flee and pray to escape noticing,
And when it was safe, hushed money to make.

Yet something else stalked that battlefield,
Something come south from where no men yet lived.
The Shade of Y'vandhra, the dead's shield,
Searching for those who he couldn't forgive.

It stooped by a looter, a gaunt woman
And looked within her mind to search for greed.
It saw desperation, seven children,
Seven mouths she'd do anything to feed.

It stooped by another, a crippled old man,
A soldier in youth, till his arm was lost.
Cast out by his lord, he lived cap in hand,
And stole from his own, just to earn bread's cost.

So many come here had stories the same,
Stories the Shade could pity and o'erlook,
Yet there were others with no sliver of shame,
There was no need for the treasure they took.

It found a man who grinned beneath a hood,
A man who should have fought upon that day
But hid and drank and sang within the woods
And had now come to see what treason paid.

This craven laughed as he sauntered back home,
Following the ancient Y'vandhran road.
The vulture flocks dispersed, he was alone,
Till an icy snarl forced his steps to slow.

A flash of blue fire in two dreadful eyes,
The sound of a sword as it lunged for him.
The combined pain of everyone who'd died
Held In the shade's white sword, it all passed to him.

Ages ago in a land long-forgotten,
Forged by the sage-smiths of people long-dead.
The shade and its blade, both unseen, were begotten.
To gift unto thieves all the pain of the dead.

Whoever found the body after that
Would find not a wound, nor any gore at all,
Just a cold corpse, scorned even by rats,

With a tortured face and a heart that had stalled.

And a few more like him, who plundered the dead
To line their pockets, to fund their evil,
Close to the battlefield they were spread,
The Shade of Y'vandrah's duty fulfilled.

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