

The Tale of the Scottock's Grail.

Sometimes things are forgotten that should not be. Things are removed, or lost, or taken, stolen, buried, simply overlooked and even destroyed. This is the tale of a hero. Not a living, breathing hero but a hero nonetheless. It has a part in an epic tale; this tale has been told and read countless times. Some say its part in that tale was pivotal in the final ending of that chapter of history, others say that without it history would have been re-written, and the world would have become a much different place. Then there are those who think it is insignificant and the stories have been blown up out of all proportion. Still others refuse to believe in its existence and that all the stories around it are fairy tales, told to children at night as a fright before bedtime. And then there are those who know.

What is this thing that provokes these differing opinions? Well, it is simple tarnished pewter mug. The outside is nothing to write home about, it is grey and plain. A single groove is engraved just below the rim, and two grooves are engraved just above the base. It flares outwards from the rim such that the base has a diameter approximately one inch larger than the rim making it stable if accidentally nudged by its user, or anyone else for that matter. The handle is crudely fashioned but does the job of a handle extremely well. It stands around ten inches tall and holds about a flagon of ale or wine (about 2 pints). The base is equally plain but again does a fantastic job of sitting on a table and stopping the tankard from falling over and spilling the contents it is perfectly designed to hold. On the rim just above the handle there is evidence of a hinge which would once have secured a lid that is now long lost.

All in all, an unremarkable, functional object. It is only when one examines the interior that one sees the difference.

The inside is not the dull grey it should be but is silver in colour. But it is a silver that shines far brighter than any Earth found silver. A silver so bright that the after image lingers long in the eyes of those who even glimpse it, a silver so bright that it is painful to look at for any length of time but for the observer who bears the pain it is incredibly difficult to avert one's gaze from such a beautiful colour.

Those that are able to look for long enough will begin to see strange markings covering the bottom and sides of the inside of this far from ordinary tankard. Many tiny circles appear etched into the surface of the pewter.

One of the circles catches the light, and then another. They lie scattered across the brilliant silver lining, each no bigger than a pinprick. At first they seem like scratches—or perhaps some craftsman's attempt at ornament. But look long enough, and a pattern begins to emerge: a ring of tiny circles, then another, and another, trailing down the sides of the mug as if something once frothed up inside it and left its mark behind.

That is what it did.

The tankard once held a flagon of Scrottock's Old Dirigible, a beer so strong and potent that its name alone could make a cautious drinker reconsider. The Acolyte, however, was not cautious. During his legendary drinking contest with the Venerable Mead, he drank from this very mug.

The circles are the surviving trace of that ale's froth.

They say the first bubbles appeared before the Acolyte had finished pouring. They say the foam climbed the silver walls in a pale, seething crown, though the drink had settled and the tankard stood perfectly still. Some claim the marks were made in a single night; others insist they gathered over the course of the contest, one circle for every time the beer rose against the rim and fell back again.

The Venerable Mead watched the tankard closely. He had seen fine vessels, enchanted vessels, vessels blessed by kings and cursed by saints. Yet he had never seen a drink leave its froth behind.

The Acolyte drank the first flagon. Then another. Scrottock's Old Dirigible burned its way through him, and still he drank. The Venerable Mead kept pace, or seemed to. The witnesses disagreed about the number of rounds, the songs that were sung, and whether the hall's rafters groaned from the noise or from something else. But they agreed on this: when the final flagon was raised, the Acolyte lifted the pewter tankard, and every tiny circle inside it shone like a star.

Then he drank.

What followed has been argued over ever since. Some say the Acolyte won, and that the Venerable Mead's defeat ended the chapter of history that had begun with their wager. Others say the contest was only a diversion, and that the true turning point came when the Acolyte set the empty tankard upon the table. A few insist the Old Dirigible was potent enough to alter the course of events all by itself.

And there are those who say none of it happened. That the Acolyte never faced the Venerable Mead, that no such beer was brewed, and that a plain old mug cannot keep the memory of a drink.

But the circles remain.

The lid is gone. The pewter is tarnished. The outside has no glory to it at all. Yet within, the silver still shines—and if you look closely, you can see the froth of Scrottock's Old Dirigible, caught forever in the moment before the Acolyte drank it down.