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DAVID EDDINGS

Book One of The Malloreon

GUARDIANS OF
THE WEST



Guardians of the West
The Malloreon Book 1
David Eddings



PROLOGUE

Being an Account those Events came to the Throne of Riva and how he slew the Accursed God Torak.

-from the Introduction, Legends of Aloria

After the seven Gods created the world, it is said that they and those races of men they had chosen dwelt together in peace and harmony. But UL, father of the Gods, remained aloof, until Gorim, leader of those who had no God, went up on a high mountain and importuned him mightily. Then the heart of UL melted, and he lifted up Gorim and swore to be his God and God of his people, the Ulgos.

The God Aldur remained apart, teaching the power of the Will and the Word to Belgarath and other disciples. And a time came when Aldur took up a globe-shaped stone no larger than the heart of child. Men named the stone the Orb of Aldur, and it was filled with enormous power, for it was the embodiment of a Necessity which had existed since the beginning of time.

Torak, God of the Angarak peoples, coveted lordship and dominion over all things, for to him had come an opposing Necessity. When he learned of the Orb, he was sorely troubled, fearing that it would counter his destiny. He went therefore to Aldur to plead that the stone be set aside. When Aldur would not give up the stone, Torak smote him and fled with the Orb.

Then Aldur summoned his other brothers, and they went with a mighty army of their followers to confront Torak. But Torak, seeing that his Angaraks must be defeated, raised the Orb and used its power to crack the world and bring in the Sea of the East to divide him from his enemies.

But the Orb was angered that Torak should use it thus and it lashed him with a fire whose agony could not be quenched.

Torak's left hand was burned away, his left cheek was seared in the arts of sorcery and charred, and his left eye took flame and was ever after filled with the fire of the Orb's wrath.

In agony, Torak led his people into the wastelands of Mallorea, and his people built him a city in Cthol Mishrak, which was called the City of Night, for Torak hid it under an endless cloud. There, in a tower of iron, Torak contended with the Orb, trying in vain to quell its hatred for him.

Thus it endured for two thousand years. Then Cherek Bear-Shoulders, King of the Alorns, went down to the Vale of Aldur to tell Belgarath the Sorcerer that the northern way was clear. Together they left the Vale with Cherek's three mighty sons, Dras Bull-neck, Algar Fleet-foot and Riva Irongrip. They stole through the marches, with Belgarath taking the form of a wolf to guide them, and they crossed over into Malloreia. By night, they stole into Torak's iron tower. And while the maimed God tossed in pain-haunted slumber, they crept to the room where he kept the Orb locked in an iron casket. Riva Iron-grip, whose heart was without ill intent, took up the Orb, and they left for the West.

Torak waked to find the Orb gone and he pursued them.

But Riva lifted up the Orb, and its angry flame filled Torak with fear. Then the company passed from Malloreia and returned to their own lands.

Belgarath divides Aloria into four kingdoms. Over three he set Bear-Shoulders, Dras Bull-neck, and Algar Fleet-foot. To Riva Iron-grip and to his line he gave the Orb of Aldur and sent him to the Isle of the Winds.

Belar, God of the Alorns, sent down two stars, and from them Riva forged a mighty sword and placed the Orb on its pommel. And he hung the sword on the wall of the throne room of the Citadel, where it might ever guard the West from Torak.

When Belgarath returned to his home, he discovered that his wife, Poledra, had borne him twin daughters, but then had passed away. In heartsick sorrow, he named his daughters Polgara and Beldaran. And when they were of age, he sent Beldaran to Riva Iron-grip to be his wife and mother of the Rivan line. But Polgara he kept with him and instructed in the arts of sorcery.

In rage at the loss of the Orb, Torak destroyed the City of Night and divided the Angaraks. The Murgos, the Nadraks, and the Thulls he sent to dwell in the wastelands along the western shores of the Sea of the East. The Malloreans he kept to subdue all of the continent on which they dwelt.

Over all, he set his Grolim priests to watch, to scourge any who faltered, and to offer human sacrifices to him.

Many centuries passed. Then Zedar the Apostate, who served Torak, conspired with Salmissra, Queen of the snake-people, to send emissaries to the Isle of the Winds to slay Gorek, Riva's descendant, and all his family.

This was done, though some claimed that a lone child escaped; but none could say for certain.

Emboldened by the death of the guardian of the Orb, Torak gathered his host and invaded the West, planning to enslave the peoples and regain the Orb. At Vo Mimbire on the plains of Arendia, the hordes of Angaraks met the armies of the West in dreadful slaughter. And there Brand the Rivan Warder, bearing the Orb upon his shield, met Torak in single combat and struck down the maimed God. The Angaraks, seeing that, were disheartened and they were overthrown and destroyed. But at night, as the Kings of the West celebrated, Zedar the Apostate took the body of Torak and spirited it away. Then the High Priest of the Ulgos, named Gorim as all such High Priests had been, revealed that Torak had not been killed, but bound in slumber until a king of the line of Riva sat once more on the throne in the Hall of the Rivan King.

The Kings of the West believed that meant forever, for it was held that the line of Riva had perished utterly. But Belgarath and his daughter Polgara knew better. For a child had escaped the slaughter of Gorek's family, and they had concealed him and his descendants in obscurity for generations.

But ancient prophecies revealed to them that the time for the return of the Rivan King was not yet come.

Many more centuries passed. Then, in a nameless city on the far side of the world, Zedar the Apostate came upon an innocent child and resolved to take the child and go secretly with him to the Isle of the Winds. There he hoped that the innocence of the child might enable that child to take the Orb of Aldur from the pommel of the sword of the Rivan King. It occurred as he wished, and Zedar fled with the child and the Orb toward the East.

Polgara the Sorceress had been living with a young boy, who called her Aunt Pol, in obscurity on a farm in Sendaria.

This boy was Garion, the orphaned last descendant of the Rivan line, but he was unaware of his parentage.

When Belgarath learned of the theft of the Orb, he hastened to Sendaria to urge his daughter to join him in the search for Zedar and the Orb. Polgara insisted that the boy must accompany them on the quest, so Garion accompanied his Aunt Pol and Belgarath, whom he knew as a storyteller who sometimes visited the farm and whom he called Grandfather.

Durnik, the farm smith, insisted on going with them. Soon they were joined by Barak of Cherek and by Kheldar of Drasnia, whom men called Silk. In time, their quest for the Orb was joined by others: Hettar, horse-lord of Algaria; Mandorallen, the Mimbrate knight; and Relg, an Ulgo zealot.

And seemingly by chance, the Princess Ce'Nedra, having quarreled with her father, Emperor Ran Borune XXIII of Tolnedra, fled his palace and became one of the companions, though she knew nothing of their quest. Thus was completed the company foretold by the prophecy of the Mrin Codex.

Their search led them to the Wood of the Dryads, where they were confronted by the Murgo Grolim Asharak, who had long spied secretly upon Garion. Then the voice of prophecy within Garion's mind spoke to Garion, and he struck Asharak with his hand and his Will. And Asharak was utterly consumed in fire. Thus Garion learned that he was possessed of the power of sorcery. Polgara rejoiced, telling him that henceforth he should be named Belgarion, as was proper for a sorcerer, for she knew then that the centuries of waiting were over and that Garion should be the one to reclaim the Rivan Throne, as foretold.

Zedar the Apostate fled from Belgarath in haste. Unwisely, he entered the realms of Ctuchik, High Priest of the western Grolims. Like Zedar, Ctuchik was a disciple of Torak, but the two had lived in enmity throughout the centuries. As Zedar crossed the barren mountains of Cthol Murgos, Ctuchik waited him in ambush and wrested from him the Orb of Aldur and the child whose innocence enabled him to touch the Orb and not die.

Belgarath went ahead to seek out the trail of Zedar, but Beltira, another disciple of Aldur, gave him the news that Ctuchik now held the child and the Orb. The other companions went on to Nyissa, where Salmissra, Queen of the snake-loving people, had Garion seized and brought to her palace. But Polgara freed him and turned Salmissra into a serpent, to rule over the snake-people in that form forever.

When Belgarath rejoined his companions, he led the company on a difficult journey to the dark city of Rak Cthol, which was built atop a mountain in the desert of Murgos.

They accomplished the difficult climb to confront Ctuchik, who knew of their coming and awaited with the child and the Orb. Then Belgarath engaged Ctuchik in a duel of sorcery. But Ctuchik, hard-pressed, tried a

forbidden spell, and it rebounded on him, destroying him so utterly that no trace of him remained.

The shock of his destruction tumbled Rak Cthol from its mountaintop. While the city of the Grolims shuddered into rubble, Garion snatched up the trusting child who bore the Orb and carried him to safety. They fled, with the hordes of Taur Urgas, King of the Murgos, pursuing them. But when they crossed into the lands of Algaria, the Algarians came against the Murgos and defeated them. Then at last, Belgarath could turn toward the Isle of the Winds to restore the Orb to its rightful place.

There in the Hall of the Rivan King at Erastide, the child whom they called Errand placed the Orb of Aldur into Garion's hand, and Garion stood on the throne to set it in its accustomed place on the pommel of the great Sword of the Rivan King. As he did so, the Orb leaped into flame, and the sword blazed with cold blue fire. By these signs, all knew that Garion was indeed the true heir to the throne of Riva and they acclaimed him King of Riva, Overlord of the West, and the Keeper of the Orb.

Soon, in keeping with the Accords signed after the Battle of Vo Mimbire, the boy who had come from a humble farm in Sendaria to become the Rivan King was betrothed to the Princess Ce'Nedra. But before the wedding could take place, the voice of prophecy that was within his head urged him to go to the room of documents and there take down the copy of the Mrin Codex.

In that ancient prophecy, he discovered that he was destined to take up Riva's sword and go with it to confront the maimed God Torak and to slay or be slain, thereby to decide the fate of the world. For Torak had begun to end his long slumber with the crowning of Garion, and in this meeting must be determined which of the two opposing Necessities or prophecies would prevail.

Garion knew that he could marshal an army to invade the East with him. But though his heart was filled with fear, he determined that he alone should accept the danger. Only Belgarath and Silk accompanied him. In the early morning, they crept out of the Citadel of Riva and set out on the long northern journey to the dark ruins of the City of Night where Torak lay.

But the Princess Ce'Nedra went to the Kings of the West and persuaded them to join her in an effort to distract the forces of the Angaraks, so that Garion might win through safely. With the help of Polgara, she marched

through Sendaria, Arendia, and Tolnedra, raising a mighty army to follow her and to engage the hosts of the East. They met on the plain surrounding the city of Thull Mardu. Caught between the forces of Emperor 'Zakath of Mallorea and those of the mad King of the Murgos, Taur Urgas, Ce'Nedra's army faced annihilation. But Cho-Hag, Chief of the Clan-Chiefs of Algaria, slew Taur Urgas; and the Nadrak King Drosta lek Thun changed sides, giving her forces time to withdraw.

Ce'Nedra, Polgara, Durnik, and the child Errand, however, were captured and sent to Zakath, who sent them on to the ruined city of Cthol Mishrak for Zedar to judge. Zedar slew Durnik, and it was to see Polgara weeping over his body that Garion arrived.

In a duel of sorcery, Belgarath sealed Zedar into the rocks far below the surface. But by then Torak had awakened fully.

The two destinies which had opposed each other since time began thus faced each other in the ruined City of Night. And there in the darkness, Garion, the Child of Light, slew Torak, the Child of Dark, with the flaming sword of the Rivan King, and the dark prophecy fled wailing into the void.

UL and the six living Gods came for the body of Torak.

And Polgara importuned them to bring Durnik back to life. Reluctantly they consented. But since it would not be mete for her so far to exceed Durnik's abilities, they gave to him the gift of sorcery.

Then all returned to the city of Riva. Belgarion married Ce'Nedra, and Polgara took Durnik as her husband. The Orb was again in its rightful place to protect the West. And the war of Gods, kings, and men, which had endured for seven thousand years, was at an end.

Or so men thought.

PART ONE - THE VALE OF ALDUR

