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A DEL REY BOOK



Book Four of The Belgariad

CASTLE OF WIZARDRY

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CASTLE OF WIZARDRY

*For Bibbidie,
and for Chopper Jack
and for Jimmy and Eddie
- close and special friends who have given support
from the start.*

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PROLOGUE

Being an account of how Riva Iron grip became Guardian of the Orb of Aldur and of the evil wrought by Nyissa.

-Based upon *The Book of Alorn* and later accounts.

NOW A TIME came when Cherek and his three sons went with Belgarath the Sorcerer into Malloreia. Together they sought to reclaim the Orb of Aldur, which had been stolen by the maimed God Torak. And when they came to the place in the iron tower of Torak where the Orb was hidden, only Riva Iron-grip, youngest of the sons, dared seize the great jewel and bear it forth. For Riva alone was free of evil intent within his soul.

And when they were come again to the West, Belgarath gave unto Riva and his descendants eternal guardianship of the Orb, saying: "So long as the Orb rests with you and your line, so long shall the West be safe."

Then Riva took the Orb and sailed with his people to the Isle of the Winds. There, upon the one place where ships might land, Riva caused to be built a Citadel and a walled city around it, which men named Riva. It was a fortress city, built for war.

Within the Citadel was built a great hall, with a throne carved of black rock set against the wall. And men called this throne room the Hall of the Rivan King.

Then a deep sleep fell upon Riva, and Belar, Bear-God of the Alorns, appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Behold, Guardian of the Orb, I will cause two stars to fall from the sky. And thou shalt take up the two stars and place them in a fire and forge them. One shall thou forge into a blade, the other into a hilt, and together they shall be a sword to guard the Orb of my brother Aldur."

When Riva awoke, he saw two stars fall and he sought and found them in the high mountains. And he did with them as Belar had instructed. But when it was done, the blade and hilt could not be joined. Then Riva cried out, "Behold, I have marred the work, for the sword will not become one."

A fox, which had sat nearby to watch him, said to Riva, "The work is not marred, Riva. Take the hilt and place the Orb upon it as a pommel stone." And when Riva did as the fox instructed, the Orb became one with the hilt. But blade and hilt were still unjoined. Again the fox counseled him. "Take the blade in your left hand and the hilt in the right and join them."

"They will not join. It is not possible," Riva said.

"Wise are you, indeed," the fox said, "to know what is not possible before you have made the attempt."

Then Riva was ashamed. He set blade and hilt together, and the blade passed into the hilt as a stick slides into water. The sword was joined forever.

The fox laughed and said, "Take the sword and smite the rock which stands before you."

Riva feared for the blade, lest the blow shatter it, but he smote the rock. The rock broke in two, and water gushed forth in a river and flowed down to the city below. And far to the east in the darkness of Mallorea, maimed Torak started up from his bed as a chill coursed through his heart.

Again the fox laughed. Then it ran away, but stopped to look back. Riva saw that it was a fox no longer, but the great silver wolf form of Belgarath.

Riva had the sword placed upon the face of the black rock wall that stood at the back of his throne with its blade downward so that the Orb at its pommel stood at the highest point. And the sword cleaved itself to the rock. None but Riva could take it down.

As the years passed, men saw that the Orb burned with a cold fire when Riva sat upon the throne; and when he took down the sword and raised it, it became a great tongue of blue flame.

In the early spring of the year after the sword was forged, a small boat came across the dark waters of the Sea of the Winds, moving without oars or sails. Alone within the boat was the fairest maid in all the world. Her name

was Beldaran, beloved daughter of Belgarath, and she had come to be a wife to Riva. And Riva's heart melted with love for her, as had been ordained from the beginning of time.

In the year that followed the wedding of Beldaran to Riva, a son was born to them upon Erastide. And upon the right hand of this son of Riva was the mark of the Orb. Straightaway, Riva carried his infant manchild to the Hall of the Rivan King and placed the tiny hand upon the Orb. The Orb knew the child and glowed with love for him. Ever afterward, the hand of each descendant of Riva bore the mark of the Orb that it might know him and not destroy him when he touched it, for only one of Riva's line could touch the Orb in safety. With each touch of infant hand upon the Orb the bond between Riva's line and the Orb grew stronger. And with each joining, the brilliance of the Orb increased.

Thus it was in the city of Riva for a thousand years. Sometimes strangers sailed into the Sea of Winds, seeking trade, but the ships of Cherek, bound to defend the Isle of the Winds, fell upon the strangers and destroyed them. But in time, the Alorn Kings met and determined in council that these strangers were not the servants of Torak, but bowed instead to the God Nedra. Then they agreed to let the ships sail the Sea of the Winds unmolested. "For," the Rivan King told his fellow monarchs, "a time may come when the sons of Nedra will join with us in our struggle against the Angaraks of Torak One-Eye. Let us not offend Nedra by sinking the ships of his children." The ruler of Riva spoke wisely, and the Alorn Kings agreed, knowing that the world was changing.

Then treaties were signed with the sons of Nedra; who took a childish delight in signing scraps of parchment. But when they sailed into the harbor at Riva, with their ships bearing full loads of gaudy trinkets upon which they placed high value, the Rivan King laughed at their folly and closed the gates of the city to them.

The sons of Nedra importuned their king, whom they called Emperor, to force the city gates so that they might hawk their wares in the streets, and the Emperor sent his army to the Isle. Now to permit these strangers from the kingdom they called Tolnedra passage upon the Sea was one thing, but to let them land an army at the gates of Riva without challenge was quite

another. The Rivan King ordered that the strand before the city be cleared and the harbor be swept clean of the ships of Tolnedra. And it was done.

Great was the wrath of the Emperor of Tolnedra. He assembled his armies to cross the Sea of the Winds and do war. Then the peaceloving Alorns held council to try reason upon this rash Emperor. And they sent out a message to advise him that, should he persist, they would rise up and destroy Emperor and kingdom and sweep the wreckage thereof into the sea. And the Emperor gave heed to this quiet remonstrance and abandoned his desperate adventure.

As years passed and the Rivan King realized that these merchants from Tolnedra were harmless, he allowed them to build a village upon the strand before his city and there to display their useless goods. Their desperation to sell or trade came to amuse him, and he asked his people to buy some few items from them - though no purpose could be found for the goods thus purchased.

Then, four thousand and two years from the day when Accursed Torak raised the stolen Orb and cracked open the world, other strange people came to the village which the sons of Nedra had built outside the walls of Riva. And it was learned of these strangers that they were the sons of the God Issa. They called themselves Ny-Issans, and they claimed that their ruler was a woman, which seemed unnatural to all who heard. The name of this queen was Salmissra.

They came in dissembling guise, saying that they brought rich gifts from their queen for the Rivan King and his family. Hearing this, Gorek the Wise, aged king in the line of Riva, grew curious to know more of these children of Issa and their queen. With his wife, his two sons and their wives, and all his royal grandchildren, he went from out the fortress and the city to visit the pavilion of the Ny-Issans, to greet them courteously, and to receive from them the valueless gifts sent by the harlot of Sthiss Tor. With smiles of greeting, the Rivan King and his family were welcomed into the pavilion of the strangers.

Then the foul and accursed sons of Issa struck at all who were the fruit and the seed of the line of Riva. And venom was anointed upon their weapons,

so that the merest scratch was death.

Mighty even in age, Gorek struggled with the assassins - not to save himself, for he felt death in his veins from the first blow - but to save at least one of his grandsons that his line might continue. Alas, all were doomed, save only one child who fled and cast himself into the sea. When Gorek saw this, he covered his head with his cloak, groaned, and fell dying beneath the knives of Nyissa.

When word of this reached Brand, Warder of the Citadel, his wrath was dreadful. The traitorous assassins were overcome, and Brand questioned each in turn in ways that made brave men tremble. And the truth was wrung from them. Gorek and his family had been foully murdered at the instructions of Salmissra, Snake Queen of the Nyissans.

Of the child who had cast himself into the sea there was no trace. One assassin claimed that he had seen a snowy owl swoop down and bear the child away, but he was not believed, though even the severest urging would not make him change his story.

Then all Aloria made dreadful war upon the sons of Issa and tore down their cities and put all they could find to the sword. And in her final hour, Salmissra confessed that the evil deed had been done at the urging of Torak One-Eye and his servant Zedar.

Thus there was no longer a Rivan King and Guardian of the Orb, though Brand and those of the same name who followed reluctantly took up rule of Riva. Rumor, ever vagrant, persisted in the years that followed, saying that the seed of Riva still lay hidden in some remote land. But gray-cloaked Rivans scoured the world in search of him and never found him.

The sword remained as Riva had placed it, and the Orb was still affixed to its pommel, though now the jewel was ever dull and seeming without life. And men began to feel that so long as the Orb was there, the West was safe, even though there was no Rivan King. Nor did there seem aught of danger that the Orb could ever be removed, since any man who touched it would be instantly and utterly consumed, were he not truly of the line of Riva.