

Odon may not have been a name that many recognized, especially in today's modern world. If one had heard the name, they might have thought it the name of a fictional character, or maybe even a department store.

They would laugh and call me crazy if I ever admitted what I knew.

Odon was not the name of any fictional being, nor the name of any chain. Odon was the name of a very real, enormously powerful dragon that had up and vanished roughly 700 years ago.

I had made it my life's work to track this dragon down, no matter how outlandish and unreal it seemed.

It had all started in college. On an archaeological dig with my professor, we both uncovered a massive ruin hidden in Ireland, Gaelic by the looks of it. The intricate carvings told of a massive, benevolent dragon, one that ruled the land alongside the Chief.

Yet, the dragon went missing one day, and no matter how hard the chief and his tribe looked for them, they never could find them.

A fascinating story, but one that both me and my professor quickly wrote down to myth.

At least, until we found the throne room.

An absolute cavern of a room, accented by massive stone pillars carved with more Gaelic, and even Norse runes. The throne itself was clearly the centerpiece, a spiraling monolith of multicolored stone and glowing gems, all cracked and crumbled from time's unrelenting grip. Yet, not even this archaeological masterpiece could distract from the massive skeleton strung across the ceiling.

It was clearly not any creature previously found by science. Some of the bones had fallen to the floor after centuries of neglect, yet-

Yet they were still intact, perfectly preserved. Hard as diamond, even. And when my professor took one and knocked it against a pillar, it was the pillar that came away cracked instead of the pearly white bone.

And the skeletal structure itself... The closest thing it resembled was a dinosaur, which was biologically impossible.

Dinosaurs weren't around in the Middle Ages... Nor did any dinosaur discovered sport six limbs; four arms and two wings, spanning the entire top of the hall.

The only possible explanation was that this was, somehow, a dragon skeleton.

My professor refused to believe this. He collected several of the bones for research, as well as countless stone and gem samples and pictures.

Several years came and went, and I graduated from the college, but stayed to help my professor. Both me and my (ex)professor managed to date the stone samples back to the 1400's, and the gems were identified as the purest forms of the most vibrant gems; Sapphires that still gleamed after 700 years of neglect, rubies that reflected the light so acutely that they glowed, and diamonds that remained untouched since they were put into place over half a millennia ago.

But most strange were the bones. No metal machine could even put a scratch on them, no amount of drilling or even lasering could put even a dent in those bones. And, on a pure stroke of genius, when I struck the bone with the diamond you had collected (much to my professor's displeasure), it was the diamond that walked away chipped.

In the end, the only machine that could get any form of reading from the bones was an electron microscope. And what it picked up was most interesting.

The bone was so dense, so packed full of carbon, that it was, in essence, indestructible. Impervious to impact, oblivious to the passage of time, and completely unable to discern the strike of a hammer from the falling of a feather. No living creature... no known animal to roam this Earth had such a bone structure.

This led to an argument between me and my professor.

'It's a dragon! It must be!' I argued.

But my professor only struck me down, saying that dragons didn't exist.

And when word spread around the college that I genuinely believed that I had discovered a dragon, I instantly became a laughingstock overnight. Nobody even considered collaborating with me after that point, and people eventually got so uncomfortable around me that the Dean was forced to throw me out.

And so that brought me here, two years later, on the precipice of the (second) biggest discovery of my life. This cave... high up in the Himalayas, not drawn onto any map. It had remained secluded, untouched, for almost a millennium...

And I intended to break that tranquility.

The cave itself was the exact same as the one my professor and I found all those years ago, with identical Gaelic and Norse runes carved on every available surface. The stone murals here, however, told a different story:

That the dragon had been driven out, shunned by the Chief and his tribe, after the Chief decided that it would be more beneficial to hunt the dragons instead of harboring them.

However, this hall was blocked by a giant iron door. No visible keyhole, not even a seam. Just carved stone, cracked and worn from centuries of disuse.

Yet, when I traced my hand along one of the runes, the door shivered. Alarmed, I took a step back, watching in disbelief as the door silently slid down into the floor, no longer restricting access.

The next room, what should have been the throne room, was even more massive than the one at the dig site all those years ago. No massive throne dominated the far end of the room, either. In fact, the only thing that was even remotely like the old dig site was the runes etched into the walls around me, for even the stone here was not stone, but white marble.

And yet, that wasn't even the most stunning thing about this place. For, lying right in front of me, lay proof that the last few years hadn't been in vain.

A dragon.

A dragon with ebony black scales, dotted with flecks of silver, shining as bright as a shard of obsidian under moonlight, or perhaps a sliver of the night sky, bound into flesh before me.

His massive wings must have spanned the entire room, had he- I just knew from the aura that this dragon was a male- chosen to do so. But for now, he seemed comfortable keeping them folded up, and close to his sides.

He raised his head as the door opened, cautiously eyeing me as I slowly stepped closer, closer, closer.

"So... a human who is finally worthy approaches..."

His voice... It was as if an ancient oak tree had come to life and spoken. A rich baritone, marred by its creakiness and scratchiness that only could have come with old age. He was over 700 years old, after all.

"Do you know why you have been called to this place, human?"

I shook my head in utter shock and disbelief. I just couldn't believe that after all this time... after all that ridicule... it was actually true.

He chuckled. "For centuries, I have locked myself away in here, away from the folly and foolishness of you humans. For centuries, I lay here, silently waiting and watching the progression, and eventual degradation of your kind.

But, I knew, that all those years ago when you discovered the resting place of Thoron, that you were the one. Your aura shone with an undeniably pure essence. One that I knew would suit well."

The old dig site... The energy there must have been... connected somehow. Connected to this place... perhaps through the runes?

"You can clearly see it, human. I am dying. I have been ever since I flew to this place, seeking it as sanctuary.

So, I beg of you, human. You are truly my last hope. I wish to carry this dying torch to you, so that you may keep me alive."

My head spun. So much new information was coming at me so fast- how could I even respond?

As I turned this sudden new development around in my head, the dragon before me raised his head. Even laying down, this creature towered above me.

"I know this comes as a bit of a shock. After all, I watched as you were mocked and ridiculed for your valiant pursuit, watched as you were shunned and forced out. You could leave that all behind-

"No."

I finally found the strength to speak.

"I don't intend to leave my life behind. I came here for undeniable proof that my search wasn't a complete waste, maybe something I could bring back to show that I wasn't crazy. But I never thought, not for one second, about leaving my friends, my family... my life behind."

The dragon chuckled. "Humble, as well. Most would have jumped at the offer to leave their human lives, their very humanity, behind, especially after what you've gone through. Very well, human. You have passed my trials. I find you worthy."

As he spoke these last few words, every single brazier in the giant hall blazed to life, flickering with a ghostly blue flame in each one. The dragon himself seemed to breathe a sigh of relief, before a flash of bright blue light forced me to shut my eyes.

A few seconds passed, accompanied by whooshes and the howling of wind, before both sound and light subsided. I warily cracked open my eyes, only to open them wide in shock at the giant blue and black orb hanging in front of me.

"I gift my soul to you, human. Use it well. Go forth with my blessing and keep my torch alive!"

The orb grew closer, closer, closer. I should have felt afraid, but...

All I felt was a strange calm.

As soon as the orb touched my chest, a brilliant pain flared where it touched me. I grunted, but I had to endure. The pain grew exponentially as the orb continued its journey into my chest, into me, and the last thing I remember was his voice...

His voice, saying-

"You have done well, human. I am honored to have you as a willing host."

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I jolted awake.

Panicked breaths, trying to calm myself. I was at home. At home. The nightmare hadn't been real, it was all in my head...

I flopped back into my pillow, unable to go to sleep now that the light of day was streaming through my curtains.

And so, I had no choice but to get up.

As I groaned and stretched, I felt a few vertebrae in my neck and back give a satisfying pop, and a little burst of energy to go alongside it. Even a few in my tail popped, which I didn't know was possible.

I quickly threw on a spare outfit from my closet and headed into the kitchen to fix up some breakfast.

Eggs, bacon, and a refreshing glass of milk.

A little puff of flame was all the stove needed, and the burner clicked right to life, the light blue flame providing quick and even heat. Within five minutes, my meal was done. I even saved the bacon grease and drank it hot, since heat wasn't a problem.

And soon, I was getting ready for the day. For, I had a meeting with the Dean of the college later that morning.

I took a look at myself in the mirror as I was brushing my teeth. Ebony black scales, flecked with silver. Brilliant blue eyes, complimented by marbled obsidian horns on either side of my draconic head.

Odon's form truly suited me well, if I did say so myself.

I recalled my nightmare that had woken me up early. It was always the same, the last few minutes of my humanity on repeat, always ending at the exact moment that I blacked out. I have no idea why Odon found those moments so horrifying, but that must have been what scared him the most: The last vestiges of my mind winking out, unknown if it was for good.

But I had, in fact, woken up. Woken up in the form I had now, with Odon's voice in the back of my head, guiding me.

I found that... I had fused with Odon, in a way. I could take either mine or Odon's form, or a mixture of the two, which I sported now. I could relive Odon's memories, and he could relive mine.

That was how I learned his name: through looking back at his memories of Thoron, and their interactions. Through him, I could comprehend the Gaelic and Norse languages and runes, so understanding Thoron was no challenge.

In fact, it was through reliving his memories that I learned what happened to him. Thoron had, in fact, betrayed Odon, driven him out, and attempted to hunt him.

No wonder Odon had such a mistrust of humans.

30 minutes left until the meeting. I opted to take my car, since arriving in dragon form would probably spark panic on campus.

Arriving on campus, I parked, and made my way to the Dean's office.

The Dean himself was the exact same as I remembered him; a shorter, rather pudgy old man who always wore a monocle on his right eye, and fancied older-style dress clothes.

"Ah, yes, Richard! Come in, come in."

He waved me inside, eager to not be seen with me out in the hallway.

"It really has been a while, eh? I hope you don't harbor any- ah, hard feelings after you left."

"After you forced me out, you mean."

My voice was calm, with just a hint of Odon's steeliness behind it. The Dean picked up on this, though.

"Ah... heh, I can assure you, I would have loved to keep you here, especially given your- unique talents. That ... is what you requested this meeting for, isn't it?"

"Indeed, it is. I thought that these last couple of years may have brought... new light forth. And it has, Mr. Proctor. It certainly has."

As I spoke, I shook off my coat, and hung it on the rack along with my hat. The Dean looked uncomfortable at this but didn't say anything in protest.

"Yes- ah, you did say that you had recovered new proof in this... admittedly farfetched life plan of yours. We'd gladly take a look at it."

Turning as if to leave, I grabbed my coat. The Dean looked rather surprised, and albeit a little suspicious, at this. But I knew what I was doing.

"Oh, trust me, Mr. Proctor. You'll want to take a look at this."

And, I switched the coat as if to put it on.

But instead, by the time that I was visible again, I had shifted into the half-Odon form. The Dean took a shocked step back when he saw this.

"By God..."

That reaction was all I needed to hear. I could feel the vibrations of him trembling, even from here.

"You see, Mr. Proctor? You, of all people, were the quickest to write me off as a crackpot. Yet, it only took me two years after you ungraciously threw me out to find Odon, and truly I thank you for that. Odon and I- you could almost say we were destined to be."

I smiled at the visible fear on this man's face. I didn't intend to hurt him, and if he was scared by me then so be it. I put on the coat, actually intending to leave. But, before I put my hat on, I stopped and glanced back at the Dean.

"Oh, and one more thing, Mr. Proctor. Next time you shun someone simply because they believe in something 'outlandish' or 'unfeasible', remember this: If I can find a dragon in a world ruled by science, then anything is possible."

And with that, I put my hat on, and whisked away to the wonders of the day before me.