

# A Tail in the MIST

*A Dragonish flash story*

Marya Miller

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# A Tail in the Mist

**L**eith sat on his rough-coated pony in the thick winter mist, filled with foreboding. He had not been afraid, joining his Mariner clansmen in battle against the reivers. He had not felt fear when cut off from his household and cornered by a massive Moraggim, whose head it had taken far too long to sever. He had not trembled when he joined his sons to face the black dragon: But now, in the middle of silence—healthy and in time of peace—fear took him.

Hairs rose on the back of his neck, but his pony stood calm. That should have been comforting.

It wasn't.

*What do you fear, Leith?*

He heard his mother ask this inside his head: His mother, who had been dead since he was small.

"I fear the mist."

*What is it in the mist that disturbs you, my son?*

"The silence."

*You have walked in silence many times. You have walked in the darkness of Crom Tarnach in silence, and not been afraid.*

He thought long before he answered. "Something comes."

The instant he spoke his thought, Leith suddenly knew what was coming. His throat dried. Knotting his reins quickly on the pony's neck, he slid his axe out of its sheath, not making a sound. He held it in both hands.

*Weapons will not work here.*

Leith wished that if his mother chose this time to visit his imagination or speak to his *ká* that she could say something more cheerful. He remembered what Briága, his wife, always said about names. "There is power in knowing the name of a thing. You may still fear after you have named the thing, but now you fear what you know: And then you can plan." Briága was Tarn, and knowing things beyond drink and song was, to her, as ordinary as breathing.

He remembered tasting his own blood at Herd Rock, watching the carrion birds wheeling not twenty boot-lengths above his head as the great beast approached him.

"I name you dragon," Leith said quietly. "I name you my Death."

Nothing happened, at first: But then blackness roiled out of the mist and the great beast that he had already battled too hard slithered towards him, twisting its hips from side to side, as if it was in pain. There was no mercy in the blazing eyes. Its teeth dripped acids that smoked and fumed.

Leith wondered why the pony wasn't panicking; didn't try to bolt and run for its life. It stood there tranquil as a sheep, paying no attention to the oily blackness slithering towards him.

"I do not trust this pony. I do not trust my senses. There was a battle. I was lying on the stone with carrion birds wheeling over me. I tasted my own blood. Am I dead?"

YOU ARE DEAD. It was the dragon's voice that answered. His mother was suddenly gone. LET ME EAT YOU.

Leith was not about to surrender to the black dragon. Briága was near. He could smell her Tarn scent of pine forests and snow, and hear the clash of her silver earrings; the ones he had made for her. He held on to her love as if it was a rope and began to climb.

The dragon burst in a million silver shards. They glittered behind his eyelids, which he could now feel. He made a huge effort and opened them, blinking sand and blood against the light...

...To see Briága's face, smiling through tears.

"She called you back," said their oldest son, Rhos, standing, blood-soaked and scowling, at his mother's shoulder. "She is a necromancer." The look he sent his mother was hard and cold.

Leith could not speak, but tears formed in the corner of his eyes. Briága smoothed his brow and kissed his face; many times. He wondered why she was laughing so joyfully at him, not disturbed by their bloodied son at all.

Life was seeping back into every limb. Leith struggled to sit up, aided by Briága.

"I have seen what is on the other side," Leith told his son. "It is only fear. You cannot hurt your mother now. She has walked there many times."

"Who are you talking to?" Briága asked, her smile fading.

It was the hardest thing he would ever have to tell her.

And their dead son faded, trapped in all his hate and hubris, caught by the final flick of a tail in the mist.





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# Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Katharina Gerlach for her all her expertise, help and encouragement.

*Marya Miller*  
March 2016

# More About Dragonish

Find out more about Leith and Briága in "A Sliver in Time", Book Two of the Dragonish Trilogy. (Estimated publication date of Book Two: Winter of 2016).

[Visit my website](#) for the latest news about Dragonish.

Thank you for reading this story. I look forward to traveling with you again.

*Marya Miller*

March 2016

# About the Author

Marya Miller was born and grew up in Scotland and now lives in the Canadian northlands. Horses, harps, history, books and dragons have made up a huge part of her life. A former magazine editor and newspaper general manager, she works as a busy (non-fiction) ghostwriter and writes fiction in her spare time.

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