

# MAGIC OF GOLDEN SORROW

The Black Book

Dark Translation

A Child Lost –  
A Wizardess' Gain

PETER J. SMITH  
and ALICIA M. SMITH

[magicofgoldensorrow.com](http://magicofgoldensorrow.com)



*This spell-binding magical fantasy weaves a tale filled with action, adventure and intrigue replete with dark creatures and evil unstoppable forces. Join these colorful characters as Wizardess Marigold and friends battle for survival. Vastly outnumbered by Sanrue's powerful evil realm, they use their skills while creating strong friendships with an array of unlikely beings. Join them as the wizardess proves ever resilient, and their fate lies in the secret of Magic of Golden Sorrow.*

# Magic of Golden Sorrow

**Order the complete book from**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/7121.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**

**Your Free excerpt appears below. Enjoy!**

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*



by  
Peter J. Smith

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

Copyright © 1994-2013 Peter J. Smith & Alicia M. Smith

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-62141-950-1

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-62141-951-8

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper.

Cover Photo ©Subbotina Anna/Shutterstock

Interior Artwork/Photo:

©Dim Dimich/Shutterstock - pg 3

©Unholy Vault Designs/Shutterstock - pg 201

©Subbotina Anna/Shutterstock - pg 317

Contributor - Jacob Austin Smith

Dark of Night - pg. 385

**Contact**

A.M. Smith

PO Box 1472, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Email: [magicofgoldensorrow@gmail.com](mailto:magicofgoldensorrow@gmail.com)

First Edition 1A-2013

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends who have experienced the grief and sorrow from the loss of a child who was taken before their time. We hope you find some comfort here as you travel through the realm of magic as seen through my son's eyes.

This novel was written during an unusually unjust and lengthy stay in solitary confinement at Ely State Prison, Nevada.

In loving memory of my son

Peter J. Smith

April 15, 1968 – April 25, 1997



We miss him as much today as we did the first. It gives us peace knowing he is in the loving hands of God.

Time of writing 1993-1997

## **A NOTE TO OUR READERS**

First and foremost we wish to express our deepest gratitude for using your hard-earned money to purchase our humble offering. It has been a long journey since we began searching for a publisher back in 1997. Since Pete's passing, it has taken 17 long years to come to grips with moving forward, but moving forward we are. Thanks to today's technology, we are able to bring our manuscript to you, the fantasy/fiction lover.

Over the years, we have also become very aware of the three driving forces that have defined the power behind the magic. (1) the sheer enjoyment of escape through the written word; (2) the desire to help those unable to bring home a loved one lost before their time for lack of resources; and (3) for those who need that extra bit of help to continue on his or her path of becoming an artisan in its multitude of media formats. Pete would be awed by today's talent and technology!

In order to accomplish these three endeavors, we hope you will (1) pass the word so others may enjoy the lands and characters within these pages. From these sales we have committed to setting up two funding sources to accomplish both (2) and (3). It is true, we do have substantial dreams for the future of [\*Magic of Golden Sorrow\*](#), but "we ain't scared!" as our resident salty sailor affirms. To learn more about how and why we have chosen to give to others as we have been given, please take a moment with your favorite relaxing beverage and visit with us--you never know what might inspire you. We are open to ideas on how to accomplish these lofty goals, and thanks to modern technology and social media--well, you decide.

Pete would be immensely proud if he could see his book in print today. God willing, we will bring his vision of honoring life, love and family to life as we carry on.

[ArtistNow4u.com](http://ArtistNow4u.com)

[B4TheirTime.com](http://B4TheirTime.com)

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to give special thanks to Emmanuel Church, Paramount, CA who covered me with unimaginable blessings. Special thanks to Pastors Harold and Ken Korver, their staff and congregation for bringing my son home from Ely, Nevada. Thank you for the beautiful service and final resting arrangements. Everlasting thanks to Bob Olson who filled my soul with music and warmed my heart with friendships from his glorious choir and beloved bells. He was the first person ever to call me a blessing, but in truth, it was the other way around. My children and I are eternally in awe of the power of God that visits Emmanuel on a regular basis. We are apart, but the spirit of God and Emmanuel continue to live in my heart...forever.

There is no denying daughters Tara, Teresa and Tana were my greatest support when we lost Pete. Their strength gave me courage to move on, and their love is valued above all. I love you.

My husband Rob, USN LT (Ret) has been ever patient in the many years it has taken to prepare *Magic of Golden Sorrow* for publication. Thank you to my officer and a gentleman for your patience and support...how did I get so lucky!

My daughter Teresa has been instrumental and supportive in readying this book for publication. Her continued efforts to bring her brother's book alive in art, music and all media forms, is our next journey. We hope you will participate by emailing your interest to her.

Email: [teresa@artistnow4u.com](mailto:teresa@artistnow4u.com)

Humbly yours,

*Alicia M. Smith*



*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

## **CONTENTS**

<b>THE TELL .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART ONE – THE BLACK BOOK .....</b>	<b>3</b>
PROLOGUE.....	5
I. INTERVIEW.....	7
II. WARRIOR WIZARD .....	21
III. A CHALLENGE.....	41
IV. THE STAFFING .....	55
V. SPRING COUNCIL.....	69
VI. BLACK BOOK .....	79
VII. AN OATH.....	93
VIII. THE QUEST.....	109
IX. ELF MASTER.....	127
X. DREAMS.....	145
XI. WORDS ON WING .....	159
XII. TRAPPED.....	175
<b>PART TWO – DARK TRANSLATION.....</b>	<b>201</b>
XIII. DARK TRANSLATION .....	203
XIV. SCOUT RETURN .....	219
XV. SHAYLA - ELF NO-MORE.....	229
XVI. BARBARIANS’ LORE.....	241
XVII. LAND OF FIRE .....	253
XVIII. DARK STORM.....	265
XIX. MANTARS.....	275
XX. TRENAIL’S TRIALS .....	287

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

XXI. A MIRACLE – FOREST OF MIST .....	299
XXII. EYES EVERYWHERE .....	311
<b>PART THREE – A CHILD LOST-A WIZARDESS’</b>	
<b>GAIN .....</b>	<b>317</b>
XXIII. A CHILD LOST-A WIZARDESS’ GAIN .....	319
XXIV. ANCIENT KEEP .....	331
XXV. THE BATTLE QUICKENS .....	345
XXVI. MAGIC OF GOLDEN SORROW .....	361
XXVII. ELSPETH’S GIFT .....	373
<b>EPILOGUE .....</b>	<b>383</b>
<b>DARK OF NIGHT .....</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....</b>	<b>387</b>
<b>THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES .....</b>	<b>391</b>

## THE TELL

This spell-binding magical fantasy weaves a tale filled with action, adventure and intrigue replete with dark creatures and evil unstoppable forces. Marigold, a lovely young golden-haired wizardess, becomes destined to save her family, friends and her world after her father and mentor (wizards Vorn and Ranith) are presumed dead in the Wilds of Daksin.

Tager, a dwarven prince and his loyal guard Tolkbin, must fulfill Ranith's last wish to seek out the wizardess and a magical arrow she holds. Together, they set out on a journey joining forces along the way with the nimble elf Alory, tough as nails Cobalt the barbarian and Redlar a seasoned Trelonian Scout. The questors head west traversing strange lands, suffering numerous misfortunes and the dominion of death. Join them as they battle for survival against hideous monsters and malevolent beings. Vastly outnumbered by the powers of Sanrue's evil realm, they forge on using their skills while creating strong friendships with an array of unlikely cohorts.

The wizardess proves ever resilient as victory or defeat lies in the secret of [\*Magic of Golden Sorrow\*](#).

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*



*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

## **PROLOGUE**

“Those that practice the dark arts are responsible for your father’s death, sire.”

“I figured that much wizard. Have you a proposal?” inquired the newly crowned king.

“The people are afraid of these dark practitioners. I suggest you outlaw them and their arts.”

“What is the difference between them and you?”

“My kind, sire, call upon the powers of this world...they call upon another.”

And so the young king did. The people were scared not knowing who would be cursed next. Panicked and frightened they rose up and slew those who practiced black magic. Outlawed and hunted, a mystical lot came into being. Seeking out more knowledge and power, they joined the different arts. Once finished combining, they called to the dark.

Responding in answer, it started to talk. No one was fooled, but they did seek to tame the evil that answered and spoke in its name. As they learned more about it, they stored it in a book. They enchanted a symbol, so you could look.

“The book!” screamed the witch. “The book!”

Rising up in the dark of night, the hunted practitioners gathered around the witch, who kept uttering, “It is gone...it is gone.”

“Who was on watch?” hollered an ageing sorcerer.

“It does not matter!” screamed the witch shrilly.

“The only reason one would....would take it is to summon it.”

Silence as heavy as the mountain they dwelt in fell amongst the practioners.



*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

“It is Liben! He was on watch. I cannot find him,” a pretty raven-haired sorceress spoke up, shattering the silence of the stillness surrounding them.

“Outside!” yelled a grey-robed warlock stepping back into the cavern. “They have found us.”

“We must fight then!” hollered the ageing sorcerer.

“No!” screamed the witch.

“Stop him we must! Warn them!” she yelled.

“No, witch!” the grey-robed warlock declared.

“We owe them nothing,” he said, taking sides with the elderly sorcerer. “We have nothing left to live for. They killed most of our kind already. Leave them to their fate.”

\*\*\*

“Due to your help in eliminating this scourge, you are purged of any crimes charged against you. Their stronghold has been destroyed, and there are none left. You have done this land a favor. Have you a request, Liben?” asked the young king.

“If I may...sire...become the court librarian?”

“Wizard, have you any doubts to this young man’s loyalty?”

“No, my lord,” answered Liben’s uncle.

“Granted, then!” said the young king.

## **I. INTERVIEW**

“**D**O not forget to keep an eye out for Ranith and Marigold,” Alice reminded her husband, coming to a halt in front of her green and brown paneled herb shop that seamlessly blended in with the surroundings.

“You do not want them catching you by surprise.”

She focused her vivid blue eyes, filled with affection and pursed her lips in expectancy. Smoothing the front of his ceremonial black silken robe designating him as a master wizard, Vorn bent forward and wisped a sweet kiss across her lips. Alice smiled, gave him another kiss, opened the door to her shop and stepped in. She poked her charming blonde head out and whispered, “Good luck!” before disappearing back inside.

Vorn sighed, contented and with staff in hand headed up Apinar Street for Grand Avenue to Castle Larion. The river glittered brilliantly in the sun flowing without restraint under a bridge that spanned its way to the royal island. He could see the castle sparkling artfully, as though the larstone blocks it

was made of were instead rainbow cubes of large fanciful jewels. It was an impressive sight and made him smile as he thought of the reason taking him there on this crisp day at the tail of winter.

He stated his business at the gatehouse, crossed over and followed a broad path winding its way up a massive craggy knoll paying little heed to the castle's caretakers scurrying around the lower estate busily preparing the fairgrounds for the upcoming spring games but a few short months away.

Ascending over half way to the top of the knoll, Vorn paused to survey the far bridge connecting the other side of the island to the forest beyond. Not seeing any silver reflection or movement, he turned his attention to the paths in the forest not obscured by trees, but still he saw nothing. He knew the old wizard and Marigold would be coming into town today.

The old wizard, Ranith, was known by most folks for not only his remarkable power and knowledge, but also his truly unique thick flowing, silver-sheened hair and beard. His robes contained magical threads that changed, along with his hair and beard in unison with the intensity of his powers. When he exerted his powers, his being became reflective as would polished steel adding to his mysterious wisdom and his cranky but laughable personality.

Marigold always appeared to view life in vivid colors, thought Vorn, fondly. The wizened old wizard had a connection with his young apprentice at her birth, Vorn mused, perhaps that's why Ranith was as much family as he and Alice. Maybe he'd spot them on his way back.

Vorn marveled how insignificant man could have built the awesome monument looming larger and larger before him. Towering with a commanding presence from its high

island hill, the castle dwarfed everything in the valley and gave the whole dale a colorful air of majestic leadership.

Castle Larion's history dated back to the founding of Trelon. It was the first and last castle of its kind. Built entirely out of larstone blocks that had been a special gift from the dwarves of Thorgane, it stood as a token of old friendship between the two and represented a new start for the inhabitants of Trelon. It prevailed as the first bright bastion to arise after a long and dreadful dark age.

The larstone possessed a unique opalescent surface that radiated a soft rainbow light without emitting any type of glare. The strange stone was thought to be weather wise, for on hot days it retained a certain degree of coolness, while on cold ones it maintained a comforting warmth.

As for the dwarves who spent much of their time deep inside the cavernous tunnels throughout the depths of Mount Thorgane far to the north, the larstone provided the perfect light and necessary heat for their subterranean labyrinth.

Vorn, now walking the length of the castle's thick oaken drawbridge, was immediately challenged by two of the king's guards who barred his way crossing their halberds in front of him. They were dressed in crimson-green tunics with yellow hose and brown leather boots. The standard of Larion, a golden griffin roaring atop the shield of Trelon, stood boldly displayed on their chests.

The guards inquired to his destination, and Vorn was allowed entry to the castle grounds. Passing through the portcullis to a sprawling courtyard bustling with merchants and members of the court, he took a left road, angling towards the sidewall, passing shops and stables before arriving at a sturdy wooden building situated between the immaculate lawn of the main hall and a small barracks for Trelonian Scouts. A tall metal pole flying the flag of Trelon

fluttered from the building's top. The symbol, a silver shield, displayed a bountiful landscape burning with a bright, rising sun. It represented the new land of Trelon founded by the survivors of the Dark War.

Vorn watched the activity taking place around him squeezing his staff for reassurance. He mounted the stone steps and entered. An elderly clerk with white hair indifferently questioned him before telling him to take a seat.

"...for the captain's busy," he said, and went back to shuffling the papers on his desk.

Vorn seated himself. His gaze eventually came to rest upon the singular topic of interest inside the room, a velvety banner of Larion that hung above the old clerk and his desk. Embroidered on the half crimson, half green cloth in threads of vibrant coloring was a stout, proud-natured griffin clutching the shield of Trelon in its formidable claws. The golden hues of the winged beast complimented the silvery shield atop which it perched. At the bottom, a bright purple ribbon ran the length of the banner. The words, *Larion, Protector of Trelon* were stamped in bone-white lettering.

As he continued to wait for his interview with Captain Trenail, his thoughts drifted reflecting upon his reasons for being here today. It was well over a year ago that Ranith, on one of his trips to Thorgane, stumbled across an ancient tome possibly written during the last Dark War or shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, it was also in bad shape leaving a mere handful of the middle-most pages to survive. But, it was still a priceless relic considering the lack of information during that age. And even greater yet, it spoke of wizards and mentioned a role they played in warfare.

It was after he and Ranith studied what salvageable script they could find, and their historical knowledge of wizardry increased by what they learned, that Ranith urged him to

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

become a warrior wizard. Now, here he was, sitting and waiting for his interview with the captain.

While Vorn and Ranith studied the ancient arts, Alice had devoted all her attentions to raising Marigold who inherited her mother's merry wit and curly golden locks with an ever so slight hint of red genetically transferred from Vorn's fiery mane. Her piercing green eyes were as remarkable and unique as her father's. Both her personality and looks reminded them of the pretty marigold flower, and thus it was.

Marigold, as Vorn, showed an avid interest in magic at an early age. As she grew, so too did her magical fascinations and abilities. She was a quick learner allowing her to progress rapidly through the university's basic courses. At the tender age of thirteen, Ranith took her to be his private apprentice as he had with her father when he was a young lad.

Vorn had trained vigilantly in the lost tradition of the warrior wizards, and here he was, now, getting ready to persuade the commander of all the border scouts on the benefits of this ancient art. He was somewhat apprehensive, but his determination was unwavering--now to convey that conviction to the commander.

An old fellow, lean in body carrying a few outstanding scars on a hawkish face, stepped from the door leading into the captain's office interrupting Vorn's thoughts. He was dressed in the cured leathers of the border scouts, and adorning his shoulders were two shields marking him as highly decorated. He curiously glanced at Vorn and stepped past the clerk who noticed not at all, and then out the door. Another man, much taller and broader than the one that just left, approached the door. And, as the other, he was dressed in similar fashion but had the full standard of Larion embroidered on his tunic. His hair was short, black and his

inquisitive brown eyes quickly surveyed the masculine wizard. After a brief pause, his lips cracked a grin and said, "You must be the wizard I have been expecting. I am Captain Trenail, commander of the border scouts."

He walked over to Vorn, who stood to shake his proffered hand.

"Come in where we can talk," he said, and beckoned him towards his office.

After a brief exchange of formalities, Vorn got right to the point. He wanted to obtain the role of warrior wizard inside the army. Surprisingly, Captain Trenail only nodded and waited for him to continue.

Vorn did so. He relayed the newly acquired information from the ancient tome Ranith had found and theorized the benefits he might bring to the scouts. At first, he faltered under Trenail's scrutinizing gaze and tried to keep his voice from sounding too indifferent. But as the interview progressed and the captain who had been listening attentively finally joined in, Vorn relaxed and spoke with greater ease until soon both were exchanging ideas based upon the concept of recruiting wizards into Trelon's army.

"It is news to me, but it might hold some possibilities," Trenail said and sat back in his chair while he pondered the wizard's proposition. Continuing with lengthy inquiry into Vorn's capabilities, Trenail made up his mind.

"This could create some controversy, but I will give you a try. You will not get any special treatment...still want in?" he asked, all ready sure of the answer he'd get.

"I certainly do," Vorn responded, trying not to sound too excited, or overly grateful. He cleared his voice and added, "That is why I am here, captain."

"Good then!" Trenail declared, cementing the deal.

"You will start off at Actan like anyone else."

He paused for a brief moment.

“We shall leave from here in a fortnight. Any questions?”

The meeting officially over, Trenail escorted him outside the building and silently recalled all the information Vorn had relayed as he watched the black silken-robed wizard walk away. His experience with magical sort wasn't much, and he didn't know the full implications of what he just agreed to, but if Vorn's list of abilities were indeed true--well, he let the thought drift and wondered instead why anyone would want to become a wizard in the first place. Heck, the man looked big and stout enough to have made a good swordsman, and his long fiery red hair, cropped sharply on top with the rest banded back securing his thick mane, gave him an extra fierce look. Trenail chuckled and dismissed the matter for the time.

Surprised at the success of the interview, Vorn took his time leaving the royal estate. He kept a lookout for Ranith and Marigold, but when he reached the bridge and hadn't spotted those for which he watched, he crossed back to town and hitched a ride to the university.

The buggy-wagon of an elderly couple dropped him off before a huge, yellow-red sandstone structure that bared resemblance to a fortress of squares stacked high. Vorn walked through its opened iron gates, crossed a grassy courtyard, went up the front steps and entered the building. Greeting a few people he knew, he maneuvered his way to the stairs and headed for the grand wizard's chamber.

The Wizard's Lair was the first university in all the land. Its function was to act as an historic and education center for all Trelonians. It possessed a unique library and a one-of-a-kind museum, while offering many courses in various trades



and skills. There now existed several such schools throughout the land, but none as large or well-equipped as the Lair.

Basils had been the overseer here for over thirty years continuing the advancement of the old school. Famed, as far as wizards go, he was one of the most authoritative men in Trelon possessing extensive knowledge in almost every craft and trade in the land.

“Congratulations, Vorn. I knew Trenail would not refuse you,” said Basils, scurrying behind his desk and riffling through the drawers.

With an appreciative chuckle, he held up twin crystal glasses and a bottle of high-powered spirits for Vorn to see. Setting them all on his desk, without assistance from Basils, the bottle magically emptied precisely enough of its contents to fill the crystals.

“I say, this calls for a toast,” he told Vorn, handing him his drink and saluting his new position.

Vorn drained his glass.

“He seemed a decent enough fellow,” Vorn said.

“I was afraid he was going to give me the boot before I was able to finish,” commented Vorn, thoughtfully recalling the interview.

“Not Trenail. He is a smart one, though a trifle militant. Had I thought he would not hear you out, you might bet I would have gone before you to pave the way. But being the smart man he is, I knew he would at least hear your proposal.”

Basils paused.

“I sure hate to see you go,” he concluded.

He sighed and stared at his now empty glass. Once again and without movement, the bottle repeated its magical task filling the crystals.

“What if I was to become the high wizard in the next few years?” said Vorn rhetorically referring to the present High Wizard Kelon and rolling his eyes dramatically.

“Right you are!” Basils chuckled.

“If you edge that joker out of his spot, I will get rid of my title.” He laughed and paused readying to entertain an amusing thought.

“Too bad that old silver hermit is not taking your place. I have been after him for years,” Basils mused.

“Ranith as Master Wizard?” said Vorn, shaking his head.

“I do not think his wisdom could be so easily passed on. You know how he is. Moreover, Marigold’s quite the handful!”

Both men laughed simultaneously at the mental picture.

“You are right, there! But be sure to keep me filled in. Who knows, the next class I start, might be nefarious training for wizards in warfare,” Basils laughed again.

Bidding the chuckling grand wizard good day, Vorn left the office and headed downstairs. He heard her well before he saw her. She was standing across the entrance hall in the middle of a group of young students, laughing gaily. Her golden head swung his way as he stepped off the landing. Once she recognized him, she hiked up her peach-colored robe and started running towards him at sprinter speed.

“Did you get it, father? Did you?” Marigold begged to know, throwing herself at him.

“I leave for the border in two weeks,” Vorn said after his daughter disengaged herself and seemed once again in control. Drawing himself up to his full six foot plus height, Vorn thrust his staff at her as though he was about to unleash some of its power.

Jumping up and down at his haughty display, Marigold showered him with praises, then yelled, “My father’s an official warrior wizard!”

Giving Vorn no time to react, Marigold turned to her entourage and shouted, “Lemonades on me, mystical mages,” and with that, she fled, causing a stampede of talented youth to go flying down the corridor. She turned to holler, “Ranith’s in the gallery!” before disappearing at its end, leaving barely a fading trail of laughter and diminishing footfalls.

More than a few people standing around looked at Vorn with disapproval, but one lad in particular glared at him with unfeigned dislike as he walked past him, Vorn wondered what trickery Marigold had played upon the lad. Maybe it was the stare, or simply Vorn’s imagination, but not withstanding, he should have been used to the looks by now. Whenever Marigold put in a public appearance she had a way of drawing attention to herself and to all those around her, welcomed or not.

Marigold was progressing rapidly in her pursuit of magic, thanks to Ranith. She surpassed even his own skills when he was her age. She was gifted in the art and well aware of her talents. She enjoyed taking center stage, and always presented from a pure and gracious heart--much as her mother. Yet, it was a natural part of her personality he’d always found most amusing, even if at times somewhat unpredictable.

Stepping inside a spacious, domed room with a number of windows carved into the ceiling and walls, Vorn spotted his aged mentor stooping over a long, crystal display case housing antiquated scrolls and tomes.

Crossing the glossed, mosaic floor, bypassing ancient artifacts, strange skeletons, jeweled weapons and armors of old, he walked up to him. Vorn knew that neither he, the High

Wizard Kelon or the Grand Wizard Basils were a match for Ranith, the old wizard--he was unique, private and contained wisdom from a time not known by others.

"Greetings," Vorn piped, stepping next to him.

"Huh," Ranith growled, looking up feigning irritability.

"Oh, it is you," he muttered, and turned his attention back to the tome he was reading.

Vorn watched patiently until Ranith wiggled a gnarled finger and a page from the tome flipped over. It was as if the old wizard had handed him the ammunition he needed, and Vorn spoke up in a loud, admonishing voice.

"This is a M-U-S-E-U-M," he barked, chidingly spelling out museum as though Ranith was one of his worst pupils.

"They keep old, delicate things in here for people to look at. That is why these antiques are in protective cases," he sneered.

"In the L-I-B-R-A-R-Y," he spelled again, "which is pronounced lie-brar-ee. They have translations and copies of these precious originals for people to read."

Vorn paused to look at him mocking a loathing expression.

"This way, it ensures the originals are preserved from wear and tear!"

By the time he finished his rebuke, the wizard was glancing feloniously around the gallery as the people nearby started to give him sour grins of disapproval.

Turning a sarcastic stare to bare upon Vorn, Ranith shook his head in exasperation.

"Never could listen, could ya boy. If I told ye once, I am fated to live out me days repeating me self. Never! Never read someone else's translation if ye can read the original manuscript. There could be mistakes!"

He glanced helplessly at the people watching who now looked perplexed not understanding the feigned dramatic exchange taking place.

Taking advantage of the brief distraction he'd created, Ranith leaned over and muttered in Vorn's ear, "Lucky for ye it was not all that interesting."

With staff in hand, he stalked boldly over to a red-cushioned couch placed beside the bleached skeleton of an adult wyvern.

To Vorn, Ranith looked every bit as menacing as the dead creature. Bending over to look at the text Ranith had been reading, he noticed it was written by Zadok, the youngest wizard in Trelon's recorded history, who had grown famous by creating elaborate illusions. Vorn crossed over to Ranith and took a seat beside him.

"Well," the old wizard spoke, breaking the silence.

"Well, what?" said Vorn as though he didn't have a clue.

Staring contemptuously at the younger wizard, Ranith ran one of his hands around his long silver beard.

"How did it go?" he inquired.

Vorn smiled, "I leave for Actan in a fortnight."

Ranith smiled back.

"Vorn, me boy," reaching over and patting his knee, "maybe I am wrong about sending ye off to war. I am not so sure ye be cut out for it. If ye agree to come back and be me apprentice, we can pick up from where we last left off. If anybody raises a fuss about ye not going, we can send locks-a-gold in your stead...what say ye?"

Vorn, caught off guard inquired, "What did she do?"

Ranith looked bored and waved his hands dismissively.

"Are you trying to compare me with some child barely able to cast minor spells?" said Vorn a bit unsettled.

“Child! Ha! That is no child!” Ranith responded vigorously glancing around to make sure no one could overhear him.

“Fooled ye is what she did. She almost fooled me self too, that is until I caught her eyeing me staff!” his crystal eyes slit with fanaticism.

“You should be ashamed of yourself,” Vorn sighed, recalling his earlier conversation with Alice.

“What manner of mentor would think about sending a sweet, young, adorable apprentice like Marigold off to war? And to think you call yourself a wizard,” he grunted with indignation.

This brought forth a loud snort from Ranith.

“Never could listen, could ya, boy!”

Forced to give the old wizard his full attention, Vorn stared at Ranith who looked back at him with that *I got you look!* Briefly, Vorn wondered what part of the conversation he missed.

“Child, bah! I told ye that is no child. No...While ye have been off dreaming of becoming some king’s wizard, locks-a-gold has been conspiring!” he laughed maliciously.

“No sirreee...not that one! No small time conjuring dreams for her! Ha hah! I say boy, did not ye hear me? I said, she has her eye on me staff!”

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

## **II. WARRIOR WIZARD**

**A**ctan was a veritable military fortress built on the fertile plains of Trelon acting as the gateway into Trelon City and Larion. It was erected not long after Castle Larion's completion with the purpose of establishing Trelon's southwestern front and defending it from the aggressive hordes of creatures inhabiting the Wilds to the west of the Duke of Thran's province of Malber, Trelon's northwestern most border.

Actan's fortress walls ran south for some distance before turning eastward partially separating Trelon's southern border from the forest of Shanifir, the land of the mysterious elves.

To the north of Trelon's territory stood the towering mountains of Thorgane, home to the dwaren kind. In the past, the two races had once been on friendly terms, but as time went by and trouble erupted between the two, they found it wise to restrict their dealings as much as possible.

The dwarves talent at forging superbly wrought swords and armaments was renowned, but highly praised and sought after were the gems they mined--the inimitable larstones found only deep inside their mountains. Regrettably, dealing with the short, fiery-tempered people almost always led to



heated debates, and on some occasions armed conflict. Trade between the two was seldom at best.

The Shining Knights of Larion had once inhabited the keep at Actan, but in time, their heavy armor and knightly tactics had outgrown their use. After several centuries when Trelon was beginning to flourish, King Rait, the reigning king of Trelon, recalled the Shining Knights back to Larion while leaving a handful to recruit and train voluntary replacements.

The majority of these recruits were simple men. Some led mercenary lives while others had been hunters, trappers, fishers or farmers. As this new army grew, so too did the ways of defending the border. A new rank and system of order was gradually established. And in time, because of their unique fighting tactics, they eventually became known as the border scouts--Trelon's only standing army.

\*\*\*

"He is as durable as any young recruit," Hinric commented, as he and Trenail stood on the balcony watching Vorn urge his horse to crouch low and stretch its majestic frame in line with the earth. It was a common tactic all scouts learned to employ when spying hostile bands of creatures.

"That was one of the reasons I signed him on," Trenail replied. Vorn, true to scout ways urged his mount up from the ground and spurred his steed off and running.

"Go find Jan," he told Hinric.

"I want our wizard instructed in some staff-wielding techniques."

"What about his magic? You going to put him to some kind of test?"

"No need," Trenail replied.

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

“Whether it works out as he hopes or not is not in question. He can prove himself as any other scout, but for now I want you to make sure he is well instructed.”

“Me?” Hinric asked, dumbfounded.

“Yes, you. When he is finished with basic training, I want you taking him out...I imagine you will be able to show him what it is about.”

“One on One?”

“No. Take that young red-haired boy with you. Name's Redlar, Redlar of Rengot.”

“Tomroy's boy?” said Hinric surprised. Trenail nodded.

“I thought he looked familiar. No wonder he has been picking up right quick.”

“Yeah, I guess Tomroy's made our work a might easier.”

“Well, captain,” Hinric chuckled, “soon as they finish up here, we will see.”

\*\*\*

“Whenever you whip your shoulders about, think of them as your staff. Your staff does not fold in on itself, neither should your shoulders.”

Jan splayed his legs and brought his staff even with his shoulders as if he was fixing to hurtle a spear.

“See how both my shoulders and staff are parallel?” he asked.

Vorn nodded.

Whipping his shoulders hard left and twisting at the hips, Jan jabbed his staff out.

The same thing applies to cross-strikes, or any other strike,” he continued, whipping out three side-to-side cross-strikes.

“You get a lot more power, you are faster, you maintain your balance and you are in a position to follow up.”

He went into a flurry of thrusts, upper clips, sweeps and side-to-side cross-strikes.

“But never forget, your legs are the most important. They get you in and out of striking range.”

He stepped up to Vorn, then to the side and away. Jan knew these techniques would be vital to the new recruit and his fellow scouts. The captain had charged him with Vorn’s training, and train him he did--right up to the start of his first adventure into Dalkoron.

\*\*\*

“Let us break here!” Hinric yelled, pulling up on top of a grassy hillock.

“That is Dalkoron Forest,” he said, pointing to a vast stretch of woods in the distance spreading out to the south and west of them.

“It runs almost to the desert foothills of Shanifir and even farther west into the Wilds. We are at the northern fringes of it now, but come tomorrow will be skirting it and heading into the Wilds. Officially speaking, this is where the border stops...what is wrong, scout?” Hinric asked, seeing a cloudy look cross over Redlar's face.

“Nothing, sir,” Redlar replied.

“Come now, lad,” Hinric pressed.

“Spit out whatever is bothering you.”

“Well,” the youth gave in, “I was thinking about the savrens. Are not they supposed to live in Dalkoron?”

“Yeah...what is your point?” Hinric wanted to know.

“Will they not be out tonight?” Redlar stammered.

“Do not they come out at night?”

A flood of relief came over Hinric.

“Is that all?” he asked, glad it wasn't anything serious.

“No need to worry about those weird bats. They will not attack unless there are lots of them. Between me, you and the wizard here, they will not pose much of a threat.”

“But tonight is when they will turn,” Redlar insisted, not at all sure Hinric understood what he meant.

“Turn what?” the old scout questioned.

“You know,” Redlar shrugged, casting his eyes down, “turn into ghouls.”

Hinric was stunned to silence.

“It will be a full moon tonight, and tonight is when they will change,” Redlar explained, positive he'd be understood now.

Hinric guffawed and Vorn chuckled.

“Stop that!” Hinric demanded as he and Vorn exploded into a rage of laughter.

“Stop!” he huffed, and held up a hand to try to suppress the hysteria.

When he grew calmer, he asked, “Who in Trelon told you that?” trying to keep a straight face as he and Vorn struggled not to snicker.

“My sister,” said Redlar looking at them and daring either to refute it.

Hinric exploded with Vorn in tow.

“Nonsense,” Hinric chortled.

“An old wives' tale,” he scoffed and pointed to the laughing Vorn.

“Something the good wizard would have you believe.”

“Thanks!” Vorn huffed through tears, trying without success to look hurt.

“No problem!” Hinric added as their hysteria reached new heights.

After dismounting, Hinric set about preparing their mid-day meal. Vorn could still hear Hinric chuckling to himself as he and Redlar tended the mounts.

"Uh, Vorn?" the young scout asked after Hinric stopped his chortling.

"I never heard of wizards joining the army...much less wanting to. Why did you join?"

"Wizards used to fight a long time ago," Vorn responded, choosing his words with care hoping Hinric wouldn't start up again.

"A friend of mine happened across a primeval tome written sometime in early Trelonian history," he said, pausing to see how the young boy was taking it so far.

"Not a lot was salvageable," he continued, liking what he saw, "but the parts that described ancient practices and lost rituals of wizards back then. As I said, it was written long ago...sometime during or shortly after the Dark War. You might say my joining the scouts is an attempt at resurrecting the glory of those once known as warrior wizards."

He chuckled.

"Why should wizards be left out of the fighting?"

"I see," said Redlar, "but tell me, what exactly can you do?"

"Many things," Vorn answered, "as far as wizards go. But my arts, well...they are as the winds."

He whispered and wove his hands through the warm sunlit air.

"If he stares at you long enough, you will turn to stone," Hinric interjected snickering at his own wit.

"Maybe," said Vorn, turning his weaving hands towards him.

"I will have to study up on that one."

Hinric passed out chunks of dried meats, smoked cheese and some blackened bread as the others took seats by him. They ate in silence, contemplating their own thoughts and enjoying the brief lull from the saddle. When they finished, Hinric pulled out a skin filled with some sweet tasting berry wine.

“How did you come by the decorations?” Vorn asked, taking a drink from the rapidly depleting wine skin.

“A long time serving.”

Hinric smiled, but his smile changed to a look of consternation.

“My first shield,” he indicated the one on his left shoulder, “came after I brought back a woman and child from the Warnt Mountains. I was out in the foothills of Warnt, in the middle of a storm when I came across a large cluster of horse tracks heading for the mountains. No scouts about, so I assumed, and rightly so, it was bolgs riding on stolen horses. I followed them a ways until I figured the story out by their trail. Seemed a few of those pink abominations snuck across our border and raided a nearby farm. They had a woman and child with them, and being no help was close by and the storm was verging on obliterating their tracks, I went after them myself.”

He paused, recalling the ordeal.

“I tracked them for three days, and when I caught up to them, all the bolgs were dead, laid out in a clearing with barbarian arrows sticking out of their fat hides. After tracking that woman and child so far, I was not about to let a wild bunch of men run off with them. I kept following, and before night of the next day I found them.”

Taking a swig from his mug, he continued the tale.

“I knew the barbarians were a fierce bunch, but I never heard of them attacking any scouts. With that in mind, I rode

down to meet them. It was my hope to employ reason, if not, they would have to kill me. When I got their attention, I pointed to the woman and child and told them they belonged to me. Seemed simple enough, but the next I knew I was flat on the ground with a sore head. They took my weapons and circled me in.”

He paused, adding dramatic purpose seeking the right words before continuing.

“Now imagine five black-haired brutes as big...no,” pausing while recalling their mighty size, “much bigger than Trenail, wearing animal furs buttoned down with grundal horns and sporting necklaces of savren teeth around barrel-like necks. Well, there I was, surrounded by them. Then one throws my sword at my feet, and another, brandishing a wicked spiked club steps inside the ring with me.”

Hinric paused and took a drink from the wine skin once again.

“If his eyes could kill, I would be dead! But I am not. I killed him more out of luck than anything, but killed him I did. After that, they just picked up his body and left. Just like that...left me, the woman and kid there. Never said so much as a word and did not even glance back.”

Vorn and Redlar sat and listened with new-found respect as the old, scarred beaten-faced scout started filling his two protégés with more famous border stories.

They mounted up and rode to the northeastern fringes of Dalkoron where they made camp before the sun set. They all had a good laugh that night when Hinric told Redlar not to worry, “...for the only reason savrens do not change shapes anymore, is because the scouts ran the shape changers out of the country a long time back.”

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

The next day, and a few hours after dawn when the sun was beginning to bask the land in its heat, Hinric reigned in and waved the others to him.

“There they are,” he said, and pointed across the plains to a pack of distant dots.

“Those are the foul-smelling beasts that have been messing my nose up all morning,” Hinric said rubbing his nose.

“They are pretty far away,” Redlar said. “You must have elf sight.”

“Nah, it is not that. It is my nose,” he retorted disdainfully and sniffed at the wind.

“I have been smellin' them for the last spell, and it is getting worse,” said Hinric, watching as Vorn pulled out his staff and jumped off his horse.

“What do you think you are doing?” he asked him.

“I will be taking a better view,” Vorn responded, and began to plant his staff in the ground.

Ignoring him, Hinric said, “They are a few days from our border, and they will think twice about getting too close. What we do, is make sure they are not gathering into any sizeable war parties, and the best way to do that is roam around and keep our eyes on ‘em. Hey...” he said to Vorn who was dumping water in the hole in which he had planted his staff.

“You will see,” Vorn smirked, and plucked some prairie grass.

When he had a handful, he fashioned them halfway down his staff, let go and smiled at the others. To everyone's surprise, the grass stayed. Hinric and Redlar watched as Vorn started speaking in a sharp tongue. The water in the hole started vibrating then cast a faint white glow. The staff started



humming and taking on the same white glow, until Vorn stopped chanting.

The wizard smiled once more and pulled the grass over and off his staff. What he held was a long, skinny cylinder, hollow in the center and made entirely out of grass.

He put the hollow object up to his right eye and looked towards the direction of the dots. He saw eight bulky-sized creatures, with brown-orange skins dotted with black spots.

They were sitting around a fire, leering and signaling to each other in grotesque fashions while their mouths clamped open and shut in lewd rhythms. Next, he spotted a pitiful form obscenely spitted over their earthen blaze. He watched as one of the grundals reached over to it, and with a brutal jerk, ripped off a hunk. Two grundals near him reached for the piece, and the three tore it up between them.

A single, finger-sized horn stained red-brown, protruded from their foreheads with an upward curve. It bobbed up and down as their jaws mutilated the meat they stuffed into their insatiable, toothy caves.

"Here!" said Vorn disgusted by the sight, handing the stupefied Hinric the straw cylinder. "Put it up to your eye and look at them."

Mimicking Vorn's previous pose, he did.

"Well, I will be a dragon on fire!" Hinric exclaimed.

"I can see them. Yep...even uglier than I remembered," he snorted at length and passed the object to Redlar.

"Wow!" the young scout said, fascinated.

"They look just like their statues...but different."

"That is because they are alive," said Hinric, eyeing the youth speculatively.

"Wait until you get a whiff of one," he grimaced.

"What do you want done with that?" he asked Vorn, motioning to the straw looking glass.

“Leave it,” Vorn answered.

“It is about to lose its magic,” and sure enough as he spoke, the cylindrical shape of the grass started coming apart in Redlar's hands.

Giving wide berth to the grundals they saw, Hinric led them farther in. Shortly after their mid-day meal, they came upon a large following of spotted hyenas making aggressive feints at them until Redlar, acting under Hinric's advice, shot and killed one.

“That is probably what they were eating,” speaking to no one in particular. Hinric nodded his head in the direction of dead unidentifiable animal remains as they passed the lifeless hyena carcass Redlar had downed.

By nightfall, well away from the grundals and hyenas they'd seen earlier, Hinric had them pitch camp beside a small brook running through an expansive meadow a short distance inside Dalkoron Forest. The scouts were thankful for an uneventful evening and a good night's sleep.

A loud snort and some rustling caused Vorn to jump. After assuring himself it was merely Hinric trying to shake off the night's sleep, he relaxed the stranglehold he'd placed on his staff.

“Huh, kump, hike-eens,” Hinric snorted at him bleary eyed.

It took Vorn a minute to understand, but he concluded the old scout was asking for some coffee beans. Instead of putting him through the agony of repeating himself, Vorn informed him, “Sorry, we drank them up yesterday.”

Hinric frowned and muttering something unintelligible, started fidgeting with his sleeping gear.

“Will you keep an eye on things?” Vorn, who had last watch asked.

"I want to go down to the stream and wash the trail stench off."

After getting Hinric's groggy but grunting consent, Vorn headed to the water. Once done, he surveyed his surroundings now twinkling from the first light of dawn reflecting off the morning frost on the forest floor. On a hunch, he walked upstream and began rooting around by the trees in the forest.

"Tastes really good, Vorn," Redlar said, sipping the hot concoction he'd made.

"What is it?"

"Pernican," Vorn answered, pleased at the compliment.

"It is in much abundance around the foothills of Yamer. My wife is the herb expert at her shop in Trelon, and every now and then, she would drag me around collecting every plant, root and seed you might imagine. I figured since we were out of coffee, I would give search and find Hinric a substitute."

The corners of his mouth signified a slight smile.

"Sure enough, I found this pernican herb."

He held up his cup.

"Besides making a piping hot drink, it also has a propensity to heighten your alertness. I reckoned the faster Hinric woke up, the more pleasant it would be for you and me!"

Both scouts started jeering playfully at Hinric who paid them no mind. He was starting to feel better, and the hot liquid warming his belly, combined with the crisp morning's air, had a liberating effect on him.

"*It was going to be a nice day,*" he thought, studying the trees of Dalkoron dressed floridly in their early spring best. He inhaled deeply of the meadow's fragrant scent, and suddenly something nagged him as he pulled on his ear. Hinric looked around with mild curiosity about to dismiss the

bothersome thought as a pesky fly, but a breeze wafted by and that nagging feeling came back with vengeance. He cocked his head and eyed his fellows with suspicion.

“Something is wrong,” he said.

Vorn and Redlar drew silent, catching the unsettling look in the scarred, beaten face of the old scout. They watched confused as Hinric poked his smashed nose into the air and started sniffing. Another breeze came by and propelled him into action.

“Smells like grundal!” he yelled, and jumped simultaneously.

Startled by Hinric's unexpected shout, Redlar dove head first for his weapons and accidentally slammed into the hearth, knocking off the pot that held their pernican.

Vorn, dropping his cup in all the excitement, reached for his staff. He saw Hinric looking past his shoulder fumbling with the sheath holding his broadsword.

With staff in hand, he rose with purpose and turned in time to see about a dozen drab-orange forms, specked with black patches, springing up from the tall meadow grass not more than twenty yards away. A handful more of the leering creatures came charging out from behind the trees of the forest.

Most of the grundals carried crude clubs or wooden sticks with fire-hardened tips, but a few held long rusty swords, and one had a short double-headed dwarven battle axe. As they rushed him, closing the distance on stout, tree trunk-like legs, Vorn suddenly realized where these creatures had come by their steel weapons.

He heard the thumping of their feet slapping turf race ahead of him much like the pounding of stampeding cattle. Their puffing and panting sliced through the cold air encasing him as though they all stood deep down inside a reverberating

canyon. Fear gripped his heart. Paralysis stole his legs. A twang sounded behind him and something whizzed past his ear.

Vorn watched transfixed as the lead grundal, holding a fire-hardened spear, poised and at the ready, stumbled oddly. It let go the deadly stick it was carrying and grabbed at the protruding object that had miraculously appeared in the center of its chest. Releasing an agonized howl, the grundal plowed recklessly back into the confines of the tall meadow's grass.

A bellowing yell of rage deafened Vorn as Hinric's broadsword freed from its sheath, came rushing by him. With another yell, the wiry old scout whipped his sword up, took a few more steps and as a dwarf bringing a hammer to bear on a chisel, swiped down on a shock-stricken grundal whose headlong charge brought him right under Hinric's blade. A grizzled-swish and a half torso later, the grundal went sprawling unceremoniously to its death to the side of Hinric. The sight was enough to bring the seriousness of their situation to Vorn's immediate attention.

The first wave of grundals had closed the gap, but they stayed at a respectful distance from Hinric, which allowed Redlar the time he needed to run to his side. The grundals started to circle, taunting them as they closed in.

Ignoring the pounding in his ribcage and trying to clear the fear gripping his brain, Vorn raised his staff. As if that familiar move gave him the courage he so desperately needed, his years of training kicked in, and a war spell etched itself into his mind.

The verbal incantation came rushing out of his mouth as water bursting its way through a dam, but before he was able to withdraw into the magical place deep inside, two grundals, one armed with a sword, the other barehanded, came running

at him and broke the thin connection he'd been striving to obtain.

Helplessness swooned down on him at the sight. With nothing to lose, more out of instinct than training, Vorn gripped his staff with both hands and brought it up to his shoulders as the grundal holding the sword raised it up and the other barehanded grundal springing at him, charged him in unison.

Ignoring the springing grundal, Vorn concentrated on the sword wielder. Whipping his shoulders hard left and twisting at the hips like Jan showed him, he jabbed his staff with the intentions of driving it through the ugly mug of the creature. He felt a momentary glee of satisfaction as the knobby end of his staff slammed into the bestial face wiping away its ghastly grin stopping it dead in its tracks only so briefly before the other grundal came crashing down upon him.

After shooting the first grundal, Redlar discarded his bow and snatched up his rapier. He'd been practicing with it since he was eight, about the time he'd learned to break a horse, but as he ran to Hinric's side, he abandoned the reign he'd once given his opponents in play and leapt into the fray with a serious lust to carve out a scout's name for himself. He did all this, and never, not once, did he leave the laboring old scout's side exposed.

Redlar cursed as two of the more daring opponents managed to circumvent him and run for the wizard. He cursed again when he saw Vorn standing petrified while shouting frantically, but then saw the wizard make his deathly staff lunge right as the other grundal crashed into him.

Redlar hollered at Hinric to let him know Vorn was down. The two frenzied scouts were trying to keep the grundals at bay, swiping and feinting at any of the creatures

who thought to interfere with the two struggling opponents on the ground.

The grundal was strong and clung to him tightly. He tried to get his knees under its body so he could throw it off, but to no avail. Vorn fought hard trying to keep its curved horn from ripping open his face.

The creature was a full foot shorter than he, but its heavy bulk more than made up for that difference. Ignoring the grundal's groping mutated hands, Vorn concentrated on getting his face out of stabbing position. He succeeded after what seemed an eternity and reached up to grip its sweaty throat. Surprised at how mushy it felt, he dug in with all his strength. Soon the grundal's fight waned as it spit, sputtered and coughed on him with wet fetid breath.

Vorn swore he would ignore the nausea threatening to overtake him and applied more pressure to its throat. With a powerful heave, he was able to roll the grundal over to reverse their positions. Vorn brought all his weight to bear on his chokehold and squeezed with all his strength. The grundal slowly gave way, and its face began to take on tormented aspects as it turned to rapid shades of darkening colors. Only when it grew completely still, and the last putrid gasps of breath escaped its carnivorous lips, did Vorn relent from his squeeze.

It seemed the grundal had ceased to struggle any longer in its final state of death. Vorn couldn't help staring aghast at it--at what he had done. A short while ago, it had tried to kill him. Its coal black eyes had emitted a callous cruelty, a desire to hate. But they were different now, he thought looking into them. They were empty--dead by his hand.

Hinric's shouting broke through to him as waves smashing against a beach. He came alive as if he'd been in

some hypnotic trance. The sounds of battle, labored grunts and unimaginable curses were a cold slap in the face.

Grundals were everywhere, attacking with increasing abandon as Hinric and Redlar stood guard to either side of him repelling them away. A foreboding toll on the two scouts. Spotting his staff but a few feet away, Vorn scrambled for it. As his hand curled around the familiar rosewood, hope washed through him.

Overcoming the weary dread he felt, he blocked out the battle waging around him until the only thing he could hear was his own voice filling the air. After he concentrated on the cryptic enchantments it made, he felt a warm darkness welling up around him. As this dark void grew and Vorn became lost to it, the fight ceased to hold any meaning for him. For far ahead, somewhere deep out in space, a light had appeared.

As though he was being drawn to it, it seemed to grow becoming a blinding but brilliant star. His speed was increasing, and the force propelling him did so at a hurtling rate. He entered into the first rays of its warm luminescence, the dark tunnel disappeared, and Vorn found himself falling, plunging through a doorway of light.

He opened his eyes and looked out upon the battlefield. His skin prickled, and his hair stood on end. Power surged through his being, screaming for escape.

"Curse and blast you beasts to hell!" Hinric yelled, making a desperate attempt to cleave through the face of a grundal that just poked its spear through his shoulder.

"Ha, ha!" he laughed in victory, feeling it bite deep.

"Come on!" he growled, letting go his own sword stuck deep into the grundal's belly.



He was too tired, and there was no time to pull it free. He didn't even try as he braced himself to meet the horde of blood-grunting creatures leaping at him.

“WHARGHAAR!” a booming voice thundered, and a crackling explosion of blue-white light erupted into existence. It shimmered in a six-foot wave above the wizard's staff. Blinded by the sudden luminescence, the five grundals charging Vorn, skidded to a halt.

With a twist and thrust from his staff, the searing wave reared its ugly head backwards and split into five separate entities. As quick as any striking snake, the entities lashed out and struck each one of the five grundals. A blinding impact followed, and the grundals exploded into unrecognizable pieces of charred and smoking things.

“WHARGHARR!” Vorn boomed again, and another crackling pop heralded the appearance of another brightly burning wall of flame, though this was remarkably smaller than the first as Vorn struggled to keep the doorway open.

When the first explosion of light appeared, the snarling, victorious grundals around Hinric had eased up from their murderous onslaught to turn quizzical eyes upon the tall figure dressed in dark green robes standing erect and without fright a few mere meters away.

His long, red hair lashed out in streams, and a wall of wavy light danced above the stick he held. They watched uncomprehending as five of their comrades were blown to smithereens.

With a twist and thrust from his staff, the small wave split into four flaming entities and exploded into fiery life. They went whipping out to strike the faces of their befuddled victims as the four hypnotized grundals, who had moments before been crooning over Hinric's prone body, fell in lifeless

protest around his inert form into smoking scraps in deadly defeat.

Vorn turned his attention towards Redlar who stood gaping at him. The six remaining grundals had already dropped their weapons and were cringing away from the youngest scout and the field of battle in terror.

Vorn raised his staff, and they turned squealing and stumbling into each other before fleeing back in panic to the safety of the forest's refuge.

"So," said a familiar voice, weakly.

It was Hinric, and he was struggling feebly to sit up. After a doubtful attempt, he succeeded in raising his right hand and put it over a bloody wound saturating the upper leather of his tunic.

"That is what wizards can do."

He wheezed, and abruptly passed out.

Hinric's wounds were attended, and he soon regained consciousness. The old scout insisted they move out. He was extremely weak from his great loss of blood but yet had enough strength to argue with vigor. His complaint wasn't that the grundals who had run off would come back with more, but rather that if his wounds didn't kill him, their odor would.

They made it back to Actan in five days. Upon arriving, the news of their encounter had spread up and down the border. Interest in Vorn, the warrior wizard, rose to an all time high. By the end of Vorn's first journey, many stories were being told.

Impressed at how well the wizard was working out, Trenail knew he had made an excellent decision.

*"Now is the time," he thought, "a quick trip to Sterdan before the spring council to see his real worth tried and proved."*

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

Sterdan was a dangerous border fort, but with a long historic undertaking to Daksin still on the hush and coming in mid-summer, he knew Vorn could use the experience. He would surely need it at Daksin.

### **III. A CHALLENGE**

A hush settled over those packed inside the Great Mountain Hall as the lights and walls dimmed slowly to off. Marigold's soft rhythmical voice floated hypnotically to those near. Her hands spun and wove a web of intrigue as they twirled and danced about the air. A dull white glow filled the front stage. The larstone expanded and seemed to breathe as its light reached out to bathe the audience in its luminance.

"Oohs!" flowed through the hall as the wall flickered and forms appeared. An autumn forest filled their eyes making the dwarves gasp in delight. White-spotted red deer roamed lazily throughout the trees while pink and blue bunny rabbits scampered around them at play on a leaf-strewn floor in its full bounty of fall colors.

"Wow!" they uttered in unison when the animals and trees came at them. They caught their breath in amazement as a shimmering blue lake hastened into view. Birds of every imaginable size with feathers of every color flew about, while gold and silver fish swam through the waters.

The birds, fish and lakes zoomed by as the tranquil sky filled with swirling white, cotton clouds. The larstone tilted back to earth, and the land came sweeping back into view. It was a flatland, shrouded in yellow grass that went rushing by. Distant mountains on the horizon began to loom inspiringly near. As they drew closer, the assembly started to clap.

“That is our home!” an observant dwarf said.

“Our mountains!” another added with pride as the towering MountThorgane grew miraculously near.

More claps started to resound but died suddenly as the sky began to darken, and the white cotton clouds swirled to dark grey. The hall went deathly still as a foreboding shadow of doom settled into place. The mountains around Thorgane were lost to view as the once grey, now black clouds began to erupt in fury. A cold wind whistled through the hall making the dwarves shiver. A flash of lightning lit up the black clouds. Exploding thunder made them jump! Sounds of panic ensued as booming thunder, torrents of rain and bright streaks filled the room. Dwarven voices cried out as the dreaded storm began to play out. The chill of terror that gripped their hearts slowly faded as the sky started to calm.

Relief came as the sun brightened the mountains and snow shone upon the high peaks. Gasps of wonder echoed as a glittering rainbow materialized. Its arc lit the sky over MountThorgane rippling with a liquid radiance.

Great eagles took to flight and blue doves twirled in droves. Silvery linings on soft, fluffy clouds were the last things seen as the larstone wall breathed its final lingering sigh, and the dull white glow returned. The lights returned to the Great Mountain Hall, and the larstone dawned back to its natural state.

A heavy silence amplified itself before claps were heard. Increasingly it picked up speed, and its momentum

built until the hall trembled with applause. King Tagan and the royal family rose and approached the balcony's edge. They were waiting for the booming ovation to die down.

"On behalf of the dwarves of Thorgane," King Tagan said, bowing regally to the young golden-haired damsel who had a wide smile splayed across her lovely face, "I would be deeply honooooor..." he grunted, as the queen elbowed him in the ribs.

"Excuse me," Tagan said after a brief moment.

He cast his Queen Quara a disgruntled look.

"I meant," he smiled, and swept his hands out to include the whole hall, "we would be deeply honored if you would accept the place of honor tomorrow night at the feast and celebration of our Spring Birth."

Everyone held their breath and turned envious eyes upon Marigold. She bowed to the king and royal family. Spreading her hands out, she bowed in a humble fashion to the rest of her audience.

In a high-toned voice that filled the hall, she said, "Thank you, King Tagan...Queen Quara. I am delighted to have met with your heartiest approval."

She blushed.

"How could I ever refuse," she finished, smiling with confidence and grace. The dwarves jumped for joy and crowded around to shower her with praise.

\*\*\*

The feast was prepared, and all who had gathered in the banquet hall were having a grand time celebrating the Spring Birth. Marigold occupied the seat of honor directly across from the king and queen. As she and Ranith filled themselves with merry, the dwarves tumbled about while others juggled fruits or sang dwarven folk songs in loud drunken voices.

“This feast is fit for a king!” Marigold piped up above the din.

“Or wizardess!” she added, laughing gaily and having fun as the dwarven humor and meal progressed on.

“What is bothering you, ye old lout?” Tager, the prince, King Tagan’s son asked Ranith.

“She yearns to be known as a wizardess,” Ranith remarked, watching Marigold basking in the attention she was receiving.

“She has got it coming... at least with us, that is,” said Prince Tager.

“Anybody that can please a dwarf with magic must be good. Her show even surprised me!” He eyed Ranith with curiosity.

“Maybe you should give her what she is due?”

“Maybe I might,” Ranith retorted with a mildly defensive attitude.

Tager laughed at him. Pounding on the table for quiet, the prince rose from his chair. Raising his jewel-encrusted, golden goblet high over his head in a saluting fashion, he shouted, “Three cheers for the Wizardess Marigold!”

And everybody but Ranith Joined in.

\*\*\*

“Hail warriors, and you, wizard!” said Trenail, coming around his desk to greet the arrivals.

“It has been awhile,” Ian said.

“Greetings, captain,” Jeric spoke up, shaking his hand.

“Captain,” Vorn said, shaking hands while bowing his head in acknowledgment.

“As of now, you are all on leave,” Trenail told them, inviting them to take seats. On an unspoken command,

Hinric, who was in the office before the others, set about pouring the traditional ale.

“The High Wizard Kelon has proposed an historic undertaking...a trip to Daksin to be more precise. The king will discuss this expedition at the meeting of the lords after the spring tournaments take place. He will enlist the help of the four dukes to fund and gather a voluntary army from all sectors of Trelon to make the trek. He will need us to lead them, and I will need you,” he pointed to Ian, “and you,” he pointed to Jeric, “and Hinric and Jan to advise them.”

“It sounds like it is a go?” Ian inquired as Hinric passed out their drinks.

“It is,” Trenail responded, staring intently at each of them.

“Other than some minor tensions between us and the elves of Shanifir, nothing is stopping us.”

“Well, who is Vorn going to advise?” Jeric asked, staring at the wizard speculatively.

“Why me, of course,” Trenail smiled at Vorn.

“If you will remember, I said Kelon proposed this journey. Word is he will be joining the host.” Trenail raised his glass. “To scouts and warrior wizards,” he said.

The men, nodding their approvals, drained the contents of their cups.

\*\*\*

“She has done it this time!” Ranith yelled, slamming with a bang the door to Alice's shop.

“She is finished!” He smacked the bottom of his staff down to the ground.

“She is through!” He swiped at the air with his free hand.

“Ranith!” Alice exclaimed, pushing some herbal dust into a jar before walking over to greet him.



"It is so good to see..."

"Do not give me that!" he shouted, cutting her off.

"Not even ye wiles can save her now!"

"Calm down then and tell me, whatever happened?" she said sweetly, hoping to placate him.

"I am calm, Alice!" he declared, shaking his staff threatening to put it to use.

"And if ye want to hear it then I will tell what happened!"

Alice nodded demurely.

Ranith eyed her warily and spat, "She tried to usurp me staff in front of those know-nothin' midgets. That is what she tried to do!"

"Usurp your staff?" Alice queried.

"That is right. She tried to usurp me staff in front of them. In all the years I have known them ungrateful midgets, they never once crowned me as their guest of honor...she has eyed me staff long enough," Ranith said, indignantly shaking his head, "but now it is too late. She is finished. She is through!"

"They are dwarves," Alice corrected, "and too late for what?"

"Too late to save her!" he shot back.

"She is no good Alice, a treacherous rogue run amuck. I know ye are her mum, but it is true. She will do tricks for anybody...anybody Alice...including ill-mannered midgets." He shook his head sadly.

"No class, I am afraid."

"It is dwarves Ranith," she corrected again, "and if that is what is bothering you, maybe you should reconsider your position...after all..." she gazed at him smugly, "you are the one who taught her."

Her words hit home just as a sculptor's blade, indeed, chiseled an expression of exasperation into his face.

"Ye...ye..." he stuttered.

"Ye think it is me fault?" he asked.

Alice nodded.

"I...I cannot believe that."

Ranith shook his head.

"It is not me fault," he hesitated.

"No...no. She tricked me! Cast a spell or something on me self."

He looked confounded as he thought about it.

"That is what she did. That is what she did...She is a cheap cloak. A showoff renegade. That is what she is...but no more...no more! I will not allow it. This time...this time Alice," he said drawing himself up stiffly, "this time, I am the one that will show her!"

"Show her what?" Alice asked, trying not to laugh.

"Not what, Alice, but when," he whispered conspiratorially, raising his bushy eyebrows to study her.

"She has eyed me staff long enough, and now I am giving her a chance. A staffing, Alice. I called her out to a staffing."

"A staffing?" Alice said, mulling over the possible meaning it might hold.

"What is that?" she asked, unsure.

"A staffing, Alice. Did not that apprentice of a hubby tell ye anything?" He glared at her in disbelief until she shook her head.

"It is a duel, Alice. Like knights, and once as famed, only with wizards. We found it in that book, the one that gave him the idea to get the king's attention."

"You gave him that idea?" Alice interrupted, trying to steer him back on track.

“And what do you think you are doing calling Marigold out to some wizard's duel? Are you mad, insane or plain crazy?” she scolded gently.

“I had to Alice. She is too big, too uppity, thinks she knows it all. She gets all the attention, and she loves it. Loves to show off to everybody...including midgets! She tries to upstage me everywhere we go. Lurks around behind me robe...coveting me staff.”

He shook his head woefully.

“It is time, Alice. It is either myself or her. Trelon be not big enough for the both of us...for once and for all,” he grinned ominously, “will see who the real wizard is.”

“That is ridiculous,” Alice laughed, “to accuse her of coveting your staff. Why, you know she adores you, and yet you challenged her to a duel?”

“Not so!” Ranith declared, looking at her suspiciously to see if she was lying.

“Maybe at one time, long ago, before she started eyeing me staff. Now I am nothing. Reduced by the trickeries of an apprentice...no. I have to prove myself. Prove it to you, to her, to everybody. I have to show her up in front of all Trelon. Then Alice, and only then will I be known as the greatest wizard in all the land!” he said with great emphasis standing haughty and proud.

“My dream...my dream Alice, is to break her staff. That is why I am here. I came to notify her next of kin!”

The door chimes jingled signaling the arrival of an elderly couple. Their eyes strayed over to Ranith, who, in response hunched over his staff and glowered at them.

“Do not worry about him,” said Alice, ignoring Ranith to walk over and greet them.

“Even old, cranky wizards must stop by to get their herbs.”

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

She cast them a winning smile.

“How is it I may help you?” she asked.

Ranith muttered to himself the whole time Alice spent with the couple.

“Marigold does not have a staff,” Alice said, resuming where they left off once the couple had departed.

“Do not worry, I will see she gets one...but it will not be mine!” he declared and turned to go.

“Wait,” he said as he paused and turned back to face her, “almost forgot,” he muttered and reached into his customary silvery robe.

“They said it is called Lamset,” he said, extracting a red leather pouch. He handed it to her.

“The dwarves drink it for headaches. They swore to Tortal it works...I figured anything that would cure a dwarf ache,” he snickered, “ought to be potent enough to wake a man from the dead.”

He tried to keep a straight face.

“Or in this case, a wizardess! Ha, ha!”

He cackled all the way out the door.

\*\*\*

“Basils went to argue the merits of the staffing. Everybody thinks it will be approved. It is the talk of the town,” Alice told Vorn as they admired a beautiful sunset in the making.

“I am going to find that silver-bearded old Ranith tomorrow and have a talk with him about this. I cannot imagine what he was thinking calling our charming Marigold out in such a fashion,” said Vorn, taking a sip of Alice’s homemade apple-rice wine and licking his lips at its pleasurable taste.

“If you are going to see that grouchy wizard, you had better look up our golden offspring too. She is as anxious, if not more so than he.”

Alice smiled.

“Why are you smiling?” inquired Vorn.

“Think what would happen if Marigold beats him,” she giggled.

“She will be a wizardess...”

She paused as Vorn smiled with satisfaction.

“If she wins, she will be the youngest magician in Trelon’s recorded history.”

Alice continued reminiscing upon her husband’s accomplishments at that age. She flashed a smile at him sweet as could be and gazed off towards the sun-drenched horizon twirling a blonde lock with her left hand.

“She has always been a natural, and that I will not dispute, but she is not that fast yet,” Vorn responded with some concern after a thoughtful pause.

“Want to bet?” she smiled.

Vorn thought about that in silence.

“Well?” she pressed.

“She is quick on her feet, is she not?” replied Vorn.

Alice nodded in acknowledgment. Vorn felt it was only right to recognize his daughter’s extraordinary talent in the art--and knew it was pride in Marigold’s ability enduring itself in his heart. After all, he too had helped train her in the ways.

“Yes dear. Ever since you joined the scouts, all she has done is to practice and study. When I go to see her, they are always working on some new spell. Sometimes I think she is learning too much too quick. She is growing up too fast,” said Alice with a touch of sadness evident in her tone.

*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

“Just how...all this since I have been a scout...achieved the standings of a wizardess?”

“Then it is a bet.” She smiled as she stated the obvious.

\*\*\*

“Hail fair maiden!” a king’s messenger announced from the street. Guiding his horse, he brought it to a stop before the house.

Standing up from Alice’s herbal garden, Marigold slapped at the dirt clinging to her scarlet, gold-embroidered robe.

“What might I do for you?” she asked, clapping her hands to clean the dust from them.

“I have two messages to deliver here. One to a wizard Ranith and another to the wizardess Marigold. Are they home?” he asked, smiling back at the young maiden as she started to beam at him.

Taking a moment to collect her composure, Marigold said, “The wizard Ranith is with my mother and father at their shop, but I am the wizardess you seek.”

She lifted her head boldly and assumed a stance she hoped befitted that lofty title. She couldn’t believe the king’s court had entitled it to a wizardess. After all, she was still an apprentice.

“Ha, ha, ha, indeed child! I am sure one day when you grow up you will make a fine wizardess, but it is my duty to deliver these respectively to those to whom they are titled.”

He lifted his head and gave her an admonishing stare.

Flustered at his indifference, Marigold assured him she was the wizardess he sought.

“I think not,” he stated simply.

“I am Marigold, and that message you have for me is in response to a request to use the tournament grounds to engage

in a duel against the greatest wizard in the land,” she said, confident the messenger would understand.

“Now sir, if you would be so generous as to give me my message, I will be able to finish my work in this garden...and even be on time for the battle,” she jested.

“Ha! You child? Bah. Come now, where be thy folk’s shop?” he asked impatient.

Their eyes locked in a stalemate.

“I will prove it!” Marigold spoke with conviction, shaking her fist at him in frustration.

The messenger started to laugh as Marigold began weaving her hands at him and mumbling under her breath.

“Ha, ha,” he jeered.

“Let me guess, you are going to turn me into a...Hey...What the...” he said, watching helplessly as his hand involuntarily started to spasm.

The two scrolls he held jumped free of his grip and hung before him in mid-air. He was about to make a grab for them, but stopped, too shocked to move as the scrolls floated towards the chanting girl.

Never taking her eyes from his, Marigold suppressed the urge to taunt him. Instead, she coolly watched him lose his composure. Trying not to laugh, she waited for him to collect his wits. As soon as he did, and as regal as could be, she plucked the scrolls from the air.

“Now, sir,” she said, sweetly reflecting her mother’s charming influences, “I am the Marigold you seek. Do you believe the words of an up and coming wizardess?” as she shot him a playful glance, placing special emphasis on the word wizardess.

“Or would you have me return my message back to you so later you can only come back and deliver it to me?”

This time she flashed him an embellished smile and assumed an air of haughtiness.

“Wwwee...well, humphf! I believe you...I think...” he stammered, reluctant.

“I thought your kind needed a staff for that stuff?” he said, trying to make amends.

“Ranith must have written me down as a wizardess, sir,” she confided, “but I will gain the title of wizardess if...if I am victorious at the tournament.”

“I said I believe you,” he reminded her.

“But what is this news about a battle? I have never heard of any battling wizards. Sorry,” he apologized, “I mean wizardess, huh?”

“Quite correct, sir,” Marigold responded, quickly playing her role of respectability to its fullest.

“Though had I wanted to, I could easily have passed the Lair’s standards for a wizardess awhile back, but instead, I prefer to match my abilities against the greatest wizard of all time.”

“Who are you talking about?” the messenger asked. “Kelon...Basils?”

“Ha! My turn to laugh,” Marigold said, brushing at her golden hair.

“Ranith, kind sir, his name is Ranith.”

“The other message...” he said, looking at her as she nodded.

“If that is all then, would you direct me to his whereabouts?”

“At my mother’s shop. The House of Herbs. You will find it on Apinar Street.”

“Then I will be off. Farewell, young wizardess,” he said politely, and turned his mount to go.



*Magic of Golden Sorrow*

“Wait!” Marigold shouted stepping hastily over the flowers she’d been planting. She rushed over to him unaware her young enthusiasm was replacing her previous royal air.

“You forgot his message,” she said and handed him the other scroll.

“So I did,” he replied, still befuddled by the trick she had played on him.

“At least you did not turn me into a toad,” he yelled back at her before galloping down the street.



*This spell-binding magical fantasy weaves a tale filled with action, adventure and intrigue replete with dark creatures and evil unstoppable forces. Join these colorful characters as Wizardess Marigold and friends battle for survival. Vastly outnumbered by Sanrue's powerful evil realm, they use their skills while creating strong friendships with an array of unlikely beings. Join them as the wizardess proves ever resilient, and their fate lies in the secret of Magic of Golden Sorrow.*

# Magic of Golden Sorrow

**Order the complete book from**

**[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)**

**<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/7121.html?s=pdf>**

**or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.**