

Liam Daniel McDonough

Black Belt Essay

The Story of Lucas Aracatum

Forward

Dear reader. I had a huge toss up of ideas in my head. So, eventually I came up with a mix between modern action/drama type with a medieval timeline, Korean Tae-Kwon-Do action, and the changed names of some fiction novels I've read in the past. I came up with the city name, Aracatum; from a name I've previously heard called Arcatum. As you read this story, you may think "This is an amazing novel," or "this novel is so cheesy" or "Why am I reading this stupid story?" Well, number one, my English teacher would tell you it is a short story and not a novel. And number two, if you think this is at all cheesy, or typical, or even un-original, I tell you, go ahead and have your opinions. They are part of what makes this story such a good novella, and a great debate topic. But no more "remember kids..." or "if you think..." on with the story.

Prologue

The Elite. He nearly laughed at the fact he was *that* good. His father would be proud now. This is what he thought as he ran through the streets of Aracanum. Left, left, right, double back. If he were normal, he would have been lost quickly in the dark maze of the city. Right in front of him an Elite appeared. He quickly performed an inside-out block and brought his elbow into the man's head. He kept on running. He was nearly there. He saw it, he ran for it, and then...

Chapter 1

Lucas woke up. "Wow, what a dream," he thought as he rushed to get his Dobak on. He checked his watch. Nearly 7:00! He grabbed a Blue Bar and rushed off. He would be late. He took his usual shortcut, along Mrs. Maguire's house, and straight onto Jamp Blvd. He got into class right as the bell struck 7:15. Phew! He went into the Tae-Kwon-Do room to find it empty. He was so busy it just now struck him it was a Funday, without any programs. Dang! He went into the restroom and quickly got dressed in his civilian clothes. He was nearly ready to ask if he was ready to become one of the Guard, one of the police of the city of Aracanum, usually trained in Tae-Kwon-Do. He ran out the door.

"Hey kid!" came a voice.

Oh no, not a gang. He was in an alley, but he was usually safe. Except, of course, the occasional beggar.

"Hey, I called your name kid, come here."

His family wasn't very rich, but since hard times hit the city, gangs mobbed whoever they could. He started running.

"Where you think you're going, huh?" the first man said.

He was surrounded by five men. The first one, the one who did all the talking, was probably the smallest one, and he was 5'7. All the men must have had 40 lb. of muscles at least. The first one had bronze hair that seemed to say "I'm cool, but don't mess with me." His grey eyes reminded Lucas of the dirty snow during spring. The man was wearing a grey suit, with blue jeans, and seemed to be the leader.

"You never know who may be out here kid, there might be gangs walking about. But we would protect you, wouldn't we boys."

The other four nodded their agreement.

"We wouldn't want you to get hurt, would we?"

Again the men nodded. Then they jumped.

The second man, who Lucas called Big Boy jumped first. He was 6'3 and had on a sleeveless shirt, grey jeans, and was the largest. Without even thinking, Lucas blocked, spun, and kneed the man right in the kneecap before he even thought that he was being attacked. The man fell, but before he hit the ground, he got a face full of Lucas's fist. It was one fluid motion, like the water that flowed down the river.

The third man, who was Skinny, pulled out a switchblade and thrust wildly. Obviously these men usually looked after Big Boy to take care of them. He blocked with an X block, grabbed, and broke the man's wrist. Even at perfectly 5 feet, his constant training kept him in great condition, and the Blue Bar was very filling and gave him energy. The man howled, and Lucas kicked him in the side. He was finished.

The fourth man, Ninja, knew at least some basic moves, as Lucas found out. With a side kick to the knee, his leg broke and he screamed. The fifth man attacked, and Lucas

had just enough time to grab the switchblade and ram it in the man's ribs. It was in-between the 5th and 6th ribs on Lucas's right side, perfect heart shot. The man stopped and coughed up blood. He fell to the ground, coughed once or twice more, and lay still. Lucas noticed that the first man had already fled in-between the third and fourth man's battle. Lucas fell to the ground and wept, for himself, for the fifth man, and for the fifth man's family.

Chapter 2

Lucas slowly got up and checked his watch. He had been crying for about 5 minutes. He checked his watch, after wiping off the blood which had sickened him, and was surprised that his fight had only lasted 30 seconds. He tried to wipe the rest of the blood off and finally gave up after he figured out it wasn't working. He started walking home. He entered Main Street, and was surrounded by five Guards. Five seemed to be his lucky number today, he thought bitterly.

"Come with us son. You will be charged with the assault of three men and the murder of one, a Mr. James Patterwheel," the lead one said.

Lucas said, "Look, they tried to attack me, and I had to..."

"No more talk, come with us now," the lead Guard said.

"But you don't understand, it was..."

"*Shut up!*" the lead one said, and swung his baton.

Even though Lucas had already dealt with four men, he somehow found the strength to protect himself against five more.

He saw the arm in slow motion, and quickly up-blocked the arm. The baton clattered away, and he grabbed the man's hand, and swung him over his back. He punched down and the man was out cold. He quickly grabbed the closest weapon, a short, strong stick. The second Guard was upon him with two Tonfas. He panicked and just barely blocked a swing. He was being moved back by the man. The other Guards were watching silently, obviously enjoying the fight. As quickly as a Puma, he saw a weak point in the man's brutal assault. He quickly jabbed his stick in the area, right at the solar plexus, and got a grunt from the man. Not wanting to stop there and have the man attack him again, he spun and butterfly-kicked the man straight in the right side of the head. The other Guards looked in shock. They must have thought this boy wouldn't have lasted a second. Lucas knew Tonfas well, and picked them up to further defend himself. The third and fourth Guard attacked simultaneously, while the fifth stayed back as back-up. Maintaining a constant defense was wearing Lucas out, so he took a risk and took up the attack. He lined up the two men perfectly, even as they tried to taunt him in-between the two of them. The man closest to him, who he only knew as the fourth man because of the different styles of fighting, attacked recklessly. Lucas rewarded him with a front kick to the chin, and then swung the Tonfa at the man's cheek. He fell quickly. Now it was just Lucas and the third man, as the fifth had called for backup. In-out, out-in, punch, round kick, it was just back and forth between them. Suddenly, Lucas swung what looked to be recklessly, and turned his back on the man. But before the man could finish his overhead blow with his Jo, he received a side kick in the gut as Lucas's move completed. You see, Lucas had turned purposely, to both lure the man in, and to prepare for his not-very-famous spin-jump-side-kick. As the man fell, Lucas ran. He had to go somewhere, but his uncle would only turn him in. Ever since his mother and father died, his uncle had full

control of his life. The best his life got was during classes, as the master was like a father to him. Suddenly, an idea struck him. He headed for his master's house.

Chapter 3

"Master Hyun-Shik, master Hyun-Shik!" Lucas pounded on the door of the master's house.

"Lucas, how great to see... tell me what happened immediately," the master said as he saw the horror in Lucas's eyes, quickly closing the doors behind him.

"It was horrible. First this gang came up, there were five of them, but only four attacked, and the other ran away. Then five Guards came up and told me to come with them, and I tried to tell them I was the one attacked, not the gang, and then a Guard struck at me. I then took down them too, except for one, who went to find help. And the worst part is, I-I-I killed a man!" Lucas started crying as he figured out just what he had done.

"It's all right, it's all right," said the master.

"No it's not! They're going to find me, and then you will go to jail too for teaching me!" Lucas cried out.

"Listen to me. I was in the guard once," these words made Lucas stand up quickly." No, I won't bring you in. Anyways, the fifth man will return with backup. They will find you gone, and order a search warrant for every house in Aracanum. By the time they get here, it will be at least a week, if they really hurry. Maybe more, as they will have figured I once worked for the Guard, or thinking you left the city. By the time they get here, you will be wild in the city. After I've trained you fully, of course."

"You'll train me?" Lucas said

"Of course, you'll need to be ready to face the Superbs, of course, which I was better than. I was an Elite, actually."

"S-S-Superbs?"

"Of course, they are what go after those who have escaped normal guards. But do not worry, you will be ready. Now hurry, we have much training to do."

Chapter 4

"Faster, Lucas! If you want to take on Superbs, you must be able to attack faster."

Worked to exhaustion, Lucas barely continued striking and blocking with the training swords. Ever since that day four days ago, Master Hyun-Shik had been working him constantly. Pushups, sit ups, basics, forms, he was worn out. The only food the master had was Ju-Jin Lo-Mein with dumplings, and was hardly full of energy like the Blue Bars.

Lucas magically saw a weakness at the left shoulder, and swung sideways for it. But the master, now having successfully baited him in, swung in a full circle to hit Lucas in the shoulder, or he would have, had Lucas not seen the move signs seconds before. It was another thing they were doing repeatedly, signs of certain moves being performed. Lucas adjusted his strike to strike his master in the back, except for the block which his master barely performed in time. Strike, counterstrike, counter-counterstrike, that's the way this whole sparing had turned out, as opposed to the usual feeling of being hit due to the fact that he missed a move, or was baited in.

Without warning, the master crescent kicked for his weapon, trying to disarm him. He dodged right, to be hit by the combo side kick. He fell back, retching. The master never hit that hard! He was disgusted as he saw the Ju-Jin Lo-Mein with dumplings that

he had been having for breakfast, lunch, and dinner come spilling out in a half-digested mess. Finally empty, he trembled from hunger, pain, and anger.

"This is all your fault master." Lucas said. "You never taught me that move."

"You must be prepared for everything," the master replied

"Does everything include being hit repeatedly, or dealing with the constant abuse you put me through, sleepless, energy-less! Huh?" Lucas asked.

"It is not my fault," the master said

"Not your fault! I suppose the bruises that cover my body are all my fault! I suppose not being able to sleep more than 2 hours because of my wounds and being woken up at the first light of dawn is my fault too! I haven't heard a better joke told by my classmates. I don't know what to tell you. Maybe I'm not as strong as you think. Maybe I'm just too exhausted."

"Practice is finished for the day."

"Are you serious? That's the best news I've had all day. I'll just eat some and get to sleep."

Chapter 5

Fed and well-slept thanks to the break the master gave him yesterday. Lucas felt great. His bruises were miraculously gone. He would have to ask the master about it. He felt amazing.

"Ready for sparring today?" the master said as he came in with breakfast.

"After breakfast please. I feel great. Can we end at 7:00 more often?" Lucas asked hopefully.

"Sure, but I must tell you that after sparring we are going into the streets."

"The streets, why?"

"You must wait to see."

"Alright, that's fine."

Chapter 6

Tik-tik-tik. The bamboo practice sticks clicked together like an old clock. This was the final sparing round. All the other sparring bouts wound up with Lucas the winner. The bamboo sticks were the master's best weapon, and so the master and the student were at a standstill. Lucas felt more alive than ever. With bruises gone, well rested, and full of the masters new addition of Red Bars, with twice the energy of Blue Bars, Lucas felt as if he could take on twenty times the gang he fought on his first day, with one arm tied behind his back. He baited his master in with a bait-bait-bait. Without warning, he grabbed his masters stick arm and pulled him off balance. Off balance, he was an easy target, and received a bop on his shoulder to show the final win by Lucas.

"Time to go to the city," the master said.

"Alright. What are we doing?"

" You'll see."

Chapter 7

"Are we there yet?" Lucas asked.

"Yes. Yes we are," replied the master.

They were in the middle of a dark alleyway. The alleyways were actually connected rather like a maze. In this area, not a single person walked. It reminded Lucas of the encounter with the gang. It seemed like months since then. But it was really only five days ago.

"Alright, why are we here?" Lucas asked

"So you can experience 3 things. Number 1, what I am about to tell you, which will rock your world, so to speak. Number 2, so you can feel a real... well, we'll get there later. And number 3, so I may tell you one last thing," said the master

"What are you going to tell me?"

"First of all, you are my son. You're father didn't die. I just went into hiding. I put you on the first doorstep I saw. Second, you are born with a special ability that skips two or three generations. You see, we are related to the founder of Aracatum, Jonathan Aracatum. You have abnormally quick reflexes, quick reactions, large strength, as well as other talents. And finally, you are destined to be king of Aracatum."

"Wow. Just wow. That's some heavy news."

"No time to think it over, they're nearly here."

"Who is 'they'?"

"A group of Superbs."

Chapter 8

"What are you thinking? Are you crazy? You reported me!" Lucas cried out

"No, I'm not crazy. It's only five, and you have me to take care of about half. Anyways, they just arrived. Too late now," the master said calmly.

"Stop there criminal!" the lead Superb said.

"He's my son, and I will protect him with my life!" the master screamed

And the battle began. They split up, two for Lucas, three for the master. Lucas took out his Tonfas and got into a fighting stance. Out of the corner of his eye, Lucas saw his master take out his sword, Nightfall, and do the same. The first Superb on Lucas attacked, and Lucas lost any concentration with his master after that. They came after Lucas, jab, slice, and swat. Lucas was panicking and reminded himself to be calm. With Lucas's new strength he felt great, so he let them have it. The first one jabbed with his Bo, and instead of block like the Guard tried to make Lucas, he spun around the attack and swung his Tonfa so hard his skull cracked like a dry twig. The next man Lucas didn't even give a chance to attack. Lucas unleashed the same combo his master had yesterday. He fell for it perfectly, and Lucas left him on the ground for now, retching. Lucas saw his master having trouble and quickly came to his aid. The first man, about to strike Lucas's master, didn't even know Lucas was there until he was on the ground. Lucas picked up his blade and continued. The other two saw Lucas, and split up. Lucas parried his strike and, pretending to strike; Lucas twisted and jammed the hilt into the man's temple. His eyes rolled back into his head. With one man left, Lucas ended any chance of a long, exciting fight and just ran him through. Finished, Lucas put his blade away.

What Lucas saw next, he could not have ever prepared for. There was one part of the equation Lucas missed during the fight, and that was the man Lucas had left retching, the commando of the group. He stabbed Lucas's master in the leg with one of the swords he found off his brethren. Lucas saw him and quickly cut him in two with the blade Lucas possessed. As a normal Elite, the master would have dealt with the wound as if it were nothing. But he was old, almost 60 years old. Still, he dealt with the wound better than any man Lucas has ever seen.

"Master!" Lucas called "Master, are you alright?"

"Son, it's time. The third thing I am, or was, as it's now time, is that you must be on your own. The other thing is that you can do things other normal men cannot. You can

call upon creatures, call upon the elements, many things you dreamed as a child. This is no lie; this is the way you and your ancestors have acted as centuries passed. In fact, the man who built one of the greatest cities in the world used these same powers to build Aracanum. You can heal me even. In fact, you already have. Look.” He showed me his wound and it was miraculously cleaned and healed as if it was never there. “You will have to learn these powers you possess on your own. I shall go on living my life. The final thing I must tell you now is that you are no longer Lucas McGuire, but Lucas Aracanum, a son of a lineage so powerful people bow at the name. Now go. I’ll tell the Guards that you tripped me and, being an old man, could not get up.”

“Yes master,” Lucas said, and went off into the large city of Aracanum to claim his kingship.

Chapter 9

Finally! He has reached the castle of the king of Aracanum. He slipped inside, and went into the king’s bedchambers. He saw the king just arriving from a royal ball of some sort. He grabbed the king from the servant’s entry and pulled the king in.

“Dear king of Aracanum, you have taken my place,” said Lucas calmly

“And who in the Gods name are you!” the king rasped

“Well, I’m Lucas Aracanum, the *rightful* heir to the throne.”

“There is no Lucas Aracanum, the Aracanum family died nearly a century ago.”

“Well, let’s settle it. Hmm... ah, I’ve got it. We’ll have a test. You shall hide the brooch of Kings somewhere in the city. If I find it within, oh, ninety-six hours, the crown, and kingdom is mine. If not, then you may execute me, for crimes against the king.”

“Why don’t I just have you killed now?”

“Because, I could kill you before any bodyguard unit could get here, and one of your advantages is that you may have men guard the brooch. But my counter-advantage is that I may take one unit of any basic infantry you have. There, it is settled. You have five hours to hide the brooch. And remember, I am watching you.”

As quickly as he appeared, Lucas disappeared.

“The game is on, Lucas Aracanum.”

Chapter 10

“My lord, my lord!”

Curse this page! He was constantly coming back and forth with notes and letters about this and that. Didn’t he know that he was just supposed to send them all through, regardless?

“What is it, page?” The king replied.

“An order came in from a Mr. Lucas Munacara,” the page replied

Now the king was interested. He thought it was very clever, putting Aracanum backwards in the last name. He didn’t know why the child still kept up with the false name. Didn’t he know that the Arcanum’s died years ago? Oh well, some just can’t quit.

“What does it say?” the king asked

“Ahem, *‘the Mr. Lucas Munacara requests one unit of Basic men and one unit of... Archers. He has a note too, that says...*

Dear king,

Urgent! Hello, I hear things are nice in the Kingdom. The Nowledge is increasing Obscenely. The Water is Yonder, and Our power is Umpresive. To Humans around Aracanum, Victory is ours. To Everyone else, Donkeys are retreating. In Our Unanimous

decision, Black Letters shall Enter the system Dangerously. The Greatness needs Unicorns, though A Ready catapult Destroyed them Strangely.

Sincerely,

Lucas Munacara

"Truthfully, it looks like gibberish. Here, look yourself," the page said as he handed the king the note.

Ah, very clever again. Yes, there it was. He knew this code from a child. He grabbed a spare sheet of paper and a quill. He looked at the capitalized letters in each sentence except the first word in each sentence. It turned out to become

I KNOW YOU HAVE DOUBLED GUARDS.

Damnit! How did he know? Oh well.

"One more thing, my lord. He says that the men should meet at the corner of Avad alley and Cucha alley," the page finished.

A dark alley. The Avad and Cucha were named after dark wizards, and so were surrounded by many other alleys. They were also fire wizards. That probably didn't occur to him though.

"Send it though immediately," the king replied, looking bored at all this back and forth messaging.

"Yes sir."

Chapter 11

Finally. The men were here.

"Men, here's the deal. From now on, you do not report to the king. You now report to me, Lucas Aracanum. If you, we, succeed, then you have three choices. A. retire in the city or country with a large amount of money. B. become one of my new bodyguard units. Or C. ask any other ways of life and I shall consider. If we fail, I will be executed, and, I'm not going to water it down for you, you probably will be executed as well. You cannot back out any longer, so I suggest you make the most of your training with me. Who's with me?"

A crowd of "Yes sirs!" went around the crowd.

Lucas came up to one of the men, and pulled out a blade. The man flinched.

Lucas, disgusted, said "Did you see that? I *don't* want you to do that. You must be ready for death. You cannot be afraid of death. But you must fight viciously to avoid death. Because if you do, you might have a chance to do something right in this world. Now, who do you report to?"

"Lucas Aracanum, sir!"

"And who do I report to?"

"No one, sir!"

"Good, now let's show those pompous Elites whose boss."

Chapter 12

"Come on! I've beaten you in every way possible."

These men were horrible! They didn't know the back end of a sword from the front. Lucas was taking each man one-by-one and sparring them. He left the commander, who Lucas sparred with earlier and found moderate with a weapon, to take the rest and do whatever the commander said. The man he was training with now had a number of bruises from bad attacks. Suddenly, the man showed amazing skill as he cut overhand.

Lucas, used to the attack, didn't even bother to block, and thrust in clumsily. Suddenly, the man did a semi-circle with the attack and deflected Lucas's thrust upward. Lucas, now off balance, received a bump on the head.

"Where in the name of the Gods did that come from?" Lucas asked

"Sigh, I guess now I have to tell you. We were all really good, but made ourselves look bad so that you could give us back to the king," the man replied.

Lucas was *mad*. He grabbed another bamboo stick and went into the training ground. He saw the commander running the men through some basic drills.

"Men, form up!" Lucas screamed.

Lucas threw the bamboo stick at the first man he saw, and immediately butterfly-kicked the man's face. The man's instincts took over, as Lucas planned, and the man ducked and stabbed Lucas, except for the superhuman block Lucas performed. He hit the man three times and insulted his family, to get him mad enough to actually spar. Back and forth the men went, a ballet dancer's complicated duet. After five minutes, a bored but much more exhausted Lucas decided to end the fight. He left an opening for a grab. The man, thinking it was genuine, grabbed. *Thwack!* The man, baited in, wasn't ready for the brutal knee to the stomach and the backhanded swing so strong it broke the pole in half.

"That, men, is what you will get if you do badly on purpose during sparring. No more good guy for you. You will be fighting for your life. This guy got the easy side of the stick. You, kid, get in the house. You're finished for the day. The rest of you, pushups till I get tired, then sit-ups till I start breathing heavy.

Chapter 13

Whew! Lucas was exhausted. It was a workout to deal with all these men. They started out the morning by showing the men one of his ideas. In advance, he took an arrow and wrapped it in a cloth. He then lit it on fire. He showed his men, and shot it at another cloth. The cloth lit like a dry twig. Later, he sparred with all of the men. In some cases, he beat them, in others, he was brutalized. Now he was just getting to sleep. He had much to do tomorrow.

Chapter 14

The archers were to shoot the flaming arrows to scare the elites. The basic men, except for two, were to engage the Elites. The other two were to come with Lucas. But what Lucas didn't tell any of the men was that the men were attacking a totally different area. At the last second his two men and he would go and get the brooch. That was his plan, and it was going beautifully. So far at least. The Elites were scared, the basic men were victorious, everything was according to plan, except for both his men dying as he led the way. Oh well, you win some, you lose some. Now he was entering the area of alleys where the brooch was, on the east side of town. He was surprised to see Elites standing in front of the entrance. He thought they were all at the battle on the south side. He grabbed a Jo and carried on.

"Stop immediately!" The lead Elite said.

Lucas charged. He baited the first man in by leaving a slight opening only an Elite would know. Then, he deflected the under-over shot for the groin and cracked the man on the side of the head. He ran straight into the next one. No, he thought, it wasn't supposed to be this way. He was running out of time. He became so angry at himself because he would cost all these good men their lives. Without a warning, flames burst upon the

Elite's shirts. That was strange, Lucas thought as he ran away. There were no sparks, and no building was on fire. Then he remembered one of his master's last words. "*The other thing is that you can do things other normal men cannot. You can call upon creatures; call upon the elements, many things you dreamed as a child. This is no lie; this is the way you and your ancestors have acted as centuries passed. In fact, the man who built one of the greatest cities in the world used these same powers to build Aracanum.*" That must have been one of his powers. The Elite. He nearly laughed at the fact he was *that* good. His father would be proud now. This is what he thought as he ran through the streets of Aracanum. Left, left, right, double back. If he were normal, he would have been lost quickly in the dark maze of the city. Right in front of him an Elite appeared. He quickly performed an inside-out block and brought his elbow into the man's head. He kept on running. He was nearly there. He saw it, he ran for it, and then, he had it! He had a strange sense of déjà vu. What was it, what was it? Oh yes, the dream! Maybe he could see the future as well. He would soon find out.

Chapter 15

"King, I wear the brooch of Kings!" Lucas shouted to the king, arriving from a formal affair with some duke.

"Impossible!" the king cried, as he turned so fast the duke slipped from no person to lean on. "I challenge you to a duel, for the brooch and the kingdom. To the death!" the king shouted out.

"Well, let the games begin," Lucas shouted back.

They both pulled out long, but adjustable, bamboo sticks. They circled, each waiting for a chance to strike. Lucas was tired, so he would not put up with any hour long fight. He baited the king in, and as the king swung, he disappeared. He reappeared right behind the king. **Crack!** The king stumbled as the bamboo cracked in half on his skull. Lucas wielded both as short practice swords.

"Huzzah!" the king shouted as he rushed at Lucas, his new war cry echoing through the land.

Crack, crack, whap, crack, they were getting nowhere! With one last bait, the king fell as two short bamboo poles almost magically embedded themselves in the king's chest. Lucas was exhausted! The fight, taking only one minute, wore him out! He stumbled, and cried out to his soldiers, now successfully back with only one or two men dead.

"This is the time, this is the place. We fought for glory, and so we got it. Without further ado, your new king Lucas Aracanum greets you!"