


RED SONJA

**SHE-DEVIL
WITH A SWORD**



THE SUN SETS **SWIFTLY**,
HIDDEN BY THE TREES OF
THE GREAT SPRAWLING
FOREST CALLED **DARKWOOD**,
ON NEMEDIA'S EASTERN BORDER...
AND TRAVELERS HAD BEST
FIND SHELTER **BEFORE** NIGHT
CREEPS UPON THEM UNAWARES....

HO THERE!
I'D HAVE A
WORD
WITH YOU!

MITRA,
FATHER!
IT'S A **MAID**,
WITH HAIR
AS RED AS
SUNSET...

...AND
SUCH
CLOTHING
AS SHE WEARS
...IS ALL OF
ARMOR!

I'LL
DEAL
WITH HER,
SON...



IF YOU WISH **TRIBUTE** OR **BOOTY** FROM US, WOMAN, YOU MAY AS WELL HAVE **GONE** WITH YE.

WE'VE ONLY THE ONE POOR **COW**--AND SHE GIVES SCARCELY ENOUGH MILK TO KEEP **BODY AND SOUL** TOGETHER, AS IT IS.

I WANT **NOTHING** FROM YOU, OLD MAN. ONLY--

--WELL, A SWIG FROM THAT **GOURD**, FOR A **START**--



AND **NOW**, AS IT'S NIGH **DUSK** AND I SEE NO **INNS** NEAR AT HAND--



--I'D HAVE YOU TELL ME ABOUT THAT **HIGH-SPIRED CASTLE**--

--WHICH I SPIED THRU THOSE **TREES** YONDER.



FATHER-- DID YOU **HEAR**--?

AYE! GET **BACK**, FIEND-WOMAN --**BACK**, I SAY--

WE KNOW **NOTHING** OF IT. **NOTHING!**



QUICKLY! LET'S BE **OFF**--FOR THERE'S A **NIGHT WIND** LOOSE--!

YES, FATHER! I **FEEL** IT!

THE HOUR WHEN THE **BAT** COMES FORTH--AND THE **WOLF**, AS WELL--!



HALT WHERE YOU **STAND**, OLD MAN! I'VE ALREADY **SAID** I'LL NOT **ROB** YOU--

BUT, I'LL NOT HAVE YOU TURN YOUR **GNARLED BACK** ON ME, EITHER!

HELP MY SON--!



HELP!? WHY, UNTIL HE LEARNS TO WIELD THAT STAFF MORE SWIFTLY, GREYBEARD...

-- HE'LL HELP NOT EVEN HIMSELF!

P-PLEASE, WHOEVER YE BE-- DO NOT HURT MY HUSBAND-- MY SON--!

WE ARE POOR SOULS, ONLY--!



I'VE KNOWN POVERTY AS MUCH AS ANY-- BUT I STILL KNEW ENOUGH TO KEEP A CIVIL TONGUE IN MY HEAD.

NOW, TELL ME WHY YOU FEAR TO SPEAK OF THAT CASTLE!

NO! I-- I DARE NOT! IT IS FORBIDDEN--!



THE DOG IS QUITE RIGHT, YOU KNOW.

WHO IN SEVEN HELLS--?



I AM GHUNTHAR.



GHUNTHAR? AIEEE! BY ALL THE GODS THERE ARE-- RUN YOUR BLADE THRU MY RIBS IF YOU WILL, WOMAN--

-- BUT SOONER THAN STAY HERE, I'D ROLL THE BONES WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF!

AND YE'LL DO WELL TO FLEE YOURSELF, HUSSY-- UNLESS YOU'RE HERE TO COUPLE WITH HIM, WHEN THE FULL MOON RISES...!

ERLIK TAKE 'EM-- THEY LEFT QUICKLY ENOUGH WHEN YOU CAME! YOU'RE WELL KNOWN IN THESE PARTS, THEN?

ON THE CONTRARY, MY DEAR GIRL... I AM KNOWN HARDLY AT ALL, AND THAT IS WHY THE PEASANTS FEAR ME... CALL ME WIZARD.

FOR, DO WE NOT EVER FEAR THAT WHICH WE DON'T UNDERSTAND?

AND SOMETIMES... THAT WHICH WE DO.

I HEARD YOU SPEAK OF NEEDING A PLACE TO LAY YOUR HEAD...

I WARN YOU, HOWEVER, ON PERIL OF YOUR SAFETY AND YOUR SOUL...

DO NOT OPEN IT, BUT GIVE IT TO THE LADY OF THE CASTLE ALONE!

...AND IN THE GATHERING TWILIGHT, THE STRANGER IS SUDDENLY GONE.

AS SHE STANDS THERE IN THE GLADE, THE CHILL AIR IS SPLIT BY THE HOWL OF A HUNTING WOLF, SOMEWHERE OFF IN DARKWOOD.

SOMEHOW, THIS HOWL CAUSES SOMETHING MORE UNEASE THAN MOST...

I THINK I CAN HELP.

LUSTFUL MEN HAVE SPOKEN BEFORE IN SUCH TONES, AND I'VE--

MY INTERESTS, WOMAN, ARE RATHER MORE ARCANES THAN MERE PLEASURES OF THE FLESH.

YOU'LL RECEIVE A HEARTY WELCOME FROM YONDER SPIRED CASTLE... IF YOU'LL TAKE THEM THIS FOR ME.

A CASKET-- OF BRASS!?

CONTAINING NOTHING WORTH THE STEALING, I ASSURE YOU...

...BUT THE PRICE OF A ROOF FOR THE NIGHT.

A SIMPLE ENOUGH TASK... WHICH A WIZARD COULD PERFORM FOR HIMSELF.

AND WHAT NAME SHALL I SAY--?

SHE BLINKS AN INSTANT--

SHE STRIDES ON, TOWARD THE BECKONING SPIRE...

...AND SENSES THE LURKING FIGURE, EVEN BEFORE SHE SEES HIM.

SHE IS SURPRISED TO SEE THAT HE IS-- MASKED.

STAND FORTH-- OR BY ERLIK, I'LL RUN YOU THRU!

I MEAN YOU NO HARM.

I PRAY YOU-- HANDLE YOUR BLADE WITH CARE!

WHY SHOULD I-- WHEN A MASKED MAN LOOKS BEHIND ME?

THE MASK IS-- THE RESULT OF A VOW I MADE.

ONE TENDS TO FORGET ONE HAS IT ON.

THIS PATH IS LITTLE USED. THEY SAY A FIEND HAUNTS THIS FOREST, THOUGH I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM.

THAT-- CASKET INTRIGUES ME.

WHAT DOES IT CONTAIN?

I DON'T KNOW-- NOR SHALL YOU.

IF YOU THINK I LIE-- THEN TAKE A SINGLE STEP CLOSER--!

THERE IS NO NEED! GOOD EVEN TO YOU!

THE HOODED MAN RUNS OFF-- A CURIOUS GAIT THAT EATS UP DARKNESS--

...WHILE RED SONJA THINKS TO HERSELF:

"STRANGE ARE THE WAYS OF THE EAST... BUT THE WAYS OF THE WEST ARE STRANGER STILL!"