

Herikyr and the Dragon: Part One

In the eastern part of Kria, in a valley just north of Oceangarde, the quaint town of Magevale faced a looming crisis. A mysterious disease had struck the populace, causing many inhabitants to suffer. The town's healers were baffled. Their usual remedies were ineffective and people were dying.

When word of the situation reached Herikyr, renowned mage and guardian of the valley, she embarked on a quest for a rare herb known to possess extraordinary healing properties. Alchemists call it Shadowbalm, and it is said to grow only in the shadow of the highest mountain peaks. To obtain it, Herikyr would have to venture far to the western edge of the valley and into the mountainous domain of Sildremarr, the elusive silver dragon.

For three days, Herikyr ascended and searched along the rugged mountain range until she arrived at a high plateau where the air was thin and the world seemed to touch the sky. It was here that she found a patch of Shadowbalm near the mouth of a large cave. As she crouched down and carefully harvested the fragile leaves, the looming figure of Sildremarr emerged from the cave, her silver scales glimmering in the sunlight.

Awe-inspiring and intimidating, the dragon moved slowly and deliberately as she carefully regarded her visitor. Perhaps she knew of Herikyr and her deeds. The great wisdom of dragons is never to be underestimated. Herikyr, meanwhile, slowly rose to her feet and kept her hands at her sides diplomatically.

"Sildremarr, mighty dragon of these peaks, I am Herikyr, protector of Magevale," she said with a slight bow. "I seek Shadowbalm to save my people from a deadly disease. I ask for your permission to gather it."

"Mage of the valley," answered the dragon. "I know of you. Your quest is noble, but Shadowbalm is sacred to these mountains." Sildremarr's gaze fell to the leafless sprig at Herikyr's feet, then to the pouch of leaves at her side, and finally back up to the wizard's eyes. "And it appears you should be seeking forgiveness; not permission. Attempting to deceive a dragon is unwise."

Before Herikyr could respond, the scrape of boots on stone caught their attention. A lone elf emerged at the edge of the plateau. His striking features were fixed on Sildremarr with an unmistakable affection. The most powerful mage in the valley went wholly unnoticed for several moments.

Herikyr used the gift of that time to study him. Dusk-colored hair, deep blue eyes, probably 130-140 years old. He was clothed in garb consistent with the elves of Myrindel. He carried no bow or hunting gear and was not armored. The dagger at his side had a distinctive pearlescent pommel, signature work of Myrindel's master weaponsmith, Faelar the Bright, and probably worth upwards of a thousand gold. His boots were of spider silk and the softest deerskin, and seemed to leave no footprint or trace of his steps. They were almost certainly enchanted—the dagger, too, most likely. Generous gifts to protect him and to help make his visits here untraceable. Herikyr dared not raise a finger to cast even a simple detection spell at such a tense moment. Instead she smiled and, in Elvish, said three carefully selected words.

"Well met, Myrindelian."

The elf froze. He looked from Sildremarr to Herikyr and back, unsure of what he had stumbled into.

Sildremarr's demeanor shifted, and a wistful softness touched her eyes. Her next words were spoken not in Common, but in Draconic. "For two thousand years I have reigned over these peaks, gathered ancient knowledge and relics, and maintained a barrier between the horde in the west and the people of the valley. Now, before I grow too old, I seek a . . . simpler life." Her gaze lingered on the elf.

Herikyr understood the unspoken truth in her words, and could tell by the uncertain expression on the elf's face that language was foreign to him. Following the dragon's lead, she answered in Draconic.

"Your secret is safe with me, Sildremarr. The love you share is yours to cherish. Give me the Shadowbalm to

save the people of Magevale. Your beloved is here now and—I assure you—safe. But others have already lost everything in their worlds. Help me stop this disease before it spreads to Myrindel and other settlements of the valley.”

The dragon hesitated, then nodded slowly. “Take the leaves and your leave, Herikyr. Your cause is just and your discretion is appreciated. Let this day be one of peace.”

With a nod, Herikyr carefully secured the pouch of Shadowbalm at her side for the trip to Magevale. As she departed, she glanced back to see the dragon had taken humanoid form with flowing gossamer robes and long, silvery white hair. She and the elf walked hand in hand across the plateau toward the setting sun, the distinctive fine scales along her arms shimmering in the fading light of the day.