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# 6



# Lady of the Winds

BY KATE NOVAK

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PICK A PATH TO ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE™





## PICK A PATH TO ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

"I have returned," says Prince Shar, "to thank you for rescuing me." He steps close to you and pulls you to him. His warmth makes you dizzy with excitement, and the walls of the wizard's study are starting to blur.

"You have saved not only my life," the dark-eyed prince murmurs, "but also my honor and the honor of my tribe. Please accept this token of our esteem." And with a flourish, he fastens a stunning jeweled necklace around your throat and then kneels before you.

"Finally, I offer you one last thing," he continues. "Something a woman of your courage deserves—myself. Marry me, Ivey, and be my desert princess."

You gasp in astonishment. This is so sudden! You met this handsome prince only yesterday.

*He makes me feel wonderful! You think. But if I marry Shar, I won't be able to finish my apprenticeship as a magic-user, and the wizard is counting on my help to defeat the evil Chrym. Yet, if I say no, I may never see Shar again!*

*Will you go with Shar to his desert kingdom,  
abandoning the dream you've worked  
toward for so long?*

*Or will you remain to study your magic and face the dangers such a practice holds in store for you, never knowing the life you could have shared with this man?*

Whichever path you pick, you are sure to find romance and adventure as the LADY OF THE WINDS

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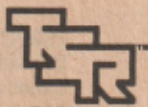
#6

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BY KATE NOVAK



Cover art by Ben Otero  
Interior art by Valerie Valusek



TSR, Inc.  
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™



To my companion in Keth,  
especially its variant Dungeon Master, Frank

LADY OF THE WINDS

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You are about to set off on a romantic adventure in which *you* will face many decisions. Some choices you will determine with your head—others with your heart. Each choice takes you on a different path to a separate ending. So be careful . . . you must choose wisely!

Do not read this book from beginning to end. Instead, as you are faced with a decision, follow the instructions and keep turning to the pages where your choices lead you until you come to an end. You may meet a handsome adventurer or chance upon self-discovery. Success or disaster—the choice that leads you there is yours!

 All right, Dowell. Any pace you want now. We're going home, beautiful."

The horse gives a joyful whinny. He quits his careful trot and begins to canter, then unleashes all his power to gallop at a speed few have known. He's two years old. He was sired by his lordship's stallion. He's the fastest horse in the fief, maybe in the whole kingdom. But best of all, he's yours! When you gallop with Dowell, you are one with the wind!

The blissful feeling of freedom sinks, however, as you approach home. You see your stepfather speaking with a stranger, shaking hands with him. The stranger is young and slender with angular features that convey an impression of both intelligence and rakishness. His light brown hair, damp with perspiration, curls ever so slightly about his face and ears. His blue eyes are twinkling from some jest Betin has just told. The stranger mounts his own horse and, giving your Dowell an appraising glance, he rides off.

You are naturally suspicious of anyone on good terms with your stepfather. Since he married your mother, he thinks you should treat him as your father. But he's nothing like your father. He doesn't understand how you feel—or doesn't care.

You ride Dowell into the corral and dismount.

"Who was that?" you ask as you loosen the stirrup straps under Dowell's belly.

"Traveler, just passing by. His name's Hoffman."

"What's he want here?"

"The horse. Offered me two hundred gold pieces."

You gasp on hearing the sum. It's more money than your stepfather ever expected to see in his life!

"Well, I hope you told him Dowell's not for sale."



"Told 'im I'd consider his offer."

"What?" you reply angrily, unwilling to believe that Betin would dare make such an agreement without consulting you first.

"Winter's comin'. We can't afford hay."

"His lordship will let him stay in the hold stables like last winter."

"Won't be beholdin' to his lordship that way."

"It's not beholding." You stamp your foot in frustration with your stepfather's stubborn attitude. "I work hard in that stable. I do the work of two trainers, says Horsemaster."

"You're too old for that work now. Isn't proper.

Besides, the horse is useless. Built all wrong for plowing. Two hundred gold would make us landholders and leave plenty for your dowry."

"I don't want a dowry! I want Dowell!"

"Two hundred gold would have rich young men looking you over—no matter you're as plain as a fence and scrawny as a wild dog. You could have your pick."

Betin's unkind words about your appearance don't infuriate you half so much as the way he ignores what you are saying. "I won't marry! And you can't sell Dowell. He's mine!"

"You will, and I can. You're seventeen. Time you learned. Girls weren't meant to ride horses. And that one—"your stepfather points at Dowell—"is a wealthy gentleman's horse. Or the horse of a crazy adventurer willing to pay two hundred gold."

"We'll see about that!" you declare, tightening Dowell's stirrup straps back up.

"Won't do you no good, I'vee," your stepfather says. He shrugs as you mount up.

Wordlessly you gallop off after the stranger, trying to think of a way to make him give up Dowell.

He isn't more than half a mile down the road. You call out. He turns, recognizes you, and stops to wait for you to come abreast of him.

"Hoffman, is it?" you try to appear business-like despite your anxiety.

"Bond Hoffman, at your service, lady," he says, doffing his cap in a flourishing sweep.

"Very civil of you, but I'm not a lady, and I really don't require your service," you answer angrily, certain he is teasing you. "I only came to tell you that Dowell is not for sale."

"Your father seemed otherwise inclined."

"My father is dead. Betin is my stepfather. And Dowell is mine, not his. And *I* say he's not for sale."

"Ah, but if he wants to sell it, he can invoke *droit paternis*. Nothing you can do."

"What's *droit paternis*?" you stumble over the strange words.

"It's Latin. Means: 'father's right.' Anything you own is his," Hoffman explains.

"But he's not my real father," you protest.

"Mother married him?"

"Of course."

"Then it's his right."

"Look," you say, changing your tactic, "you don't really want Dowell. He's still pretty wild. I'm the only one who's ever ridden him. Besides, if you know anything about horses, you know he's not worth as much as two hundred gold."

"I know a good deal about horses. He's worth it."

You ride silently for a moment, frantically trying to

think of a new argument but not succeeding very well.

"Look, if it weren't me, it would be someone else," Hoffman says. "Betin's determined to sell the horse. He could probably even sell him to Lord Maytar. A beautiful animal like this doesn't belong in a corral as a toy for a peasant girl."

"Lord Maytar wouldn't buy him back. He gave him to me as a gift."

"Oh, really," Hoffman says, laughing. "Why would a bright horseman like Maytar give a prize horse to a peasant girl?"

"Because Dowell had the blood-sweat when he was a colt. They were going to kill him, but I begged his lordship to let me try to heal him. And I did, too. My aunt Magda is a witch-woman. She gave me a potion and he got better. His lordship said I'd earned him, that he was mine." You turn away to hide your tears. Dowell, sensing your grief, comes to a stop.

"Hey," Hoffmann whispers and stops his horse next to yours. "You're not crying, are you?"

"No," you lie, trying not to show any weakness in front of this man.

"Darn. Yes, you are. Cut it out, huh? Before I do something stupid and chivalrous."

You turn around hopefully. "Would you tell Betin you don't want to buy Dowell?"

"Of course not. Here, let's dry those pretty dark eyes." Hoffman leans toward you with a clean silk handkerchief and dabs gently at the streaks of water on your cheeks. He brushes stray strands of your hair out of your eyes and strokes them down neatly. "I'll tell you what," he says. "I'll make it up to you."

"How?" you ask dubiously.





"Your father . . . excuse me, your stepfather says you're really good at training horses."

"I'm the best," you reply.

"Maybe. I like to think I am, but who knows. I'll make you a deal. Come with me. I could use another trainer at my stables. I also plan to race Dowell. I need a rider for him and my other horses. You're good. I watched you in the field. You're a good weight."

"I'm skinny, you mean."

"Slender is the word I would use," he replies, grinning with amusement. "Stylishly so. But I don't suppose they know much about style this far from Corthax. You'd turn a few heads there."

You blush at the notion that men might admire you. No one in Maytar's Hold ever thought you were pretty.

"I'm supposed to buy Dowell tomorrow morning. Disappear early, like you were moping about losing your horse, and meet me by the bridge. We can go before anyone notices you're missing. What do you say?"

You hesitate, confused by Hoffman's offer. It sounds like a wonderful opportunity. Few stable owners will let girls work with their horses or ride them in races. Blushing again, you wonder if Hoffman is just being nice because he sympathizes with your feelings or does he like you in other ways, too?

After a moment, the young man leans toward you. His lips close to your ear, he whispers, "Say yes, I'vee. You'll love Corthax as much as Corthax will love you."

You flush deeper, flattered by Hoffman's words and a little excited by his nearness.

Unwilling to spoil the pleasant moment, you agree. "All right." You nod firmly.

"Wonderful. Now, when you get home act angry, upset, or whatever they would expect so they don't get suspicious. Until tomorrow, then, lady," Hoffman smiles. He doffs his cap again with another flourishing sweep.

You turn Dowell and head for home. *Probably for the last time*, you think.

But then you begin to have second thoughts. You don't really want someone else to own Dowell, even if you can stay with him. How do you know you can trust this Hoffman anyway? Even though he *seems* very nice, he might not be a gentleman. What else can you do?

You could run away tonight, all alone. You have often daydreamed about leaving Maytar's Hold and finding a place where you can prove you are special. You have even saved money and equipment for the day you will have the nerve to leave. Then Dowell will be yours forever.

"He is mine. His lordship gave him to me," you mutter angrily.

You know that finding your dreamland won't be easy. The roads are dangerous for the king's men, let alone a young girl like yourself. It would be safer accepting Hoffman's offer. It would be nice, too, if he really did like you.

*If you decide to run off with Hoffman,  
turn to page 13.*

*If you decide to run off alone tonight,  
turn to page 16.*



You can't help liking Hoffman—he's so charming. The more you think about traveling all alone, the more frightened you become. You decide to go with the young adventurer.

Early in the morning, you sneak out, wearing your warmest clothing and carrying your traveling gear. You wait, hidden beneath the bridge. Finally Hoffman rides over the bridge on his black stallion, leading his new purchase by the reins. Dowell skitters nervously until he sees you.

You wave shyly, suddenly nervous in Hoffman's presence.

"I'm glad you're here," he says. "This horse has been acting up ever since I led him out of the yard."

"There, boy, it's all right," you say to reassure Dowell. "I'm here now."

It is exciting to be out on the road, traveling into unknown lands, since you have never before been out of Maytar's Hold. Hoffman is a congenial companion.

The day passes quickly and the sun begins to sink beneath the hills. You think about making camp when suddenly you notice Hoffman has grown very silent and is looking around uneasily.

"What's the matter?" you ask. "Are we lost?"

"Oh, no," Hoffman says, shaking his head. "I know exactly where we are—unfortunately. That's what comes of riding with a pretty girl. I didn't mean to take this road."

"What's wrong?" you ask, alarmed. You stare into the shadowy forest, shivering in the evening air. "Are there bandits around here?"

"Yes, m'dear," says a strange voice. "There are *many* bandits around here, aren't there, Hoffman?"

Frightened, you whirl Dowell around and find yourself facing a superior-looking young man backed by about ten men-at-arms. You look at Hoffman. His face is dark and scowling, much different from the carefree young adventurer you knew this morning.

"Horse thieves are a problem, too," the well-dressed young man continues. He draws a lace handkerchief from the cuff of his velvet jacket and dabs at his lips. "That's a fine horse you are riding, Hoffman. Looks a great deal like one of mine."

He gestures with his handkerchief. "Guardsmen, do your duty."

The leader of the men-at-arms rides forward.

"Bond Hoffman," he growls. "You are under arrest for stealing his lordship's horse."

"No!" you protest. "That can't be true." But one look at Hoffman's snarling face proves otherwise. Your heart sinks as you find the lord staring intently at you—and Dowell.

"My name is Lord Sevrethal," the young man says, bowing slightly. "Who are you, young woman, and what have you to do with this . . . thief?"

"I'vee, your lordship." You gulp. "I met Hoffman yesterday. He offered me a job training horses . . . and I ran away from home this morning." Your voice trails off. You feel very foolish and young. You realize now what a mistake you made, traveling with a man you knew nothing about.

Lord Sevrethal raises his eyebrows.

"And the horse?" he asks. "A fine animal. Is that another one of Hoffman's acquisitions?"

"Dowell is mine!" you cry. "Or he was mine until Hoffman bought him."

"Bought him with money he stole from me." The lord smiles. "That makes him *my* horse."

"What?" you cry in horror. "No! You can't!"

"Ah, but I can." The lord yawns and dabs at his lips with the handkerchief again. "You are in my lands now, young lady. I could have you arrested for traveling with a known felon. However, I feel merciful. Guardsmen, take her to Mother Grey. Have the priestess escort her home."

"Yes, your lordship."

"Her horse goes to my stable." The lord bows coldly and gallops off down the road.

The guardsmen bind Hoffman's hands. The young man does not even look at you as they lead him away.

"You'd best get down from the horse," a guardsman orders you.

You slide off Dowell. For a moment, you bury your face in your horse's mane, weeping silently. The guardsman coughs in impatience. One of the men grabs Dowell's reins. You watch as they lead Dowell off, traveling down the road behind Lord Sevrethal.

The guardsmen escort you to a temple. The priestess, Mother Grey, returns you to your home. You have no choice now but to remain there and marry one of the many young men who are attracted by the dowry your stepfather provides.

THE END



You want to become independent. You decide to go alone to prove that you can take care of yourself.

You lie awake in your bed, impatient to leave, the covers pulled up over your riding clothes. Soon you can hear Betin's rumbling and your mother's softer snore. Cautiously, you climb out of your bedroom window.

Once safely inside the barn, you gather your secret stash of traveling gear: your warmest clothing, your heaviest quilt, your money, and your father's dagger. You pack it all into the saddlebags. Then, using a strip of bark and a piece of charcoal, you write a good-bye letter:

Dear Mama,

By the time you read this I will be far away from Maytar's Hold. You named me Ivey so I would stay rooted, but I just don't feel settled. I need to be someone different. I know you always said I can't expect to be my own mistress, to have things go my way, but I feel differently. Please don't worry about me. When I am a success I will send you lots of money. I love you always.

Ivey

You leave the letter in your mother's milk pail so she'll find it in the morning. Then, after strapping the saddle and saddlebags on Dowell, you lead him quietly out of the barn, mount up and ride off.

Pausing at the end of the road, you look back, bidding your mother a final, silent farewell.

*Please turn to page 23.*

Although it means you will have to serve the wizard for a long time, you realize that independence must be earned. Phrytz's offer is undoubtedly the best one you will ever get. As for the evil Chrym . . . well, it's worth the risk. At least life won't be dull!

"Phrytz, I've decided to become your apprentice," you state.

"Great, kid!" Phrytz grins at you. He dismounts and motions for you to do so, too.

"Hold out your hands, cupped."

As you obey, he drops something soft into your palms—a fat, furry caterpillar.

"Close you hands carefully. Now, two questions. Do you, I'vee, come willingly to the profession of magic?"

"Yes." You feel the insect crawling.

"Do you accept me as your master?"

"Yes."

The caterpillar squirms fiercely.

"Close your hands together tight."

"But. . ." The caterpillar grows warmer and bigger. If you close your hands, you'll crush it. As you squeeze you feel something squeezing you until you're breathless.

"Hurry. Do it," Phrytz hisses.

With a great effort you force your hands together, expecting to feel the slimy squish of a dead bug. Instead, a warmth surrounds you. You feel something alive trying to free itself. Your soul seems to be struggling within your body, like the caterpillar struggles inside your hands. The terrible pressure increases and you feel as though your body must crumble beneath it. Then it is gone. You open your eyes. You feel something tickle inside your palms. You open your

hands, a black butterfly flutters about your face and then disappears into the night.

Phrytz grins.

"Swell. Just swell. I knew you could do it. I had a feeling. Welcome to the ranks of magic."

Phrytz takes your left hand in his own and slips an odd-looking pewter signet ring onto your middle finger.



"But I don't feel any different," you reply, disappointed.

"What did you expect? Indigestion? Now hold this." Phrytz hands you a slender, polished stick of wood. It has a sparkling stone at one end.

"It's a wand," you state, excited.

"Yup. I'm going to help you do your first spell. I'll recite the words and go through the motions for you. All you have to do is drink this when I tell you to." Phrytz hands you a small flask.

"What's in this?" you ask nervously. The fluid whirls around inside the flask, even though you are not moving it.

"Believe me. You don't wanna' know. Take my hand. If you feel yourself slipping, just squeeze my hand tighter. Try not to drop the wand, huh? It's kind of fragile. Now drink the potion."

Your throat tightens with fear as you sip the spell ingredients. You swallow and gasp, "Ick. It feels like something's crawling down my throat."

"Hush," Phrytz orders. "Now, close your eyes. Con-



centrate on the wand." Then he begins to chant words you do not understand.

A drifting sensation takes hold of you, as though you were floating on water. Vertigo clutches you, and you gasp for air, struggling to keep your eyes closed.

Phrytz's hand holds yours tightly, and you feel reassured, knowing he won't let you go. The wand grows warmer and through your eyelids you can perceive it glowing, burning, covered with flame. Frightened that it will burn your hand, you nearly drop it. Then you take a deep breath and hold onto it firmly.

"Open your eyes," Phrytz commands.



You open your eyes, and everything is normal again. The wand looks like an ordinary stick of wood. The ground is steady beneath your feet.

"What did I do?"

"An Identify Spell."

"What's that?"

"Say you've found this wand and you don't know what magic powers it possesses. This spell gives you an idea. In this case, a Wand of Fire."

"And I did it? I cast a spell?"

"Well, sort of. We did it together. I had to hold your hand. If you try spell casting alone before you're able to do everything perfectly, the spell could go wrong. Worse, you could lose your power and never be able to use magic again."

"It was exciting. Can I do it again? Another spell?"

"Probably not. You're more drained than you know. Mount up," the wizard orders. "I thought while we ride I'd let you play with the wand once. The spells are already cast into it so all you have to do is give it the command verse. Point it away from me, please. Thank you. Keep it level. Point it above the fields. This is just a demonstration. Maytar'd have my hide if I set his crops ablaze. Listen to this rhyme. 'From my pinkie to my thumb, here's a warm un-welcome.' Now you say it."

"'From my pinkie to my thumb, here's a warm un-welcome,' " you chant. Suddenly a twelve-foot fan of flame shoots out from the wand. Just as suddenly, it disappears. Every night animal noise is hushed until Dowell nickers uneasily.

"Wow!" you whisper.

"Impressive, huh? You should see the fireball. Not tonight though. The rhyme for that is: 'Wicked creatures great and small, have a taste of fireball.' You've got to specify where you want the center of the blast

first, before you say the rhyme—height and then distance. Got it?”

You nod, repeating the instructions and the rhyme in your mind to memorize them.

“O.K. Put it away, someplace handy but safe.”

You tuck the wand into your inside jerkin pocket. You ride on for awhile in silence.

“You’ll love Corthax. The Golden Spires makes Maytar’s Hall look like a stable.”

“What’s the Golden Spires?” you ask.

“It’s my home, the inn where I stay when I’m in Corthax. What’s wrong with your horse?” Phrytz asks, noticing Dowell’s sudden skittishness and flaring nostrils.

“He smells evil,” you explain, pulling in on Dowell’s reins.

“Horses don’t smell evil. That’s an old wives’ tale, kid. Maybe it’s a wild-cat or a grif—” Phrytz is cut off in mid-word. A human-shaped figure, horrible to look at and worse to smell, drops from a tree branch onto Phrytz’s back. More creatures follow it.

Gagging from the stench of the creature you gasp for a breath of fresh air and lash at it with your fly crop.

“What are they?” you shout in terror.

Phrytz slumps over his horse’s neck, unconscious.

The awful creatures close in on you. You grab the reins of Phrytz’s mare and kick Dowell into a gallop, but the two horses haven’t traveled fifty yards when Phrytz topples out of his saddle.

Quickly reining in Dowell, you jump down to the wizard’s inert body. The creatures continue moving toward you. You know you must do something fast as the creatures draw near.



*The wand!* you think. You're not certain you know how to use it, though. Perhaps you should draw your father's dagger instead. You have only moments to decide.

*If you want to draw out the wand  
and try to fireball your attackers,  
turn to page 31.*

*If you decide to take out the dagger instead,  
turn to page 33.*

Dowell doesn't make any fuss. He's accustomed to moonlight rides.

Tonight, unfortunately, large, dark clouds sweep across the moon. You cross your fingers to wish that the clouds would hold their rain. It does you no good. First, there are scattered splatters that make their way through the branches hanging over the road, then a cold, steady drizzle soaks through your cloak. Finally, driving arrows of water make the prospect of continuing too unpleasant.

Dowell neighs with annoyance. "Easy boy, it'll be all right in a little while," you murmur softly, dismounting and leading him into the forest. Here there is shelter from the stinging rain, though not from getting wet.

You haven't gone ten feet when a deep, gruff voice speaks, "Keep followin' the path, toots. I'll have some hot soup waitin' for you."

Whirling around in fright, you peer through the darkness for the source of the voice, but there is nobody about.

Curious, you walk on and eventually arrive at the site of a blazing campfire. You approach warily. An elderly man is bent over the flames. He has dark hair and a pointed beard peppered with gray. The garb he wears and the staff he leans on could only belong to a wizard—a showy wizard.

"Hope ya' like lentils, kid, cause it's the *soup de jour*." He smiles and hands you a mug of steamy, thick soup.

"Who are you?" you ask.

"Name's Phrytz, toots. Phrytz the Wizard. And you?"

"I'vee," you answer, curtseying uncertainly.

Phrytz ladles himself a mug of soup from a copper kettle, which floats over the fire. "Your health," he says, taking a sip. "Aah, one of my better brews. Have a seat, kid."

As you sit, you notice the ground is curiously dry. You abandon your caution and sip the warm liquid. "It's very good."

"Naturally, kid. I do everything well. So tell me. You traveling alone?"

"No," you smile, "Dowell is with me." You nod toward your horse.

"Oh. Right. This is Silver Moon." The wizard indicates a white and gray dappled mare. "Um, look, I don't mean to pry, but a bright-looking girl like you must realize it ain't safe out here, even with your traveling buddy there. Fine-looking animal, by the way. There are a lot of people on the road who'd like to take him away from you—or you from him—if you take my meaning."

"It's not much different at home."

"Ah, I see. Care to talk about it?"

"Not much to say. My stepfather wants to sell him and marry me off."

"Oh. Well, can't say as I blame you for running away then. Have to be blind not to be able to see that you and that horse were made for one another. But what do you plan to do?" Phrytz asks.

You fidget uncomfortably. "I want to be special and well . . . free." You shrug and lower your eyes to your mug of soup. "I want to be independent and do things on my own."

"I know those symptoms. They accompany the di-



sease called growing up." Phrytz starts packing his gear. "Very dangerous illness."

"How did you know I was coming up the path?"

"A little birdie told me." Phrytz gives a piercing whistle and the largest crow you've ever seen flutters to his shoulder.

"Meet Fred. Say hello, Fred," the wizard whispers to the bird.

The crow caws something that sounds like "hello" and bobs his head toward you.

"Care to ride down the road with me, kid?" Phrytz asks.

"What about the rain?"

"Already taken care of."

At a gesture from the mage, the campfire dies. A brilliant light bursts from his staff, illuminating the woods all about you. You draw your breath in surprise, looking at him for an explanation.

"Nothing to it," is all Phrytz says.

You and Dowell follow behind the mage and his dappled mare. As you mount, you notice the rain falling all around you, but you are not getting wet. "Are you holding back the rain, too?" you ask in wonder.

"Yeah. Neat trick, huh? Simple Shield Spell. I'm fussy about my comfort. Not that I don't like a little ride in the rain occasionally. Waters the beard, you know. But it's so chilly."

"What are you doing out here tonight then?"

"A little voice told me I'd find something somewhere between Maytar's Hold and my home in Corthax."

"What are you looking for?"

"Someone." He knits his brow. "Someone special. This little voice recited this rhyme:

*"Might be a friend,  
Might be your end,  
Might be the apprentice you seek.  
On the road  
From Maytar's Hold  
If you ride in the hay-harvest week."*

"That doesn't sound completely nice. Where did you hear this little voice?" you ask.

"In a dream. Or maybe a nightmare. But I thought it might be worth the risk. Friends are hard to come by and apprentices even more so."

"Why?"

"Well, it takes a special kind of person to cope with my moods and be willing to take the risks."

"What sort of risks?"

"First, there's the initiation. Some don't always get through that. Then, these days, just being involved with magic is dangerous." He lowers his voice to a whisper. "Magic-users have a lot of extraordinary enemies. One in particular has appointed himself judge, jury, and executioner of anyone who learns magic or teaches it. He wants to wipe us all out and keep all magical things to himself so humanity will be powerless to fight or resist him. With a monopoly on magic, he will be invincible."

"How awful!" you gasp. "Who is he?"

Phrytz shudders. "You don't say names like his aloud, kid. It's real unlucky—dangerous even. It might attract his attention, ya' see. I call him Chrym. That's just one syllable of his true name."

"How dangerous is he?"

"Suffice it to say that colleagues are vanishing and

apprentices are hard to find. Anyway, think about it. It's dangerous, but it has its rewards."

"Are you asking me to be your apprentice?" you ask, startled.

Phrytz stands up in his stirrups and surveys the dark, rainy landscape. "You see someone else around I might be addressing?"

As you ride beside the wizard, your thoughts and feelings are in turmoil. Learning magic could guarantee your independence. You are sure it would be exciting to be a wizard. You have a fleeting, thrilling vision of yourself saving humanity from the ravages of the evil Chrym.

Trying to be more serious-minded, you feel apprehensive about accepting a position that might make someone want to kill you. And you wouldn't really be independent as Phrytz's apprentice. You'd have to study and work for him until you become a mage yourself.

*If you decide to accept Phrytz's offer to study as his apprentice, turn to page 17.*

*If you would rather give the wizard's offer a lot more thought, turn to page 28.*



You decide you would rather continue being independent. And you don't want to risk getting killed by Phrytz's enemy, Chrym!

"I'm sorry," you reply, "but it's not exactly what I had in mind."

Phrytz sighs sadly.

"I'm not too busy to be your friend, though," you continue, sorry to have disappointed him.

"Well then, this trip wasn't a total loss." Phrytz grins. "Let's stop for the night. There's a temple up ahead. There are all sorts of wicked things out after dark." Phrytz scratches the chest of the huge crow on his shoulder. "Isn't that right, Fred?"

Fred suddenly gives a startled cry and shoots off into the sky.

"Oh, no!" the wizard cries, turning around to stare at something behind you. "I'vee, duck!" he shouts as he throws himself off the back of his mare.

You do as you are told. A second later you feel the fluttering of wings and the whoosh of some flying creature. You catch sight of golden brown feathers and a bright red cock's comb.

"Why it's nothing but a rooster!" you laugh.

"That ain't no rooster, kid"—Phrytz scowls—"that's a cockatrice! Stay down!"

You watch in astonishment as Phrytz raises his hand and points at the flying creature as it makes another swooping attack. Dazzling silver bolts shoot out from the wizard's fingertips and strike his attacker.

The cockatrice, propelled forward by its own momentum, gives a terrified shriek, thumps into Phrytz's chest, and tumbles to the ground.

"You got him!" you cheer. "That's really impressive."

You hear a voice behind you. "It might have been more impressive if the cockatrice had died *before* it hit him instead of afterward."

You whirl around to face a strange, hooded figure, seated on a horse. His face is hidden in his cowl.

"Who are you?" you ask fearfully.

"Father Uriah." The cleric throws back his hood to reveal a somber, bearded face. "Perhaps I may be of service."

He dismounts and approaches Phrytz. The cleric smacks his hand down on the wizard's shoulder. Phrytz does not move.

"What's wrong with him?" you ask in alarm, dismounting to inspect Phrytz more closely.

"The cockatrice," Father Uriah explains, "turns flesh to stone with its touch. It wasn't quite dead when it hit your friend here. This is Phrytz, the wizard, isn't it?"

You hesitate before answering. You find yourself mistrusting this strange cleric. Maybe it is the fact that his robes are dirty, patched and tattered.

"Yes," you answer finally. The cleric nods.

You stroke Phrytz's hand and cheek. Just as the cleric said, the wizard is now nothing but a rock statue.

"What can we do for him?" you ask anxiously.

"Well, you certainly can't leave him here," Father Uriah muses. "After all, the man has all sorts of enemies. One of them might decide he would make excellent paving stones."

"Isn't there some way we could turn him back?"

"Ah . . ." The cleric smiles unpleasantly. "It seems to me that I may have a potion in my pack that could work this miracle."

"Well, let's try it," you exclaim.

The cleric replaces his cowl, folds his hands in his sleeves. "It's worth several hundred gold," he says.

"What?" you cry in shock. You can't believe he could be so mercenary at a time like this. "What kind of cleric are you?"

The cleric shrugs. "A hungry one. But I might consider a trade. The potion for your horse."

You look anxiously at Phrytz's petrified form. You just promised him your friendship. You can't leave him here. You found yourself really liking the wizard. And he was defending *you* from the cockatrice when he was turned to stone.

On the other hand, you aren't certain you can trust this obviously wicked cleric's potion to work. It might even harm Phrytz! Besides, you don't want to give up Dowell! You could leave Phrytz for just a short while to ride for help.

*If you decide to trade Dowell for the potion,  
turn to page 41.*

*If you decide to turn down the cleric's offer,  
leave Phrytz, and get help, turn to page 44.*



*I can't fight all these creatures with a dagger!* you think. You draw the magic wand from your jerkin pocket.

"Ten hands high, a hundred feet far," you tell the wand, pointing it toward your attackers. Shaking with fear, you must hold the wand steady with both hands. Then you chant, " 'Evil creatures great and small, have a taste of fireball.' "

The wand's magic surpasses your expectations. The fireball's brilliance illuminates acres of land all about you. As it fades, you can see the silhouettes of all but one of the creatures crumble to the ground.

The last monster closes in on you. You look with dismay at the magic wand. The sparkling stone has turned a dull gray. The wood is charred and begins to crumble in your hand.

"Oh, no!" you moan, reaching for your dagger. But before you can pull the weapon from its sheath, four glowing darts fly over your shoulder and bury themselves in the creature's chest. It collapses.

"Thank goodness!" you sigh, turning around, expecting to see Phrytz standing behind you. But Phrytz is still lying rigid on the ground.

Bent over him, covering him with a blanket off the wizard's mare is a young man. He wears a long dark cape. His brown hair curls and waves in an unruly mass down to his neck.

The young man straightens and you can see that he is shorter and slighter than you are and very pale. His soft hazel eyes are framed by long lashes. But what strikes you most are the silver streaks of hair at his temples.

Despite the silver hair, you are sure he is younger than you. However, there is something in his confident

stance and penetrating gaze that suggests he is more mature than his years. "Nice shooting," he says matter-of-factly. "You must be the new apprentice."

"I'm Ivey," you gasp with astonishment. "How did you know?"

"Because I'm Silvar, the old apprentice."

"Phrytz's? I didn't know that he had another one."

Silvar nods. "I've been his apprentice since his partner, Merf, my first master, was killed a year ago."

"What did you do to that one?" you ask, indicating the last monster.

"Hit it with magic missiles. You handled the wand well. Too bad it didn't survive."

"I've used it all up, haven't I?" you ask guiltily. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to ruin it."

"Better the wand crumbles than Phrytz dies," Silvar says. "It was a smart risk to take. Phrytz chose his new student well."

*Please turn to page 36.*

Afraid to trust yourself with the wand, you draw your dagger, thrusting it out in front of you to ward off your attackers. The leading monster shrieks and rushes at you. But before it can reach you, four glowing darts fly over your shoulder, burying themselves in its chest.

The horrid thing leaps and crashes into you, knocking you to the ground. You feel a sickening crunch from inside your jerkin. As you push the creature off, its stench causes a wave of nausea to sweep over you. You lie doubled over on the ground, gasping and retching.

Suddenly there is a bright flash. As the light fades, you can see the silhouettes of your attackers crumble to the ground.

You feel a slim but muscular arm around your shoulder, helping you to sit up. For a moment you think it must be Phrytz, but an unfamiliar voice tells you, "Easy. Just try to breath naturally. The sick feeling will pass now that I've gotten rid of the ghosts."

You look up into a pair of hazel eyes framed by long, soft eyelashes. They are the eyes of a young man. His skin is strangely pale. His hair, which waves and curls in an unruly mass around his face, is streaked with silver at the temples.

"I'm better now, thank you." You sit up.

"I threw some magic missiles at the monster that attacked you," the young man states.

"What was the other light?"

"Oh, that was a fireball to polish off the rest."

"Are you a mage, too, like Phrytz?"

"Yes. No. Well, actually—" The young man lowers his eyes modestly. "I'm Phrytz's apprentice, Silvar."

"Thank you for saving me, Silvar. My name is Ivec.



How did you cast that spell?" you ask.

"With my staff."

"Like the Wand of Fire Phrytz gave me." You reach into your jerkin pocket to pull out the magic item. You give a little cry of horror. The wand's wood is charred and crushed and the stone at its tip has turned to a dull gray. "The monster must have broken it when it hit me."

"That happens. Don't feel too badly about it. It wasn't your fault," Silvar reassures you, patting you gently on your shoulder. "If Phrytz gave you the wand, you must be the new apprentice."

"Yes. Phrytz didn't tell me he had another apprentice, though."

"I've been his apprentice a year, ever since Phrytz's partner, Merf, my first master, was killed." Silvar rises from your side and moves over to where Phrytz is lying. He takes a blanket off the wizard's mare and covers his master tenderly.

Silvar is dressed in a long cape. You can see when he stands that he is not as tall as you are. You suspect he is younger than you, but there is something in his calm, gentle manner that suggests a maturity beyond your experience.

"You reacted quickly, pulling Phrytz out of that ambush. He chose his new student well," Silvar says, gazing at you steadily.

*Please turn to page 36.*

You look down the steep walls of the pit and back away. "I'm sorry, Shar, but it looks too difficult to climb. I think I'd rather rely on magic."

Shar scowls at Silvar, but he steps forward and kisses your lips. "For luck," he says.

Taking Silvar's hand, you stand quietly as he chants his Featherfall Spell. Although you know it will work, you feel a moment of fear as you leap from the edge with him. You hang suspended over the pit for several seconds as the breeze from below lifts you, but eventually you begin to drift slowly down.

Suddenly, however, the light from Silvar's staff goes out. You have hit an anti-magic shell and you are no longer being supported by magic anymore. You begin to fall into the pit. You scream in terror and then remember nothing more.

You regain consciousness and open your eyes. A dim torch light reveals the horror of your situation. Three gruesome gargoyles stand guard over you. When you recoil in fear, they laugh wickedly.

You and Silvar are tied up next to one another on the floor of the pit. The mage is unconscious and badly battered. Shar is nowhere to be seen.

You lie alone in the cold a long time, the gargoyles laughing at your pain and suffering. You wonder if they are going to turn you over to Chrym. Finally, miserable with the thought of your failure, weak from crying with the pain of your injuries, you fall asleep again, beyond caring if you ever wake.

THE END

You lower your eyes modestly, embarrassed by Silvar's frankness and unwavering stare. "Thank you," you reply. "What's wrong with Phrytz?"

"He'll be all right," Silvar answers. "Those were ghouls and ghastrs that attacked you. If they touch you, you're paralyzed. The smelly ones, the ghastrs, also make you sick to your stomach. Phrytz will thaw out in a little while. We need to keep him warm."

A strange red mare trots up to Silvar from out of the darkness. Fred, the crow, is perched on her saddle. Fred flutters to Silvar's shoulder and caws in his ear.

"Hello, Fred," Silvar says to the crow. "Looking around to see if there are any more ghastrs about?" The young magic-user reaches up to stroke his mare's ears.

The crow buries its head in Silvar's hair.

"I think we should call you Fred, the chicken," Silvar teases.

With a loud screech, Fred launches himself from the young apprentice's shoulder and flies to Phrytz's mare. He perches on the saddle.

Silvar grins. "You know, as long as you're here to watch Phrytz, I think I'll go check to see if the ghastrs and ghouls had a lair with anything interesting in it."

"Their lair?" you ask nervously. "What could be in there?"

"Treasure. Things they've stolen from other people they've attacked."

"It might be dangerous." You frown.

"I can protect myself." Silvar gives his staff a little shake. "And I think, between the two of us, we've scared off all the monsters. As long as you stay right here, you should be safe. If you're frightened, though, I'll stay with you."



"I'm fine," you answer, suddenly annoyed that this young man should imply you need his protection.

"Good girl. You have a lot of pluck. Phrytz likes that. So do I. I'll be back in a jiffy." Your fellow apprentice dashes off into the woods, leaving you with the skittery horses, the cowardly Fred, and a paralyzed wizard.

As you sit, staring into the darkness, you grow more uneasy. *I should have insisted Silvar stay here with me—for his own protection*, you think.

Suddenly Dowell gives a frightened whinny and gallops off into the darkness! Your horse has never run away from you before. You leap to your feet and begin to follow shouting, "Dowell, come back!"

Phrytz's mare gives a shrill neigh. Fred flutters into the air, flying around your face, cawing excitedly. You stop. Phrytz, your master, still lies unconscious on the ground and Silvar is relying on you to watch over him.

You return to Phrytz's side, knowing that your first duty is to him. *Dowell can take care of himself*, you think, hoping you're right.

Then you feel the hackles rise on the back of your neck as you hear a horrible hissing of air being drawn through clenched teeth, like a ghoulish creature creeping up right behind you.

You whirl around, drawing your dagger. Silvar jumps back, startled.

"Oh . . . Silvar!" you sigh in relief.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you," the young man says with a grin.

"Yes, you did," you snap. "You're lucky I didn't slice you with my dagger." You sheathe your weapon.

Silvar looks down at the ground, embarrassed. "I'm sorry," he says sincerely, meeting your gaze.

"All right," you smile.

"Shall we kiss and make up?" the apprentice asks with a mischievous gleam in his eyes.

You flush. The idea of kissing Silvar suddenly makes you tingle. Then you see him grin. *He's teasing me*, you think, and your face grows warm.

"Where's your horse?" Silvar asks suddenly.

"Dowell!" you gasp. "I almost forgot him. He ran off."

"Don't worry. We'll get him back." Silvar walks over to Phrytz's mare and whispers, "Silver Moon, our friend in need, go and find that silly steed."

The mare trots off in the direction Dowell fled.

"Is she magical, too?"

"No," Silvar replies. "Just very smart. Come see the great stuff I found." Silvar holds up a bulging sack.

Still nervous about Dowell but interested in Silvar's find, you turn your attention to the assortment of treasure he dumps on the ground. There are golden coins and loose gems of dazzling beauty, a diamond necklace, a silver crown, and two sheepskin scrolls sealed with wax.

"Try this on," Silvar insists. He fastens the necklace around your neck. "You look like a princess," he says.

"More like a gypsy," you scoff. Secretly, you wish you could see yourself wearing the beautiful jewelry.

"No," Silvar protests. "You're really pretty."

"What are those scrolls?" you ask, anxious to change the subject, certain that Silvar is only teasing you again.

"I'm not sure. I'm hoping they may be magic scrolls. They're like wands or staffs—you don't have to cast a spell to use their power."

"What kind of spells?"

"Well, that's the problem. To know what kind of spell they are, you have to cast a spell—a Read Magic Spell."

"Can you do that?" you ask, impressed with Silvar's skill.

"I've read magic before, yes." The young mage fumbles around in his pack and pulls out a glass vial. It appears to be filled with oil. "All I have to do is wave this over the scroll and chant the words to the spell," he explains. "But I always do it when Phrytz is with me—in case the scroll is cursed."

"Cursed?" You blink. "How?"

"Well, the reader could turn into something awful. Something awful could appear and attack him, or the reader could be magically teleported to someplace far away."

"And Phrytz can tell which scrolls are cursed?"

"No. No one can. Phrytz is better prepared to handle them if they are," Silvar replies. "I could read them for you, if you like?"

"That's not necessary," you reply quickly.

"Come on." Silvar urges. "Aren't you curious?"

"Well, yes," you reply. "But it's frightening to think they might be cursed."

"I'm not afraid. Are you? I think I'd like to know myself. Sometimes the scrolls disappear if you don't read them right away. Phrytz is unconscious. Perhaps I'd better read them, so we don't lose them."

"Silvar, maybe you'd better not. Enough bad things have happened tonight," you say. "I'd feel safer if you'd wait for Phrytz to wake up. After all, you're only an apprentice."



Silvar's youthful face hardens. "I'm perfectly able to take care of myself. I may be only an apprentice, but I'm not a child," he declares heatedly. He picks up one of the scrolls and pulls out a dagger to peel away the wax seal.

*If you want to stop Silvar reading the scroll,  
turn to page 47.*

*If you decide to let Silvar risk reading it,  
turn to page 53.*

You know you cannot leave Phrytz the way he is if there is the least possibility he can be restored to normal. If you really are his friend, you must do everything in your power to help him.

"I'll take your potion," you say coldly, handing Dowell's reins to the tattered cleric.

Father Uriah hands you a small, glass vial full of a thick, red liquid. "Pour it all over his head and then rub it in down over his face and shoulders," he tells you.

The liquid is oily and smells like blood, but as you spread it around the stone you can feel it grow warm. Color begins to return to Phrytz's features. In a few more minutes, Phrytz looks like a person again. He smiles at you, then collapses to the ground.



Father Uriah helps you get Phrytz mounted securely in his saddle and leads you down the trail.

When you reach the temple, a priest, hearing your approach, steps out to greet you. "I am Father Moss. Welcome to Temple Shale. It seems you have had some misfortune. What is wrong with your friend?"

"He was turned to stone by a cockatrice," you explain. "This person—" you nod toward Father Uriah coolly—"happened by and traded me a potion which brought him back. He is weak from shock. Can you help him?"

"Certainly, my child." He motions toward a shadowy building. "You can stable the horses over there." Then he reaches up to help the wizard down. "Good heavens, it's Phrytz!" he exclaims.

There is a flurry of excitement. Clearly, Phrytz is someone they know and respect. Several temple priests fuss about to make Phrytz comfortable. You wait impatiently in a small room with a cot for some news of your friend's condition. Finally, after what seems like hours, Father Moss returns to tell you that Phrytz will be fine and only needs rest.

"You look like you could use some yourself, child," he adds. "Please, do not worry any more."

"Who is this Father Uriah?" you ask.

Father Moss frowns. "A wandering priest. He has a knack for turning up when people are in trouble, then selling his healing potions dearly. Now, try to get some sleep."

But after the priest leaves, you sit crying quietly for a long time, trying to decide what to do next. Without Dowell, your chances of getting somewhere in the world seem very slim. More important, you love him.



As you see it, you have only two options left now to achieve your goals of independence and success. You can tell Phrytz you have changed your mind and would like to be his apprentice after all or you can sneak out and steal Dowell back from Father Uriah. Both choices make you very nervous for different reasons.

You feel embarrassed asking Phrytz if he will let you reconsider his offer. You aren't certain that he will want to train you after you've turned him down once.

Your other alternative, while it has the advantage of getting even with the wicked cleric for being so mercenary, would make you an outlaw. You're afraid of being caught, and you feel guilty for even considering something so dishonest. But you can't bear to think of losing Dowell!

You open up the window of your room and look out to the barn where the horses are stabled. The night will be over soon. You don't have much time to decide.

*If you decide to steal Dowell and run off,  
turn to page 56.*

*If you decide to stay with Phrytz and ask him  
to let you be his apprentice,  
turn to page 58.*

"Your help is too expensive," you declare coldly. "I can take care of this myself, thank you."

"Have it your way, but you'll probably be sorry you did," the cleric snarls. He mounts his horse and rides away.

After covering Phrytz as carefully as possible with a blanket from Silver Moon, you take the reins of the wizard's mare and continue down the road to the temple.

Without Phrytz's staff to light your way or his shield to keep off the rain, your progress is slow, frightening, and uncomfortable. *Maybe I should have accepted Father Uriah's potion, you think. If this takes too long, something awful may happen to Phrytz.*

It is long after midnight when you reach the temple. You have to pound on the door for several minutes before an elderly priest answers your knock.

"Welcome to the Temple Shale," the priest says. "I am Father Moss. Who are you? And what brings you here at this late hour?"

"Please, father," you plead. "I need your help. My name is Ivey, and my friend, Phrytz the wizard, was attacked and turned to stone by a cockatrice on the road east of here."

"Phrytz!" the priest exclaims. "Good heavens. Brother Lichen! Brother Oak!" he calls to two acolytes. "Prepare our horses immediately."

Within a few minutes, the priest and the two temple acolytes are riding back up the road with you. The rain still drenches you, but at least now you have torches to light your way.

Soon you come to the spot where the cockatrice attacked you. The creature still lies in the center of the

road, but Phrytz is gone! "What could have happened to him?" you cry in anguish.

Brother Lichen dismounts and picks up a small, feathered body from the ground.

"It's Fred," you whisper. "Is he all right?"

"He'll be fine," Brother Lichen answers. "He's only stunned."

"Could Father Uriah have had something to do with this?" you wonder aloud.

"Who?" Father Moss asks.

"Father Uriah. A strange cleric. When Phrytz was hit by the cockatrice, the cleric appeared and offered to trade me a potion that would turn Phrytz back to normal. But I didn't trust him, and the price was too high," you add, feeling ashamed now that you could put a price on Phrytz's life.

Fred twitters and caws. Brother Lichen strokes the bird tenderly. "Say that again, little one."

Fred makes the same noises again.

"The crow claims the cleric put Phrytz into a hole," the acolyte explains.

"A hole? Where?" You peer about the forest for a freshly dug grave.

"A magic hole. The kind you can carry around with you."

"I don't understand."

"It is a special magical item. Very rare, as is all magic these days," Father Moss explains. "He could have spread it on the ground, pushed Phrytz's 'statue' into it and then folded it back up and put it in his robes."

"But why? What would he do with him?"

"I know this Father Uriah. He is a wicked man. He will do anything for money. My guess is that he will



hold Phrytz for ransom, or try to sell him somewhere, perhaps auction him off to his enemies."

"This is my fault," you moan. "Father Uriah warned me, but I was too proud to let him have Dowell."

"One should not dwell too long on the past"—Father Moss pats your hand kindly—"once its lessons have been learned. What will you do now?"

"I promised Phrytz my friendship," you reply. "Somehow I must find this cleric and make him give Phrytz back, no matter what the cost. Perhaps he is going to Corthax. I'll start looking there."

"Corthax is a big city, and he may not even have gone there." Brother Lichen frowns.

"I know. But what else can I do?" you ask helplessly.

Fred caws weakly.

"The crow wants you to take him with you. Perhaps he can help," Lichen gently hands you the bird.

"May your efforts be blessed," Father Moss says.

"Good-bye, I'vee."

"Good-bye. Thank you for your help," you answer. Cradling Fred in one arm, you ride off toward Corthax.

Your quest may be impossible, but you vow to see it through. You only hope that it ends with you rescuing Phrytz, and not with you discovering that the kindly wizard is beyond help.

THE END

"Silvar, please stop," you beg. "Phrytz told me how Chrym has been destroying wizards and their apprentices. It just doesn't make sense for us to take any unnecessary risks. I'm sure Phrytz would think your life was more important than some scroll."

Obviously frightened by the mention of Chrym, Silvar's expression becomes more thoughtful. He nods slowly and puts the scrolls back into the sack. "You're right." He looks up at you. "Phrytz really did pick you well."

There is a moan from behind you. You and Silvar turn your attention to your master. Phrytz sits up slowly.

"I'm getting too old for this," the wizard groans. "What happened to the ghosts and ghouls? The last thing I remember was one dropping on me."

"Ivee and I took care of them," Silvar replies. "I found their lair and picked up this stuff." The apprentice holds up the bulging bag. He shows all the treasure to Phrytz, including the scrolls and the necklace and crown you are still wearing.

"Giving away our booty to pretty girls before I get my cut, huh?" the wizard teases his young apprentice.

"I just thought they might look nice on her," Silvar mutters, blushing deeply.

*He really is shy, you think.*

"You picked some good stuff, kid," Phrytz says. "But don't"—Phrytz's tone grows sharper—"go trashing through ghoulish lairs alone, ever again. Dead apprentices are utterly useless to me."

Just then Silver Moon comes trotting back with Dowell frisking along behind her.

"We'd better be getting home," Phrytz says, sighing.

But, just as you are all about to mount up, the horses shy uneasily. A golden mist forms in the road ahead. A very handsome man steps from the mist. His skin is golden, his eyes red. There is a shadow behind him, darker than blackness.

"Chrym," Silvar whispers hoarsely.

*Chyrm!* you think in alarm. *How can someone so evil be so attractive?* You shudder, fearing you've escaped the ghosts and ghouls to be destroyed by a worse enemy.

The figure chuckles sinisterly. Then in a pleasant voice it says, "That's it, Phrytz. Take them home, lest they roam. If I catch them alone, they'll be dead as stone."

"Not if I get to you first, you monster," the wizard snarls.

The figure laughs again, apparently undisturbed by Phrytz's threat.

The wizard draws a crystal prism out from his robes and holds it up to the light of his staff, shouting, "Get thee hence, foul creature!"

A golden beam of light from the prism strikes Chrym. His form breaks up into the golden mist, which dissipates into the darkness. The echo of Chrym's laughter remains hanging in the air. You find yourself shaking with terror, more frightened than you were of the ghouls.

"Let's get out of here," Phrytz growls.

You mount up and follow Phrytz down the road. Silvar rides next to you.

"Why didn't Chrym attack?" you ask. Your stomach is tight with the fear that the monster might still do so at any moment.



"That prism Phrytz held contains Chrym's amulet—his power in this world, so to speak. As long as it's imprisoned in the crystal, Chrym can't enter our plane unless Phrytz summons him. What we saw was an illusion, the image of Chrym in some other plane."

"Phrytz is lucky to have the amulet, isn't he?"

"Yes," Silvar agrees. "Merf died bringing it to him. Chrym didn't give it up easily."

The sun rises as the three of you ride into Corthax, hungry, cold, and exhausted. The Golden Spires Inn lives up to Phrytz's description. Even the stable hands have matching livery, while the steward who approaches you is better dressed than Phrytz.

"Welcome back, your magicnesses. Home so soon?" the steward addresses Phrytz and Silvar. "And what have we here?" he asks, staring at you.

"Ivee," Phrytz says, grinning. "This is the steward of the Golden Spires, Bulakias Morgestoth. This is Mistress Ivee, my new apprentice," Phrytz tells the steward.

The steward's eyes widen in surprise. "Oooh. Well, I'm sure you must think you know what you're doing."

"Dry up, Bulakias. It's been a rough night. Put Ivee up in the room next to Silvar's. I'm going to sleep."

Phrytz climbs the stairs of the inn slowly, looking old and tired.

"How dare Bulakias talk like that to Phrytz?" you whisper to Silvar as you climb the stairs.

"They're business partners. They own the inn fifty-fifty."

"Well, I think he should be more polite. Phrytz is very special, after all," you huff.

"Ah, they're old friends." Silvar smiles. "Bulakias is

a good man. One of Chrym's assassins came after me once, and he beat him off with an iron skillet."

Laughing, you walk into your room and stare around you with delight. It is splendid beyond anything you have ever dreamed. And it looks as though it has been designed just for you! Silk curtains with green ivy leaves hang in the windows. There is a soft down coverlet upon your bed, also decorated with ivy leaves.

*Did he know he would find me?* you wonder. *Or is this more magic?* Too tired to think, you snuggle down beneath the coverlet and are soon fast asleep.

You don't wake until the late afternoon when Silvar knocks on your door.

"Phrytz is talking business with Bulakias. He asked me to show you around and get you started with your magic book."

Silvar takes your hand and leads you to a study cluttered with books, scrolls, and indescribable knick-knacks. Laid out on the table is a meal of bread and honey, cheese and fruit, and creamy milk.

"Sweet things for a sweet lady." Silvar offers you a slice of honeyed bread.

"Silvar, you shouldn't say things like that." You feel yourself blushing.

"This is for you." Silvar smiles and hands you a large, leather-bound book.

You open the book. "It's empty. All the pages are blank."

"Yes. You have to write in the spells yourself. It's part of the magic. Then you have to study them every day. They slip off your mind like eggs in grease. Every time you cast one, even with Phrytz helping you, you'll forget it and have to learn it over again."

"Does that happen to you, too?"

Silvar nods. "That's my book on the table." He indicates another large, leather-bound journal similar to your own.

"What's this doing in here?" you ask, removing the diamond necklace Silvar found last night from between the leaves of the book. "I gave this to Phrytz last night. I can't keep anything this valuable."

"Phrytz says it's mine since I found it. It's a gift."

"Silvar, I can't accept this." You hand the necklace back to Silvar. You don't want to hurt his feelings, especially since he is so sweet, but you can't let him give you something so expensive.

"Don't you like it?"

"Of course, I like it. It's beautiful, but you don't have a reason to give it to me."

"Sure I do. I like you. I thought you liked me."

"I like you, but as a friend. You don't give presents like this to someone who's just your friend."

"Well . . ." Silvar stands up straighter, still not quite as tall as you. "Suppose I wanted us to be more than just friends?" He blushes even as he is speaks.

You sigh in exasperation.

*I've never had this problem before, you realize. All the young men in Maytar's Hold thought I was too plain or skinny or strange. Why is Silvar so different?*

"I'vee? You're not mad, are you?" Silvar, looking very nervous, breaks in on your silence.

"No. I was just thinking. Silvar, isn't this kind of sudden? We just met last night, after all."

"Well, I thought that, since I rescued you last night, that I might . . ." Silvar breaks off his sentence. His pale skin is now a bright red.



"You might what, Silvar?" you ask gently.

Silvar turns his face away from you and says very quickly, "I've never kissed a girl, and I thought that I would like to kiss you for my first kiss."

You feel warm inside and your heart races. You know that if you kiss Silvar it will be even more difficult to discourage him from trying to court you. Still, you're not certain you *want* to discourage him! And, you have never kissed a young man before, either. You wonder if maybe you wouldn't like that first young man to be Silvar.

*If you want to kiss Silvar,  
turn to page 60.*

*If you think it best to discourage Silvar now  
and decline his kiss, turn to page 65.*

"Well, I am sort of curious to know what it says," you say, not wanting to appear cowardly. *After all, Silvar has been studying magic with Phrytz for a year. He should know what he is doing, you think.*

He waves and chants in a strange language.

"It's a Dimension Door Spell on the scroll!" Silvar says excitedly.

"Yes," a deep voice rumbles behind you, "and I am your curse."

You and Silvar both whirl around in panic. A giant shape looms over you. It has glowing red skin, claws, and awful fangs.

"And these are for you, Silvar and Ivey," the creature holds out a sapphire in one hand and an emerald in the other. The moment you look at the emerald you feel dizzy and weak, as though your very spirit were slipping away from you.

The next thing you know, you are in a circular tower room. The walls are covered with brilliantly glazed tiles and sheer silks and satins. The room is lit by many shining brass oil lamps. Silvar stands in front of you, looking as dazed as you feel.

"Where are we? What was that creature?" you gasp.

"That was an efreeti," Silvar whispers, "and they're not very nice. We're prisoners in his palace, in the elemental plane of fire."

"How did we get here?" you gasp, completely unnerved.

"He trapped our souls in those gems he had. He freed me first to taunt me. When he left, I smashed the emerald you were in to free you. He'll be back any moment now so we have to hurry."

"Why? What are we going to do?"

"I'm going to cast the Dimension Door Spell written on the scroll." Silvar shows you the scroll he has hidden behind his back. "It will take us outside of this palace. You must hold onto my staff while I cast the spell so that we can go together. It's dangerous, but we have to escape right away. He's going to sell us to Chrym!"

Silvar reads from the scroll. The words make no sense to you, but again you feel dizzy, as though your spirit were slipping away.

You wake up in a place even stranger than before. All around you is dark sky and silvery stars. You are lying on nothing, suspended in mid-air. Silvar, floating next to you, looks concerned.

"Where are we now?" you gasp, knowing you are nowhere near the road from Maytar's Hold to Corthax.

"Astral plane, I think. At least, that's where you go when you try to 'Dimension Door' to a place where someone else is already standing. I think that's what happened to us, otherwise we'd still be in the elemental plane of fire."

"Silvar, how are we going to get home?" you cry, frightened.

"I don't know," Silvar admits miserably. "I don't know anything about getting from one plane to another, or even traveling in a different one from our own. I think the only thing we can do is wait until we meet someone who can help us. There are a lot of nice creatures in this plane, at least that's what Phrytz says."

"Any bad ones?" you ask doubtfully.

"Well, not exactly, no."

"So, we just float here until someone comes along, hopefully someone nice," you shout angrily. "In the



meantime, Phrytz is frozen and helpless back in our plane, and when he wakes up—if he wakes up, he won't be able to find us, and he'll think something has happened to us."

"I'm sorry, I'vee," Silvar says. "I know it's all my fault. I'm scared, too. Don't be angry with me."

You sigh. "It's all right, Silvar. It's not all your fault. I was just as curious about it as you were. Don't worry. We'll get home somehow."

*Maybe we will, anyway, you think, trying to feel hopeful but not succeeding very well.*

## THE END

You don't want the wicked cleric to have Dowell. You feel badly about leaving Phrytz, but you know it's best not to get him involved in your criminal action.

Your feeling of shame is just barely balanced by your feeling of elation to be with Dowell again as you sneak your horse out of the stable. You walk him along the grass until you're far enough from the temple so no one will hear his hoofbeats on the road. Once you're several miles away, you camp until the morning and then continue traveling at daybreak.

You ride into the next town shortly before sunset, stopping only long enough to buy feed for Dowell and some bread for yourself. You decide it would be best to rest Dowell in the woods, away from prying eyes.

As you step out of the bakery, your heart sinks. Holding Dowell's reins is Father Uriah, and standing by him are two townguardsmen.

"Excuse me, mistress, but this priest claims you've stolen his horse," one guard says as he approaches you.

Father Uriah eyes you coldly. Panic-stricken, you wonder whether he'll really go so far as to have you arrested.

"The priest is mistaken," a gruff, familiar voice says.

You whirl around in surprise. It's Phrytz! The guards take off their hats and bow to him.

"Perhaps I can clear this up if I could have a few minutes of your time in private, Father," the wizard says to the cleric.

"I don't think we have anything to discuss," Father Uriah answers.

"Listen, sir," one guard mutters, "that's Phrytz the wizard. I ought to warn you that around here his word is considered inviolable. If he stands against you in

front of a magistrate, it won't look good for you. Perhaps you ought to listen to him."

The cleric nods curtly to Phrytz, and he and the wizard walk down the street whispering heatedly. When they return, Father Uriah humbly apologizes to you and the guard for any inconvenience, then slinks off. The guards bow and leave.

You stand before the wizard, feeling embarrassed and awkward.

"Thank you," you say shyly.

Phrytz shrugs. "I owed you. You saved my life. I found out everything that happened between you two and Dowell and all. I bought Dowell back for you."

The wizard turns to leave.

"Wait!" you cry. "I've been thinking about your offer and I'd like to be your apprentice."

The wizard glances back at you. "Sorry, kid," he says. "But I need an apprentice . . . not a horse thief."

You feel your face burn with shame.

"Go home, I'vee," Phrytz says kindly. "You have a lot of growing up to do before you should be out on your own."

The wizard mounts his horse and rides away.

*Stealing Dowell was wrong, you realize miserably. And Phrytz is right. I'm not ready to handle independence. I could have found myself in serious trouble if he hadn't helped me.*

Sadly you mount your horse and return home. Even your pleasure in Dowell is gone now, for every time you look at him, you remember your crime.

THE END



You decide to stay with Phrytz. If he will train you, perhaps you can earn enough to buy Dowell back from Father Uriah. But you cannot steal him. A bargain is a bargain.

Late the next morning, Father Moss brings your breakfast to your room.

"The gentleman you came in with last night left earlier. He said you traded him your horse for the potion you used to cure Phrytz. Is this true?" the priest asks.

"It seemed the only thing to do," you reply.

"Come, I shall take you to the man whose life you saved."

Phrytz looks very pale and much older than he did last night. But he is sitting up in bed, propped up with pillows, joking with an acolyte.

"Ah! The hero of the hour," Phrytz declares when you enter his room. "Awake at last, sleepy-head?"

"I didn't sleep very well last night," you say.

"I've been given to understand I slept like a rock." Phrytz laughs.

Father Moss and the acolyte smile, though they shake their heads in disapproval of Phrytz's joke.

"Come sit with me, heroine." Phrytz smiles and pats the cushion on the chair by his bedside.

"You're the one who saved me from the cockatrice," you argue as you sit by the mage. "That's more heroic than what I did."

"Toots, you got a lot to learn, but I won't embarrass you any further. Suffice it to say that I'm very grateful. I'm in your debt. Any boon I can grant is yours."

You can't believe you've been given such a perfect opportunity to ask Phrytz the question that's been on your mind since last night.

"I want to reconsider being your apprentice, if you'll still have me. Could I ride to Corthax with you while I make up my mind?"

Phrytz sits up straight in his bed and grasps you by your shoulders. "Do you mean that, kid?"

Startled by the wizard's sudden excitement, you can only nod wordlessly.

"You got it, toots," Phrytz answers, then collapses back into the pillows. "Better rest today. We ride out tonight."

Long after sunset, Father Moss leads you through candlelit corridors to the temple doors. Phrytz is waiting on the steps.

You join Phrytz, squinting in the darkness to inspect the new horse Phrytz has purchased for you.

"Dowell!" you cry, running up to the stallion who nuzzles at your skirt pocket, looking for food. "But how did you get him back from the cleric?"

"Did a little trading of my own." Phrytz grins. "Someone like Uriah always has a price. A certain amount of gold and gems convinced him to part with Dowell."

The wizard salutes the priest. "Moss, thanks. May your lamp's flame ever be bright."

"May your efforts be blessed, Phrytz." Father Moss waves farewell.

Together, you and Phrytz turn your mounts to the road and ride away.

*Please turn to page 17.*

"Silvar," you whisper, "since you rescued me, I should be the one to kiss you." Impulsively, you lean forward and gently brush your lips against his.

You are astonished at your own daring, but you aren't sorry you did it. The kiss gives you a warm sensation throughout your body, even after you've pulled away from Silvar.

"I like your reasoning," Silvar smiles. "It gives me an excuse to kiss you back." He puts his arms gently about your waist and pulls you toward him.

"What do you mean?" you ask, holding back, though not exactly breaking away.

"Well, the scroll I was going to read last night might have been cursed. If it was, then you saved my life by keeping me from reading it," Silvar murmurs, kissing you firmly and hugging you tenderly.

The warm sensation you felt before grows stronger. When you and Silvar part, you feel as though you are standing in the sunlight in a bright meadow and not a drafty wizard's study near the end of autumn. You both sigh at the same time, and then you both giggle.

"Again?" Silvar asks. His hazel eyes are twinkling with excitement.

"What will you say to Phrytz when he asks you what you've shown me today?" you tease.

Silvar blushes again. "You're right. We should get to work." He is suddenly very serious.

"Silvar?" you ask nervously. "You don't think Phrytz would mind, do you?"

"Mind what? Oh, us? No. Phrytz teases me, but he never interferes in my private life. But he's counting on me to help train you, and I don't want to disappoint him."



"I know how you feel." You nod understandingly. "I want to please him. He's been so nice."

"It's more than that for me, I'vee. Phrytz didn't have to take me as an apprentice when Merf died. He could have given Chrym back his amulet and sworn not to teach me anymore. Then Chrym would have left him alone. But Phrytz knew how badly I wanted to become a mage, so he started teaching me himself. I want to do more than please him. I want to make him proud of me."

"I see. Well, shall we get started then?" You smile.

"Yes. That little scroll over there is for you. You're supposed to copy it into your book. And this big one—" Silver picks up a scroll from Phrytz's desk—"is for me to copy."

"What's on the scrolls?"

"Phrytz didn't say. He only read one and said it wasn't cursed. I'm supposed to copy it. I could cast a Read Magic Spell on it if you'd like."

"Isn't it dangerous to cast a spell without Phrytz's help while you're still an apprentice?"

"When you're a beginner, yes. But I've been studying magic for three years. Here. Hand me the scroll."

Silver pulls out the same oil-filled crystal vial he had last night and waves it before his eyes, chanting. Then he glances quickly at the two scrolls.

"Yours is a Protection From Evil Spell and mine is a spell to summon an air elemental."

"What's an air elemental?" you ask.

"It's a powerful creature from the plane of air. It will do whatever you command it. I'll show you."

Studying his scroll more carefully, Silver traces an odd design on the floor with a piece of chalk.

"What's that for?"

"It's a thaumaturgic triangle. It's used to keep out the elemental, as a precaution. Come here. Step inside with me."

"Are you sure this is all right?" you ask nervously.

"Don't worry," he smiles, pulling you closer to him. "I'll protect you."

Silvar reads out loud from his scroll. You don't understand what he is saying, but you can see the effects of the spell almost immediately. First, the words vanish from the scroll, then a gust of wind blows through the window, scattering colorful autumn leaves around the room.

Suddenly the wind becomes a towering whirlwind that spins slowly in front of you. Its glowing eyes seem to glare down at you.

"Silvar, it doesn't look too friendly," you gasp.

"They resent being summoned. Don't worry. It can't hurt us. Fetch the lady a rose from the garden," Silvar commands. The elemental whirls out the window.

"Can you make it go away?" you ask. "It makes me nervous."

"I'm sorry. I'll dismiss it as soon as it returns with your flower."

The elemental spins back into the room and drops a late blooming rose at your feet. It suddenly shrieks and hurls itself at Silvar but whirls away, repelled by the protective triangle.

"Why did it do that?" you gasp.

"I'm afraid I wasn't concentrating enough. I may be losing control." Silvar appears worried. "Leave us!" he commands.

The elemental does not obey immediately. It spins all around the room, sending papers, books, scrolls, and innumerable small knickknacks flying dangerously about. Finally, after crashing the table to its side with a loud thump, the elemental dissipates into nothing

Silvar sighs. "What a mess."

"I'll help you clean up," you offer.

"No, that's the servant's job. I have to go tell Phrytz what happened. You'd better wait here."

"Won't he be angry?"

"Probably," Silvar sighs. "I have to go just the same." He gives you one more quick kiss and leaves the study without looking back.

Out in the hallway, you can hear Phrytz growling, "What's all that racket? What trouble have you been into now, kid?"

"I hope he isn't too hard on Silvar," you wish silently. Slowly you bend over to pick up the rose the elemental brought for you. The petals fall from the rose and flutter to the floor.

*Please turn to page 70.*



You peer down at the bottom of the pit.

"I'm sorry, Silvar, but I just haven't got the nerve to jump off the edge. Shar's right, if there is an anti-magic shell, it would be certain death. *I'd* rather rely on my hands and feet."

"Fine, I'll hold my staff to give you light and then join you the easy way," Silvar mutters.

Slowly, you and Shar begin the treacherous descent, searching for footholds and handholds in the rocks.

Suddenly your hand touches something sticky and clinging. "Shar, I'm stuck!" you cry.

"So am I," the prince gasps.

"Oh, no," Silvar moans. "I'vee, Shar, don't move. Stay very still, I'm coming down to help."

You feel Shar start to jerk on the rope.

"Shar? Oh, help! Silvar! There's a giant spider on Shar!" You struggle in terror, forgetting Silvar's warning, desperately trying to move away from the awful creature crawling over the prince's form toward you.

"Silvar! Stay back!" you cry. "It's too late."

You feel a stinging pain in your back as the spider leaps onto you. A warm, light-headed feeling sweeps over your body. The last thing you wonder, as the spider's poison works through your system, is whether or not Silvar will be able to rescue Phrytz.

THE END

*I'd better put a stop to this before it gets any worse, you think.*

"Silvar, we hardly know each other. You're not really old enough to know how you feel about me."

"That's not true," Silvar argues angrily. "I'm nearly a journeyman—as soon as I figure out what I have to do to become one."

"What do you mean?"

Silvar shrugs. "I've been studying magic for three years now. Phrytz says I have only one more step to pass. But he won't tell me what that is."

"Maybe you have to reach a certain age," you suggest. "And you're too young."

"No, I'm not," he insists. "I can even throw a spell without Phrytz's help. I'll prove it."

Silvar picks up one of the scrolls he found in the ghoul and ghastr lair. "I'll read it for you."

Silvar pulls out the same crystal vial full of oil that he had last night and waves it in front of his eyes, chanting words you've never heard before. "It's a spell for summoning an air elemental."

"What's an air elemental?"

"A powerful creature from the plane of air. It will do whatever you command it."

"What is that picture at the bottom for?"

"That's a thaumaturgic triangle to protect against the elemental in case it attacks."

"Oh," you reply doubtfully.

"You don't believe I just read that, do you?"

"I didn't see anything special happen," you admit.

"If you want something special, I'll show you something special. Watch this." He begins to read the words from the scroll out loud. A gust of wind blows through

the window, scattering colorful autumn leaves and pages of books and scrolls about the room.

You suddenly sense the presence of another being in the room. A dusty whirlwind spins slowly in front of Silvar, towering over him. Alarmed, you see a pair of eyes glaring at you with hostility.

"Silvar, what have you done?"

"I read the scroll and summoned the elemental. What shall I make it do for you, Mistress Iveen?"

"You can make it go away!" you gasp.

"No, not after I've gone to all this trouble. I've a better idea. I'll make it bring you—" Silvar breaks off his sentence as the elemental starts to move closer to him, blowing his clothing and hair into disarray. "Move back!" Silvar commands, but the creature does not obey. It whirls faster and closes in on him.

"Silvar!" you cry over the sound of rushing wind that fills the room. "Get rid of it!"

"I can't. I've lost control. Iveen, run! It's going to attack!"

You back away to the study door, watching in horror as Silvar is swept around by the force of the wind generated by the creature. You can tell it means to harm him. You must do something quickly! But what? Phrytz has just left the building. You heard him tell the steward he would be back in an hour.

*If you think you should stay with Silvar  
and try to make the elemental leave,  
turn to page 68.*

*If you think you should run after Phrytz for help,  
turn to page 75.*





You know Phrytz left the inn, but you don't know which way he was going. You'd better not take the time to try and find him—the elemental is battering Silvar, knocking him around the room.

Quickly you run back to the desk and inspect the scroll Silvar read. There is no writing left on it, but at the bottom, still glowing faintly, is a sketch of the thaumaturgic triangle which protects against the attack of the elemental.

Hastily you copy the picture on the floor with a piece of chalk. Looking up, you see Silvar spinning toward you, caught within the whirlwind. Reaching out from the triangle, you grab his shirt and yank.

Both of you fall to the floor with a thud, safe within the protective chalk scrawl. The whirlwind shrieks and flies toward you over and over again, but it is unable to cross the figure you have drawn.

Silvar moans. Cradling his head in your lap, you inspect a cut on his cheek. A hundred sheaves of paper whirl about the room. A huge oaken table crashes to the floor. Then all is still. Everything that had been in the air flutters gently to the floor.

You call Silvar's name softly, stroking his hair back from his forehead. You pat his uninjured cheek to make him respond. "Silvar, are you all right?"

He stirs. "My head hurts."

"Well, don't move. Just lie still. The elemental's gone."

"They leave when they get bored. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to . . ." Silvar's voice trails off as his eyes close in agony.

"Shh. It's O.K." You try stanching the blood from the cut with your handkerchief.

Silvar sits up to survey the wreckage. "Oh, no! What a mess!"

"Why did you do it?" you ask.

"I thought I would be able to concentrate enough to control it." Silvar sighs.

"But why? What for?"

Silvar shrugs. "To impress you."

"Well, you sure did that! I've never been so scared in all my life!"

"I'm sorry," Silvar whispers. He turns away.

"Hey, it's all right. Here. I'll help you clean up. It'll be as if it never happened. We won't have to mention it or anything."

Silvar turns around and smiles at you sadly. "No. I have to tell Phrytz. It wouldn't be right not to. Besides, the staff will want to know what the noises were. It's left its mark on me, anyway," he says, pointing to the cut on his face, "and Phrytz would miss the scroll I used."

Silvar picks up his magic book. "Thank you, for saving my life." He kisses the tips of two fingers and brushes them lightly against your lips. Before you can say anything more, he slips from the room.

You hear Phrytz's voice in the hallway asking, "What is going on up here? Bulakias is ready to evacuate the building! What have you done, kid?"

Your heart pounds fiercely, but you're not certain why. It could be a reaction to your fear of the elemental or anxiety over what Phrytz will do about Silvar. Or could it just be Silvar himself?

*Please turn to page 70.*



Anxiously you wait for Phrytz and Silvar to finish their talk, but the murmur of voices from the study goes on and on. Finally, exhausted from your long journey of the evening before, you return to your room and sleep until morning. Phrytz awakens you with a knock on your door.

"Wake up, toots. We got lots of work today. Here." Phrytz tosses you a shimmering bundle. "This is for you. Bulakias insists I can't let you go around in his inn dressed the way you have been. Lots of pretty things in there. Choose one you like and come join me in the study."

You sigh with delight. There are two dresses, decorated with lace and tiny beads on the cuffs and collar. But your favorite is a robe styled like Phrytz's and Silvar's, made of heavy green brocade.

"Oh, my!" Phrytz whistles when you walk in. "Bulakias was right. All that was needed was some decent clothing to make a looker out of you. Turn around."

You spin about slowly, blushing a little at Phrytz's compliment. "Thank you so much. It's beautiful. I've never had anything new before. Where's Silvar?" For some reason, you'd like to see his reaction to your new clothes.

"Oh, he's gone. Sent him off this morning," Phrytz replies, snatching a piece of toast from your plate.

"Oh," you whisper, shocked. You can't believe Phrytz has dismissed Silvar. Suddenly you don't feel hungry. "Just because of the elemental?" you ask meekly.

"The elemental!" Phrytz laughs. "Good heavens, no. Silvar's pulled crazier stunts than the elemental. I

didn't send Silvar away because I was angry with him. He passed the last step of his apprenticeship yesterday."

"How?" you ask in surprise.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" Phrytz chuckles, his eyes twinkling. "He is now a fully qualified journeyman magic-user. So he's gone journeying to prove himself. I've sent him to look for the Golden Sanctum."

"What's that?"

"An ancient holy temple. Legend says Chrym stole it and hid it in the Caverns of Rite. Merf found out about it from an old spell scroll. If we can find the Golden Sanctum and summon Chrym there with the amulet, the spell on the scroll is supposed to banish Chrym to the lowest regions of the Abyss so he can't bother us or even contact his servants in this world."

"Is it far away? Will Silvar be gone long?"

"Well, it's somewhere in the Caverns of Rite, which are northeast of here. Finding it in that labyrinth could take a while, though."

Phrytz rises from his chair. "When you've finished breakfast I want you to get started with your magic book. Sign your name on the first page. On the second page, copy everything on this little scroll carefully." He hands you a rolled-up piece of parchment. "If you make a mistake, you'll have to start again on a fresh page. When you've done it right, the magic will go from the scroll to the book and the writing on the scroll will disappear. Got that?"

You finish your breakfast quickly and hurry to start your tasks. It takes you three tries to copy the scroll perfectly, but you know the third is right because the writing on the scroll fades away as you are blotting the

ink on the page in your book, just as Phrytz said it would.

Next you begin the job of learning the spell. You never had any problem memorizing your lessons as a child, but the magic words and the odd symbols drawn between them continue to elude you until late in the afternoon.

Finally, though, you feel just a twinge of the same dizziness you felt when Phrytz helped you cast the Identify Spell, and you know you have learned the verbal portion of your spell. *No lesson was ever this hard, you think, but then no lesson was ever this exciting.*

As the weeks pass, you copy and memorize many more spells. But since you can only memorize and cast one spell a day, even with Phrytz's help, you have time to do other things.

Often you ride Dowell through the city, running errands for Phrytz or just for exercise. You help Phrytz keep his vials and jars of spell components replenished, grinding metals and expensive gems into powders or collecting herbs, berries, flowers, and insects.

You are happier than you ever remember being before, except when you think of Silvar. You notice Phrytz staring out the northern window and know that he, too, is worried about the young magic-user. As the winter begins to wane, there is still no sign of Silvar. The wizard grows moodier and more withdrawn. Finally, on a morning when the snowdrops bloom, still cold, but not bitter, Phrytz packs his traveling gear into his saddlebags.

"You're going to look for Silvar, aren't you?"

"Yes. It's less than half-a-day's ride to the Caverns of Rite. But if Silvar is lost or trapped in them, it could



take longer to find him. Stay out of trouble while I'm gone, huh?" he asks as he heads out the study door. He pauses on the stair. "And if you can't stay out of trouble, at least be careful."

You wander anxiously through the inn for the rest of the day, unable to concentrate on your studies.

*This won't do at all, you think. I have to keep myself busy. I'm not helping Phrytz or Silvar by worrying.* Finally, you take Dowell for a hard ride.

The sun is setting as you climb the stairs to the empty study to try and learn your lessons. Then you hear shouting on the stair below and turn to investigate. Bulakias is trying to block a stranger from climbing the stairs. The stranger is a rough-looking young man with long, gleaming black hair. He is dressed in ragged clothing. His skin is dark, his brown eyes flash. You stare at him in admiration, thinking you have never seen such an attractive, exotic-looking man.

"I told you—Phrytz is not in. And you may not go up there!" Bulakias insists.

"I do not believe you. Get out of my way! I must see the wizard," the young man shouts.

He manages to twist past Bulakias and rushes up the staircase, crashing right into you. The steward bounds up the stairs after him, his iron skillet in his hand.

"Are you all right, Mistress Ivey?" the steward shouts, holding his skillet threateningly over the young man.

"I'm fine," you reply. "What's going on? Who is this man?"

"Some unfortunate who just escaped from a Slaver Guild caravan, mistress. He claims to know Phrytz, but he won't believe me when I tell him that Phrytz

isn't here. The slavers are waiting outside for me to bring him back to them."

You nod, realizing Bulakias's dilemma. He hates the slavers as much as Phrytz, but their guild is powerful and violent. *If their property—this young man—is not returned, they will probably storm the inn, you think worriedly.*

"Do you want to speak with him? I can stall the slavers for a short while," Bulakias asks you.

"I did not go to all this trouble to speak with a mere girl," the young man growls. "Especially such a plain one who smells like a stable. I am Prince Sharbellanibahah of the desert tribe of Havish."

"Sure you are," sneers Bulakias. "And I'm Fred the crow. Keep a civil tongue in your head, boy." Bulakias shakes the skillet. "Mistress Ivec is Phrytz's apprentice. You won't do yourself any good insulting her. Shall I throw him out?" Bulakias asks you.

*If you want to let Bulakias hand  
this insulting young man to the Slaver Guild,  
turn to page 78.*

*If you would rather ignore the insult and find out  
if he really does know Phrytz, turn to page 82.*

*Only Phrytz can handle the elemental*, you decide, hoping you can catch him. You rush out the door, down the staircase, and out of the inn. Once on the street, you catch the gleam of Phrytz's robes amidst the crowd. Shouting his name, you chase down the street after him. The crowd parts in front of you. You have to hold onto Phrytz when you catch up with him to keep yourself from falling.

"Phrytz!" you cry. "You've got to help Silvar! There's an air elemental attacking him."

"Where?" Phrytz demands.

"The study! He used the scroll . . ."

You realize you're talking to empty air. Phrytz has already returned to the inn the fastest way he can—by teleporting.

When you reach the study, the elemental is gone. Phrytz is bent over Silvar's body, feeling for a pulse.

"Is he all right?" you whisper with dread.

"I don't know. I found him like this. The elemental was gone." The wizard carries Silvar to his bedroom. "An elemental wouldn't have left him like this, though. I'm going to have another look around the study. Stay and watch over him, huh?"

After Phrytz leaves, you try to make Silvar more comfortable. Even though the young man is unconscious, he still clutches his staff.

*This is my fault*, you think miserably. *If I hadn't insisted Silvar was too young to be a journeyman, he wouldn't have been so anxious to prove himself by reading that scroll.*

You sit by Silvar's side, stroking his hair back from his forehead. The silver streaks at his temples are softer than the rest of his hair, almost like fur.



Phrytz returns much later, looking tired and very worried. "He opened the second scroll. I think it was cursed and brought another creature into the room. There are scorches on the floor, and I can detect traces of evil about them."

"Why would he open the other scroll?" you ask.

"Possibly to defend himself from the air elemental," Phrytz suggests. "I haven't been able to find his book of magic either." He sinks into a chair. "A magic-user's book and his soul are bound together. I think whatever creature the curse brought into the study stole both of them."

"His soul?" you ask, horrified.

"It's a powerful magic spell. The soul is trapped in a magical gem until the gem is broken. His body should have gone with his soul, though. Something is holding it here. Something very powerful. I suspect it is Merf's staff."

"You mean the staff Silvar's still holding? It belonged to Merf? His old master?"

"It always did have a lot of weird powers not even Merf understood. I have to find a way to help pull Silvar's soul back to his body before his soul pulls his body to wherever it's trapped. I'll be in the study. Watch him."

You nod, anxious to help in any way you can.

"Ivee . . ."

Startled, you wake up.

Moonlight illuminates the room. *I must have fallen asleep*, you think, looking around to see who called your name. Silvar is still unconscious. There seems to be no one else in the room.

You turn towards the window and gasp. A book floats

over the sill, hovering in midair.

"Silvar's magic book!" you cry.

"I'vee, help me, please!" His voice comes from inside the pages.

"Silvar, where are you?" you call out in alarm.

"I'm here. Open the book and get me out. Hurry, please."

As you reach out for the book, it suddenly bursts into flames.



"Silvar, the book's on fire! What should I do?"

But he does not respond.

Quickly you reach for the pitcher of water on the bedstand and pour it over the flames. The water spills to the floor as though the flaming book wasn't even there. But you can see flames consuming it! You can feel their heat!

Should you risk burning yourself on the magic book or go to Phrytz for help?

*If you decide to go to Phrytz for help,  
turn to page 88.*

*If you decide to open the book, turn to page 85.*

You do not want to deal with this insulting and stubborn young man.

"Let the slavers have him," you state coldly.

The slavers come out of the inn, clamp chains on the stranger's wrists, and lead him away. Bulakias watches them leave with their prisoner.

"A wise decision," the steward tells you.

"I suppose so," you say, sighing.

Returning to the study, you bury yourself in your magic book, trying to forget the arrogant, attractive slave. But a nagging guilt haunts you. Even the spell you are trying to memorize—a Reduce Spell which shrinks people or things—reminds you of the incident. You feel reduced, small and petty, for not having helped the prince. He needed your help, even if he did not want it.

The room grows dark as you imagine all the terrible things the prince must be suffering. Suddenly the door bursts open.

"Hi, toots. You'll ruin your eyes reading in the dark, ya' know."

"Phrytz! You startled me. I'm so glad you're back!" you cry.

"Well, I would hope so. You'll be glad to know I found Silvar safe and sound, too," the wizard replies. "Yes, he must have cleaned a thousand monsters out of the Caverns. But he couldn't find the Golden Sanctum." Then he takes a closer look at you. "Ivee, what's wrong? You look so pale. Is something else the matter?"

Quickly you tell Phrytz about the stranger and his abduction by the slavers.

"Sharbellanibanah. In the desert tongue that means



"storm of rain and lightning," the wizard muses. "What tribe? I know a lot of desert princes, I'vee."

"Havish, I think he said."

"Havish? Of course! Shar! That's what they call him for short. No wonder there's such a large gathering of desert-folk outside the wall. They must be planning an attack if they don't get their prince back. He's very popular. I've sworn a blood oath of friendship with his father. I'm going to have to go to the Slaver Guild to negotiate a ransom."

You nod and watch from the window as Phrytz mounts a fresh mare and rides towards the Slaver Guild.

Suddenly a hand grabs hold of you, the edge of a dagger is at your throat. A deep voice with an accent whispers, "Do not scream. Tell me where the wizard is."

"He's not here," you gasp in terror. "He's gone out."

"You lie," the voice accuses. Strong hands jerk you around in your chair, the knife's point at your neck. The hands belong to a man who resembles the prince. He is much older, but he has the same long, black, silky hair and the same sharp, dark features.

"No. It's true," you whisper, less frightened. "Are you a friend of Shar's?"

"I am Cavin, bodyguard to His Exalted Highness Prince Sharbellanibanah of the Havish."

"Phrytz went to arrange a ransom with the Slaver Guild to get your prince back," you explain.

Cavin takes the point of the knife away from your throat.

"They have already sold His Highness to the servants of the Golden One."

"The Golden One? Do you mean Chrym? . . ."

"I followed them to their secret temple and watched them chain the prince. At midnight they will send him to the Abyss to serve the Golden One as his slave and so insult and shame us."

"Phrytz should be back soon. He'll help Shar."

Cavin gives a derisive snort. "There is no escape from the Golden One's temple. When his servants send our prince to the Abyss, we will have our revenge on your whole city. We will attack it and level it. I am here only to see that your wizard does not interfere with our vengeance."

"But that's stupid!" you argue angrily. "Your people should be doing everything in their power to rescue Shar from the temple, not waiting until it's too late and taking your revenge out on Corthax."

"No one can fight the Golden One. He is too powerful. But Corthax is responsible for the slavers' actions. It allows them to stay within its walls."

"And since you're afraid to fight Chrym, you'll just destroy Corthax, is that it?" you retort. "Phrytz will never allow it."

"That is why I am here—to stop him from helping to defend it," Cavin says. Sheathing his dagger, he draws a long curved sword.

"You aren't going to hurt him?" you cry in alarm.

"Only if he does not cooperate."

A stab of fear pierces your heart. Phrytz will most certainly not cooperate with Cavin. *I can't allow Cavin to harm Phrytz!* you think. *But what can I do?* Suddenly you realize that on the table near you is the heavy porcelain mortar you use to grind things to powder. Cavin has his back turned to you, certain, that you—a mere girl—can do nothing to stop him.

*I could knock him out easily, you think, but I might kill him if I hit him too hard. You would do anything to keep Phrytz from harm—even go to Chrym's temple by yourself to rescue Shar—but you feel uneasy about clubbing another human being.*

*If I can rescue Shar, Cavin will forget his stupid revenge on the city of Corthax and Phrytz will be safe, you consider. On the other hand, I may not be able to convince Cavin to let me help Shar and this could be my only opportunity to stop the desert man.*

*If you decide to knock Cavin out,  
turn to page 95.*

*If you want to try and rescue the prince,  
turn to page 91.*



*No matter how rude he is, he is obviously in terrible trouble*, you think. Then your eyes notice the odd ring he is wearing. You gasp. It is identical to the one Phrytz gave you! But just as you start to ask about it, the young stranger shoves the steward against the stairs and runs out the front door.

"We've got to stop him," you cry. "He really is a friend of Phrytz's. Where are the slavers?"

"Out back, the way he came in. But they'll be around front before long," Bulakias answers.

"Go stop them. I've got to talk to him."

"Very well," Bulakias heaves a long-suffering sigh. "But I won't be able to hold them off for long."

"Let them search the inn if they want. I'll get the prince out of here."

"Well, I'm sure you must think you know what you're doing," Bulakias mutters, heading down the stairs.

You run outside.

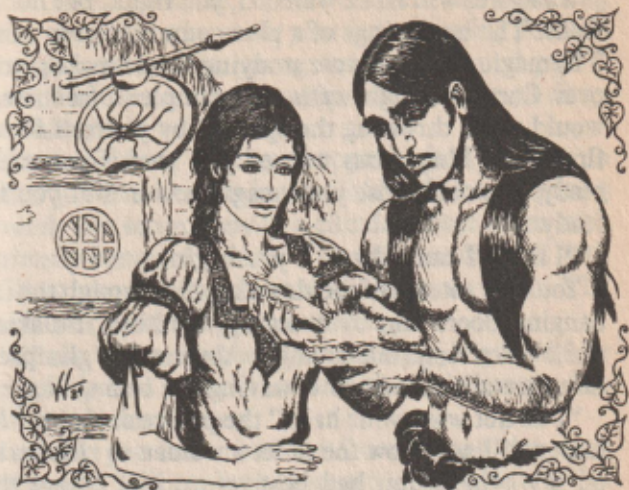
"Stop!" you cry, grabbing the prince's arm. "Let me see that ring!"

The young man straightens to his full height. He flips his long, silky hair back over his shoulders and holds out his left hand to show you a signet ring. You compare it to your ring. The two are identical, and when you bring them close together, they glow slightly.

"Sorcery," the young man hisses, drawing his hand back quickly.

"Well, what did you expect from a wizard's ring? How did you get this?"

"Many years ago, Phrytz and my father swore blood oaths of friendship. When I left my home in the desert to come to these lands, my father gave me this ring and



said I was to seek out Phrytz if I had any trouble. But how can you be Phrytz's apprentice?" the young man asks scornfully. "You are a woman."

"How can you be a prince?" you reply indignantly. "You're a slave."

The desert prince flushes, then answers, "In the desert we would consider it a mistake to give a woman so much power. You haven't the wisdom or honor to be trusted with it."

"Well, I'm sorry you feel that way, Prince . . . uh Sharb . . . Shar! Because I'm all you've got right now," you state angrily. "Besides, I don't think even Phrytz could protect you from the Slaver Guild!"

"If I can reach my people, who are camped outside the northern wall of your city, they will protect me."

*The gates will all be watched, you think, but not the walls.* The beginnings of a plan come into your mind. The magic spell you were studying would make getting over Corthax's high walls very simple. Of course, it would mean throwing the spell all by yourself for the first time. Phrytz has warned you that if you aren't ready, you could lose your magic power. But you feel ready.

"I think I can help . . ." you begin.

You hear sounds of the slavers going through the inn, banging doors and overturning furniture. Bulakias's shrill voice rings out in anger. You catch a glimpse of him through the window, waving the iron skillet.

"I do not want your help," the prince declares. "My honor will not allow me to let a woman to risk herself on my behalf. You had best return me, before they wreck your inn," Shar states.

"This is silly," you snap. "I can get you over the wall to your people. All we have to do is stall the slavers a while longer."

"No. You do not have my permission," the prince commands.

You can help the prince if you can only convince him to let you, but you wonder now if he's worth the effort!

*If you still want to try to help Prince Shar,  
turn to page 98.*

*If you would rather not risk aiding the prince,  
turn to page 78.*



You aren't going to repeat your mistake of leaving Silvar alone when he needs your help. Steeling yourself for the burning pain, you grasp the book and pull it open. The flames die instantly. You become so dizzy you nearly fall.

Then the dizzy feeling disappears, but you are no longer in Silvar's room in the Golden Spires. Looking around, you see you are in a circular tower room with curiously curved windows. The walls are covered with brilliant glazed tiles, sheer silks, and satin cloth. The room is lit by shining brass oil lamps.

"Silvar, where are you?" you whisper, frightened by the strangeness of the place and its exotic beauty. But Silvar does not answer.

Instead, you hear someone from behind the cloth drapes ask, "Where is the gem with the soul in it?"

You shiver with horror. You recognize the voice. It is Chrym!

"In this next room, my lord," a second, harsher voice replies. A hand brushes the curtains. "It is hidden in an oil lamp."

"Whose soul did you take?"

"The male apprentice, Silvar."

"Excellent."

"I am glad you are pleased."

You remember in a flash that Phytz said Silvar's soul could be imprisoned in a gem. Quickly, your hands shaking nervously, you blow out one oil lamp after another, pouring their contents onto the table. The third lamp contains a beautiful sapphire, the size of a bluebird's egg. "Silvar," you hiss, "is that you?"

You receive no reply.

The harsh voice asks Chrym, "Do you wish to keep

the apprentice imprisoned in the gem, or will you release him?"

"I'll destroy the gem here and release him—to make sure you are telling me the truth. I wouldn't want to reward you for bringing me a mere chambermaid."

"Then will you keep him as a slave or trade with the wizard for him?"

"I shall do both." Chrym laughs horribly.

Quickly you grab an empty oil lamp and crush the sapphire between the lamp's heavy base and the table. Hot oil splatters over your hand, but you are oblivious to the pain. Silvar's figure shimmers into existence before you, holding his book.

"Hurry! Take my hands," he whispers. "We have to get out of here!"

But as you reach out for Silvar, two figures enter the room. One is as tall as a giant with burning red skin and horrible fangs and claws. The other is Chrym, golden-skinned, handsome, and surrounded by darkness. He stares at you in astonishment.

"What have we here? Both apprentices? How amusing! But why are they free?" Frowning, Chrym turns to his servant.

At that moment, Silvar grabs your hand. You are seized by the same dizziness you felt grasping his book. Then you are in Silvar's room once again, standing by his bed, holding his hands.

"Thank you for saving me," he whispers.

"What was that horrible creature with Chrym?" you shudder.

"An efreeti. I tried to read the other scroll after you left—the one Phrytz hadn't checked yet. It was cursed. The efreeti appeared before me. I grabbed the staff,

and that's the last thing I remember. I got sucked into a soul trap."

"That was what Phrytz guessed happened. Chrym was going to buy you from the efreeti and use you in trade."

"I think I owe you more than just my life." Silvar takes your hands in his and gives them a gentle squeeze.

"I was happy to help," you whisper shyly. "I'll go tell Phrytz. He'll be so pleased."

"No, I'd better go. I have a lot I must tell him," Silvar murmurs. "Alone." He kisses the tips of two of his fingers and brushes them gently against your lips.

Before you can argue, Silvar slips from the room with his book and Merf's staff. An uneasy feeling creeps over you. *Once Phrytz gets over being happy to see Silvar, he'll probably be very angry, you realize.*

You're still frightened by the close call you just had in the beautiful round room, but you are glad that you saved Silvar from Chrym. Oddly enough, your feelings toward Silvar right now aren't exactly those of a protective older sister!

*Please turn to page 70.*



You run to Phrytz's study, hoping he'll know what to do about the burning book. "Phrytz, hurry!" you shout, pounding on the door.

Phrytz runs out of the study and down the hall. He stops short at Silvar's door and then slumps against the frame.

You gasp as you look into the room. Silvar's body is missing, the glowing book is ash on the windowsill, and Merf's staff is a gnarled stump.

"Tell me what happened, Ivey," Phrytz chokes.

"His book appeared and I heard him speak from it. He told me to open it up and come get him out, but the book was on fire, and I couldn't put the fire out so I came to you."

Phrytz shudders, burying his face in his hands.

"What happened to him?" you whisper, sobbing.

"His soul is trapped somewhere. It reached out for his body. But since his soul couldn't leave wherever it is, his body joined his soul."

"But where did the body go?" you ask. "Where is his soul?"

"I don't know for sure who stole Silvar, but the thief will undoubtedly sell him to Chrym. He can pay the most."

"Can't we rescue him?" you ask hopefully.

"I will make a deal with Chrym," Phrytz says, but his voice is tired and flat. "Get some sleep, Ivey. There's nothing more for you to do tonight." Phrytz shuffles slowly back to his study, closing the door behind him.

After a long time, you fall asleep and dream you hear Phrytz's voice from far off shouting, "Chrymatythaxus."

*Those shouts are real, you think, waking with a start.* Phrytz cries out again, "Chrymatythaxus. Show yourself, you coward."

You hurry to Phrytz's study, but the door is locked. "Phrytz, are you all right? What's wrong?" you call out, but Phrytz does not answer. You peer through the keyhole.

You cannot see the wizard, but you can see a swirling golden mist in the center of the room. The mist forms into Chrym. His golden skin shimmers in the candlelight.

This time you know it is not an illusion. Phrytz has summoned Chrym by calling out his full name.

"Greetings, Last-One," Chrym says with a sweeping bow. "What can I do for you?"

"I want Silvar back. I know you have him."

"Naturally." Chrym smiles and holds out his hand so Phrytz can see what he holds. It's a lock of Silvar's hair, some of it brown and some of it silver. Chrym lets it drift to the floor. You choke back your tears.

"I'll make you a deal," Phrytz replies. "The amulet for the young man."

"That deal does not interest me. We both know you dare not use the amulet against me while I hold the young man. I will make the deal. Come with me to my realm and you may have the young man."

"No!" you shout. But Phrytz doesn't even hesitate before stepping forward. He looks very tired and defeated. The mist forms again, filling the room. When it clears, both Chrym and Phrytz are gone.

You shake the locked door, crying in frustration. To your amazement, it flies open! There is no one in the room, but on the table is a box. Three ancient tomes lie

underneath your magic book. Slipped between the pages of your book is a note from Phrytz.

My dearest Ivey,

If you are reading this letter, I am probably gone to the Abyss with Chrym. I hope to help protect Silvar from Chrym's evil. In the box is a great sum of money. Go home and hide. It would be safest for you to forsake magic. But if you are unable to forget the dream I offered you, I have also left you three books that will help you understand your gift. It will not be easy—or safe—to teach yourself spell-casting, but if you succeed, magic will remain alive in our world. I hope you will not wait, as I did, until it is too late to share your knowledge. Good luck.

Phrytz

As Phrytz asked, you return to Maytar's Hold. Your mother is happy to see you safe, and Betin, your stepfather, is delighted that you have returned wealthy. You buy your family a small farm and settle into life in the countryside, keeping to yourself.

Secretly, you continue to study your magic. It takes a long time, but finally the tomes Phrytz has left you begin to make sense. With great joy, you cast your first spell unaided. But you know it will be many years before you will be powerful enough to challenge Chrym. By then, you vow, you will either help free Phrytz and Silvar or have your revenge on the evil Chrym.

THE END



"Never attribute to malice that which can be blamed on fear," Phrytz once told you, and you realize that it applies to Cavin and his people. *They aren't evil, you think, just afraid they will lose Shar to Chrym. They aren't thinking clearly enough to realize that destroying Corthax will not help Shar.*

"Take me to this secret temple of Chrym's," you say with determination. "I will rescue your prince for you." You try hard to hide your own fear. If you are caught by Chrym's servants, they will send you to the Abyss with Shar . . . if they don't kill you outright.

"What nonsense. You are only a girl. What can you do?" Cavin turns to glare at you.

"I am Phrytz's apprentice. I am not afraid of what you will not even attempt to try."

"It would not be honorable to allow a woman to risk herself so."

"Is it honorable to sit by and do nothing while Shar is made Chrym's slave?" you shout.

"Very well." The desert man sighs. Together you leave the inn.

You whistle for Dowell as Cavin mounts a beautiful desert stallion.

Cavin takes you through some of the darkest and most eerie sections of the town. You are afraid for a short time that he is lost, but finally you come upon a large square building of marble hidden by dense trees and shrubbery.

"This is where the slaves are held," Cavin whispers.

"Where's the entrance?"

"On the roof. One can reach it only by climbing a ladder the guards throw down. But there is another way in—for you at least."

Cavin leads you to the side of the building. There are windows, but they are high up and barred. The desert man stands on his saddle, balancing easily, and pulls himself up to a window ledge. Then he pulls you up after him.

You peer inside. Beneath you, one oil lamp provides little light in a vast, empty, doorless room. The prince is chained by his wrists and ankles to a wall.

Holding your breath, you slip between the window bars.

"Get some rope. Tie it to a bar, and just keep guard. If I need you, I'll call," you order as you drop lightly to the temple floor. The room is completely still. You creep over to the prince.

"Who goes there?" you hear Shar whisper.

"I'vee," you whisper. "Remember me? Plain girl who smells like a stable? Are you all right?"

"Leave immediately!" the prince orders. "I won't have your capture on my conscience."

"Prince Shar, please keep your voice down, or you *will* have my capture on your conscience! I'm sorry I let the slavers take you." You examine the bands about his wrists.

"Lady," Shar whispers, "my plight is desperate. I do not wish you to share it. Please, flee before the guards decide to check on me."

"The guards aren't going to be checking on a helpless man chained to a wall." You sound braver than you feel. You pull a vial of iron powder from your pocket. "But I appreciate your chivalry. You're a lot nicer than I would have guessed. I'm glad I came."

The prince slumps in his bonds, defeated by your determination and his own exhaustion.

"Prince Shar, I'm going to cast a spell over you so you can escape this place. You have to trust me and relax or it won't work."

"NO!" Shar straightens immediately. "How do I know you aren't some shape-shifter in the girl I'vee's form sent by the Golden One to trick me?"

"Oh, for goodness sake!" You throw your hands up in exasperation. "What do I have to do to convince you?"

"Come closer."

You step forward, looking up into the prince's dark eyes.

Without warning, his arms encircle you and clasp you firmly next to his body. The chains attached to his wrists clink and tighten about you.

"And just what is this supposed to prove?" you whisper, startled.

"If you can trust me, perhaps I will consider trusting you. Will you relax?"

Sighing, torn between pleasure and exasperation, you force yourself to relax in the prince's strong arms. Shar lowers his mouth to your ear. "What spell did you mean to cast?" he whispers softly.

"I'm going to reduce you, make you smaller, so you can slip out of your chains and through the bars on the window, like I did," you answer. Shar's warm breath down your neck raises goosebumps along your arms. Your heart races from his nearness. "You'd grow back in a few minutes," you add.

"Why are you helping me?" the prince asks, brushing his lips along your forehead.

"Just maybe I don't want to see you harmed, even if you are arrogant and foolish," you whisper.



"You are very honorable . . . for a woman," he adds, letting you loose. "I will not resist your spell."

You draw a deep breath and take a pinch of powder from the vial, trying to remember the words to your spell. You've practiced it with Phrytz flawlessly many times.

But now the first phrase sticks somewhere in your memory, and you suspect the reason is Shar. The desert prince's embrace, his dark eyes, and his silky hair occupy your thoughts more strongly than magic ever has.

Suddenly you hear armored feet marching overhead.

"It's the guards!" Shar hisses. "You must flee. There is no time for your magic. You musn't let yourself be caught."

The words to your spell pop into your head, but you aren't sure if you should cast it now. It is the first time you have ever tried without Phrytz's help and if you try before you are ready you could lose your magic powers! Or worse—the spell could go wrong and hurt Shar! You may not have time, anyway—you could be discovered and captured any second now. Your only other choice is to run and let Shar be sent to the Abyss.

*If you decide to stay and cast your spell,  
turn to page 107.*

*If you think that staying might be too dangerous,  
and you wish to flee, leaving Shar behind,  
turn to page 105.*

You don't want to take any chances. Phrytz is more important to you than hurting Cavin or even rescuing Shar. You raise the heavy mortar high and bring it down on Cavin's skull with a sickening thud.

The desert man crashes to the floor. Quickly you check to see that he is alive. You take away his weapons and tie him up in case he awakens. Then you wait.

As midnight approaches, you grow restless and unhappy. Soon Chrym's servants will send Shar to the Abyss. Phrytz may be safe from Cavin, but the desert prince is doomed, and the Havish will attack Corthax.

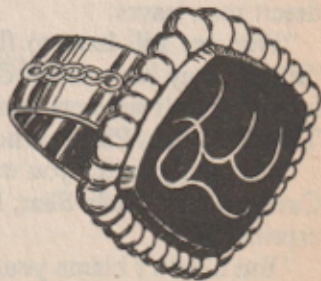
Midnight passes and you think, *It's too late now. Should I have done something differently?* Just as Cavin seems to be coming around, you hear hurried footsteps on the stairs. The figure of a stranger bursts into the study.

Startled, you grab the mortar again.

"Who are you?" you cry.

"Ivee, it's me!"

"Silvar!" you gasp. "You're back." You stare at the young mage, astonished. He has grown taller and more muscular. His once pale skin is now tanned and rough. The silver streaks at his temples are longer. On his left hand, he wears the third ring of a master mage. Fred is perched on his shoulder.



"Get your cloak and book," Silvar says. "We have to leave immediately." He begins to shove magic books and scrolls and gems into a sack.

"Why? What's the matter? Where's Phrytz?" you ask in alarm.

"He tried to rescue some desert prince from Chrym's secret temple."

"The fool!" Cavin whispers from the floor. "No one can fight the Golden One."

"Who's that?" Silvar asks, just noticing the desert man.

"Cavin, the desert prince's bodyguard. His tribe is going to attack the city, to avenge what happened to Prince Shar. He was supposed to make sure Phrytz didn't help defend Corthax."

Silvar draws his dagger and slices Cavin's bonds. "You can go tell your people you've succeeded," he says flatly. "Phrytz was captured trying to rescue your worthless prince. They have both been sent to the Abyss to serve as Chrym's slaves."

"No!" you cry. "Not Phrytz!"

Cavin rises stiffly to his feet. "Our grief, apparently, is now equal. Perhaps for such a sacrifice we will reconsider taking out our vengeance on your city." The desert man leaves.

"I'vee, we still have to flee," Silvar says anxiously. "Phrytz may have saved Corthax, but we aren't safe here. Chrym's servants know about us, where we live. They know that Phrytz is no longer here to protect us."

"This is my fault," you whisper. "If I had convinced Cavin to let me help Shar, Phrytz wouldn't have been captured."

"You mustn't blame yourself. If anyone's to blame, it's me. I failed to find the Golden Sanctum, and I couldn't help Phrytz. I met him, you see, when he was on his way to Chrym's temple. I went with him. When



he was captured, he tossed me the amulet and ordered me to run." Silvar shows you the amulet embedded in the prism crystal. "I didn't want to leave him, I'vee, but I had no other choice. The amulet holds Chrym's power in this world."

"You had to keep the amulet from Chrym, Silvar. You mustn't feel guilty."

"I'm so glad Phrytz took you for his apprentice, I'vee," Silvar tells you. "Otherwise I'd be all alone. Together we can practice our magic in secret. I'll find the Golden Sanctum someday, then we'll challenge Chrym and rescue Phrytz."

Though you are still miserable and very frightened, Silvar's determined words give you courage.

"I'm glad you've come back, Silvar." You smile. "Otherwise, I'd be all alone, too."

Silvar hugs you close for a moment. If you weren't both grieving for your master, the moment would be wonderful. Together you leave the Golden Spires and ride from Corthax. Your heart is heavy, but you are not without hope that someday you will defeat Chrym and see Phrytz again.

THE END

*I must help the prince, even if he is too foolish to allow it, you think. Phrytz would, if he were here.*

Quickly you look around and spot a passing stablehand.

"I need two of those uniforms." You point to the outfit the boy is wearing. "Hurry!"

"Yes, Mistress Ivec." The boy looks startled, but obeys.

"You are going to a lot of trouble for nothing. I told you I cannot allow you to risk yourself on my behalf," the prince states.

"Prince Sharbellan . . . do you have a shorter name?"

"My name in your tongue is 'Storm of Rain and Lightning.' I am called more simply Storm or Shar," the young man replies.

"Good. Because we don't have much time. Prince Shar, my honor won't allow me to turn you over to those men," you state coldly. "Now you can cooperate and help me or you can make it difficult for me, risking your life and mine. What does your honor say to that?"

The prince pauses to consider. Then he nods, reluctantly.

"Hide in the stables. I'll be there in a moment." You rush up to the study and grab your magic book. The slavers are banging around in the kitchen now, upsetting pots and pans. You know that it will be only moments before they think to look in the stables.

As calmly as you can, you begin memorizing the words to the spell you plan to use. It is much easier now that you have had practice. You have it learned and its components collected by the time you see the stablehand outside with the uniforms. You run down the stairs.

"Now, get Dowell and another horse ready," you order, slipping on the uniform jacket. "Put this on," you tell Shar, handing him a jacket.

"If your people are camped outside the city, why didn't they try to ransom you from the slavers?" you ask the prince as he puts on the disguise.

"They tried, but the servants of the Golden One offered the slavers more money than they had."

"The Golden One? You don't mean Chrym? What does he have to do with you?" you ask, shivering.

"Chrym is what you call him here in the south. In the desert we do not honor his evil with a true name. He is an ancient enemy of my people and his servants hope to insult and disgrace us by sending me to the Abyss to be his slave."

"Here," you say, handing the prince a cap. "The stablehands all have short hair. Hide yours under this."

"No," he declares. "We of the desert do not cut or hide our hair. It is our strength."

"They'll recognize it if they see it," you say in exasperation. "Do you have any objection to wearing it differently? Braided like mine? I sometimes ride with the stablehands and wear their jackets. Maybe anyone watching will mistake you for me and me for a stablehand."

"No. You may weave my hair for me," the prince replies.

You hadn't planned on helping the prince with his own hair, but there is no time to argue. You begin plaiting it quickly. "You have very beautiful hair," you can't help saying.

"Yours is very long. Why do you wear it that way?" he says, turning and fingering your braids.



"To keep it out of my way. Besides, even when I let it down, it's not as nice as yours," you reply shyly, wishing you'd kept quiet.

When you are finished making Shar's hair look like your own, you stuff your braids into a cap and lead the prince outside where the horses are waiting.

"If you're to be me, you must ride Dowell," you tell Shar as you mount the mare and trot off north.

When you reach the north wall, you hear the mysterious and exotic sounds of the instruments of Shar's people. The music and the darkness combine to give you an eerie and anxious feeling. "What are they playing?"

"A death lament for me," Shar says coolly.

You shiver, not from the cold night air, but with fear that the music is an omen. You dismount. Removing the cap on your head, you begin to let out your braids.

"Why are you doing that?" Shar asks.

"If we are spotted before I am finished, or before you have gotten over the wall, I will flee in the opposite direction you do. I'm counting on them mistaking me for you and letting you go."

"You were wrong," the prince whispers. "My hair is not nicer than yours." Very gently, he runs his fingers through the tresses of your long, dark hair.

"Thank you," you reply softly, blushing. Quickly you pull out the ingredients for your spell.

But before you can unwrap them, Shar takes you in his arms. His embrace is warm and strong. He nuzzles you ear gently and brushes his lips along your neck.

Your heart has been pounding with the knowledge of the danger you and Shar are in, but now it is racing with an excitement you have never felt before. You are



tempted to let this desert prince hold you as long as he likes, but you know neither of you can afford the time.

"Shar," you whisper breathlessly, "we could be spotted any minute. You have to get over the wall."

"How shall I do that?" he asks, letting you go. "It's too high and smooth to climb."

"Magic." You draw a trembling breath. "You must tilt your head back with your mouth open and your eyes closed."

Cautiously you unwrap the ingredients of your spell and begin to search your mind desperately for the words you memorized from your book.

*This is the prince's fault! you realize. I can't stop thinking about the way he embraced me!*

You nearly panic, afraid you will never recall the

words, or that you really aren't ready to cast a spell alone.

You take another deep breath and the words return to your memory. Knowing it is too late now to turn back, you begin the chant. The dizziness you always experience when you cast a spell passes more quickly now. When you are finished, the tiny vial of liquid and the delicate house spider in the palm of your hand are both glowing lightly. After pouring a drop of fluid from the vial over the spider, you place it carefully on the back of Shar's tongue.

"Swallow, quickly!" you order him.

The prince chokes a bit but manages to get the ingredients down his throat. "That was awful," he gasps. "What was it?"

"To quote Phrytz, 'Believe me, kid, you don't want to know.' But now you can get over the wall."

Shar looks puzzled but reaches for a hold where there is none and finds himself three feet off the ground. He jumps down in surprise. "My hands and feet stick to the wall!"

"Yes. Now all you have to do is climb up this side, down the other side, and join your people."

"Thank you. This is wonderful." Shar moves towards you, his dark eyes flashing. "You are wonderful!"

Quickly you back away from him until you bump against the wall.

"I only want to kiss you good-bye," Shar protests.

"You'll stick to me. Besides, you haven't got time. You must hurry or the spell will wear off, and I haven't the power to cast another. Go now."

With a regretful look, Shar leaps up to begin his



climb. "I'll be back to thank you more properly," he calls, then he disappears over the wall.

You ride back to the inn, humming the strange tune you heard in the desert camp.

As you step inside, Bulakias points upstairs.

"Phrytz!" you cry, at the sight of a figure on the stairs. "You're home!"

"Brilliant observation."

"Did you find Silvar?" you ask nervously. Phrytz appears angry.

"Yes. *He's* fine. He cleaned out at least a thousand monsters from the Caverns of Rite, but he couldn't find the Golden Sanctum. *You*, on the other hand, have problems," the wizard says. "We have to have a little talk. Upstairs!" he commands.

Meekly you follow your irate master up to his study.

Phrytz sits in his chair. He does not invite you to sit down. You remain standing before him, nervously.

"I return to find my home surrounded and ready to be invaded by goons from the Slaver Guild," Phrytz growls. "A letter from the Guild master arrives, demanding I turn you over for punishment for theft. Next comes a message from Chrym's servants stating that they will get even with you. I thought I told you to stay out of trouble!"

As quickly and concisely as you can, you explain to Phrytz all that has happened to you since you met Shar. You don't mention the prince's compliments to you or his embrace, but you do describe in vivid detail how you threw your first spell all alone.

"I know you said it was dangerous if I wasn't ready. I know that I could have lost my powers. But I *felt* ready, and it was all I could think of."

"You threw a Spider Climb Spell by yourself?" Phrytz gasps, staring at you intently. "And it worked?"

"Of course. The prince went right up the wall— just like a spider. He's safe. I'm sorry, Phrytz. Please, don't be too cross with me."

*Please turn to page 112.*

You grow panicked by Shar's words. Terrified, you dash across the room and yank at the rope. Cavin begins hauling you up.

"Halt!" shouts a voice. "Or you're dead!"

Twisting around, you see an ogre aiming an arrow right at your heart. Your hands slip and you fall to the floor.

Cavin peers through the bars, staring down at you in horror.

"Run!" you shout, gritting your teeth from a sudden pain in your ankle.

"Oh, ho! That's the wizard's girl apprentice," a voice hisses. "Good work, Golth. The master will be pleased. We'll send her to him along with the prince. Go chain her up."

The two ogres lower a ladder and climb down into the room. You struggle to rise to your feet and back away from them, but the pain in your ankle makes you fall again.

The ogres grab you and chain you to the wall next to Shar. They take away your dagger and vial of iron powder and leave you alone with the prince.

"If you'd left when I told you to," Shar states coldly, "you would be safe now."

"If I'd stayed put and not scurried across the floor trying to escape like a frightened rat, they never would have heard me." You blink back your tears.

"If there were any way I could keep you from sharing my fate, lady, I would use it," Shar says, more softly. "Perhaps we will both find some way to escape when they send us to Chrym."

Suddenly the dizzy feeling that you've come to associate with magic sweeps over your body. For a moment



you have a ridiculous hope that Phrytz has somehow transported you away from this terrible place. But when you look up into the red eyes of Chrym, you know you are doomed.

"Ivee!" The evilly handsome creature smiles. "What a pleasant surprise. Phrytz will be so interested to know you've come to help me out here in my realm."

Chrym's words stab at your heart like a dagger.

*Not only did I get myself captured, you think in despair, but I gave Chrym a weapon to torment Phrytz.*

## THE END

You cannot abandon Shar now! You *must* be ready to cast your spell. So much depends on it!

"Run!" Shar warns. "I command you."

"Shhh. You're making it hard for me to concentrate," you snap.

You cast your spell, chanting quickly over the pinch of iron dust. You feel the dizziness you always experience when spell-casting, but it passes quickly. The dust begins to glow softly. You point to Shar and open your fingers to let it drift to the floor.

Shar's body begins to shrink. You breathe a sigh of relief. Quickly you help slip the manacles over his ankles while he pulls off the ones on his wrists.

He looks at you, startled. "Are you sure I will grow back?" Alarm fills his voice. He is now about your size.

"Yes. All too quickly," you reply. You hear the footsteps outside the room retreating. "To the window," you order.

At the window, you whisper for Cavin. He pulls you and Shar up on the rope. When Shar slips through the bars, his bodyguard stares at him in dismay.

"Your Highness, what has she done to you?" he gasps.

"It will be remedied, Cavin. Come, we must hurry." The three of you jump to the ground. The prince rides behind you on Dowell as you gallop through the streets toward the Golden Spires. You are not pursued. You have cheated Chrym of a slave and escaped. You can't help smiling as Shar wraps his arms around you and pulls your body close to his.

"This is an excellent horse," Shar comments, after a few moments. "For such did I come south to buy."

"Well, you must look elsewhere, Prince Shar.

Dowell is not for sale. Not for any amount of money."

"Is he Phrytz's horse?"

"No, he's mine."

"You have very odd customs in the south. Women of the desert do not ride stallions."

"You should try to think of me as a wizard's apprentice, Prince Shar. I am not like many women in my land either."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. Women are the same everywhere. You have already proven that."

"Really?" you ask, suspecting he is about to insult you in some way. "How?"

Shar crushes you closer to him. He places his hand on your wrist. "You have a woman's heart. If you had been the evil creature I suspected, you would have no pulse. But you do. Moreover, your pulse is fast when you are nervous; it would have been irregular had you lied to me. Most important, it races when you are excited by things that should rightly excite a woman." He kisses the back of your neck.

"I was right about you," you state, pulling away. "You have a very high opinion of yourself."

"I cannot deny it," the prince says.

By the time you reach the Golden Spires and dismount, Shar has returned to his normal size. "Now your stature matches your opinion," you state loftily.

When you enter the inn, Phrytz is waiting for you on the stair.

"I am relieved to see you safe, Your Highness," he addresses Shar.

Shar replies in a language you do not understand.

Phrytz answers him in the same tongue. Both Cavin and Shar laugh.



"I'll speak with you in the study, toots," Phrytz says, turning to you. "Go up and wait for me."

"But . . ." you try to protest.

"Right now!" Phrytz growls.

"Yes, sir," you mutter. *I did all the rescuing*, you think angrily. *Why can't I stay?* You wonder what the men were laughing about and suspect it was you.

But as you brush past the prince, he whispers "I will return to thank you more formally."

You wait nearly an hour before you finally hear Phrytz at the study door. You stand as he enters.

"Where are Shar and Cavin?" you ask.

"I helped send them back to the desert camp outside the walls. They'll be able to defend themselves from Chrym's servants easily among their own people."

Phrytz sinks into his chair by the fire.

"What did you and Shar say to one another downstairs?" you ask.

"Oh, that." Phrytz smiles. "Shar hoped I was in good health and then he told me you were the gemstone in the ring that is my home."

You blush and smile at the same time. "What did you say that made them laugh?"

"Only that I wished you would stop falling out of your setting. I was on my way to rescue Shar myself when Fred here"—he scratches the crow fondly—"told me he saw the two of you riding back to the Golden Spires. Cavin told me why you did it, I'vee, and I appreciate your concern for me. Now listen, toots, I don't treat you like the desert men treat their women—as delicate flowers. But your survival, your growth into a true mage is the most important thing in my life. You could have been captured and sent to the Abyss as well,

and it would have been worse for you than it ever would have been for Shar. Chrym would delight in tormenting you to torment me. You must be more careful in the future. Please?"

"I'm sorry."

Phrytz nods. "Shar says you made him smaller. Explain to me how you did it."

"I used the Reduce Spell, just as you taught me. He almost didn't let me, but I, um, convinced him." You blush, remembering how you gained Shar's trust.

"You cast a spell alone? Unaided?" Phrytz gasps.

"Yes," you reply meekly. "I know you told me it could be dangerous—that I could lose my power—but I felt ready, and I had no other choice. I'm sorry. Please don't be cross with me."

*Please turn to page 112.*

*The gargoyles are too dangerous, you think. I should try to get Phrytz to deal with them.* You step up to the ritual stone and tug at the heavy chains. They give slightly, at least enough so Phrytz could wiggle out of them if he were awake.

"Phrytz, wake up." You shake the wizard by the shoulders. He is breathing at least, but very slightly. A peculiar odor makes your nose crinkle. *I should get him away from this wretched smell, you think in despair.*

You manage to pull one of the wizard's legs free of the chains, but suddenly your arms feel very heavy. You lie across the ritual stone for a moment to catch your breath.

An incredible drowsiness blankets you. You lift your head to see how Silvar and Shar are doing, but a golden haze obscures your vision.

"This mist is making me so sleepy," you whisper to the wizard. "Can't seem to stay awake."

*I should have helped save Phrytz, you think drowsily as you lay your head down next to the wizard. Not count on him to save me.* Your eyes close.

THE END



Phrytz stands to face you, resting his hands gently on your shoulders. "My dearest Ivey, I am not cross with you. As a matter of fact, I have never been so pleased! Do you know what you have done?"

"Saved Prince Shar?"

"Well, that, yes. But someone saves a desert prince every day on this tiny world. There are thousands of them, and they're always getting into trouble. But you are only the second person to complete a magical apprenticeship in fifty years!"

"I am? How?" you ask, perplexed.

"By casting your first spell unaided."

"But if it's that easy, why didn't you just tell me?" you cry.

"If you tried before you were ready, you could not have succeeded. A true mage knows when the time is ripe." Phrytz hands you a small box he produces from up his sleeve. "Here, this is for you."

Inside is a jade ring carved in great detail to look like a twine of ivy.

"Congratulations, Ivey." He kisses you on the forehead. "I'm very proud of you."

You smile, overjoyed by Phrytz's praise. "Thank you so much, for everything."

"Thank you, for succeeding. You'd better get some sleep now. You have a big day ahead of you tomorrow. We will discuss your journeyman quest."

When you awaken the next afternoon, Phrytz's



words from the night before return to you immediately. You are both excited and nervous as you wonder what he will have you do.

Dressing in one of your pretty, lacy dresses, you open your bedroom door to head for the study, then you jump back with a gasp. The whirlwind form of an air elemental spins slowly in front of you. Before you have time to react, the elemental retreats, leaving something to fall at your feet with a small thud. You keep your eyes on the creature in the hall, but it dissipates into nothingness. Cautiously, you bend over to inspect what the elemental dropped.

It is a bouquet of wild flowers, festooned with ribbons of lace, silk, and velvet.

Still carrying the bouquet, you head toward the dining room, puzzled. This is really not Phrytz's style at all!

At the door, a man's hand thrusts out, blocking your way. Dangling from the hand is a familiar-looking diamond necklace. A face peers around the door at you. "Hello, Iveen. I understand congratulations are in order."

"Silvar! Welcome home!" you cry with pleasure. You start to give the mage a hug, but something about Silvar makes you hang back shyly.

"You've changed," you whisper. In the time he has been away, he has grown taller than you. His journeys have tanned his skin and hardened his muscles. The silver streaks in his hair are more pronounced, and the hand that still holds out the diamond necklace is now callused. He wears three rings.

"You have a master's ring," you gasp.

"It's been a long journey for me, Iveen," Silvar says

solemnly. Then he smiles. "Please, accept the necklace as a graduation gift from your master's new partner."

"Why?" you ask teasingly.

"I offer it as an apology for that silly kid named Silvar who frightened you with an air elemental last autumn."

"That silly kid named Silvar would have asked if we shouldn't just kiss and make up," you say, laughing.

Suddenly you blush, realizing you have invited Silvar to kiss you!

"He's grown up some and knows better now," Silvar replies quietly, reaching around your neck to fasten the necklace. He kisses you gently on the forehead, the way Phrytz did the night before.

*What does he mean by that?* you wonder, disappointed. That wasn't the kind of kiss you had in mind!

"By the way, Prince Shar has been waiting since this morning to see you," Silvar mentions.

"He has? Why didn't you wake me up?"

"Because I figured you needed the sleep and it would do him good to wait. I'll tell the prince you'll see him now," Silvar says, leaving the study.

In a few minutes, Shar enters the study, looking very different from the previous day. His long, silky hair flows about his shoulders. He is dressed in expensive silks and embroidered satins. He wears a sword with a gem-encrusted scabbard. He makes a sweeping bow.

"You look very beautiful in that gown," the prince says.

"And yesterday I was plain and smelled like a stable," you tease, a little astonished at his attitude.

"I would be pleased if you could forget I said that. In despair at my situation, I was blinded to your beauty. I



have returned, as I said I would last evening, to thank you more formally for rescuing me." Prince Shar takes hold of your hand.

"Well, you're quite welcome," you blush, and try, unsuccessfully, to withdraw your hand.

"I offer you more than words." Shar steps very near and pulls you close to him. "Much more," he says, lowering his lips to yours. He kisses you, not as though you were a child—as Silvar had done earlier—but as though you were a woman.

You feel dizzy with excitement, rather like casting a magic spell. You gaze up into the prince's dark eyes.

"You have saved more than my life," Prince Shar murmurs. "You have saved my honor and the honor of my tribe. My people and I are grateful. We offer you this token of our esteem." Shar draws out a necklace of pearls and coral and gold from a velvet purse at his waist.

"Oh, Shar! It's beautiful," you gasp.

"Allow me," Shar whispers, slipping the jewels around your throat. He takes you in his arms and starts to kiss you, but is interrupted by a knock on the study door. Silvar pokes his head in. "Excuse me." The young mage enters the study and sits in a chair by the fireside. He picks up a book and starts flipping through the pages. "I just need to find a passage in this. Don't mind me," he says.

Shar releases you. He stares at Silvar with annoyance. Then he shakes his head and turns back to you.

"Finally, I offer you one last thing." The prince kneels before you. "Something a woman of your courage and honor deserves. Myself."

"What?" you exclaim in astonishment.

"He's asking you to marry him, I'vee," Silvar says. "As modestly as he knows how."

Shar glares at Silvar angrily, but you are too astounded to pay much attention to Silvar's insult.

"Shar, really? Do you want me to marry you?"

The prince takes you in his arms again. "I think you are quite worthy to be my wife."

Breathless, you close your eyes. The prince bends over you and kisses you. You hear the sound of the study door slamming as Silvar storms out of the room.

"We will leave tonight for the desert. You will be a beautiful princess."

"Wait. I haven't said yes yet. This is all so sudden. I just met you yesterday. And I must go on my magician's quest."

"What can all that matter? You do not need to take a quest to prove yourself to me. Marry me and there will be magic enough."

You realize you must say yes or no right now. Shar won't give you more time. If you marry him, you will have to leave Phrytz and Silvar and never go on your journeyman quest. But if you say no, Shar will leave for the desert and you may never see him again.

*If you love Shar and want to tell him  
you will marry him, turn to page 123.*

*If you are sure you cannot marry Shar yet,  
turn to page 118.*





"I'm sorry, Shar. I'm honored by your offer. I care about you, but I'm not sure if I love you enough to give up what I do here."

Shar takes a deep breath. "Then I will stay, too, for a time. I must convince you that you will be happier married to me than living such a reckless life." He kisses you warmly.

"Hey, where is everyone?" Phrytz shouts from the hallway. He sticks his head in the study door. "I'vee, suppertime. Oh! Shar! You still here?"

"I've decided to stay in your city for a while longer. I am courting your apprentice."

"Well, well. I'll have to add Shar's name to the list," Phrytz teases.

"There is another?" Shar asks.

"Why, Silvar, of course." Phrytz grins.

"Silvar!" Shar scoffs. "He's only a boy."

*Silvar!* You blink in astonishment. *After the way he behaved earlier, I thought he considered me only a friend.*

"Well, he's sixteen. I'vee's seventeen, and you're, um, twenty-two?"

"Twenty-three," Shar corrects him. "The older, and therefore the better, candidate."

"Well, some say that it's better to be closer in age, but your standard suits me fine. Judging by that, I am the eldest and best qualified to escort the lady in to dinner." Phrytz smiles and leads you to the table. Shar sits opposite Silvar, glowering. Silvar ignores Shar completely.

Phrytz winks at you across the table. "There's nothing like a quiet evening at home with amusing company." The page serving your dinner sets a gold

and crystal wine decanter on a tray next to the wizard.

"I've been thinking about your journeyman's quest, I'vee." The wizard reaches for the bottle. He removes the stopper. As he reaches out for Shar's glass, you notice a mist rising from the decanter. The mist suddenly becomes a billowing smoke cloud.

"Phrytz!" you cry out. "The bottle is on fire."

"What?" Phrytz draws back from the table but not quickly enough. The wizard gasps as his form rises from the floor and moves toward the window. There is a shattering of glass and wood as Phrytz's body hurls from the dining room and is sucked out into the dusk.

You cry out in anguish and rush to the opening with Silvar to peer into the darkness. Phrytz is nowhere to be seen.



You turn from the window when you hear Shar scuffling with the page. He pushes the servant into the wall and draws his sword on him. Clutched in the prince's hand is a slip of paper.

"Where did this note come from?" Shar demands.

The page shrugs.

"What note?" you ask.

"It was under the bottle." Shar hands it to you.

Printed in a jagged script are the words:

*COMPLIMENTS OF CHR YM*

"Oh, no," you cry.

Shar steps closer to the page, forcing him to move back against the wall. "You are a servant of Chrym's, aren't you? Where has he taken the wizard?"

"I'll never tell, prince-who-was-a-slave," the page says, sneering.

Shar turns livid, and you think for a moment he's going to kill the page, but Silvar grins and tosses the prisoner a copper coin. "A penny for your thoughts."

The page catches the coin, but he snorts derisively. "What is this? Some sort of joke? Not even gold could bring me to betray my master."

"There are less civilized ways of coercing a man to betrayal." Shar frowns meaningfully.

"No," Silvar muses, "that won't be necessary. There is to be a sacrifice tonight in Chrym's temple in the town of Skren."

The page pales. "How do you know that?"

"Silvar just cast a spell to read your mind," you say.

Silvar nods. "The ceremony starts at midnight."

"Then we will ride north at once," you cry.

"I will ride. You will stay here," Silvar states.

"I will go with you to honor my father's blood oath of friendship," Shar offers.

"Very well," Silvar agrees, tying the prisoner up.

"You can look after our counterfeit page, I'vee."

"I want to come," you protest.

Shar sheathes his sword. "I will rescue Phrytz, my dearest. This is too dangerous for you."



"Fiddlesticks!" you shout angrily.

"He's right, I'vee. You aren't powerful enough," Silvar says. "It's too dangerous. I'm *ordering* you to stay."

"You've no right to order me!" you cry.

Silvar steps over to you and puts his hands on your shoulders. He stares down at you. *This is a new Silvar*, you think, forgetting your anger. *Serious, strong, manly.*

"I am Phrytz's partner and your senior. I have that right. Moreover, I have the power to make you obey. Must I use it?" His voice is deep.

Frightened by the intensity of Silvar's emotion, you cannot meet his gaze. You realize he could make you stay with magic. "I'll stay," you whisper.

From the study window, you watch the young mage and the prince ride off. You return to the dining room to glare at the trussed-up page. Feeling completely useless, you slump down in Phrytz's chair.

Idly, you inspect the cursed bottle, turning it in your hand. Something inside clinks! Quickly you turn the bottle over and shake it. A small golden key falls out. You see words engraved on the bottom of the bottle: *The Golden Sanctum.*

Phrytz told you once that Chrym always leaves clues to his game. *Could this golden key be the key to the Golden Sanctum?* you wonder.

"You sent Shar and Silvar in the wrong direction! You're a decoy!" you yell at the page. "The aerial servant took Phrytz to the Golden Sanctum in the Caverns of Rite!"

"Why don't you check it out yourself?" The page shrugs. "Prove you're smarter than your boyfriends."

Ignoring the page, you leave the room, change into your riding clothes, and fly to the stable. Within minutes, you and Dowell are speeding from Corthax on the north road, toward the Caverns of Rite.

As you approach the northeast fork that leads to the Caverns of Rite, you think about what the page said. *Should I ride north to catch up with Silvar and Shar and make them turn east as well? Or should I take the northeast road by myself?*

It would be nice to prove you were smarter than they were. Still, you know it will be very dangerous if you go alone. You halt at the fork in the road.

*If you decide to ride up the north road  
to tell Shar and Silvar about the key,  
turn to page 126.*

*If you ride to the Caverns of Rite alone,  
turn to page 139.*

*No one has ever made me feel as excited as Shar has. He treats me like a woman.* You decide you want to be with Shar more than you care about going on your journeyman's quest and studying magic with Phrytz and Silvar.

"Yes, Shar," you say, smiling. "I will marry you."

Shar laughs delightedly. He picks you up in his arms and spins you around, then he kisses you again, longer this time.

"Where is everyone?" You hear Phrytz call. The wizard sticks his head in the study, calling, "Ivee, supertime. Oh! Shar! You still here?"

"Yes, but not for long. I leave with Ivee tonight," the prince puts his arm around you protectively.

"Shar has asked me to marry him," you explain, "and I've agreed."

"And he's stealing you away tonight? I suppose that means you won't be going on your journeyman's quest." Phrytz suddenly appears very old.

"I'm sorry, Phrytz. I don't want to disappoint you, but I love Shar."

"Well, there's nothing I can do about that, I suppose." The wizard sighs. "You are stealing something very precious from me, Sharbellanibanah." Phrytz bends over to kiss you gently on the forehead. "I'll miss you, Ivee. I know you'll be busy as a princess, but try to practice your magic occasionally. When I visit Shar's people next, I'll bring you some new spells to learn."

"Thank you. I'd like that," you reply. "Tell Silvar good-bye." You swallow, realizing suddenly how much you will miss these two.

"I will," Phrytz promises gently.



"Thank you, Phrytz. For everything. I'll miss you, too. Come visit soon, please." You hug the wizard farewell.

Shar bows to Phrytz, then takes your arm and leads you from the study and the inn. He helps you mount Dowell and then jumps on his own stallion. Together you ride from Corthax.

A cheer goes up from the waiting desert caravan when you ride into camp with Shar. You journey through the night, listening to the tribe's exotic music. Shar rides beside you, translating the words to the musicians' songs.

"This one means: 'You are the desert wind, and I the desert sand. Whenever you pass by me, your spirit makes me fly. You weave me into patterns, and I warm your breath at night. Always I will love you, if always you will stay.' It fits you best, I think. You have a spirit like the wind—free."

Suddenly a guard rides up to Shar. "Excuse me, Your Highness, but there is something blocking the road ahead. Something evil. It claims to mean us no harm but demands to speak to the lady, Iveen."

With a feeling of dread, you dismount Dowell and walk to the head of the caravan. Shar walks with you, his sword drawn.

You can barely make out a misty golden figure standing in the road. A terrible fear grips you. It is Chrym!

"Iveen, you have stolen the prince from me," Chrym snarls. "I have repaid you in kind. I have taken Phrytz and Silvar in his place."

You cry out in shock.

"You are distressed? Good! No one thwarts me without paying for it in pain. Be happy with your des-

ert prince, girl. Soon I will force Phrytz to release my amulet from that cursed crystal. Then I will be free to roam your world. I will leave you in peace only if you forsake all the magic you have learned. Should I discover you are practicing that gift which humanity was not meant to have, I may decide to take you in place of the prince."

"She is to be my wife. She does not need your precious magic," Shar growls. "Trouble us no more."

Chrym cackles wickedly and fades into mist.

"Phrytz and Silvar . . . gone!" you whisper in horror. You begin to cry. Shar puts his arms around you and holds you close.

"I'm the very last true mage," you sob. "I left Phrytz and Silvar and now there will be no true magic in the world. Only Chrym's."

"You must forget them to save yourself. There is no sense in deliberately angering Chrym. I will help you to forget. Come away from this evil place, my lady of the wind. I do not want its sadness to cling to us."

You walk back to Dowell, holding onto Shar. His strength and his warmth give you a feeling of security, but your spirit no longer feels as free as the wind.

THE END

*It would be foolish to risk going alone just to prove myself, especially with Phrytz's life at stake, you think, turning north.*

It's not long before you can hear hoofbeats ahead, echoing through the hills. Soon you spot Silvar and Shar up ahead, in the light cast by Silvar's staff. They are turned toward you, waiting. Shar's sword is drawn.

"Who comes?" Silvar calls out, unable to see you in the darkness.

"It's me, I'vee," you answer, riding into the light. Both young men are relieved you are not someone more sinister, but neither seems very pleased to see you. Shar eyes you sternly and Silvar looks furious. Before they can begin to argue with you, you add, "You're going in the wrong direction."

Quickly you explain about the words carved in the bottle and the key.

"Then who is to be sacrificed in Skren tonight?" Silvar wonders. "I'm sure I read that clearly from the page's mind."

Suddenly Chrym's deviousness hits you. "We are! you cry. "We were *meant* to capture the fake page. There's probably an ambush waiting in Skren. If Chrym left the clue to Phrytz's true location, his motive was not to help us but to harm us."

"What you say makes sense," Silvar agrees. "Chrym wants to capture us and force Phrytz to release his amulet. We go to the Caverns of Rite."

"We must escort I'vee back first," Shar states.

"No." Silvar shakes his head. "I was wrong; she should come. She was supposed to go on a quest anyway."

"Very well," Shar sighs and sheathes his sword. "I



will take the rear guard." The prince kisses your hand, then drops back. You ride beside Silvar.

Silvar smiles. "You remind me a lot of Merf."

"Your first master? How?"

"This is the kind of thing she'd do."

"Merf was a woman? I didn't know that," you exclaim.

"Yes. She used to say and do things that shocked everyone except Phrytz. He would just laugh. Not at her, but at the people who were shocked."

"Was she his apprentice, too?"

"I don't think so," Silvar says. "I think it was the other way around, that he was her's. I never found out for sure. Since Chrym killed her, Phrytz won't talk about her very much."

"Were she and Phrytz. . ." You pause uncertainly. The word "lovers" is hard to associate with the elderly, cynical Phrytz.

Silvar finishes your question for you, ". . . in love? I was too young then to pay much attention. They were cool to each other in public, I think, to keep Chrym from guessing how much they cared for each other in private."

"How sad," you whisper.

It is midnight when the light from Silvar's staff reveals the entrance to the Caverns of Rite. It is an arched tunnel, twenty feet high, leading straight into the mountain. The horses shy at the sound of wind shrieking through the rocky hole.

"We have to leave the horses behind," Silvar says. "They have too much sense to enter this place."

Uneasily the three of you head down the tunnel. It has numerous side branches, but Silvar keeps to the

main corridor. "This hallway grows narrower and ends suddenly more than a mile down. I detected great evil there but could find no way to proceed. Keep the key ready, Ivec."

You try to move silently. The echo of the caverns is frighteningly loud.

*How could Silvar have spent so much time in this horrid place alone? you think. No wonder he seems changed!*

Finally, after an hour of traveling, you come to the dead end Silvar described. The wall before you glows softly with a golden light.

"That never happened before," Silvar says.

"There is a key hole," Shar whispers. You draw out the golden key. It too glows softly.

You place the key into the dark space on the door.

The door and the key disappear. Beyond is a cavern so vast the light from Silvar's staff cannot illuminate it. The echoes of your footfalls take several moments to return to you.

You take a step forward and suddenly realize there is nothing beneath your foot. You feel yourself start to fall. Flailing for something to steady yourself, you grab both Shar and Silvar. They pull you back. Silvar holds his glowing staff up high. You squint into the void. "Oh, my gosh," you gasp. "The floor must drop fifty feet or more."

The wind in the tunnels suddenly increases in volume. Its shrieking sounds like laughter.

"Is Chrym waiting for us?" you wonder.

"We have to get down somehow," Silvar says.

"There are footholds in the rock," Shar notes. "It is steep but not perpendicular. We can climb down."

"I can cast a magic Featherfall Spell," Silvar argues. "It'll be easier."

"I would rather trust my own skills than your magic spells," Shar says, scowling.

"You trusted Ivey's spell well enough when you had to," Silvar snaps. "If we're attacked by something on the way down, we could slip and fall."

"And what if we use your magic spell and hit an anti-magic shell?" Shar hisses.

"Well, if I have to choose one way, I prefer my own," Silvar states.

"Then go your way," Shar answers coolly, "and I shall go mine."

"Fine with me." Silvar shrugs. He pulls from a packet the component to his spell—a blue feather—and holds his hand out to you.

*Wonderful, you think, They've both agreed to be stubborn about it. Whichever way I choose to go, the other will be offended.*

*If you decide to float down Silvar's way,  
turn to page 35.*

*If you choose to climb down along the wall,  
turn to page 64.*

*If you wish to find another way to go down,  
one that both men will accept,  
turn to page 130.*



You decide both ways sound too dangerous and you know that both men are too proud to admit the other might be right.

"There has to be an easier way down," you mutter. "Phrytz says this was once a temple. I'm sure the worshippers didn't climb down the walls or jump from them." You circle cautiously around the chasm, holding your dagger over the edge. About half way around, the dagger encounters an invisible obstacle near the edge.

Silvar peers over your shoulder. "Good thinking," he murmurs. From his pockets he draws out a vial of silver powder and another of white powder. With a sprinkle of one and a pinch of the other, he chants a spell you do not recognize.

"Invisible staircase," Silvar says, stepping off the edge of the chasm. He appears to hang in midair.

Shar gasps.

"Can you see it?" you ask.

"Sure can." Silvar nods and points. "It spirals down along the wall. Come on." Silvar holds his hand out for you to take.

You hesitate, unable to convince your feet that there is a staircase below and not a fifty-foot drop.

"Don't look down, I'vee," Silvar whispers gently. "Look into my eyes."

"I don't see how that's going to help," Shar growls.

Silvar glares at the prince. "Perhaps Your Highness would care to step down first, to reassure Mistress I'vee."

Shar looks hard at the empty air. You can tell he is as frightened as you are, perhaps even more since he has had little experience with magic.

"That's all right," you say quickly, "I'm not afraid." You take Silvar's hand and step down carefully.

You take Shar's hand. The prince smiles gratefully at your encouragement. Hand in hand, the three of you descend into the cavern.

It does not take Shar long to overcome his nervousness. He slides his hand about your waist and pulls you closer to him. You smile up at him shyly and he smiles back.

*He's so strong and comforting*, you think, feeling less frightened of the vastness about you.

Silvar stares at you and Shar coldly. "Shall we try them two at a time?" he dares, jumping down the stairs at a reckless pace. The magic light from his staff is suddenly extinguished and you hear a thump in the darkness.

"Silvar! Are you all right?" you cry.

"Just fine. I guess there is an anti-magic shell down here. Lucky we didn't Featherfall."

"I have a torch and a tinder box," Shar says, letting you go to reach into his pack.

You wait until Shar has lit his torch. The staircase is visible now that the anti-magic shell surrounds it. You go down the stairs.

"Whatever possessed you to pull such a childish stunt?" you ask Silvar angrily.

"Childish stunt? What about you and Shar? We're trying to rescue Phrytz and you're snuggling together like a pair of turtle doves," Silvar snaps back.

"Did it ever occur to you that Shar was just trying to make me less nervous?"

"Oh? How was he doing that?"

"Just by holding me close," you whisper into Silvar's

ear. Wrapping your arm about the mage, you hug him gently. "Like this."

Silvar pulls away from you abruptly. "Please, don't, I'vee. I need my concentration to cast my spells."

Embarrassed and hurt you stand up.

Wordlessly, you climb down the rest of the stairs. Shar leads you down a tunnel—the only exit you can see. You enter another massive cavern and find it lit by a hundred oil lamps. The walls glisten with gold. At the far end of the cavern is a dais with a huge golden throne. At the opposite end is a golden ritual stone. Laid out like a corpse, chained down, is the figure of a man.

"It's Phrytz!" you whisper in horror. "He's so still. Are we too late?"

"It's probably a trap!" Shar draws his sword.

"Undoubtedly," Silvar replies.

Cautiously, you approach the stone. Suddenly, from overhead, comes the beating of wings and harsh laughter. More laughter comes from behind you. Five gargoyles block the tunnel you've come from.

"I'vee, hide!" Shar orders, pulling you back with his free hand.

"No," you argue, shaking away from Shar's grasp. You draw your dagger.

The five gargoyles move in on your group. Silvar sends three shimmering magic missiles into the lead gargoyle as it lunges for him with its claws, feet and horns. It falls at the mage's feet while the other four regroup, looking for a hole in your defenses.

"I'vee!" Silvar shouts. "Make a run for Phrytz. Wake him if you can. If not, use the stone as cover."

You rush toward the wizard and you stop short at the



ritual stone. Phrytz is breathing but very shallowly. The chains that bind him look too heavy for you to break. An eerie golden haze surrounds the mage.

Behind you, Silvar screams in pain. You turn to see that he is having trouble holding the gargoyles back. You know that the mage cannot cast his spells if his concentration is broken by being clawed or bitten. Shar is fighting them with his sword, but he cannot hold them off without help.

*Maybe I should help defend Silvar so he can use his magic, you think. But perhaps, if they can just hold on long enough for me to wake Phrytz and free him, Phrytz can handle the gargoyles more easily.*

*If you think you should wake Phrytz and let him handle the gargoyles, turn to page 111.*

*If you want to help Silvar and Shar fight, turn to page 134.*



You cannot let Silvar be torn apart by the gargoyles while you take the time to break the chains. *I may not even be able to wake Phrytz, you think. He must be under some kind of spell. Silvar's problem is more urgent!*

You rush to Silvar's side and lunge at the gargoyle with your dagger. The wounded monster backs off, but the other three continue their attack. Heady with success, you lunge again, only to be pulled back by your shirt.

"Are you crazy?" Silvar shouts. He steps in front of you and casts another three magic missiles at the gargoyle you wounded. It drops to the floor.

Three more gargoyles move in for the kill. You chant a Sleep Spell, sprinkling a pinch of sand on the ground. One gargoyle falls to the floor, snoring loudly. Roaring in rage, the other gargoyles fight more fiercely. One jumps on Shar while the other leaps at Silvar.

Shar slashes at the gargoyle with his sword. You run over to help Silvar, knowing he cannot cast his spell while under attack.

"Cast your spell!" you cry.

The gargoyle turns when you stab at it and claws your face and body. You gasp in pain, terrified of the teeth biting your shoulder. Then more magic missiles bury themselves in the creature's body. It collapses.

There is a thud as Shar's sword severs the last monster's head from its body.

"You're bleeding. Here sit down," Silvar holds his handkerchief to the gashes on your forehead and shoulder.

Silvar leads you across the room to Phrytz's body and halts before the plain golden slab. A strange golden





mist hovers around the wizard and the ritual stone.

"It's a good thing you didn't get too close to it, I'vee," he says, shuddering. "That golden mist is a magical sleeping gas. Very potent. You'd be sleeping and Shar and I would be losing to the gargoyles."

"Is Phrytz going to be all right?" you ask.

"Just a moment." Silvar chants a spell over the ritual stone. The golden mist fades away.

Shar shatters the chains with his sword.

In a minute, Phrytz takes a deep, wheezing gasp of air and sits up, looking startled. He stares at each of you, around the Golden Sanctum, and across to the dead gargoyles. Finally he grins, "I see you got here without too much trouble. Splendid!"

"That is not exactly how I would put it," says Shar, laughing, "but as long as you are well, it was worth it. Are you strong enough to move, sir? The sooner we leave this place of evil, the better I will feel."

"I'm feeling fit as a flumph, but I have no intention of leaving just yet," Phrytz states. "I have Chrym's amulet and I am in the Golden Sanctum. I plan to summon him and cast a spell which will banish him deep into the Abyss."



"You can't be serious?" Shar gasps. "No one fights the Golden One. We should flee and hide."

"No." Phrytz shakes his head. "I'm tired of running and hiding. This is our struggle—to make it safe to practice magic and keep it alive in humanity."

"Well, it certainly is not *my* struggle," Shar states. "Staying here to fight Chrym is insane! Dearest Ivey, you must not agree to this madness. Leave with me. Now."

"If we fail, Chrym will seek Ivey out anyway," Silvar explains. "Every spell she casts will attract Chrym's attention. He will hunt her down and destroy her wherever she is."

"As my wife she will not need magic. She can forsake it forever and live in peace with me," Shar answers. He puts his arms around you. "Say you will come with me, Ivey." He pulls you close to him and holds you tightly against his body. "Do not tempt death. If you care at all for me, do not risk your life at this deadly game. Live. Live and marry me."

You look over to Phrytz and Silvar questioningly.

"It must be your decision, Ivey," Phrytz says. "Silvar and I will stay. You could help. But if you want to leave, I understand. If we succeed, I'll send word and you can return if you like."

"Silvar?" You gulp, as misery engulfs you, knowing he and Phrytz might both die.

"I must stay and help Phrytz, Ivey. I have chosen magic. But I think you should go. What we're doing is dangerous; the Banishment Spell might not work. We may not even get a chance to cast it if Chrym is prepared."

You look from Silvar to Shar. *Shar and Silvar both*

want me to leave. After all, what can I do against Chrym? But my future as a magic-user depends on this battle. Perhaps I should stay.

*If you decide to leave with Shar,  
turn to page 145.*

*If you choose to stay with Phrytz and Silvar,  
turn to page 140.*



*I'll show Shar and Silvar that I don't need them! you think. When I rescue Phrytz myself, they'll be sorry they didn't let me come!*

You gallop down the northeast road toward the mountains. You haven't traveled far when Dowell gives a terrified whinny and paws the air with his front hooves. You fall off. Dowell bolts back down the road.

"Seize her," a man's voice hisses. He has dark red eyes and glistening, white fangs.

"A vampire!" You shudder.

From out of the darkness of the trees spring two more vampires. They grab your arms and hold you fast.

"Very astute, young mage. I am Raymonde, a servant of Chrym," the man states.

"Release me at once!" you say, choking. "My friends will be here any minute. And believe me, you don't want to tangle with them!"

The man laughs. "Nice try, little mage, but we ambushed your friends in Skren."

You struggle fiercely to escape the grip of the vampires holding you, but their strength is positively inhuman.

Raymonde laughs again. "There is no escape for you. Look at me!" he orders.

Stubbornly you lower your eyes to the ground, but Raymonde's powerful hand pushes your chin up until you have been caught by his gaze. Slowly you feel your spirit and your will being drained away by the vampire. With them all hope of saving Phrytz, Silvar and Shar fades away.

THE END

"I'm sorry, Shar, but I must stay," you tell the prince. "If Phrytz thinks this is our last chance to fight Chrym, I must help. I cannot forsake my magic."

Shar draws away from you slowly, shaking his head. "Farewell, Ivec. I shall mourn you long." Without another word, he retrieves his torch and returns up the tunnel.

You watch him leave, uneasy that he is so certain you will die. You turn to face Phrytz and Silvar.

"Glad you could make it, toots," the wizard smiles. He leaps onto the ritual stone and reaches down to help you up. Silvar jumps up next to you.

"Hold this for me, will ya', Ivec?" Phrytz asks, handing you the crystal prism that imprisons Chrym's amulet. You have never seen it so close. Embedded in one side of the stone is a tiny golden mask of Chrym's face in exquisite detail. The wizard bends over to draw a protective pentacle on the ritual stone, chanting softly.

"If the Banishment Spell doesn't work, will you bargain with Chrym and give this back to him to make him leave?" you ask nervously.

"If the Banishment Spell doesn't work, or if Chrym subdues us before we have time to finish it, we're doomed."

"But the book about evil creatures says he can't hurt the one who holds the amulet or take it from him."

"No, he can't, but he can threaten those who aren't holding the amulet or offer them a deal they'll find hard to refuse. But no deal with Chrym is safe."

"Because he doesn't keep his word?"

"Because he *does*. Always," Phrytz corrects. "Hold the amulet over your head."

As you raise the prism above you, it collects the light from Silvar's staff and shoots it out in a golden stream. Phrytz positions the golden light so it hits the throne. Then he chants:

*"No deal will I make with the one I call hence,  
But curse him and banish him into the Abyss.  
This charm should hold him in that place of fear  
For every crystal shard at least a year."*

Then the wizard shouts out, "CHRYMATY-THAXUS!"

A deep rumbling shakes the cavern and a golden mist swirls and spins through the air. Then Chrym appears, seated in the throne. The beam of light from the crystal sparkles on his golden skin and hair. His attractive features are made more beautiful by his smile.

"At last, we meet face to face, wizard," he whispers.

Phrytz sprinkles a shining red powder on the ritual stone, then splashes it with dragon's blood. "You won't sound so pleased when we are finished, monster." The wizard starts a third chant.

For a moment Chrym looks startled, then he smiles again. You look at Phrytz. When you turn back to watch Chrym, you blink.

"It's Shar!" you cry out, lowering the crystal. The prince is seated on the throne.

"No, I'vee, keep the crystal up!" Phrytz commands. "Chrym's only wearing that form to confuse you."

Chrym rises from the throne and walks to the ritual stone. With a graceful leap, he lands on top, outside your protective pentacle. "What a tangle of



confused emotions you are. All three of you. You are not worthy to know magic."

"Keep the light on him, I'vee," Phrytz mutters.

You follow Phrytz's order as Chrym shifts from Shar's shape to that of a beautiful woman with dark hair and golden skin and strange eyes.

"Merf," Silvar whispers, lowering his staff.

"Keep the light up, Silvar!" Phrytz orders.

Silvar obeys, tears of despair in his eyes.

"Free the amulet from the crystal, dear Phrytz," the woman smiles, "and I will leave you and your ragtag pupils alone, word of honor."

"No," Phrytz replies coldly as the image of his deceased partner halts at the edge of the pentacle. "I'm here to banish you for a long time, Chrymatythaxus."

The woman suddenly holds up her hand. An unfamiliar symbol glows softly in her palm.

Your vision blurs. Suddenly you find yourself standing in the stables of the Golden Spires Inn. Dowell is there, covered with blood-sweat as he had been when he was a colt.

"Dowell, oh, no!" you cry in despair. "What has he done to you?"

You reach for a bucket and rag to wipe the horse off, but Dowell falls to his knees and rolls to his side.

"Dowell, no! Aunt Magda promised me you could never get sick again! This can't be happening," you whisper in disbelief. Then you understand! "That's it! This *isn't* happening!" you say firmly.

Suddenly you are back in the Golden Sanctum. Both of your companions stand in stunned silence.

"Phrytz, what is that symbol?" you whisper, noting the look of despair that crosses the wizard's face. Silver drops his staff.

"What's wrong, Silver? Phrytz?" you cry.

Both mages appear to be under a spell. You feel very alone and frightened.

"They recognize the hopelessness of the situation, my dear," Chrym whispers. "I wonder that you do not. But then, perhaps you are too inexperienced. Give me the crystal."

"No," you back away. "Never!"

"Foolish girl, you have no choice. Phrytz," Merf's image orders, "scuff out that horrid design you've scrawled on my ritual stone."

Phrytz slowly rubs away the five-pointed star with the toe of his boot.

Chrym steps up to the wizard and pats him on the shoulder, shape-shifting back into his true form. In his hand is a long sword. Darkness hangs about him like a cloak. Chrym looks at you.

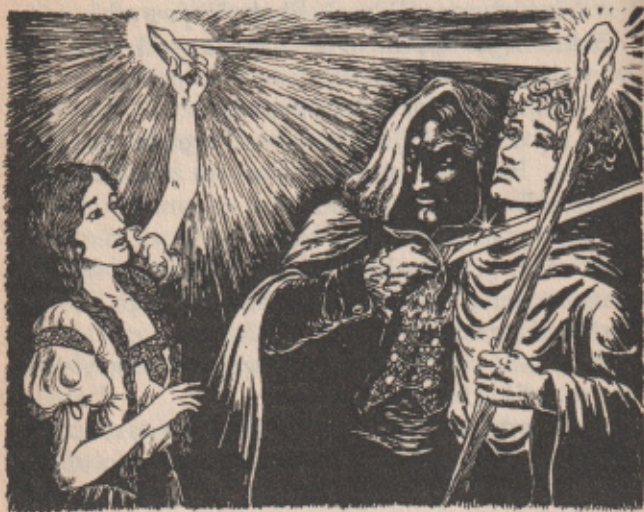
"Now, what's to stop me from taking the amulet from you?" he asks.

"You can't take it by force," you reply defiantly. "It has to be handed to you. You can't harm me while I hold it."

"But what is to stop me from destroying them both?" Chrym places the point of his sword at Silver's throat. "Give me the crystal and I will leave you alone forever."

Slowly you lower the crystal from over your head.

*Could it be so simple?* you wonder. *Perhaps I don't need Phrytz's Banishment Spell. If I was powerful enough to break away from the spell Chrym*



*put on Phrytz and Silvar, maybe he fears me enough to make a deal with me. Phrytz said Chrym always keeps his word. How could that be dangerous?*

*If you decide to give Chrym the crystal containing his amulet, turn to page 151.*

*If you choose not to accept Chrym's word and keep the crystal with his amulet from him, turn to page 148.*



*Shar doesn't want me to stay and neither does Silvar. I do care for Shar, enough to give up magic if I have to, you think. "I'll go with Shar," you say aloud, smiling at the desert prince.*

"Very well," Phrytz sighs. "We'll give you time to escape before we summon Chrym. Be careful, Ivec."

"I will keep her safe," Shar insists.

"Good luck," you whisper, hugging Silvar and Phrytz good-bye.

"And to you," Silvar answers, his voice breaking.

Shar leads you quickly back down the tunnel. Together you climb the invisible staircase and run the length of the hall to the exit.

Just as you reach the outside, the earth shakes and you hear a tremendous boom from the cave behind you.

"Hurry, Ivec. That must be the Golden One." Shar reaches for his horse's bridle.

You pause by Dowell's side, feeling frightened but curious. "I wonder what caused that explosion? Perhaps the Banishment Spell did not work and they are battling him with magic."

"I had no idea Phrytz was so powerful," Shar whispers.

"He is powerful, but I don't think he knows any spells that could make such a blast. Only the breaking of a staff could release so much energy."

"Phrytz did not have his staff. And Silvar's was used up," Shar protests.

"That's what he said. But he may have been saving its power to strike at Chrym in case the Banishment Spell failed." The full implication of what that means sinks into your heart. "Oh, Shar, anything

near him would have been destroyed if the staff was even close to full power—Phrytz, Chrym . . . Silvar himself!”

“Then you are safe?” Shar asks. “Free to practice your magic?”

“Yes,” you whisper sadly and begin to cry. “They’re all dead! I’m the last true mage.” You sob miserably, wishing very much that you weren’t.

Shar takes you in his arms and strokes your hair. “Ivee, you must go on. You must make their sacrifice mean something. Come, let us leave this awful place. The desert will burn away your grief.”

You and Shar mount your horses and ride toward Corthax to join Shar’s tribe. You’re glad you have the desert prince to comfort you because you know your heart will always be heavy with the loss of Phrytz and Silvar. And you will always wonder if you could have changed anything if you had stayed behind in the Caverns of Rite.

THE END

You just can't get Shar's face out of your mind, or forget the feeling of his lips. It doesn't matter to you that the prince doesn't understand how you feel about your magic.

"Silvar, if I leave, what will you do?" you ask.

"I'll still have magic," the mage whispers sadly. He kisses you gently on the forehead.

"Phrytz," you call, climbing down from the ritual stone. "I have to leave, to catch up with Shar."

"Going to marry him after all, eh? Well, good luck." Phrytz sighs. "I will miss you. Good-bye, my dear. Better hurry. He'll be halfway to Corthax by now."

After lighting a torch from your pack, you hurry back the way you came.

Dowell waits nervously where you left him. The moment you mount him, he is off down the road.

In the early morning light you can see Shar riding ahead. You let Dowell loose to dash after him.

Shar hears Dowell's hoofbeats, halts and turns. "Ivee!" he shouts when you draw close. "You're alive!"

"Yes. And Chrym has been banished!"

"So," he says with a false cheefulness, "you have chosen magic and won. Congratulations."

"You don't sound very sincere." You smile.

"I had hoped you would choose me," Shar says, riding up close to you.

"Can't I choose both?" you ask softly.

"You, my lady, have a spirit like the wind. You will do as you wish and I can deny you nothing," Shar answers, taking your hands in his own.

THE END



You know you cannot give in to Chrym! He is too dangerous and evil. His deal could be a trick. Besides, that was part of the spell, agreeing not to bargain with the evil monster so he could be banished for as many as years as crystal shards.

*Of course! you think. I have to break the prism and the amulet within! That will keep Chrym from ever getting it, and it must be done before he harms Phrytz and Silvar.* In a flash you hurl the amulet to the ritual stone. It shatters into thousands of tiny pieces.

Chrym's shrieks echo through the cavern. Golden light shoots from his body in all directions only to dissipate into the darkness. The rocks rumble about you. Even the huge ritual stone shakes. The rock floor splits apart, leaving a yawning chasm between the throne and the stone. Chrym loses his balance and falls from the stone into the rent in the earth. As suddenly as it appeared, the crack closes. Chrym is gone.

Phrytz and Silvar shake off whatever power Chrym had over them, and the wizard laughs.

"You're very good at smashing things," he grins, hugging you close. "Good work!"

"What was wrong with you and Silvar?"

"That was a symbol of hopelessness in Chrym's palm. We had a vision that made us give up our hope. Fortunately, it didn't work on you."

"What did you see?" you ask Phrytz.

"I saw Merf in the Abyss as Chrym's slave. I know she's dead. But the vision was so *real*, and . . ." Phrytz hesitates as a wave of sorrow passes over his face. "And I loved her so much," he whispers.

The wizard takes a deep breath and then adds in a cheerier tone, "Suffice it to say Chrym won't be caus-

ing us any more pain for some time to come." He jumps down from the ritual stone and walks over to the throne to inspect it more closely. "Let's see what we can find behind this rock."

Silvar turns to pick up his staff. "You know, if you want, you could catch up with Shar. Dowell is faster than the prince's mount. Shar'd be happy to see you alive and you could marry him and still practice magic now that Chrym is out of the way."

"You don't mind if I go? Silvar, I thought you cared for me," you say angrily.

A rumble echoes through the room as Phrytz pivots the throne on the platform.

"I don't want to stand in the way of your happiness, I'vee. I know you love Shar."

"Silvar, *I'm* not even sure how I feel about Shar. What makes you so certain I love him?" you argue.

An unpleasant thought occurs to you. You grab Silvar's arms. "What vision did you see?" you demand.

"I saw you and Shar married. You were very happy together."

"And that made you lose all hope? You *do* really care for me then?"

"Of course, I care for you. I love you," Silvar replies simply.

"Well, you have a funny way of showing it."

Silvar reaches out to pull you close to him. He presses his lips to yours very gently. The kiss is not as polished as Shar's kisses were, but it eases the pain Chrym has caused the two of you.

"Shar still loves you, you know," Silvar says softly when he pulls away from you. "I don't want to stand in

the way of your happiness. You can leave and go to him, if you want.”

You try to sort out all your feelings. Shar made you feel very excited. He always let you know just what he was thinking and how he felt. He tried to protect you and offered to make you a princess.

Silvar is so much more complicated. He wants to protect you too, but he is willing to let you run your own risks. He is not as passionate or romantic as Shar, but he shares your love of magic.

You know you must decide whether to follow Shar or let the chance slip by in Silvar's arms.

*If you want to leave now to catch up with Shar  
and tell him you love him, turn to page 147.*

*If you wish to stay with Silvar,  
turn to page 153.*



"Give me the crystal and I will leave you alone forever," Chrym said. You think about his words. Even Phrytz said that Chrym always lived up to a bargain.

Certain that you have finally brought Chrym under control, you hand him the crystal. He moves the point of his sword from Silvar's throat with a slow and deliberate motion as he takes the prism in his other hand.

"Now, you must leave us alone," you demand.

"Us? I don't recall saying anything about *us*." Chrym laughs with an evil glint in his eyes. "These two I will bring to the Abyss as slaves. I promised to leave *you* alone. And alone you shall be."

The room begins to blur around you. Dizziness sweeps over you. Then your vision steadies. All around you are sand dunes. The air is blistering hot and the sun hangs directly overhead in a cloudless sky. Silvar, Phrytz, and Chrym are nowhere to be seen.

*Chrym has tricked me, you realize suddenly. He has left me alone all right, but in a way I may not survive!* You pick a direction and begin to travel through the desert.

After hours of wandering, you collapse in the thin shadow of a dune to rest. Miserably, you fall into a sleep filled with nightmares of Silvar's and Phrytz's slavery in the Abyss with Chrym.

THE END

Looking at the streaks of silver framing his despairing face, you realize how deeply you care for the young magic-user.

"Oh, Silvar. I don't want to marry Shar. I want to stay here with you," you whisper.

Silvar closes his eyes and puts his arms around you. The tension goes out of his face. "I'm so glad. You know, I think I understand you better than Shar does. I'm not as romantic as he is, but maybe all I need is practice."

"I'm sure of it," you agree shyly. Then you kiss Silvar, running your hand through the soft silver streaks in his hair. "It's a lot like magic," you whisper. "Dizzy-making but wonderful."

"Well, well, well, look what I've found!" Phrytz has sorted out a large cache of treasure into piles of coins, gems, and jewelry. The object of the wizard's attention, however, is an empty crystal flask, which glows faintly. He is trying to pull the stopper out.

"Uh, Phrytz, are you sure you want to open that?" you ask, remembering the claret bottle.

Phrytz looks up at you. "Toots, I'm never sure of anything. That's how I got as far as I have." He gives a final yank. The stopper flies from his hand. A whirlwind swirls from the container and spins around Phrytz menacingly.

Phrytz does not seem concerned, however, and the whirlwind swirls into the form of a giant man. He is dressed like a desert dweller, only his clothes and jewels are more impressive than Shar's. He bows low before the wizard.

"It's a djinni!" Silvar whispers.

"I am the Sharif Kahrmant," the djinni says to

Phrytz. "Brother to the Caliph of the Djinn. I was imprisoned in that bottle by the one called Chrym over a hundred years ago. You have earned my gratitude by releasing me."

"Greetings, oh, noble djinni. I am Phrytz. And these are my pupils, Silvar and Ivey. We have banished Chrym to the Abyss this day. He will trouble no one for some time."

The djinni smiles. "How delightful. This calls for something special. Tradition demands I grant you three wishes, but I will offer you something better—your heart's desire."

"What a charming idea!" Phrytz smiles.

"I touch you and I know the secret desires of your heart." Kahrmant smiles and takes Phrytz's hand in his. "A wise heart you have. To please it will be an honor."

The room fades around you. You find yourselves in Phrytz's study in the Golden Spires. A fire blazes in the hearth, and the table is set for a seven-course meal. The treasure from Chrym's lair is stacked about Phrytz's feet in neat piles. Phrytz's crow, Fred, flutters to his master's shoulder.

"Is not a safe and orderly homecoming pleasant?" the djinni asks.

Phrytz grins, takes up a glass of wine, and raises it to the noble djinni. "The best," he replies.

The djinni then turns to Silvar.

"Ah, I see one wish has already come true for you this day," Kahrmant turns from Silvar to you.

Silvar flushes, and you can feel your own face growing warm.

"Still there is something in my power to give you."





Again there is a blur in the room. When it stops, stacks of ancient books and scrolls lie at Silvar's feet.

"Merf's magic books!" Silvar gasps. "I thought Chrym had destroyed them."

"No, he hid them away to covet their power for himself," the djinni explains.

Last of all, he takes your hand in his. A breeze seems to blow over your body. Kahrmant steps back in surprise. "You have a singular spirit," he says. "There have been very few like you, but fate has always brought them the same gift." The room blurs one last time. You look about, curious to see what gift you've been given. You notice nothing different, except a strange ring on your finger.

Kahrmant points to the ring. Then he leads you to the window. "Brannix's Spell of the Erumar was made for such as you. Behold, I've Erumar, your mount, Dowell. Loyal he was, loyal he shall ever be."

You look down at your horse and gasp. Behind Dowell's perfect withers sprout large, powerful wings of velvety black feathers. The grooms all back away from him as he beats the wings furiously. He rises slowly above the ground, above the trees, and above the inn. Then he spirals gracefully back down to the yard.

"What is Brannix's Spell of the Erumar?" you turn around to face the djinni. But he is gone.

"Erumar is desert for Windlord. I'm not familiar with the spell. Perhaps there is something on Brannix in Merf's books," Phrytz says.

Silvar picks up one of the ancient, dusty tomes and opens it. "Brannix," he mutters, flipping the pages. "Here it is. There's a picture of a winged horse and the rune of the Erumar, that's the symbol on the ring. It says," Silvar reads: "The Lady of the Wind rides a black-winged stallion of great power, beauty, and loyalty, which needs neither bit nor saddle. The spirit of the Wind is hers, a spirit of freedom and self-determination that cannot be quenched. That's you, I've," Silvar says. "The Lady of the Wind."

"Well, aren't you going to ride him?" Phrytz asks.



You pause at the door, noticing Silvar with his nose still buried in the book he was reading. "Aren't you coming?" you ask.

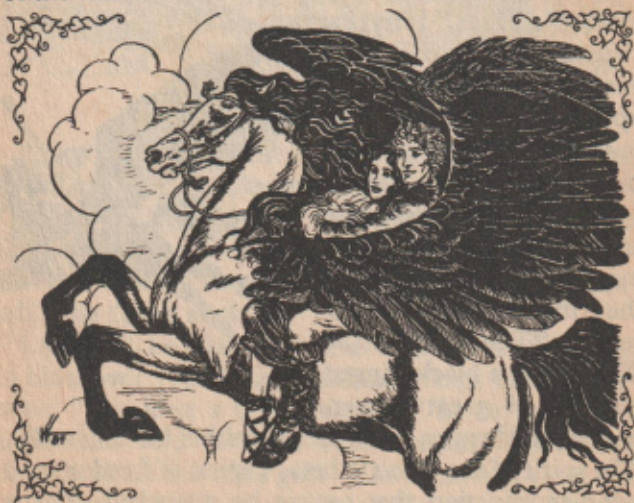
"I can see better from here," he says.

"That is what you think!" You grab his hand and drag him down the stairs and out of the inn.

Dowell stands perfectly still, waiting for you to mount up. You swing onto his back and reach for Silvar's hand.

Silvar grins, then mounts behind you and hugs you tight in his arms.

With a powerful leap, Dowell launches himself into the air, carrying you and Silvar high over Corthax. Silvar says something you cannot hear over the rushing of the wind.





"What?" you call out.

"I said, your heart is beating so quickly. Is it because I'm holding you?" Silvar shouts. "Or because we are flying?"

You laugh, leaning back in Silvar's strong arms. "You'll just have to wait until we land to learn for sure."

THE END

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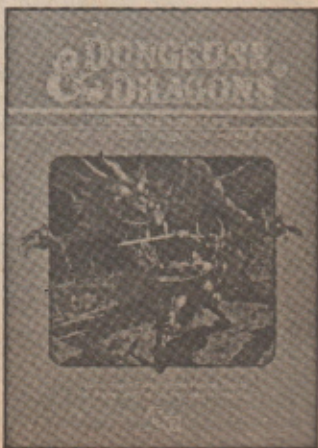
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