

# **The Tragedy of Senibor**

by Jared Murphy

## **Prologue**

In the ages past, when gods and mortals walked the same earth and summer never ended, many great and terrible things came to pass. It was in this age of legend that a young man named Senibor began a journey that would change the world forever. This is the story of how a god who grew to be hated was born from one of humanity's truest heroes. This is the tragedy of Senibor.

## **Part One:**

### **The Meeting**

It was in the age of legends that Senibor was born. He was a mortal, born of a simple family of farmers. What made Senibor unique was not whom he was related to, but rather what he wanted to make of himself. He left his family when he was young to find what he was destined for in life. He traveled abroad, helping all he met along the way, until, by chance, he found Samri's garden.

It was a massive garden, filled with countless flowers, trees, and animals. Color was everywhere. At its center sat the beautiful Samri—patron of love and the arts and goddess of springtime, nature's beauty, and youth. She lay against a huge, white tree of golden blossoms and sweet fragrance.

Senibor walked through the garden in awe until he reached the place where Samri rested against the tree. Her beauty astonished him, for when she was on earth she appeared as a beautiful woman of fair skin and hair like sunlight. In a trance, he said simply, "Surely this is a dream, for such a beautiful thing cannot be real."

Samri opened her eyes and smiled to hear his words. "How chivalrous of you," she said with a laugh as radiant as sunlight, "to say such kind words."

Senibor fell at her feet in awe. “Truly, you are the most beautiful maiden in all the world. I can only image that Samri herself would be envious of your face!”

Samri giggled again, her voice like a brook’s flowing, and replied, “Why, she cannot be jealous of herself!”

Senibor’s expression melted into one of shock, before he began to smile even wider. “I knew that such a face was that of the divine, for now I wish only to win your heart.”

Samri’s happiness disappeared, for while she saw that he spoke true and his love was pure, she knew that as a mortal, he could not join her. “Alas,” she sighed, “it is not meant to be. I can see that you mean what you say, but I am a god, and you are doomed to die.”

“Then I shall become a god, if only to be with you!”

Even though Samri knew that to tell of it was forbidden, she was so overcome by the purity of his heart that she told Senibor of a mystical spring, a pool of pure magic that bubbled from the earth and granted immortality and godhood to any who bathed in it. She also told him its location and that the gods had put many monsters, puzzles, and challenges in the way of anyone who wanted to access the magic of the pool. Senibor, entranced by Samri’s beauty and kindness, knew he had to find this mystical spring and achieve his newfound purpose in life. Samri gave him a crystal that contained pure sunlight to help him on his journey and a perfect golden blossom from her tree to remind him of her. And so he set out, determined to succeed.

## **Part Two:**

### **The Blighted Village**

So it was that Senibor began his journey to be with the one he loved. He carried a sword and dagger to defend himself, the map Samri had drawn to guide him to the spring, the crystal of sunlight, the perfect golden blossom, and nothing more. He walked until night began to fall, and it

happened that he spotted off in the distance a large village, nestled in a valley with craggy cliffs on one side. It was too far to reach before dark, so he slept on a nearby hill.

In the morning, Senibor entered the valley. What, in the dusk, seemed to be fertile land, was a marshy quagmire with sickening clouds of greenish fog hanging in the air like a choking veil. When he reached the village, what he found was a meeting of the townsfolk, who turned with shock at seeing such a strange young man in their village. Seeing the sorrow in the faces of the people, he asked, "What has happened?"

The village elder looked at him with a face streaked with trails of old tears through dust. "Who are you?"

"I am merely a man on a journey. I came here to find a place to rest for a time."

The old man's voice was weak. "We have no food to give you. All of our livestock is gone, and our crops have withered and died. It is the Blight Dragon's doing."

Senibor, wishing to help these people, inquired, "What is the Blight Dragon?"

"It is a horrid beast of pestilence, filth, and corruption. It lives atop that cliff there, and although it hates the light of day, it comes out at night to hunt. That is how you were able to enter. Otherwise, it eats all those who try to come or go."

"Why would it do such a thing?"

"For a long time, it requested gallons of milk every week and a pig or sheep every month as a sacrifice. It threatened that if we didn't supply it with food, it would cause crops to fail and leave us with nothing. We had no choice but to obey it, for none of us were skilled enough to fight it head-on. In recent times, we ran out of animals to give it, but it had grown even more corpulent and insatiable, and began requesting a cow or calf every week. When we ran out of cows, the beast declared that it needed the sacrifice of a human. We refused, and now our crops have failed. We then finally agreed, but it has since demanded that such a sacrifice be delivered

monthly. Now, our priestess of Samri has volunteered to be devoured. If we refuse to give her up, we shall all starve, but if we let her die, we won't have Samri's priestess to bless our crops and give them life. No matter what, our village is doomed."

Senibor, despite fearing what would happen if he failed, knew he had to help. After all, to run away from these people would make him unworthy of godhood, not to mention unworthy of Samri's love. "I shall slay the beast," he declared.

The villagers were astonished. One cried, "How? It is massive!"

Senibor thought of the beast's hate of light and Samri's gem and smiled bravely. "I have a plan."

The villagers thanked him and told him to hurry. As he reached the fanged mouth of the dark cavern, he spotted the priestess of Samri tied to a stone inside the mouth of the cavern. Her eyes were closed in silent prayer. She looked all but nothing like Samri—her skin was dark, with hair all but black—and yet, she was no less fair, and possessed the same youthful, springtime beauty. She opened her eyes to see him. He walked over and began untying her.

"What are you doing?" She whispered, confused.

Senibor smiled. "I am here to slay the dragon. Even if I fail, I shall serve as the sacrifice. Run to the village and wait."

As Senibor spoke, a rumbling came from the cave. A shadow appeared in the cave behind them. Senibor turned around to see the Blight Dragon slowly lumbering towards them.

The Blight Dragon was a disgusting and terrifying creature. It was no dragon—for a dragon is a being of magnificent appearance. This was nothing but a monster. The Blight Dragon had no wings but rather looked like a monstrous blend of serpent and frog. Hideous to behold, it had massive, drooping jowls that hung beneath a mouth of many countless jagged, filthy teeth. Its bloated hide was covered in a mix of slimy, yellow boils and patches of dry, peeling, brown flesh.

Its huge head was covered in spines and its teeth dripped venom. It turned its small, ill-developed eyes on Senibor. Roaring, the beast approached and began to speak in a deep, rasping voice.

*“Who are you to disturb my meal? I am as old as the land itself. I fear no mere human, for you will not be the first to die fighting me.”*

Senibor drew his blade. “I fear no beast such as you. I am Senibor, Samri’s chosen. It is my fate to become a god. Now, I will give you one last chance: leave this place and its people, live off of what you hunt, and I shall let you live.”

The beast let out a hacking, dry laugh. *“Foolish child! How do you intend to slay me?”* The beast lurched closer, opening its gaping maw to reveal rows of jagged teeth and three monstrous tongues, each dripping slime.

Senibor raised the crystal Samri had given him. As he did, the light of the sun shone forth upon the day-shunning beast, searing its flesh and blinding it. The beast reeled, howling in agony. It stumbled away. Senibor spoke again. “Do you still refuse to leave?”

The beast turned towards the voice. *“I will kill you!”* It lunged at Senibor, screaming vengefully.

Senibor leapt aside, for the beast was slow and couldn’t see him. The Blight Dragon’s tongues, however, lashed out like whips and grabbed Senibor’s leg. Crying out with the pain from the corrosive slime, Senibor managed to use his sword to cut off the tongues, which released their holds. The creature howled again, and Senibor used that time to jump forward and plunge his sword into one of the monster’s beady, yellow eyes. The thing pulled back, howling, but Senibor leapt onto its head and stabbed it further still. The beast reared back, screamed again, and fell to the cavern floor. The dreadful Blight Dragon was dead.

Senibor returned to the cheering villagers with the priestess of Samri. The crops, free of pestilence, bloomed again. The noxious fog lifted, and the village was saved. The village leader gratefully asked how he and the villagers could repay Senibor.

Senibor replied that all he needed was food, a place to stay, and bandages for where the dragon's tongues had seared him. He gave the priestess of Samri the golden blossom Samri had given him and asked her to plant it in the field so that Samri herself could help the crops grow. The next morning, the villagers insisted that he take a reclaimed artifact the dragon had stolen from their village: an ornately carved, lightweight set of body and shoulder armor. They told him that the armor, when willed to, would become so light that it allowed the wearer to defy gravity and fly. Senibor, touched by the kindness of these people, thanked them before continuing his quest for godhood.

### **Part Three:**

#### **A Test of Strength**

It came to be that Senibor had caught the attention of the other gods. Upon discovering that Samri was in love with a mortal, the gods were divided. Some, like the sea goddess, hoped for Senibor to succeed, for he was pure of heart, clearly loved Samri, and seemed destined to be a god of heroism. Most, however, were angry with Samri for revealing their secret and wished to keep their exclusive status as gods. Or perhaps they had tried to win Samri's heart once but to no avail, causing them to resent, even hate Senibor. Most resentful of all was Samri's father, Dueron. Dueron was the king of the gods, the god of laws, justice, thunder, and the sky. Whilst Dueron was usually righteous and just, his daughter was the subject of great emotional weight for him. For countless years, he had protected his young daughter from corruption and had tried to arrange several relationships with other gods for her. She, however, had never wanted such sheltering and had outright refused all of her father's matches. Now, upon discovering that a lowly mortal sought

not only to become a god but also to marry his beloved daughter, Dueron grew enraged. He and the gods and goddesses that didn't want Senibor to succeed plotted to ensure Senibor's failure.

Days had passed since Senibor left the village. As he drew farther and farther away (and closer and closer to his goal), he began to notice a change. Days became shorter, nights became longer, and eventually there was no day at all. Unknown to Senibor, this was the work of the gods, an attempt to make him lose his way. Senibor, however, walked undisturbed using the light of the gem. He noticed that the plants slowly seemed to die out as he drew near, as did the animals. His supply of bread from the village was all but gone by the time he reached the place he knew the mystical spring to be.

It was a massive and brooding mountain, ringed by walls of black stone. A monstrous cavern was set into the mountain's face like a roaring mouth. Yet, even in the blackness, flames danced on the ramparts, and a light could be seen from deep within the cavern. It was there that the spring flowed. Only there could Senibor become immortal.

Senibor slowly began to make his way up the mountain. Step by step, he drew closer... until a monster burst from the cavern.

The beast was huge and dreadful to behold. It was akin to a massive arachnid with a shell as dark as midnight encasing the fire that burned beneath. It was armed with a scorpion's tail, an armored body, a lion's jaws, spider mandibles, locust wings, goat hooves, and two pairs of spike-covered arms. A serpent's tongue flicked in and out of its glowing maw as it turned its hideous gaze upon Senibor. Its mouth gaped even wider as it let out a hateful scream before taking flight and swooping towards Senibor.

Senibor, using the power of his armor to make himself light, leapt aside as the monster barreled at where he was just standing. Furious, the beast spun around and let loose a torrent of flame aimed directly at Senibor. Surprised by the attack, Senibor managed to leap aside moments

before the fire would have incinerated him. Senibor then, through the power of the armor, willed himself so light as to be able to fly, maneuvering himself so that when he released the power and became heavier, he came cascading down onto the beast's back, his sword at the ready. As soon as he landed, he thrust his blade into a gap in the plated armor of his adversary. Smoke immediately burst from the wound, accompanied by a crackling, hissing noise as when water is dumped on a fire that it cannot douse.

Screeching in agony, the beast knocked Senibor off its back and quickly began lashing at him with its clawed arms in an attempt to grab and crush him. Senibor, now without a sword, could only do his best to evade the swipes before he sprung back, trying to devise a plan. He was given no time to think, for the beast's fiery breath once again shot forth. Senibor, acting quickly, lunged aside, bouncing off a boulder to land behind the beast. Before Senibor could leap up to pull free his blade, the beast's scorpion tail swung out from behind it, knocking him off his feet. The beast spun around, reaching out again with its claws.

Senibor rolled to the side as the beast attempted to snare him in its claws. The monster then tried a different tactic, lashing down with its tail in order to impale Senibor. Senibor could barely catch his breath before he had to roll again and again to dodge the fiend's strikes. Senibor rolled back before taking flight again, this time heading to the cave.

The creature took flight, pursuing Senibor. Senibor, however, was already inside the cave, and had a plan. Floating upwards, he landed on a ledge high up near the ceiling. He removed his armor, slipping it instead around a monstrous stone stalactite. He then willed the stone spike to become as light as air, making it easy for him to reach out and break it from the ceiling. He then jumped out, grabbing hold of the stalactite. As the monster careened into the cave, it looked around in agitation.



“Hey!” Senibor bellowed his challenge. Hissing in triumph, the beast looked up at Senibor and took flight. As the beast came right under him, Senibor willed the armor to make the stone heavy again. The stone spike began to plummet...with the monster pinned by the sudden weight.

Senibor held on to the stalactite as the behemoth writhed beneath it, attempting to get out from under its weight. When it finally hit the ground, the point of the massive black rock impaled the beast. The fiend let out one last shriek before going silent. Its flames sputtered out; it was dead. Senibor had passed the first challenge.

#### **Part Four:**

#### **A Test of Cunning**

After seeing Senibor’s skill and cunning as he fought the guardian beast, the gods began to shift sides. Many now began to favor Senibor, thinking he must be truly worthy to have defeated such a monster. Some, however, remained spiteful. Dueron was foremost amongst them. No matter their position, however, they eagerly awaited to see how Senibor would fare with their next challenges.

Senibor put on the armor again and strode into the cave. Despite the burns, bruises, and gashes that covered his body, the plate mail’s magic allowed him to walk with little difficulty. He walked ever downwards, noting that he must be far below the mountain now. It was then that he reached the second challenge.

Senibor had entered a cavern lit by the glow of a wall of cinders. At one end sat a hooded figure against an ornately carved metal door. Raising the sitter raised its head, the hood it wore failed to fully cloak the dry scales and keen, sulfurous eyes of a serpent beneath the cowl. The thing lifted its arms, revealing hands like a crone’s, and fixed its cold eyes on Senibor.

*“Hello child,”* The hag rasped. *“Come, I’ve been waiting for you.”*

Senibor cautiously approached the thing.

*“Tell me, child, are you here to become a god?”*

Senibor, wary of the creature, replied, “I come here to be with my love, no more. I seek not godhood, but her love.”

The thing let out a hacking, coughing laugh. *“I see, then, that you are worthy of being allowed to begin my challenge. I ask you now:*

*What runs smoother than any rhyme,*

*Loves to fall,*

*But cannot climb?”*

Senibor considered the riddle before replying, “Water.”

The crone laughed again, its tongue flicking as it did so. *“Well done, child. Now:*

*Voiceless it cries,*

*Wingless it flutters,*

*Lifeless it dies,*

*Bodiless it shudders.”*

Senibor paused again before stating, “The wind.”

The creature, irritated, began another riddle.

*“What has roots as nobody sees,*

*Is taller than trees,*

*Up, up, it goes,*

*But yet never grows?”*

Senibor thought carefully: “A mountain.”

The being was now growing angry as it spoke its last riddle.

*“What cannot be seen, cannot be felt,*

*Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt;*

*Lies beyond the stars and beneath the hills;*

*Ends life and kills laughter?”<sup>1</sup>*

Senibor considered this longest of all before speaking quietly, “The dark.”

The crone sat in silence before standing up and stepping aside. “*Very well. You may pass.*”

So Senibor continued to the last challenge.

### **Part Five:**

#### **A Test of Will**

Senibor’s success caused those gods who still doubted him to waver in their belief.

Dueron, however, was confident that the final tests could best the mortal.

When Senibor finally reached the last challenge, he came to a door at the end of a tunnel. Above the gate, scrawled in the rock, were the words “Neither stop nor stray.” Senibor stared in confusion. *What could this mean?* Senibor wondered. *Don’t stop at this doorway? Don’t stay from the path?* Then, Senibor made a choice.

Wrenching open the ancient and massive door, Senibor was astonished to find himself in a room filled with marvelous treasures. Gold and gems sparkled everywhere he looked, with ancient artworks and glimmering coins stacked beyond Senibor’s height in places. He all but reached out and touched an artifact amongst the treasures before he remembered the writing above the door. He pulled his hand back, realizing that the room’s beauty was merely a trick. Senibor turned his back and walked to the other end of the hall, leaving the gold forever.

It was then that Senibor reached a second door. Upon pushing it open, Senibor was astounded: he found himself in a field, radiant and beautiful, with a twisting path leading to a set of stairs winding downward. As he stepped forward and glanced around, he saw a beautiful woman,

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<sup>1</sup> Riddles from: <http://ancienthomeofdragon.homestead.com/riddles.html>

more astonishing even than Samri. She was seductive in her loveliness, drawing Senibor to the point where he all but forgot who he was.

“Hello, Senibor. I’ve been waiting for you.”

Senibor stepped back, confused. “What?”

The woman smiled again. “I love you. I want you.”

Senibor shook his head. “My love is pledged to another.”

“Why, you don’t need her. I’m exactly what you want.”

It was then that Senibor knew this too was a trick, an attempt to make him forget what he wanted and never reach the spring.

Senibor pushed her away. “You are only a trick. I do not want you.”

“But you do!”

“No!”

Not stopping to look back, Senibor ran for the steps and quickly descended.

Finally, Senibor arrived at a room with a door even larger than the last. It ground against the earth as he slowly opened it.

He was assaulted by a wave of applause, cheers, and trumpets. Stepping in, he saw countless people arrayed around him and a huge throne at the end of the hall. All of the people cheered in exhilaration, laughing and calling his name. Senibor stopped briefly. A man bowed before him. “Hail Senibor! Hail he of greatness!”

Senibor smiled until he realized that if he stayed, he might well forget himself and never leave. As he narrowed his eyes, he spotted a door on the side of the great hall. Senibor noticed, however, that it was shrinking by the second, making it so that if he did not reach it in time, he would be trapped here forever. He began shoving aside the crowd that held him back. The people in the crowd began grabbing hold of him, trying to hold him back.

“Please Senibor, don’t go!”

“We need you!”

“Stay here!”

“We will never neglect you!”

“Never!”

“Please, Senibor!”

The voices were on all sides of Senibor as he pushed past, trying to get to the doorway before it closed. The crowd, however, grew thicker, with the people grabbing hold and making it near impossible to escape.

“You don’t need Samri!”

“You can be our god!”

“You can have anything you want!”

“Live forever!”

“Have any woman!”

“Have all the wealth you desire!”

“Live in utmost luxury!”

The countless voices all chimed in. Senibor fought them off with shoves and blows, watching in horror as the throng closed in and the door shrunk more and more. Using the power of his armor, he flew above them and dove down at the door. The horde became so aggressive that they began attacking him with claws, scratching his skin as he took flight and screaming at him as they tried to stop him. He did his best to force his way past them and narrowly reached the door, pulling it open. The great mass of bodies grabbed at him as he slammed the door shut, watching it disappear behind him.

All the screaming and clambering was gone- replaced by near silence. Senibor turned around to see the enchanted spring bubbling from the earth. It glowed with radiant power, and Senibor could feel the warmth emanating from it. Senibor, tired and weak, removed his garments and armor. Finally, he stepped in, allowing himself to be submerged.

### **Part Six:**

#### **The Coronation**

Senibor awoke on the stone floor of the Hall of the Gods with the sound of thunderous applause and trumpets all around him. Sitting up, he noticed that he was gowned in a white tunic and golden armor and his wounds were gone. As he got to his feet, Samri rushed over, embracing him. They kissed and the gods cheered even more. Now Dueron was perhaps the only god who still hated Senibor, and he despised him more than ever. Senibor knew not, but instead approached and bowed at Dueron's feet.

"Your majesty," Senibor said graciously.

Dueron's frown deepened, as he was still resentful of the mortal. "Come now. It is time for your coronation."

Samri smiled. "They're going to make you god of heroism, Senibor!"

Senibor smiled even wider. "You are all too gracious- I..."

Dueron raised the ancient staff entrusted to the gods long ago by the creator. He handed Senibor an orb that would give him his power.

Dueron began to speak an ancient ritual he had no desire to complete. "Senibor, you have proved yourself worthy of godhood. I declare you..." Dueron paused looking over first at the mortal before him, wondering if what he was about to do was the right thing. When he looked at his daughter, though, he lost control of himself and forgot all the noble justice he was meant to uphold in favor of accepting his pure hatred.

“...God of Decay!” Dueron yelled with fury, touching the staff to Senibor’s shoulder.

Suddenly, Senibor felt power course through him. Hearing what Dueron said and the gasps of shock from the other gods, he looked down. What he saw was a sickly green glow emanating from the orb. He watched in horror as the aura suddenly spread to him, causing the orb to crumble into dust. He stood up, aghast, looking around to see the stone floor begin to crumble and turn to foul brown dust around his feet. He stepped back to see that the terrible curse that had been inflicted upon him was in fact real and followed him where he went.

Samri rushed forward, crying, “Father, what have you done?”

Dueron’s look of satisfaction changed to one of horror as he saw what he had created: a thing of pure destruction... and a way to make his daughter eternally unhappy. It was only then that Dueron realized what he had just inflicted on Senibor... and he knew that it was too late for him to ever reverse it.

Senibor had a realization just as Dueron did- he couldn’t ever be with Samri, for all that she made grow would fail to come to life with him there to make it die. All on earth would slowly die unless Senibor didn’t go near his beloved ever again. Senibor collapsed to the rapidly decaying floor and began to cry.

### **Epilogue**

So it was that Senibor was cursed and the age of Legends came to a close. At first, Senibor stayed away from Samri. After a time, though, they wanted to come together again. So they made a deal with the other gods: Senibor would keep to his realm while Samri helped the mortals for half of the year (spring and summer), allowing the mortals to grow food and store it for later. In the second half of the year, though, Samri and Senibor would be allowed to go to the garden of eternity, where Senibor’s power had no effect. As Senibor joined Samri, his power would cause the slow decay of the world (autumn), and when they both departed, neither any new

growth nor any new decay would occur on the earth. Their first child was the goddess of cold and ice, and when her mother was gone, she would control the weather (winter) - and so the seasons came to be.