

The Destruction of the Hammer and Shield

The Hammer and Shield Tavern of River's End was attacked by a small Dyllarian Drake in the fall of 596. The Bard Durin Flann has written an account of this tale according to the reports of several eyewitnesses.

The young Drake was badly beaten, its powerful body beginning to look weary. The creature seemed to stagger under its own weight, and its breathing was raspy and cumbersome. It looked cornered.

Angus Ebonheart noticed these things, but he was not sure that anyone else did. He tried to rally the scattered defenders, but they seemed to be in a panic. The beast had sustained an incredible amount of damage, and yet still it fought on. This was enough to send most of the adventurers running into the hills, but not Angus. He knew that there was not a beast alive that would not die if you hit it enough. And now the thing looked bad - if he could just bring together one last charge.

Angus looked around him at the few warriors that had answered his call. They were exhausted. Their weapons and armor were covered in the slimy green blood of the drake and a little of their own as well. They looked pitiful.

“One more time lads, this beast is almost done!” said Angus in a tone filled with hope and determination. The warriors seemed to take heart at his words and they valiantly followed the highlander into the jaws of death. The deserters watched from their hiding places in the forest, and not one took a breath. The moment was timeless as the small haggard band of heroes engaged the great behemoth.

The men threw themselves at the creature, hoping that their steel would find a niche in its hide. As their blades thrust and cut at the beast, the drake let out an agonizing scream. It reared on its hind legs and brought its mighty wings to bear against the attackers as it had done so many times before in this struggle. The warriors were thrown back, all except for Angus. He stood defiantly before the drake and raised his blade for one final blow. As the drake's front legs came down Angus thrust his mighty sword into its underbelly. The beast let out another cry, but Angus was lost beneath the drake's body. He was surely crushed, and the drake still lived. All hope was lost.

Then suddenly the drake lifted its mighty wings and took flight. It left the battlefield, even though no one stood against it to defend the town. The hidden defenders immediately came forth, some from within the tavern, others from the woods. All of them gathered beside the body of their fallen hero. They watched as the powerful healer Chalene SilverMoure invoked her magic to breathe life back into Angus' shattered body. Slowly the highlander rose from the ground and those gathered gave a resounding cheer.

They had defeated the beast and saved the lives of the fallen, the victory was theirs. But Angus was not convinced.

“Where has the beast gone?” Angus asked.

“It has flown brother! You have defeated it! See?” said Sarathon Ebonheart, Angus’ Dwarven half-brother, as he pointed to the sky. Angus followed the line of his brother’s finger and saw the diminishing image of the beast in flight.

“Come, brother, let’s have an ale to celebrate.” Said Sarathon as he walked into the tavern. All of the others agreed and they began to follow the elder Ebonheart.

Angus stood and watched the dragon. It flew toward a large bank of clouds and disappeared there. He waited. Suddenly the dragon appeared out of the clouds, and it was coming back! Realization came upon Angus in a rush. The clever beast had pulled a ruse, and now everyone sat in the tavern unaware that the dragon was returning to ruin the party.

“Everyone out of the tavern! Out of the tavern now!” shouted Angus, but no one heard. The bards had already begun playing and the tales of how each of the adventurers had helped to fight off the dragon were captivating their comrades. After a few more shouts Angus was able to get the attention of some of the people within the main room of the tavern, and the word spread that the dragon was returning. The panic-stricken adventurers scurried to get free of the building and most did thanks to the urging of Angus. The beast landed on the top of the tavern, crushing the roof with a large crash and killing anyone underneath. When the smoke cleared, Angus charged into the ruined building and engaged the beast. Sarathon and a few others hurried to his brother’s side in a desperate attempt to slay the drake once and for all.

The dragon met the assault with its great claws and fangs flashing. Although it was severely wounded and nearly dead, the dragon was still a formidable foe. It fought with great ferocity, but in the end the combined might of the adventurers was simply too much. It eventually fell in a heap within the ruined walls of the Hammer and Shield tavern. A triumphant cry arose from the mouths of the town defenders as Angus sought out his brother amid the rubble.

“Now is the time to celebrate,” said Angus quietly.

“Aye, Angus,” agreed Sarathon as the brothers looked upon the carcass of the great beast with pride and wonder. “Celebrate indeed.”