

The Tibicena

Black saliva hung from its jaws; two razor-sharp teeth protruded downwards, the moonlight glistening against them.

"I don't feel good," moaned Sami, edging towards the mouth of the cave, his sword beginning to drag on the floor.

"Shut up - you'll wake it," I hissed back. "And pick your sword up. It's noisy."

Sami's eyes were glistening too: a small pool of tears gathered in their corners, threatening to burst their banks at any moment. Trying not to shake, I tiptoed forwards, raising my sword ever so slightly. I gulped as a small river of sweat meandered down my cheek. The sword felt heavier now; my legs too. We had come so far.

Sami shuffled behind me. He had dried his eyes - now was the time to be brave. It's what father would have wanted.

Father was the last person to have seen the Tibicena. We were following his footsteps, literally and figuratively. This monstrous beast had terrorised our village for weeks: it had stolen livestock; burned down the homes of young and old; killed without mercy. Father had stormed the cave with an army of men - not one returned.

We were here to avenge his death.

We slowly crept towards the sleeping beast, trying to stay calm, trying to stay quiet.

Then it opened its eye.

Sami shrieked; the Tibicena turned to face us - me - and a deep growl began to form in the depths of its throat. I looked around. I was on my own.

Unconsciously, I found myself walking backwards, moving towards the far wall of the cave, edging towards the darkness. The Tibicena rose up onto its hind legs, sniffing the air, trying to find me. Its muscular frame cast a shadow over my quivering body. It snarled, and specks of sour spittle landed on my cheek. I felt myself begin to cry.

The Tibicena's face contorted, almost as though it was laughing at me, as if it found my pathetic endeavour some sort of joke, and it brandished its claws high above my head. I closed my eyes.

Out of nowhere, a familiar shriek swallowed the cave whole. The Tibicena slumped downwards, emitting a painful groan as it hit the floor. It was dead.

Sami stood there, his sword covered in the blood of the beast, his face drenched in tears.

"That was for father," he said.

And that was when we saw it.