



LEGENDS
VOLUME TWO

WAR OF THE TWINS

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BOOK I



The River Flows On . . .

The dark waters of time swirled about the archmage's black robes, carrying him and those with him forward through the years.

The sky rained fire, the mountain fell upon the city of Istar, plunging it down, down into the depths of the ground. The sea waters, taking mercy on the terrible destruction, rushed in to fill the void. The great Temple, where the Kingpriest was still waiting for the gods to grant him his demands, vanished from the face of the world. Even those sea elves who ventured into the newly-created Blood Sea of Istar looked in wonder at the place where the Temple had stood. There was nothing there now but a deep black pit. The sea water within was so dark and chill that even these elves, born and bred and living beneath the water, dared not swim near it.

But there were many on Ansalon who envied the inhabitants of Istar. For them at least, death had come swiftly.

For those who survived the immediate destruction on Ansalon, death came slowly, in hideous aspect—starvation, disease, murder . . .

War.



CHAPTER I



hoarse, bellowing yell of fear and horror shattered Crysania's sleep. So sudden and awful was the yell and so deep her sleep that, for a moment, she could not even think what had wakened her. Terrified and confused, she stared around, trying to understand where she was, trying to discover what had frightened her so that she could scarcely breathe.

She was lying on a damp, hard floor. Her body shook convulsively from the chill that penetrated her bones; her teeth chattered from the cold. Holding her breath, she sought to hear something or see something. But the darkness around was thick and impenetrable, the silence was intense.

She let go her breath and tried to draw another, but the darkness seemed to be stealing it away. Panic gripped her. Desperately she tried to structure the darkness, to people it with shapes and forms. But none came to her mind. There was only the darkness and it had no dimension. It was eternal. . . .

Then she heard the yell again and recognized it as what had awakened her. And, though she came near gasping in

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relief at the sound of another human voice, the fear she heard in that yell echoed in her soul.

Desperately, frantically trying to penetrate the darkness, she forced herself to think, to remember. . . .

There had been singing stones, a chanting voice—Raistlin's voice—and his arms around her. Then the sensation of stepping into water and being carried into a swift, vast darkness.

Raistlin! Reaching out a trembling hand, Crysania felt nothing near her but damp, chill stone. And then memory returned with horrifying impact. Caramon lunging at his brother with the flashing sword in his hand. . . . Her words as she cast a clerical spell to protect the mage. . . . The sound of a sword clanging on stone.

But that yell—it was Caramon's voice! What if he—

"Raistlin!" Crysania called fearfully, struggling to her feet. Her voice vanished, disappeared, swallowed up by the darkness. It was such a terrible feeling that she dared not speak again. Claspng her arms about her, shivering in the intense cold, Crysania's hand went involuntarily to the medallion of Paladine that hung around her neck. The god's blessing flowed through her.

"Light," she whispered and, holding the medallion fast, she prayed to the god to light the darkness.

Soft light welled from the medallion between her fingers, pushing back the black velvet that smothered her, letting her breathe. Lifting the chain over her head, Crysania held the medallion aloft. Shining it about her surroundings, she tried to remember the direction from which the yell had come.

She had quick impressions of shattered, blackened furniture, cobwebs, books lying scattered about the floor, bookshelves falling off walls. But these were almost as frightening as the darkness itself; it was the darkness that gave them birth. These objects had more right to this place than she.

And then the yell came again.

Her hand shaking, Crysania turned swiftly toward the sound. The light of the god parted the darkness, bringing two figures into shockingly stark relief. One, dressed in black robes, lay still and silent on the cold floor. Standing above that

unmoving figure was a huge man. Dressed in blood-stained golden armor, an iron collar bolted around his neck, he stared into the darkness, his hands outstretched, his mouth open wide, his face white with terror.

The medallion slipped from Crysania's nerveless hand as she recognized the body lying huddled at the feet of the warrior.

"Raistlin!" she whispered.

Only as she felt the platinum chain slither through her fingers, only as the precious light around her wavered, did she think to catch the medallion as it fell.

She ran across the floor, her world reeling with the light that swung crazily from her hand. Dark shapes scurried from beneath her feet, but Crysania never noticed them. Filled with a fear more suffocating than the darkness, she knelt beside the mage.

He lay face down upon the floor, his hood cast over his head. Gently, Crysania lifted him, turning him over. Fearfully she pushed the hood back from his face and held the glowing medallion above him. Fear chilled her heart.

The mage's skin was ashen, his lips blue, his eyes closed and sunken into his hollow cheekbones.

"What have you done?" she cried to Caramon, looking up from where she knelt beside the mage's seemingly lifeless body. "What have you done?" she demanded, her voice breaking in her grief and her fury.

"Crysania?" Caramon whispered hoarsely.

The light from the medallion cast strange shadows over the form of the towering gladiator. His arms still outstretched, his hands grasping feebly at the air, he bent his head toward the sound of her voice. "Crysania?" he repeated again, with a sob. Taking a step toward her, he fell over his brother's legs and plunged headlong to the floor.

Almost instantly, he was up again, crouched on his hands and knees, his breath coming in quick gasps, his eyes still wide and staring. He reached out his hand.

"Crysania?" He lunged toward the sound of her voice. "Your light! Bring us your light! Quickly!"

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"I have a light, Caramon! I—Blessed Paladine!" Crysania murmured, staring at him in the medallion's soft glow. "You are blind!"

Reaching out her hand, she took hold of his grasping, twitching fingers. At her touch, Caramon sobbed again in relief. His clinging hand closed over hers with crushing strength, and Crysania bit her lip with the pain. But she held onto him firmly with one hand, the medallion with the other.

Rising to her feet, she helped Caramon to his. The warrior's big body shook, and he clutched at her in desperate terror, his eyes still staring straight ahead, wild, unseeing. Crysania peered into the darkness, searching desperately for a chair, a couch . . . something.

And then she became aware, suddenly, that the darkness was looking back.

Hurriedly averting her eyes, keeping her gaze carefully within the light of her medallion, she guided Caramon to the only large piece of furniture she saw.

"Here, sit down," she instructed. "Lean up against this."

She settled Caramon on the floor, his back against an ornately carved wooden desk that, she thought, seemed vaguely familiar to her. The sight brought a rush of painful, familiar memories—she had seen it somewhere. But she was too worried and preoccupied to give it much thought.

"Caramon?" she asked shakily. "Is Raistlin d—Did you kill—" Her voice broke.

"Raistlin?" Caramon turned his sightless eyes toward the sound of her voice. The expression on his face grew alarmed. He tried to stand. "Raist! Where—"

"No. Sit back!" Crysania ordered in swift anger and fear. Her hand on his shoulder, she shoved him down.

Caramon's eyes closed, a wry smile twisted his face. For a moment, he looked very like his twin.

"No, I didn't kill him!" he said bitterly. "How could I? The last thing I heard was you cry out to Paladine, then everything went dark. My muscles wouldn't move, the sword fell from my hand. And then—"

But Crysania wasn't listening. Running back to where Raistlin lay a few feet from them, she knelt down beside the mage once again. Holding the medallion near his face, she reached her hand inside the black hood to feel for the lifebeat in his neck. Closing her eyes in relief, she breathed a silent prayer to Paladine.

"He's alive!" she whispered. "But then, what's wrong with him?"

"What *is* wrong with him?" Caramon asked, bitterness and fear still tinging his voice. "I can't see—"

Flushing almost guiltily, Crysania described the mage's condition.

Caramon shrugged. "Exhausted by the spell casting," he said, his voice expressionless. "And, remember, he was weak to begin with, at least so you told me. Sick from the nearness of the gods or some such thing." His voice sank. "I've seen him like that before. The first time he used the dragon orb, he could scarcely move afterward. I held him in my arms—"

He broke off, staring into the darkness, his face calm now, calm and grim, "There's nothing we can do for him," he said. "He has to rest."

After a short pause, Caramon asked quietly, "Lady Crysania, can you heal me?"

Crysania's skin burned. "I—I'm afraid not," she replied, distraught. "It—it must have been my spell that blinded you." Once more, in her memory, she saw the big warrior, the blood-stained sword in his hand, intent on killing his twin, intent on killing her—if she got in his way.

"I'm sorry," she said softly, feeling so tired and chilled she was almost sick. "But I was desperate and . . . and afraid. Don't worry, though," she added, "the spell is not permanent. It will wear off, in time."

Caramon sighed. "I understand," he said. "Is there a light in this room? You said you had one."

"Yes," she answered. "I have the medallion—"

"Look around. Tell me where we are. Describe it."

"But Raistlin—"

"He'll be all right!" Caramon snapped, his voice harsh and

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commanding. "Come back here, near me. Do as I say! Our lives—his life—may depend on it! Tell me where we are!"

Looking into the darkness, Crysania felt her fear return. Reluctantly leaving the mage, she came back to sit beside Caramon.

"I—I don't know," she faltered, holding the glowing medallion high again. "I can't see much of anything beyond the medallion's light. But it seems to be some place I've been before, I just can't place it. There's furniture lying around, but it's all broken and charred, as though it had been in a fire. There are lots of books scattered about. There's a big wooden desk—you're leaning against it. It seems to be the only piece of furniture not broken. And it seems familiar to me," she added softly, puzzled. "It's beautiful, carved with all sorts of strange creatures."

Caramon felt beneath him with his hand. "Carpet," he said, "over stone."

"Yes, the floor is covered with carpet—or was. But it's torn now, and it looks like something's eaten it—"

She choked, seeing a dark shape suddenly skitter away from her light.

"What?" Caramon asked sharply.

"What's been eating the carpet apparently," Crysania replied with a nervous little laugh. "Rats." She tried to continue, "There's a fireplace, but it hasn't been used in years. It's all filled with cobwebs. In fact, the place is covered with cobwebs—"

But her voice gave out. Sudden images of spiders dropping from the ceiling and rats running past her feet made her shudder and gather her torn white robes around her. The bare and blackened fireplace reminded her of how cold she was.

Feeling her body tremble, Caramon smiled bleakly and reached out for her hand. Claspng it tightly, he said in a voice that was terrible in its calm, "Lady Crysania, if all we have to face are rats and spiders, we may count ourselves lucky."

She remembered the shout of sheer terror that had awakened her. Yet he hadn't been able to see! Swiftly, she glanced about. "What is it? You must have heard or sensed something, yet—"

"Sensed," Caramon repeated softly. "Yes, I *sensed* it. There

are *things* in this place, Crysania. Horrible things. I can feel them watching us! I can feel their hatred. Wherever we are, we have intruded upon them. Can't you feel it, too?"

Crysania stared into the darkness. So it *had* been looking back at her. Now that Caramon spoke of it, she could sense something out there. Or, as Caramon said, some *things*!

The longer she looked and concentrated upon them, the more real they became. Although she could not see them, she knew they waited, just beyond the circle of light cast by the medallion. Their hatred was strong, as Caramon had said, and, what was worse, she felt their evil flow chillingly around her. It was like . . . like . . .

Crysania caught her breath.

"What?" Caramon cried, starting up.

"Sst," she hissed, gripping his hand tightly. "Nothing. It's just—I know where we are!" she said in hushed tones.

He did not answer but turned his sightless eyes toward her.

"The Tower of High Sorcery at Palanthas!" she whispered.

"Where Raistlin lives?" Caramon looked relieved.

"Yes . . . no," Crysania shrugged helplessly. "It's the same room I was in—his study—but it doesn't look the same. It looks like no one's lived here for maybe a hundred years or more and—Caramon! That's it! He said he was taking me to 'a place and time when there were no clerics!' That must be after the Cataclysm and before the war. Before—"

"Before he returned to claim this Tower as his own," Caramon said grimly. "And that means the curse is still upon the Tower, Lady Crysania. That means we are in the one place in Krynn where evil reigns supreme. The one place more feared than any other upon the face of the world. The one place where no mortal dare tread, guarded by the Shoikan Grove and the gods know what else! He has brought us here! We have materialized within its heart!"

Crysania suddenly saw pale faces appear outside the circle of light, as if summoned by Caramon's voice. Disembodied heads, staring at her with eyes long ago closed in dark and dismal death, they floated in the cold air, their mouths opening wide in anticipation of warm, living blood.

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"Caramon, I can see them!" Crysania choked, shrinking close to the big man. "I can see their faces!"

"I felt their hands on me," Caramon said. Shivering convulsively, feeling her shivering as well, he put his arm about her, drawing her close to him. "They attacked me. Their touch froze my skin. That was when you heard me yell."

"But why didn't I see them before? What keeps them from attacking now?"

"You, Lady Crysania," Caramon said softly. "You are a cleric of Paladine. These are creatures spawned of evil, created by the curse. They do not have the power to harm you."

Crysania looked at the medallion in her hands. The light welled forth still, but—even as she stared at it—it seemed to dim. Guiltily, she remembered the elven cleric, Loralon. She remembered her refusal to accompany him. His words rang in her mind: *You will see only when you are blinded by the darkness. . . .*

"I am a cleric, true," she said softly, trying to keep the despair from her voice, "but my faith is . . . imperfect. These things sense my doubts, my weakness. Perhaps a cleric as strong as Elistan would have the power to fight them. I don't think I do." The glow dimmed further. "My light is failing, Caramon," she said, after a moment. Looking up, she could see the pallid faces eagerly drift nearer, and she shrank closer to him. "What can we do?"

"What *can* we do! I have no weapon! I can't see!" Caramon cried out in agony, clenching his fist.

"Hush!" Crysania ordered, grasping his arm, her eyes on the shimmering figures. "They seem to grow stronger when you talk like that! Perhaps they feed off fear. Those in the Shoikan Grove do, so Dalamar told me."

Caramon drew a deep breath. His body glistened with sweat, and he began to shake violently.

"We've got to try to wake up Raistlin," Crysania said.

"No good!" Caramon whispered through chattering teeth. "I know—"

"We have to try!" Crysania said firmly, though she shuddered at the thought of walking even a few feet under that terrible scrutiny.

"Be careful, move slowly," Caramon advised, letting her go.

Holding the medallion high, her eyes on the eyes of the darkness, Crysania crept over to Raistlin. She placed one hand on the mage's thin, black-robed shoulder. "Raistlin!" she said as loudly as she dared, shaking him. "Raistlin!"

There was no response. She might as well have tried to rouse a corpse. Thinking of that, she glanced out at the waiting figures. Would they kill *him*? she wondered. After all, he didn't exist in this time. The "master of past and present" had not yet returned to claim his property—this Tower.

Or had he?

Crysania called to the mage again and, as she did so, she kept her eyes on the undead, who were moving nearer as her light grew weaker.

"Fistandantilus!" she said to Raistlin.

"Yes!" Caramon cried, hearing her and understanding. "They recognize *that* name. What's happening? I feel a change. . . ."

"They've stopped!" Crysania said breathlessly. "They're looking at him now."

"Get back!" Caramon ordered, rising to a half-crouch. "Keep away from him. Get that light away from him! Let them see him as he exists in *their* darkness!"

"No!" Crysania retorted angrily. "You're mad! Once the light's gone, they'll devour him—"

"It's our only chance!"

Lunging for Crysania blindly, Caramon caught her off guard. He grabbed her in his strong arms and yanked her away from Raistlin, hurling her to the floor. Then he fell across her smashing the breath from her body.

"Caramon!" She gasped for air. "They'll kill him! No—" Frantically, Crysania struggled against the big warrior, but he held her pinned beneath him.

The medallion was still clutched in her fingers. Its light glowed weaker and weaker. Twisting her body, she saw Raistlin, lying in darkness now, outside the circle of her light.

"Raistlin!" she screamed. "No! Let me up, Caramon! They're going to him. . . ."

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But Caramon held her all the more firmly, pressing her down against the cold floor. His face was anguished, yet grim and determined, his sightless eyes staring down at her. His flesh was cold against her own, his muscles tense and knotted.

She would cast another spell on him! The words were on her lips when a shrill cry of pain pierced the darkness.

"Paladine, help me!" Crysania prayed. . . .

Nothing happened.

Weakly, she tried one more time to escape Caramon, but it was hopeless and she knew it. And now, apparently, even her god had abandoned her. Crying out in frustration, cursing Caramon, she could only watch.

The pale, shimmering figures surrounded Raistlin now. She could see him only by the light of the horrid aura their decaying bodies cast. Her throat ached and a low moan escaped her lips as one of the ghastly creatures raised its cold hands and laid them upon his body.

Raistlin screamed. Beneath the black robes, his body jerked in spasms of agony.

Caramon, too, heard his brother's cry. Crysania could see it reflected in his deathly, pale face. "Let me up!" she pleaded. But, though cold sweat beaded his forehead, he shook his head resolutely, holding her hands tightly.

Raistlin screamed again. Caramon shuddered, and Crysania felt his muscles grow flaccid. Dropping the medallion, she freed her arms to strike at him with her clenched fists. But as she did so, the medallion's light vanished, plunging them both into complete darkness. Caramon's body was suddenly wrenched off hers. His hoarse, agonized scream mingled with the screams of his brother.

Dizzily, her heart racing in terror, Crysania struggled to sit up, her hand pawing the floor frantically for the medallion.

A face came near hers. She glanced up quickly from her search, thinking it was Caramon. . . .

It wasn't. A disembodied head floated near her.

"No!" she whispered, unable to move, feeling life drain from her hands, her body, her very heart. Fleshless hands

grasped her arms, drawing her near; bloodless lips gaped, eager for warmth.

"Paladi—" Crysania tried to pray, but she felt her soul being sucked from her body by the creature's deadly touch.

Then she heard, dimly and far away, a weak voice chanting words of magic. Light exploded around her. The head so near her own vanished with a shriek the fleshless hands loosed their grasp. There was an acrid smell of sulfur.

"*Shirak.*" The explosive light was gone. A soft glow lit the room.

Crysania sat up. "Raistlin!" she whispered thankfully. Staggering to her hands and knees, she crawled forward across the blackened, blasted floor to reach the mage, who lay on his back, breathing heavily. One hand rested on the Staff of Magius. Light radiated from the crystal ball clutched in the golden dragon's claw atop the staff.

"Raistlin! Are you all right?"

Kneeling beside him, she looked into his thin, pale face as he opened his eyes. Wearily, he nodded. Then, reaching up, he drew her down to him. Embracing her, he stroked her soft, black hair. She could feel his heart beat. The strange warmth of his body drove away the chill.

"Don't be afraid!" he whispered soothingly, feeling her tremble. "They will not harm us. They have seen me and recognized me. They didn't hurt you?"

She could not speak but only shook her head. He sighed again. Crysania, her eyes closed, lay in his embrace, lost in comfort.

Then, as his hand went to her hair once more, she felt his body tense. Almost angrily, he grasped her shoulders and pushed her away from him.

"Tell me what happened," he ordered in a weak voice.

"I woke up here—" Crysania faltered. The horror of her experience and the memory of Raistlin's warm touch confused and unnerved her. Seeing his eyes grow cold and impatient, however, she made herself continue, keeping her voice steady. "I heard Caramon shout—"

Raistlin's eyes opened wide. "My brother?" he said,

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startled. "So the spell brought him, too. I'm amazed I am still alive. Where is he?" Lifting his head weakly, he saw his brother, lying unconscious on the floor. "What's the matter with him?"

"I—I cast a spell. He's blind," Crysania said, flushing. "I didn't mean to, it was when he was trying to ki-kill you—in Istar, right before the Cataclysm—"

"You blinded him! Paladine . . . blinded *him!*" Raistlin laughed. The sound reverberated off the cold stones, and Crysania cringed, feeling a chill of horror. But the laughter caught in Raistlin's throat. The mage began to choke and gag, gasping for breath.

Crysania watched, helpless, until the spasm passed and Raistlin lay quietly once more. "Go on," he whispered irritably.

"I heard him yell, but I couldn't see in the darkness. The medallion gave me light, though, and I found him and I—I knew he was blind. I found you, too. You were unconscious. We couldn't wake you. Caramon told me to describe where we were and then I saw"—she shuddered—"I saw those . . . those horrible—"

"Continue," Raistlin said.

Crysania drew a deep breath, "Then the light from the medallion began to fail—"

Raistlin nodded.

"—and those . . . things came toward us. I called out to you, using the name Fistandantilus. That made them pause. Then"—Crysania's voice lost its fear and was edged with anger—"your brother grabbed me and threw me down on the floor, shouting something about 'let them see him as he exists in their own darkness!' When Paladine's light no longer touched you, those creature—" She shuddered and covered her face with her hands, still hearing Raistlin's terrible scream echoing in her mind.

"My brother said that?" Raistlin asked softly after a moment.

Crysania moved her hands to look at him, puzzled at his tone of mingled admiration and astonishment. "Yes," she said coldly after a moment. "Why?"

"He saved our lives," Raistlin remarked, his voice once more caustic. "The great dolt actually had a good idea. Perhaps you should leave him blind—it aids his thinking."

Raistlin tried to laugh, but it turned to a cough that nearly choked him instead. Crysania started toward him to help him, but he halted her with a fierce look, even as his body twisted in pain. Rolling to his side, he retched.

He fell back weakly, his lips stained with blood, his hands twitching. His breathing was shallow and too fast. Occasionally a coughing spasm wrenched his body.

Crysania stared at him helplessly.

"You told me once that the gods could not heal this malady. But you're dying, Raistlin! Isn't there *something* I can do?" she asked softly, not daring to touch him.

He nodded, but for a minute could neither speak nor move. Finally, with an obvious effort, he lifted a trembling hand from the chill floor and motioned Crysania near. She bent over him. Reaching up, he touched her cheek, drawing her face close to his. His breath was warm against her skin.

"Water!" He gasped inaudibly. She could understand him only by reading the movements of his blood-caked lips. "A potion . . . will help. . . ." Feebly, his hand moved to a pocket in his robes. "And . . . and warmth, fire! I . . . have not . . . the strength. . . ."

Crysania nodded, to show she understood.

"Caramon?" His lips formed the words.

"Those—those things attacked him," she said, glancing over at the big warrior's motionless body. "I'm not sure if he's still alive. . . ."

"We need him! You . . . must . . . heal him!" He could not continue but lay panting for air, his eyes closed.

Crysania swallowed, shivering. "Are—are you sure?" she asked hesitantly. "He tried to murder you—"

Raistlin smiled, then shook his head. The black hood rustled gently at the motion. Opening his eyes, he looked up at Crysania and she could see deep within their brown depths. The flame within the mage burned low, giving the eyes a soft warmth much different from the raging fire she had seen before.

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"Crysania . . ." he breathed, "I . . . am going . . . to lose consciousness. . . . You . . . will . . . be alone . . . in this place of darkness. . . . My brother . . . can help. . . . Warmth . . ." His eyes closed, but his grasp on Crysania's hand tightened, as though endeavoring to use her lifeforce to cling to reality. With a violent struggle, he opened his eyes again to look directly into hers. "Don't leave this room!" he mouthed. His eyes rolled back in his head.

You will be alone! Crysania glanced around fearfully, feeling suffocated with terror. Water! Warmth! How could she manage? She couldn't! Not in this chamber of evil!

"Raistlin!" she begged, grasping his frail hand in both her hands and resting her cheek against it. "Raistlin, please don't leave me!" she whispered, cringing at the touch of his cold flesh. "I can't do what you ask! I haven't the power! I can't create water out of dust—"

Raistlin's eyes opened. They were nearly as dark as the room in which he lay. Moving his hand, the hand she held, he traced a line from her eyes down her cheek. Then the hand went limp, his head lolled to one side.

Crysania raised her own hand to her skin in confusion, wondering what he meant by such a strange gesture? It had not been a caress. He was trying to tell her something, that much had been apparent by his insistent gaze. But what? Her skin burned at his touch . . . bringing back memories. . . .

And then she knew.

I can't create water out of dust. . . .

"My tears!" she murmured.