



THE LOST CHRONICLES  
VOLUME THREE

DRAGONS  
OF THE  
HOURGLASS MAGE

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Astinus, Chronicler of the History of Krynn, writes:

*On the Twenty-sixth Day of the Month of Mishamont, Year 352 AC, in the city of Neraka, the Temple of Takhisis falls. The Dragon Queen is banished from the world. Her armies go down to defeat.*

*Much of the credit for this victory is given to the Heroes of the Lance, who fought valiantly for the Forces of Light. History should note, however, that the Light would have been doomed to failure if not for one man who chose to walk in Darkness.*

## PROLOGUE



Two legends of Krynn are essential to the understanding of the plot. Many variations of these legends can be found. Every bard tells them somewhat differently. We have chosen these versions as being the closest to what actually occurred, though, as with most legends, the truth of the matter will likely never be known.

Excerpts from “A Child’s Garden of Tales of Krynn,” translated from the Elvish by Quivalen Soth:

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*The Story of Berem and Jasla  
A Tale of Love and Sacrifice*

Long ago, at the end of the Second Dragon War, the valiant knight, Huma Dragonsbane, drove Queen Takhisis into the Abyss. He forced her to swear an oath before the High God that she would not return to the world to upset the delicate balance between good

and evil. The gods believed that an oath taken before the High God was so powerful that not even the Queen of Darkness would dare break it. Sadly they were mistaken.

Time passed. The Kingpriests of Istar, acting in the name of the Gods of Light and with their blessing, rose in power. The world was at peace. Unfortunately a man may be blinded by light as well as by darkness. The last Kingpriest looked into the sun and saw nothing but his own glory and dared to proclaim himself a god.

The Gods of Light realized to their sorrow that *they* were now threatening the balance that causes the world to keep turning. They sought the help of the other gods, including Queen Takhisis. The gods determined that in order to restore the balance and teach mankind humility, they would cause a great Cataclysm. Before they acted, they sent the Kingpriest many warnings, urging him to change. The Kingpriest and his followers turned a deaf ear, and the gods, greatly grieving, hurled a fiery mountain down upon Krynn.

The blast leveled the city of Istar and cast it into the sea and destroyed the Temple of the Gods of Light. Or so the gods believed. But although the Temple of Istar lay in ruins at the bottom of the sea, the Foundation Stone upon which the Temple was built remained intact, for that stone is the foundation of faith.

After the Cataclysm, the gods hoped men would acknowledge their faults and seek out the gods. To the gods' sorrow, men blamed the gods for their suffering. Word spread that the gods had abandoned their creation. The world erupted into chaos. Death stalked the land.

Takhisis, Queen of Darkness, was still imprisoned in the Abyss. All the exits were guarded. If she tried to break free, the other gods would know and they would stop her. Still, she never quit seeking a way back into the world, and one day, in her restless roaming, she came upon a great prize. Takhisis discovered the Foundation Stone. The other gods did not know it still existed. She realized that she could use the stone to return to the world.

True, she would be breaking her oath to the High God. But she was cunning and she counted upon the fact that the world was already in peril. Men had lost hope. Plagues, pestilence, famines, and wars had killed millions. Takhisis could enter the world and wake her evil

dragons and launch her war. When she conquered Krynn, she would be so powerful that the other gods would not dare to punish her.

Takhisis, cloaked in darkness, slipped into the world through the gate left open by the Foundation Stone. She woke her evil dragons and ordered them to steal the eggs of the good dragons, who slumbered in their lairs. She prepared to prosecute her war with all her might and power. Then she discovered one day that her way into the world through the Foundation Stone had been blocked.

A man named Berem and his sister, Jasla, were walking together when they came upon the Foundation Stone. They could not believe their good fortune. Rare and precious gems, embedded in the stone, sparkled and shone in the light of creation. Berem was a poor man. One gem could relieve his family's poverty. One gem, one perfect emerald, out of so many would not be missed. Berem began to pry the emerald loose.

His sister, Jasla, was horrified by the theft. She grabbed hold of her brother to try to stop him. Berem flew into a rage and flung her away. She fell and struck her head on the stone and died, her blood staining the Foundation Stone.

Berem loved his sister, and he was appalled at his crime. And he was afraid. No one would believe him when he said that killing his sister had been an accident. He would be executed for murder. Instead of confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness, he turned to flee. As he did so, the emerald that he had been trying to steal sprang from the Foundation Stone and embedded itself in his chest.

Berem was frantic with terror. The spirit of his sister grieved for him. She assured him she still loved him, but he refused to listen. He tried to tear the gem out with his fingers. He was so desperate, he sought to cut it out of his own flesh with a knife. The emerald remained a part of him, the everlasting reminder of his guilt. Berem covered up the gem with his shirt and fled, closing his ears to the pleas of his sister to seek forgiveness even as she had forgiven him.

Takhisis had been witness to this tragedy and had reveled in Berem's downfall . . . until she tried to cross the Foundation Stone. She found her entrance barred by a chain forged of love. Jasla's spirit blocked her way. Now only the Dark Queen's shadow could be cast

over Krynn. Her power over man was reduced; she would have to rely on mortals to prosecute her war.

Takhisis had to find Berem. If she could destroy him, his sister's spirit would depart and the Dark Queen would once more be free. She had to be careful in her search for him, however, for if he returned to his sister and redeemed himself, her entry into the world would be blocked for good.

She sent secret word out to her most trusted servants to seek a man named Berem who had a green gemstone embedded in his chest. A man with an old face and young eyes, for the gem gave him immortality. He could not die until he was either redeemed or his soul was utterly lost.

Berem was always on the move, running not only from the Forces of Darkness, but also from his own guilt. Time and again, Takhisis was thwarted in her efforts to capture him. She launched her war, which became known as the War of the Lance, and still Berem had not been found. But by now, his tale was becoming known to more and more people and, eventually, was bound to come to the attention of those fighting Queen Takhisis.

Berem Everman would become men's greatest hope. And their greatest fear.

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*The Story of Fistandantilus*  
*A Cautionary Tale*

Long ago there lived a powerful wizard named Fistandantilus. He was so powerful that he came to believe that the rules and laws, which governed other, lesser men, did not apply to him. These included those laws of his own order of magic, that of the Black Robes. Fistandantilus left the order and became a renegade, subject to death at the hands of his fellow wizards.

Fistandantilus did not fear his fellow wizards. He had amassed such knowledge and skill in magic that he could destroy any who came to try to bring him to justice. Such was the fear and respect in which his fellow wizards held him that few tried.

Fistandantilus flaunted his power in the face of the Conclave, even taking on apprentices. What no one knew was that he was

feeding off his pupils, sucking out their life-forces and using that to extend his own. He had created a magical gem, a bloodstone, for this purpose. He would press the stone to the heart of his victim and drain him of life.

As Fistandantilus's power grew, so did his arrogance. He decided to enter the Abyss and overthrow the Queen of Darkness and take her place. To this end, he crafted one of the most powerful and complex magical spells ever created. His arrogance proved his downfall. No one is certain what happened. Some say Takhisis found out and her wrath brought down his fortress on top of him. Others say that his spell escaped his control and blew the fortress apart. Whatever the cause, Fistandantilus's mortal body died.

His soul, however, did not.

His soul refused to leave Krynn, and the evil wizard remained on the ethereal plane. His existence was tenuous, for he was constantly under siege from Takhisis, who continued to try to destroy him. He kept himself alive by leeching off the life-forces of his victims, even as he hoped someday to find a living body he could inhabit and return to life.

Fistandantilus had managed to retain his bloodstone and, armed with that, he lay in wait for victims. He sought out young magic-users, particularly those who were leaning toward darkness, for they would be most likely to succumb to temptation.

The Conclave of Wizards knew Fistandantilus was searching for prey, but they were powerless to stop him. Whenever a young magic-user took the dread Test in the Tower of High Sorcery, the Conclave knew there was a chance that Fistandantilus would seize him. Many who died taking the Test were thought to have been his victims.

Five years prior to the start of the War of the Lance, a young mage and his twin brother came to the Tower of Wayreth to take the Test. The young man had shown great promise in his studies. Foreseeing a time of war and evil coming to Krynn, the head of the Conclave, Par-Salian, hoped that this young mage would assist in defeating the darkness.

The young mage was himself arrogant and ambitious. Although he wore the red robes, his heart and soul tended toward darkness

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and his own choices led him to strike a bargain with Fistantantilus.\* The evil wizard did not intend to keep his side of the deal; he meant to drain the young man of his life.

Raistlin Majere was not like others before him. He was in his own way as skilled in magic as Fistantantilus. When the evil mage came to seize the young man's heart and rip it from his body, Raistlin grasped hold of the heart of Fistantantilus.

"You may take my life," Raistlin told Fistantantilus, "but you will serve me in return."

The young man survived his Test, but he was shattered in body, for Fistantantilus was continually draining him of life in order to sustain himself on his magical plane. In return, however, Fistantantilus had to keep Raistlin alive and would come to his aid by feeding him knowledge of magicks that were far advanced for such a young wizard.

Raistlin did not remember any of his Test, nor did he remember his bargain. He thought the Test had ruined his health, and Par-Salian did not tell him otherwise.

"He will know the truth only when he comes to know the truth about himself, confront and admit the darkness within."

Par-Salian spoke those words, but not even he in his wisdom could foresee how the dark and strange alliance would, in the end, be resolved.

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\* The story can be found in *The Soulforge* by Margaret Weis, published by Wizards of the Coast.

# BOOK I



# I

## **A roll of the dye. AN unexpected encounter.**

*2nd Day, Month of Mishamont, Year 352 AC*



The city of Palanthas had been awake most of the night, bracing for war. The city had not panicked; ancient aristocratic grand dames such as Palanthas never panicked. They sat rigid in their ornately carved chairs, holding tight to their lace handkerchiefs and waiting with stern countenances and straight backs for someone to tell them if there was going to be a war and, if so, would it be so rude as to interrupt their plans for dinner.

The forces of the feared Blue Lady, Dragon Highlord Kitiara, were rumored to be marching on the city. The Highlord's armies had been defeated at the High Clerist's Tower, which guarded the pass leading down from the mountains into Palanthas. The small group of knights and foot soldiers who had held the Tower against the initial assault were not strong enough to hold out against another attack. They had left the fortress and the graves of their dead, retreating to Palanthas.

The city had not been pleased at that. If the militant, warmongering knights had not entered her walls, Palanthas would have been left in

peace. The dragonarmies would not dare to attack a city so venerable and revered. The wise knew better. Almost all other major cities in Krynn had fallen to the might of the dragonarmies. The baleful eyes of Emperor Ariakas were turned to Palanthas, to her port, her ships, her wealth. The glittering city, the jewel of Solamnia, would be the most magnificent gem in Ariakas's Crown of Power.

The Lord of Palanthas sent his troops to the battlements. The citizens hunkered down in their houses, shuttered their windows. Shops and businesses closed. The city believed she was prepared for the worst, and if the worst came, as it had come to other cities, such as Solace and Tarsis, Palanthas would fight valiantly. For there was courage in the heart of the old grand dame. Her rigid spine was made of steel.

She was not tested. The worst did not come. The forces of the Blue Lady had been routed at the High Clerist's Tower and were in retreat. The dragons sighted that morning, winging toward the city's walls, were not the red fire-breathing dragons or the lightning-crackling blue dragons people feared. The morning sun sparkled on shining silver scales. Silver dragons had flown from their homes in the Dragon Isles to defend Palanthas.

Or so the dragons claimed.

Since war did not come, the citizens of Palanthas left their homes and opened their shops and surged out into the streets, talking, arguing. The Lord of Palanthas assured the citizens that the new dragons were on the side of Light, that they worshiped Paladine and Mishakal and the rest of the gods of Light, that they had agreed to assist the Knights of Solamnia, protectors of the city.

Some people believed their lord. Some didn't. Some argued that dragons of any color were not to be trusted, that they were there simply to lull the people into a state of complacency, and that the dragons would attack in the dead of night and they would all be devoured in their beds.

"Fools!" Raistlin muttered more than once as he shoved his way through the crowds, or rather as he was bumped and jostled and nearly run over by a careening horse cart.

If he had been wearing his red robes that marked him a wizard, the people of Palanthas would have eyed him askance, left him

severely alone, gone out of their way to avoid him. Clad in the plain gray robes of an Aesthetic of the Great Library of Palanthis, Raistlin was trampled and pushed and trod upon.

Palanthisians were not fond of wizards, even those of the red robes, who were neutral in the war, or the white, who were dedicated to the side of Light. Both Orders of High Sorcery had worked and sacrificed to bring about the return of the metallic dragons to Ansalon. The head of their order, Par Salian, knew that the sight of the spring dawn glistening on silver and golden wings would come as a punch in the gut to Emperor Ariakas; the first blow that had been able to penetrate his dragonscale armor. All during the war, the wings of Takhisis's evil dragons had darkened the skies. Now the skies of Krynn shone with brightening light, and the Emperor and his Queen were starting to grow nervous.

The people of Palanthis did not know that the wizards had been working to protect them and would not have believed such a claim if they heard it. To their minds, the only good wizard was a wizard who lived somewhere besides Palanthis.

Raistlin Majere was not wearing his red robes because they were wrapped in a bundle tucked under his arm. He wore the "borrowed" gray robes of one of the monks of the Great Library.

Borrowed. Thinking of that word brought to mind Tasslehoff Burrfoot. The light-hearted and lighter-fingered kender never "stole" anything. When caught with purloined goods upon his person, the kender would claim to have "borrowed" the sugar basin, "stumbled across" the silver candlesticks, and "was just coming to return" the emerald necklace. Raistlin had "stumbled upon" the Aesthetic's robes lying folded neatly on a bed that morning. He had every intention of returning the gray robes in a day or two.

Mostly people, absorbed in their arguments, ignored him as he fought his way through the crowded streets. But occasionally some citizen would stop him to ask what Astinus thought about the arrival of the metallic dragons, the dragons of Light.

Raistlin didn't know what Astinus thought and he didn't care. Keeping his cowl pulled low to conceal the fact that his skin shimmered gold in the sunlight and that the pupils of his eyes were the shape of hourglasses, he would mutter an excuse and hurry on.

He hoped sourly that the workers at his destination were actually doing some work, that they were not out gossiping in the street.

He regretted thinking of Tasslehoff. The memory of the kender brought back memories of his friends and his brother. He should say his *deceased* friends, *deceased* brother: Tanis Half-Elven, Tika, Riverwind and Goldmoon, and Caramon. All of them dead. He alone had survived, and that was because *he* had been smart enough to have foreseen disaster and planned a way out. He had to face the fact that Caramon and the others were dead and quit obsessing over it. But even as he told himself he should stop thinking about them, he thought about them.

Fleeing the dragonarmies in Flotsam, he and his brother and their friends had sought to escape by taking passage aboard a pirate ship, the *Perechon*. They had been pursued by a Dragon Highlord—his half-sister, Kitiara, as it turned out. The crazed helmsman had steered the ship deliberately into the Blood Sea's feared Maelstrom. The ship was being ripped apart, spars falling, sails being torn to tatters. The wild water was breaking over the decks. Raistlin had a choice. Either he could die with the rest of them or he could leave. The choice was obvious to anyone with a brain—which excluded his brother. Raistlin had in his possession the magical dragon orb that had once belonged to the ill-fated King Lorac. Raistlin had used the magic of the orb to escape. True, he might have taken his friends with him. He might have saved all of them. He might at least have saved his brother.

But Raistlin was only just learning about the powers of the dragon orb. He was not certain the orb had the ability to save the rest, and therefore, he had saved himself—and the other. The other who was always with him, who was with him even as he pushed his way through the streets of Palanthas. Once this "other" had been a whispered voice in Raistlin's head, unknown and mysterious and maddening. But the mystery had been solved. Raistlin could put a hideous face to the disembodied voice, give the speaker a name.

"Your decision was logical, young magus," Fistandantilus said, adding with a sneer, "Your twin is dead. Good riddance. Caramon weakened you, diminished you. Now that you are free of him, you will go far. I will see to that."

"*You* won't see to anything!" Raistlin retorted.

"I beg your pardon?" said a passerby, halting. "Were you speaking to me, sir?"

Raistlin muttered something and, ignoring the man's offended stare, kept on walking. He had been forced to listen to the yammering voice all morning. He had even fancied he could see the black-robed, soul-sucking specter of the archmage dogging his footsteps. Raistlin wondered bitterly if the bargain he had made with the evil wizard had been worth it.

"Without me, you would have died taking the Test in the Tower at Wayreth," said Fistandantilus. "You came out of our deal well enough. A bit of your life in exchange for my knowledge and power.

Raistlin had not been afraid he would die. He had been afraid he would fail. That was the true reason he had made the bargain with the old man. Raistlin could not have borne failure. He could not have endured his brother's pity or the fact that he would have been dependent on his stronger twin for the rest of his days.

Just thinking about the undead leech of a wizard sucking the life out of him as one sucks the juice from a peach brought on a coughing fit. Raistlin had always been frail and sickly, but the bargain he had struck with Fistandantilus, which allowed the spirit of the archmagus to remain alive on his dark plane of tortured existence in return for Raistlin's escape, had exacted its toll. His lungs seemed to be always filled with wool. He felt as though he were being smothered. He was subject to fits of coughing that almost doubled him over, as happened at that moment.

He had to pause and lean against a building for support, wiping the blood from his lips with the gray sleeve of the purloined robe. He felt weaker than usual. Using the magic of the dragon orb to transport him across a continent had taken far more out of him than he had anticipated. He had been half dead when he had arrived in Palanthas four days earlier, so weak that he had collapsed on the steps of the Great Library. The monks had taken pity on him and carried him inside. He was recovered somewhat, but he was still not well. He would not be well ever . . . not until he ended his bargain.

Fistandantilus seemed to think that Raistlin's soul was to be his reward. The archmagus was going to be disappointed. Since

Raistlin's soul was finally his own, he was not going to meekly hand it over to Fistandantilus.

Raistlin considered that the archmagus had done well out of the deal he'd made with Raistlin in the Tower. Fistandantilus was, after all, leeching part of Raistlin's life-force in order to cling to his miserable existence. But as far as Raistlin was concerned, the two of them were even. It was time to end their bargain. Except Raistlin couldn't figure out how to do that without Fistandantilus knowing about it and stopping him. The old man was constantly lurking about, eavesdropping on Raistlin's thoughts. There had to be a way to shut the door and lock the windows of his mind.

Raistlin finally recovered enough to be able to resume his errand. He continued through the streets, following directions that were given to him by people he met along the way, and soon left the central part of Old City behind and, with it, the crowds. He entered the working part of the city, where streets were known by their trade. He passed Iron-Mongers Avenue and Butchers' Row and the Horse Fair and Goldsmith Lane on his way to the street where wool merchants plied their trade. He was searching for a particular business when he glanced down an alleyway and saw a sign marked with the symbols of three moons: a red moon, a silver, and a black. It was a mageware shop.

The shop was small, a mere hole in the wall. Raistlin was surprised to find such a shop at all, surprised that someone had even bothered to open a shop dealing in objects related to the use of magic in a city that despised those who wielded magic. He knew of only one wizard who resided in the city and that was Justarius, head of Raistlin's own order, the Red Robes. Raistlin supposed there must be others. He'd never given the matter much thought.

His steps slowed. The mageware shop would have what he sought. It would be costly. He could not afford it. He had only a small sum of steel, hoarded up and hidden away over months. He had to save his steel for lodging and food in Neraka, his destination, once his health was restored and his business in Palanthis was finished.

Besides, the owner of the mageware shop would be bound to report Raistlin's purchase to the Conclave, the body of wizards that

enforced the laws of magic. The Conclave could not stop him, but he would be summoned to Wayreth and called upon to explain himself. Raistlin didn't have time for all that. Events were happening—momentous, world-shaking events. The end was coming. The Dark Queen would soon be celebrating her victory. Raistlin did not plan to be standing on the street corner cheering as she rode past in triumph. He planned to be leading the parade.

Raistlin walked past the mageware shop and came at last to the place he'd been seeking. The stench alone should have guided him, he thought, covering his nose and mouth with his sleeve. The business was located in a large, open-air yard filled with stacks of wood to stoke the fires. Smoke mingled with steam rising from the huge kettles and vats and reeked with the odors of the various ingredients used in the process, some of which were not at all pleasant.

Clutching his bundle, Raistlin entered a small building located near the compound, where men and women were hauling wood and stirring the contents of the vats with big, wooden paddles. A clerk on a stool was writing figures in a large book. Another man sat on another stool, studying long lists. Neither took any notice of Raistlin.

Raistlin waited a moment; then he coughed, causing the man looking over the lists to raise his eyes. Seeing Raistlin waiting in the entrance, the man left his stool and came over to inquire how he might serve one of the honored Aesthetics.

"I have some cloth to be dyed," said Raistlin, and he brought forth the red robes.

He kept his hood over his face, but he could not very well hide his hands. Fortunately the building was shadowy, and Raistlin hoped the man would not notice his gold-colored skin.

The dyer examined the color, running his hands over the cloth. "A nice wool," he pronounced. "Not fine, mind you, but good and serviceable. It should take the dye well. What color would you like, Revered Sir?"

Raistlin was about to reply when he was interrupted by a fit of coughing so severe that he staggered and fell back against the door-frame. He missed his brother's strong arm, which had always been there to support him.

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The dyer eyed Raistlin and backed up slightly in alarm. "Not catching, is it, sir?"

"Black," Raistlin gasped, ignoring the question.

"I am sorry, what did you say?" asked the dyer. "It's hard to hear with all that jabbering."

He gestured to the compound behind him, where women engaged in dunking the cloth in the kettles were yelling back and forth or exchanging barbed comments with the men who stoked the fires.

"Black," Raistlin said, raising his voice. He generally spoke softly. Talking irritated his throat.

The dyer raised an eyebrow. Aesthetics who served Astinus in the Great Library wore robes of gray.

"It is not for me," Raistlin added. "I am acting for a friend."

"I see," said the dyer. He cast Raistlin a quizzical glance, which Raistlin, overtaken by another fit of coughing, did not notice.

"We have three types of black dye," stated the dyer. "Our cheapest grade uses chromium, alum, and red argol, logwood and barwood. This produces a good black, though not very durable. The color will fade with washing. The next grade dye utilizes camwood and coppers and logwood. This grade is better than the first I named, though the black can turn slightly green over a long period of time. The best grade is done with indigo and camwood. This provides a deep, rich black that will not fade no matter how many times the cloth is washed. The latter is, of course, the most expensive."

"How much?" Raistlin asked.

The dyer named the price, and Raistlin winced. It would considerably diminish the number of coins in the small leather pouch he had hidden in a conjured cubbyhole in the monk's cell he was occupying in the Great Library. He should settle for the less costly dye. But then he thought of appearing before the wealthy, powerful Black Robes of Neraka, and he cringed as he imagined walking among them in black robes that were not black but "slightly green."

"The indigo," he stated, and he handed over his red robes.

"Very good, Revered Sir," said the dyer. "May I have your name?"

"Bertrem," Raistlin replied with a smile that he kept hidden in

the shadow of the cowl. Bertrem was the name of Astinus's long-suffering and harried chief assistant.

The dyer made a note.

"When may I return for these?" Raistlin asked. "I am—that is, my friend is in a hurry."

"Day after tomorrow," said the dyer.

"Not sooner?" Raistlin asked, disappointed.

The dyer shook his head. "Not unless your friend wants to walk the streets dripping black dye."

Raistlin gave a curt nod and took his leave. The moment Raistlin's back was turned, the dyer spoke a word to his assistant then hurried out of the building. Raistlin saw the man hastening down the street, but exhausted from the long walk and half suffocated by the choking fumes, he paid no heed.



The Great Library was located in the Old City. The hour being High Watch, when shops normally closed for lunch, more people thronged the streets. The noise was appalling, dinning in Raistlin's ears. The long walk had taxed Raistlin's strength to such an extent that he was forced to stop frequently to rest, and when he finally came in sight of the library's marble columns and imposing portico, he was so weak that he feared he could not make it across the street without collapsing.

Raistlin sank down on a stone bench not far from the Great Library. Winter's long night was drawing to a close. The dawn of spring was near. The bright sun was warm. Raistlin closed his eyes. His head slumped forward onto his chest. He dozed in the sun.

He was back on board the ship, holding the dragon orb and facing his brother and Tanis and the rest of his friends . . .

*" . . . using my magic. And the magic of the dragon orb. It is quite simple, though probably beyond your weak minds. I now have the power to harness the energy of my corporeal body and the energy of my spirit into one. I will become pure energy—light, if you want to think of it that way. And becoming light, I can travel through the heavens like the rays of the sun, returning to this physical world whenever and wherever I choose."*

"Can the orb do this for all of us?" Tanis asked.

"I will not chance it. I know I can escape. The others are not my concern."

*You led them into this blood-red death, half-elf. You get them out."*

*"You won't harm your brother. Caramon, stop him!"*

*"Tell him, Caramon. The last Test in the Tower of High Sorcery was against myself. And I failed. I killed him. I killed my brother . . ."*

*"Aha! I thought I'd find you here, you doorknob of a kender!"*

Raistlin stirred uneasily in his sleep.

That is Flint's voice and that is all wrong, Raistlin thought. Flint isn't here. I haven't seen Flint in a long time, not for months, not since the fall of Tarsis. Raistlin sank back into the dream.

*"Don't try to stop me, Tanis. I killed Caramon once, you see. Or rather, it was an illusion meant to teach me to fight against the darkness within. But they were too late. I had already given myself to the darkness."*

*"I tell you, I saw him!"*

Raistlin woke with a start. He knew that voice as well.

Tasslehoff Burrfoot stood quite close to him. Raistlin had only to rise up from the bench and walk a few paces and he could reach out his hand and touch him. Flint Fireforge was standing beside the kender, and though they both had their backs to Raistlin, he could picture the exasperated look on the old dwarf's face as he tried arguing with a kender. Raistlin had seen the quivering beard and flushed cheeks often enough.

It can't be! Raistlin told himself, shaken. Tasslehoff was in my mind, and now I have conjured him up whole.

But just to be safe, Raistlin pulled down the cowl of the gray robe, making sure it covered his face, and he thrust his gold-skinned hands inside the sleeves of his robes.

The kender looked like Tas from the back, but then all kender looked alike either from the front or the back: short in stature; dressed in the brightest clothing they could find; their long hair done up in outlandish topknots; their small, slender bodies festooned in pouches. The dwarf looked the same as any dwarf, short and stocky, clad in armor, wearing a helm decorated with horsehair . . . or the mane of a griffon.

"I saw Raistlin, I tell you!" the kender was saying insistently. He pointed to the Great Library. "He was lying on those very stairs. The monks were all gathered around him. That staff of his—the Staff of Maggots—"

"Magius," the dwarf muttered.

"—was on the stairs beside him."

"So what if it was Raistlin?" the dwarf demanded.

"I think he was dying, Flint," said the kender solemnly.

Raistlin shut his eyes. There was no longer any doubt. Tasslehoff Burrfoot and Flint Fireforge. His old friends. The two had watched him grow up, him and Caramon. Raistlin had wondered frequently if they were still alive, Flint and Tas and Sturm. They had been parted in the attack on Tarsis. He now wondered, astonished, how they had come to be in Palanthas. What adventures had brought them to that place? He was curious and he was, surprisingly, glad to see them.

Drawing back his cowl, he rose from the bench with the intention of making himself known to them. He would ask about Sturm and about Laurana, the golden-haired Laurana . . .

"If the Sly One's dead, good riddance," Flint said grimly. "He made my skin crawl."

Raistlin sat back down on the bench and pulled the cowl over his face.

"You don't mean that—" Tas began.

"I do so too mean it!" Flint roared. "How do you know what I mean and don't mean? I said so yesterday, and I'll say it today. Raistlin was always looking down that gold nose of his at us. And he turned Caramon into his slave. 'Caramon, make my tea!' 'Caramon, carry my pack.' 'Caramon, clean my boots!' It's a good thing Raistlin never told his brother to jump off a cliff. Caramon would be lying at the bottom of a ravine by now."

"Ah, I kind of liked Raistlin," said Tas. "He magicked me into a duck pond once. I know that sometimes he wasn't very nice, Flint, but he didn't feel good, what with that cough of his, and he did help you when you had the rheumatism—"

"I never had rheumatism a day in my life! Rheumatism is for old people," said Flint, glowering.

"Now where do you think you're going?" he demanded, seizing hold of Tasslehoff, who was about to cross the street.

"I thought I'd go up to the library and knock on the door and I would ask the monks, very politely, if Raistlin was there."

"Wherever Raistlin is, you can be sure he's up to no good. And

you can just put the thought of knocking on the library door out of your rattle-brained mind. You heard what they said yesterday: no kender allowed."

"I figured I'd ask them about that, too," Tas said. "Why won't they allow kender into the library?"

"Because there wouldn't be a book left on the shelves, that's why. You'd rob them blind."

"We don't rob people!" Tasslehoff said indignantly. "Kender are very honest. And I think that's a disgrace, kender not being allowed! I'll just go give them a piece of my mind—"

He twisted out of Flint's grasp and started to run across the street. Flint glared after him; then, with a sudden gleam in his eye, he called out, "You can go if you want to, but you might want to listen to what I came to tell you. Laurana sent me. She said something about you riding a dragon . . ."

Tasslehoff turned around so fast that he tripped himself and tumbled over his own feet, sprawling flat on his face on the street and spilling half the contents of his pouches.

"Me? Tasslehoff Burrfoot? Ride a dragon? Oh, Flint!" Tasslehoff picked up himself and his pouches. "Isn't it wonderful?"

"No," Flint said glumly.

"Hurry up!" Tasslehoff said, tugging on Flint's shirt. "We don't want to miss the battle."

"It's not happening right this minute," Flint said, batting away the kender's hands. "You go on. I'll be along."

Tas didn't wait to be told twice. He dashed off down the street, pausing at intervals to tell everyone he met that he, Tasslehoff Burrfoot, was going to be riding a dragon with the Golden General.

Flint stood long moments after the kender had left, staring at the Great Library. The old dwarf's face grew grave and solemn. He was about to cross the street, but then he paused. His heavy, gray brows came together. He thrust his hands in his pockets and shook his head.

"Good riddance," he muttered, and he turned and followed Tas.

Raistlin remained sitting on the bench a long time after they had gone. He sat there until the sun had gone down behind the buildings of Palanthas and the night air of early spring grew chill.

At last he rose. He did not go to the library. He walked the streets of Palanthas. Even though it was night, the streets were still crowded. The Lord of Palanthas had come out to publicly reassure his people. The silver dragons were on their side. The dragons had promised to protect them, the lord said. He declared a time for celebration. People lit bonfires and began dancing in the streets. Raistlin found the noise and the gaiety jarring. He shoved his way through the drunken throng, heading for a part of the city where the streets were deserted, the buildings dark and abandoned.

No one lived in that part of the great city. No one ever went there. Raistlin had never been there, but he knew the way well. He turned a corner. At the end of the empty street, surrounded by a ghastly forest of death, rose a tower of black, silhouetted against a blood-red sky.

The Tower of High Sorcery of Palanthas. The accursed Tower. Blackened and broken, the crumbling building had been vacant for centuries.

*None shall enter save the Master of Past and Present.*

Raistlin took a step toward the Tower, then stopped.

"Not yet," he murmured. "Not yet."

He felt a cold and corpselike hand brush his cheek, and he flinched away.

"Only one of us, young magus," said Fistantilus. "Only one can be the Master."