

## The Red King

Reaching towards the sky, hoping for a better life; the wind whistled silently through leaf after leaf of the tall pines, where trees stood solid and proud, as the thick branches wrapped in poisonous ivy reach out towards the other inhabitants of the damp, dark, moist forest, reaching, but never quite making a connection of any kind. The vast mountains of rock rose out against the glassy, reflective sea-turned-mirror, conjuring the illusion that there were many more mountains of rock than really existed. The pine forest threw their image out onto the water, on the rough, surprisingly fertile home of The Dragon.

The wine splashed onto the thick, cream rug, staining it to a dark, velvety scarlet, as the perpetrator laughed raucously, and hollered for more wine. The table girl, unsurprised by the all-round lack of manners, went to fetch the Viking king, Rory the Red, more wine and slow-roasted meat. Rory the Red, or, as he was also known, The Red King had earned his name as he plundered villages throughout Scandinavia, Norway, England, but most proudly of all, the island of Berk.

For just over 7 years now, The Red King had been hunting down The Great and Powerful Ripslide, the large, rocky island mentioned earlier, in the clutches of the pine forests and rocky, stony mountains. But, in the middle of all this chaos, there was a hole. About 3 longboat lengths wide each way across and wide, it was beyond comparison even to The Red King's longboat, a great feat of engineering if there ever was one, to be rivalled by none, not even in the non-European countries. The ground shook, and boulders fell, for now Ripslide had arrived for battle, and battle he would.

Rory, the only unrivalled warrior in the country, pulled out his sharpened battle-ax from its hilt, and ran into war with a battle cry of death, despair and loneliness. Ripslide's scales gleamed a dark grey in the indecisive, dim light of the island as she flew into battle. Rory, being a trained warrior, ducked decisively under the clumsy, uncoordinated dragon and hacked his ax into the gap between the tail and abdomen.

Rocks and boulders fell, rolling around and into the hole, never being heard or seen again. The path out was blocked, meaning there would be a bitter and twisted battle to the death, with only one survivor and the odds were definitely stacked up against The Red King. The Great and Powerful Ripslide had only been playing subtle mind games with its prey, but now the games were over.

The dragon was bulky, and packed a lot of force behind all of the possible attacks it could muster, and being able to fly was an obvious advantage, but with all its bulk and might, it had slow, uncoordinated attacks that could be easily evaded with the right skill and speed, both of which qualities Rory The Red happened to possess. He was born with both natural talent, alongside rigorous training, in which he learned how to fight with both ease and might.

Had the dragon not had one, vital weakness, it would have been an eternal stalemate, in which neither side would ever have been able to win; locked in an eternal chess match, never to be won. One scale hung loosely on the hide of the Dragon, revealing the dark grey underbelly, the only chance of survival for The Red King.

He struck hard and fast, with the magnificent might and grace only a fully-fledged warrior could muster under the circumstances, and as black blood flowed from the thin line of the battle-ax, Rory The Red died... a slow and painful death if there ever was one, for while The Red King had been sneaking up to kill the Dragon, its tail had struck, breaking ribs, puncturing lungs and killing.

Rory The Red died, alongside The Great and Powerful Ripslide.

The great dragon died that day and Rory the Red was hailed as the greatest, most unrivalled warrior of the Scandinavian countries, which rose to unite under his name, although he was dead, but not before being able to whisper four words to The Red King. "I love you... Son."