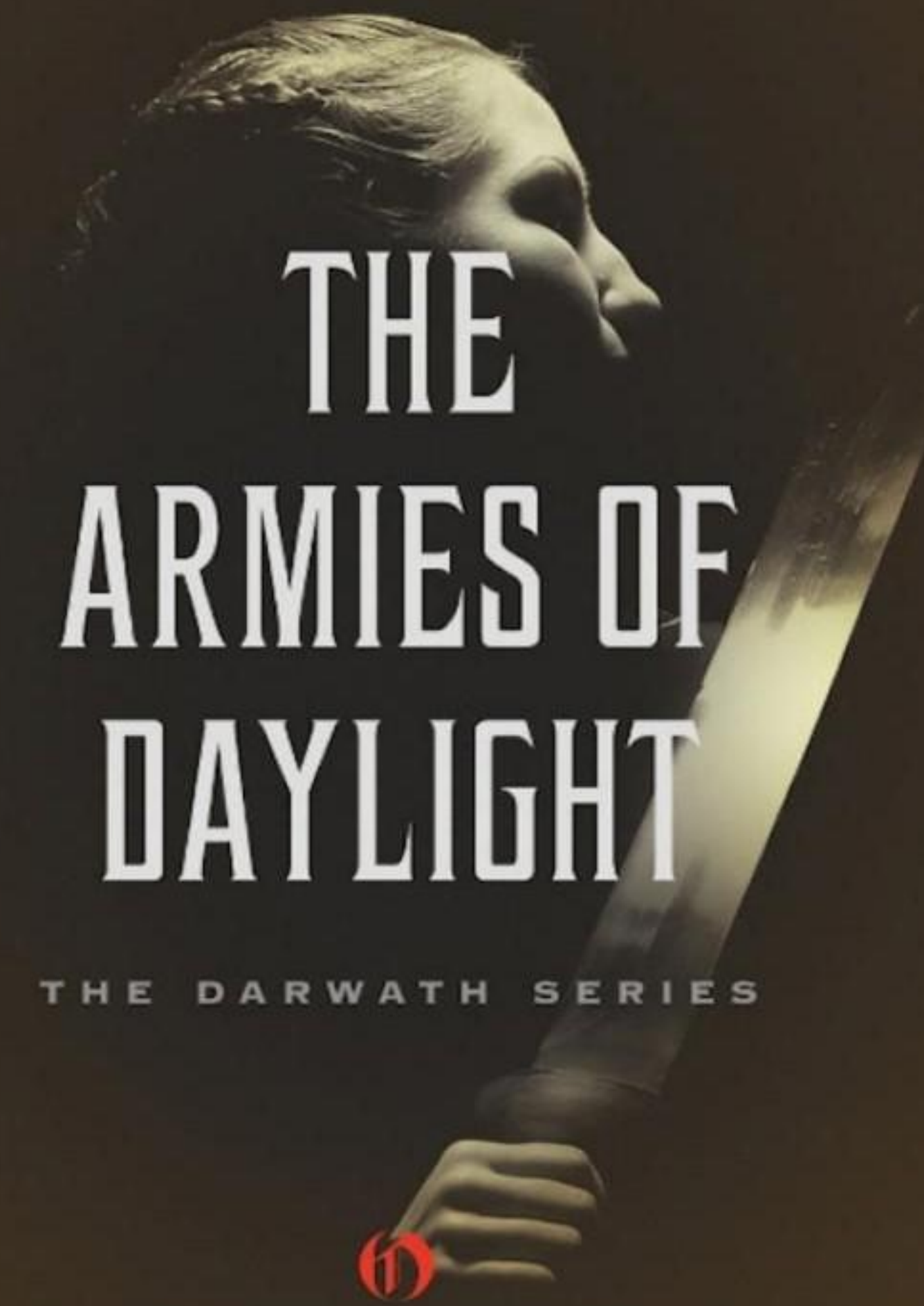


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

BARBARA HAMBLY

A black and white photograph of a woman's profile, looking upwards and to the right. She is holding a sword vertically, with the blade pointing upwards. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting her hair and the edge of the sword against a dark background.

**THE
ARMIES OF
DAYLIGHT**

THE DARWATH SERIES



The Armies of Daylight

Darwath Saga
Book III

Barbara Hambly

CONTENT

[Map](#)

[Church Diagram](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Part One *The Question And The Answer*](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Part Two *The Faceless King*](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

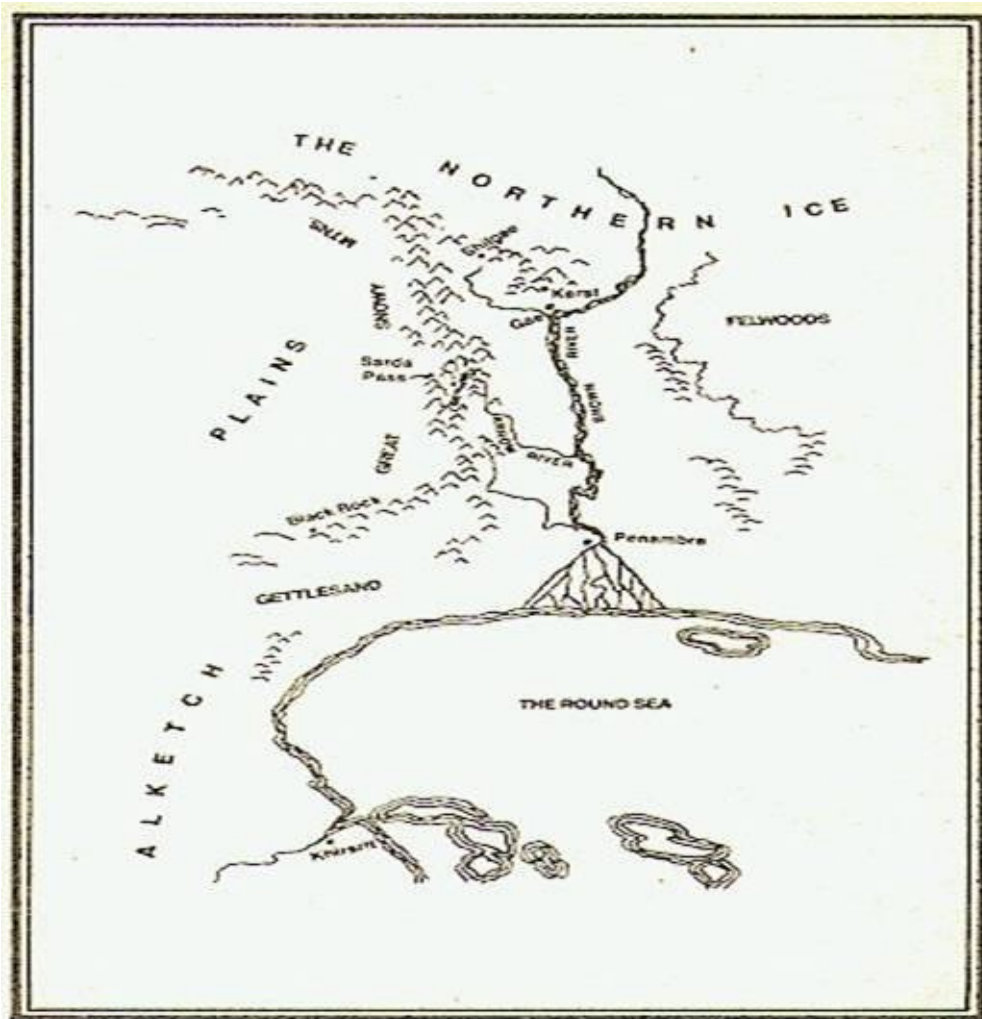
[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

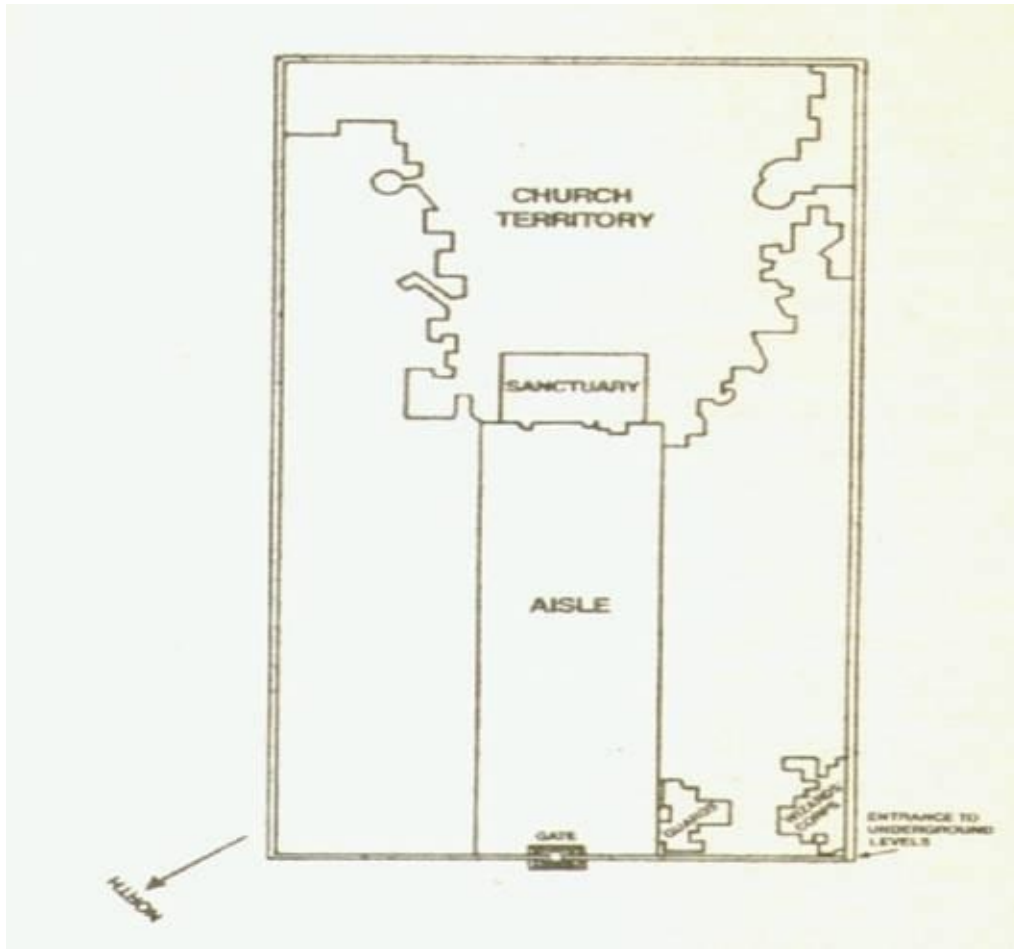
[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

Map



Church Diagram



Prologue

When the wizard Ingold crossed the Void between worlds to save the infant Prince Tir from the destruction of Gae, Gil Patterson and Rudy Solis tried to help him. But one of the monstrous, evil Dark crossed behind him, and they were all forced to flee back to the world of magic from which the wizard came.

It was a world where magic worked and where the loathsome Dark were destroying humanity, after having lain almost forgotten in underground lairs for three thousand years. And it was a world where the only hope for mankind lay in the distant, ancient stone Keep of Dare, built to resist the previous ravages of the Dark.

The King had fallen in Gae. Now Chancellor Alwir was the Regent, as brother to young Queen Minalde. Vying for power was the Bishop Govannin, fanatic leader of the Straight Faith. And both Alwir and the Bishop feared Ingold.

The road to the Keep was a hell of cold and danger, with both the Dark and the barbarian White Raiders taking toll on those who struggled through the freezing mud. But Gil found herself accepted as one of the Guards. Rudy won the love of Minalde and discovered that he had wizard powers. He became a student of Ingold.

Once the remnant of humanity was established precariously in the Keep, Ingold and Rudy set out for Quo, the city where the wizards ruled and protected all their ancient lore. There had been no word from that city, and no magic of Ingold's could reach through the veils of illusion guarding it. But when they reached Quo, after two thousand miles of marching through hardship and danger, they found the city in ruins—the Dark had been there. Of the wizards, only Lohiro remained to meet them. And Lohiro was possessed by the Dark. In a bitter struggle, Ingold managed to destroy Lohiro.

Ingold sent out a desperate mental summons for any wizards of any degree of ability. Then he and Rudy began the long struggle back to the Keep.

During their absence, Gil had used her training as a scholar to investigate the old records, looking for some clue as to how the ancient Dare of Renweth had defeated the Dark. Together with Minalde, who had a touch of the mysterious memory of past events that was supposedly inherited by only a few men, she found the ancient workshops of the wizard-engineers who had built the Keep. And she found artifacts of all lands, most without apparent use.

When Ingold and Rudy returned, they found a ragtag assembly of wizards, half-trained witches, and village healers waiting to become the Wizards' Corps under them. Ingold realized that the crystals Gil had found were the

ancient source of artificial light. And Rudy seized upon a collection of parts which he assembled into a flame thrower, a possible weapon against the Dark.

Alwir used the discovery as an excuse to determine that the wizards must spy out the Nest of the Dark at Gae. Ingold, knowing the folly of the plan but unable to deter Alwir, began trying to create a cloaking-spell that might protect the wizards against the Dark.

Part One

The Question And The Answer

Chapter One

The night was still. The wind that had beaten with such violence down the ice-locked mountains to the north had fallen at about sunset to an uneasy murmuring in the dark pines that filled the twisting Vale of Renweth. By midnight, even that had ceased. The black branches hung motionless from one end of the Vale to the other, slowly furring with frost in the deepening cold. A man's breath, barely visible in the soulless glimmer of the few remote and haughty stars, would hang like a diamond cloud about his face or freeze in white hoarfrost to his lips. In that piercing cold, not even the wolves were abroad; the silence ran from cliff to lightless cliff, an almost tangible property in that frozen and desolate world.

Yet beneath the dark trees, something had stirred.

Rudy Solis was sure of it. He glanced behind him for the fourth time in as many minutes, fear creeping along his spine and prickling at the nape of his neck like tiny teeth. Yet he saw nothing there, only the thin sheen of starlight frosting the unmarked snow.

He looked back to the darkness of the trees. He stood some fifty feet from the forest's edge, his shadow a misty blur on the old broken snow around his feet, his breath a tiny smear of steam against the darkness. Even wrapped in the thickness of his buffalohide coat, he shivered, though not entirely with cold. He knew that it would be warmer in the protection of the forest and, look as he would, he could sense no movement there. It was undoubtedly perfectly safe, and sheltering there would be a damnsight more intelligent than standing in the open listening to the ice crystallize in his lungs.

But neither hope of Heaven nor fear of Hell would have induced him to seek the shelter of those shadowed woods.

A wind touched his face like a clammy, seeking hand. It took all his strength not to whirl, to face the unseen foe. But he had been told not to run. In the open ground of a still mountain night, flight would mean instant death. The cloaking-spell that covered him, like all cloaking-spells, depended upon diverted attention; the wizard who used one must do nothing to call attention to himself, lest the illusion fail. And in any case, Rudy knew that no human being could ever hope to outrun the Dark.

This is stupid, he told himself desperately. What if Lohiro was wrong? Or worse, what if he was lying? The Dark possessed his mind for weeks. How the hell do we know he was telling the truth when he said they'd let him go? This spell of Ingold's is to cloak against a collective, rather than an individual, intelligence—but how do we know that will overcome the reason human magic never worked against the Dark Ones? What if it was all a trap?

The unbearable terror returned again, as if some vast, dark bulk were

creeping slowly toward his back. But he could see nothing there, no movement in the stark white emptiness of the snow-covered meadow, and could hear no sounds but the hiss of his own breath in his lungs and the hot, too-swift pounding of his heart. The years he'd spent on the fringes of the motorcycle gangs, among the tough guys and would-be tough guys of smog-bound Southern California, had given him a kind of bar-fight courage sufficient for his survival. But the waiting in terror for an unknown danger was different. His every perception, sharpened by wizardry to detect what others found invisible, was keyed to a fever pitch for the warning of danger. And in his heart, he was sure that no warning would save him.

Cold, directionless winds breathed upon him, like the draught from a primordial abyss of darkness which had never seen light. At the touch of it, his heart seemed to lurch, then hammer chokingly. His intelligence screamed at his instinct to run, telling him that, even if he ran, even if he made the half-mite dash through the ice-locked drifts of the buried meadow to the windowless Keep of Dare, they would never let him in. Once the cyclopean doors were sealed at sunset, Keep Law forbade that any should open them before dawn.

So he drew the veils of alien illusion more firmly about him and prayed that they all were right—Lohiro, Ingold, and Thoth—when they said that this kind of spell would guard his body from the inhuman hungers of the Dark.

He could feel the Dark Ones coming closer; he sensed their coming in the change of the air. Close by him a little skiff of snow whirled up, as if stirred by wind, but no wind riffled now in the fur of his collar. In all directions the snowy landscape rolled like a frozen, silver sea; yet from the corner of his eye, he glimpsed movement, a sudden flurry that vanished, as things did in dreams. In the shadows of the trees before him, he thought he saw something shift, though not a branch stirred.

They were all around him—he knew it, but their illusions screened them from his eyes as he prayed that his own covered him. He felt their stirring, though there was nothing that he could fix his eye upon—just a gleam of starlight on something that pulsed wetly and the sudden glitter of acid on chitinous claws. There was a buzzing, humming sensation in his brain... a drift of wind that stank of rotten blood...

Then suddenly it was above him, a delirium-vision of an obscene, squamous bulk, fifteen feet from the tucked, slobbering tentacles of that drooling mouth to the wriggling tip of the spined cable of tail. Huge, clawed legs dangled down, like the feet of a wasp; from them, acid dripped to smoke on the snow.

Rudy shut his teeth hard on a scream. Sweat was freezing on his face, and every muscle in his body fought to remain still against the instincts that shrieked at him to run. The effort and the revulsion at the nearness of that