

READBEAST

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Two sweaty bodies glowed in the torchlight. They were passionately coupled. Again and again a gigantic penis lustily parted the cheeks of strong-hewed warrior. The chamber in the keep echoed with flesh slapping flesh.

The parted one was called Laerak. No mightier human had walked the earths. His pectorals bulged like boulders; his biceps were thicker than a boy's waist; the lines of his neck fell in a straight line from his jaw to his corded shoulders. His thighs could crush a man's hips and his buttocks squeezed like a gigantic clam.

On his chest, on the precise line between his nipples that were now stiff and hard as his sex jutting a foot out of his groin, was tattooed a device: a sword, held upright by a man mounted upon a huge stallion. Laerak never wore a jerkin, because he was by law forbidden to cover such a mark. The mark defined him. It proclaimed his status: he was King's Champion of Mindea, sworn defender of the King of the Men who lived in the land between Ocean and the Kiirad mountains to the east, a man born to the sword and wedded to it.

As the great penis plunged into him he rolled his head. His eyes were rolled up into his head and showed like slivers of cold moon. A shower of black hair rolled over his sweaty back. It hung down to his buttocks; indeed he could feel one or two strands tug on his skull with the rhythm of his lover, because those hairs had been sucked up into his dank interior by the passion of the sweaty men.

The one mounted upon the Champion was his elder by two decades or more. He had been given the name Gan, but he was more often addressed as Sergeant. His hair was dark as the Champion's but flecked with gray; by law, his was only shoulder-length and could be neither longer nor shorter. He was muscled almost as thickly as the one he bred with such talent and force, but not quite; his chest was just smaller, his thighs did not have the striated muscles, and his own buttocks did not dimple as deeply.

Yet he was the man, for his penis was longer than the dueling daggers the soldiers sleeping and whoring in the barracks below were wont to carry when outside the fortress. If Laerak and Sergeant had pressed their wrists together (and they had, once, when the moon was right and mingled blood coaxed forth by a silver dagger) Sergeant's sex would still have been the thicker.

Laerak braced his hands on his legs, his legs splayed. His seed sacks swayed with the Gan's strokes. The shadows from the scone-mounted torches were deep on his body. His sword lay on the straw-stuffed mattress and his loincloth was hung from a peg buried in the stone wall of the keep. Laerak's penis dripped with the juices of his body. The juncture between the two was slick with sweat. It reeked of spice — the man spice that only a good breeding can bring forth. It stretched tight round the great prong. And Laerak moaned from the pleasure of it.

The moans mingled into a soft symphony of pleasure. For the fortress — the Gautrond, the sea-gate of the

Kingdom of Mindea — seethed with men in the midst of pleasure. In the barracks, in the stables, in the labyrinthine stairs carved into the stone walls men bred. Tongues touched. Hands undid buckles in the dark and pushed aside leather pouches, reached in and drew forth hard meat rich with cheese. Lips opened and saliva was spread. Buttocks parted.

Sergeant's back arched and he plunged deep into his love. Spit flew from his lips. His seed sacks drew up

tight against his sex, and the thick tube on the bottom of his meat pulsed. Laerak's head came up

and Sergeant dug his teeth into it, twisting the flesh into a mound of purple agony. In seconds thick white fluid emerged from Laerak's tightly stretched ring and coursed down Sergeant's sex like a freshet down a slope.

Sergeant collapsed forward onto Laerak's hard back after a long minute, lay there with his huge chest. He remained buried in the sweaty flesh beneath him, tumescent but slightly softer. His tongue emerged, a long fat pink worm, and scooped the droplets of sweat off the Champion's tanned flesh.

"Again," breathed Laerak with urgency. "The night is young."

Sergeant's hips began to move again. But he didn't reach his fifth orgasm, nor Laerak his first. For the silver cry of the alarm pierced them as surely as Sergeant's flesh pierced Laerak.

Their heads came up and Laerak's eyes unrolled. The focus moved from his buttocks and the lance of flesh plugging him to the sound of the braying trumpets. Looking through the mullions they saw the red glow of a newly-fired beacon.

Smoothly Sergeant's hips withdrew his mighty flesh from Laerak's narrow passage. It emerged with a gush of his seed and snapped upright against the fur on his flat stomach. His hand moved absently towards his sweaty hips.

"Raiders," said Laerak, hearing the tune the trumpet declaimed. He stood upright. His vertebrae, stretched and abused by the stance he'd taken with his lover, didn't pop. In a smooth motion he took up his sword from where it leaned beneath the window. The seed moving down the backs of his hard thighs felt like warm mud.

The hue and cry raised activity in the shadowed courtyard before the keep. Laerak's gray eyes swept over it. Shadows, shadows in the moonlight; lovers rustled up from love. The courtyard was always filled with men at night — low-ranking soldiers and mercenaries desiring privacy for their bouts. But there was something ... near the King's Armory ...

Sergeant's callused hand fell onto his shoulders, moved to caress Laerak's long hair. "What do you see?"

"Nothing — " He cursed. A mounted figure rode at top speed across the courtyard, somehow shadowed though the moon was bright enough. The horse was huge and its tail streamed like a battle-pennon; the rider's hair was long enough to mirror Laerak's. Cold light glittered on the edge of an sword upthrust like a man's shaft of love. The shape moved swift as a viper towards the gate, standing open because Mindea was an open kingdom dreaming in peace; and the walls stretching for miles north and south of Gautrond blocked travelers and forced them through the fortress itself.

There was no one between the rider and the gate. Laerak saw the guards emerge still tumescent and dripping from a long bout of lust. The mounted figure prodded his stallion and they leapt over the guards like a dragonfly darting aside.

His fingers curled round the pommel, feeling the cold leather. "Come," he said, and they strode from the room, naked with swollen meat.

Captain Unrede had gathered a detachment of coal-black mercenaries outside the Armory. The moonlight shivered on the strange red metal of their spears and on the glistening fluids on their gargantuan penises. Tassels made from the feathers of the eroch and the nah-megg birds streamed from their headdresses; long ropes of silver fluid flayed from the tips of their parchment-thick

foreskins.

Unrede hadn't yet taken his blond lovers to bed, so he wore still the heavy mail and steel greaves that he strode around Gautrond in during the day. Yet he was fond of keeping his genitals free, so nothing cupped him. His maleness extended into the cool night air like an elephant's questing trunk.

His ears recognized easily the footfalls Laerak's unshod feet made on the cobbles of the yard and he turned. The gray eyes burned like magic along iron. "The Thrimmodd is gone."

Laerak spat. "Damn them. Was everyone too busy with lust to fulfill their duties?"

Unrede's eyes narrowed. "The assigned guards were vigilant. But overmatched. Their bodies are with Kourn the Sorcerer."

Laerak frowned. "Why him?"

Sergeant came striding up behind Laerak. He had diverted to his barracks to have his men assemble in the courtyard. Laerak's buttocks, streaked with drying sweat and seed, brought a stiffness to his sex. It was not good to have love interrupted, for it usually took them hours for each to satiate himself of the other. His seed sacks ached with the need to void.

"They were felled by spells," Unrede said. "Not swords."

Laerak turned towards the gates. The mighty iron valves were now at last shut and a great bonfire burned upon the stone roof of the gatehouse. "It was the Elf. The Elf I dreamt of."

Sergeant said, "You cannot be sure."

"I cannot. But I saw the one who did this robbery flee, and a sword he had upraised. Unrede says our guards were felled by sorcery. Only Elves mix the two."

"Kourn," said Unrede, "will need an hour or so to determine the type of magic."

"We shall need to dispatch riders to the King," said Sergeant. "To tell of the theft, and warn him of the peril we face."

"Yes, yes," said Laerak. "But we should wait until the dawn."

"It should be done now," said Unrede. Unrede was the man charged with upholding the law of the King of Mindea from Gautrond which blocked the pass westwards across the rugged highlands to the free port of Bitthron; he also held lands direct of the March-lord Taumman. For Unrede the law was paramount, both letter and spirit.

Laerak said, "Now or morning, it matters not." He turned on one heel away from the gate; a rope of seed dropped from his gaping passing. "But I will pursue the Elf. Now."

"You will not find him in the darkness," said Sergeant. "Not if this is an Elf, and he possesses sorcery such as we cannot imagine."

Laerak looked into the face of his love, noted the hard stubble which covered the jaw, the gray streaks in hair still sweaty from the effort of loving him. "No, I will not find him, not tonight. Nor will I find his trail. But I know where he must go, and I will follow him."

"Where do you think he will go?" asked Unrede.

"He rode west, away from Mindea. He therefor seeks escape with his prize. He will cross the fief-lands outside the forest and then have a choice where the land begins to descend towards the sea. He might go north, but that land is too settled with folk loyal to Mindea and well-populated with the fighting barons the King is wont to station on his pale. He will not take that way. He will go towards Galma forest. Perhaps as far as the Voi-Sannd. He seeks to cross the sea from whence he came. He shall have companions in a ship — I heard tales in the Claw and Talon that Konyamiand's ships have been seen off our coasts — or else this Elf shall use his glamory and escape."

Sergeant nodded. "You are I think correct."

"Then let us saddle steeds. Unrede, have Mouraus made ready. Sergeant, I want you to accompany me."

Unrede said, "You should take Kourn with you."

"He will slow us. Elves pass like the wind. We must be the storm."

In half an hour they rode, Laerak on his black stallion Mouraus, Sergeant on his bay stallion Irath. They had girt themselves with sword belts and scabbards, and Sergeant took a bow and a quiver of thirty arrows. They had saddlebags hastily laden with victuals. But they wore no armor nor indeed any other garment. The leather of the saddles clung to their wet skin.

They passed into the night. The great fortress now blazed with red light, for Unrede had ignited the great bonfires. Gautrond lay in the narrow pass in the Rondou mountains, the only route from the Mindean plains to the coast. A great wall ten cubits high blocked the mouth, and as they rode they saw that Unrede had ordered the warning beacons fired along its length.

They took the good road that ran westwards towards Bitthron. Laerak was sure that the Elf — if it was an Elf, but in his heart of hearts he knew — had probably left this route. But westward the land sloped from the rugged mountains and westward the Elf must go; this road would suffice and perhaps put them ahead of the Elf.

They rode with swollen seed sacks and organs unsatiated. The motion of their galloping stallions was maddening. Clutching their swords in one hand and penises in another, guiding their steeds with their knees, they pleased themselves as the dark world whipped past, their eyes burning for on another across the distance that separated them.

They rode until dawn turned the peaks of the Rondou behind them into sullen gold. A gray light filtered down; they were in the midst of the highland farms. A soft mist, hovering in the orchards and vineyards, swiftly burnt away. Now it was time to take a leisurely pace and ask those they passed for word of a traveler who passed in the night.

They passed farmer after farmer — big men, naked save for deerskin sacks holding genitals only slightly less lordly than their own — and they questioned them. No, heard nothing in the night. Sorry, me and the boy were too busy haw-haw.

They paused briefly, ate cheese and drank water. They drained their bladders into the fresh green grass outside a farmer's cottage. Laerak's mouth watered at the size of the stream Sergeant produced — it was solid as the gush from a fountain as fragrant as mountain herbs. Staring at one another, smelling the odors of love drying upon each other mingled with new odors of travel, they

became aroused and hard as stone for one another.

"A bout?" asked Sergeant.

Laerak was turning to let his lover mount up. But he saw Mouraus staring at him with sad eyes, and knew he did not have the time. He was King's Champion; he had duties; not all his life could be spent as a boy-whore for a virile man.

"We cannot," Laerak said.

They mounted up and rode.

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In the afternoon they left the rolling foothills and came to a region where the land began to fall towards the sea still distant from here. The farm cottages, which before had tended to cluster to the main road — an artifact from the time when raids from the Pandomill pirates swept up in a burning tide to break at the rock of Gautrond — now spread out, because the men tilling this land had to find their plots further away. So more and more lanes departed the road, snaking through declivities towards tree-shaded villages and hamlets. Tall oaks rose up on either side and whispered to each other as the wind blew.

"Nothing," said Laerak. "I feel we've wasted a morning."

"Perhaps," said Sergeant. "But it's not yet noon. Let's ride a bit further."

They goaded their mounts with their naked heels and rode.

A stream tumbled down from a hill and met the road; both chased each other to the sea. It held to the right side of the road and quickly became substantial, being fed by the many springs in this region. It burbled over great stones and snaked through the mossy roots of huge oaks. It was bridged on occasion by narrow wooden bridges, just sufficient for a farmer's wain.

"Stop," said Laerak, reigning Mouraus in. "I hear something."

Without the clod of ironshod feet on the roadway more sounds came to their ears. Over the chatter of the brook and the hiss of the leaves they heard deep ululations, moans uttered by two throats, very young and very passionate.

Laerak grinned. His sex, sleepy but never asleep, rose from his groin, jutting like a mighty pier of giant-carved stone. He placed his fist on it, moved it so that his foreskin winked. His seed sacks lay trapped by his thighs. "We never finished last night," he said.

"How well I remember. That was your decision," said Sergeant. His own organ rose in response and he dreamt of Laerak bent over with spread buttocks gleaming with sweat. He spurred his horse. "I want to see."

Two were loving each other in the dust of a southwards crossroads. The one on the bottom had blond hair, but short like a boy's; he was on his back and his legs, slender yet muscled, were tight round the waist of his lover. The lover had a mighty organ for one so young; some ponies could have been shamed by it. He drove it into the blond with much passion. His hair was the color of roasted chestnuts and cascaded forward so that it brushed his nipples.

The top one saw Laerak and Sergeant riding down the road. The blond was involved in his passion; his forehead was buried in his lover's armpits and so he did not see. The top one grinned and redoubled his efforts. The strokes flew at a blur and a shower of sweat exploded from the ends of his hair. He grunted once then jetted long into the blond, who in turn released great gouts of liquid silver along the hard muscles of his lover's chest.

Laerak waited until the top one's passion had eased. "I am Laerak, the King's Champion. I would ask of you a question."

The blond relaxed under his chestnut lover, head flopping back into the dust. His eyes flicked up to take in the hard naked body of the King's Champion. His eyes focused on the organ that reared ready to strike from the groin. "Before the question, may I lay with you?"

Sergeant laughed. "This one lays with me."

The top one slipped his tongue into the blond's mouth and made easy hunching motions. They were joined still, hot and sticky. The road beneath the blond's buttocks had turned to mud because so much seed had leaked from his narrow passage. "This one lays with anything. How can I help you, King's Champion?"

"We seek word of a traveler. A stranger. An interloper."

"Ahh," said the top one. "The Dark One."

"Speak of him," said Laerak.

"He passed last night," the blond one said. "We lay here, coupling. We heard the thunder of his horse but we didn't wish to move. We saw him come. The moon was bright but he was shrouded in a darkness."

"Describe him," Sergeant said.

The top one spoke. "His hair was dark. Long and flowing, in color like unto yours, King's Champion; but the length of it was not so great. His eyes burnt with a blue fire. His sword was sheathed; so was his organ, to my misfortune, because he was comely in a frightening way."

"And his mount?"

The blond answered after stretching his legs once then wrapping them again around his lover. A dreamy smile curved his lips. "His mount. It was a stallion. Very much the stallion. White as your mount is black, King's Champion; but his mane was black as your hair. Black as his hair. His eyes burnt with the same blue fire." He spasmed, and a rope of seed spurted from the gaping tip of his foreskin. "His mount had an organ — " but then his lips clenched and he spurted again.

"Banna here saw the mount more than I," said the top, pressing himself deeper into the pleasure that was his lover. "He was facing up, after all. The rider didn't see us until too late. He leapt over us. His mount reared, spun, because he went down that lane." The top extended a brown arm to point southwards between the green-dusted boles of the oaks.

"South?" asked Laerak.

"South," said the top, beginning to move again. As his hips came back and his organ slid forth like a drake issuing from its lair they saw that his hair was matted to his hard flesh, sticky with seed that

had flushed from his lover. They had been mounted all night and their passion showed no signs of contentment.

Laerak looked at Sergeant, whose erection was eloquent. "Let's go."

Sergeant looked longingly at Banna the blond, unnumbered gallons of seed spilling from between his buttocks, writhing against his chestnut lover. Then at Laerak, whom he wanted at this moment to take likewise. "South," said Sergeant, teeth clenched into an ivory fence.

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They passed a few hamlets and were told that the traveler and his huge mount had passed like a terror in the night. They spurred their steeds harder and soon came to the end of the lane. A rising land lay before them, long miles of it, covered mostly with scattered copses of trees. In the distance a ridge rose; an outlier of the Rondou stretching like a finger towards Ocean. Naked of trees, it cut the hard blue sky like a knife.

They relieved their tensions by hand twice, streaking their mounts' manes with their juices; but relief was fleeting. Laerak felt the urgent need to be mounted by his man and found himself dangerously daydreaming of Sergeant's meat penetrating him. The countryside he was scanning faded when he fell into such thoughts; he hoped they didn't pass any obvious spoor of the traveler. The problem was that the ground was fairly firm, so there were no obvious hoofprints.

Late in the day they picked up signs of the Dark One, as the two lovers had called him. For they reached the crest of the long ridge, and they paused briefly. The wind blew from Ocean to the west and they let it bathe them; they were sticky with dried fluids from interrupted love and from the sweat of long, hard travel. Laerak sat on Mouraus' back with his arms outstretched, feeling the wind caress the hair in his armpits, his nipples erect and bringing forth tiny droplets of a shiny clear fluid.

"What is that?" Sergeant asked. He pulled his hand away from his erection; he had been attempting to strip off the dried seed which caused him to itch. He pointed along the line of the ridge toward the west.

Laerak squinted. Not far away a curl of thin smoke rose, as if from a dying fire. He grasped the pommel of his sword. "Let's go." In this empty country he was certain who was at the campfire.

They rode like the thunder. Laerak's long hair streamed like a banner torn from the night sky. Sergeant followed, his bow in his hand, hoping for a shot at long range. Bath forgotten, sweat broke out on them in anticipation of battle.

But the campsite was empty. A large stump still smoldered in the center in the circle of stones; kicking it, Sergeant discovered it was green wood, so green he couldn't imagine how the Dark One ignited it. Laerak stood, his blade Haugrath matching the drooping angle of his maleness, examining closely where the long grass had been knitted together to make a bed. Just beyond was a place where the grass had been cropped, a circle maybe twenty feet square. Sergeant hated to imagine the appetite of a horse that could eat so much.

"A few hours old at most," said Sergeant.

Laerak nodded. "We've lost time. We only rode out half an hour or so after he stole the Thrimmodd."

"He can't sustain the pace for much longer. He'll kill his mount. As we're in danger of doing."

Laerak glanced back at Mouraus and Irath. Both were lathered and chomping at the grass; both were also good of heart and could easily be ridden hard until nightfall at least. "He stopped here for rest. Not much, if he passed the lovers at the time I think he did."

"You can see his trail," said Sergeant. The grass on the southern side of the ridge was caressed by the gentler winds from that direction, and was hence more tender. There were marks in a clear line where a gigantic horse's hooves had ripped the shoots out of the ground as it trotted along.

Laerak, squinting, followed the line. "It descends into the valley." The next valley was wide, nearly a day's ride in width. A dark green tide, obscured by the hazy distance, flowed into its mouth: the Galma forest. Further to the west a line split the green. This was the Coast Road, a military highway built to facilitate the movement of the legions in response to the pirates but now mostly used by the scattering of settlers south of Galma for commerce with Bitthron and Gautrond.

"He's moving as you guessed," Sergeant said. "Towards Galma. This course would also take him near the Voi-Sannd."

Laerak nods. "He has friends. Or he wants to work a sorcery." He sheathed his sword, whistled to Mouraus who wearily pricked up his ears. "He'll not leave these shores with the Thrimmodd." He went to his Sergeant, placed his tongue in his mouth and pressed their hardening shafts together. "We shall ride until sunset. There is a stream at the floor of the valley. We'll stop there and rest. And love."

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They almost lost the Dark One's trail in the lengthening shadows, but as they approached the stream the ground became softer and his spoor clearer. Tall trees — huge, ancient oaks and great pines — rose up and surrounded them, biting off the remainder of the light.

They reached the stream where it spilled into a natural bowl of rock and made a pool. The trees broke and there was a wide lip of soft grass encircling the waters. A thicket of sage and rosemary clustered where the waters spilled over a lip of stone to continue its journey towards the sea; the glade was pungent with their smells, and Laerak and Sergeant were revived by the scent.

They found the remains of a second fire built upon a large flat shale that had been drawn from the shore of the pool. Soot blackened it, but otherwise there were no other remnants of a blaze upon it. There were no cold embers scattered in the grass.

"The Dark One slept here as well," said Laerak, looking around the circle of trees.

Sergeant bent to examine the grass. His erection bespoke the desperate need he had to mount Laerak, but there was a mystery to solve. In one spot the grass was trampled, as if the Dark One's mount had tussled with something in one confined spot. Hoofprints were pressed deep into the soft soil. In one spot the prints of the Dark One could be seen, mostly between where Sergeant thought the back hooves of the mount had been.

"What is this?" Laerak said. He was ten feet from Sergeant, bent over, looking at a puddle of fluid in the grass. He touched it with his fingers, sniffed it. It was acrid, bitter, rich, and smelt of chemicals and other sorcerous things. But there was a hint of cinnamon to it, like the vague hint of lightning in a cloudy summer sky.

"I do not know," said Sergeant, who joined him. "Some sorcery of the Dark One. Perhaps it is an Elf, as you dreamed." He sniffed the liquid which dripped thickly from Laerak's fingers. His penis rose to

a towering high from his groin. His hair clung stickily to his body, plastered there from sweat and exhaustion. He must have Laerak now.

He grabbed the King's Champion, his muscles straining to hoist the heavy mass of his love. Then he pitched Laerak laughing into the pool. Crystal waves lapped at the tufts of grass; frogs leapt into the water in panic. Sergeant dove in after.

Their hands stripped the sweat from their armpits, their chests. Sergeant's wasted no time and soon had his fingers between Laerak's buttocks, stroking his love there and making him moan in desire. He caressed his love's long hair, pressed hard to his muscled back like black metal.

Laerak assumed his favorite stance, the one he preferred to spend his nights in. The cool waters lapped at his seed sacks, which were so swollen with seed and desire that they would no shrink up hard against his shaft. He held his hips steady as his love barreled into him, but his cry echoed all through the valley as their first bout began.

After several hours they emptied the last of their passions, Sergeant into his love and Laerak into the waters which bore it away to the sea. They made their way onto the banks where they collapsed beside their mounts, who had eaten and drank their fill while their masters loved in the water. At last the agony in their groins was stilled and as the waxing moon rose like a great eye they slept, Sergeant's meat pressed as a reminder into the King's Champion's buttocks.

Galma was a wild place, never tamed. Not hostile in nature — dragons had never lurked here nor any creatures of the Dark Gods — but gryphons were known denizens, and also the mischievous spirits who were neither Men nor Elves nor gods, and other creatures. Safe enough, if a man bore a sword — there were even a few woodsmen who cut timber for the shipwrights in Bitthron; but the forest was not to be taken lightly. The trees rose tall and thick, and leaves dark as the green depths of the sea interwove to bite off the light. There air was still. A carpet of decaying leaves and branches, soft as a boy's butt, devoured all sound. Thickets of thorns turned all paths into mazes and with the sky unseen it was easy to become lost.

They followed the Elf's path down the stream until it entered Galma. There the trail of the Elf turned away from the stream, angling more to the south-west while the stream turned more northerly to empty in the long firth of Bitthron. It was clear to Sergeant and Laerak the path the Elf had chosen; the floor of the forest was almost as good as snow for tracking fleeing quarry.

As they entered the depths of the forest, Laerak halted, climbing down from Mouraus. Already sweat streaked his flanks; the air under the trees was hot. He examined the trail. "These are older by far. Half a day or so. We've lost more time."

"He is stopping at odd times," said Sergeant. "Either for rest or to refresh his sorcerous dark cloak. We must press on for the rest of the day. We will capture him today or else loose him in Voi-Sannd on the morrow."

Laerak, bent, showed clearly the seed running again down his thighs, this time in the copious quantities both Sergeant and Laerak were used to. Straightening he loosed some more, which oozed in a brownish tide over tanned hard skin. Grimly he nodded and remounted Mouraus. The black stallion's back was soaked with ejected seed.

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Around noon they came upon a narrow forest lane snaking amidst the tall towers of the trees. It was deeply rutted from wheels; the hooves of the Elf's mount cut as deeply into it as the forest floor.

"The Dark One searches for an easy route," said Laerak. "Haste," said Sergeant. "There may be a ship awaiting him."

"Perhaps. Or he knows of our pursuit."

"How can he? We have not revealed ourselves to him."

"He is an Elf," said Laerak. "Who knows what his sight reveals?"

Within the half hour they came upon a homestead. A small cottage, its roof a thatchwork of willow obtained from some low valley. A small stable was built between the trunks of two giant trees. No smoke emerged from the red brick chimney and the door stood open.

Laerak reigned Mouraus to a halt. "I smell smoke. A fire was burning recently." He breathed deeply again, the great muscles of his chest expanding. "Something ... like the fluid in the glade."

Sergeant's phallus stirred, for he remembered the long loving he and Laerak spent, and he desired it again. His head turned as he heard a sound from the stables; he goaded Irath forward as he drew his sword. Laerak followed closely.

A stallion emerged from the stable. A huge draft horse, of the massive breed found most often in the less wild lands north of Bitthron, his color roan. The great head hung as if the horse had been roused from a nap. His gait was drunken and unsteady. But it was not sleep that the stallion suffered. Alongside his mane and all over his withers dried blood was smeared as if a savage painter had attacked him.

Irath reared and Sergeant had to calm him. The draft horse staggered forth and leaned against the bole of a tree. His penis swung like a banner beneath him. A great burbling fart erupted from beneath the horse's tail. The acrid smell with the unusual whiff of cinnamon filled the air.

Laerak rode round behind the stallion. Its buttocks were stained with fluid — not blood, for whatever it was had no color — which poured in a flood from the stallion's gaping anus and coated testicles the size of apples.

He looked over at Sergeant, who had settled Irath. His enormous erection towered from his groin, swaying with the heavy blood gorged weight. Laerak's buttocks itched with desire. He could not wait. He must have Sergeant. Swiftly he dismounted from Mouraus, crossed the distance in a flash, and leapt upon Irath's back, pressing his lips against Sergeant's face, feeling the hard stubble against him. "I must have you," Laerak crooned.

Sergeant's hard fingers clasped him by the buttocks, lifted Laerak up so that his phallus could find purchase, then drew Laerak down upon his length and thickness. Sergeant waited until Laerak's long cry at the entry ended. "We must ride, if we are to keep time."

"Then ride," said Laerak, arms snaking round the great torso of his lover. He rubbed the tattoo marking his status against the mat of hair, draped his arm round Sergeant's hard neck. With his thick thighs spread and supported on Sergeant's own, the motions of Irath's hard muscled back moved the thick rod within his clasping tunnel. "Faster," he breathed, his jet of silver fluid unexpected and voluminous.

Sergeant's heels goaded Irath. The silent guardians of the trees flew past. He spurted into his love after but a few short minutes, but the smell — so like unto a storm's lightning — lingered still in his nostrils. It made his blood burn.

They placed tongues down each other's throat and loved until they reached the wide Forest Road. Sergeant still had to finish; he clasped Laerak by the waist, swung a lug over, and slid off his lathered mount. He put Laerak into the dust, as Banna had been under his chestnut lover, and grunted and screamed as he spent his volume into the King's Champion.

They disengaged to the rumblings of well-stretched bowels, standing as sweat rolled down the bridges of their noses.

"Behold," said Sergeant, laughing, "the rods of might."

Both Mouraus and Irath were tumescent, even dripping, and their flood was like a cloudburst upon the road.

Laerak smacked Mouraus upon the flank. "A good show, eh? But now we must work." Brushing the dust from his back he bent to inspect the road. His skills were keen — and needed, for the surface of the road was hard, and their lovemaking had obliterated the tracks where the Dark One had ridden from the loamy woodcutter's lane onto the Forest Road. But there they were — hoofprints from the Dark One's giant mount, on Laerak's right, heading towards the south. Kneeling down, hot muck oozing from between his buttocks. "Not more than four hours," he said at last.

"We've gained upon him," said Sergeant, stripping a film of seed from his meat.

"Perhaps he bivouaced and we missed it in our ... haste." Laerak paused. "If so, our passion is making us incautious. We must not be snared in a trap nor loose him should he make a subtle move." Sergeant swung back upon Irath's broad back. "Cautious we shall be, though my passion for you will not be easily abated."

The day wore on. A rivulet of blue sky showed where the road clove the verdure, but the air remained thick and humid. Dust rose as they rode, and they often slaked their thirst with trips to their water bags. They held their attention to the sides of the roads, where the softer ground would show if the Dark One had turned off into the trackless trees.

Again they were pungent with male smells — sweat dried in their crotches and semen caked upon Sergeant's phallus and between Laerak's buttocks. And again they were aroused. But both Laerak and Sergeant refrained, dealing with the pressures with their hands, streaking their mount's manes with seed.

When the sun had sunk halfway towards the horizon from the burning noon a voice rang out: "Hold!"

They reigned in and undid the buckles holding their swords in their scabbards. "Who challenges us?" Laerak cried.

"Do not draw your weapons! We are a company of King's Bowmen, and our strings are taut."

"Which kingdom?" Sergeant demanded. A fair question, because away southwards the remnants of the Pandomill pirates still held lands not as fief to the King of Mindea but rather by force of their own prowess at arms, styling themselves as kings in pale imitation of the Crystal Throne.

The reply was haughty. "We are the Company of Damolak, a Banneret of the King of Mindea."

"Grau! Min-aund!" Laerak cried, sliding his hand from the pommel.

"The King's Champion!" Three figures swung down from a thick branch. The leader was a tall man,

lithe and sinewy; he was naked as the soldiers of Mindea were wont. But he was battered. Livid bruises covered his hard flesh, and a raw wound cut into his hard pectorals, starting under his left breast. His eyes were fierce under a shock of golden hair; they swiftly lit upon the tattoo on Laerak's chest. "I am Damolak. Forgive us, Champion — we have been attacked today."

"By whom?" asked Laerak.

"This we are loathe to say, for it is truth and makes us seem unvalorous. But it was a single rider."

Laerak nodded. "Upon a huge mount?"

"Aye. You know of him?"

"We seek him, Gan and I. He stole the Thrimmod from Gautrond, two nights past."

"The Thrimmod?" His companions, bruised as he was and perhaps even more comely, exchanged looks of unease. "Gautrond is unguarded?"

"The walls stand firm and ring with the sound of marching feet. What were your losses?"

Damolak indicated his body. "For the most part, bruises. Six of our men lost their chastity." He smiled, somewhat coyly. "A mighty weapon he wielded."

Laerak stirred, as did Sergeant. No satiety for them during their long ride, but perhaps for the Dark One. When again they were in the King's Champion's halls in the Keep of Gautrond Laerak intended to spend days, weeks, or months on his back beneath Sergeant, until the spending of seed caused him pain — but there was no question of satisfaction or remaining need. "How did he take you?"

"Bent over," said Damolak. His nipples, bloodied, erected.

"No doubt," said Sergeant, eyeing the lithe Banneret.

"His weaponry," said Laerak again. Though aroused his tone brooked no levity.

"He is a sorcerer," said Damolak. "He raised a mist around us. It stank of strange spices — a wizard's bakery, if wizards baked. He rode out of the mist, naked, as proudly male as could be believed." Damolak's phallus grew as he spun his tale. "And his mount ... his mount ... they wove a spell. We were taken with great excitement, beholding him tall and dark as the shade under a thundercloud. His mount, of a perfect breed, equipped with the weapon of a god, who reeked of the scent of the spices as if he were the center of it, not the Elf."

"It was an Elf?" asked Laerak.

"I have seen a mariner of that race, of the ilk of Konyamiand. Elves are more than myth to me. He was an Elf."

"I have never seen an Elf," said Laerak. "But of them I've dreamed."

"How did he then proceed?" asked Sergeant, touching his phallus with deft strokes.

"We were aroused. He ... dismounted, and took us. Each thrust left us wanting more, each peaking made us burn with desire for more seed. He was with us for hours. We could not resist him. Who would raise a sword against such a master of pleasure?" Damolak fingered himself in conscious mirror of Sergeant. "Him I would see again." His eyes passed like a starving man's over a king's

repat, drinking the sight of the glistening dew that streamed down the King's Champion's penis. "Mounted I would be again ... by anyone."

And Laerak swung his leg over. Poised on the brink of sliding down he stropped. No more conscious had he ever been to the sweat, the stickiness between his buttocks. He glanced at Sergeant, who stroked himself fully.

Damolak turned, bent, and exposed a hole between chafed buttocks so large that it looked as if the Dark One's mount had ridden him. "I desire you, King's Champion."

Desperate, Laerak looked at Sergeant, who measured the erotic endurance of Damolak's three quiet companions. Laerak said, "Ride, Gan! The Dark One makes sorcery to delay us!" And mastering his desire with a shudder Laerak goaded Mouraus, who jerked as if startled from a dream. He charged past Damolak in his amorous pose, and Mouraus' great head turned, looking upon Damolak as something more than forbidden flesh.

With sweat streaming and phallus straining Laerak flew down the road. Through the hard pulse of blood in his ears he heard hoofbeats, with the known rhythm of Irath. The trees flashed by; but the forest exhaled breath hot as a dragon.

In minutes they came upon the Company of Archers. And behold a spectacle of lust more lurid than a week of nights in Gautrond. Each archer coupled with a man or more; great penises jutted and vomited seed; tight buttocks wantonly embraced the thrust of hard gleaming flesh; lips shiny with drool ate the blood-gorged meat of men. Howls and grunts rose like a pack of wolves tearing into a kill. The road, soaked with constant gouts of seed for long hours, was muddy. Instinct caused Laerak to slow. His phallus quivered and spat over Mouraus' mane. His mouth drained dry and his stomach quivered with need.

"Riders! Fresh riders!"

"It's been an hour!" A hand beckoned.

A hand grasped Laerak's penis, sliding on the seed. His vision cleared. It was Sergeant.

"Sorcery," said Sergeant.

Laerak closed his eyes. His chest heaved as vigorously as it did after a night of love, but his insides seethed with the molten needs of a virgin boy.

Sergeant started Irath into a sow trot. Hand on his lover's vibrating weapon he led them down the road, away from the moans, the growls, the rich fluids, the passions, and the spice of cinnamon.

As a slow bend in the road swallowed the orgy Laerak pressed his lips against Sergeant's. "I must have you," he said. His throat burned with need.

"And I you," said Sergeant. "But the Dark One may be no more than an hour ahead. We must put aside our passions. His sorcery ... "

Laerak pulled away, removed his love's grasping hand from his phallus. Tears glittered like light on the edge of a dagger. "There comes a time," he said, "when one considers putting aside everything worldly in return for a bout of love in the middle of a road." Sergeant kissed him again. "Not long now."

After less than a mile the Dark One left the Forest Road.

"Here," said Laerak. "See the tracks. He turned towards the west, towards Voi-Sannd."

Sergeant peered ahead. "Galma is treacherous for mounts without a track."

"He took it. And Mouraus and Irath are wiser than we. And if we're to make all our deprivation worthwhile we must ride."

"I shall lead," said Sergeant.

They set off into the forest.

Away from the rolling foothills of the Rondou the land stretched in a broad plateau Ocean, where it suddenly dropped in limestone cliffs towards the waves. This part of Galma bore the brunt of Ocean's darker mood; the growth was thick, hardy, and sometimes armored with thorns. The trees were less stately and tall; and as they approached the Voi-Sannd — here occupying a broad stretch of salty swamp between the cliffs and Ocean — they grew together in dense thickets hostile to their passage, so that their course (and the Dark One who preceded) became dizzy.

"We ride like drunken sailors," said Sergeant.

"Our course is that of the Dark One of Dreams," said Laerak. "His marks are now clear and fresh."

"So long as we have the Sun."

The shadows swiftly lengthened and grew thick. Gray clouds scudded in from the west on the ride of a moist, salty wind. The Dark One's marks — prints in the soil, tufts of ripped grass, snapped branches, enormous droppings from his mount — began to be harder to find, and to read.

At nightfall, they reached the cliffs.

"We've lost him," said Sergeant.

For the cliffs marched in a line towards north and south. Old stone, weathered by wind and storm, carved with ravines, there were many places to descend towards the green slimy stink below. The forest, reduced to a thicket of gnarled trees, they had left half a mile ago, so that the lip of the cliffs were clear. Had there been light they would have seen him, were he on top of the cliffs or even in the Voi-Sannd below.

Even Laerak sagged. Weariness lay deep. He ached from the long ride and he ached with unsatisfied need for Sergeant. The wind from the sea had an unpleasant chill, even though it was High Summer; the breath of Ocean came from many strange worlds. His nipples stood up proud and hard and he was sheathed in gooseflesh. "He could have taken a route a hundred rods north or south. Even if we found the right one, Voi-Sannd has eaten his marks as completely as the night erases sight of him."

"We cannot descend in the night," said Sergeant. "And it will be dangerous even in the day with our stallions."

"He did it," said Laerak. "Of that I'm sure. His steed is a demon."

"Let's camp," said Sergeant. "For the night. No fire — if he is still on the cliffs or just descended to the swamp he is sure to see it. At dawn we can descend to the marsh on foot. No mount will travel faster than a man in that muck."

And though Laerak's heart was not one to surrender a quarry to darkness and damp, he knew that to proceed was foolish. They were on the cusp of error. Search blindly, and the Dark One could slip beyond their grasp. Wait — and a slim chance remained.

So they tethered their mounts, spread blankets upon the ground, and tangled their bodies in but a single bout of love. Weariness was heavy and darkness pressed close. Even the spending of seed could not assuage such a state.

They fell asleep as the glow of the rising moon lit the heavy clouds with silver fire.

Laerak awoke with stars still swimming in the sky. A cold blade bit his neck. Eyes alive with lambent blue fire burnt inches from his.

A voice like the hiss of urine upon leather spoke. "Do not move, King's Champion. Elves freely spend the lives of Men."

Rawhide bit Laerak's wrists. The Elf had bound him while he slept, placing his hands in the small of his back. Laerak's legs were free. He could run — perhaps.

Sergeant was not there. Only Mouraus and Irath, shadows on the edge of vision, nervous.

A Dark One he was. For his locks were the shade of night and did not shine with the frosty luminance of the Moon. And though his eyes shone with blue radiance it was the glow of lightning muted by dark shadows of tall clouds. Tall he was, four or five cubits. He wore the flaps of a deerskin loincloth; the genitals and hard muscles of his buttocks swelled the skin fore and aft. His great legs looked as if they could run for days on end, and his arms were muscled to wield the mightiest of battle-blades.

His dagger he sheathed. His eyes fell upon the tattooed mark on Laerak's chest. "King's Champion. Sworn to the Mindean king. A valiant man — or so the tales said. Yet you and your companion I took with naught but a dagger."

"Where is Gan?"

"Is he your love?"

"Yes."

"Then listen." And the Elf raised his hand. "Still your breathing."

From afar came a sound, faint as the gasp of a dying baby exposed upon a hillside. Soft moans, and cries from which distance stole the edge of pain; a hiss like leather scraping over stone; a rhythmic thumping like a hard mallet banging upon stretched dry flesh.

"There is your beloved," said the Elf. "He is with my beloved."

"Who are you?"

"Who are you to ask?"

"This you know. I am King's Champion of Mindea. I seek he who stole the Thrimmod."

"Thrimmod," said the Elf. "That is the name for the Rod in your tongue?"

"It is. Who are you? I make formal challenge."

The Elf bent close. His eyes shone into Laerak's face. The luminance was warm and Laerak felt blood warm in his face. "I am Salanu son of Amilya, of the City of Remainyo across the mists of Ocean." He kissed Laerak. His tongue wound hot into the throat before withdrawing. "Do you know of me?" His breath smelt of —

"Of Elves I've heard tales. The ships of Konyamiand have called at Bitthrond. No Elf before you have I laid my waking eyes upon. But your name I do not know."

Salanu leaned back. Dark shapes, huge like the fruit of an apple tree in autumn, moved beneath his loincloth. "Konyamiand is a kinsman — a cousin, in your terms. A valiant man, tall and well-built. If Aradd permits I will lie with him on my next Heat."

"Return the Thrimmod," Laerak said. There was a tenseness in his groin, a whisper of desire.

Salanu laughed. "You are beaten, King's Champion. Make no demands."

"Why have you taken it?"

"Why? Because of its power. Surely you know its power."

"It has the Power of Warding. So said Zalku, God of Warrior-men, when he gave the Thrimmod to the first King ages past." Laerak rolled onto his side. His head was beneath the spread knees of the Elf.

"So it does. What know you of Elves?"

"That you are demons who sail Ocean."

"Our history?"

"You saw the face of the Gods receding into the blue on the morning the Worlds were birthed. And that is why your eyes are unlike all others."

A pool of bluish luminescence left Laerak's face, traveled down his chest, settled upon his groin where the warmth was welcome. "What do you know of Uklo, our nemesis?"

"I know nothing of Uklo."

"Uklo is the Dark God. He made the Sun but was scarred by the heats of its Making. Mocked by his lovers amongst the Divine he rebelled. He made his abode in the North of my World, where the shadows are long and the ice assuages his wounds. He hates us — we, the Elves. For we retain the beauty he lost." Salanu paused. "He builds in the estuary of the River of Hate a black fleet, to one day assail Remainyo and destroy us. For long we were able to resist him. But he is a God, and thus of a different and greater order than we. We are doomed, in the end, unless ... " here he looked again into Laerak's eyes " ... we fence our city with powerful magics."

"So you steal," said Laerak.

"We do not steal." The voice like thunder shook Laerak's heart. Rich, great, deep as the heavy sea, strong as the pounding waves that eat upon the shorelines of all the Worlds.

Salanu stood. "Beloved Aradd."

On the edge of shadow the massive stallion stood. Taller by far than Mouraus or Irath. His eyes shone with an unearthly glow, though his color tended towards the shade of smouldering coals. His flanks, hard and muscled as a warrior, shimmered white in the mingled light from eyes and moon. Yet his mane and tail were dark and drank up the glow.

Salanu crossed to the stallion. The beast was lathered from exertion. The Elf's arms encircled the great neck and they stood in quiet commune.

"Where is Gan?" Laerak demanded. But there was no answer from long minutes.

"Gan," the horse rumbled, "is that his name? All he muttered was 'Laerak' over and over."

"I am Laerak."

"Gan," said Aradd, "is content."

Salanu broke from the stallion and returned to where Laerak lay. He kissed Laerak. "Gan lives."

Laerak turned away. Tears stung his eyes. Sergeant lay in the forest, battered and torn; with his mind he could see it. And there was this Elf and this demonic horse who stood on the verge of shadows, holding the Thrimmod. And he, alone of all the line of the King's Champions of Mindea had been flyted.

Salanu said, "Gan lives. And he loves you." He kissed Laerak again. "As I do." He pressed Laerak flat and licked the salt away.

Aradd spoke. "You say we steal, Laerak. We do not." From him came a hissing noise like a vast snake slithering. "We will take the Rod of Might — your Thrimmod. But in exchange we will leave you a child."

"A child?" asked Laerak. "Of what use in a child?"

"In his day, when he is fertile," said Aradd, "he will be a breeder of great prowess — as I am. He will have the blood of the Elves, a fluid akin to magic wine. Man will become masters of this world."

"There is no child here," said Laerak.

Salanu said, "We shall make one, you and I."

The slithering noise from Aradd ceased.

Laerak looked at the Elf as he knelt. His eyes glowed more intensely. Callused fingers caressed Laerak's chest. He shuddered. "You are beasts."

Aradd laughed. "I wear the shape of a beast, lithe one. For I admire this one's weaponry. But I am no beast.

Next to me, you are."

"What are you?" Laerak asked.

"He is a God," said Salanu, still stroking.

Shadows wreathed Aradd, for he had not moved from the edge of the camp. Mouraus and Irath were not far from him; they were restless, smelling Aradd. Something dark and throbbing jutted from

between Aradd's hind legs — something the size of a broadsword. It smacked against his belly, faster and faster, as Aradd worked.

"He is a devil," said Laerak.

"Quiet," hissed Salanu. "He makes a sorcery for us."

Great bursts of air erupted from the white stallion's lungs — and thought the night was not cold enough, the bursts shone in the mad light like billows of steam. Aradd raised his head high so that the long shape like an aroused phallus jutted at the sky.

The stallion trumpeted. The stones of the cliff shook.

The sword swelled to a massive size and shook. The air reeked of tension, as if the lightning-stroke of a God was barreling in.

A rain began to fall, a rain of hot liquid, hot as blood but sticky like syrup. It reeked ... of cinnamon and the sour substances belonging to the province of alchemists.

Salanu shuddered. Silver fluid streaked him, knotted in the black hair, coiled on his chest. A titanic erection

thrust aside the forward flap of his loincloth; longer by far than Sergeant's, thicker than a gladiator's arm, the foreskin still mantled the sizzling knob of the head.

And Laerak, hands bound, body beaten, twitched in fear in the face of sorcerous perversion. And rose just as hard as the Elf and his beloved.

Salanu again kissed Laerak. This time he held it. Laerak's flesh melted with the hot seed covering them; his tongue yearned upwards desperate to thread the labyrinth to Salanu's gullet.

But even as Laerak kissed with burning passion, he looked. The great beast who was not a beast, Aradd, stood with head hanging limp. Legs quivered with strain. But the great weapon throbbed undiminished, angry and blazing. Arcs of white foam webbed the stallion's hard belly. The head slowly lifted, and turned towards Mouraus.

A chill spread through Laerak, but he did not cease devouring the breath of the Elf.

Salanu undid the belt holding his loincloth. His eyes shone with the radiance of exploding storms. He broke the kiss and knelt over Laerak's face, parting his buttocks with a free hand.

Laerak beheld the Elf's secret hole.

The pucker was no different than those he'd explored before Sergeant — tight, hair thronged, a ring of desire to adorn any phallus. But ... there were a pair of glands, set on either side of the hole where the hard buttocks sloped in. Laerak thought of an oak leaf, for there was a pattern of veins and sacks. A pair of tubes led from those glands and buried themselves in the seed-sacks.

In the lambent light Laerak saw fluid coursing down. The glands pulsed as the hole twitched.

Salanu's buttocks engulfed Laerak's face. The odor — again of cinnamon and unholy substances — swelled; without a thought Laerak's tongue slid forth and lapped at the strange hole like a dog investigating a potential mate. The taste was human — salt, sweat, hard flesh, hair, tang. His saliva

bubbled and the overflow slid over his cheeks.

The Elf bent forward, engulfing Laerak's phallus with his throat. The constriction sank all the way down the shaft; Laerak felt Salanu cough once. He was embedded deep. Fluid oozed up around his flesh, cascading down its length to mat in the hair at the base.

Cool air flooded his face as Salanu lifted away. The small sacks and veins round the Elf's hole were filled with a whitish fluid. Ropes of a sticky substance connected both halves of the buttocks.

The Elf turned. The electric glow from his eyes blinded Laerak. "You shall end my Heat." The Elf's fist stood Laerak's meat upright, slid along the flesh, enticing as a platoon of soldiers on the march.

"What is Heat?" gasped Laerak.

"Breed me," said Salanu. And he sat down upon the head of the fat penis.

The sphincter, clasped tight, swiftly surrendered, for Laerak jabbed upwards as powerfully as his bound body would allow. Laerak surged into the tunnel of heaven, his cries of desire echoing with Salanu's over the marshes lapping at the base of the cliffs below.

Salanu's head turned upwards, just as Aradd's had, to gaze sightless at the shapeless clouds suffused with lunar silver. Spittle shone on the corners of his mouth, along the line of his jaw. He crooned, "Now, Aradd, now," in a feeble voice as Laerak began to move within him.

The great stallion stood now behind Mouraus. His weapon was more mighty than thronged armies. He nickered in a manner halfway between a horse and a man grunting.

With motions liquid as the indifferent moonlight Aradd mounted Mouraus.

Laerak turned at the scream of penetration, phallus throbbing.

Aradd's dark weapon sliced into Laerak's mount. Desperately Mouraus twisted, impaled and suffering from the penetration of the gigantic meat.

Desperately Laerak hammered at Salanu, driving harder, wanting to bruise the hard buttocks of the Elf with shuddering thrusts.

Salanu regarded Laerak with his livid eyes. "Does Aradd in his rut make you burn as much as I?"

Laerak spat, "Harder." His seed-sacks were swollen with wine.

Salanu rested his hands upon Laerak's tattoo, squatting half a foot above the muscled man, enjoying the spearing his took from the meat. The sacks around his hole throbbed with fluid; they dripped liquid thicker than sweat but thinner than man-seed.

Mouraus fell silent. And Laerak turned to look at his mount. His destrier stood with tail demurely swept aside, bearing Aradd's great weight with braced legs.

A sullen flame appeared on the flying tips of Aradd's mane. A kiss of flame, not chaste, but growing more and more brighter as the stallion drove harder into the other.

"What — " Laerak gasped " — what — "

"Silence," said Salanu. "Love me."

Laerak's hips flew harder.

The flames rose higher over Aradd and the lip of the cliff was bathed in red. The crimson radiance filled the arena. Mouraus, lathered, with massively parted buttocks. Irath, aroused, dripping his equine fluids. The radiance fed from the heat of the horses, flowed on the bellies of the sea-born clouds.

Laerak could not endure this. No man he had known had the muscular strength the Elf did in that tunnel. Laerak's phallus angrily shouldered hot, quivering flesh aside. He stabbed his length in —

— and a second rain began, for Salanu's weapon erupted.

The seed-sacks, dripping with fragrant sweat, bloated, pulsed, and squeezed. Great gouts of fluid shot from the slit.

Laerak screamed. Fluid bubbled into Salanu's rectum — not his seed, but something else that had the consistency of male seed. The sudden sensation and the spasming of that muscle-girded passage drove him to spurt.

Salanu crooned as the Man emptied in him.

The Elf rolled off Laerak's phallus the moment the last pulse of seed ended. He went over onto his shoulder, pulled his knees up. Between his legs, in the mounting red glow, his seed-sacks throbbed still. But his hole, which should gape and wink and show Laerak's bubbling seed, was closed tight as the gates of Gautrond after his raid. The glands guarding the hole were swollen with surging fluid.

"And it begins," breathed Salanu.

Laerak twisted in his bonds. The flow became brighter. He felt heat upon his face, radiating from the horses. "What?"

Salanu looked as if he'd bathed in blood. The Elf's hole now pulsed, and his buttocks rolled with slow grace. He groaned, and bent double. "Silence, King's Champion, while it grows." A spasm shook him, as if he cramped.

Aradd's voice came, over the growls of Mouraus pleased beyond belief. "It shall not be long, beloved." The slurps from Mouraus' buttocks were long and liquid.

Salanu cried out. The muscles on his stomach rippled. He rolled over onto his belly, spreading his legs. His phallus jutted outwards again, digging into the soil.

Something swelled inside him. Laerak beheld the hole push outwards. Something was inside.

Salanu clasped his buttocks together with the fanaticism of a mad virgin intending to remain so in the face of a party of sea-weary sailors. "Not long," Salanu breathed. His voice squeezed with agony. "Not long."

The flames along Aradd's back leapt to a bonfire. And the white stallion again trumpeted, the sound shot forth by great seed-sacks contracting. And seed flooded the guts of the passive stallion.

But this Laerak did not watch.

Salanu's buttocks spread wide. The hole distended. A minuscule foot appeared in the middle of the pucker, wet and shiny. His eyelids closed and his penis throbbed against the ground. The muscles of

his midsection rippled downwards. A second foot appeared through the anus.

The crimson blaze along the mating stallions died.

Salanu hugged his stomach with arms corded with muscle. His buttocks lifted slightly into the air and he opened his knees. His cries he forced into the loam. The spasms drove out the length of a pair of legs, and his hole opened wider and wider ...

The small body emerged into the world wet and glistening with sperm.

Salanu peaked with another flood of his seed into the ground.

The Elf pulled himself away from the puddle of steaming fluid. Sitting up he took the infant, from whose lips a thick goo dripped. He pressed his lips over the tiny ones and hollowed his cheeks. His throat bobbed as he drank.

When father and son (for Laerak saw that the child was male — very much so, almost equine) broke the kiss, the child's first cries were heard in the world.

Salanu crawled to Laerak. The Elf's face was gray, strained, sweaty. He pressed the child's lips to Laerak's hard breast, just inches from the armed man upon the stallion.

"Here is the weregild for your Thrimmod," said Salanu. His voice was weak as if from a long evening of love.

"What shall I do?" asked Laerak. The babe — his son — motions stirred his breast.

"Feed him the milk of dreams," said Salanu, "and be glad no Dark Gods inhabit this his world."

*

In the gray morning, humid and moist, Sergeant stumbled back to the cliff edge. His gait was wide and he felt the air kiss his innards, coursing through an anus stretched so wide that he had not been able to close it throughout the entire night.

Liquid cinnamon caked the backs of his thighs, clogged his buttocks.

"Laerak," he said, seeing the King's Champion of Mindea seated by the embers of a fire. His love's strong back was streaked with dirt. "Laerak. They are gone. They passed me in the night, descending towards the Voi-Sannd."

The King's Champion turned.

A naked babe nursed at his muscled chest, drinking the strong draught of man.

Sergeant could not speak. But he guessed the tale. The Thrimmod was gone forever, lost to the Elves who rode the misty Ocean.

Laerak said, "We have lost." A tight voice. "But an exchange has been made. They have an artifact of Wardship. But we have something greater."

Sergeant knelt. A huge burst of air and seed erupted from between his buttocks, falling warmly upon his calves. Sorcerous fluids sizzled upon the ground.

Laerak kissed him. "Behold." And he held the babe up. "The only son of man never born of woman."