

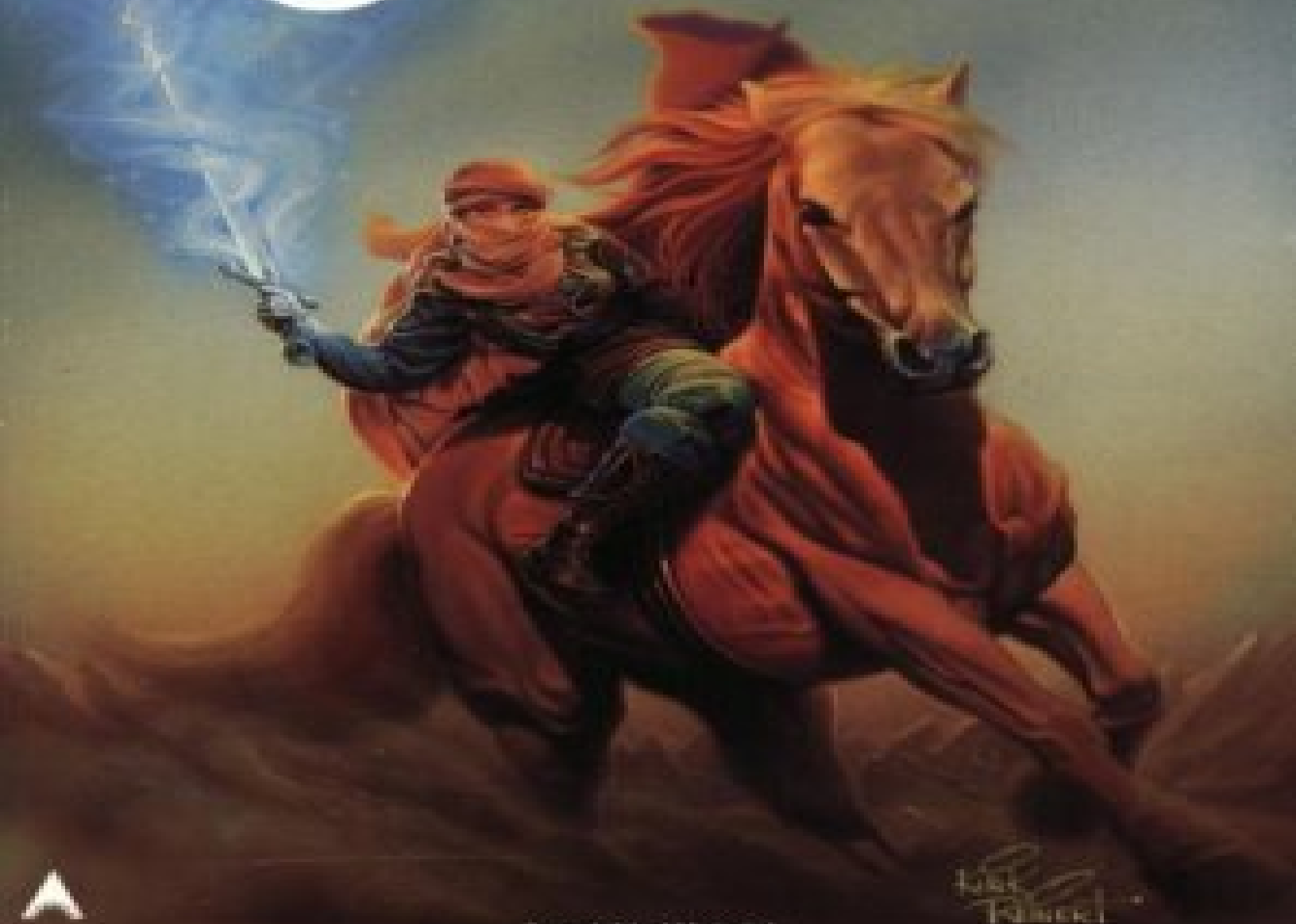
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— *The Washington Post*

ROBIN MCKINLEY

THE BLUE SWORD



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THE BLUE SWORD



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BLOODLINE

“What have swords and—” Harry gulped, for she loved the horse Sungold already—“and war-horses to do with me?”

“When you tasted the Water of Sight you saw a war-party coming to battle,” replied Corlath. “I and all my Riders heard you cry out—in the ancient tongue of our forebears, the tongue that was spoken when Damar was one land, a great and green land, before...”

Before my people came, Harry thought, but she was not going to say it aloud if he was not.

This Ace book contains the complete text of the original hardcover edition. It has been completely reset in a typeface designed for easy reading and was printed from new film.

THE BLUE SWORD

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**To Danny and Peachey,
who first led me to Damar.**

CHAPTER ONE



She scowled at her glass of orange juice. To think that she had been delighted when she first arrived here—was it only three months ago?—with the prospect of fresh orange juice every day. But she had been eager to be delighted; this was to be her home, and she wanted badly to like it, to be grateful for it—to behave well, to make her brother proud of her and Sir Charles and Lady Amelia pleased with their generosity.

Lady Amelia had explained that the orchards only a few days south and west of here were the finest in the country, and many of the oranges she had seen at Home, before she came out here, had probably come from those same orchards. It was hard to believe in orange groves as she looked out the window, across the flat deserty plain beyond the Residency, unbroken by anything more vigorous than a few patches of harsh grass and stunted sand-colored bushes until it disappeared at the feet of the black and copper-brown mountains.

But there was fresh orange juice every day.

She was the first down to the table every morning, and was gently teased by Lady Amelia and Sir Charles about her healthy young appetite; but it wasn't hunger that drove her out of bed so early. Since her days were empty of purpose, she could not sleep when night came, and by dawn each morning she was more than ready for the maid to enter her room, push back the curtains from the tall windows, and hand her a cup of tea. She was often out of bed when the woman arrived, and dressed, sitting at her window, for her bedroom window faced the same direction as the breakfast room, staring at the mountains. The servants thought kindly of her, as she gave them little extra work; but a lady who rose and dressed herself so early, and without assistance, was certainly a little eccentric. They knew of her