

The History of Windhaven

by Baron Natan of Windhaven

Long ago by the shores of the Forgotten Sea was a land of wealth and plenty. The people of this land were strong, industrious, and loved their leaders dearly. The leader of the land was Lord Tamarack, who was wise and just. His wife died in child-birth, so his daughter, Horcon, ruled by his side. Together they ruled the land with a sense of justice and fairness that was otherwise unheard of in this time. Throughout the land, all were happy and nary a complaint was heard.

Tamarack's neighbors, however, complained a great deal. Oppressive rules of the old style, they found their peasants becoming more and more restless as they observed the great freedom and wealth that Tamarack's people enjoyed. Rather than institute reforms of their own, they resolved to eliminate this threat to their way of life.

Early one spring, while most of Tamarack's knights were off at a tourney, his enemies struck. Burning, raping, and pillaging, they ravaged the countryside. Refugees poured into Tamarack's castle, until it was surrounded. The defenders of the castle were strong and brave, but hopelessly outnumbered. When Tamarack fell severely wounded the Staff of Leadership passed to Horcon. Looking around her at the mass of refugees, mostly children, the elderly and the wounded, she resolved to escape with all of them, rather than allow them to be taken by the evil outside walls. Leaving behind a volunteer rear guard, she led her people thru a long escape tunnel into the night. Over his protests, Tamarack, far too wounded to fight, was taken along.

The rear guard fought on for two more days, but in the end were killed to a man and woman. It was another day before the invaders realized that any had escaped, and two days more before the trail was found. Then the pursuit began in earnest.

Horcon had pushed her people as far as she dare, heading north into the wilderness. Several times she led ambushes against scouting parties that came close to discovering them. Finally, after many days, their path was blocked by a great marsh. Travel was impossible to the west or north, so they followed the marsh eastward until they found that way blocked by a large lake, many miles wide. Exhausted, they collapsed here to await the end. Alone among them, Horcon still had the strength to fight, and she strode forward, grimly determined to make her enemies pay dearly. . . .

Within the marsh dwelt Bo-tii, an ancient amphiptere (a giant winged serpent and distant cousin to the imperial dragons) and she had been here for centuries. Her last children had long since grown and flown away, often to be killed by marauding humans. Long ago, she had appointed herself guardian of the marsh, protecting all the small flying creatures that lived there from the depredation of humans who would hunt there, for sport or for cruel pleasure. Many times she had hidden in her marsh, watching groups of humans fight each other along the shore, for they seemed to enjoy killing one another almost as much as they enjoyed killing helpless animals. Many times she would attack and destroy the victors for these fights, for all humans were her enemies.

When Horcon's enemies rode up, Bo-tii was in the marsh nearby, watching and waiting for another battle. This time, however, it was different. This time it was one lone human female fight, not for pleasure, but to defend those she had sworn to protect. A common chord was struck between Horcon and Bo-tii that day, and for the first time in her life Bo-tii felt kinship with a human being. As the enemy charged down to Horcon, Bo-tii arose from her hiding spot and roared into the enemies flank. Half of them fled in terror, the other half died in the short battle that followed, but not without a price. Both Horcon and Bo-tii were wounded, and Bo-tii's wounds were too deep and too numerous to heal.

"I am wounded unto death." Bo-tii told Horcon, "I have barely the strength to return to my nest on the north edge of the marsh. I go there now to die. Send your people there, when you can, to give me proper burial that I may return to the earth. Long have I protected the creatures of the wind that call this marsh their home, guarding them against the depredations of your kind. I pass that duty unto you now. Swear to me that you will honor it!"

Horcon promised that it would be as Bo-tii asked. Bo-tii launched herself into the air one last time, returning to her nest to die. Horcon's people went there to honor the pledge given by their mistress after burying those she had slain, in defense of Horcon, in a great mound to mark the place of the battle.

They built a town at the foot of the lake and dwelt there for a year, until all had recovered from their wounds. Then Horcon returned the Staff of Leadership to Tamarack stating, "I am still young and would travel some before I settle down. Also, our enemies still exist, and we have little protection here. I have heard tale of a great bowman down by the Tree-Girt-Sea who is forging a kingdom. With the protection of one such as he, we could live without fear once more."

Tamarack saw the wisdom of this and gave her his blessing. South she traveled and ... indeed she found her bowman, Cariadoc by name. She joined him in his efforts to found the great Middle Kingdom, even becoming the first seneschal of the Midrealm. And the Midrealm extended its protection to Tamarack's folk, and their enemies never bothered them again.

Tamarack continued to rule wisely, extending his lands to the north edge of the lake, where he built a citadel, and west to the Point of Steven. He called all this land Windhaven, and decreed it a sanctuary for all creatures of the wind, making it illegal to hunt them for sport. He took the image of Bo-tii as his device, so that all would remember her and her deeds.

Time passes. . . . People and even places, change. Few now know this tale and most consider it myth. But the town at the foot of the lake, and the hill of the dead, still exist. 'Tho their names have been rendered into the common tongue, Fond Du Lac and Buttes Des Morts. At the north end of the lake Windhaven still exists, and to the southwest Horcon's marsh. 'Tho greatly reduced in size, it is still a sanctuary to all creatures of the wind where, to this day, none may hunt them for sport.