

The Stone-Bound Slayer

The Story of Barbos,

Barbos was born beneath the island kingdom of Minos, in a place where sunlight never reached and prayers went unanswered.

His father was King Asterion, a ruler so consumed by pride that he believed his palace rivaled Olympus itself. Gold flooded the streets. Wine flowed like rivers. The people praised themselves as favored above all others, and the king encouraged it. Temples to the gods were neglected while statues of the royal family towered over the city instead. Human beings. One successful harvest and suddenly they think lightning should ask permission before striking them.

The gods watched in silence for years.

Then came the curse.

The queen, Elyra, began waking each night with a hunger no mortal should possess. Not for meat. Not for blood. Human flesh. At first the king hid it in secret. Prisoners vanished. Beggars disappeared from alleys. Deep beneath the palace, a labyrinth of black stone was carved into the earth where unwanted people were fed to the queen so the kingdom would never know.

But the curse did not stop there.

Months later, Elyra became pregnant.

The child was born during a thunderstorm so violent the sea itself climbed the cliffs of Minos. Midwives fled screaming before dawn. Some claimed the infant had horns already protruding from his skull. Others swore its eyes were completely black.

The king ordered every witness executed.

The child was named Barbos.

As he grew, so did the horror surrounding him. By the age of five he was larger than grown men. By ten he could snap iron chains with his bare hands. His horns curved like jagged

spears and his body became something between man and beast. The kingdom whispered the word monster, but only where the king could not hear.

Asterion did not see a son.

He saw a weapon.

Barbos was raised in the labyrinth beneath the palace among bones, darkness, and starving prisoners thrown into the maze for his “training.” Soldiers were sent against him in groups. Gladiators were promised freedom if they could survive him. None did.

At first Barbos hated it.

He hated the chains around his neck. The screams. The endless blood. The feeling that every living thing looked at him with fear before he even spoke.

But hatred fades.

Pain becomes normal.

And eventually, violence became the only language the world ever used with him.

So Barbos learned to answer in kind.

Years passed. Kingdoms rose and fell above him while the labyrinth became a graveyard beneath the earth. Then came the war of the Ash Coast. A neighboring empire invaded Minos, believing the aging king weak.

Asterion smiled.

For the first time in decades, the labyrinth doors were opened.

Barbos emerged from the darkness fully grown.

Nine feet tall.

Broad as a siege gate.

Wearing chains thicker than ship anchors around his arms.

The invading army lasted three days.

Men were torn apart like cloth. Horses split in half. Entire shield walls collapsed when Barbos charged them. Survivors claimed he walked through fire without slowing and laughed while arrows broke against his skin.

From that day forward he became known as The Stone-Bound Slayer.

Kings no longer feared armies.

They feared the moment Barbos appeared on the battlefield.

For years he was traded between rulers like a living catastrophe. Empires used him to crush rebellions. Warlords unleashed him against rival nations. Entire cities surrendered at the rumor of his arrival.

But something unexpected happened over time.

Barbos stopped caring about victory.

Wars blurred together. The screams became repetitive. Strong men died too quickly. Legendary warriors crumbled beneath his hands like brittle statues pretending to be heroes.

He was not angry at the gods.

Not angry at his father.

Not angry about the chains, the darkness, or the blood forced onto his hands as a child.

Barbos was angry because the world was weak.

Every battle disappointed him.

Every “great champion” collapsed too easily.

Every king hid behind armies instead of standing beside them.

For decades he searched for someone worthy of standing in front of him without fear.

Someone who would not break.

Then he met Xanotos.

Not on a throne.

Not leading an army.

Not begging for mercy.

Just one man standing in ash and fire with a sword in his hand and death staring him in the face.

And for the first time in Barbos's entire life...

He smiled.