

Fate

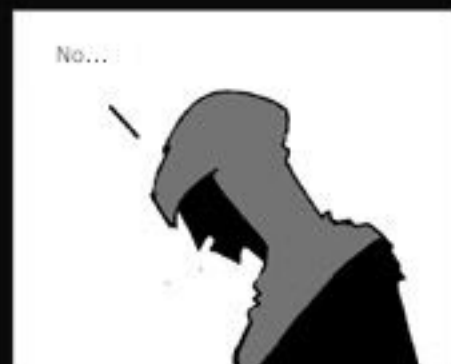
——《Tales of Tarsylia》

吴淼作品

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Mt. Murdock, Tarsylia's largest mineral aquifer. Beneath the surface, dwarf clans have excavated a city that has lasted a thousand years...

But today, it's just someone's backyard.





Such as?



Build an everlasting empire.



Create a religion to rival the gods.



We could even create a world that belongs only to us.



Instead of laying here all day letting time slip away.



Only the weak strive for these things.



We sleep to wake up.



Maybe you see fate as going with the flow. But I certainly don't.



Fate?



You barely hatched a few days ago, and you want to argue fate with me?



I understand you don't want to change, but I am still young.



Do you know what you're saying? Foolish child!



I do know what
kind of path I
want to take.



All I see is a willful hatchling sulking
to their family.



I'm sorry that
that's what
you believe.



As I said at the beginning, I'm here
to say goodbye.



I have my own path to walk.



"Walk"?



You know, I've
always been one to
walk.



I wasn't born with this third
eye...
To be precise, I still don't have
one...

Oh?

This light on
my forehead
isn't actually
an eye.

It's also not, as the
humans believe, a
magic eye to
manipulate
time.

If you want to
hear the rest,
don't interrupt me.

800 years ago,
when I was just a
bit older than you
are now...

I had just come of
age, and was
wandering in Tarsylla
without cares or
worries.

I stirred up a lot of trouble,
traveled to many lands, swam
across the boundless ocean, and
got to know the equally proud
water dragons through combat.
I was full of curiosity and eager
to know the world back then.

I also once hiked up a snowy
mountain. If the Emerald
Dragon hadn't knocked me
back down, I might have
made the elves' Sacred
Forest my first territory.

I wanted my own cave, so I
provoked the dwarf king. He
was a cute old man, with an
enormous beard. He lost a son
while trying to resist me.

They really were
quite heroic. But
the future is
impossible to
predict -- who
would have
thought that
seven
centuries later...

his grandson
himself
would gift
this
underground
palace to me.

I know what you're going to ask.
Son, us dragons have a certain
tradition: If an adult dragon is
defending their territory against a
clueless fledgling straight out of the
nest, you're can give them a harsh
lesson, but under no circumstances
are you permitted to kill.

Otherwise, the prophetic Emerald
Dragon would have bitten me in
half all those years ago to save
herself from the trouble I cause her
now. Hahaha....

But I digress. That's not what
I wanted to tell you. That
day, after I had been chewed
out, I slunk away. I wasn't
feeling scared at all; instead, I
was quite excited....I spent
the rest of those days
recuperating within the Tilfik
Mountains.

One day, an old human man dressed as a wizard appeared in front of me...



He was looking for a person, but his descriptions were so fuddled that I doubted he even knew who he was searching for.



I found the crazy old man amusing, especially with that rainbow hat he was wearing.



I had never before met any human who could stand before me and speak in a normal tone.



I wanted to roast off his hat, give him a little scare.



But I slowly realized that my eyes could not move away from the faintly glowing hat.



And then I lost consciousness.



When I woke up, I could feel a hole in my forehead.



Curiously, a ruby sat nestled in that hole...



I was suddenly overcome with reverence like I had never felt before for the wizard standing in front of me.



And so... he became my master.



He used you as a...



Quiet! Interrupt me again and I'll rip out your tongue.



For the next thirty years, we flew around searching for the mysterious person. I loyally accompanied him until the end of his life. He and I talked constantly; most of it was meaningless, but somehow still interesting.

Then one day, the wizard died only back mid-sentence. In the moment he died, I was struck with the worst spitting headache, and fell out of the sky into a small lake.

I laid in that lake for years. I had lost all of my pride, my dignity... That human had trampled over it all, leaving me with nothing.

Then, my despair morphed into wrath.

I can't describe how angry and wild I felt. My mind was utterly blank. If anyone so much as looked at me, I would assume they were ridiculing me.

I retraced my path, burning down hundreds of towns and thousands of villages along the way, simply because they had seen me being ridden by a wizard.

I ripped that wizard's hometown to shreds in a single day, killing every living creature that I saw, without regard to who or what they were. I wanted to bury my shame so deep it was in another dimension.

Afterwards, the kingdom sent out a troop of soldiers to deal with me.

Evidently, they underestimated a dragon's wrath.

With a belly full of rage and nowhere to release it,

I flew to the capital of that small kingdom.

Half of my scars today come from those four days of fighting. I was reckless, back then, using only the most primitive fighting methods. Or maybe I wanted to bleed out my shame...

I crouched atop the crumbling church, looking down at the city I had destroyed, the bodies I had charred black. Their culture was so fragile. How many years had the humans spent building this city? How many more establishing their history? But now, their story had reached its end. In a few centuries, no one would remember them. These thoughts, petty as they were, helped me escape from my single-minded rage. I was finally able to recognize the source of my pain.



No one had been picking at my scars, laughing at my past! What I had been desperately trying to erase was in fact my own "fate." Were those 30 years I had spent as a "slave" really that painful? No, I was the only one who had dubbed me a slave. That period of my life had actually been quite interesting, as if I was living in a story. The suffering that I had imagined was simply a skilled wizard riding on my back. I had endured far greater suffering in the five years after -- driven by hate and unable to sleep or eat.

And so I realized...

What causes us pain often isn't others, but our own selves.



Since then, humans have called me
"King of the fire dragons, the three-
eyed Kantelosi Sfedi."



Do you understand
the significance of
this title?



It's a
testament to
your strength!



Wrong! It signifies nothing! Have you
ever seen a dragon come to
challenge me for that title?



Uh...I
haven't!



Because us dragons don't need
anyone's approval. Much less that
of a hum



Because life is short, we yearn for immortality.
Because life is humble, we yearn for power.
Because we are weak, we spend all day telling ourselves:
"We must grab hold of our fate. We must change our fate!"

What is fate?

What you can change, what you can't; what you can
choose, and what you cannot: these are all fate.

Those two-legged creatures believe that
facing and conquering your fate is a sign of
greatness. In the end, it is nothing more than
bringing trouble upon yourself.

So get stronger! Son, you will
understand one day...

I am strong, father!



You are strong? Strength is an
attitude!



Dwarves believe strength lies in unity.
Humans believe strength lies in power.



Elves believe the closer you are to the spirits, the stronger you are.



Orcs are even simpler: the ones who can kill their enemies are strongest.



So, where does your understanding of strength lie?



.....



To me, strength is savoring everything fate dishes out.



But every dragon has their own fate...



That's true, but the way I see it...



All fates are perfect!



One more thing.



I should let you know before you leave.



When you were born, I had the ability...



...to fix your wings..



What?



That spell you're always looking for...I know what it is.



Technically, it isn't a spell, but I do have that power.



And yet you never did anything!



That's right, I didn't.



Do you know how much I've endured these past 30 years?



Do you know how I felt watching my brothers soar through the sky?



Why should I have known? That was your fate, your life!



Those wings were Fate's gift to you, just like my third eye was for me.



Gift?



Yes! Fate gave you this path to walk down.



Then why did you just spout all that nonsense at me?

Let me walk my own path! My life and death are no one else's business.

Because you are my arrogant, ignorant son!

Only low-life creatures will constantly gripe about how unfair life is! Only they will torture themselves hating the more fortunate. But you are better than that!

When I first saw you using magic to soar through the sky, I was so proud! I had thought that you would have recognized fate's true purpose for you then. Had you never considered that, because of these wings of yours, your spell-casting ability is 20 years ahead of your peers?



You never mentioned that before....



You shouldn't care so much about what others think.



That is the greatest distinction between us and the gods.



But you are
my father...

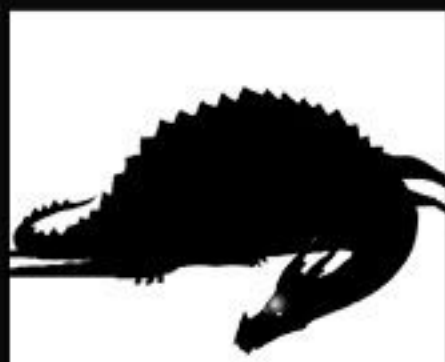
Goodbye.

You really insist on "walking"
out of here?

No one asked fate...

...to give me this path to "walk."

.....



HAAAAOOOO

"When a young dragon becomes old enough to defend itself, the adult dragon will banish them from their nestling cave. In fact, no young dragon will ever return to their father's territory upon being so banished. These cold-blooded creatures spread through our world in this manner."

— Excerpt from *Compendium on the Dragons of Tarsylia*



If in Tarsylia you ever encounter a wizard whose eyes turn red when angry...

...you had best be on your best behavior.

END