

THE
LEGEND
OF MENDI

from 'The Gidoia' or
'The Great Script'

II Century, under the service of
Queen Eustinnia I

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During the Age of Might, there lived a man called Liial. Though Liial was no man of riches, a herd of hearty cows kept his table full. He took loving care of his animals because Liial was a man with a loving heart.

Because of his loving heart, Liial was in the Gods' favor, and so he was in good health. But like all mortals, Liial was not immune to tempers of hate or anger. And so his tragic story begins, on a bright summer morning.

Liial always woke before the first sun, but he waited for her arrival before beginning his daily work. On this particular day, Liial rose from bed and went about his morning unbothered, slinging his trusted hatchet through his belt.

When Liial left the modest farmhouse to tend his herd, he was shocked to find every one of his cattle on their sides in the plush summer grass that should have been verdant green but was instead coated with stagnant pools of blood already crusting over in the morning heat.

He cried out, falling to his knees before a dead cow. His eyes found the unmistakable jagged slices from the claws of a wild merlak marring its skin. Deep was Liial's pain, and his body trembled from the terrifying discovery. There was nothing a keeper of livestock could fear more than a pack of the enormous feline beasts. They killed for sport as well as food, so rare was a single spared animal after they decided to strike a herd.

Liial climbed a pile of stones taller than himself, stretching up to see over the field. All he found was more

carnage. Ripped flesh was scattered over the ground. He searched and searched, but found no animal among his herd left breathing.

With tears in his eyes and anger darkening his heart, Liial sat.

Resting head in hands, he wept and wept until his eyes were devoid of tears. He decided then that he wouldn't let this crime go unpunished, and so Liial turned to the stones beneath him and, with the will of the Gods, he gave life to something the merlak cats couldn't pierce with their fangs.

The stones tumbled and jumped, a creature rising from them, standing the height of three men with the strength of two hundred bulls. Liial called it Ekora. He placed the decorative stone from his prized milk cow's halter within the Ekora, so it may know why it was created.

Together Liial and the Ekora set out to hunt the great merlak cats. The first night, they encountered no creatures, and the same failure waited for them the second night. But Liial continued, for he needed to avenge his loss.

On the third day, just after nightfall, Liial heard the chuff of a merlak in the distance. He led the Ekora toward the sound, and soon they came upon a glade where a pack of the beasts rested. Liial sent the Ekora after them, and there ensued a great battle. The Ekora fought with ferocity and was victorious over the merlak, slaying them all and leaving trails of gore as it went.

Liial was pleased, and then shocked, for after the Ekora had slain the last merlak, the creature consumed them. It ate and ate until nothing remained, and Liial thought the Ekora was another man taller once it returned to him.

Though he'd avenged his cattle, one pack wasn't enough to console Liial's soul. He was not equal with the beasts for the number they'd taken from his herd, nor all those the merlak would take from his fellow farmers in the future.

So he took the Ekora deeper into the forest, and they traveled until they found another pack and vanquished them all. They continued on this journey for days, then weeks, then months.

Like the first time, the Ekora ate everything it slayed. It quickly grew taller than the great arku trees and destroyed them as it traveled, looking for more to devour.

Soon Liial and the Ekora had crossed the whole land, and there were no more merlak to be found, even in the coldest passes of the northern territory where they once thrived.

After a week of no food, the Ekora became restless. Liial tried to feed the creature fish from the ocean, birds from the sky, and cattle from the land, but the Ekora refused it all. Soon it became desperate, rumbling the ground as it stomped through the woods looking for a suitable meal.

Though once simple as an animal, the Ekora had seen Liial's violence and rage toward the merlak, and learned

those traits for itself. It went into a frenzy of hunger, smashing everything in its path. One day it came across a home and stomped it to dust, devouring the people within.

That was when Liial realized his mistake. He'd created an uncontrollable monster the size of a mountain that rampaged across the land, eating anyone it could find. Liial tried to stop it, but the Ekora no longer listened to his commands.

As the Ekora shook the world with its steps, Liial sank to the ground in defeat, praying to the Gods for help. But nothing happened.

He sat in the prairie and cried out in anger, cursing the Gods for their silence, blaming them for his misfortune. Liial prayed, trying to find a solution, or to appease just one God enough to earn a sliver of help.

But none came. So while the Ekora continued to rampage, Liial continued to pray. A storm rolled in, drenching him in cold rain. The suffering cries of a nearby village reached his ears, and it was only when he'd experienced everything else that Liial felt guilt, and finally acceptance of his own imperfect nature.

He prayed once more. This time for forgiveness.

The storm rumbled, and a great crack pierced the air, a flash of lightning breaking through the clouds and coming down with great force onto Liial. He reckoned he deserved being smote for all that he'd done, but then Liial realized the lightning wasn't aimed at him.

Just when he thought the Gods would never come to his aid, they had. For the bolt of lightning had turned Liial's hatchet from wood and metal to pure, glittering diamond. Liial grasped it and thanked the Gods for their blessing.

And so Liial raised the hatchet high above his head and fed it his magic, speaking his wish for the monster to stop its madness. It glowed with the power of the Gods, and around the feet of the Ekora spurted a glittering array of golden magic that swirled up, up, up, and around the creature's enormous body. The Ekora froze, arms falling limp and legs failing beneath it.

It rumbled and shifted, falling apart and succumbing to the will of the Gods. It let out one final bellow of anguish before stilling for the rest of time, now nothing more than a pile of stones.

The empty shell was dubbed Mendi Mountain, and there was once again peace in the land.

Although the mountain soon sprouted flowers and trees, welcoming birds to build their nests in its crevasses, locals were quick to warn visitors not to linger near it, for there were whispers that traces of the monster still lived within.