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# Song of Huma

BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS

Out of the village, out of the thatched and clutching shires,  
Out of the grave and furrow, furrow and grave,  
Where his sword first tried  
The last cruel dances of childhood, and awoke to the shires  
Forever retreating, his greatness a marsh fire,  
The banked flight of the Kingfisher always above him,  
Now Huma walked upon Roses,  
To the Wilderness, where Paladine bade him to turn,  
And there in the loud tunnel of knives  
He grew in unblemished violence, in yearning,  
Stunned into himself by a deafening gauntlet of voices.

It was there and then that the White Stag found him,  
At the end of a journey planned from the shores of Creation,  
And all time staggered at the forest edge  
Where Huma, haunted and starving,  
Drew his bow, thanking the gods for their bounty and  
    keeping,  
Then saw, in the ranged wood,  
In the first silence, the dazed heart's symbol,  
The rack of antlers resplendent.  
He lowered the bow and the world resumed.  
Then Huma followed the Stag, its tangle of antlers receding  
As a memory of young light, as the talons of birds ascending.  
The Mountain crouched before them. Nothing would change  
    now,  
The three moons stopped in the sky,  
And the long night tumbled in shadows.

It was morning when they reached the grove,  
 The lap of the mountain, where the Stag departed,  
 Nor did Huma follow, knowing the end of this journey  
 Was nothing but green and the promise of green that endured  
 In the eyes of the woman before him.  
 And holy the days he drew near her, holy the air  
 That carried his words of endearment, his forgotten songs,  
 And the rapt moons knelt on the Great Mountain.  
 Still, she eluded him, bright and retreating as marshfire,  
 Nameless and lovely, more lovely because she was nameless,  
 As they learned that the world, the dazzling shelves of the air,  
 The Wilderness itself  
 Were plain and diminished things to the heart's thicket.  
 At the end of the days, she told him her secret.

For she was not of woman, nor was she mortal,  
 But daughter and heiress from a line of Dragons.  
 For Huma the sky turned indifferent, cluttered by moons,  
 The brief life of the grass mocked him, mocked his fathers,  
 And the thorned light bristled on the gliding Mountain.  
 But nameless she tendered a hope not in her keeping,  
 That Paladine only might answer, that through his enduring  
     wisdom  
 She might step from forever, and there in her silver arms  
 The promise of the grove might rise and flourish.  
 For that wisdom Huma prayed, and the Stag returned,  
 And east, through the desolate fields, through ash,  
 Through cinders and blood, the harvest of dragons,  
 Traveled Huma, cradled by dreams of the Silver Dragon,  
 The Stag perpetual, a signal before him.

At last the eventual harbor, a temple so far to the east  
 That it lay where the east was ending.  
 There Paladine appeared  
 In a pool of stars and glory, announcing  
 That of all choices, one most terrible had fallen to Huma.

For Paladine knew that the heart is a nest of yearnings,  
That we can travel forever toward light, becoming  
What we can never be.  
For the bride of Huma could step into the devouring sun,  
Together they would return to the thatched shires  
And leave behind the secret of the Lance, the world  
Unpeopled in darkness, wed to the dragons.  
Or Huma could take on the Dragonlance, cleansing all Krynn  
Of death and invasion, of the green paths of his love.

The hardest of choices, and Huma remembered  
How the Wilderness cloistered and baptized his first thoughts  
Beneath the sheltering sun, and now  
As the black moon wheeled and pivoted, drawing the air  
And the substance from Krynn, from the things of Krynn,  
From the grove, from the Mountain, from the abandoned  
shires,  
He would sleep, he would send it all away,  
For the choosing was all of the pain, and the choices  
Were heat on the hand when the arm has been severed.  
But she came to him, weeping and luminous,  
In a landscape of dreams, where he saw  
The world collapse and renew on the glint of the Lance.  
In her farewell lay collapse and renewal.  
Through his doomed veins the horizon burst.

He took up the Dragonlance, he took up the story,  
The pale heat rushed through his rising arm  
And the sun and the three moons, waiting for wonders,  
Hung in the sky together,  
To the West Huma rode, to the High Clerist's Tower  
On the back of the Silver Dragon,  
And the path of their flight crossed over a desolate country  
Where the dead walked only, mouthing the names of dragons.  
And the men in the Tower, surrounded and riddled by  
dragons, **Copyrighted Material**  
By the cries of the dying, the roar in the ravenous air,

Awaited the unspeakable silence,  
 Awaited far worse, in fear that the crash of the senses  
 Would end in a moment of nothing  
 Where the mind lies down with its losses and darkness.

But the winding of Huma's horn in the distance  
 Danced on the battlements. All of Solamnia lifted  
 Its face to the eastern sky, and the dragons  
 Wheeled to the highest air, believing  
 Some terrible change had come.  
 From out of their tumult of wings, out of the chaos of  
     dragons,  
 Out of the heart of nothing, the Mother of Night,  
 Aswirl in a blankness of colors,

Swooped to the east, into the stare of the sun  
 And the sky collapsed into silver and blankness.  
 On the ground Huma lay, at his side a woman,  
 Her silver skin broken, the promise of green  
 Released from the gifts of her eyes. She whispered her name  
 As the Queen of Darkness banked in the sky above Huma.

She descended, the Mother of Night,  
 And from the loft of the battlements, men saw shadows  
 Boil on the colorless dive of her wings:  
 A hovel of thatch and rushes, the heart of a Wilderness,  
 A lost silver light spattered in terrible crimson,  
 And then from the center of shadows  
 Came a depth in which darkness itself was aglimmer,  
 Denying all air, all light, all shadows.  
 And thrusting his lance into emptiness,  
 Huma fell to the sweetness of death, into abiding sunlight.  
 Through the Lance, through the dear might and brotherhood  
 Of those who must walk to the end of the breath and the  
     senses,  
 And the long lands blossomed in battle and music.

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Stunned in new freedom, stunned by the brightness and colors,  
By the harped blessing of the holy winds,  
The knights carried Huma, they carried the Dragonlance  
To the grove in the lap of the Mountain.  
When they returned to the grove in pilgrimage, in homage,  
The Lance, the armor, the Dragonbane himself  
Had vanished to the day's eye.  
But the night of the full moons red and silver  
Shines down on the hills, on the forms of a man and a woman  
Shimmering steel and silver, silver and steel,  
Above the village, over the thatches and nurturing shires.

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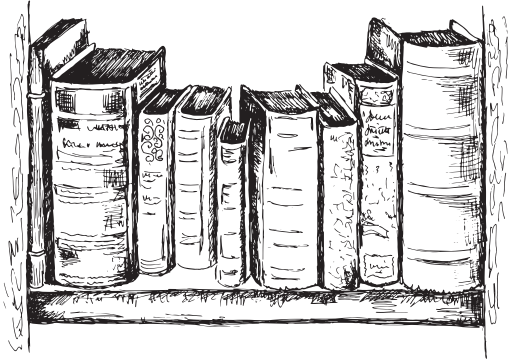
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# BOOK ONE



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## CHAPTER ONE

Dalamar the Dark was centuries distant from those who had been stranded in time by the destruction of the Device of Time Journeying. Yet he had them on his mind as he left the office of Astinus carrying the shattered remains of the Device in a black velvet sack.

He kept seeing over and over the moment when he had entered the Artifact Room in the Great Library of Palanthas at Astinus's bidding to find the monk, Brother Kairn, standing motionless among the wreckage of the Device. The floor was littered with debris: cogs, wheels, jewels, metal shards, a broken chain.

"I ordered him not to move until you arrived," Astinus had told Dalamar, "to see if you could salvage it."

"But what happened to those who traveled with Brother Kairn? Lady Destina and Tasslehoff?" Dalamar had asked, aghast. "Where are they? What of the Graygem of Gargath the lady wears?"

"Brother Kairn returned alone," Astinus had replied, maddeningly dispassionate.

Dalamar had used his magic to gather up the fragments of the Device and place them in this bag. Astinus had given him permis-

sion to take the remains of the Device to Justarius, head of the Conclave, to determine if it could be repaired and to tell Justarius about the catastrophe that had left four people and the Graygem of Gargath stranded in time.

Dalamar first returned to his own tower, the Tower of High Sorcery in Palanthas, to make certain all was well. His *Shalafi*, Raistlin Majere, was purportedly stranded in time. Knowing Raistlin as he did, Dalamar would not have been surprised to find his *Shalafi* once more master of the tower, and he was relieved when the Black Robes who guarded it reported nothing amiss had occurred in his absence.

“I am traveling to the tower of Wayreth,” Dalamar told them. “Close the magical portals to all except me. No one is to leave or enter.”

Having no idea how long he would be gone or what dangers he might face, Dalamar replenished his spell components and selected a variety of magical scrolls with spells that could be cast swiftly and at need.

As he worked, he considered reporting what he had learned about the whereabouts of the Graygem to the gods of magic. They knew Chaos was roaming the world, but nothing more. And the other gods did not know that much. The gods of good and those of evil all believed the Graygem was still in hiding, as it had been for thousands of years.

If Astinus was the god Gilean, as some believed, he alone knew it had gone back in time, yet Dalamar had no fear Astinus would intervene. He never intervened, but merely recorded what he saw as he sat with his hand on the Sphere of Time. When the world ended, the last sound would be the scratching of Astinus’s pen.

“Better if I deal with this disaster quickly and quietly without divine interference,” Dalamar said to himself.

He did not have time to send word to Justarius that he was coming. Walking the paths of magic, Dalamar arrived at the tower of Wayreth without warning and the sudden appearance of the master of the tower of Palanthas materializing in their entry hall threw the guardian mages into confusion and alarm.

Every master returning to the tower to suit himself or herself. Since mages came from all over Ansalon to take their Tests at the

Tower of High Sorcery in Wayreth, Justarius had designed the entry hall to be welcoming. Tapestries celebrating magic lined the walls. A rug carpeted the cold marble floor. The guardian mages were playing at khas on a board they had set up, when Dalamar's arrival triggered the warning bell that sounded throughout the tower. The two guardians jumped to their feet, ready to defend their posts. Both immediately recognized Dalamar, who was the only elf archmage to ever take the black robes.

"I must speak to Justarius," said Dalamar.

The guardians sent for the chief apprentice. Once she recovered from her shock, she approached him.

"Master, this is an unexpected—"

Dalamar cut her off. "I must speak to Justarius on a matter of the utmost urgency."

"I fear the master is not here, sir," the apprentice told him. "He has traveled to his home to dine with his wife and their new baby daughter."

"Fetch him," said Dalamar. "Now."

"Yes, Master. Right away, Master."

She escorted Dalamar to one of the antechambers where the students usually waited to take the Test. The small room was furnished with chairs and a table where nervous applicants could study their spells. Dalamar had forgotten until the apprentice mentioned dinner that he had not eaten all day. The apprentices served him bread with clotted cream and honey and brought a flagon of elven wine. By the time he had finished his meal, Justarius had returned.

Justarius was in a good mood following his visit with his family, but when he saw Dalamar's expression, his pleasure evaporated.

"What has happened?"

Dalamar glanced about. The apprentices had disappeared, leaving the two alone. But the walls have ears, especially in magical towers, and he did not want to say more than necessary. "The Graygem."

Justarius was grave. "We will go to my quarters. We can speak in private there."

He escorted Dalamar to his private chamber.

People were always amazed that two men who were so vastly different and should have been sworn enemies were, in fact, ex-

tremely good friends. Both were dedicated to the magic and to the gods they served.

Justarius was a human in his early fifties who wore the red robes of those dedicated to Lunitari, the neutral goddess of the red moon. He walked with a crutch, for his Test in the Tower had left him crippled in body, though stronger in spirit and resolve. He was still hale and fit. Only the few strands of gray in his hair and beard gave evidence of his age.

Dalamar was a Silvanesti elf with black hair and almond eyes. He wore the black robes of Nuitari, the god of the dark moon. He was over a hundred years old and in the prime of his life. Acting as a spy for the Conclave, Dalamar had served Raistlin Majere after his *Shalafi* had claimed the Tower of High Sorcery in Palanthas. Raistlin had discovered his betrayal and Dalamar still bore the marks of his *Shalafi*'s wrath on his flesh.

The master's quarters were designed for comfort rather than elegance, with several large, overstuffed chairs that were cozily shabby. The walls were lined with shelves of books. Justarius placed a warding spell on the door and, leaning on his crutch, turned to his companion.

"You spoke of the Graygem. You have news?"

"The worst possible," said Dalamar grimly. "Lady Destina and the Graygem have traveled back in time to the Third Dragon War. Tasslehoff Burrfoot is with her, as are Sturm Brightblade and Raistlin Majere—both men very much alive. That is the bad news. This is what makes bad news worse."

He placed the velvet bag on a table and opened it.

"Look inside."

Justarius peered into the bag and saw a rod, two orbs, a chain, myriad jewels, and bits and pieces of broken metal. Justarius stared at the objects in what appeared to be confusion, then he realized what he was seeing and looked up at Dalamar in horror.

"Is that—" Justarius couldn't finish.

"The Device of Time Journeying," said Dalamar. "Or, rather, it *was* the Device. Right now, it is a collection of junk. It blew apart, leaving those who went back in time stranded."

Justarius gaped at him, bereft of speech.

Dalamar sighed and ran his hand through his long black hair. “I was hoping you and I might be able to repair it. If so, we could send someone back to rescue them.”

“We can try to fix it,” Justarius said, but he didn’t sound hopeful. “Let us take it to my laboratory.”

The laboratory was the beating heart of the Tower of High Sorcery. Here mages conducted experiments to create new spells or worked to perfect or enhance old ones. The walls were lined with metal shelves containing jars and bottles and cannisters of spell components, all neatly labeled and placed in alphabetical order. Since the risk of fire was high, given the nature of some of the spells, no spellbooks were kept within the laboratory, although they could be brought inside. Those who worked or studied here sat on metal stools.

The familiar smell of spell components enveloped Dalamar as he entered: pungent spices, acrid chemicals, drying herbs, and the sickening smell of decay. He glanced swiftly about. He did not expect to see any secret experiments—Justarius was far too careful for that. But he might gain some idea of the field of study the archmage was pursuing. He saw nothing of interest, however.

Apprentices working in the laboratory jumped to their feet in respect when the two masters entered. Justarius ordered them away, shut the door, and cast a locking spell on it.

Dalamar carefully emptied the bag onto a marble worktable whose smooth surface contained no runes or any other symbols of magic that might interfere with the magic of the Device.

Justarius gazed in dismay at the pile of glittering jewels, the numerous tiny cogs and small wheels, the chains and orbs. “Did you find all the pieces? Is this everything?”

“I have no way of knowing,” said Dalamar with a helpless shrug. “The remnants were scattered everywhere around the Artifact Room in the Great Library. I cast a revealing spell that caused the magical parts to glow, and I gathered up all I could find. But I could have easily missed some. And since the Device blew up during the spell-casting, it is possible some pieces could be in the past.”

Justarius sat down on a tall stool and leaned his side against his crutch. Dalamar drew another stool near him. Together, they gazed in glum si-



lence at the remains of the Device. Justarius picked up the rod and one of the orbs and attempted to fit them together. When that failed, he shook his head despondently and set the pieces back down.

“Tell me how this happened,” he said.

“As you know, Astinus asked me to loan him the Device of Time Journeying so that his aesthetics could use it in their research,” Dalamar began.

“I always thought that was a mistake,” Justarius growled.

“I could not very well say no to a god,” Dalamar replied.

Justarius grunted, conceding the argument. “Go on.”

“I told you before about the human woman, Destina Rosethorn, and how she traveled to the dwarven kingdom to find the Graygem of Gargath.”

“In which accursed gem Reorx imprisoned Chaos,” said Justarius. “The fool!”

“Destina or Reorx?” Dalamar asked with a faint smile.

“Both!” Justarius grunted. “Go on with your tale.”

“When Destina returned to Palanthas, I laid a trap for her in order to take it from her, employing my most powerful mages to seize it. The Graygem thwarted them, nearly costing one the use of his hand. Destina then took the gem with her to the Great Library with the intention of stealing the Device of Time Journeying so she could travel back in time to the War of the Lance. Her father had died in the fighting and she wanted to restore him to life.”

“Which meant she would change history,” said Justarius, frowning.

“That is why she needed the Graygem. To give her credit, she believed the change would be minuscule, a mere drop in time’s vast river. And she might well have been right.”

Justarius gave a violent snort.

Dalamar faintly smiled. “You and I can say she was misguided, but given the choice, Master, both of us might have done the same to bring back someone we love.”

Justarius was silent, perhaps thinking of his beloved wife and the baby girl he had so recently cradled in his arms.

“The time for judgments is past. Continue,” he said brusquely.

“Destina managed to steal the Device, undoubtedly with the

help of the Graygem. She couldn't make it work, however, and she asked the kender, Tasslehoff Burrfoot, to assist her. As you know, he had mastered its use."

Justarius groaned and put his hand to his head.

"The story is complicated, so bear with me," Dalamar continued. "According to Brother Kairn, Destina transformed herself into a female kender named Mari. She asked Tas to take her to the High Clerist's Tower to save her father, but Tasslehoff had other ideas. He wanted to take her to the Inn of the Last Home to introduce her to his friends. That was the same night Goldmoon arrived in the inn with the holy Staff of Mishakal."

Justarius was grim. "I begin to see where this is going."

"Brother Kairn tried to stop Destina and Tas but ended up traveling with them. Because he had been the last person to use it, the Device of Time Journeying remained with him. Raistlin Majere was there with the Staff of Magius and Destina possessed the Graygem. Acting on impulse, she seized the Device from Kairn and activated the magic with the intention of taking Sturm Brightblade to the High Clerist's Tower to save her father. Raistlin struck her with the staff to try to stop her. Tasslehoff saw Raistlin attacking his friend, so he hit Raistlin with the Staff of Mishakal. Holy and arcane magicks collided, with the Graygem in the center."

"The gods save us," Justarius murmured.

"A little late for that," said Dalamar dryly. "The Device transported Sturm Brightblade, Raistlin Majere, Destina, and Tasslehoff to the right place—the High Clerist's Tower. But to the wrong century—the time of the Third Dragon War. The Device was apparently too fragile to withstand such a confluence of powerful forces, and it shattered, throwing Brother Kairn back here and leaving the others stranded, unable to return. And now the Graygem is with them at one of the most pivotal points in history. Undoubtedly by Chaos's design."

Justarius sat in appalled silence for long moments.

"Are you certain of this information?" he asked at last.

"I have only just returned from the office of Astinus, where I have seen proof," said Dalamar. "Brother Kairn showed me the writings of Astinus from that time, thousands of years in the past. I saw

Sturm Brightblade listed on the roll of knights defending the tower, along with Huma Feigaard. Two war wizards—Magius and Raistlin Majere—were also listed.”

“The great Magius,” said Justarius, distracted. “To think they might get a chance to meet him! I almost envy them.”

“I thought much the same myself,” said Dalamar. “But that does not solve our problem.”

“Which is?”

“I fear it is possible Chaos could wreak havoc in the past and thus alter time.”

“That seems far-fetched.”

“I fear the alteration has already begun,” said Dalamar. “We looked for Lady Destina and the kender, Burrfoot, in the writings of Astinus, hoping to read what he had written about them, but . . . the pages were blank.”

Justarius frowned. “How could the pages be blank? Astinus would have recorded what happened.”

“He said it was because the history of that time has yet to be written. That we might yet escape drowning, but the waters are rising.”

“What in the Abyss did he mean by that?” Justarius demanded impatiently.

“The waters of the River of Time rise slowly. What happens in the past has yet to reach us in the present, which means we have time to salvage the situation by going back to rescue the four before they can do irreparable harm.”

“Given that the Graygem is with them, we may already be too late,” said Justarius.

“My *Shalafi* is also with them,” said Dalamar. “Raistlin made an extensive study of time travel, as I am certain you know, for that is what eventually led to his doom. He understands the perils of traveling through time. He will do what he can to be certain time remains unchanged.”

“Unless he figures out how he can use this disaster to his advantage,” Justarius said caustically. “We could wake tomorrow to find Raistlin a god.”

Dalamar said nothing. They both knew Raistlin and knew what Justarius said was quite true. They gazed at the pieces of the Device. Justarius gingerly nudged some of the jewels with his index finger.

“I know nothing about creating artifacts, let alone repairing them,” Justarius said.

“I was thinking we might find information on the Device in your Silver Book,” Dalamar suggested. “Since the previous master, Par-Salian, gave the Device to Caramon and told him how to use it, he may have recorded information on it.”

Every Tower of Sorcery possessed a Silver Book that contained powerful magical spells known only to the masters of the towers. The books were as old as the towers themselves. The spells had been handed down through the generations and only the masters held the magical keys to open them. Originally there had been five Silver Books. Now two were left; the others had been destroyed by their masters for fear they would fall into the wrong hands or be lost in the destruction of the towers.

“The book is in my office, guarded by a warding spell only I can remove,” said Justarius, reaching for his crutch. “Please do not disturb yourself. I will fetch it.”

Dalamar smiled in understanding. All the masters jealously guarded the secrets of their Silver Books. Much as he liked and trusted Justarius, Dalamar would not have allowed him to be present in the same room as he retrieved his own Silver Book.

Justarius soon returned, struggling to carry the immense book in one hand and his crutch in the other. He dropped the book on the marble table with a ringing clang. The Silver Book was, as the name implied, bound in silver.

The Silver Book contained a thousand spells or more, but fortunately they were cross-referenced and indexed. The various masters had also added descriptions of artifacts they had created, notes on ancient artifacts, and other information they felt would be useful to future generations.

Justarius smiled in satisfaction when he located a page written in Par-Salian’s hand entitled: *Device of Time Journeying*.

The entry was long and, according to Par-Salian, contained all the information he knew about the Device. Justarius and Dalamar hunched over the book and studied it together. They were initially disappointed to find that much of what they read they already knew.

The Device of Time Journeying had been forged on the Anvil of Time. The Anvil itself was now lost and no one had been able to

discover who had forged the Device or when. It had been first mentioned in the Silver Book of Wayreth following the Cataclysm, which had shaken the tower, split the ground, and unearthed a chamber beneath the tower whose existence had been previously unknown. The master of Wayreth at the time had found the Device in the chamber, along with the poem that provided instructions for the Device's use.

The master had recorded its discovery in her Silver Book and locked the Device away for safekeeping.

When Par-Salian became master hundreds of years later, he had read about the Device in the Silver Book and sought it out, then had made a study of it.

*The Device is old and fragile. Although it was forged on the Anvil of Time and that is now lost, I hope to either replicate the Device or create a new one to replace it in case it breaks,* he wrote.

He had gone so far as to draw a diagram of the Device, and had provided a list of selected materials and suggested spells that could be used to make the Device functional. Apparently, that was as far as he got.

*I have come to the conclusion that the magicks used to create the Device cannot be replicated,* Par-Salian wrote. *I can well imagine some long-ago crafter adding magic to the molten metal and hammering the pieces with a magical hammer on the magical Anvil. If something were to happen to this Device, an artifact maker might be able to repair it, but I believe it would not be possible to create a new one without the Anvil.*

*The proper study of artifact-making is a lost art these days, one that I lament. Young mages only want to learn how to hurl fireballs and cast other such flashy spells. The days of the great artifact makers, such as the revered Ranniker, are no more.*

Dalamar and Justarius flipped through the pages, only to find that all mention of the Device ended there.

"It seems Par-Salian was more interested in inventing a new Device than he was in maintaining the old one," Justarius remarked, closing the book in disappointment. "He says nothing about how to reassemble it if it was broken."

"According to legend, the last time the Device broke, a gnome fixed it," Dalamar said thoughtfully. "I suppose we could . . ."

“No!” said Justarius firmly. “I will have nothing to do with gnomish infernal devices. Their enthusiasm outweighs their technical expertise, which means their inventions have an unfortunate tendency to explode.”

“True,” said Dalamar, smiling. “Perhaps Par-Salian attempted to create a new Device and it did not work. Thus he concludes one would need the Anvil of Time. Which makes sense.”

Justarius sat frowning at the book. “Ranniker. Why is that name familiar? I seem to recall I have heard it before in reference to the Device and the Graygem.”

“You are thinking of Ungar, the mage who urged Destina to bring him the Graygem. He destroyed Ranniker’s Clock, which showed us a vision of doom.”

“Ah, yes. Is Ungar still languishing in your dungeon?”

“I will let him go eventually,” said Dalamar coolly.

Justarius snorted. “He destroyed a rare and valuable magical artifact crafted by the most gifted artifact maker of all time. You are kinder to him than I would be. But I am thinking of something different. When you first told me about the clock, the name ‘Ranniker’ jogged my memory. Gather up the pieces of the Device and meet me in my office.”

Justarius picked up the Silver Book and carried it off to return it to its hiding place. Dalamar carefully gathered up all the pieces of the Device and went to the office, where he found Justarius giving instructions to a White Robe who served as his secretary.

“I received a letter some time ago from a young mage who asked to be considered for the Test,” he told his secretary. “The name is Ranniker. You will find it in the file marked ‘Rejected.’”

The secretary left and was gone some time searching the files, for the number of rejected applicants was extensive. He finally returned and handed the letter to Justarius, who noted the name of the applicant and nodded in satisfaction.

“Alice Ranniker. I remember wondering at the time if she was a distant relative of the great Ranniker.” He handed the letter to Dalamar. “As you can see, she was not qualified to take the Test. She lists very few of the most rudimentary spells we require to demonstrate proficiency in the art. I doubt she could have magically boiled water.”

“But she does say she is knowledgeable in regard to artifacts,” Dalamar remarked. “You did not think to ask her about her work in that regard?”

“Given that if a mage fails the Test, the penalty is death, I did not want to give this young woman the slightest encouragement,” said Justarius. “I had my secretary send back the standard reply: ‘Continue to pursue your studies and contact us again at a later date.’ That was over a year ago and we have not heard from her since.”

“You are thinking she might be able to repair the Device. She lives in Solanthalas, but she doesn’t say where,” said Dalamar. “As I recall, a member of the Conclave lives in Solanthalas.”

“You are thinking of Bertold. I have been a guest in his house,” said Justarius. “I will contact him and ask him to find her. I fear repairing the Device is a forlorn hope,” he added somberly.

“But better than no hope at all,” said Dalamar.



## CHAPTER TWO

**D**estina Rosethorn sat alone beneath the sheltering arms of an oak tree and watched the sun of a distant past flicker among the leaves and branches. She sorrowfully recalled the words of her dwarven guide, Wolfstone.

*The Graygem has chosen you. It's yours now, for good or ill.*

Destina clasped her hand over the gem that hung on a red-gold chain around her neck. The Graygem was cold and, at the same time, uncomfortably warm. Yet she felt compelled to constantly touch it, constantly reassure herself of its presence, though at the same time she longed to snap the chain and throw the Graygem into the deepest part of the sea. The one time she had tried to rid herself of it, the Graygem had grown so hot it had burned her hand, and she had been forced to let go of it.

She would have liked to have blamed Chaos for the bad choices she had made, but she could only blame herself. The Graygem might have chosen her, but she had chosen to set out on the ill-fated quest to the dwarven kingdom to find it.

If only she had not **Copyrighted Material**  
*If only . . .* The saddest words in any language.



If only her father had not died at the Battle of the High Clerist's Tower. If only she had not let her grief consume her and made the foolish decision to go back in time to save him. If only she had never walked into Ungar's mageware shop in search of the Device of Time Journeying. If only she had never sought the Graygem!

Destina felt the gem tingle, as though it laughed, mocking her, reminding her that she was wearing Chaos on a chain around her neck. And now she and Sturm Brightblade, Raistlin Majere, and Tasslehoff Burrfoot were trapped back in time.

"And it is all my fault," Destina murmured.

She had tricked Tasslehoff into showing her how to use the Device of Time Journeying by shapeshifting into the body of a kender female named Mari. After Tas had told her she could find the Device in the Great Library of Palanthas, Destina had abandoned Tas and the kender body and traveled to the Great Library, where she had tried to persuade a monk, Brother Kairn, to give her the Device.

But when Tas had arrived in the library, searching for Mari, Destina had changed back into the kender and stolen the Device. She had intended to travel back to the High Clerist's Tower to save her father, but in her panicked desperation, she had forgotten the complex poem needed to use the Device. She had turned for help to Tas, but he had wanted to introduce Mari to his friends, and before Destina could stop him, he had activated the Device to take her back to the Inn of the Last Home. At the last second, Brother Kairn had grabbed hold of the Device, and the River of Time had carried all three to the inn on the night the companions had agreed to reunite after five years of searching for the true gods.

Raistlin Majere and Sturm Brightblade were among those present, and Destina conceived the ill-fated idea of taking Sturm back to the High Clerist's Tower. She had grabbed Sturm and activated the Device of Time Journeying, and after that—disaster. The Device had transported Destina, Sturm, Raistlin, and Tas through time to the right place—the High Clerist's Tower—but the wrong century. They did not arrive at the tower during the War of the Lance. The Graygem had instead thrown them back in time to the Third Dragon War.

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They made the discovery when they overheard two men talking—

two men who turned out to be Huma Dragonbane and his friend, the wizard Magius. They could see the High Clerist's Tower in the distance and were astonished to note that it was under construction, as it had been during the time of Huma. The curtain wall was covered in scaffolding, only half completed.

And now they were stranded here in this time, for the confluence of powerful magicks had caused the Device to explode, leaving them with only a few broken pieces and no way to escape.

They had taken refuge in the woods, for Huma and Magius had talked of goblin raiders in the area. Sturm had left the shelter of the trees to reconnoiter. Raistlin and Tas had gone off on their own to talk in private; she could see them through the leaves and could hear Raistlin trying to explain to Tas that his wife, Mari, a kender, was in truth Destina, a human.

"Destina used a magical artifact to shapeshift into a kender," Raistlin said.

Tasslehoff was having none of it. "I know you mean well, Raistlin, and you're almost never wrong, except that time you were wrong about trying to become a god and a couple of other times before that. But I saw that Destina woman suck Mari up in a stardust cyclone and whoosh her away. I even got stardust in my eyes and my hair! Mari *must* be around here somewhere, so I have to find her!"

"If you want to understand what happened to Mari, you will keep quiet and listen to me."

"I'll be quiet, but it's just that—"

Raistlin glared at him.

"Being quiet now," said Tas meekly.

"What you saw, Tas, was not a magical stardust cyclone, but rather the effects of the shapeshifting spell Lady Destina used to transform herself from a human into the kender you knew as Mari and then back again."

"If I wasn't being quiet, I'd tell you I saw a magical stardust cyclone," said Tas.

Raistlin gave an exasperated sigh. "Answer me this: Did you ever see the two of them—Mari and Destina—together?"

"Of course I did! **Copyrighted Material**. No, that was just Mari. It must have been... No, that was just Destina... And

then . . . No, that wasn't them either." Tas sighed unhappily. "I guess maybe I didn't."

Destina couldn't bear to hear the pain in his voice, and she shrank back into the shadows of the trees and ducked her head. Seeing the horrible brooch of shapeshifting still pinned to her wool jacket, she tore it off, buried it in the underbrush, and covered it with a pile of dirt and wet leaves.

"But if what you say is true, Raistlin, and Destina was really Mari all along, does that mean I'll never see Mari again?" Tas asked.

"I could tell you that you never saw Mari at all, Tas," Raistlin replied. "But I know that she was very real to you, and the loss of your friend hurts very much. I am sorry."

Destina wondered what she could say to Tas, to all of them, to make them understand that she was sorry. So very, very sorry. Wiping the dirt from her hands, she touched the ring her mother had given her when she was young. The ring was on the little finger of her left hand, and she had worn it so long she often forgot about it. A gold band set with a small emerald, the ring had been blessed by the goddess Chislev. According to her mother, the goddess would guide her if she was ever lost in the darkness.

Destina gazed at the ring in sorrow. She felt very lost now, but she doubted if even a goddess could help.

She was startled and alarmed to hear the rattle of armor and the sound of boots crunching through the leaves and brush. Recalling that a party of goblin warriors had only recently passed by their hiding place in the forest, she hurriedly scrambled to her feet. She was relieved to see Sturm enter the forest and walk toward them. He was wearing old-fashioned plate armor that she knew from stories about him had been his inheritance from his father—the armor and the family sword. He kept his hand on the hilt.

Sturm glanced at her and his face hardened. He made a polite bow, but it was stiff and cold. He walked past her toward Raistlin and Tas.

Destina could not blame him for reviling her, for she had attempted to dose him with a potion of cowardice. She wished she could sink into the ground and not have to face him or the others, but that wasn't likely to happen. And she was no coward. She was the daughter of a knight and she had to accept responsibility for her

actions. She shook out her skirt, brushed off the dead leaves, and prepared to face them.

"I guess I understand, even though I don't," Tas was telling Raistlin. "So because I married Mari who is really Lady Destina, does that make me Lord Tasslehoff?"

"You are not married, Tas," said Sturm sternly, overhearing. "Lady Destina married you under false pretenses."

"Actually, I married her under a roof, not a false pretense," Tas stated. "But I see what you mean. If I marry a kender she needs to be a kender and not a human or a bugbear. Although I guess if I wanted to marry a bugbear, so long as the bugbear *was* a bugbear and not a three-headed troll in disguise, I could do that. Kender law is very generous on that point."

"Did you see any sign of the goblins—" Raistlin began, but he was interrupted by a fit of coughing. The cough sounded terrible—a deep, hacking cough that seemed to be tearing at his lungs. He drew a handkerchief from the sleeve of his red robes and pressed it over his mouth as he struggled to breathe.

Destina should have probably offered help or sympathy, but she kept her distance. Like most Solamnics, she had an aversion to all magic-users, and he frightened and intimidated her. He was young, perhaps in his twenties, yet his hair was white. His skin glowed with a golden metallic sheen in the sunlight and the pupils of his eyes were in the shape of hourglasses. A faint odor, as of rose petals and spices and decay, clung to him. She guessed she wasn't alone in her dislike. Sturm watched Raistlin cough until he doubled over in pain, yet Sturm made no move to assist him.

Tas regarded Raistlin with interest.

"Still got that cough, huh?" he said. "I was thinking being dead might cure it. Is that bad wizard, Fistandoodle, inside you?"

Raistlin pressed the handkerchief to his mouth and stared at Tas. Slowly he lowered the handkerchief. Destina saw blood on it.

"What did you say?" he asked Tas.

"About Fistandoodle?"

"No. About being dead."

"That I thought dying might have cured your cough," Tas repeated.

Raistlin stared into the shadows of the past. "There is no cure.

The cough, my frailty, are part of the price I paid for my power. And I was powerful. One of the most powerful mages to have ever lived, Master of Past and Present. I died . . . I remember. . . .”

“You *were* dead in the past, but I guess ‘past’ is still to come in the future,” Tas said helpfully. “Sturm is dead, too. But if it’s any comfort, you both look pretty lively right now.”

Sturm was frowning in perplexity. “I remember the High Cleric’s Tower. I remember Laurana and Tas . . . and a dragon orb. . . . I held the dragonlance in my hand. . . .” He rounded angrily on Raistlin. “What manner of foul magic have you worked this time? You have dragged me from eternal rest!”

“I cast no magic,” said Raistlin. His glittering gaze went to Destina. “This is none of *my* doing. Five years ago, we separated, agreeing to meet again at the Inn of the Last Home on the anniversary of that last day we were together. We were sitting around the table when you and a monk joined us. I saw you pour a potion into Sturm’s drink that would have turned him into a coward. I caught you, and when that failed, you seized hold of him and activated the Device of Time Journeying.”

Raistlin turned accusingly to Tas. “Did you give the Device to her? You were the last one to have it, at least in my time.”

“It wasn’t my fault!” said Tas. “Astinus had it after me, and she borrowed it from Astinus.”

“Yet I doubt Astinus taught her how to use it,” said Raistlin, fixing his strange gaze on the kender.

Tas fidgeted. “It’s . . . uh . . . possible I may have taught her how to use it. Or rather I taught Mari. And Mari didn’t take it, Destina did. So, you see, it’s still not my fault!”

Raistlin sighed and turned back to Destina. “Using the Device, you brought us here to the time of the Third Dragon War. Now the Device is lost and we are stranded here. You owe us an explanation, Lady.”

Destina clasped her hands together to hold fast to her courage. “First I want to apologize to you, Tas. Raistlin is right. I used a magical brooch to turn myself into the kender Mari. I am truly sorry for deceiving you. Please believe I never meant to hurt you.” Destina looked around at the others. “I never meant to hurt any of you, and

I will do whatever is in my power to fix this terrible situation. I truly never meant for any of this to happen!"

"Yet, you meant for *something* to happen, Lady," said Raistlin. "Where were you planning to take Sturm and why?"

Destina twisted her hands together. "My father fought at the battle of the High Clerist's Tower during the War of the Lance. At one point, he feared the battle was going to be lost. He and the other knights intended to leave the tower and return home to defend their families. My father was going to return to me."

She raised her eyes to look at Sturm. "You were his commander, and you gave him permission to leave. You told him you understood. Then you faced the Dragon Highlord alone and you died on the battlements. Your sacrifice lit a flame in my father's heart. He stayed to fight the dragons and they killed him! I lost my dearly loved father. Then I lost his legacy, our castle, and our lands. I lost everything."

"We know about loss," said Raistlin grimly. "That doesn't explain your actions."

"I'm trying to tell you," said Destina desperately. "One of my father's favorite books was an account of Huma's life written by a scribe who had served with the army during the Third Dragon War. I remembered reading a passage in that book in which Huma's friend, Magius, mentions a Device of Time Journeying. Magius had been in love with Huma's sister, who had been wounded in battle and died. Magius wanted to go back in time to prevent her death. My father had underlined the passage about the Device. I believe he had some idea of trying to go back in time to try to prevent the war. If so, he never acted on it. I was thinking that if I gave Sturm the potion of cowardice and took him back to the High Clerist's Tower . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Sturm would run from the battle and your father would live," Raistlin finished her sentence for her.

Sturm was clearly shocked to the core of his being.

"If you had succeeded, Lady Destina, I would be forever branded a coward, a disgrace to my name, a disgrace to the knighthood! You should be proud of your father. He fought to save Solamnia from the forces of the Dark Queen. He died with honor, as befits a knight."

“Honor?” Destina repeated bitterly. “Where is the honor in leaving a fifteen-year-old girl without a father? I needed him! Solamnia didn’t. He was only one man, a drop in the river. His death meant nothing.”

“Sturm Brightblade was one man,” Raistlin said sharply. “Yet you said yourself his sacrifice resulted in the knights triumphing over the forces of the Dark Queen. One man can make a difference.”

“So can one kender,” said Tas. “I made a difference when I found the dragon orb in the High Clerist’s Tower. True, I was going to smash it, but—”

“Not now, Tas!” said Raistlin impatiently. “Continue, Lady. Why bring us to this time?”

“As I told you, I never meant to!” Destina said. “Sturm and Brother Kairn were talking about Huma Dragonbane, so perhaps he was in my mind.”

“We are not in this predicament because Sturm was thinking of Huma!” said Raistlin. His hourglass eyes glistened. “Only truly powerful magic could have thrown us back in time and left us stranded here. My guess is that it has something to do with the gem you are wearing.”

Destina was reluctant to tell them about the Graygem, but the Measure says that “Half a truth is naught but a whole lie.”

She put her hand to her throat. The Graygem was hidden beneath her collar hanging on a golden chain. She slowly lifted the chain and drew out the gem. It faintly pulsed with a dull gray light.

“The Graygem of Gargath,” said Raistlin. “I suspected as much when I noticed it in the inn. You would need the Device to travel back in time, and the Graygem to alter time—to save your father. I must say I admire you, Lady Destina. You thought of everything.”

“But the Graygem is only a myth!” said Sturm. “No one in his right mind believes that tale about how Reorx captured Chaos inside a gemstone and it went flying about the world changing gnomes into kender.”

“I was never a gnome,” said Tas firmly. “I’ve always been a kender. Just so we’re clear on that.”

“Whether or not it flew about the world, the Graygem is very

real and very dangerous, and the lady is wearing it around her neck,” said Raistlin. “You noticed it in the inn. I know you did because I saw the expression of disgust on your face.”

“It gives you a squirmy feeling if you touch it,” Tas added. “And not the good kind of squirmy feeling. The bad kind.”

“I grant you, the gem is loathsome to look upon, but that does not make it the Graygem,” Sturm argued.

Raistlin stirred in annoyance, his red robes rustling. “Do I tell you how to wield your sword, Sturm Brightblade? My knowledge of magic is my sword, and you would do well to pay heed to me!”

“Please don’t quarrel,” said Destina, her cheeks burning with shame. “Raistlin is right. This is the Graygem.”

Sturm still appeared unconvinced, but to continue to argue would be to accuse her of lying and he would never do such a thing. He turned from her to Raistlin.

“The question is, what do we do now that we are stranded in a time that is not our own?” Sturm asked.

“You and I are alive again and I, for one, intend to stay that way,” Raistlin replied. “We *must* stay alive until we can find a way to return to where we belong. Otherwise we will change time. And that could be catastrophic.”

“Raistlin knows all about time travel,” Tas offered helpfully. “He went back in time to try to become a god, and Par-Salian sent Caramon and me back in time to stop him. That is, Par-Salian sent Caramon. He didn’t send me, but I couldn’t let Caramon go alone, so I changed into a mouse and—”

Raistlin rounded on him. “Do you remember the talk we had about a cricket? My threat still holds.”

“I remember,” said Tas, sighing. He added in an aside to Destina, “He told me he would change me into a cricket and swallow me whole.”

Raistlin pointedly ignored him and turned to Sturm. “Did you see any goblins?”

“None near us, but signs of them are all around. And I recognize our location. We are in the wooded flatland known as the Wings of Habakkuk, south of the High Clerist’s Tower. The knights will be gathering their forces to defend the tower and the Dark Queen is