

Death of the Dragon

by Glynis Becker

The family laughed. They ate. They moved about their home, living lives as they always had, not knowing that just beyond their safe haven, a dragon waited. He moved closer, quietly, stealthily, day-by-day until one morning he was close enough to knock on their door. They opened it, still unknowing, and try as they might to slam the door against him once they recognized him, he swung wide with his tail and created a barrier through which they could not push.

That is the day the dragon moved inside. He brought with him sulfurous breath, burning fire and a heavy cloud of despair. From the day he roared into the house, he stayed with them, audaciously eating at their table, sleeping in the front room as an obstacle around which they always had to step.

Every day the family held hands around the table and asked that the dragon be removed from their home. They wanted him gone, to be sure, but as they were so few and small and only had so much power against him, they resolved to continue living their lives, stepping around him as best they could. They still laughed, they still ate and they had faith that one day they would have freedom from this dragon.

Once a week, they opened the door and marched out into the forest, a line of warriors holding their swords firmly and singing songs to encourage and strengthen each other. The trees that lined the road were thick, a canopy over their heads, blocking out the sun that they were certain was still hanging in the sky, although they could not see it.

When they reached the clearing, each member of the family, each a soldier in the fight, pulled out his or her sword and chipped away at the dragon's tail or took aim at his clawed feet or open maw. Even the littlest one of them, although her sword was heavy and was too big for her tiny hands, stabbed away at the awful dragon. Because, out of all of them, the dragon had come especially for her. And when the sun went down, they trudged back through the dark forest, saddened although never defeated with the dragon following, scathed and wounded, but never dead.

Yet, behind them all, close to the tail of that dreaded dragon, followed Another. They knew He was there, even when they could not see Him, because He was a strong Warrior, a Healer, poised to defeat the dragon when the time was right. But until that moment, He would quietly march at the end of the line of soldiers and prayer warriors and would fight in the clearing with them, sword clashing along with their own. He walked back through the forest with them, entering the home when they did, smiling when they laughed and holding them close to Himself when they lost heart, doubting the dragon would ever leave.

Some days the dragon would shrink, becoming transparent, a shadow rather than shape. The family could imagine, for a fleeting moment, that he was gone. But as suddenly as he

disappeared, he would fill out, becoming substance again and they were reminded that this battle was a long one, not to be finished overnight.

On occasion, when the night was especially quiet, the sky dark and starless, and the dragon slumbered the sleep of the victorious, the Healer would speak words into the ears and hearts and souls of each of them. "I am here. Sleep well, my warriors. I will keep watch. In the end, this battle is Mine. I will defeat your dragon."

Those battles were relentless. The tides of championship ebbed and flowed, as one often sees during a long war. Victories small and large were celebrated with gusto. Setbacks always felt like defeat. But the Healer remained close, available for consult, though only seen through the evidence of His care, never seen Himself.

And finally, one day when the blanket of forest seemed ready to suffocate them, they came to the clearing as they had done so many times before. Set to take action, swords raised and ready to strike, they were taken aback as out of the darkness came One with a mightier sword, a broader swing and a greater authority. With one stroke, the tail was cut off, no longer able to sweep their feet from under them and with another slice, the dragon's head was removed, no longer able to breathe his disgusting fire of sickness.

The dragon lay where he fell, defeated.

The family was free. They danced back through the forest, its darkness holding their joy close to them in comfort instead of suppressing and stifling it as had been the case just moments before. The littlest warrior was lifted high on their shoulders, home again and healed.

The Healer joined them as He had before and remained with them always, continuing to speak words of life and comfort into them, because He knew that even as that particular dragon was now gone, others always lay close by, each biding their time.

This family, as every family does, will have dragons come in and live with them for a time. But He will fight with them against the dragons' pain and the brokenness and the suffering they cause, until that time when He defeats all dragons. Then each of us, from the biggest to the littlest, will be made whole.

Author's Note

After reading this piece, a dear friend of mine, a woman who has lost a husband and a son to cancer, as well as battled it herself said to me, "You know, sometimes the dragon wins."

I know.

It is only fair to acknowledge that truth. And if the dragon is not cancer, then it will be something else. We are mortal.

The only way I know to live in the presence of a dragon is with faith that our Healer is good, and faithful, and powerful. I wrote this story to make some sense out of my two-year-old niece's leukemia diagnosis. It was meant to get my own fear out of my head and onto the paper where it would hopefully lose some of its power. It was meant to give encouragement to my family and remind them that we have a big God and He is the only one in control.

I pray that whatever you are walking through, whatever dragon has made its bed inside your home, that you look to the One who loves you, fights for you, and of whom it is said:

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4, NASB)

Blessings, Glynis