

Armour of the Beast

by Keith Savage

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1 Entropy In The Mist

A fog oozed its way in, transforming the simple town into a sparse void, where even the rope linked fence beside Sevren Mane disappeared into nothingness.

His wet fingers slid over the waxy surface of a matchlock rifle as he scanned the grey canvas ahead. He knew Jerum's stable was not twenty paces ahead, but it was blotted out by the thickest mist he had ever seen.

"It's black magic I say!" said Dhom.

"Shh..." Sevren raised a hand and kept scanning the boiling cloud. He shrugged a shoulder to make sure his spear was still within easy reach. He had retired from soldiering nearly as soon as he'd started, and hadn't fired his weapon since then, besides, he doubted whether the powder would even burn in the humid air.

"Hrrrrkk!" Came a sharp grunt. It was loud, moving, and decidedly not human.

Sevren raised his rifle, and breathed carefully on the burning embers of the match-cord. Dhom and what served as the village watch stepped back. He was glad he had some distance from the rest of his allies. Prone to panic, they were more likely to stick him than the creature sprinting around the smoldering blankness.

Whatever lurked in the dark was moving fast, circling the hamlet, looking for a way in. It showed an unexpected level of intellect.

Dhom and his ilk jumped at every sound, but Sevren didn't. He knew they were already dead. The speed at which the thing had killed Bronu was alarming to say the least. It had come with the fog, striking the shepherd with such force that his back exploded, painting the air red.

Whatever was out there, it was toying with them. It would kill them at any moment, but Sevren Mane wanted to do as much damage to the creature as possible before he went.

The noises ceased, and the tension grew. Mane breathed on the matchlock cord, feeling the heat on his cheek. He prayed the starter would light the powder and send the creature back to hell. The village watch shuffled, looking in all directions.

Sevren focused on the pair of legs that spilled out of the wall of fog, and all that could be seen of Bronu's remains. He tried to ignore the frantic breathing behind him and listened for the scratch of clawed feet on the hard ground. All he sensed was silence and fear that grew as dense as the cloud before him.

Suddenly Bronu's legs shot back into the mist with a grunt. The villagers shrieked, where Bronu could not. The sounds of tearing flesh and spraying blood caused them to break. Dhom shook with fear, and instinctively threw his spear into the mist. They did not hear it land, nor it strike a target. The void had taken it, and they backed up to assure they would not follow it's fate. Only Sevren stayed.

Suddenly a spraying limb shot from the fog towards them, followed closely by the creature. It was massive and unearthly in its speed. The villagers behind screamed with fear, shocked into action. Sevren dropped low and sensed a clumsy spear shoot past overhead, nearly hitting him.

The hairy thing bounded at them with inhuman force. Blood sprayed from its foaming jaws, scraps of Bronu still clinging to its teeth. Its features were incomprehensible due to the speed. Sevren could see only a wall of hate rushing towards them faster than any horse, or bird.

The only thing he could focus on were the eyes. Bulging spheres of bloodshot white pierced him in lieu of the carnage to come.

Taking aim, and using what he assumed was his last breath to keep the cord lit, Sevren pressed the trigger. The creature flew closer and closer, as the hammer fell at an excruciatingly slow speed. It was nearly upon them when the hammer touched the pan. Sevren's trigger hand had already fallen to his spear in case the powder fizzled.

A flash of light blinded him momentarily. He felt the rifle jump in his one handed grip, and the butt slammed into his shoulder roughly. The barrel popped to the right as if kicked aside. When his sight cleared, Sevren saw the barrel had cracked apart, but his attack struck, and was enough to send the creature off course.

He felt a hot, primeval spray of bloody air, mixed with the scent of slaughterhouse bowl him over as the wolf-like creature stumbled and rushed past him. Steaming gore blasted him from behind, and he heard screams he did not know were humanly possible.

When Sevren turned he saw an eruption of crimson death obscure what remained of the village watch. His friends were torn to pieces instantly. He saw arms and legs scrambling for safety, but were shredded for their insolence.

Having resigned himself to death, Sevren was surprised to find his body had picked itself up, climbed over the rope fence behind, and drawn his remaining weapon before him.

The bloody storm ceased, and the mist of ichor fell to reveal the werewolf crouched over the remains of seven men. Separating the bodies for burial was an impossibility. The wolf-man's lips drew back revealing a wave of steam and razors glowing with fresh blood. It's hungry eyes scanned for Sevren Mane, the one who dared injure it.

It was then that he saw the open gunshot wound on it's right shoulder.

With a snarl the massive upper arms of the wolf twitched and it leapt ten feet as easily as Sevren traveled one. It landed on the fence, expecting it to be more solid, and fell off balance. Moving more on instinct than common sense, he pushed straight at the creature, driving his spear into its other shoulder. The butt of the weapon slammed into the ground behind him, shattering in two as the behemoth tumbled past.

Diving over the fence again, with the other half of the spear still ready, Sevren turned only to see the dripping creature already rising to charge again. He retreated with as much speed as his shaking legs could carry him, until he felt the door to the blacksmith's hut behind him.

The werewolf was nearly on him as he pushed his way inside, and slammed the door shut, not believing for a second it would even slow the unstoppable thing. He ran for the back door, throwing anything in the path behind him just as the entrance exploded. Only then did Sevren realize that he had dropped several racks of farming implements in the way of the shaggy locomotive. A ground shattering howl erupted from the beast's lips as it was speared by several picks, shovels, and sticks. The wooden shafts broke under the speed and power of the attacker, and it plowed headlong into an anvil with a dull clang.

He reversed direction as the wolf began to rise again, and stabbed it as he passed. The spear stuck in its hide, and slipped from his grasp. Not bothering to retrieve his only weapon, he dashed across the street to the inn hearing the raging beast gaining behind him.

Panic beginning to set in, Sevren didn't know what he was doing, and that unnerved him. He had always been lucky when he trusted his instincts. It kept him alive, but this battle was no skirmish between soldiers, and he felt his luck was only likely to prolong the painful inevitable.

Pulling down the ladder to the roof, he leapt for safety. He had not reached more than one foot from the roof when the ladder exploded beneath him. Sevren's hand snatched the ledge as he heard the wolf sail underneath, and shatter into the jugs of ale and whisky.

Terror pulled him onto the roof faster than he thought possible, and scrambled for safety. Shingles exploded in all directions as the werewolf pressed the attack. Its hair matted with blood and drink, and for the first time, Sevren saw it was severely injured. The thing's eyes were the embodiment of rage, determined to kill him before it succumbed to its wounds.

He knew the creature would achieve its goal, and the retired soldier didn't know why his body continued to drag this battle out. His hands fumbled with his matchlock tools, striking the tinder and flint roughly, with hysterically trembling hands.

The beast leapt at his prey just as a blast of flame lit the air. The alcohol flared and engulfed the hairy brute. Sevren rolled aside as the terror fell through the roof, leaving a wake of fire behind it.