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A DEL REY BOOK



Book Three of The Belgariad

MAGICIAN'S GAMBIT

DAVID EDDINGS



MAGICIAN'S GAMBIT

*For Dorothy,
who has the enduring grace to put up with Eddings
men,
and for Wayne,
for reasons we both understand but could never be
put into words.*

PROLOGUE

Being an Account of how Gorim sought a God for his People and of how he found UL upon the sacred Mountain of Prolgu.

-based upon The Book of Ulgo and other fragments

AT THE BEGINNING Of Days, the world was spun out of darkness by the seven Gods, and they also created beasts and fowls, serpents and fishes, and lastly Man.

Now there dwelt in the heavens a spirit known as UL who did not join in this creation. And because he withheld his power and wisdom, much that was made was marred and imperfect. Many creatures were unseemly and strange. These the younger Gods sought to unmake, so that all upon the world might be fair.

But UL stretched forth his hand and prevented them, saying: "What you have wrought you may not unmake. You have torn asunder the fabric and peace of the heavens to bring forth this world as a plaything and an entertainment. Know, however, that whatsoever you make, be it ever so monstrous, shall abide as a rebuke for your folly. In the day that one thing which you have made is unmade, all shall be unmade."

The younger Gods were angered. To each monstrous or unseemly thing they had made they said: "Go thou unto UL and let him be thy God." Then from the races of men, each God chose that people which pleased him. And when there were yet peoples who had no God, the younger Gods drove them forth and said: "Go unto UL, and he shall be your God." And UL did not speak.

For long and bitter generations, the Godless Ones wandered and cried out unheard in the wastelands and wilderness of the West.

Then there appeared among their numbers a just and righteous man named Gorim. He gathered the multitudes before him and spoke to them: "We wither and fall as the leaves from the rigors of our wanderings. Our children and our old men die. Better it is that only one shall die. Therefore, stay here and rest upon this plain. I will search for the God named UL so that we may worship him and have a place in this world."

For twenty years, Gorim sought UL, but in vain. Yet the years passed, his hair turned gray, and he wearied of his search. In despair, he went up onto a high mountain and cried in a great voice to the sky: "No more! I will search no longer. The Gods are a mockery and deception, and the world is a barren void. There is no UL, and I am sick of the curse and affliction of my life."

The Spirit of UL heard and replied: "Why art thou wroth with me, Gorim? Thy making and thy casting out were none of my doing."

Gorim was afraid and fell upon his face. And UL spoke again, saying: "Rise, Gorim, for I am not thy God."

Gorim did not rise. "O my God," he cried, "hide not thy face from thy people who are sorely afflicted because they are outcast and have no God to protect them."

"Rise, Gorim," UL repeated, "and quit this place. Cease thy complaining. Seek thou a God elsewhere and leave me in peace."

Still Gorim did not rise. "O my God," he said, "I will still abide. Thy people hunger and thirst. They seek thy blessing and a place where they may dwell."

"Thy speech wearies me," UL said and he departed.

Gorim remained on the mountain, and the beasts of the field and fowls of the air brought him sustenance. For more than a year he remained. Then the monstrous and unseemly things which the Gods had made came and sat at his feet, watching him.

The Spirit of UL was troubled. At last he appeared to Gorim. "Abidest thou still?"

Gorim fell on his face and said: "O my God, thy people cry unto thee in their affliction."

The Spirit of UL fled. But Gorim abode there for another year. Dragons brought him meat, and unicorns gave him water. And again UL came to him, asking: "Abidest thou still?"

Gorim fell on his face. "O my God," he cried, "thy people perish in the absence of thy care." And UL fled from the righteous man. Another year passed while nameless, unseen things brought him food and drink. And the Spirit of UL came to the high mountain and ordered: "Rise, Gorim."

From his prostrate position, Gorim pleaded: "O my God, have mercy."

"Rise, Gorim," UL replied. He reached down and lifted Gorim up with his hands. "I am UL - thy God. I command thee to rise and stand before me."

"Then wilt thou be my God?" Gorim asked. "And God unto my people?"

"I am thy God and the God of thy people also," UL said.

Gorim looked down from his high place and beheld the unseemly creatures which had cared for him in his travail. "What of these, O my God? Wilt thou be God unto the basilisk and the minotaur, the Dragon and the chimera, the unicorn and the thing unnamed, the winged serpent and the thing unseen? For these are also outcast. Yet there is beauty in each. Turn not your face from them, O my God, for in them is great worthiness. They were sent to thee by the younger Gods. Who will be their God if you refuse them?"

"It was done in my despite," UL said. "These creatures were sent unto me to bring shame upon me that I had rebuked the younger Gods. I will in no wise be God unto monsters."

The creatures at Gorim's feet moaned. Gorim seated himself on the earth and said: "Yet will I abide, O my God."

"Abide if it please thee," UL said and departed.

It was even as before. Gorim abode, the creatures sustained him, and UL was troubled. And before the holiness of Gorim, the Great God repented and came again. "Rise, Gorim, and serve thy God." UL reached down and lifted Gorim. "Bring unto me the creatures who sit before thee and I will consider them. If each hath beauty and worthiness, as thou sayest, then I will consent to be their God also."

Then Gorim brought the creatures before UL. The creatures prostrated themselves before the God and moaned to beseech his blessing. UL marveled that he had not seen the beauty of each creature before. He raised up his hands and blessed them, saying: "I am UL and I find beauty and worthiness in each of you. I will be your God, and you shall prosper, and peace shall be among you."

Gorim was glad of heart and he named the high place where all had come to pass Prolgu, which means "Holy Place." Then he departed and returned to the plain to bring his people unto their God. But they did not know him, for the hands of UL had touched him, and all color had fled, leaving his body and hair as white as new snow. The people feared him and drove him away with stones.

Gorim cried unto UL: "O my God, thy touch has changed me, and my people know me not."

UL raised his hand, and the people were made colorless like Gorim. The Spirit of UL spoke to them in a great voice: "Hearken unto the words of your God. This is he whom you call Gorim, and he has prevailed upon me to accept you as my people, to watch over you, provide for you, and be God over you. Henceforth shall you be called UL-Go in remembrance of me and in token of his holiness. You shall do as he commands and go where he leads. Any who fail to obey him or follow him will I cut off to wither and perish and be no more."

Gorim commanded the people to take up their goods and their cattle and follow him to the mountains. But the elders of the people did not believe him, nor that the voice had been the voice of UL. They spoke to Gorim in despite, saying: "If you are the servant of the God UL, perform a wonder in proof of it."

Gorim answered: "Behold your skin and hair. Is that not wonder enough for you?"

They were troubled and went away. But they came to him again, saying: "The mark upon us is because of a pestilence which you brought from some unclean place and no proof of the favor of UL."

Gorim raised his hands, and the creatures which had sustained him came to him like lambs to a shepherd. The elders were afraid and went away for a time. But soon they came again, saying: "The creatures are monstrous and unseemly. You are a demon sent to lure the people to destruction, not a servant of the Great God UL. We have still seen no proof of the favor of UL."

Now Gorim grew weary of them. He cried in a great voice: "I say to the people that they have heard the voice of UL. I have suffered much in your behalf. Now I return to Prolgu, the holy place. Let him who would follow me do so; let him who would not remain." He turned and went toward the mountains.

Some few people went with him, but the greater part of the people remained, and they reviled Gorim and those who followed him: "Where is this wonder which proves the favor of UL? We do not follow or obey Gorim, yet neither do we wither and perish."

Then Gorim looked upon them in great sadness and spoke to them for the last time: "You have besought a wonder from me. Then behold this wonder. Even as the voice of UL said, you are withered like the limb of a tree that is cut off. Truly, this day you have perished." And he led the few who followed him into the mountains and to Prolgu.

The multitude of the people mocked him and returned to their tents to laugh at the folly of those who followed him. For a year they laughed and mocked. Then they laughed no more, for their women were barren and bore no children. The people withered and in time they perished and were no more.

The people who followed Gorim came with him to Prolgu. There they built a city. The Spirit of UL was with them, and they dwelt in peace with the creatures who had sustained Gorim. Gorim lived for many lifetimes; and after him, each High Priest of UL was named Gorim and lived to a great age. For a thousand years, the peace of UL was with them, and they believed it would last forever.

But the evil God Torak stole the Orb that was made by the God Aldur, and the war of men and Gods began. Torak used the Orb to break the earth asunder and let in the sea, and the Orb burned him horribly. And he fled into Mallorea.

The earth was maddened by her wounding, and the creatures which had dwelt in peace with the people of Ulgo were also maddened by that wounding. They rose against the fellowship of UL and cast down the cities and slew the people, until few remained.

Those who escaped fled to Prolgu, where the creatures dared not follow for fear of the wrath of UL. Loud were the cries and lamentations of the people. UL was troubled and he revealed to them the caves that lay under Prolgu. The people went down into the sacred caves of UL and dwelt there.

In time, Belgarath the Sorcerer led the king of the Alorns and his sons into Mallorea to steal back the Orb. When Torak sought to pursue, the wrath of the Orb drove him back. Belgarath gave the Orb to the first Rivian King, saying that so long as one of his descendants held the Orb, the West would be safe.

Now the Alorns scattered and pushed southward into new lands. And the peoples of other Gods were troubled by the war of Gods and men and fled to seize other lands which they called by strange names. But the people of UL held to the caverns of Prolgu and had no dealings with them. UL protected them and hid them, and the strangers did not know that the people were there. For century after century, the people of UL took no note of the outer world, even when that world was rocked by the assassination of the last Rivan King and his family.

But when Torak came ravaging into the West, leading a mighty army through the lands of the children of UL, the Spirit of UL spoke with the Gorim. And the Gorim led forth his people in stealth by night. They fell upon the sleeping army and wreaked mighty havoc. Thus the army of Torak was weakened and fell in defeat before the armies of the West at a place called Vo Mimbire.

Then the Gorim girded himself and went forth to hold council with the victors. And he brought back word that Torak had been gravely wounded. Though the evil God's body was stolen away and hidden by his disciple Belzedar, it was said that Torak would lie bound in a sleep like death itself until a descendant of the Rivan line should again sit upon the throne at Riva - which meant never, since it was known that no descendants of that line lived.

Shocking as the visit of the Gorim to the outer world had been, no harm seemed to come of it. The children of UL still prospered under the care of their God and life went on almost as before. It was noticed that the Gorim seemed to spend less time studying The Book of Ulgo and more searching through moldy old scrolls of prophecy. But a certain oddity might be expected of one who had gone forth from the caverns of UL into the world of other peoples.

Then a strange old man appeared before the entrance to the caverns, demanding to speak with the Gorim. And such was the power of his voice that the Gorim was summoned. Then, for the first time since the people had sought safety in the caverns, one who was not of the people of UL was admitted. The Gorim took the stranger into his chambers and remained closeted with him for days. And thereafter, the strange man with the white beard and tattered clothing appeared at long intervals and was welcomed by the Gorim.

It was even reported once by a young boy that there was a great gray wolf with the Gorim. But that was probably only some dream brought on by sickness, though the boy refused to recant.

The people adjusted and accepted the strangeness of their Gorim. And the years passed, and the people gave thanks to their God, knowing that they were the chosen people of the Great God UL.

