

TALES OF BURMON:  
THE CURSE OF THE POISONED LORD

Written by

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## PROLOGUE

OVER BLACK: We hear small feet trotting on soft ground. A WISE WOMAN'S VOICE sets the stage:

GLORIA (V.O.)  
Of all the known lands in all the  
known world, the Kingdom of  
Burmon's were the most giving.

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - DAY

CLOSE ON: ELENORA (8) a giddy little girl, running barefoot. She picks an apple and goes to bite...

GLORIA (V.O.)  
And yet, its people starved...

EDWARD (30s), her father, snatches the apple from her hand...

EDWARD (O.C.)  
(sternly)  
No, Elenora.

Edward calms himself. He feels awful:

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
These are not yet ours to keep.

PAN BACK as Edward leaves, pushing A WAGON FULL OF APPLES. Elenora could cry as she's surrounded by EMPTY APPLE TREES.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
...forced to pay tithes to a  
covetous lord who declared all that  
they had as his.

EXT. THE TITHES ROAD - DAY

SUPER ON: An endless line of STARVING PEASANTS. They roll wooden carts of food toward the walled city of KAINÉ. We ZIP down the line, over the hills, through the gates...

EXT. KAINÉ - DAY

...and into the city, where the PEASANT LINE snakes up a COBBLESTONE STREET toward a MOUNTAIN OF FOOD at the bottom of a GRAND STAIRCASE leading to the LORD'S MANOR.

The CRIMSON GUARD -- SIX HULKING KNIGHTS in blood-red plate armor -- stand on the manor steps, three on each side.

Their leader, A'BAZIL, stands between them, his face scarred and weathered. A large ATTACK DOG curls by his feet. They watch as LOWER KNIGHTS empty the wagons. Edward steps up to the pile, powerless as knights seize his apples.

The MANOR DOORS open. Out steps LORD GAUL, adorned in fine silks. He has a long, cruel face, ripe with displeasure. He struts down the steps, hands behind his back, and plucks an apple from Edward's wagon.

GLORIA (V.O.)

There was no pleasing the Lord Gaul  
of Kaine...

Gaul bites and snarls. He casts the half-eaten apple into the pile of food. Edward's heart sinks.

EDWARD

I beg you, Lord. My next harvest,  
it will be thrice as sweet.

GAUL

For your sake, I hope so. If not,  
it will be your last.

Edward's grip on his wagon tightens as he watches Gaul leave. He can feel A'Bazil staring at him. Wisely, Edward hides his hate. A SMALL BASKET OF APPLES is loaded onto his wagon.

INT. EDWARD'S COTTAGE - DAY

Cramped. Dingy. Edward enters with the basket, hardly enough food for his WIFE and Elenora. He sets the basket on a table, then he moves to a window and gazes upon his bare fields:

GLORIA (V.O.)

Edward's orchards grew lush and  
abundant. Yet for them he had so  
little to show. *He understood why.*

Edward looks across the room. Elenora grabs an apple from the basket. She bites into it, savoring the flavor.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Elenora would die before it made  
sense to her.

Elenora tugs his pants. Smiling, she hands him the HALF-EATEN APPLE. He takes it, smirks, goes to bite -- stops. The fruit is pulsating; something is trying to bore its way out...

Edward digs with his finger. A WORM punches through and inches onto his hand. He studies as it moves over his thumb and onto his wrist.

Edward's eyes come up -- an idea brews in his mind.

INT. EDWARD'S COTTAGE - DAY

Edward kneading dough, anger in each motion. He stretches the dough over a SKILLET and tops it with APPLE SLICES. Then, he looks at a SMALL STONE CUP full of WHITE POWDER. He takes a deep, thoughtful breath.

He gazes at Elenora, nestled with her mother by the fireplace. He nods, then pours the contents of the cup over the apples. He covers everything with another layer of dough.

EXT. KAINE - LORD'S MANOR - DAY

Edward enters the square. He's holding something covered by a cloth. He walks past the mountain of food -- now mostly rotten. He stands at the bottom of the steps... waits...

The doors open. Gaul steps out, flanked by his Crimson Guard. A'Bazil comes last with his dog. From every alley and rooftop, KAINEFOLK watch as Gaul steps up to Edward.

EDWARD

For you, Lord. Thrice as sweet.

Gaul removes the cloth, revealing a FRESH-BAKED APPLE PIE. Edward kneels, presenting the pie as a gift.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Edward had laced the pie with enough poison to kill the Kingdom. A tasteless, odorless powder, chiseled from the river beds and dried over flame.

With his fingers, Gaul takes a small bite. He smacks his lips and looks at Edward, who's shaking with nerves.

EDWARD

Does it... please my Lord?

Gaul pauses, smiles... and takes another bite... another... another... for once, he is indeed pleased...

More Kainefolk reveal themselves. They step through the alleys and stand tall on the rooftops. A'Bazil notices. He signals The Guards to ready. Gaul gorges. Edward grins.

Just as Gaul pinches another piece of pie, HIS EYES BULGE, HIS THROAT SWELLS! THE VEINS IN HIS FACE TURN BLACK! He collapses and grabs his throat. HE FOAMS, SQUIRMS, AND DIES WITHIN MOMENTS!

The Crimson Guards ready their SWORDS and SPEARS. A'Bazil pushes through. He looks at Gaul's body, then down at Edward. He grips his blade and winds up!

GLORIA (V.O.)

Edward had accepted his fate. But then... something happened that nobody could have expected.

THE GROUND BENEATH GAUL'S BODY SHAKES! THORNY BLACK ROOTS burst through and wrap around the corpse like a cocoon!

A'Bazil, his dog, and the Guards are ensnared. The roots drag them and Gaul's body down into the BLACK BEYOND, leaving behind a GAPING HOLE IN THE GROUND.

Kainefolk fall to their knees, revering Edward, praising him, crying tears of joy and gratitude.

GLORIA

Nobody doubted who would lead them now. Burmon was Edward's, whether he wanted it or not.

The ground quakes. From the hole, roots emerge and twist, forming a LARGE LUSCIOUS TREE. The roots shoot from the bottom, snake beneath the cobblestone and leave the city.

Edward watches them as Kainefolk backpedal in fear. Then, he turns and faces the tree:

GLORIA (CONT'D)

It rose from the Black Beyond, its roots transmuting the lord's greed, cruelty, and malice. It returned to the people of Burmon what Gaul had spent his mortal life stealing.

IMAGE: A FARMER, shocked by how tall his cornstalks are.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Their harvests had never been so bountiful...

INT. KAINÉ - LORD'S MANOR - GREAT HALL - DAY

Hundreds gather for a feast. EDWARD AND HIS FAMILY SIT AT THE HEAD OF A LONG TABLE. Elenora finishes an Apple. She gets up and trots across the room for another. Edward watches her...

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 ...Fruit had never tasted so sweet.  
 The sugars kissed their lips like  
 gold...

Elenora grabs the LAST APPLE from a basket:

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 ...and Gold has a way of driving  
 humble men mad.

She's BOMBARDED BY KAINEFOLK grabbing for the apple! Edward can't see her. He rushes over and pulls people off:

EDWARD  
 Move! Out of the way! Move, I said!

He finds Elenora TRAMPLED TO DEATH... He falls to his knees, mortified... He picks her body up and holds her to his chest.

EXT. KAINÉ - LUSCIOUS TREE - DAY

Edward with Elenora in his arms. He falls to his knees:

EDWARD  
 You have power over life! Return  
 hers! Return hers, I beg you!

Edward sobs over Elenora's body.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 Elenora's life was the first their  
 new lands claimed... It would not  
 be the last.

EXT. KAINÉ - BATTLEFIELD - DAY

TWO ARMIES CLASH! It's an absolute bloodbath! Edward's men wear GOLD AND WHITE. The INVADING FORCES are easy to spot. They come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and creeds.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 Great houses came from oceans away  
 for a slice of Burmon's fertility.

A WARRIOR's throat is cut. His blood seeps into the ground.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 Their blood watered the fields...

ANGLE ON: THE DEAD WARRIOR'S FACE AS DAY TURNS TO NIGHT. The ground quivers. ROOTS ENSNARE THE BODY, PULLING IT DOWN!

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 ...their bodies fed the soil.

AS NIGHT TURNS TO DAY: Peasants with wooden carts arrive.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 When they returned to gather their fallen, there were none left to collect. Death was easily forgotten.

EXT. KAINE - BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Edward battles invading warriors. With each kill, a new HEIR OF EDWARD replaces the last version:

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 For 500 years, Edward's line defended their fertile lands. With each battle came a bountiful harvest... and with each harvest... another bloody battle.

Edward's army turns on itself!

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 When there were no outsiders left to kill, the men of Burmon turned on each other. Brothers fought brothers; cousins slayed uncles; fathers butchered sons.

EXT. KAINE - BATTLEFIELD - DAY

An HEIR OF EDWARD cuts down a warrior. He transforms into EDWARD THE PEACEMAKER, who lays down his sword. The opposing leader - REMNY, a Burley Bearded Man, does the same.

GLORIA (V.O.)  
 Tens of thousands had perished before the fighting finally ceased. It took the bravest of them all, Edward the Peacemaker, to agree that bloodshed was not the answer.

Edward and Remny meet in the middle. They grab forearms.  
Their respective armies cheer! Weapons clank to the ground!

EXT. KAINE - HILL - DAY

Edward and Remny overlooking Kaine. Its fields look wet.  
Edward nods to an ARCHER with a FLAMING ARROW knocked. The  
archer draws, releases, and sets Kaine ablaze!

GLORIA (V.O.)

This place had a hold on men. Its  
power was too great to wield.  
Instead, they'd retreat to their  
new holds, Edward in the South, his  
cousin, Remny, in the North. The  
Scorched Lands of Kaine would mark  
the border between them.

ON EDWARD THE PEACEMAKER, watching the fire. In the distance,  
he can see the LUSCIOUS TREE.

ANGLE ON: The Luscious Tree -- It goes up in flames.

EXT. KAINE/THE SCORCHED LANDS - HILL - DAY

BEHIND EDWARD, watching the fire. He grows old and fades  
away. The fire races toward and behind us, burning everything  
from coast to coast.

ANGLE ON: The LUSCIOUS TREE -- Now dead. BLACK. Lifeless.

GLORIA (V.O.)

From then until the end, Edward's  
line swore an oath, never to spill  
another drop of blood upon those  
poisoned lands...

Time races by... months... years... decades...

GLORIA (V.O.)

...and all the while, the Lord Gaul  
waited, a god imprisoned in the  
Black Beyond. His day would come,  
and when it did, he'd raise an army  
unlike any the Kingdom had ever  
seen. "*Feed the soil,*" the Poisoned  
Lord sneered, "*Bleed and feed the  
soil.*"

Everything is dead, burned, black. Covered in twisted roots.

Until...