

## THE LEGEND OF SAINT URSUL

### Part I

Once, in the earliest days of Aquaterra, there was a young prince by the name of Ursul. As he was the eldest son, he was taught the arts of chivalry and warfare to the point that he became a paragon of the chivalrous knight. Knowing that his knightly skills were more than the average knight's and that the ladies of Aquaterra had but few champions, Ursul vowed that he would be the Champion of Aquaterra.

Ursul's fame spread far and near. As he strongly upheld his duties, honor, vows, and morals so well and uncompromisingly, he soon became to be considered a saint by those who met and knew him.

But one day a dark cloud covered the bright sun of Ursul's life—a cloud in the form of a female stranger with selfish desires for Ursul. She made her desires known to Ursul, but the young knight, unwilling to compromise his vow to the ladies of Aquaterra—one lady in particular—and unwilling to slight his morals, flatly refused the lady's proposition.

Unfortunately for Ursul, the newcomer was a sorceress of great magic. She returned from whence she came in a dangerous, angry mood.

Upon reaching her land, she vented her anger against the noble Ursul by casting spells nine by nine and turning him into a bear, never to return to his normal form until he renounced his vow as Champion of Aquaterra.

But though his form and manners were changed to those of a bear, Ursul still had his knightly skill, his power of speech, and human thoughts and personality—the latter being slightly clouded by the instincts of the animal he had become. Knowing that he could no longer live in the world of men, Ursul girded his sword around his bear's waist, slung his shield upon his back, and wandered off to the woods of Aquaterra.

It soon became known that Ursul had disappeared from his manor in a most mysterious way. Everyone searched far and near for him, but he was not to be found.

Upon hearing of the missing Ursul, one of the young men who admired Ursul's Lady, the foremost Lady of Aquaterra, decided to become her new lord. She, not believing that the saintly and chivalrous Ursul could break his vows to her and the women of Aquaterra, refused the youth saying that Ursul would return.

But the youth was not of great chivalry, and, becoming angry at Ursul's Lady, he and his men took her prisoner. They were transporting her to the castle of the young man through the woods when they encountered a bear—unusual in the fact that it was awake in late January, and it was brandishing both sword and shield. The bear attacked the small band and sent them running, leaving their prisoner to her fate.

The Lady was surprised by the bear's behavior. As she watched, it sheathed its sword and removed its shield. It dropped to its four legs and then spoke saying for her to take its shield and climb onto its back. She did as she was told, and the bear carried her back from where she had been taken.

But before reaching the edge of the town, the bear stopped and told her his sad story, for it was Ursul himself. Noting that the sword and shield were that of her champion, she believed the bear, and she said that she would hold a celebration on the anniversary of her rescue until he could return to her as proof of her devotion.

Ursul never renounced his vows to Aquaterra, and he was sainted soon after his disappearance. Even now the armed bear that is Saint Ursul is sometimes seen in Aquaterra while the celebration, now known as the Ursulmas Tourney and Feast of Saint Ursul, is still occurring in the Shire of Aquaterra.

*~Chronicled by Dianna of the Silver Shore*