

# Tales of Eon: IERLYN AND THE CANYON OF THORNS

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(Free Sample)

There are many stories that have come out of the Canyon of Thorns, and many of them seldom inspire hope or courage, this story however is a very notable exception. From out of those dark and twisted depths of those viney, thorn-filled caverns packed to the brim with beasts most foul, you never would have guessed that a profit, quite a small profit at that, a little girl just under ten years of age, would have been able to navigate miles upon miles of rock and beasts and emerge on the other side not just a survivor, but a champion. A small champion girl that would go on to define the ways and culture of the people to the Center North-West of Eon.

In order to tell this story properly we must not look at the Canyon of Thorns for what it became, rather we must beckon back to what it was, although you would have to go back quite a ways before you could find anything substantive of the Canyon before it became the desolate labyrinth of pain and misery. Indeed the story of the Canyon of Thorns goes back almost as far as a story can be told, having its beginnings in the First Era, it was a span of time that produced very little in terms of global prosperity but was the era credited with the birth of recorded history and you would be hard pressed to find a book, scroll, or even a sheet of parchment that talks of the First Era and doesn't mention the story of Ierlyn and the Canyon of Thorns. For it was truly a gripping tale, one of strife, struggle, and eventual triumph of Ierlyn, the survivor of the Canyon and the matriarch of her people.

## PART ONE: THE CANYON

It was year 37 in the Wandering Era, the first Era ever recorded. The sun shone brightly and would grace all those who inhabited the canyon. Whether they live on the ridges high above the valley and tunnels, or through the cracks and crevasses of the canyon below, you would find that both areas of the canyon had been colonized by the tribes and wandering bands who had braved the journey, with tents and even a stone house or two peppering the lands high and low. Now upon first glance the canyon would appear not so special, in fact, one might be a tad overwhelmed by the canyon's size and terrain, for it was a truly ginormous swath of land, as deep a canyon as you could imagine with tunnels and valleys so large you could have housed a kingdom or two in the gaps between the stone walls of the valley. The sun cast upon the land would be eminent through the bright orange walls of the canyon which would only emphasize

the deep chasm below, some would even house a river or even a small oasis that gave refuge to camels and lizards to commune.

But though it was a vast canyon, it was not a barren one. You would see trees growing always near the bottom of the valleys for the top bore no fertile soil, in fact due to the tunnels below there would be a most curious phenomenon where trees would grow all over the tunnels and caverns created by the canyon, some of the trees would even grow upside down on the tunnel like a stalactite drooping from the ceiling. These trees were seen as a natural marvel for the canyon folk, and nowhere else in all the world would a phenomenon like this be repeated. And so many people would travel from all over the canyon to tend and live next to the trees, for it would become a feat not just a natural wonder, but spiritual as well, for the trees were held as sacred in the ways of the people and even spoken of in the dreams of its preachers by the great leader Ierion, a great religious figure who we will know in due time. Though the trees were a welcome sight to all who lived near them, this would create a very odd situation for the tribes living in the tunnels of the canyon, for if they chose to make lodgings under these great trees there was always the possibility of the trees becoming so heavy that they would be, though it was very rare, de-rooted and fall down straight to the bottom. You could only imagine the shock of some of the tribals who would be on their merry way, only to have their stride broken by a falling red wood. It is also why living in an open valley in the canyon was seen as preferable to a tunnel, for the villages in the center of the valley would be spared from any falling trees. It was such a noticeable fad among the people of canyon that it inspired many sayings and phrases such as “When there’s whistling in the Canyon, best to have quick feet” or “When you live in a tree top tunnel you can be one of two things, flat or warm” this is because the trees that fell would make excellent fire wood or building materials for houses, this saying is also repeated even today as a way of warning for people who seek dangerous opportunity.

There was one village in the canyon, however, that was the largest of all the other tribes, a tribe located almost in the direct center of the canyon, the town of Nox. The town of Nox was larger and more densely populated because it served as the hub of trade for the rest of the canyon dwellers. It was a large concave area with many tents and houses lining the sides, with towns and shops sprouting all around, bazaars and street vendors peddling their spices and fresh vegetables that were grown a few miles to the east where the most fertile of canyon grounds was to be found. But the most famous of all the people of Nox were the couriers, some of the most legendary wall climbers in all of Eon. They would scale the great walls of the canyons, surveying the lands below for traders and caravans to make a safe journey there and back. Some couriers would even take whole loads of goods on their backs and navigate the great walls and valleys on foot without missing a beat, to them climbing a wall of rock with a heavy load on one’s back was no different than a cat pouncing across the house carpet.

The couriers were indeed the most respected of all professions in the canyon, and that was due in part to their leader, Brand. Brand was a massive burly man, standing almost seven feet tall and there was almost no part of his body that wasn’t graced with bushy hair. His skin was sun-kissed and shared a hue not unlike the canyon walls around him, he wore a blue and white tunic that was tidier and more well-kept thanks to the maids and manservants at his

disposal, and even though he was on the cusp of 97 years of age, he had not lost a single ounce of vigor since he began rock climbing at the age of 7.

Brand and his wife, Vina, shared a modest-sized stone house in the middle of Nox, there they raised their 8 children, seven boys, and one girl. The sons of Brand were all couriers, all except for one, who would each play a role in the business his father conducted. In order from oldest to youngest, here is the roster of children of Brand and Vina.

The oldest was Ensel: a strapping lad of 57 whose job it was to head up the couriers who bore goods on their backs and make sure no merchandise was destroyed along the way.

The next was Orly: a son of 53 who was barred from courier service due to his brittle bones and sickly stature, however, he was one of the most useful of Brand's boys, serving as a dispatcher of couriers, plotting trade routes, and organizing courier bands to take on the deliveries all over the canyon.

Next was Jen, who was 47 years old when he passed away, he was another trader who moved goods on his back but there was a heavy rain on his trade route, and Jen was more of a reckless boy. Soon after, his hand slipped after trying to grab the peak of the valley, he fell and broke his shoulder and left leg on the way down and his body was swept away by a rushing tide into a great river. Ensel found the body three days later near the edge of the canyon, his body and clothes bloated from the tide that had taken him, he was buried that day at the canyon's edge.

The next son of Vina was Vanee, A adventurous boy of 44 who left the courier business behind him along with the canyon to explore new tribes and lands, this was frowned upon heavily by Brand and the canyon folk alike, but it cannot be stressed enough that this was the "Wandering Era" and Vanee's interests were mirrored by all other distant tribes that would go on to form the great kingdoms in the realms of Eon. His eagle-eyed vision served him well along with his family's talent for climbing, for there was nary a danger he could not detect. He joined roaming bands of adventures later on to learn sword fighting along with tracking and hunting, Vanee's presence in the Wandering Era was one of the most prominent of the Canyon folk who dared to leave the canyon, along with two other of Brand's children who would eventually join him.

Then came Mov, a lad of 39 who was the second of Brand and Vina's boys to join Vanee in his mission. He was a tall and slender man, even outgrowing his father standing at seven and a half feet, but he had no hair anywhere except his face and was incredibly resourceful to Vanee's quest. He like the other boys was a courier and also an affluent studier of plants and their uses, this made him an integral member for Vanee, as Mov could craft out of plants healing balms, remedies, and even food seasoning from the plants he studied and gathered.

The sixth of Brand's boys was Vin, a far bit younger than the rest being only 27. Even though he was born with a rotund figure, Vin was an excellent climber like the rest, and like Vanee, he had sharp eyes and an even sharper sense of navigation, reading the stars above to

accurately map his travels. Vin was the star of the navigation team of couriers, responsible for discovering over half the plotted trade routes managed by Orly.

The next boy of Vina and Brand was the youngest of the lot, Baid. At only 19 years old, normally seen as a child compared to the long-life spans of the other men of Eon, Baid was the one who would help load and unload the hauls of the traders coming in and out of Nox. A rather mischievous devil, Baid would spend his time when he wasn't working planning pranks and gags on villagers and passersby. He was seldom punished by his father or anyone else, not for lack of trying mind you, but because Baid was an astounding digger, his hands were so fast at moving soil, earth, and gravel that you could swear the palms were concave like shovels. Being able to escape most punishment by just using his talent for tunneling, he was slick and dismissive to all who may protest his impish ways. However, deep down Brand knew the boy at heart was kind, for when there was a cave-in, or a man trapped under some rubble, Baid was all too quick to offer his crafty hands to help dig them out.

Last and certainly not least of Brand's children was the youngest of all of them, little Ierlyn, a pure-hearted girl at only six years of age. Ierlyn was a tiny lass, even amongst other girls, with a face that was said to inspire pure joy from her wide cheeks, bountiful blue eyes, and the cutest smile of tinny, uneven teeth. She was absolutely engulfed by her father's presence, why she could have sunk into the palm of Brand's hand if he wasn't careful, and Ierlyn's aura of hope and aloofness was felt by all, so much so that whenever passing adventures were ready to move past Nox and beyond the canyon, one of their biggest regrets was not being able to see her smiling face again. Since this pup of Nox was far too young for any trade or profession in the canyon, Ierlyn spent most of her days shadowing her father and older brothers, playing outside in the fields with Baid in the borders of Nox, and every day before bed she would sit and dream of all the wonderful adventures awaiting her in the future. Little did Ierlyn know that those adventures were not so far off as she imagined, and they would be an order of magnitude less pleasant, for as little Ierlyn fell asleep one night she would have no idea of the plague of beasts that would soon befall her.

On the afternoon of Ierlyn's sixth birthday, the head family of Nox was going about their affairs the same as any other, Orly managing the routs, Ensel heading up the courier platoons, and of course, the second youngest of the lot Baid was wondering about with Ierlyn, showing her how to use her hands as he did and how to part the ground beneath them to dig proper holes and tunnels. Ierlyn was something of a natural at it, she could conjure a tunnel or hole almost as fast as her older brother, needless to say, Baid was indeed proud of her tunneling if not for the fact that he now had a digging buddy, but all this messing around in the dirt oddly seemed to put a smile on her face, and the two had become thick as thieves. From his odd gags to his aloof stature, Ierlyn had always been drawn to Baid, more so than her other siblings and the two could not have been happier when they played together, but when they were digging on the day in question both of them noticed that something was different, that the canyon was not quite the same as it once was before.

On that particular day, Ierlyn and Baid both noticed a very queer flower sprouting out of the canyon. This was very peculiar not just because the soil near the town of Nox was all but

infertile but the shape and color of the flower were odd as well; it sprouted with about 7 or 8 petals with a very catching design of purple and black, and there was many of them, for there seemed to be a couple of dozen sprouting in a patch that couldn't be more than three feet wide with the dark green stems and vines twisting and coiling beneath the petals in huge bunches. It took them both a moment to notice but looking around the canyon walls it seemed that there could be smaller bunches of the same flower sprouting all over them, they were smaller of course, and not nearly as visible as the bush before them, but once they trained their eyes to it, there was no denying that the flower was indeed spreading all over.

Curiosity had struck Baid as he approached the patch of flowers before him, took in a hand full of them, and then took a bite, it had a pleasant enough feel in his mouth, but it tasted awful, not unlike having a mouth full of chalk and rotten lettuce, earthy and not the least bit pleasing to the taste. It took Baid a moment but as he looked at the mess of vines in his hand he noticed that he had started to bleed, he dropped the patch of plants before him in shock, and it took him a moment to realize that the vines were peppered with thorns that left small, protruding cuts all over the palm and fingers of his hand. This came as indeed a shock to Baid for he held roses and certain breeds of cacti before, and his hands were none the worse for wear, for they were callus and hardened after years of digging, and for a flower of all things to cause this kind of damage to him was indeed perplexing. Ierlyn on the other hand could not help but fall in love with the flower and its deep purple hue, she thought it would make a great dye for a small tunic if ever she could convince her father. Ierlyn asked her brother if he could carry a small patch back with them, though Baid was weary to touch the queer bush again from the damage it did to his hand, he simply could not deny such a warm smile that his sister aimed his way. So he grit his teeth and picked up the thorny patch and they made their way back home to the house of Brand.

Many days passed after that initial observation out on the borders of Nox, and in that time the patches of the strange flower only grew bigger and thicker. What would start off as a sprouting or two popping out of the cracks would become a partial field of violet the day next, and it grew beyond even the area of Nox and started to sprout all over the canyon. It would start in the village of Dol which was located near the south border of the canyon and would spread its thorny vines even to the far north in the border town of Nasu. Even the sure and well-traveled couriers of the canyon could not help but be inconvenienced by the patches for they sprouted not only outward, but upward onto the tops of the canyon as well. In the two months that passed since that discovery by Ierlyn and her brother, the strange flower went from being an odd occurrence to an undeniable growth that had embedded itself deep into the rocks and crevasse of the canyon.

In the days that had passed, Ierlyn would have her wish of a small purple tunic granted by her father, the flowers around them had become so numerous that it was all too possible to render a dye from them, and shortly enough Brand had his servants and seamstress make a beautiful purple tunic for his little girl; it was a most stunning hue of purple, like the rim of the sunset before twilight, and it had shimmering vines of silver that wrapped and coiled around the face of the tunic with sturdy valley like silver patterns near the bottom, representing the canyon from

which they all dwelled, and in the center of the tunic was a mighty silver star with three points, and the points around were surrounded by eight smaller stars to represent the family of Brand. Though seeing Ierlyn so happy did indeed lighten his spirits, it was cold comfort given the news he had received earlier.



*Figure 1 Ierlyn, Princess of the Canyon*

Thank you so much for reading this far! If you would like to read the full version please go and visit TalesofEon.com or visit or Patreon or SubscribStar to gain full access to all the epics short stories of Eon!

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