



## THE KRYFFYR QUEST

By

Scymnus du Berg

One summer day, in the south of Narbicana, a woodcutter's son named Orogald was splitting kindling for his father's fire, when two young knights rode into his father's yard, which was but a short way from the road that went by it. One of the knights was merry and fair, but the other was dark of hair and eye and looked grim. Orogald knew that they were knights, from the bearing of them and from the fashion of their swords. For they sat their horses with the left side toward him, as knights of Narbicana always do in time and place of peace.

And the grim knight wore a cloak, though but a light one, in that warm weather.

The two knights sat their horses and watched a while, until he finished cleaving the heavy piece of tree trunk he was working on. For he did not use that axe as most men do, sliding left hand out toward blade to raise the axe and letting hand slip back to other at haft's end when axe strikes down. But he kept both hands in place at the end of haft, and did much, both of raising and of striking, with his wrists. Nor did he work the axe-blade loose from wood when stroke was struck and wood was still unsplit, but lifted axe and stubborn wood together and brought them strongly down again upon the chopping block. And as they were about to strike the block, he bent his knees to lend force unto his stroke, straightening legs again as he lifted. And his wrists and his chest were strong.

When he had cleft that piece of wood and began to look at them while resting, the dark knight said to Orogald, for it seemed the merry one was loth to speak the question, "Is this the place?" And it seemed to Orogald that there was merriment behind the grimness of him.

Now the village wherein Orogold's father sold his wood was just around a hill past which the road was leading to them. And he thought that they were asking whether they had come to the place where the village was. So he answered quickly, "Yes." The knight said, "Good." Then he straightened himself in his

saddle and said to his fellow, “This is the place.” He turned to Orogald again and asked, “Where may we lodge?” Orogald pointed to the village, which had the hill between it and them, and said, “There is an inn.” The dark knight nodded and said, “Thanks.” And as they turned their horses, he saw that two pack horses followed them, and each pack horse bore armour of mail for him who led it. He wondered why those knights who carried armour in a time of peace, had no squire to travel with them.

Both the knights rode on toward the village.

Now, when the knights had been in the village for some days and seemed to wait, as men and women said, for some purpose of which they did not speak, Orogald thought more of the speech which they had had with him on that first day. It seemed to him that they might have been seeking a place of which some other man was meant to tell them, and that somehow they might have thought he was that man. The more he thought of it, the more it seemed to him that this was like to be the way of things and that he had thus misled them, to cause them waiting in a place where the thing for which they waited would not come or happen. So he spoke of it to his father, who agreed that this might be the right of it. And his father said that no one likes to seem slow-minded or to seem to meddle

foolishly in matters not his own, but that a man should always do his best to make right any mistake his words have caused for others. So Orogald went to the inn and meant to ask whether he might speak with them. But before he uttered word, they spoke gladly to him, as men who welcomed a chance to speak with one who had done them great kindness or who had a common cause with them. They bade him sit and take his choice of wine or ale, and he drank ale with them. And they seemed like men who waited and who were yet content to wait.

Orogald spoke courteously to them, and with respect, and with no great regard for their being unblooded as their shaven faces said they were and as indeed at their age they were most likely to be, at a time when peace was strong in Narbicana.

They told him their names – the dark knight was called Dunard, and the other Miclas – and he told them his. And they spoke of such matters as the food and ale their landlord served, and asked the names of certain maidens they had seen, though not in a manner which would show they meant to follow these things further. But Orogald's mind was ever upon the mistake which he had made for them, and he wanted quickly to make it right, as far as could be done, and to explain how it had happened. Not knowing how to fit that matter with the talk that

was toward, he said, of a sudden, “You are in the wrong place.” And Dunard looked at him, while Miclas seemed to understand his trouble, and said, “How can that be? You told us this was the place.” And Orogald made to speak again, but Dunard put up his hand and said, “This is the place. There can be no doubt of that.” And Orogald was silent and knew not what to say. But Dunard looked at him closely and said, “It is not yet the time.” And it seemed to Orogald that the dark knight made some mockery within himself, though not of Orogald. So he thanked them for their ale, and left them.

Orogald told his father about this, and his father smiled once and suddenly, but would say nothing of it.

The day after that, the two knights came again to the woodcutter’s cottage, and they asked Orogald to go riding with them. And they had with them one of their two pack horses, which bore a saddle borrowed from their landlord. It seemed to Orogald that they did not mean him to be part of any hidden purpose but wished only to be friendly with one who had been good to them, though he did not know how. So, with his father’s leave, who saw no harm in those young knights, he took the thing they offered, though it was not much pleasure for him bodily as he was not skilled in riding upon horseback. But they urged him to try to learn it

well. “A woodcutter upon horseback could be stout man at arms in time of war,” said dark Dunard.

“There is no war,” said Miclas.

“I know,” said Dunard then. “That is the best of it.” And Orogald, who was a simple youth, made bold to say, “When I saw ye first, I thought Miclas the merrier, but now I think that you are.”

“He is not so serious about it,” said dark Dunard. Orogald laughed, but the grim knight made no smile.

And often after that, Orogald went riding with them, sometimes going to a stream where the three would swim, or pointing out the farm where dwelt a maiden they had asked about on that first day of the friendship that was growing, or roaming in the woods where he could show them certain trees and say what use he hoped to sell them for when time was ready for it. For he knew a little of all the uses of wood for carpentry and for carving, and for making of wheels and handles of tools, and many other things. But the knights gave him no knowledge of the part of Narbicana which they came from, nor said which part it was, nor spoke of what they sought in Orogald’s quiet village. And Orogald never asked, although he often wondered, why Dunard wore a cloak in summer. That cloak was worn

with its clasp on the right side of his neck, so that the garment covered the whole of his left side, and Dunard wore it always. And as the knights had always their swords in goodly scabbards at their sides, Orogald took to carrying his best axe about with him. Most of his neighbours smiled at that, and some did more than smile, but it seemed to him, while the knights were there, a fitting custom, though he could not follow it when they would leave. And his father let him away from much of his work, for he knew the youth would gladly later make up, by working harder, for what the father deemed a gainful idleness. And the sun was warm upon the three that summer.

But late one afternoon as they came back from riding near the fields beyond, there was a great stir in the village, and they saw folk from all around it, and a few from other villages, gathered, with wonder and much talk, about a dray which many horses had hauled along the road. And upon that dray was what Orogald thought at first to be a bird of wondrous size, though he thought next that there was a beast behind it on the dray. For he saw only a great, smooth-feathered head, with its huge beak curving away from him, and beyond that large paws. But even as he thought this, it seemed strange to him that a bird and a beast so large could

be so close together on one dray. Then he saw with a leaping of his heart that bird and beast were one.

“Dastards!” shouted Dunard, at Orogald’s left ear. “How took ye the Kryffyr?” (For “kryffyr” is the Narbicanan word for griffon). And he rode toward the dray. Such was his anger that people drew away, leaving Dunard and his two friends to face the men whose dray it was, if his friends would face them with him. And Miclas and Orogald moved not aside, but waited.

“We hunted him,” said a man who seemed to be the leader of those eight who followed the dray. “And now we got him.”

“Not with hunter’s skill but with coward’s cunning is a kryffyr taken by such as you,” Dunard called out, with his voice raised for all to hear.

“However we took the beast, we got him now,” the leader said. “And someone who can afford to cage the beast will pay us well for it.”

“That the Kryffyr is an animal, no man can deny,” Dunard made answer, “but say not ‘beast’ of it in that manner. The Kryffyr has a place in the lives of men that nothing else can take. My people know him well.”

“What do people in the south of Narbicana know of beasts in the north?” the leader shouted.



“We moved from the north in the long ago, when the king did call us to defend the south,” said dark Dunard. “We knew of the Kryffyr then and we have not forgotten him.” He paused, and then he said, “I will tell the rest of you.”

He gathered his breath and began again. “The Kryffyr dwells in the north and leaves it only to give a warrior’s death to those who well deserve it. When a man should die a warrior’s death but Narbicana is not at war and there is no other cause worth fighting for, the Kryffyr comes to him. And then he fights such a battle as few warriors may engage in. For it is told to us by the wise that things do not go well with a man who merely lets the Kryffyr slay him.”

“Legends from the north,” the rough man sneered.

“The truth is cold and clear,” said dark Dunard. And with his voice well raised, he said again, “When the Kryffyr comes to a man and slays him in a fight well fought, that man’s sons, and their sons, may bear the title Kryffyr-fighter, as many warriors well know. And they may wear a silver badge, worked in the shape of a Kryffyr rampant, in honor of their sire or grandsire. But no one may hold such honour won by any further back than his own grandsire, and such grandsires are rare.”

Dunard threw back his cloak from his left shoulder, so that it hung straight down his back. And all might see that his left arm and side were as whole and strong as were his right. But those who were in front saw also upon his chest, above the heart, a silver badge in the shape of a griffon rampant. And he said in a voice that roared, “Free the Kryffyr.”

Then Dunard got down from his horse’s back saying, “You do not deserve to face a man and horse together.” Miclas got down also and so did Orogald. And Dunard laid his cloak across his horse’s saddle. And getting down from horseback suited Orogald right well, for if he had to fight, he did not want to do it there but with his feet upon the ground, where they were wont to be. But he thought that Miclas and Dunard might have better served the common cause by staying where they had sat. Nevertheless, he stood his ground with them.

“You cannot fight for such a thing,” the leader of the rough men said.

“That is for a knight to say,” said the knight Miclas. And he drew his sword, and so did Dunard. And Orogald held his axe ready.

Since neither party asked for help, nor appealed unto the law, the men of the village made no move to stop the fight, but stood to watch the weapon-work. And the women went indoors.

The men who faced the three had divers weapons: swords, spears and a mace. And three came forth against Miclas, and four against Dunard, and one, who had a sword, chose Orogald as easy prey. And in doing this they made good judgement of Dunard and Miclas, but were less wise concerning Orogald, who had no skill in battle and would have fallen quickly before two of them. Indeed, as he remembered that he lacked skill in fighting with an axe (though he was skilful with a spear), he looked to a foeman more like a farmer with an axe than like a woodman, for he seemed unsure about its use.

But when Orogald saw his foeman's malice, his own anger took fire in him and he moved as habit drove him. As the one man came toward him and made a feigning thrust, Orogald dodged beneath the sword point as if it were a branch's end in an awkward place, and struck workmanlike at the foeman's root – that is to say, his ankle.

The axe-edge split the pad of muscle at the ankle's outer side and cut through the foot beneath the ankle-bone. And Orogald drew smartly back, which saved his shoulder from a downward cutting stroke the man was making with the hiltward portion of his blade. Then the foeman felt the pain of the stroke which Orogald had given him, and screamed, and Orogald swept the axe into his ribs. Had the

others been less sanguine at the first, they would have had him then, for such an axe-stroke is clumsy to recover from. But those who fought Dunard and Miclas had no eyes for Orogald just then. The knights were fighting back to back, not with disregard of Orogald but from habit of weapon practice together, which they had forgotten Orogald was lacking. For they thought of him as one of them. And they were fighting well together, though neither yet had killed a foe nor put one from the fighting.

One of the foemen had his back to Orogald, who was minded then to drive the axe into his backbone. But he thought that this might not be knightly killing, and his friends might be ashamed of it, and he thought also that little less than axe-stroke would turn the man's attention to him. So in the end he turned his axe and smote with the back of it upon the man's left heel, and crushed it. And the man fell backward to the ground, and Orogald snatched his spear and cast it aside. For in his haste and fury he thought not to use the spear himself. The foeman he had struck lay moaning, and two more turned to Orogald. One, who bore a sword, staggered and fell dead, of a wound in his back, which gave Orogald clearer knowledge of knightly action in a melee with foes out-numbering, even as he swung a hefty stroke at the neck of the other man and killed him in making of a

stroke that wounded Orogald's left side, though he knew not this until the heat of battle cooled. For the man had thrust his spear at Orogald, who moved aside, and then he drew the spear-point back in cutting movement as Orogald had struck.

Now Orogald saw that Dunard and Miclas each faced two foes still, but when he would have helped them one cried out, "Back, woodman! Would you have them all?" So he leaned upon his axe to watch. But when that cry was made, the man with the mace turned his head to see what Orogald was doing, and Miclas struck him on the beard below the face, with point of sword, a harmless stroke, ere parrying a spear-thrust from his other foe, who'd aimed it for his knee. And Miclas grinned at the man with the mace, much as to say, "Keep mind on what art doing, lad." And he warded a stroke of the mace and dodged a spear-thrust. And Dunard also was warding and dodging and striking.

It seemed to Orogald that the foemen were hindered by their diversity of weapons, for none had in his own actions the feeling of what his partner did. It would have been better for them if the two spearmen worked together against one knight, while swordsman and mace-wielder faced the other, Orogald was thinking.

Now Orogald saw a thing that would be tried only by young and reckless knights who had practiced well together. Miclas touched lightly Dunard with back of left hand upon the buttock, and each drove forward making strokes that seemed to Orogald like movements in a dance and not strokes made to hurt. But the foemen seemed not to see them thus, and parried and warded, leaping backward. And none of the strokes struck a foeman, but none of the strokes were warded, for all of the quickness of both knights and foemen. But finally their strokes were warded, and then the knights moved back, lest each be caught between his pair of foemen. For these moved apart as they went back. And when the knights had but four long paces between them, each went quickly backward two, moving slightly each to other's left, leaving back exposed, and the last step of each knight was a reaching back of the right foot, with a stooping turn of the body. And in that stooping, each knight struck backward suddenly at the foe who faced his partner from the left. Thus Dunard struck a foe of Miclas on the side of his right knee, which cast him to the ground, and cut it half-way through, while Miclas gave his victim a frightful wound between the hip bone and the rib, which killed him soon. And each foeman who was left – swordsman and mace-wielder – quickly raised his weapon against the arm that hurt his fellow, so that both now were unguarded

as facing Miclas and Dunard, who were not slow to strike again. Each struck the foe who faced him, between neck and shoulder, and the blades cut deep. Then, with no more foes to face them, for no fight was in the wounded, they leaned upon their swords and breathed awhile, and each pushed into a wound some cloth, cut from his own clothing, to stop it bleeding. For Miclas had a wound like Orogald's and Dunard had a stab wound in the thigh. And for cutting the cloth they used their daggers which had been used for warding only and thus had no blood but theirs upon them. And Orogald did likewise with his wound, using the dagger of Dunard. The three looked on each other with great friendship, and Dunard said unto Miclas, "Greedy, these peasants," and all three laughed together, in great joy of life. Then the three men marched together, with faces set and grim, and none would hinder them, unto a house and through it and into the yard behind and there privily were sick together. But years of training held the knights, and Orogald held himself as grim as they. Then the three young men went back into the street, and Dunard laid in the dust his sword, which was still bloody, and let the dust gather into the blood and dry into it, before he wiped it from his sword. And Miclas and Orogald did likewise with their weapons. And Dunard looked upon the dead, and said, "It was a better death than they deserved,

but death in battle is what he seeks who goes against the Kryffyr.” Then he called for a spade, and one was brought to him, and he and Orogald and Miclas went back into the yard, and covered with earth what they had left therein when they were sick together. Then they came out again, and Dunard stood the spade into the earth and said, with voice well raised, “Let no one use this again till these are under ground or taken home for burial, if any there be who want them.” And this was said and done to strengthen himself as much as for the meaning of it, and yet it was said well, and was well done.

Now, some of the people of the village were tending the wounded foemen, and some were looking closely at the captive Kryffyr, but the most part of them stood where they had watched the fighting, to see what the knights would do. And Dunard said to them, “It is time to free the Kryffyr.” But a weaver said, “Does this beast not in truth belong to these men ye have wounded, since they took it? Or should not our Duke decide whether it is theirs or not, before ye set it free?”

And Dunard made answer: “The Kryffyr belongs to him who fights it, and only while he does so. It is not the Duke’s to judge – if he will judge me wrong in freeing it, then let it be so. But I do not think he will. If the courts of the law will



have these men own the Kryffyr, then the courts may bring it back for them. But I do not think they will.”

Now the three young warriors looked closely at the Kryffyr and at the binding of it. The Kryffyr lay upon its back, and its wings were slack by its side but rested on the dray. His paws, both fore and hinder, were bound, with the back of one fore paw against the back of the other. And each toe was crossed with its mate on the other paw, and these were separately bound together, two by two, most cruelly. For Orogald saw that the paws were touching with the inmost toe of one against the inmost toe of the other. And when he looked more closely, he saw that the claws on those toes – which a Kryffyr may sheathe or bring out at will – had been pushed forward and stout cord had been tightly tied about the tender roots of them. And the beast was suffering more from this than from any other hurt which was but bodily. There were great chains which also held his legs, but it seemed the captors had depended more upon the binding. And when the villagers saw how cruel the binding was, they were better minded to help the knights and Orogald to set him free. A seamstress cut the binding of the claws with all the skill she could to cause no further pain, and the blacksmith took the fetters off that held the Kryffyr’s legs. Poles were nailed to the sides of the dray, and sheets were

stretched upon them, that the Kryffyr might rest and sometimes stretch, with none to watch him lying helpless without bonds. But soon there came a sound of movement from behind the hangings, as of a thing that would have done with rest, and the sheets and poles were taken down. But the Kryffyr could not leave the dray of his own doing without rolling on one of his wings, which, it was seen, might well do harm to it. So men took some of the sheets which had been used to screen him, and knotted these together, and tied the two remaining ends to the middles of stout poles. And they who held one pole got upon one side of the dray, and they who held the other got upon a smaller dray which was brought up close upon the other side. And the men worked the rope of sheets beneath the Kryffyr's shoulders, and lifted the upper part of his body so that one shoulder was beyond the edge of the dray that bore him and his wing was above the other dray. Then the second dray was wheeled away, and the Kryffyr rolled from the one where he had lain.

The great beast landed in a crouch upon the ground, with his huge wings a little lifted. Then it strode toward a cottage. And when Orogald saw the folded wingtips reaching beyond and above the lion's haunch and tail, he found it somewhat funny, though he dared not laugh, or even smile, while that proud and baleful eye

beheld him. And as the Kryffyr walked, it put its hind paw upon the place where its forepaw had been, as cats are seen to do.

People walked beside the Kryffyr, at a distance – and Orogald saw among them his father, looking at him anxiously – or followed behind, until it came to the cottage which suited it. There it reared upon its hind legs and placed its forepaws upon the roof, against the eave. And there it spread its wings well out, and struck three times downward with them. And each time he struck with greater strength, but for each of the first two strokes he held himself down against the cottage to keep his wings from lifting him. But when he made the third stroke of his wings, he also pushed with his forepaws on the roof and bounded with his hind legs, so that he went high enough to fly. And he circled the village once as he went higher quickly, and then he flew away.

And as they stood watching the Kryffyr rise, Orogald's father came to him and said, "Son, you are wounded."

And Orogald looked into his father's eyes and said, "The rind is scratched, indeed." And then he fell, for he had lost more blood than Miclas had, and his will was not bent like a knight's strongly to act against such loss, and his mind had been upon the Kryffyr only, but his father caught him and raised him in his arms.

And Orogald's father said to dark Dunard, "He belongs with ye until this thing has ended. Whether he will be mine again awhile, I do not know, and he is all I have since death of wife, but now he is with you. Let us take him to the inn."

Dunard nodded. Then he said to a younger man who stood nearby, "Go you, if you will, and tell your lord of killing in his village." And the young man left for the castle of his lord.

Then Dunard and Miclas went to the inn, and the woodcutter bore Orogald with them, where their wounds were tended. But the two foemen who remained, he of the half-severed leg and he whose heel was crushed, were taken to the weaver's house and there were tended as well as might be done until the lord's surgeon could be brought to them.

And on the morrow the lord of that manor came to them, with his surgeon and his Advisor in the Kingdom's Law, and he heard what had been done, from the knights and Orogald, from the wounded foemen, and from some villagers. And he called them all to the hall of the inn, and he said that he would not give judgment in a matter which dealt with doings of a Kryffyr. "There may be law which deals with this, but I know nothing of it," the lord said then. And he told the foemen, "You must put your cause before the King."

And the foemen looked grimly at Dunard, at Miclas, and at Orogald, and they said to him, “We will.”

The lord said, “A messenger has gone to tell the King of killing in his country.” And he left the inn. But three of his men-at-arms stayed in the inn and kept themselves between the three young men and their two foes, until those two had left the inn. And then the men-at-arms lodged where they could see the inn and the weaver’s home, and when a man of one side or the other came outside, they went between him and the lodging of his foes. And it was duty of the men-at-arms to keep this watch while both those groups of foemen were within their lord’s domain.

The bodies of the slain foemen were placed in burial boxes, with good earth packed about them in the boxes, until kinsmen should come to take those boxes home or to say where they should be put into the earth. And the lord had messengers take word to the kinsmen of the slain, whose names were given him by the two who lived.

Orogald and his two friends stayed at the inn until their wounds were mended. And while their wounds were mending and the young knights took their ease after doing of a deed well done, Orogald was sometimes minded to tell them how he

had caused them stay in their right place by simple error, but he forebore. For it seemed to him that there was other great doing to be done, and he did not want to seem an unmeet fellow for those who were to do it. And Miclas and Dunard had ever seemed to feel that he belonged with them in what they were about, and he thought that their knowledge was better than his in matters of this kind. And then one evening Dunard went to the cottage of Orogald's father and spoke long with him. And in the morning, the woodcutter came to the inn, and he was leading a pony which he and Orogald had used to draw their wood-cart – or a sled in winter – and he gave it to Orogald and bade him farewell. And he gave him both the pony and money to buy another horse, with word to send the pony home when he had bought one.

His father said, "You have started a thing that you must finish, and here is not the end of it." And Orogald was sorrowful, but his father sent him on his way, with Dunard and Miclas.

And Orogald bought from the landlord of the inn that saddle which he had been using.

When the three had mounted and rode from the inn's stable yard, Dunard stopped upon the street and looked upon his friends. "We entered the village

there,” he said, and pointed. “It seems to me our way is north.” And they rode upon the trodden way that lay most nearly northward. But as they rode along the village street, the men-at-arms who were their lord’s guardians of peace in this matter, came out of the house where they were staying and kept between them and the weaver’s house. And when they passed the weaver’s house, the eldest of the men-at-arms asked, “Are you leaving?” And Dunard said, “We are.” Then it became the duty of those men-at-arms to see that the young riders’ foemen left not the village until twelve hours had passed.

And Dunard rode with his cloak down over his left shoulder to hide the silver badge.

Now, shortly before noon they came to a town on their road north, which was beyond the domain of Orogald’s lord, and as they drew near the town Dunard stopped beside the first man they saw in speaking distance of them, and he asked that man, “Is this the place?”

And the man looked back at him and said, “I do not know.”

But Dunard said kindly and with courtesy, “It matters not that you do not know, good master, if you have will to answer me. Is this the place?”

And the man looked at him as at a fool, and said, “No it is not.”

And Dunard said, “Thank you, good master.” And they rode on. But Orogald rode nearer to Dunard and asked, “What place?” Dunard then looked at him askance and answered only, “How in the name of Peace should I know?” They rode in silence for a time, and then all three broke out together laughing at the fullness of the jest. And since they had food enough to last them for a while, they rode through that town and onward. But they left their names, and the names of the places were their homes, with a clerk of the town’s chief warden, as the law demanded of men who had done killing not yet judged.

And that was their first adventure.



## II

Elodoban of Norrimnos and Ealina his beloved, who were of wizard-kin, walked silently into the Judgement Hall of Korferd, in the southwest of Narbicana, where the trial of a woman of the dukedom, charged with slaying of a kind forbidden unto women, was about to be begun. Duke Orlonuis was not yet in the Chair of Judgment, or they would not have been allowed to enter, but Elodoban could see the Duke was soon expected. They made their way to places on a bench that was nigh empty, and sat down. As they did, the duke came out into the hall, attended by his Adviser in the Kingdom's Law, and the jury and the spectators stood. The woman Miolona was brought up the middle aisle between two guards and stood before the Bar of Judgment.

The Duke then said, "Miolona of Norrimnos, you are accused that you, on the seventh day of Nommolos, in this formetnith year since the Tellarian

Manifestation, did wilfully slay Woulun of Fomnos, for a cause other than that he did attempt dishonourable or harmful assault on you or other woman or upon a child of less than fourteen years. How say you, do you admit to guilt in this cause, or do you challenge the King's Accuser to prove that you be guilty?"

Miolona stood defiant. "I challenge the King's Accuser to prove that I be guilty."

"He is so challenged," said the Duke. "Have you a lunden to uphold your challenge?"

"I challenge unassisted," said Miolona.

The King's Accuser called his witnesses, and their evidence was forthright and simple, and Miolona did not attempt cast doubt on any word of it. There were three witnesses, two serving-girls and a ploughman, who said that Woulun had been visiting Burcu and his wife Miolona and had suggested jokingly, as they were saying a farewell in the yard, that Miolona might return some night that visit, without Burcu, and Burcu had asked how Woulun could help him have children, who had five while Woulun's wife had had none given her. Woulun then had said he meant not that Miolona should bear a child of his but only that he should make use of her as whore.

Burcu then had asked whether Woulun would beg forgiveness of Miolona and accept his punishment at Burcu's hands or go to formal judgement where his shame would be made public and he would be in public punished. Woulun then replied, "I'll take such punishment as thou hast foresight enough to mete," and rushed at Burcu, who was unarmed, and cut his leg from under him. Burcu fell, and Woulun raised sword to cut his head off, when Miolona, who had seized a heavy stone when sword came out, struck Woulun heavily where spine meets skull. He died at once. Then Miolona tried to get the others and Burcu to agree upon the tale that she had screamed at Woulun, causing him to turn, and Burcu had flung the stone unto his neck. But they would not agree thereto and be forsworn. Thus ended the evidence brought forward by the King's Accuser of Korferd South. For Burcu did not give evidence against his spouse.

The only questioning of the witnesses that Miolona did, brought out more strongly the fact that Woulun had truly aimed at Burcu's neck the stroke that he had been about to strike.

Then said the Duke, "You have heard the evidence that the King's Accuser brought against you, Miolona. Do you desire to give evidence in your own defence?"

“The evidence the witnesses have given to the court has been the truth,” said Miolona. “I seek only to address the court upon the merits of the case.” Elodoban and Ealina looked at each other. From what they knew of the Law of Narbicana, the merits of the case were clear.

“Will you so address the court before or after the King’s Accuser hath so done?” the Duke asked. “Because you gave no evidence, the choice is yours.”

“I choose address the court after the King’s Accuser hath so done,” said Miolona.

The speech of the King’s Accuser was brief. He said the evidence made it clear that Miolona had killed a man for that he meant to kill her husband, and for that cause only. He said that Woulun who was slain had not attempted harm to Miolona herself or to a child, and the Law of Narbicana clearly forbade a woman to kill or to fight in defence of man or country, or for any cause other than the defence of her person or of another woman or a child, except that she might fight other women in single combat to oppose a law upheld by other women.

“Our Law is clear on this,” the King’s Accuser said. “It says a woman may not resort to violence even in defence of those she is permitted to defend, unless it is manifest to her that no man’s help for them may be had. Our Law does thus

preserve the sacredness of woman as the bearer of life, in forbidding her the taking of life unless it be for the defence of others who have borne life or who may bear it, or of those who are still properly within the care of women. So sacred is the place that woman hath as bearer of life that she is forbidden to fight even in the defence of Narbicana, the mother of us all.”

Then was Miolona’s time to speak. “You men of Narbicana who are the judges of the facts in this my trial, I ask ye whether the greatest of facts is not the love that is between a man and wife. That love is made for the getting and conceiving and the raising of children, but it is also an end in itself, as the Fathers of the Church have told us. It is through their love for each other that men and women have reflected in their lives the deep, true, and particular love of God. It is for those who are not priests their deepest partaking in the Love Divine. I hold that this love is a fact so noble that it is greater than any man-made law, and I call on ye, who are the judges of the facts in this my trial, to support for me this holding. I deny not that my action was wilful, and I have not claimed that my will was overborne by sudden passion. My love for Burcu was higher than the law of men. I hold ye may overrule therefore the holding of our Lord the Duke, who is but judge of man-made law.”

The Duke, in his charge unto the jury, said that the judges of the facts must make their findings within the rulings of the judge of the law and may not overthrow his rulings on the basis of what they might feel to be the importance of a single fact. He said the facts in the case were clear, in that Miolona had slain a man who was about to harm her husband and none other, and that the law did clearly forbid that slaying.

The jury was out of the hall for five minutes only, and brought back a verdict of guilty as accused. The Duke then condemned Miolona to death, ordering that she be beheaded a week from that day, for she made no claim to combat against other women in opposition to the law she had defied. And it was widely thought she did forgo such claim because her making it would have entailed her killing many friends or dying at the hands of one of them.

As they left the Judgment Hall, after Miolona was first moved from it with look of bitter resignation on her face, Elodoban said in a low voice to Ealina, “It seems a hard law that denies a woman the right to save her husband from his death, while it allows her to save another woman’s children.”

But Ealina said, “Nay, it is a good law, as all the laws of Narbicana are, being given to us by the High Ones. For the wise who have learned from the High Ones

have told us that the gentleness which belongs unto woman is so greatly valued by the Lord Most High, in itself and as the source of lesser gentleness in woman's sons, that men should rather die most willingly than have that gentleness shattered by violence in woman for the sake of man. And if a woman be allowed to fight for her own children as the nature of a woman, and even of her very gentleness, must compel, it is only fair that she be allowed to fight for children of others, for the child of another woman is not less worthy of life than one's own, whatever a mother's feelings may incline her to imagine."

"You repeat most well the teachings of the Wise," said Elodoban, "but does your inmost heart agree with what your mouth repeats?"

"Aye, most deeply," said Ealina. "My feelings and my instincts teach me that it is true."

"And you believe most truly, then, that a woman should not fight for her mother Narbicana as she may fight for the honour of her body?"

"Aye. The motherhood of Narbicana is but a symbol of the motherhood of woman, and the personality we attribute to our country is but a shadow of those personalities that belong to women. At least to other women, for I feel I have no personality."

“How can you say that, when I love you so, who are so much a lovely person unto me?”

“That is reassuring,” said Ealina. “But how can your impression of a personality be so valid, when you feel like questioning the worth of woman’s gentleness and of the laws of Narbicana that safeguard it? Are these not verities?”

“Can they be more than one woman’s personality, of which Narbicana is but a shadow?” asked Elodoban, and they both laughed.

But as they walked along, Elodoban spoke further: “I am minded to ask Father Aleuris whether it was sin for Miolona to disobey the law and save her husband.”

“Do outlanders know the way of the High Ones as well as do the Wise?”

“It is not disobedience of the High Ones that makes an act a sin, but the contravening of the will of the Lord Most High, as you well know.”

“But the High Ones are the servants of the Lord, and they convey His Will to us.”

“Still, a High One’s will is not the same thing as the Lord’s Will; there is a distinction.”



“Methinks you play with the word ‘will’,” said Ealina. “Nevertheless, if it will content you on this question, I am content to visit Father Aleuris for the answering of it.”

So they wended to the house of the village priest, a man from Sassenter who had answered Narbicana’s need (for men of Narbicana may not be priests in Narbicana while the land maintains its privilege of converse with the High Ones), and Elodoban then asked him, after casual words of welcome had been exchanged, “Is it always a sin to disobey the law? Was it a sin for Miolona to use force to save her husband’s life?”

“Methinks it was a sin, in the objective sense,” said Father Aleuris. “Whether Miolona herself did truly sin is a question only God can answer. But in general it is a sin to disobey the laws of one’s country, unless those laws are clearly contrary to the Will of God. God does not say that one must always kill a foe to save one’s life – a man may choose to die rather than send his murderer straight to Hell – and the men of Narbicana have a right to say that they do not want their women’s gentleness defiled for their own saving from mere death of body, which men of Narbicana, like the warriors of Sassenter, do not greatly fear. (Perhaps not as greatly as they should, some of them).”

“But is it fair to woman that only men can make such law?” Elodoban asked.

“Women can influence men to change the law, if they should desire,” the priest made answer. “The will of woman is carried out more often than a young, unmarried man might think.”

“But the men of Narbicana make their laws according to the counsels of the High Ones, and the women of Narbicana have no say in that at all.”

“Methinks you will find it is from the devotion of their mothers that the men of Narbicana first learn hallowing of the High Ones,” said Father Aleuris.

“Methinks rather from their fathers, to whom the mothers are devoted,” said Elodoban.

“Howbeit, women are as much in reverence of the High Ones as the men are,” said Aleuris.

“That is so,” said Ealina. And after talk of other things they left the priest.

On their way home, Elodoban said, “Meseems from what the father said, that the laws of Narbicana are not always the laws of God, or at least do not begin so. I wonder whose law it is that wizards may not marry if they are to practice of their art, but must either practice and remain single or marry and only breed wizard-kin.”

And to that Ealina said nothing. She had known for a long time that Elodoban had wished he might both marry and practice wizardry, but she thought he knew he wished in vain for practice of the art.

### III

“I had a dream one night,” said the dark Dunard, as the three rode on from Nindoran, the town where he had first asked another, in Orogald’s company, the question Orogald by error had answered so luckily for the Kryffyr, “and all I could remember of that dream when morning came was that three warriors rode asking of all they met, ‘Is this the land? Is this the land?’ And I remembered not their saying what land it was they sought, though perchance they did say and I forgot, yet who knows how men may act in dreams? And I thought unto myself, when first on waking I recalled it, how should a man know how to answer them if they told him not what the land was that they were seeking? ‘Twas but a passing thought on waking, yet the thought came again much later in the day, and then I thought ‘twould be a quaint conceit to undertake a quest that way, to see what answers one might get. And it seemed to me that the time was right for such a quest, since Narbicana has been at peace so long.

“So,” he said, “I went to Miclas, my oldest and dearest friend of all, and said to him that we should go upon such questing north, asking the first we met at any town or village whether that place was the place we sought. And we were minded that if the person asked said no, we would ride on, and if he did say yes, we would take him at his word and stay there for three weeks, to await some such deed as seemed worthy of our doing. And if the three weeks had ended without such deed, we would go to the person who had answered us, and say to him, ‘What is the deed?’ And we would do whatever task he set us, so it was not mean or sinful. And so we crossed the Nelbarn and came to Village Ardfalie, and were met as you remember. And a deed did come to us well worthy of our doing, whereof we were made glad and have gained a fine companion.”

“So that was the way of it,” said Orogald. “I’d wondered oft, till ye accosted that man back there, and then I deemed I knew something of your way of doing. Meseems it is well done.”

“Good way to spend a summer holiday, which our fathers kindly gave us,” said Miclas. “But,” he added, “we were minded also that after the first deed, we would wait only three days before seeking the next, and three days only for those after,

for we wanted reach the northernmost part of the country and ride quickly back before the harvest.”

And so they rode on, talking of this and that or staying silent as friends do, and once, as they spoke of one who was a mighty, and a wondrous skilful, swordsman, of the like of Rognirth of old, Orogald said to his friends, “Fain would I learn the art of the sword.”

Dunard said, “You are well skilled with spear, you told us, and meseems you do not ill with axe. Would ye change to knight from woodcutter?” For in Narbicana only knights learned usage of all weapons.

“Nay, I have skill with spear indeed, but wielding well of axe in battle so far hath been luck, not skill,” said Orogald. “Am I to learn a second weapon, I would it were the sword and not the axe. For with the axe I earn my living, and it seems not meet that I should kill with it both men and trees. But the sword is meant for killing men, as is the spear.”

“That is well said,” quoth Miclas. “We will teach you of the sword.” And that evening, when they were camped within a wood between two towns, Dunard bade Orogald cut two slender fir trees and cut from them all the branches save two on opposite sides a bit more than two hand’s breadths from the butt, and bade him

cut these two short for quillons and flatten with axe the sides of the trunks of the trees, so that they were as wooden swords, such as Narbicanans make when boys. Then, Dunard and Miclas shaped with knives the butt ends as sword handles. For Dunard said it was not meet that sharp and killing swords be used for training, even when no strokes were yet for striking, unless they be used for solitary exercise.

Now, Orogald knew the parries and strokes and thrusts of the sword, from contending with them in practice with his spear, but Narbicanans always follow the same simple, rigid pattern of arms instruction, partly that no point be overlooked and partly that anyone taught be able thoroughly to teach.

“The main difference between use of sword and use of spear are that the sword be held in one hand only, most of the time, and that the right foot, of a righthanded wielder, be advanced,” Dunard told Orogald as they faced each other in the campsite. “A spearman has left foot advanced if he be righthanded. But for spearman and swordsman the position of the feet is the same, though the feet themselves change places. Ye stand in a crouch, the weight evenly balanced over both feet, with feet apart the distance of your own foot and half the length of it again with the forward foot pointing through the heel at the heel of the rear one,

so that were they together, they would form an L, joined at the heels.” Thus Dunard spoke while doing what he described. For his weapons master had thus used both ear and eye and body in his own teaching of Dunard, as all weapon teachers of Narbicana do.

“Ye step forward, when advancing, as when using spear, the length of your own foot. The forward foot is advanced with a lifting of the toes and a reaching forward of the heel to where the toes were, then the rear foot is picked up with a lift from the knee, as forward knee comes into balance place, and is put forward likewise the length of one foot, with the toes coming down first and then the heel.” He made thus a few steps forward, and bade Orogald do the same afterward. Orogald found it a little awkward, being used to doing it with left foot forward, but Dunard said he did it right.

“The retreat,” said Dunard, “is made in picking up the rear foot as before, and moving it back a foot’s length.” He did that. “As the rear foot goes down, the toes of the forward foot are raised, and then the forward foot is brought back a foot’s length. Do that a couple of times.” Orogald did so. “Good. It’s only what you’re used to doing, with the holding of the feet reversed, at that. Here, watch him, Miclas, while he and I move at and from each other. A bit faster, Orogald.” And



so the knight and the woodcutter took turns advancing and retreating, gradually speeding up their movements, hands at sides. Miclas said Orogald was doing well. It was, after all, practice which Orogald had done in boyhood for a long time before he was allowed to hold the stick he used under training by his father as a spearman.

“The pacework needs not the training now that ye required in youth,” said Dunard, “And probably the sidesteps will not, either. Try them, the right foot first.” Standing at the crouch, Orogald pushed with his left leg so that it went straight and he to the right, backwards, landing on his right foot with that leg still bent. As he moved, he extended his right arm to forward and to left. Then he returned to the on-guard stance.

“Good,” said Dunard. “Let’s see you do it dodging a sword.” And he picked up a wooden sword and lunged, Orogald sidestepping so that he missed, for Dunard lunged at where Orogald was crouching, not adjusting for the sidestep.

“Now,” said Dunard, “the sidestep left.” Orogald pushed sideways with his right foot still pointing outward, with left leg bent. Then he pulled with his right leg, returning to the on-guard stance. Again, Dunard practised lunging at him, again missing more often than he touched. Then Dunard said, “Step as you will,

to either side,” and Orogald sidestepped as he would, sometimes repeating steps to one side and sometimes changing, and now Dunard touched more often than he missed, for he adjusted for the sidestep.

“Good,” said Dunard, as he stopped lunging. “Now, the parries.” He picked up the other practice weapon and passed it on to Orogald. “The first, called formont, is the one into which ye would naturally go if attacked while drawing your sword. Like this.” He held the wooden sword at his left side, left hand gripping the blade beneath the quillons, as if it were in scabbard. Then he reached with right hand and drew the sword and as its tip cleared his left hand, he moved his sword hand from its place on the right side, level with his head, to a position on the left and above the head, so that the sword slanted steeply down outside his left side. “That will parry a cut at the left side or a thrust at the body. Of course, if the attack is at your legs, you go into low formont. Like this.” He went again through the drawing motion, this time bringing his sword hand down as it went across, so that it was above and outside and forward from his left hip and the wooden blade protected his legs.

“From either of these, you can go next to fremuen or low fremuen.” He brought the hilt up just above his head on the right side, arm slightly bent, turning his

knuckles and the sword-edge outward, with the blade slanting down and forward. Then he lowered his hand so that it was out forward from the right hip, the blade protecting his legs. “If your foe should feign at legs on right and then cut at arm, the best parry is thirmion, the most usual on-guard position. Just turn the wrist over and lower the hand, turning the knuckles to outside. I find it faster than high fremuen. If you need to ward from thirmion a cut at legs or a thrust beneath the belt, you might use mornod. Turn the swordpoint in and down while keeping back of hand upward rather than turned to left.” He did that, too. “Always remember to lower the hand for a high parry and raise it for a low or you’ll soon lose your hand. For thirmion and mornod, the elbow is a hand’s width in front of the body, just above the hip.” Dunard made semi-circles up and down, between thirmion and mornod. “For cuts at the left side, you go from thirmion to kermozin or tonosle. Kermozin just brings the sword across to just outside left hip, point more up than out. Tonosle is the same position as low formont, but with the hand turned over, as if from kermozin. The more usual parry for a cut at the head is qumone: to make that from thirmion, swing the point down and in to left and bring sword up with knuckles upward, elbow level with shoulder and forearm slanting slightly forward. From kermozin, just snap the sword hand across and up. From qumone,

you easily go to formont or fremuen to protect your sides. Duluon guards the head with the hand to left of it and elbow in front of left shoulder. It's also a good response to a downward cut at arm while you're on guard or about to cut from thirmion.

“You can go from high formont to mornod just by snapping the elbow down in front of right hip while turning hand slightly rightward.

“Maybe the most important parry you can learn is called sliangialm. When you cut from thermion, block the riposte by bringing your elbow up to fremuen and turning your point up over your opponment's blade and down inside. You could use carnord, which is snapping your elbow in front of the left shoulder with the wrist turning the blade down and out, as if biceps, forearm and blade made a triangle that had the outer side's end separated from the base, which would be your right shoulder at that open corner; the hand is just above the head. But a strong riposte against that can put much strain on your arm in that position. You might possibly use ingial, which simply snaps the blade back toward the upper side of the horizontal arm upon cutting and at once turns the hand vertical and the knuckles outward, but that is sometimes not as dependable as snialgian.

“One more parry which may be made from thirmion, is snelosc. Just snap the sword to the left and down, with hand turned downward, so that the hilt is just left of the thigh, and well below the hip with the blade pointing up and forward, mostly forward.” Dunard did as he said, while speaking. “It’s good surprise parry against a body thrust, mostly.

“Speaking of body thrusts, the usual parry against a thrust to upper body if you’re in kermozin or snelosc, is thioste. That’s made by snapping hand to right, with forearm horizontal and palm upward. It’s also the usual on-guard position if you’re using mostly your point, as in single combat.

“Carnord is the only parry that works against a direct cutting riposte to your cutting at left flank from thirmion. Thus endeth the lesson, for tonight.”

The next evening, they went beyond a village with an inn, to camp again, that they might continue the lessons without other people watching them.

“Tonight, the lunge,” said Dunard, after they had supped. “On-guard stance. To lunge with a sword, as in spear-fighting, ye extend the weapon arm, raise the toes of the forward foot and reach the heel forward, and as ye reach ye push quick and hard with the rear leg, straightening it. The heel hits first, the toe comes down, and at once you raise it again, pushing back with the heel and pulling back with

the rear leg, so that ye're back in the on-guard crouch. The unarmed hand is against the hip, unless you see a sudden chance to use it. Try that." Orogald found it strange, for he was used to lunging with the feet in reverse position to the one he now employed, but Dunard and Miclas said he did it well, and after practising a number of times he felt used to it.

"All right, the attack," said Dunard, picking up a wooden sword while Orogald got the other. "Ye hold the sword a little back along the hilt from the quillons, to keep yourself from getting thumb and fingers nicked when blocking thrusts that may bring foeman's edge down to quillons. Quillons could be made that protected against that, but most knights would rather trust their grip than artifice. It keeps us alert.

"Now, the thrust is the more effective attack when fighting only one foe, but the cut keeps the sword more readily in play in melee, so we learn cut first, as battle is more likely than single combat.

"To cut, ye send the swordhand out and to the left while turning it palm upward and turning the wrist to left, swinging the sword at the foe's left side. To feign a cut, you stop the swinging of the sword before the arm is quite extended, and flip the hand over to bring the sword to your left, then, to bring the attack home, move

the hand back to the right, swinging the sword with the wrist.” Dunard did these things as he said them. “But when ye feign a cut from thirmion, be ready ever to go up into dluon, against a cut at the arm.” Dunard made direct and feigned attacks against Orogald’s guard, then had Orogald do the same to him. He parried every attack by Orogald, though he said the attacks were well made and fast.

“The usual parry from thirmion against a cut to the left is kermozin, but formont can be used effectively from thirmion, too. Just drop the point and bring up the hand across the body.” Both did it. “Since formont is technically the first parry, we’ll practise that. On guard.” Orogald and Dunard stood in thirmion, and Dunard lunged, cutting slowly and lightly, Orogald dropping point and bringing hand up high and to the left, the sword in formont stopping the cut. The next time Dunard lunged thrusting and Orogald stopped that with formont. They practised thus about twelve times, and Dunard said he was doing well.

“The usual dispot from formont is a cut downward straight from the parry position, to head or shoulder, and dluon is good against that,” Dunard said then. “But before ye make the dispot, ye must make sure your foeman does not do this – in formont, for a moment.” Orogald stood in formont, and Dunard, stooping, slid his sword down the blade of Orogald’s, side-stepping to his own left and

drawing his wooden blade across Orogald's right leg and bringing it well to the left as he brought his right leg over to the new position. "Many a man has lost a fight and the use of his leg from being too quick in his dispot from formont. It's better to wait a moment, giving the foe a chance to recover, and feign the dispot, then strike elsewhere. Thus endeth the lesson."

And on several nights thereafter, Dunard gave Orogald instructions in the separate parries he had shown him, and in circular, or counter, parries from various positions, against thrusts, and had him practice each parry and various combinations of parries.

And on the sixth evening after they had begun the lessons without anyone's having given them an affirmative answer to their wonted questions as they neared a town or village, they were given word, in the town of Worfolmed, that they were summoned to Norforinden Upon Nelbarn, in the month of Karmorthan, the second month of autumn, for trial before the Council Royal.

"That is fast," said Miclas. "I had not thought the Council Royal would sit till spring, nor had I thought that it would hear our case."

"The Council Royal has other matters to discuss in Karmorthan," said the town clerk who had given them the word. "And it is said that the judgement of this



matter of freeing of the Kryffyr, as I understand 'tis called, may mean the making of new law in Narbicana. Ye had best make way to a skilful lurnden.”

“The lurnden Wirmonald is a friend of my father,” said Miclas. “He is learned in the law and a skilled debater. Shall we ride home to our fathers and seek their advice, or shall we send messages to our fathers and to Wirmonald, suggesting we be his clendern?”

“Better the latter, I think,” said Dunard. “One lurnden costs as much as another, within their classes at least, and we need one of his class, and I am loth to abandon the quest. If we continue it as planned, we shall be at Norforinden in good time to consult Wirmonald.” And so it was agreed, and they sent messages, and continued, more or less directly, toward Norforinden.

Three days after they had received the summons, as they were about to camp in a clearing off the road between Dumaron and Foznared, Dunard regarded the ears and eyes of his horse for several moments and held the nose of Orogald's horse, to prevent his neighing, and then said, “Insarion has the scent of other horses not far off which belike are being kept from whinnying to him. For he, being a knight's ganestrian, is trained not to give away our presence to other horses and their riders, but the horses of other than knights are not likely to be so trained.

And if the other horses, which I deem by his signing to be more than three or four, should really be those of knights, then both our parties should seek fall in together, but carefully. But if these others be not knights, they may have it in mind to do us harm. For we left foes unslain in Ardfalie that meseemed were men quite likely to defy the law in seeking revenge. It is best that we assume these others are the latter and that they mean us harm.”

“What should we do?” said Orogald. “If they seek us out at camp, should we not set a trap for them, unless they be too many?” For he had great faith in the ability of two knights to overcome foes outnumbering by a little.

“Even so,” said Miclas. “We’ll set up likenesses of sleeping men by dying campfire, when else we would to sleep, and wait in the woods around. The only question is, if they be not too many, whether we should set on with shouts of challenge and with swords, or in stealth with cudgels to stun.”

“I’d rather cudgels,” said Dunard.

“So would I,” quoth Orogald.

And so, when supper was done, which they ate with Dunard and Miclas watching closely the signing of their steeds, they cut branches from trees some distance from the clearing and wrapped these in long bundles in their blankets, in

likeness of men asleep, and built over what should have been the heads a small lean-to of fimunel, that Narbicanan shrub which repels mosquitoes, and they waited, each on a different side of the clearing, in which the horses stood and their fire was doted. Each of the three crouched close in underbrush, facing the camp sideways. And before they hid themselves, Miclas and Dunard said to their steeds a word which Miclas said would keep the wizard-trained ganestrians from whinnying, and Dunard made a series of signals to Firnist which he said would keep that horse quiet if foes approached.

After the moon had risen, Orogald heard something pass close by him in the woods, and he saw against the sky it was a man, and the man went to the camp as other men came out on all sides of it, and there were eight of them, and soon was one crouched at the foot of each likeness of sleeper and one for each likeness standing above the lean-to, and one at the side of each outer likeness, for the likenesses were side by side, and all this time Orogald was creeping closer with his cudgel. And he waited for what sudden action the stealthers might make, for such sudden action was to be the signal for the three. And the man who stood with back to Orogald, who was the one near the likeness that was most southern, moved quickly his right hand, and the three who crouched each threw themselves

on the forms before them, to wrap arms and legs about them. Then leaped the three friends to the clearing, and each struck down a foe with a clout upon the head. And when each had felled a foe, there was one remaining between Orogald and Dunard, and one between Dunard and Miclas, and there were three surprised a-leaping from the ground. Dunard feigned a stroke for the head and landed a rib-numbing stroke, followed by another on the head of the man who stood upon his right, while Miclas felled him who stood between them and Orogald withheld a stroke he had meant for Dunard's quick victim. Then, as the three foes upleaping threw themselves at the three friends, Dunard and Miclas tossed aside their cudgels and threw their foes upon the ground by seizing their arms and turning quickly, in one of the skilful wrestling throws which Narbicanan knights learn in very childhood. And Orogald, who was not quick to throw aside his cudgel but loth to use it against single foe not wielding weapon, felt his cudgel seized by his foeman, who, as they struggled for it, brought his knee into the crotch of Orogald, a stroke that is deemed of great dishonour among men of Narbicana, for that it strikes not only at a man himself but also at his wife and his prospective children. And as Orogald did double up and fall, so fell was that foul stroke, then did Dunard lunge with arm outstraightening in sword-thrust without sword that took

the man below the breastbone and doubled him also over. By then the thrown men were getting up, but Dunard and Miclas felled them unconscious with strokes of fist that followed swift feignings. Then the young men did quickly bind the fallen foes, both hand and foot. But their hands they bound in front of them, that the foes might sleep without untoward discomfort, if they were minded unto sleep. And Dunard and Orogald and Miclas took turns at watch for the rest of the night, with two of them sleeping at a time. Of the foes, some slept and some were sleepless in angry bitterness.

In the morning, after a breakfast they offered share with the foes, who did refuse, Dunard found the foemen's horses, with the help of his own steed, who called to them, and they undid the foemen's foot-bonds, one at a time, and put them on their horses, and tied about their ankles ropes that ran under the horses' bellies, and they rode to the next town, which was called Dolofluel, and gave the prisoners in charge to the Duke's Warden of the town, accusing them in formal case of trespassing at night upon a camping place. For that is a serious offence in Narbicana, where one must not disturb without good cause a person sleeping in the open and where one who has good cause must shout from three rods away his call of wakening of camper.

The Duke's Warden of the Town asked the foemen whether three days were time enough for their preparation unto trial or whether they demanded three weeks, and the foemen said three days were time enough, and they were agreed to be tried together and not separately, and the trial was held on the second day, for that the lurnden and the Duke's Judicial Deputy (for that Duke was one of several in Narbicana at that time who took advantage of the right to have a deputy to serve as judge) were by then ready. And Orogald and Miclas and Dunard bore witness to what had happened, and the foemen gave no witnessing, and the Duke's Judicial Deputy then said to them, "Ye are found guilty, all and each, of trespassing at night upon a camping place of these three men. If you do not say why it was ye did this, I am bound to presume ye meant the greatest harm that may be done, and therefore to punish ye according to the holding of intent to murder. For though it seems from the circumstances I have heard that ye meant to seize these three young men alive, yet that might have been for murder afterward, maybe even after some torturing of them. So if ye would escape the sentence most severe, I rede ye tell of why ye set upon these men."

And one who seemed a leader of the foes, a man named Arnid, told the judge, after taking of his oath to tell the truth, that they were friends and kinsmen of the

hunters from whom the three young fighters had rescued the Kryffyr in Ardfalie. He said that when they had been told of that and heard the three were ordered to Norforinden Upon Nelbarn for Judgement by the Council Royal, he and his friends were minded to capture the three fighters and hold them prisoner in quiet place until the time for which they had been summoned had gone by, and the three friends would be dishonoured by failure to answer to a Royal Summons, and when they were set free, the two young knights would have to bear at least the shame of having been overcome, for all their training by wizards, by common fighters, even if the King decided not to hold them in the great dishonour for which the foes had hoped. And all the foemen of the three young men declared, under oath, that that was what they had intended. And the judge sentenced each of them to ten stripes of the lash, and put them under Duke's Order not to harass the three young men again. And after that the three young men rode onward, without incident, to Norforinden Upon Nelbarn, for the judgement of the Council Royal.

IV

One day there came to the house of Elodoban's father in Norrimnos a hard-faced man who sought speech with Elodoban alone. And they went to a private chamber of the house, and the man said to Elodoban, "The plan hath gone awry."

Elodoban said, "Word has come to Norrimnos of the deeds of three young men, two knights and a woodcutter, who freed the Kryffyr from your cousin's party. How is it I had not the word directly from ye sooner?"

The man, whose name was Marfod, said, "Among the folk of Mofordoris, revenge is more important than talebearing." And he told the wizardkin of the attempt that had been made to capture the freers of the Kryffyr and of what had befallen therefrom. For Marfod was one of the eight had made the attempt and his back bore the stripes which had been ordered as his punishment. "And it may be that the Council Royal will forbid the hunting of the Kryffyr, for that it has a



noble place in the lives of men of Narbicana,” Marfod said when his tale was done.

“That may be,” said Elodoban. “We shall speak another time of what must be done, after the Council has made its ruling. For there will not be a proper time before then for another capture of the Kryffyr, and we may as well be prudent. I thank you for your coming here.” And he brought Marfod to the hall of his father’s house and fed him.

Now, as Marfod was leaving the house of the family of Elodoban, Ealina was entering thereto, and she saw Marfod and she liked him not. She said to Elodoban when Marfod was gone, “Who was that hard-faced man I saw with you just now? He seemeth like unto the man that visited Norrimnos before the sword of Molinod was stolen, he that was sought in suspicion of having stolen it.”

“He is one of a group of men who have been seeking to aid me, all unknowing, in a plan to change the laws of Narbicana anent the wedding of wizards,” said Elodoban.

“What plan is that? Why have you not told me of it?”

“I wanted to carry out the plan as a surprise to you,” he said. “I have been told by one most learned in the Lore of Narbicana that if the Kryffyr can be slain

outside of Narbicana, by a man belonging not to Narbicana, wizards will be admitted both to practice of their art and to the breeding of more wizards.” And he told her he had hired the men whom the knights and woodcutter had kept from bringing the Kryffyr out through the south of Narbicana, to capture it and sell it to a chief of Zanod.

“It is not that I do not believe you,” said Ealina then, “but the lore that you were told hath not the ring of truth to me.” For the special gift of Ealina’s family of wizard-kin was the discerning of truth in lore concerning Narbicana. And that gift did not depend on formal practice of the art, which was allowed only to men. “Who was the giver of this lore to you?”

And Elodoban, though he was loth, said, “Nordig told me it.”

“I would advise you to question Nordig closely on this matter.”

Therefore Elodoban went to Nordig, who also lived in Norrimnos, and said to him, “I do not doubt your word, but Ealina has said that what you told me about sacrificing of Kryffyr by outlander has not the ring of truth to her. It may be she is mistaken, for she has, of course, no practice, but yet she has the gift, so I request you tell me truth, if you have not told it.”

“I can tell you no more than I have told,” said Nordig, and he looked to Elodoban as he were conscious of great wrong-doing.

“Tell me not and be the object of inquiry by the learned in law and lore,” said Elodoban. “I suspect you of using me for some sinister work without my wittingness, and that I do not forgive. If you want me as a partner, you must trust me, but if you tell me truly what you want me doing, I will not betray you to others, though I may feel compelled to do all that I myself may do to stop you. Either tell me all, and let me make my own decision, or I shall tell Duke Orforas what we had intended for the Kryffyr. I doubt not that he and the King’s officers and wizards will uncover something foul, and you will suffer for it. For it seems to me, from what Marfod said, that the Kryffyr may be a mighty thing in the life of Narbicana, and its death might bring disaster.”

“Swear you will not tell others and will seek only to thwart me by yourself, if at all, as you have said, and I will tell you all.”

“I swear by the Most High I will tell no one of what you are to tell me, unless with your permission, and that I will thwart you by my own means solely, if at all, if you will tell me what you really intend in your dealing with the Kryffyr,”

Elodoban said solemnly. And then he had Nordig also make oath, that he should tell the truth.

“The truth is, I am an old and bitter man, and grown to be a hater of the ways of Narbicana,” said Nordig. “I forwent the practice of the Art to marry Mabinia, who at one and twenty was mild and sweet and beautiful, and I deeply loved her, and she hoped to bear my children to be great wizards or fine parents. My uncle in the practice, who is dead these many years, had learned for me that I was sterile, but I told him I loved Mabinia too much to give her up and would be happy with her in a childless marriage, and I lied to him that Mabinia was so agreed, and I lied to her that the High Ones had named me fertile, for I feared to lose her, and we were wed.

“But after years had passed, she grew most sourly shrewish when she found I did not quicken her, for she was fertile and had known it. And I have long regretted that I had not taken up, instead of her, the practice of the Art which was my gift at birth, by which I might have brought great good to Narbicana and found fulfilment of my soul. And so I am most bitter against the laws of Narbicana, which say I may either be wizard or breed wizards but not both, when in truth I may not now do either. And when you told me you greatly desired both

to marry and to practice, I deemed I might make use of you for overthrowing of that law. For it is known to a few that if the Kryffyr, which is very death-guardian for the brave, should be sacrificed by an enemy of Narbicana, with a sword that has been wielded in defence of Narbicana – which is why I had Marfod's brother steal Molinod's sword – then Narbicana will be defeated in war by the nation of that foe, and will for a time be ruled by that nation, before the High Ones raise the yoke from Narbicana's shoulders. It was my hope that subjugation would force the leaders of our people to let all wizard-kin, single or wed, engage in practice, for the overthrowing of the tyrants, to which vocation all able men of Narbicana would doubtless then be called. It was my intent to make argument for that as pressing as might be. I was not loth to see Narbicana suffer for a time as it has made me suffer in the wasting of self, if by that suffering it could be made to grant me my rightful place among the active wizards. And I thought that you, who are most highly gifted, would support my argument and be among those who would most greatly benefit by it. I misled you when I let you think the changing of the law would be direct result of sacrifice of Kryffyr, but I doubt not that I could make it an indirect result of that. For even wizards jealous of their power

must put the freedom of Narbicana above that jealousy. And Narbicana would be a great nation if all its wizards could engage in practice.”

“You would betray Narbicana to an enemy to make yourself an active wizard?”

“The conquering of Narbicana would not be my doing directly, or yours if you helped me. My action would only be the removing of a protection of Narbicana by magic, a magic which Narbicana now prevents me from sharing. And when I shared it, the magic that guarded Narbicana would again be greatened, and all would be better than before, for at the end of seven years another Kryffyr would be alive and in full strength, and the yoke of Zanod would be thrown off, and Narbicana would be great among the nations.

“We must be mindful also that there can never be lasting peace for Narbicana until Zanod is converted. What is more likely to bring about such conversion than Narbicana’s showing itself so much the beloved of God as to throw off the yoke of total subjugation by Zanod? Would not the lives saved from future warfare of who knows how long be worth the seven years of servitude to Zanod? Is not the saving of the souls of countless infidel Zanodens worth a temporary loss of freedom?”

And so great were his desire for Ealina and his desire to be an active wizard, that Elodoban saw sense in this argument, and he dallied with the temptation put before him, and then he yielded to it. And then he swore for Nordig an oath to help him in his design, and not to tell anyone about it, except to tell Ealina that what he was about would redound to the glory of Narbicana, which was true, though the way that it was true was not really known to him. For Nordig had not been wholly truthful, despite the oath that he had made.

Nordig and Elodoban talked further that day, and Elodoban said that if Zanod conquered Narbicana it would seek to wipe out Christianity in the country, for the difference of religion was the chief reason for the enmity of Zanod, and seek there to establish Elsam, so that there would be persecution of the faithful. And he said that he was willing that good Narbicanans should go to glory in that manner, and that the weak of soul be purged and sent to Hell where they belonged, if it were so that persecution should last but seven years and then be ended, but he thought also that the Zanoden would want to wipe out the practice of conversation with the High Ones, that wizardry which was the peculiar glory of the Faith in Narbicana. And he said that that must not be tried, so that wizards could work for restoration of the country and of protection of the Faith, even if they must pretend embrace

Elsam for that purpose. And he asked Nordig to name his sloindar among the Zanoden, and Nordig named one Ilzahig, a noble of the Tribe of Ingrahith, and Elodoban said, “The word of a noble in such a case is not enough; I must have the sworn oath of the High Chieftain himself that he will allow the practice of wizardry when he has conquered Narbicana through the sacrifice of the Kryffyr.” And Nordig at first demurred but then agreed, and the two agreed that they would, in that time likely coming, urge upon all wizards the outward practice of Elsam for a time, while they would follow the true Faith in secret, to work the glory of Narbicana. For, they said, Elsam and the Church both worship the same God, but with the difference only that Narbicanans know that God has Trinity of Persons and that the Second Person died as man to save men from their sins. And so they shook hands and made oath, and parted for a time, with Elodoban taking upon himself, without telling Nordig, the part of chief partner in the design. And that was as Nordig had intended.

Elodoban went to Ealina and told her he was sworn to secrecy by Nordig and could only tell her that the thing in which they were engaged would redound to the glory of Narbicana. And that had the ring of truth to her, and she was content, for she greatly loved and trusted Elodoban.



V

“My Lords the Dukes of Narbicana,” King Ordonizdan said to the fifty-two members of the Council Royal, gathered in the Great Hall of Council in Castle Norforinden, “you have been summoned here to judge between two parties in a cause that may touch upon the Lore of Narbicana, the judging of which may mean the making of new law.

“In this cause, my lords, it is the charge of Ornoad of Duimfel, and of Enfelis of Kenuid, hunters, that Dunard and Miclas of Folimbron, knights, and Orogald of Ardfalie, woodcutter, did under guise of combat fair, murder Tilfont, Olfanid, and Nifilod of Corfunod, and Parfudal, Malfuon, and Dormondis of Formorin, hunters, for the unlawful freeing of a beast that the said hunters had captured from the wild and therefore fairly owned in all lawfulness, and that those whom they accuse did unlawfully maim Ornoad and Enfelis in the same combat unlawful.

“And it is the charge of the aforementioned Dunard and Miclas and Orogald that Tilfont, Olfanid, Nifilod, Parfudal, Malfuon, Dormondis, Ornoad, and Enfelis, did capture a creature sacred to the High Ones, for base purposes unbecoming to the destiny of that high creature, amounting to perversion of the purpose of the creature, and that they upheld this cause with recourse to arms without putting before the law a claim to the fulfilment of lawful purpose, and that therefore they abided, and must accept, the result of combat brought against them by foes of right intent.

“I call upon ye, good my lords, that ye ask the High Ones, and Him Who is Most High, to guide our minds that we may deliver rightful judgement.”

And each member of the Council Royal bowed his head and prayed, with the words of his own thought, silently, to the High Ones and Most High. Orogald and his friends prayed also, that judgement might be just and in their favour.

Orogald was sitting at about the middle of the Hall of Council, with Miclas at his left and Dunard beyond Miclas, and their opponents further to the left, well separated from them. Between the two groups and ahead of them were the Spokesmen Before the Law, one lurnden for each group, seated at tables which bore books of the Law of Narbicana. They faced the King, who sat before the

Hall's north wall, on the Chair of Justice, which was made from carven birch. And on the high back of the Chair of Justice was carved the face of a snarling lynx, the Golden Lynx which was the heraldic sign of the throne of Narbicana, whose form was carved in birch, rampant, regardant, on a shield which hung above the chair. On each side of that half of the hall which lay between the King and the accused were four rows of seven seats each, each row upon a platform, bearing men who each ruled one of the fifty-six Dukedoms of Narbicana, half of them east of Nelbarn and half of them upon the west. And the Dukes of Narbicana West were to right of the King, and the Dukes of Narbicana East were to his left. Each row of ducal seats was higher than the one in front of it, and the seats of each row that was behind another were placed so that they fronted a space that was between the seats in front. And upon the Dukes' chairs were their dukedoms' crests. And four of the ducal chairs were empty, for three of the Dukes had been prevented by illness from attending and another had been excluded by lot, so that the King might have a deciding vote in the event of a deadlock among the councillors. And on the highest of the rows sat the High Duke of each quarminuid of dukedoms. And before the king, and below his chair, sat three laurdamin, men

wizard-trained to remember exactly all that was said, for writing down later upon paper.

“My Lords the Dukes of the Council Royal of Narbicana,” said Lurnden Nicfolos, who was Spokesman Before the Law for the foes of Orogald, Miclas and Dunard, “we, the spokesmen in this cause, do ask your lordships for permission to put before the council a statement of the words and deeds of the encounter between my clendern and the party they have accused. My clendern and their opponents all agree that this statement is just and true and doth eliminate the need of taking of separate evidence from each person concerned in the case or from other witnesses. It has been compiled through interviewing of each man in both parties and of other witnesses to that encounter. The words and deeds are not a matter of dispute.” And Lurnden Wirmonald agreed with this before the Council.

The King asked each accused whether he had read the statement or had had it read to him, and whether he agreed with what it said, and each, being sworn, said that he indeed agree with it. And the Dukes voted without exception to accept the statement, which then was read to them by Lurnden Nicfolos. And that statement

is not repeated here, for the words and deeds of that encounter have already been told.

“My Lords the Dukes of Narbicana,” said Nicfolos, after the statement had been read, “you have heard how the men called Tilfont, Olfanid, Nifilod, Parfudal, Malfuon, Dormondis, Ornoad and Enfelis were wending their way through Village Ardfalie when they were set upon by two fully trained knights of Narbicana, who were aided by woodcutter Orogald, and how most of them were slain and two were maimed, and how the beast in their possession was taken from them and set free. You have heard the reason given by one of the knights for that mayhem and deprival, which we contend is murder and robbery. And to add to the account that you have heard, we now call Ornoad of Duimfel to tell you how he and his companions came to be possessors of the beast called Kryffyr, that ye may judge their right to its possession.”

And Ornoad sat before the court and told the Dukes of Narbicana that he had been approached by an official of the High Chieftain of Zanod, who said he was collecting rare animals for the Chieftain, who had it in his mind to establish a bestiary that should be a wonder of the world, and that official told him that a beast called kryffyr, which was a beast composed of eagle and of lion, dwelled in

the mountains north of Narbicana, and he told him how to capture it. The official, whose name was Itzenbanth, told Ornod that the Kryffyr slept once in a moon, on one of the first three nights of the full moon when it seemed to sleep for all three nights, but that it could be kept asleep if taken with great subtlety.

Itzenbanth said that if a bundle of loose woven cloth containing a certain drug, called surinomini, were put into the nostrils of the kryffyr, while it slept, it would sleep for three more days and then would die if not allowed to wake. And he said he would give huntsmen a sufficiency of that rare drug, if they would undertake to capture the Kryffyr for him, for a price which Itzenbanth deemed generous. And Ornod had talked of this with seven of his kinsmen, and they had undertaken the task and had been given the surinomini and used it on the Kryffyr, which haply was asleep on the first night of the full moon, when they found it in the mountains north of Narbicana. And they had bound the Kryffyr and had been transporting it to Itzenbanth, where he waited on the border of Zanod and Narbicana, when they encountered Dunard and Miclas and Orogald in Ardfalie.

“Had you heard before that any of the so-called lore that Dunard did tell you of on that occasion?” asked Nicfolos.

“No, my lords, to us the kryffyr was a rare animal and nothing more. Neither before that time nor since have I heard such lore.” And Enfelis said also that he had heard of no such lore, but only from Dunard.

“I object to this usage of the word ‘lore’, my lords,” said Wirmonald. “There is no evidence that Dunard did claim to cite the lore of all of Narbicana.”

“If it be not lore, then is the cause decided, for what defence but that may ye make?” said Nicfolos.

“Let the wording stand, my lords,” said Wirmonald. And when Ornoad had stepped down from the witness stall, Wirmonald told the Lords of Council that his next evidence dealt with matters which might be Lore of Narbicana, and he asked that the Court of Lords appoint two Judges of the Truth of Lore from among ten wizards whose special gift lay in discerning that lore was true, if indeed it were, upon their hearing it. And one of these wizards was an uncle of Ealina, but he was not chosen, though he was among the seven then present, for the lurnden agreed upon Doridanos of Slomenz and Gilmonard of Forthunis. And they heard what Dunard had received from his father and his grandfather anent the existence and the purpose of the beast called Kryffyr, the which was what he had told unto the foes in Ardfalie. And when he had finished speaking, the Judges of the Truth of

Lore proclaimed unto the Court of Lords, upon their oath, that what Dunard had said had been true Lore, according to the witness that these two wizards had been given by the High Ones.

But Nicfolos asked Dunard, “Had you ever heard such lore from others than your sire and grandsire? Know you of any Masters of the Lore who teach this special lore?” And Dunard answered that the only sources of this lore, of which he knew, had been his sire and grandsire.

“Dunard of Folimbron,” said Wirmonald, “have you any direct knowledge of your own about the Kryffyr and its purpose?”

“Of direct knowledge, I have only what I saw in Ardfalie, as the court has heard, and what I saw the night my grandsire died,” Dunard said then.

“Will you tell that latter to the Court of Lords, if it please the council?” And the King said, “This may be heard.”

Dunard said, “By the year that I was seven, my Grandsire Dormufals often told me that he wished that he were brave enough to be a foeman of the Kryffyr, for he said he liked it ill that he should die in bed after surviving the battles he’d been in. But he said that he had always been afraid of death, each time, until the joy of battle filled his heart and made him fit to fight, so he knew he would never get the



death the Kryffyr gives. But one night when the moon was bright outside our home, a night three weeks after my seventh birthday, there came a noise like a great wind above the manor house, and my grandsire's name was shouted from outside in a harsh and croaking cry. And my grandsire leaped as if he were young again, from where he sat beside the fire, and he seized his sword and said, "He's come for me!" and he told us all to stay inside the doors until the Kryffyr called again, and then only my father and I should go outside when he was dead. And my father and I did stand against the door, but we heard nothing from outside. For Grandsire said that Kryffyr fights are always fought in silence.

"And after what seemed to us long time, we heard again that harsh voice that Grandsire said was Kryffyr's. And we opened the door and went outside, and there was the Kryffyr standing, with wings outspread, over the body of my Grandsire, and round about were fourteen wolves that looked as if the Kryffyr only was what kept them from tearing Grandsire's body. But as Father rushed out with sword, the wolves all shrunk away, and the Kryffyr touched my grandsire's face with back of beak, and leaped into the air and flew away. And Father, weeping, picked up his father's body and brought it in the house, and he showed me the wound over Grandsire's heart, which he said was made by the claw of

Kryffyr. And we buried him the day after next. And men who'd heard our story of that night did make for us our Kryffyr badge, which we have always worn since then.”

And that ended the taking of the evidence. And then was the turn of Lurnden Nicfolos to address the Court of Council.

“My Lords of the Council Royal of Narbicana,” said Nicfolos, “ye have heard the evidence. I submit to ye that that evidence shows clearly that my clendern were engaged, in all good faith, in a pursuit most fully lawful, when they were obstructed, with force of arms behind a threat, by those whom they have charged, namely the knights Dunard and Miclas and the woodcutter Orogald.

“His Majesty has told us, my lords, that this case may mean the making of new law in Narbicana. That may be so, but no man may be bound by law that is not yet made, but every man must be governed by the law that has force and effect at the time of his action, whatever that action may be. Whatever its status may be in the time to come, the beast called Kryffyr is not yet, and was not at the time of the episode with which this court must deal, protected by the Law of Narbicana. My clendern had no way of knowing that the Kryffyr serves a purpose sacred to the hearts of all the brave in Narbicana, no way of knowing that it was more than any

other beast that might be rare. They knew that it was rare, indeed, but that was all. No one had told them that it was a sending of the High Ones, nor was that claimed when the knight Dunard gave to them of his informal inheritance of Lore.

“To my clendern, good my lords, the Kryffyr was but an animal, as any other beast is animal only, and there is not law in Narbicana that forbids the hunting of animals for sale, nor is there any actual law that would forbid the taking into captivity of animal ferox, though the tradition and spirit of the people of Narbicana has always been against this. I suspect that law may now be made that will forbid such, as well as law forbidding captivity of Kryffyr or other meddling with it that accordeth not with its high placing. But the law as it is now does not forbid the things my clendern did in all good faith.

“It is generally perceived that beasts are made for man’s usage, whether he employ the tamer kind to work his fields or raise as food or the wilder kind to serve as foods and tests of courage. (And there was test of courage in what my clendern did, for there was great risk that the Kryffyr would not be asleep when test was made of it concerning wakefulness.) And we recognize that a man who slayeth beast for his own food doth greater honour to the purpose of the beast than doth a man who killeth it for sale of meat to others, as the spirit of Narbicana has

always held that direct use of object is more noble than use that only maketh sale to others, for the serving of other purpose of the seller. But the law forbiddeth not this lower purpose – for how could men in civilized society co-operate without it? My clendern did nothing contrary to law in their taking of a beast, however rare, for sale. Selling of a beast is not perversion of purpose. And even though the Kryffyr be a sending of the High Ones, may it not have been the purpose of the High to use some Narbicanans, all unknowing, to introduce the Kryffyr into Zanod, in seeming helplessness, for the wreaking of dire havoc when Zanod and Narbicana are next at war? For the peace that is now, is unlike to last. But even if it is not so, the Kryffyr is but a beast, and a beast is made to be used by men, and men are equal. Who are we to say that the granting of a warrior's death to a man who is more than usually brave, is a higher purpose than a hunter's earning his family's living? The former purpose sounds more glamorous, but the latter is perhaps more serious. The warrior is not made more brave by being set to fight the Kryffyr, for it is the bravery already his that earns him this fight, which may be said to be an empty honour. And one beast is not in essence of more value than another, unto the Lord Most High. Those men my clendern were not doing anything wrong when they caught the Kryffyr for sale to a wealthy outlander who

would pay them well. They were acting in good faith and within the law as it was then – indeed, as it is now – and they were illegally obstructed, with killing of some of them and maiming of others, and those who did these deeds are criminals and must be punished. They are guilty of robbery and of murder.

“My clendern had the right to defend with weapons that of which the law did not forbid possession.

“My lords, I yield the floor to my fellow lurnden.”

“My Lords the Dukes of the Council Royal of Narbicana,” said Wirmonald, “I submit unto your lordships that it is indeed a perversion of purpose to enslave a beast of great nobility that is meant by the High Ones for honouring of the brave of Narbicana. For enslavement is that whereto those men, the clendern of my fellow lurnden, did lend themselves. There is no evidence that this enslavement was a ruse devised by the High for a future defeating of Zanod, and indeed it would be against the honour of the High to put such a ruse in motion during time of peace with Zanod. My fellow lurnden could have had that reading of the evidence tested by the Judges of Lore, had he so chosen. His suggesting it is an appeal to what your lordships will doubtless feel concerning the Kryffyr: that it is a beast of noble purposes; so therefore he suggests that the action of those hunters

was meant for a noble end, like the defence of Narbicana. But the defence of Narbicana was nowhere near those hunters' thoughts in this unsavoury escapade. They meant to sell a beast that is possessed of great nobility, to be a captive, its freedom sacrificed unto the pride of a ruler who is oft our enemy. Thanks be to the Most High that they did not know the height of its nobility, for they might knowingly have betrayed that also.

“The defence of Narbicana is indeed a noble end, but the High Ones to whom our country is sacred do not encourage deceit and spying unto achievement of that end. The High Ones encourage bravery and defiance, not deceit, in our defence of Narbicana. And to those who have the courage to defy and face our enemies, they sometimes give us privilege in peacetime of such a death as may be earned by that defiance. A peaceful old age ended by a death in battle cannot be said to be an empty honour in a country to whom battle has been so important as it is to Narbicana. What man of a nation of warriors will call a battle-death an empty honour? If a man has served his country well in battle and yet lived, may not the Higher Guardians of that country honour him with death in battle as much as with longer life than warrior may well expect? Such life, such death, is not an empty honour but is honour redoubled. The Kryffyr is a sending of the High Ones for the

honouring of men of Narbicana, and the selling of such a beast into captivity is a slighting of the High who would give that honour. The offence that those hunters would knowingly have committed is lesser only in degree and not in kind to the offence that they knowingly were committing. For it is an offence against the honour of Narbicana to sell into slavery a beast of the High Ones' sending, meant to glorify some men of Narbicana. That indeed is perversion of purpose.

Therefore, there should be law in Narbicana to forbid such meddling with the Kryffyr as would not accord with its high placing, and those hunters, the clendern of my fellow lurnden, have offended against that law-that-should-be. And my own clendern have upheld that law, which I doubt not your lordships will soon shape and soon proclaim. My clendern are not criminals. They acted in good faith, Dunard on learning that he had from his sire and grandsire, and Miclas and Orogald from trust in their friend.

“However, it would have been an offence also to sell the Kryffyr into slavery even if it were not a sending of the High Ones, for its capture that was made for that purpose was done in a manner most ignoble, having made use of slibgetain, which Narbicanans never use against those beasts they use for meat which yet are dangerous to kill when killing is done fairly. That is an offence against the

tradition of Narbicana and as even my fellow lurnden has suggested, ought to be an offence in law, as the captivity of beast that will fight for freedom also ought to be. It is ignoble to take by means that accord with cowardice a beast that is worthy of being a chivalric symbol. The hunters' offence against Tradition, though not against the written law, is, I submit, my lords, an offence worthy of some punishment, though such a punishment cannot formally be demanded – and not the punishment of maiming or of death. But such an offence as they did commit against law-that-should-be, if that commission had been witting, should indeed be punishable by death, or at least by maiming, and I submit that your lordships should declare it so. As I have already argued, the clendern of my fellow lurnden did not appeal to law when their right to hold the Kryffyr was challenged, but they depended on force of arms, and they must therefore abide the result of the combat which therefore ensued, and they forfeit the right of strict interpretation of the law on their behalf. The law of Narbicana is not clear upon that point, my lords, and I suggest that ye now clarify.

“Also, my lords, it must be said, if you accept my argument concerning law that should be, that my clendern did, in good faith, that which should have been done, and they do not deserve therefore to be named criminals. I suggest to ye that



ye make a law forbidding any knavish meddling with the Kryffyr, and declare my clendern technically guilty of breaking law but yet not criminally so.

“My lords, we all admit that animals may be sold, whether alive or dead, if their ownership be not disputed. But never has it been known that an animal was so sacred to the purposes of the High Ones and the destiny of man, as the Kryffyr has been declared to be, by the Judges of the Truth of Lore. It is not an ordinary beast, but one consecrated as a messenger of the favour of the Most High. If it is admitted, as it is by all, that use of a thing is better deed than sale of it, does it not follow that sale of a thing which truly is sacred to noble purpose is a deed disgraceful? Men sell not holy things. How much more is it so with holy living things? For I challenge my fellow lurnden to say he does truly believe that the Kryffyr be not holy.

“I say not,” he added, as Nicfolos began to rise, “that the Kryffyr is possessed of supernatural grace, but that it hath a holiness that cometh from God but purely in the natural order.” Nicfolos resumed his seat.

“My lords, I have no more to say, unless that I be questioned by your lordships,” Wirmonald said then, and he sat down. Their lordships had no questions.

Then the King arose. “My lords the Dukes of Narbicana, members of the Council Royal,” he said, “I am prepared even now to suggest judgement and propose law. Hath anyone word that needeth saying before he listens?” And all the Dukes said, “Nay.”

The King said, “I suggest judgement that the beast called Kryffyr is a sending of the High Ones, for the glory of the brave men of Narbicana, and propose as law that no one be allowed to meddle with it except in such manner as might be in accordance with what the Lore of Narbicana may reveal.

“I suggest judgement that the hunters who are clendern of Lurnden Nicfolos be not guilty of any offence actually forbidden by the law, though I would warn them to be of more respect toward tradition, and they be set free. They are morally guilty of basely perverting a noble purpose.

“I suggest judgement that Dunard and Miclas and Orogald acted in good faith and in accordance with law that should have been, and so are technically but not criminally guilty.

“I suggest judgment and propose law that those who resort to weapons instead of appealing to the law, when challenge is made of what they deem their rights, must abide by the outcome of that appeal to weapons to the extent that death or

maiming may not be claimed as punishment for those who do violence against them in such combat, if the rule of law should later go against the aggressors. However, I further suggest that any goods or rights which might be taken after combat that follows a challenge thus accepted, belong not necessarily to victor but to those whose claim is supported by the law. This would not give the Kryffyr to the hunters, even could the court of council make effective such a ruling, for their claim is not supported by the law that should have been, that now is here suggested.”

The King said, “Hath any a point to raise before ye vote on these proposals?”

One young Duke, Ovorindal of Brizfric, stood then. “My lords,” he said, “we must have a care that we do not give too great a price to what we deem the nobility of warriors, and so come to despise the rights of those who have a right to what we deem the lesser life of a seller of goods. I find no fault in logic with what the king proposes, no fault in logic with any of it, but my heart is with the lowborn, and I abstain from voting.”

“There is no rule of law that will allow abstention for that reason,” said the King. “You must even vote, as must we all, upon the law proposed, unless you or others have valid reason for abstention.”

No other objections were raised, so the King then made again each suggestion for separate vote, and each of his suggestions was adopted by vote unanimous. Then was great rejoicing by Dunard and Miclas and Orogald and their families and friends, and less among the clendern of Nicfolos.

Now, that night, Prince Andrieth of Narbicana came to Dunard and his friends, as they and their families were resting in the Inn of the Owl, one of the lesser inns of the royal city, and he congratulated them upon the judgement in their favour and upon their deed accomplished in Ardfalie. And they let him know of the quest that they had undertaken, and said how pleased they were with the ending of it.

“Nay, not an ending,” Andrieth said then. “Ye are but halfway through Narbicana, and your quest was meant to take you to the top, was it not?”

“Ay,” said Dunard, “but we had meant to get there by the fall. And now ‘tis well into the fall.”

“Truly,” said Andrieth, “but fain would I be part of such a quest. ‘Tis a thought that tickles me.

“I have it. Let me speak to my father about this. I would well that ye three be my guests the winter and your families among the King’s Christmas guests, and that the quest continue, with me a part of it, late next spring.”

Dunard laughed long. “’Twould suit me well. What say ye, my friends? Shall we ask of our fathers more holiday next year?” And they agreed they would, and they told their fathers what the Prince had said. Miclas’s father said, “I am content to please the son of my King, if so little a thing will please him greatly. However, if the King is not minded to ask us as his Christmas guests, I would suggest that ye come home till after Christmas, and return here then.” The fathers of the other young men agreed therewith, and the Prince said he would ask his father, and next day he sent a messenger to tell them that all was arranged as he had suggested, and formal invitations would be forthcoming. And on the third day after the trial, the families and relatives and friends of Orogald, Miclas and Dunard left for home, while the three young men remained in residence at the Palace in Norforinden Upon Nelbarn.

VI

Now, when the harvest was finished in the land about Norrimnos, Elodoban of that district went to his father and asked him for permission to travel for a time in Zanod, where he had not been before, that he might see the wonders of the chief city of that country, for he said he would return in time for Christmas, and his father agreed to this, and so Elodoban left Norrimnos late in the month of Karmorthan, which upon Tellus is called October, and he travelled upon horseback in a caravan of scholars of Elsam who in that time of peace had come to discuss religion and philosophy with the more learned priests of Christ in Narbicana, for the zunnedin of Elsam were not forbidden peaceful means of conversion to their religion, though conquest was specially enjoined upon them if that failed. And Elodoban was loath to have behind him the autumn of Narbicana, which he loved above all other seasons of his country, and he chided jestingly the

zunnedin of Elsam that they would not endure the winter of Narbicana for the sake of saving Narbicanan souls to Elsam, and some of the younger of the more zealous of them said to their elders that perhaps they should go back to Narbicana for the saving of souls, but the elders said it would not be seemly to remain in Narbicana during the high celebration of the outrageous twelve-day Feast of Christmas, a blasphemous festival of polytheism. And after that, Elodoban chided them no more. And he came with them to Uladabad, the high city of the High Chieftain Garhendahil, and there he was lodged with a zunnedar who was an old and reverend disputant of his father upon the value or perniciousness of wizardry, as practiced in Narbicana, to whom his father had sent a letter of introduction. And that zunnedar, whose name was Alholzin, would have been filled with horror had he known of the treachery that Elodoban was bent upon, and would have made no use of it for the glory of Elsam, and Elodoban knew his mind and spoke no word to him of his intended treachery.

With the aid of a son of Alholzin, Elodoban gained introduction to Ilzahig the Discreet, the man of whom Nordig had told him. And when they had done the courtesies of greeting, Elodoban said to Ilzahig, “Affandai, I am a partner of

Nordig of Norrimnos, whom you know, who has joined with you in a plan to kill the Kryffyr of Narbicana.”

“And do you know, my son, what it is that that killing will bring about?”

“I know, Affandai, that it will ensure the conquering of Narbicana by Zanod, and I am willing that that should be.”

“Why so, my son?”

“I am convinced that Narbicana is of all nations beloved of our God, the Lord Most High, so that he will not permit her to remain forever in subjugation to those whom, with your pardon, Affandai, I must call infidels. I believe He will save Narbicana from Zanod, even by miracle, and I think it to be most likely that Narbicana’s thus rising from defeat will convince the men of your nation that our religion is the true one, as the resurrection of Christ the Lord on Tellus has convinced most of the reasonable men of this world who have heard it.”

“Ah, yes, the resurrection legend. My people revere Christ as a prophet, but we do not believe he rose again beyond his crucifixion. It is the way of the just to end as martyrs, until Elsam reigns supreme and the just are all protected. However, the test with which you challenge us is indeed an interesting one. If Zanod were to conquer Narbicana wholly and in sooth, I for one should have my faith in Elsam



shaken if she should rise again to full nationhood as a Christian country. But you say you are convinced of this. You put, perhaps, your faith in Narbicana's wizardry?"

Elodoban was startled at this perception. But Ilzahig had been sure that any full partner of Nordig would be of wizard-kin and have great trust in wizardry.

"It is possible that the High Ones who converse with Narbicana's wizards would be God's mediaries in bringing the miracle about," said Elodoban.

"But Eslam would stamp out the practice of wizardry, should it conquer Narbicana, as one day it will, by the grace of Elleh."

"I give you my solemn oath, upon my hope of soul's salvation, that our wizards converse with the angels of Him Whom you call Elleh, and not with the djinns of Azardizog the Fallen, whom ye call Giztenjiord. I swear it on the soul of Christ my Saviour, and I know whereof I speak." And such was the fervour and sincerity of Elodoban, who in his boyhood had seen his Uncle Armoniend imbued with the power and the holiness of a High One, that Ilzahig, who made deep study of the minds of men, was utterly convinced. And he was more than ever minded for the destruction of wizardry, for he felt then that Elleh had for some obscure reason

favoured the perfidious Narbicanans above the Sons of Elsam in this respect, a favour which Elsam never would achieve. But he smiled.

“If Narbicanans converted to Elsam can still practice wizardry, I shall do all I can to see that all Narbicanans are so allowed,” he said. For he saw well into the mind of young Elodoban.

“With thy pardon, Affandai, I must point out that this is but begging the question. For it assumes that Elsam and Christianity enjoy equal favour of Him you call Elleh, which is the point to be tested.”

“Thou art right, my son. Narbicanans must be allowed outright to practice wizardry, without demanding equal favour of Elleh for converts. It shall be so.”

Elodoban told Ilzahig that he feared the influence of Ilzahig would not be great enough to protect the practice of wizardry after conquest of Narbicana. He said he wanted oath from the High Chieftain himself, Garhendahil the Noble. And Ilzahig said he would see what could be done, but the High Chieftain of Zanod was not as partial to subtle dealing as was he, Ilzahig the Discreet. But Elodoban said it must be done, or the arrangement anent the Kryffyr must be cancelled.

Now, therefore, Ilzahig sought private audience with Garhendahil and told him all that was planned anent the Kryffyr of Narbicana. And Garhendahil stroked his

black-silky-bearded chin and said, “We must not allow the practice of wizardry in Narbicana if we conquer it, for it is a practice of the infidel Christian religion, but I am loath to forgo this opportunity, and equally loath to be forsworn. Doth this young infidel of whom you speak have direct knowledge of our presence?”

And Ilzahig said, “He does not, Your Greatness.”

Then said Garhendahil, “Let a noble be found among our trusted ones who will sit in my place when private audience is given the infidel, to give the infidel the oath that he desires, and I shall have our Chief Zunnedar make sacrifice of twelve prize camels for the cleansing of that noble’s soul, of his forswearing.”

And this was arranged, so that Ilzahig went back to Elodoban with word that Garhendahil would grant him private audience upon a day in the following week and would swear the oath he sought. So it was that on the middle day of the following week, Elodoban appeared before Ziladohid the Subtle in the private audience chamber of Garhendahil the Noble, High Chieftain of Zanod. And Ziladohid the Subtle said: “I understand that you would require an oath of me, young infidel.” And his manner of speech was stern, and his aspect majestic, so that Elodoban was fearful, and the young man haltingly outlined the plan that Nordig and Ilzahig had formed for the overthrow of Narbicana, and his reason, as

given to Ilzahig, for taking part. And he explained that he desired for all wizards of Narbicana, both those joining Elsam and those who might survive avoiding it, the practice of their art, that he might himself enjoy, despite defeat of country, the exercise of that talent with which he had been born.

“I had thought that wizardry was a dealing with the demons of Hell,” said Ziladohid. “If you are willing to swear to me that it is indeed a dealing with the angels of Elleh, and that you know it of your own knowledge, I am willing to make the oath that you would have of me.” And Elodoban so swore, right gladly, and had thereby the oath which he had sought. And so he returned to Ilzahig and told him that all was going well for the conquest of Narbicana by Zanod, and then went back to the house of Alholzin and his sons, until it was time to go back to Norrimnos for Christmas, during which he received the Eucharist, while he remained unshriven, on each of the Twelve Days.

## VII

Orogald was standing on the battlements of the keep of Castle Norforinden a morning in the fall, looking down to the south upon the island city of Norforinden-upon-Nelbarn, toward the tall spires of the Cathedral of St. Northonald, when Prince Andrieth came up behind him. “Fine buildings, are they not?” said Andrieth.

“I have never seen the like,” said Orogald. “It is a fine place to live in, and a mighty fort.”

Below the hill on which the palace stood, and out beyond a margin grassy and tree-lined, lay four squares of town residential buildings, in a line, each having on each side stone houses joined by walls of stone, and behind those squares was another line of four and then another line the same, and then two lines of six squares, and in the middle of the isle the great cathedral square, with mighty L-

shaped buildings built around the corners of the great cathedral, to house the archbishop and his priests and the monks of St. Northonald, who used one of the L-shaped buildings, the one northwest of the cathedral, as the University of Lornis. And on each side of Cathedral Square were two rows of three squares each, which housed the soldiers of the town's own garrison that were of the knightly caste of Narbicana. And beyond Cathedral Square was a row of six residential squares, and another row of equal number, and then another, and then two rows of four as the island again narrowed, and another row of four, and then two more squares, and then the City Hall of Council. And round about these squares was the high city wall, with towers at intervals of one hundred fifty feet. And the walls of the houses of the city were strong, as were the walls that joined the houses, and within each square of houses, beyond the yards, were squares of sward, where people could leave animals at graze and meet for games at evening in the summer and the fall, after the people of the square had cleaned up the leavings of the beasts for fertilizing of their vegetable gardens. And though the houses grew close together in each square, there was yet great variety in the making of them, so that the city was most pleasantly odd to look down upon, that of it which could be seen from the high keep of Castle Norforinden.

“Did you know that Norforinden has never been under seige?” asked Andrieth. For a prince of Narbicana could be excused for not taking for granted the holding of knowledge by a villager from the south.

“Aye. The kings of Narbicana have always defended their country rather than let their country defend them. They are not chess-game kings.”

“So far. I wonder whether I shall be a worthy king. I have never been tested in battle, though I’ve stood against bears and enkin stags. That’s not the same.”

“I’ve had only one fight,” said Orogald. “I was afraid for a while then until I got thoroughly angry. But that isn’t like continued battle, either. I think it would not be too bad if one stayed angry throughout. But at least in battle your enemies are men. I’ve never faced the pure beast ferocity of bear or enkin stag, that has no thought of mercy.”

“Would you like to try it?” asked Andrieth. “I am going out with a tracker after noon, after an enkin stag and I would gladly have you as my second. You wield a spear full rarely well.” For Orogald had engaged in weapon practice with the men of the court during what had been as yet but a short stay in Norforinden.

“If you mind not the risk of untried help, I will go right eagerly,” said Orogald.

“Good.” And Andrieth stood leaning in silence, at another embrasure, looking out upon his royal city.

After the noonday meal, Prince Andrieth and Orogald, with a hunter, rode out on the bridge across the west fork of the Nelbarn, along the road through meadow more than two bowshots wide in the woods that lined the riverbank, through a farming village a mile from the Nelbarn, and into forested hills. They rode along game trails with the hunter in the lead, scanning the ground for recent tracks. A half hour after they had entered hills, the hunter raised finger unto lips and pointed at the ground. There was nothing there that Orogald could see at first when they had dismounted and gathered round, but the sign became clear as the hunter explained what he saw in the grass. It was a hoofprint. Then they tied long ropes to their horses’ bridles and walked well ahead of them, leading the horses, Onardin the hunter in the lead, with Andrieth just behind, holding his spear with the point ahead of Onardin, in case the enkin stag should chance to turn upon his track.

They walked thus for twenty minutes and came to the edge of a clearing, wherein was feeding a lordly enkin stag. Its back was toward them, and so was the wind. Following a sign by Andrieth, they moved back along the trail a short



distance, going quietly as before, and Andrieth and Onardin conversed in sign language, then signed to Orogald that they would go to the enkin's right. They moved stealthily through the woods, having picketed their horses, for Orogald had learned a hunter's stealth in his own work, in seeking not to disturb unnecessarily the denizens of the forest where he worked and sought firewood or wood for carvers. Orogald had known from boyhood that if the enkin became aware of them before they faced it, it would surely flee, but once it had encountered foes, it would fight to the death.

Luck was with them and they had stolen around to the clearing's side without disturbing the enkin when it raised its head and looked around, warily. It was a ten-point stag. They kept still until it had gone back to grazing, and then Andrieth stepped out with his spear at the ready, advancing quickly with Orogald behind and to the right, Andrieth giving voice to an imitation of the enkin battle challenge.

The enkin reared turning and came down with antlers lowered.

Andrieth stood squarely in front of the charging enkin, spear poised, so that the enkin, guided by instinct trained by High Ones, knew he was the one to fight, and Orogald stood to the right, with spear held loosely, ready to throw to Andrieth if

latter should be disarmed or to stab the enkin fatally at once if Andrieth by ill hap should pierce it in an eye. Those were his only duties as second to the prince. As enkin charged, Andrieth stabbed between the antlers toward right side of neck, to plunge spearhead inside collar-bone into vitals, but the enkin, halting quickly, turned its head that side so that left antler warded stroke and spear was almost caught twixt antlers, but Andrieth snatched back the spear and thrust to left. Again the enkin warded. And Andrieth snatched back spear not quick enough, but enkin moved quickly past point and reared, threatening the hunter-prince with hooves. But Andrieth whirled spear in time to threaten belly, and enkin threw itself aside as point went up but never in, and then it charged again with antlers down as prince did deftly step aside and aim, overhand, at side and heart. But enkin turned again, straight-on, and then began a series of quick thrusts and wards, followed by quick steppings forward on part of enkin, and there were further rearings by the stag, and unsuccessful thrusts at belly, two of which were put aside by foreleg. And so they fought long time, until enkin wearied first, for it had not man-warrior's long terms of practice and endurance under wizard-training, but had relied on stamina with which endowed by nature in carrying of antlers and through mating-season fights with other stags, and when it wearied, it warded late

one time at last and point of spear struck home at end. And Andrieth wiped blood off spear and leaned against it as on staff, greatly breathing and much asweat, and he smiled at Orogald. “My sixth,” he said. And Orogald no longer marvelled that Andrieth had overcome with such ease, as it seemed to him, a mighty enkin stag.

They paunched the deer and cut it into quarters, and while they were doing it, a family of golden lynx approached them from the woods which they had left.

“Their louth’s not far from here,” Onardin said. “I know the siredin well, have fed him oft.” And they gave the kittens each a kidney of the enkin. The parents, who graciously stood still to let the hunters tickle them under chin, would finish what the kittens left.

The hunters went back to Nelbarn, Norforinden, and the palace, and at dinner the next day, which was the feast of St. Duimnedis, a soldier, everyone in the castle had on his plate a small piece of the meat of the brave enkin, with the beef and vegetables that made the main meal. And the same was done with meat of other enkins that evening at the house of the Lord Mayor of Norforinden and in the palace of the archbishop.

Thus passed the fall, in helping with harvest beyond the river, and hunting Narbicanan hares with thrown stones, and attending appeal cases put before the

King, and taking part in usual weapon-practice of the court. And winter came, and the trials continued, and Orogald and his friends helped in the sledding home of firewood cut in summer, and fed the sheep and cattle in Castle Norforinden's barns and led them out to exercise on the snowy sward of the bailey. And then came Christmas, and the King's guests, and Orogald was glad to see his father. And on Christmas Eve, all of Castle Norforinden and all of Norforinden-upon-Nelbarn gathered in the great cathedral for midnight Mass. And after reading the Gospel of the Birth of Christ, Archbishop Olmidan set aside the book and began his sermon.

“My dear children in Christ,” the Archbishop said, “we are celebrating this early morn the coming of the King of the Universe into a small, rebellious district of his Kingdom, in the guise of a rebel, born to make all the rebels worthy of being princes. He came to the world called Tellus, of which Tellares is the twin, for the sole purpose of dying the death of a rebel, slain by other rebels for declaring his Kingship to them. In that murder all of us have been partakers, being sons of Father Adam and sharers in his shame as an adopted prince turned rebel. And besides the shame of Adam the first man, which of us has not added personally to his own burden of sin? But the long and painful death that all

deserved for that foul murder has been changed, by Our Lord Christ's submitting to it, to the high privilege of princes, for those who are called to it, and it and all other deaths endured for love of Christ are but the prelude to eternal happiness with Him." Orogald was surprised to hear the bishop "harping" thus on the privileges of royalty, for he usually worked into his sermons the high duty of humility for high and low alike. "But there is another side to this that is but little touched upon in sermons here, for that we in Narbicana tend to take it much for granted. And that is the fact that when Adam of Tellus sinned against God, he lost for all of his world's creatures, and for all the creatures of Tellares, and maybe for all those that live on worlds throughout the universe, the participation that they had in the great glory of God. For man is an animal, though the highest and the only rational one we know, and in his sharing of the glory of God, as son of God, the idea of animalness is associated with the Life of God. And the brute beasts share with man that essence called animalness and in their relation to the life of man are given a special relation to God. They have with man the relation that the High Ones, the Dukes of the Divine King, have with the Most High, and give us the glory which God has in being deservedly served by others. And this means that we must bear toward animals the love that God bears toward us, always

remembering that we are not as God in our calling of beasts to pain and death. For as God, for reasons that we cannot plumb, calls man to share in the sacrifice of Christ our Lord, so men require of animals that they give their lives for us, to feed us and to give us gear and clothing. They cannot reason for themselves that their sacrifice is worth making, as men can argue that the friendship of God is worth the agony of martyrdom, and we cannot reassure them, as God reassures us, that the sacrifice is worth making. Nor can we reward them after death for the giving up of life, as God rewards man. They do not know that their parts consumed by men will be made part of the body of a thinking animal, and even if they could fathom it they could not appreciate that glorification while it was taking place, but only in the time before they died. And it is only their parts, and not their wholeness, that are given this ennoblement. But we shall enter in all our wholeness into the glory of God, if only we stay faithful to His law. Every one of our own members shall have its own part in our Heavenly glory, and our souls shall discern the separate glory of each member and the combined glory of all. And it may be that after the Last Judgement, when the earth will be renewed with the rejoining of Tellus and Tellares, the beasts of the field will have their special part in that Divine Glory, a glory which they will not be able to appreciate as we

do but which we will delight in for them. And it may be that, though the souls of beasts are mortal as their bodies, God can remake those souls as he can their bodies, and give back their memories of their life with us, to augment in a special way our memories of having treated them rightly during this present life. And it may be that those who were mistreated will not forgive their tormentors but avoid them even in the life hereafter, so that what might have been a small super-addition to eternal glory will be denied to some saints whom God has forgiven for sins against beasts and men. This is only speculation, I need not remind ye, but if it is not true, there will yet be some aspect of eternal life that will encompass that aspect also.

“I have dwelt so long upon our treatment of the beasts, because it is in our treatment of those who are below us – and only the beasts are truly below any man, no matter the designation of rank allotted by the High Ones – that we signify to God how we believe the high should treat the low, in which He may take us at our own performance. It is not unfitting that we should dwell this early morn upon our relationship with the beasts, for when Christ upon this day did come forth into the world of Tellus, He was born in the company of beasts, as the Gospels have told us. The beasts were the first to share His company, and that may have been

meant by Him to signify that we, though only a little less than angels, are yet but little more than beasts and no more deserving than they of the great glory which He has come to call us to. We must be ever mindful of our lack of merit.

“We tend to forget our lack of merit, we who live in Narbicana under the tutelage of God’s Dukes the High Ones, we who of all the nations in Tellus and Tellares have been chosen for that open tutelage through our specially born wizards. We tend to think that our birth entitles us to privilege of wizardry, or swift reflex of knightly men, or manual skill of subtle craftsman. And a thing has occurred this year which might foster that tendency: the confirmation by the Council Royal of a legend that had nearly died out in Narbicana but was fostered still by some few faithful families. I mean, you will have gathered, the great sending of the Kryffyr by the High Ones to brave warriors at peace. No other nation on Tellares – and I have not heard of any upon Tellus – has had this kind of privilege of God, and I think we tend to feel our nation has earned its privilege by reason of great bravery seen as ours alone. I ask you, then, if we are all so brave, why has not the sending of the Kryffyr been more widely known? I suggest to ye it is because there is a thing that the High Ones value more than bravery. And that is humility before the greatness and goodness – the Holiness – of God. I think that



without that humility, lacking which no man can be truly obedient, no man will have a visit from the Kryffyr.” And then his voice deepened and came a little louder: “I fear me there is great pride in Narbicana.” Then, softer: “May God bless you all: have a holy and a happy Christmas.” And he returned to the high altar and intoned the Creed.

After Mass, the King and his household and his guests returned to the Palace, to the Great Hall, and there was poured wine for all present, and the King proposed the toast to the Lord Arrived, and all drank it, as was done about that time in all the households of Narbicana. And then the company dispersed, and all went to bed and all to sleep except the King and Queen, who that night begot and conceived the youngest sister Andrieth would have, a child of later motherhood. And all slept well in preparation for getting up for morning Mass, which all attended, though for some that was the second Mass of daylight rather than the first, and after Mass the whole household, including King Ordonizdan and Queen Duilena, under the direction of the Master Cook, completed such preparations for Christmas Banquet as had hitherto to be left undone, and then there was great rejoicing and much feasting, with roast goose and mincemeat pie, and cider and divers sweetmeats, and toasts to the health of King and Queen and Crown Prince

Andrieth, who in turn drank to blessings on the kingdom and its people. And Wizard Ormeol of Mirfulas proposed a toast to “the new Princess,” for he was most wise and greatly loved, and the King roared with laughter and the queen deeply blushed, and both looked proudly pleased.

When the feasting was all but done, the King arose in his place upon the dais at the High Table and called upon Master Orfolzis the chief bard to bring him the Box of Storymaking, and each person at the High Table took therefrom a token, the most whereof were blank but seven, and the seven bore each a carving of an animal of Narbicana, those being the unicorn, the enkin stag, the beaver, the black bear, the hare, the gold lynx, and the cat. And each who had such token threw dice to see who should begin, or when continue, a story of the High Elves in the early days of Narbicana, in which these animals should play a part. And the lot fell upon the King, who had the hare, to begin, and he related the beginning of a story that began to draw upon the strings of the heart of Orogald, and then the story passed to Duke Dornobusdan, and then to Orogald’s own father, who had the golden lynx, who kept up the noble tale so passing well, with such great humour that the guests throughout the hall did almost sob with mirth, and so the story went and grew until it came to Master Orfolzis, who, without a token, was by

tradition the ender of the tale, and he told the ending of that much-turned tale with a masterly twist which brought joy-in-sadness to all who heard. And then the rest of the day was passed in telling of jokes and posing of riddles until 'twas time for supper, which mostly was made up of dinner's plentiful leftovers, served cold. And after supper, King Ordonizdan made choice of which among his guests would be the Seven Giants for the Battle of St. Stephen's Day, and Orogald was named first among the seven. And the others were Dunard and Miclas, and Stumonis of Mirgard, and Elfird of Galmdale, and Felmonidan of Myrthand, and Dumorin of Stelfos, all knights.

"It is fitting," said the King, "that all of those who have brought the Kryffyr recognition of its high station in our land, should take part this Christmas season in the First Battle of Narbicanan Men." And the seven went to bed that night, after singing of carols round the Great Hall, feeling greatly honoured.

On the Feast of Stephen, after Mass, the chosen seven set to work in rolling rounds of snow, as thick through as most men's shoulders are wide, to set one upon another for making of seven pillars of snow, in parallel rows of three with one between the middle two, on the level ground between Castle Hill and Norforinden City, and left them there till three o'clock of the afternoon, when

they returned with wooden swords and wooden helms to face the “Men of Narbicana,” fifty-one boys, similarly armed, chosen from among those come to fourteenth birthday in past year, who all had been committed to full training in some weapon from then on and who were no longer allowed defence by women.

The boys and the people of the city gathered upon the ground between the pillars and the city, and, his breath misty in the clear air, the Marshall of Mock Combat announced the rules (though they were well known): the boys could cut or thrust to any effect against the pillars only, and were not to use wrestling or pushing against the seven, who were deemed too strong to be thus overthrown, and none of the men were to strike in any way but lightly against the boys. Any boy’s arm or leg struck by sword edge was to be deemed cut off, and any boy struck with edge on head or body was to be deemed slain. The boys could win only by destroying the snow pillars with their swords and might not touch the pillars with aught but sword. And when the Marshall of Mock Combat had set forth the rules, the King stood forth and then recounted how it was told in the Heroic Tradition of Narbicana that seven giants had driven the High Elves from the country with aid of magic from Azardizog the Fallen, who gave their souls into the keeping of stone pillars which the High Elves could not damage, so that

the giants could not be killed or injured and they slew, all reckless, those who tried to attack their pillars with great hammers, or those who, knowing not the truth, had come against them with swords. And the device had made the Seven Giants invincible, until Tarandiel the Just had with White Magic endowed the swords of Christian outland Men with power to cut the silidmid stone, and those Christians had attacked the giants and their pillars simultaneously, and had destroyed the pillars and slain the giants, and then had been given Narbicana by the High Elves and had kept it ever since, against all enemies.

Orogald, standing with the other six, heard, when the King had ended his tale, a boy in the crowd ask a man beside him, “Is that tale true, Uncle Forlozid?” And the uncle, who wore a badge of wizard practising, replied, “There could not be giants in reality, of the size of which Heroic Tradition tells, unless the High Ones or the Fallen intervened in a way they never have, to make the laws that govern Nature other than they are. And a being cannot live with its soul removed from it, for the soul is the principle of life. The tale is pure slengrethan, my nephew, as is all of Heroic Tradition. But slengrethan is most oft a healthy thing, especially when advocating courage.”

Now, the boys who were the Men of Narbicana, gathered in three rings each of seventeen around the giants and the pillars, and six giants stood in a ring about the pillars, one to each gap between pillars, and Dunard stood outside the rings of boys. Orogald was on the side facing the city, before and between the pillar on the left and the one in the middle, and on his right was Elfird and on his left Felmonidan. A trumpet sounded and the Men of Narbicana began closing in. As the first circle moved close, Orogald feigned a cut at the shoulder of the boy in front of him, then moved left, striking at one who parried qumone, while the one in front, after parrying also qumone, lunged at the pillar behind Orogald, but Orogald was quicker and “cut off” his arm at the elbow. The boy dropped his sword and stopped to pick it up with his left hand, and Orogald cut him on the head so that he withdrew, as another, about to take advantage of Orogald’s unguarded left, was struck on the shoulder by Felmonidan who then stepped quickly back to ward against an attack beyond his left and “cut off” an arm before his pillar could be reached. The boy who had been to right of Orogald had in the meantime been cut down by Elfird, while the boy who was to Elfird’s right drove his sword into the pillar facing him but had his hand “cut off” by Elfird before he could push upon the sword. Then Elfird “killed” him before he could use left hand

to push. As he did so, the boy in the second circle, who was to right of Orogald and left of Elfird, drove for the middle pillar, parried fremuen a cut at flank from Orogald, and was “cut” on the head by Elfird. Then Dunard, ranging round to this side from the other, “struck down” the boy in the second circle who was facing Elfird, after deceiving attempts at warding by the boys to his left and right. Orogald turned quickly to his left, saw only Felmonidan standing there, then saw that Dunard, with no need to guard, had “slain” the two who had been trying to stop his attack.

Orogald stepped away from the pillars, turned to the clacking of wood at his right and saw the last “Man of Narbicana” facing Stumonis and Dumorin and warding furiously as they struck one after another and then, suddenly, at once, “killing” him. For he warded fremuen Stumonis’s stroke at flank but not Dumorin’s cut, which struck him on the chest from right. Then the trumpet blew again, and the Marshall of Mock Combat inspected the pillars, two of which had had small pieces cut out at the top. And he proclaimed all Seven Giants still alive, and the seven pillars of snow remained in place, till they would melt, as a reminder that even Narbicana may suffer ultimate defeat.

Burke – Kryffyr – 112

Then the boys were taken to the castle and given wine to drink in toast to battle in righteous cause, the first and last wine that they would drink until they were twenty-one years old and could legally be slain in combat. For the slaying of a youth under twenty-one is a war crime in Narbicana and in the lands around except where it is proven the only way in defence of life.



## VIII

When Elodoban returned from Zanod to Norrimnos, he spent much time during and after Christmas in the company of Ealina, as was to be expected, and soon after Christmas he went without her to the home of Nordig and said to him, “The High Chieftain of Zanod, Garhendahil the Noble, has promised that Narbicanans will be allowed to practice wizardry if our country is conquered by his through slaying of the Kryffyr.”

“Good news, my son. We can proceed. And—”

“How now shall we deliver to him the Kryffyr’s death? Only two remain of those we did employ, and one is maimed, and doubtless are afraid, as would the others be if still alive, after narrow escape from law, to meddle again with Kryffyr. Where shall we find Narbicanan men to work for us and, unknowing, for Zanod? Or must we furlingad Zanodens into the country?”

“Fear not. When Marfod and his companions sought assail the three Friends of Kryffyr, in their creeping upon the camp at night, they made themselves, in sort most formal, enemies of the Kryffyr in dishonourable wise, for they pursued after their fashion the mission of those who sought deliver Kryffyr unto Zanod. A compulsion hard to resist is now upon them, though yet perhaps they feel it not, to seek and slay the Kryffyr by furlingit means. But it would be better if they worked for us unknowing of compulsion, so I have devised a tale that you may tell them, that will encourage them to the end we purpose.” He told Elodoban that tale, and at the end of it he moved his head as if a thought had struck him suddenly, and he said, “It has returned to my old and faulty memory that to make it absolutely sure that the conquest of Narbicana shall endure no more than seven years, the sword which slays Kryffyr must have shed within that hour the blood of a virgin and the blood of a priest of Narbicana.

“Fear not,” he added, as he saw how Elodoban took this, “the virgin and the priest must not be slain, for that would be black magic and would greatly lengthen the time of conquest. They must only be let blood enough to wet the edge of sword. You should not begin to think I would condone murder for the gaining of our ends or let myself believe that you would. You must tell the men of Marfod

that a virgin and a priest – they may be the same; a male virgin will suffice – must be brought with them when they return to Elfland to seek the Kryffyr in the spring.” For it had been in Elfland, which is north of Narbicana but hidden, that the other hunters had captured Kryffyr, and they had been afraid to tell that to the Council Royal. And they had been afraid also to tell the council of the theft, by Marfod their accomplice, of the sword of Molinod, used before in the defence of Narbicana, which Elodoban had told them could defend against Kryffyr if he should escape his bonds, though it would be useless against him before capture.

Now, Elodoban journeyed to the town where Marfod dwelled, and sought him out and said to him, “You have heard from the evidence given at your kinsmen’s trial before the Council Royal, what is the nature of the Kryffyr. It grieves me to tell you now that I have learned further that the nature of the beast is such that it will seek, at some time unknown, to give a lingering and painful death to any who have demeaned it as those you aided, with whom it now numbers you, both for your stealing of the sword and your seeking dishonour to the men who helped it so that ye are become, as much as the first hunting party, the Kryffyr’s dishonourable enemies. It will not be content till it has punished ye for thwarting

its desire to have no dealing with men except in giving of honourable death to the courageous in time of peace.”

“You brought this on us,” said Marfod.

“Indeed. I did not know the penalties when ye were sent to capture it. But I am willing to make amends, as far as may be made. The Zanoden noble with whom I put you in touch before is still eager to get possession of the Kryffyr, but such captivity will not guarantee your safety. I fear ye must kill it if ye are to feel secure. I sought you out to tell you this because I am responsible for your danger, which before I did not know. You must get into Elfland one more time and catch the Kryffyr sleeping as before, and have a man of Zanod slay it for you with the sword you have, that had been used in defence of Narbicana. I know a rival of the noble who sought the Kryffyr for his beast-home, who has no use for it himself, who may well agree to kill it for you, to prevent that noble’s ever getting it. For it can only be killed, so that it does not rise again after three years, by a man who is not of Narbicana. And the sword which kills the Kryffyr must have on it fresh blood of a virgin and of a priest – a male equivalent of virgin will do, so it will be enough to have a priest accompany you and shed a little of his blood, if he has never sinned mortally against purity.”

“I know a man who will serve that purpose,” said Marfod. “The curate of our parish is a generous young man who’s said he’d dearly love to visit Elfland, which he knows is accessible only from Narbicana and in which he’d hardly dared believe until he came here. I would swear he is a virgin. I shall ask him, telling him some yarn of honourable task in Elfland. And all our band, the two of us who were in the first hunting party and the rest who are enemies of the sainted Noble Three, will go with me to kill the beast.

“But you who are responsible for our danger must come with us this time and share it fully.” And Marfod was a hard man and dangerous, so Elodoban dared not refuse. But even so, he was well content, and departed from Marfod and next day from that town and went home and told Nordig what had happened. And they were well pleased, and they sent a message in cipher by secret means to Ilzahig the Discreet. But Nordig sent also another message of which Elodoban knew nothing.

When spring came, all the preparations had been made, and Nibolahad the Zanoden came into Narbicana in guise of scholar, and met, with four warriors disguised as servants, the party organized by Marfod. And the combined party travelled north, keeping close to Nelbarn, to a certain grove of ancient pines not

far from Nelbarn, and Elodoban told the priest, whose name was Flanos, that he, as a virgin, must earn for them the right to enter Elfland, by passing through that grove from south to north, no matter what might seem to try to stop him. And Elodoban said no harm could come to him thereby if he had never sinned mortally against purity, no matter what danger he might seem to encounter. And Father Flanos went into the grove's southern end, and when he was out of sight, all others of the party, who were standing in a circle round the grove, performed each an act of solitary vice, which in the circumstances was as a deed of black magic, though not one requiring talent, and they finished their foul deeds before the priest came out the northern end, with his eyes shining and he seeming unable to speak of what he'd seen. Then all went on, without incident except one day there came a sharp and strong north wind, in face of which Father Flanos knelt suddenly and screamed a prayer short, then rose and would say only that some great evil had narrowly passed him by but was not meant for them. And so they approached the source of Nelbarn and drew near the entrance of Faerie. For black magic or white magic may both gain entry there. And with both kinds of magic deeds behind them, the priest unknowing of the black, they waited outside the entrance for full moon, when the Kryffyr would come and rest in guarding of the entrance.

Now, after Elodoban had left Norrimnos to join the party going to Elfland, Nordig felt great guilt for what he was doing, though he repented not, and his sleep was uneasy and he had bad dreams. And in one of those dreams he dreamed that Elodoban had betrayed him to the King and he was put on trial with Elodoban before the Council Royal, and he dreamed he told the council all the plot and tried to blame Elodoban for most of it. But in his dream he still told lies unto the Council Royal, for he dreamed there were no Judges of the Truth of Lore. And the speech he dreamed he made unto the Council Royal was being made in truth, for he was talking in his sleep, a thing he did but rarely, and his wife Mabinia heard all he said and was dismayed. And she slept no more that night, and in the morning she went to Ealina and told her what she had heard, and Ealina was greatly troubled and would have gone most reluctantly to the Council of Norrimnos to tell them about the plot, but Mabinia said they must try to save the men they loved, without bodily destruction of these men. For despite her despairing shrewishness, she still at heart did love her husband. She urged Ealina to pursue Elodoban into Elfland and promise never to marry him unless he should give up and thwart the plot against the Kryffyr. Ealina agreed, for she loved Elodoban as much as she did Narbicana, and she mounted a fast horse and set out

in pursuit. And Mabinia told her there was a wizard-kin in the northwest who could help her into Elfland, for Mabinia was somewhat learned in the lore of wizardry, as befitted the wife of a wizard born, who had expected to be mother of wizards.

And as Ealina was setting saddle to her horse, Mabinia counselled her urge Elodoban to choose his art over her and use magic against those who had been leagued with him, if they would not yield to argument, and counselled her to say, in that event, that she would never marry but would hold her body as consecrated to honour of him who would be wizard in practice of his art.



IX

When spring had come again to Narbicana and the ground was dry, Dunard and Miclas and Orogald and Andrieth, with Omidfulos, an older knight entrusted with special care of the prince, set out from Norforinden-upon-Nelbarn, upon the bridge to the western side of Nelbarn, and they rode by country byways northward, stopping at towns and villages, and at each place of three at which they stopped they received but negative replies to the customary question of Dunard. But at last, they came to a farm outside a village, which farm was kept by a tall, lean man of later middle age, and when Dunard said to him, “Is this the place?”, the man said, “It is indeed the place, young knight of Narbicana.”

Dunard said then, “May we therefore stay with you three days?”

The man said, “Ye may, if two of you mind not sleeping in the barn, for I have room enough in the house for three only.”

Dunard said, “It is meet that we stay together. We will lodge at village inn. It may be that we shall speak to you in three days’ time.”

But the man said: “My farm, and not the village, is the place I named. I know ye for the three, with two more, who freed the Kryffyr on a quest of whim. The deed for ye is already chosen.”

Dunard said, “If we be found out and the deed chosen, we may as well know it now.”

The man said: “I am Larnidolal, of wizard-kin, that chose to marry and breed more wizards rather than give myself to practice of the art. But now my wife is dead for more than seven years, so I am admitted to the converse of High Ones though I cannot wield magic, but my only child was a daughter, who cannot be wizard but only give birth to wizards. And that branch of lore with which my father dealt was the lore that pertained to the Kryffyr, and I have kept that lore.

“Now, it is told in the Lore of Kryffyr that anyone who meddles, by way of fighting, in the life of the Kryffyr, must fight the Kryffyr himself, as soon as he can do so after knowledge of that duty comes to him. For if they who meddle in the Kryffyr’s life by fighting do not seek him out to fight him, the Kryffyr will interfere in any battle that they may have to fight for sake of Narbicana, and slay

equally on both sides, so that the battle shall be bootless, until those he seeks are the only ones remaining, and they shall fight the Kryffyr then. Therefore there could be great loss among the fighting-men of Narbicana if any of you three should go to war before ye fight the Kryffyr. So it is ordained that ye should seek the Kryffyr out in Elfland, for that is where he truly dwells, and seek to slay him in combat.”

“Mean you that our time has come to die?” said Dunard. “For none may slay the Kryffyr, but only die in fighting him.”

“The Kryffyr may be slain,” said the wizard. “There is one place upon his body where he may be wounded, and wounded unto death, that he knows not of. But he may be also killed through open beak, but he knows that and will guard against it. There are three wizards in Narbicana who know that piece of lore, and each may tell it to only one man living at one time, without great punishment. It may be told to one man of any group of five that seek to slay the Kryffyr. For it may be five at most that seek him thus in any one group, and it is best that there be no fewer, that there be one to face his beak and one for each of his four paws. So let ye decide, and it must be decided soon, whether all five of ye will go, or only the three who must, or whether ye will seek avoid your duty.”

Miclas said, “May we wait to have your saying tested by a judge of the truth of lore?”

Larnidolal said, “Ye may.”

Dunard said, “We have agreed to take upon ourselves the deeds that may be set us, so that they be in accordance with the laws of God, and so I think we must accept the deed that now is given us, regardless of the danger, or forsake as folly our quest of whim. I say we take the deed as soon as we may, provided he gives us oath he speaks the truth.”

“He could believe it well, and yet be wrong,” said Miclas. “The law of God forbids a reckless endangering of life. We should have a judge of lore to test what he has told us.”

Prince Andrieth agreed, for the King had warned him not to take needless risk, and so, finally, did Dunard. And the wizard told them where a judge of the truth of lore might be found, and they rode there at three hours’ ride and found they had been told the truth, and went back joyfully, all five, for on the way it was decided all five would keep up the quest, for they had found a deed of quest that might mean glory. And when they returned, Larnidolal invited them to supper, where his daughter Euvona served at table, and during the meal he told them that if they

should succeed to slay the Kryffyr, there would be peace, a peace of blessing and prosperity, in all of Narbicana for fifty years at least. And then they were more joyful. But Miclas said, “You have not yet told one of us the place where the Kryffyr may be wounded.”

Larnidolal said, “Choose him, then, for only he may be told.” And the five agreed that Dunard should be the one, and the wizard took him aside and told him, and Dunard looked grimmer when he returned to table.

“But are you sure he is an Elvish beast?” asked Dunard. “I had never heard that.”

“He is a beast of the High Ones only,” said Larnidolal, “but his home is Elfland.” And the five agreed they would set out at morn, to seek a wizard who would help them into Elfland.

But Larnidolal said, “I can tell ye how to get there. Ye must go unto the Nelbarn by the shortest way from the place where ye are told your duty with the Kryffyr, and then travel northward, always within three rods of Nelbarn, except ye must leave its bank when ye are opposite the Grove of the Unicorn and go to that grove the shortest way, and pass through it by moonlight and return the shortest way to Nelbarn and travel again within three rods of Nelbarn till ye reach

its source, and when ye have reached the source ye shall be in Elfland. And as ye fare into Elfland, ye must go between the two stone pillars that are beyond the spring of Nelbarn, or else perish.”

But Dunard said, “I am not one who may pass unwed through the Grove of the Unicorn.” And he was much ashamed, but he continued, “Conjugal chastity is the only kind I may attain, and I am not yet married. Does this mean I must face the Unicorn and die?”

The wizard said, “You must face the Unicorn and die or pursue the quest as far as marriage. You must be married by the time your companions reach the grove, and you must stay behind until any children that you may have are come of age, and then must follow your companions if they have not returned. And if you have to go to war before they come of age, the Kryffyr will not destroy the armies in that war, for you will be pursuing the quest as best you may.”

“Whom shall I marry?” said Dunard. “The last maiden I did ask gave me refusal.”

Larnidolal said, “I have a daughter who needs a husband.” Euvona looked shocked, and blushed. “There are now no wizard-kin in Narbicana who are of age to marry her, except Elodoban of Norrimnos, and he is betrothed.” He looked,

smiling, at Euvona, and went on, “She would not, I think, be loth to marry a knight who could keep the farm with her when I am gone.”

“Euvona is a lovely woman,” said Dunard, “but I know her not well.” And he bowed to her, and she got quickly up from table and quickly left the room.

“I assure you, sir, that she is virtuous, and even-tempered insofar as that latter term may be used of woman in discourse among men,” said Larnidolal. “Our ancestors went into marriages arranged for them knowing little more than that, and their marriages were none so ill, no worse than the majority of marriages today. The quest can be delayed for as long as ye were at first prepared to wait for setting of the deed ye sought, that ye two may further your acquaintance. That should be time enough for whirlwind courtship.”

Dunard laughed loud and long, while the others of the five wondered what he would say. “So let it be, if Euvona will have me. Though what my father and mother will say when I bring to them a wife they did not know I sought, I do not know.”

“I can bring your father to see the rightness of the decision,” said Larnidolal, “and I doubt not that Euvona will be pleasing to your mother.”

“You spoke of my keeping this farm with Euvona after you are gone,” said Dunard. “It may well be so, for my father has older sons than I. But will our children be of knightly caste or wizard-kin?”

“That is for the High Ones to determine. I have known sons of knight and wizard-kin to possess the talents of both, so that the choice of way of life lay with the holder of the gifts.”

“But hold,” said Dunard; “I am the only one of the five of us who knows where the Kryffyr may be wounded. May I tell another, or may someone replace me bearing that knowledge, or must my four friends go on without such help?”

“You were the one selected for the knowledge of the wounding place,” said Larnidolal. “Only one person at a time may hold that knowledge from the wizard who gives it, and only one in each group of warriors to fight the Kryffyr. It is yours until you die. But apart from that, your place may be taken by another to make up five. I have in mind my nephew Dormufals, who lives three miles from here, who has yet to engage in practice of the art and may yet use weapons if he is prepared to forgo that practice. He has been used to practise weapon-art with blunts, for exercise and sport, for that he wished he had been born a knight, and I think he will not be loth to take upon himself this quest of yours. We shall send



for him and see. I think he has been chaste these seven years and may go through Grove of Unicorn.”

Dormufals was summoned and arrived, and agreed most eagerly to take upon himself the quest. And the others made themselves useful about the farm, while Dunard and Euvona walked about together, talking about their hopes and fears, their likes and dislikes, and their private ambitions, and since it had been well-nigh decided they would marry and each was pleasant in company, it was not long before they were in love, each with the other, and well minded to marry each the other.

During the stay of the chosen six, Larnidolal gave these further lore about the Kryffyr and of Elfland. He said, “By the time ye five reach Elfland, the Kryffyr should be finished of its guarding rest at entrance, and be about its usual wandering in Elfland. But if by chance ye should arrive sooner and find it in its rest, ye must wait outside the entrance, sending one man in each evening to look, until you find that it has gone. For it rests three days and three nights, and for one of these three is sound asleep, but no one ever knows, except by going up and touching him, whether he is asleep or only resting. And to touch him when he is resting only, is instant death. And for the fighting party to challenge him when he

is resting is great insult to him, and deeply would he feel it. When he has gone again, however, the Elven guards who keep the usual watch upon the entrance will return, and ye will meet them when ye enter, and ye must tell them of your quest, that ye may search Elfland for the Kryffyr. But when ye tell them of the quest, ye may well be asked to accompany Elven warriors upon another quest, for slaying of a dragon. For there are times when dragons rise to power dangerous in Elfland and must be fought and killed.

“Dragons are fully Elflandish creatures as the Kryffyr is not, and the Elves must endure their presence till they are grown inimical and dangerous, for dragons, though they are in all Christian legend symbols of great evil, have yet free will and choice between good and evil, yet so great is the taint of original sin upon their kind that they are most oft so much inclined to evil that they succumb to that temptation and are made beasts of foulest nature. But a dragon must be endured and never slain at birth, till it has made that choice, and the Prince of the Fallen rarely puts that choice to it most fully until it is full-grown and fell. This doubtful nature of the dragon is underscored by a prophecy which says that there will one day be a dragon of great power who will choose good instead of evil and will one day be bane of Liculdura, enemy of Elfland.

“For I must tell ye also of Liculdura, for she will be your enemy also, when you have passed through Grove of Unicorn.

“Liculdura was an Elven maid who abandoned the chastity which to her kind comes more easily than to Men, and she tempted males of Elvenkind but they rejected her, and so she delved into black arts and summoned incubi and disported with them in the sacred places of Elfland, desecrating them most foully, and for that desecration Azardizog rewarded her with power great against the Elves, who yet with help of great Tarendiel did succeed to banish her beyond the further border of Elfland, which is upon the border of Hell. And if she ventures forth from there and is slain, she will doubtless go to Hell, for Elves who have chosen evil repent not easily, though they can repent, as the Fallen High cannot. But it is possible that if she ventures forth, she will not be slain, unless she is faced by men who have killed Kryffyr. For men who kill Kryffyr are then made powerful indeed against all evil that is of Earth or Elfland. And if ye kill the Kryffyr, ye may go with Elves that number as many as ye do that survive the Kryffyr-fight, into Morzindorim, the realm of Liculdura, and hale her thence, then powerless, for trial by the King of Elfland. And one of ye may behead her if she is found guilty of treason against Elfland and of foul traffic with the Fallen High.

“Therefore will she seek to stop ye if she knows ye come to Elfland, and know she must, for she is sensitive to what occurs at Grove of Unicorn, and knows who goes through it. And she will guess, seeing five, that ye come to fight the Kryffyr, and she will be afraid the Elves will seek your help against her, and she will seek to slay ye while ye are still in Narbicana. For there is great power in Elfland against her doing battle there, while yet the Kryffyr roams there. But her minions can sweep through Elfland and out its gate into Narbicana and slay men here. And when they do come out of Morzindorim through Elfland, these minions who are her offspring by captive, seduced men of Narbicana, are as black she-wolves to those who see them at all, but to most men their approach is as that of a bitter wind from north, until they bite and claw, and they can be seen only by men who wear rings which I will give you, that were made by my uncle who practised the art. And I advise ye that if ye see the she-wolves coming, ye pretend ye see them not, till ye suddenly draw swords and set upon them when they draw near. There should be but seven of them, so by taking by surprise ye should prevail against them. But these wolves are deadly beasts, but they may be slain by men with ordinary swords.

“This quest is turning dangerous,” said Omidfulos.

“Indeed it is,” said Larnidolal. “But great good may come of it. Even without knowledge ye may luckily strike the Kryffyr where death may be done it. That is the point of greatest danger, that ye may not.”

“However it fares with us in battle with the Kryffyr, the Kryffyr is a good beast,” said Omidfulos. “‘Tis the fell Liculdura I like not.”

“Good fighters with sufficient warning can prevail against her she-wolves,” said Larnidolal. “And if ye slay the Kryffyr, ye will survive the quest to Morzindorim. That can be foretold.”

“Still, they are ill beasts,” said Omidfulos. “And what more can you tell us of that dragon we may have to face as well? That were fell beast also, to my thought.”

“Men have always been lucky against dragons in Elfland, though their luck was none so good in olden days when dragons got forth in Narbicana,” said Larnidolal. “That is why the Elves will ask ye for your help. And it will be to your advantage to give that help, for Elves are lucky against Kryffyr, when they may go against it with equal number of men, which is the only time that they may ever seek to fight it.

“If you are asked by Elves to fight dragon, you may accompany them as long as the paths ye follow do not clearly separate. Ye may go after dragon till ye know for sure the quest of Kryffyr leads another way, and the Elves may go with ye till quest of dragon clearly leads another way. But if both quests may be fitly carried out together, ye men and Elves will likely have good luck in both. Ye may well hope there is dragon quest needful in Elfland when ye arrive there, and ye may pray that, if there is, the two quests coincide.”

And the party all were grave, but Dunard said suddenly, “What of the hunters? Will their meddling with Kryffyr not lead to bootless battle if they go to war? Who will search them out to tell them duty?” But Larnidolal said, “They have their fate, as you have yours, but they, unlike yourselves, will be compelled to it. Ye need not be concerned with them.” So they fell to talk of other things.

And so the three days passed and the wedding day was come, for Larnidolal had talked with the Bishop concerning the importance of the quest and wedding, and had got a dispensation allowing forgoing of the banns, and so Dunard and Euvona were wed in the village church on the morning of the fourth day and there was a merry wedding breakfast at the farm, after which the five companions, without Dunard, left to ride straight for Nelbarn. And they arrived at the riverbank

in mid-afternoon and rode up along the bank and came, as the moon was rising, to the place that Larnidolal had told them was the shortest distance from Grove of Unicorn. And they turned and rode due west and saw the grove of tall and stately pine trees in the moonlight. They rode toward the southern end of the grove and entered it, Miclas in the lead. And as they moved through the middle of the Grove, there stood in front of them the pure and mighty Unicorn, his silver spiral horn a gleam.

As Miclas rode forward, the Unicorn lowered the spiral horn and placed the point of it against the chest of Miclas, above the heart. And Miclas felt great fear, and at that moment, each of the four others felt a point against his chest, above the heart, and also felt great fear, and so they paused.

Now, just before the moment Miclas felt the horn against his chest, Dunard was in the bedroom of Euvona and had just wrapped a dressing robe about himself and was about to approach her awaiting him in bed, when suddenly he felt a sharpness against his chest, above the heart. And he feared black magic, and he stopped. And Euvona, seeing him stop and seeing his fear, thought she knew the cause of it, and got out of bed and dropped her nightdress and stood before him naked and shapely, with pleading in her eyes which he could see by moonlight shining

through the window. And Dunard felt sorry that Euvona thought he feared her body and her beauty, and he stepped forward without thinking, and the point pressed deeper. But he had great courage, and he knew that there could be no wrong in his approaching of his bride, God's gift of chastity to him, and he stepped again forward, and the point pressed deeper still, though yet no blood was drawn, and he stepped again, and then the point was there no longer, and he went to Euvona and embraced her, and he pressed his lips to hers, he and she impressing and receiving feelings, so that each mouth was as both seal and wax, and then he put his lips to where her breasts were joined. And this is mentioned here because it is thus that all Narbicanans newly wed begin lovemaking, to signify that their thoughts expressed by mouth are joined and should be taken in by their children as with their mother's milk. But how they proceeded after that is no concern of any but them and the High Ones and Most High.

Now, as the point was lifted from Dunard's chest, the sharpness pressed deeper into chests of the five in the Grove, but fear was lifted from them and they went forward in confidence, trusting the Unicorn. And as they moved, the Unicorn went backward, slowly enough to maintain the threat of piercing heart with horn. And so they moved slowly through the Grove and out of it at the north end, and



Burke – Kryffyr – 137

then the Unicorn did rear and canter back into the Grove, and the five rode back to Nelbarn.

X

Now, Ealina, riding hard and well, and changing horses often, came soon to Larnidolal, who was the wizard of whom Mabinia had told her, and she told him all that she had known and been told, and he was grim when he heard it. He said: “I had thought those hunters were seeking the Kryffyr but as rare beast, which would have been bad, but this is grave indeed. But not all that you have been told is true. For the slaying of a captive Kryffyr by an enemy of Narbicana with a sword that had been used in defence of Narbicana, would ensure the enslavement of Narbicana for sevenscore years, not seven only. And the harmless letting of blood of virgin and priest would not affect the sacrifice of Kryffyr, but the slaying of priest and virgin followed by slaying of the Kryffyr with the same sword within an hour, would mean that Narbicana be enslaved three hundred years. I fear Nordig and the Zanod lord are false even to your Elodoban.

“It would be better if we could send quickly a force to Elfland to stop that furlingit hunting party, but it would, I fear, be late. Though I will send one, anyway, behind you, for traitors, if so they prove, must not go unpunished, nor must the Zanoden. You must ride on as quickly as you can, and appeal to the hunters’ love of country for them to refrain from what they mean, and if they are too far gone in evil to be swayed by love of Narbicana, Elodoban must call upon his High Guardian to invest him with power of the art, so that he may overcome them all by magic. Mabinia’s advice to you is good; I cannot imagine a man truly in love who could resist the honour you intend to offer him. I think we well may make good wizard of Elodoban. For though I fear he may have used black magic of a minor sort to gain access to Elfland, it is not the kind of magic that makes full commitment to the Fallen High and opens talent for their use. And even use of full black magic may be repented by a member of mankind.

“But if the Narbicanans fight for their country against the Zanoden who mean our downfall, they will be given gift of fighting Kryffyr as men ought, for face him now they must, and they will die good deaths. You may promise them that on my word. And if Elodoban will use his art in supporting them to save Kryffyr, his facing it, which otherwise might come at any time in life, may be put off until his

elder age, for the Kryffyr has great love for wizards, though only rarely does he come to give death to one of us. But this is one such case. But if he uses magic thus, the Narbicanans must not slay the Zanoden, but leave them to the Kryffyr.

“But as for the law concerning wizardry and marriage, that is not just a law of Narbicanan authority, but God’s law of nature. For a practicing wizard’s relationship with his High Guardian is as binding and exclusive as marriage, and trying to have two such bonds would mar the soul. So never must ye expect both to marry and to have Elodoban wield magic. I fear the Fallen High had tampered with the teaching of Elodoban when he was learning lore.”

“And with mine also. I never knew that.”

“Of another thing must I warn you: the Elven witch Liculdura, who makes her realm at border of Hell and Elfland,” said Larnidolal. “She may seek to slay you, if she is ware of why you go to Elfland. So if you must ride horse – it may be you will have better steed, of which I speak hereafter – ‘twere better you ride with others whom you may catch upon the way, and urge them ride with you night and day to get them there with you in time.” And he told her of Miclas and his friends, and the danger they faced, and the rings he had given them. “But the horse I will give you is faster far than theirs, so if you know the minions of Liculdura are

slain, it were better you go alone. But if you are allowed the best steed of all, you need not fear fell Liculdura's she-wolves. For, as to your getting into Elfland, you must go from here unto the Nelbarn by the shortest way and travel north keeping within three rods of Nelbarn, until you are opposite to the Grove of the Unicorn, then go through the Grove northward. The Unicorn will place his horn against your heart when you have reached the middle of the Grove, but if you have not sinned mortally against chastity in the past seven years, he will go back as you advance, until you leave the Grove. And then you will be able to go back to Nelbarn by the shortest way and travel up, keeping again within three rods of river, to Elfland. But if you are a virgin in soul the Unicorn will kneel before you and let you get upon his back and let you ride him to Elfland, but he will not enter with you. But on the way he will be bane of Liculdura's minions. And if you can ride him, my horse will follow you for your return."

Ealina ate a meal with Larnidolal and with Euvona and Dunard, whose kind of happiness she hoped enjoy with Elodoban if only for short while, and then she rode to Nelbarn and north along its bank, staying within three rods of river, and she rode fast, on the horse Larnidolal had given her. And as she rode next day

through a grove near river's edge, she met a young man also riding, whose look she little liked.

“Whither goest, maiden?” asked the man.

“I am bound on urgent duty,” she said. “I have no time to linger in talk.” And she was about to pass, but he turned his horse and rode with her on the path.

“Urgent duty may do well to have companion,” he said. “I have time upon my hands and would welcome adventure, especially with comely lady at my side.”

“If you must know, I am bound for Elfland, and I misdoubt me you would qualify to come, from the way you have been eyeing me. Please excuse me.” And she spurred her horse to slightly greater speed. He spurred also, and, drawing abreast, seized her horse's rein.

“It is not fitting,” he said, “that Narbicanan maiden fare abroad without protection. You must take mine, or need protection from me, for I will not have it said that I am ill companion for a lady except I am to prove so.”

“As you will. I may assume you mean dishonour me, that I may in good conscience wield sword against you and need not run away?”

“You may assume it well enough,” he said, and he tried fondle breast of Ealina, riding horse close to hers, but she struck his hand aside with parry-like movement of her arm. “Not till I die,” she said.

“Or maybe till you are gravely wounded,” said the man. “I’ve no objection to rough lovemaking that entails a virgin’s loss of blood.”

“Cease talking and dismount.” For he was not riding a ganestrian.

They both dismounted, for now they were in level place beyond the grove of birches, and they ground-hitched their horses and faced each other, drawing swords, with Ealina on guard in thioste and the man in thirmion. “Cutting wounds on torso are less like to mar your nubility,” he remarked. “I’d rather, though, wound an arm and a leg ere I mount you.”

Ealina advanced quickly and thrust, in half-lunge, at his heart, and he struck hard at her sword, hoping to disarm her quickly, but her reflexes were very fast, as wizard-kin requires sometimes in fighting against black magic, and she deceived his stroke and pierced him, through the triceps, in the ribs. He cried out and dropped his sword, but bent and picked it up with left hand, saying, “For that you die, even without enjoying me, for I’ll rape you with my sword.” For he thought she had been merely lucky, as he prided himself upon his swordskill, though he

was not a knight, for his maternal grandfather had been of knightly caste. He held his sword in thioeste, and that was ill for Ealina, but not so ill as might have been, for she had sometimes practiced with a cousin who was lefthanded.

Ealina feigned a thrust at his chest and turned it into parry fremuen as he sidestepped left and thrust at arm, then she bore down against his sword, toward his thigh, which he turned inward with bend of knees, and he moved sword aside and then cut down at arm, but she parried qumone and from it thrust, in slightly awkward move made smooth by practice, at his chest, and as he parried dluon, she turned her hand around to cut a swift, strong feint at his left side; then, as he wildly warded formont, she turned wrist again and cut down into his head. She jerked out sword as he fell. He was dead, she saw, as she prayed for his soul, then mounted and rode fast along the Nelbarn.

When she reached the Grove of the Unicorn and had got to the middle of the grove, the Unicorn approached slowly and put its horn against her heart. She urged her horse forward, and the Unicorn backed quickly and knelt before her, and she got off her horse and got upon the back of the Unicorn, which then went fast as wind unto the Nelbarn, then turned left and galloped northward to the



Burke – Kryffyr – 145

source of Nelbarn, making on the way one stop of which more will be told  
hereafter.

XI

The five companions seeking Kryffyr-fight rode on up Nelbarn after getting back to riverbank from Grove of Unicorn and they rode fast but warily, keeping watch ahead and all around where possible, for the minions of Liculdura, sleeping only two at a time, and those with sword at hand, in as wide clearings as they could find at or near day's end. But this great care was seemingly needless, for the she-wolves attacked in daylight, coming loping down from the north in plain sight of wearers of Larnidolal's rings. But on the day before they saw the wolves, Omidfulos had said, "There was a time, when we of the Green Company feared attack from ambush in a war with the Angolben, and we sang a song that had refrain like sound of swords clashing, and we drew our swords and clashed them ringing together as we rode singing, so that the Angolben knew not we were expecting them, but we had swords ready when they attacked. I rede we sing that

song and draw our swords to that same purpose if we see the she-wolves as we ride.” And he taught the others that song, which they liked well, apart from its value as tool of ruse. And when they saw the she-wolves loping down the Plain of Alkarethan, which is before the last long forest leading up to Elfland – or to the North Highland, for those who have not done the needful things to get to Elfland – they began to sing that song and clash their swords at the refrain, and the seven black she-wolves ran nearer as the five rode north.

Now, the companions’ ganestrians were not aware of the she-wolves and therefore felt no fear of them, and the five rode on singing and feigning well to be most unaware, and the wolves drew very near. And the five were hoping the wolves would run and leap straight at them, to be killed with relative ease, but they were not so lucky. For the she-wolves were most cautious, and especially so on seeing drawn swords, though they knew not the five could see them, and they passed by on the left, on the side away from Nelbarn, and went well past and turned and came at the companions from behind, running swiftly, so that the five must suddenly swing horses round, betraying that they could see the she-wolves, who stopped quickly, growling. But though the horses could not see the wolves, yet they were responsive to riders’ mode of attack against foes unseen – for all

five rode ganestrians, as Orogald had learned much of battle-riding at Norforinden during winter – for all knights of Narbicana learn riding of blindfolded horses, to build trust between ganestrian and rider. But as the five maneuvered against wolves, the minions of Liculdura let themselves be seen by horses and disappeared from them again, many times, as they drew close, and even those great ganestrians of Narbicana were frightened thus, so that it was with trembling that they held firm between riders' knees. But they would not respond to signals for maneuvering, or to sharp-spoken commands. For the minions of Liculdura were fell beasts indeed, and had much power over ordinary animals, though not as much in this case as they would have liked, for ganestrians are guarded sometimes by the High.

Now, at that place the Nelbarn was too deep for fording, so the five set horses' rears to river edge, and paused.

“We'll do those beasts no harm while sitting these horses,” said Andrieth. “If we do not attack dismounted, we'll stay here till we starve. But if we must dismount, they might well kill the horses before we bring them down.” And Narbicanan knights will die to keep their ganestrians from being slain, as would the horses die for masters.

“We must dismount,” said Omidfulos. “Thus we can keep between wolves and horses, and if we attack them, they may not be able to fight and exert compulsion over beast at the same time.” And they dismounted to attack, leaving ganestrians standing close together, but as the five moved forward, the wolves moved back, widening their half-circle, so that if the five went further, the wolves could get to horses. The five drew back again.

“They’ll have us at their mercy when it’s dark,” said Omidfulos. “I suppose we’ll go down slashing sightless then, and they’ll get the horses anyway. Too bad, I liked the thought of being worthy of fighting Kryffyr. Do you think this means we aren’t?”

But then a sudden sound like thunder broke around them, for the beast that was to rescue had gift of travelling swift in silence when was need, and the Unicorn swept into wolves’ half-circle, stabbing with its horn into the side of one ere it could move. So silently had come the Unicorn that none had seen it, so intent were all upon their enemies. But then one she-wolf turned and bit at right foreleg of Unicorn, and its left sengil-tooth broke without harm to Unicorn, and the beast howled once and ran away northward. And there was a dark-haired graceful girl clinging to back and mane of magic beast, as if held there by magic all her own.

Burke – Kryffyr – 150

And then the five drove at the fell beasts with shouts exultant, as Unicorn struck another down dead with left fore-hoof and all the craven pack that were alive went fleeing back to northward, with Unicorn in full pursuit. And the girl turned her head and grimly smiled, as Unicorn was galloping, and then the girl and Unicorn were gone. But the five, having calmed their horses after some time, were still wary of the she-wolves, lest they return, until they reached the source of Nelbarn.

XII

When the party of Elodoban and Marfod and Nibolahad was coming nigh the source of Nelbarn, there was talk among the Narbicanans in the party of who should be the first into Elfland to test the Kryffyr's wakefulness. For it was known to Elodoban, through Nordig, and had been told the earlier party of Tilfont that had caught the Kryffyr, that the Kryffyr in his three nights resting at the mouth of Elfland was indeed asleep for only one night of the three and for the others rested wakeful, and no man might know beforehand which night the Kryffyr chose to be asleep. And on the time that went before, Nilfilod of Corfunod had gone first into Elfland and had cast a stone upon the Kryffyr from a distance and had run out when the beast had roused, and was no more able gain admittance unto Elfland until he should go back to Grove of Unicorn and sin there again a sin of solitary vice and travel back again up Nelbarn. And on the second

night Tilfont himself had gone in and cast a stone outside to let the others know that it was safe to enter, and they had entered and had found the Kryffyr sound asleep and used their means to bind him and to take him forth.

“Well, I am certainly not going to try him out, with this bad foot,” said Enfelis, and the others laughed.

“I am willing to try him,” said Fordulan. “I’d rather risk a quick death at the Kryffyr’s beak than wait for midnight for his killing, with all the hosts of Elfland like to come and ask what we are doing within their borders.”

Thus it was that on the first night of the Kryffyr’s resting, the night before Torndornmolos, the criminal Fordulan went into Elfland with a stone in hand and threw it at the Kryffyr, and the Kryffyr made no movement except where some feathers were parted by the stone, which struck him on the head. And Fordulan went closer and threw another stone, and still the Kryffyr did not move. And he went very close indeed, and pried open the lid of the Kryffyr’s left eye, and the Kryffyr moved suddenly and snapped, and Fordulan was dead. And maybe he was in Hell, but who can say? Thus his companions waited outside Elfland without word from him, and on the second night Fidulsinan went in and did almost exactly as Fordulan had done, and found the Kryffyr sleeping, and he went



outside and told the others the things that he had done, and bade them enter, but he was to stay outside, for he could not again go into Elfland without the aid of that black magic of which the telling has been done. And the others called him coward, but he smiled, and they went grimly into Elfland and found the Kryffyr sleeping as he had told them, and they put surinomini in its nostrils to make sure it did not wake, and they bound it with bindings like unto those which Orogald and Miclas and Dunard had seen on it before, and they waited for midnight. But at ten o'clock, the Unicorn came thundering up to source of Nelbarn with Ealina, knelt to let her dismount, and it slew Fidulsinan for his sin at the Grove, and it galloped back down the side of Nelbarn, and Ealina entered Elfland.

“What are you doing here?” asked Elodoban. And the other men, both Narbicanan and Zanoden, moved toward her, but he gestured for their stillness. And Ealina told them all, with anger in her voice and fire in her mien, what she had been told by Mabinia and Larnidolal. And the Zanoden tried to hush her but the Narbicanans had her speak on, and when she had finished, Marfod said, “I was not loth to slay the Kryffyr when I thought it meant me evil death that would do no good to anyone. But I will not have Narbicana conquered for the saving of my life. Those who would have it so must kill me before the Kryffyr.” And the

others of the eight Narbicanan commoners agreed and drew their swords, and the Zanoden and the Narbicanans got ready to do battle, the Narbicanans with grim courage against warriors trained. And Ealina, joyful, smiled at Elodoban, whom she knew was equal of these men.

But then Elodoban, whose heart had been hardened by the scorning of Ealina which was implied in his sinful deed of minor black magic, performed with full malice, which scorning was extended unto Narbicana the Fair, and who had too long desired to be both married and great wizard in public eye, raised his hands above his head and called upon a zinnulzag, a minion of Azardizog the Fallen, to come into his soul and mind and body, and he directed at the Narbicanan men the power of the zinnulzag, to blast them as with lightning. But as he was about to do so, the zinnulzag suggested it were better hold them moveless for tortured death from Zanoden after slaying of Kryffyr, and he did that instead, not really knowing why he did it. But the zinnulzag knew well, and the Narbicanan men were moveless, in the on-guard position of thirmion, with grim, contorted faces, as they strained uselessly against the power of black magic. And Elodoban smiled grimly, his teeth gleaming in the fair moonlight of Elfland, that now seemed fell unto Ealina, and he said to the Zanoden, “Magic will hold them well past midnight,

when ye may slaughter them in such wise as ye deem fitting unto traitors, when ye have slain the Kryffyr.

“And you, Ealina, shall be wife to a great one of Zanod, for the conquest that will be is great enough to satisfy the dreams of great Garhendahil.”

“Never shall I wed you now,” said Ealina.

“My dear, you will, for I shall compel you with magic, as soon as I recover from the draining which my last exertion brought about. Try fleeing, if you like, but these my friends will see you get not far.”

Father Flanos, who had stood by at first with growing anger and then with silent horror at the working of black magic, said, “My son, repent your evil deed; free the Narbicanan men who now are greater heroes than I had believed them, and relent your anger against your fair country. You can yet be deemed a good man if you repent before black magic settles its grip upon your soul.” But Elodoban bade him keep silence or be slain, and the Zanoden bound his hands behind him and pushed him down and bound his feet, but he struggled to his knees and remained there, praying silently.

“You’ll not slay the Kryffyr, nor this good priest, while I live,” said Ealina, and she drew her sword.

“It is forbidden by the law of the country you revere, that you fight for such a cause,” said Elodoban. “Women may not defend other than themselves or males of less than fourteen years. If those men slay you in combat for this cause, you go to Hell.”

“I will not abandon Narbicana to the Zanoden,” said Ealina. “Besides, you mean enslave me, so I fight also in self-defence.”

“No, I give you freedom,” said Elodoban, as zinnulzag suggested Ealina not be slain. “You may depart, for all I want of you.” And he meant it, and she knew that, but still she stood her ground, and she approached the nearest Zanoden and bade him draw. For they had put back their blades after Narbicanans were rendered moveless. And he drew and cut at her legs, expecting her to leap and cut downward at his head, when he would side-step left and cut at head instead of side, but she parried tonosle and swiftly thrust, stabbing him to the heart. And the other Zanoden were angered and ashamed that a warrior of their nation should be slain thus easily by Narbicanan woman, and they set upon her all together despite protest by Elodoban, and she fought with a savage brilliance but soon was thrust through the belly, for zinnulzag guided that thrust which it would not otherwise restrain, that it not kill quickly, and she fell. And Nibolahad would have cut off

her head, but Elodoban said in stern tone, “Hold, she must not die before the Kryffyr.” And Nibolahad forbore. And Elodoban said, “A prolonged ravishment, for which I am empowered, will by magic keep her alive until you slay the Kryffyr at midnight.” And he knelt by Ealina and began to lift her garment. But Nibolahad said, “Some foulnesses I will not stomach, even for great good of Zanod,” and he cut off the head of Elodoban. Ealina screamed then, for she had loved him greatly, and she felt her own death nigh, and she said to Father Flanos, “Father, I have put my love of Narbicana above God’s love for her; for that sin, and for all my other sins I am truly sorry, for their offence to God as well as for peril to my soul, and I ask you to grant me His forgiveness.” And Father Flanos did so, weeping, and she died, and at this death of one who died for Narbicana, the bonds that held the Kryffyr disappeared, and likewise the surinomini from his nostrils, and the Kryffyr rose in all its wrath and quickly slew the remaining Zanoden, then gave good, quick deaths to the moveless Narbicanans. And it bit through with sharp beak the bonds of Father Flanos, and then it flew away, and soon came Elven warriors who heard disjointedly from Father Flanos what had happened and who administered to him and healed his mind, in three days, of the horror to which it had succumbed upon the death of Ealina.

### XIII

When Orogald and his companions entered Elfland, they found before the pillars a band of forty-nine Elven warriors whom they told of their quest and who then made them welcome.

“Know you of the Elven quest against dragon fell?” asked Prince Murundel, the leader of the band.

“We have been told that such a quest might well be doing when we arrived, and also of the reason it would be well for us to help ye if it were,” said Miclas. “Is such a quest afoot?”

“It is about to be,” said Murundel. “There was, it seems the King my father had foreseen, a reason to delay it, and now the reason’s here – if ye will take part?” And Miclas said, “We will.”

“Tis well,” said Murundel. “Seven of our band will take ye to the King.”

Then Orogald and his companions rode, with Dirmundiom and six other tall warriors, through Elfland, which was strange and fair, to the palace of the King of Elfland, which was on a hill covered with silver-coloured daffodils in the middle of a plain whereon grew trees that were like lindens save that they had bark like that of silver birches, and Castle Mirimomondios was beautiful but grim, and stately were the halls through which they went to find the King. And Dirmundiom told the King of the quest of the five companions, and of their willingness to help the Elves against dragon, and the King and his court were glad. But they were grave when Miclas told them that Liculdura's minions had passed through Elfland and out into Narbicana and doubtless back again through Elfland to Liculdura's realm.

And the Elves took the five to Father Flanos, whose mind was healed, and he told them what had befallen when he was brought to Elfland. And he gave them his blessing, and said he would pray for them to prevail against the dragon.

“We set out in the morning,” said Crown Prince Nuenfoliad, “for we know the dragon lairs near the realm of Liculdura, which causes us suspect he's chosen evil and is not the dragon of prophecy. However, even an evil dragon can repent and change, though with great difficulty, so we must deal carefully with him before

we seek to slay. And no one knows ever where the Kryffyr is in Elfland, so it will not be a forsaking of your own quest if you accompany us, as ye may find the Kryffyr as quickly thus as otherwise. What say ye?”

“It sounds well to us,” said Andrieth.

“Good. Now shall ye eat and rest, and then choose armour which mayhap will be proof against the dragon’s claws.”

“Pardon me, Lord Prince, but I am a woodcutter and unused to weight of armour,” said Orogald. “I am willing to trust without it to the luck of mortal men against dragon in Elfland which is known to men of lore.”

“I doubt that you will find our armour so greatly heavy as to hamper you,” said Nuenfoliad. “Elven work is not as that of mortal smiths.”

Then Nuenfoliad brought them to a hall where Fair Folk sat at table, and introduced them to the gathering, and those nearest made room for them, and they ate such food as none of them had ever eaten, and drank wine like wine they’d never known. And then they were taken each to a small bedroom, hung with tapestries showing beautiful but restful scenes, and were invited rest themselves. And Orogald was about to fall asleep when came a light knock upon the oaken door of his room, and a silvery voice said, “Lord Orogald, champion of men of



Narbicana, I, Nilenditha, sister of Prince Nuenfoliad, crave speech with you.” And Orogald knew not whether virtuous Elven maid would linger in a bedroom with a male, but he was loth to seem discourteous in Elfland, so he opened the door and saw a maiden passing lovely, taller than he but of delicate proportion, and he was for a moment speechless.

Then he stammered, and he said, “Come in.” And he was about to shut the door, but she said that that would not be seemly, and he felt relieved.

“Lord Orogald, I have come to ask great boon of you,” said Nilenditha. “I scarce know how to ask it, but first let me seek knowledge: are you a wedded man or one betrothed or with an understanding with a maid?”

“Not I, Your Highness. I had hoped marry someday, when I find a maid who suits me. Whom I suit.”

“Would I suit you, do you think?”

He could only stare at her, and gape. Recollecting himself, he shut his mouth. But still he stared. And as he looked into her eyes, great wonder and great joy came into him.

She said, “My grandmother was a mortal maid of Narbicana, and there is in me, from her, a great desire to see the mortal beauty of that land. But because of my

blood part human, I could not re-enter Elfland without going through Grove of Unicorn.” She blushed, deeply. “And I am not one who could go through Grove of Unicorn unwed.

“A man who fought a dragon enemy of Elfland and yet lived would be welcome to dwell in Elfland all his days, except when he might leave to visit his home country, and he would live long, though not to end of earth, if he were wed in Elfland to one of Faerie folk. I ask you not to decide now whether you will grant this boon, but I beg you bear it in mind while you ride through Elfland. We maids of Faerie, even those who are not entirely pure of mind,” – she blushed again – “have full possession of our hearts and may bestow them wholly where our wills direct. I would be good wife to you, in Faerie and Narbicana, and a wife most loving. Please give thought to this.” And she turned to go.

So great was joy and wonder that Orogald said, “Wait.”

She turned back.

“To have such a one to whom return would make me strong against dragon and against Kryffyr,” said Orogald. “I will take the boon you offer me.”

“It is custom in Faerie for troth-pledged lovers to seal betrothal with a kiss,” said Nilenditha. “And if the lovers can keep that kiss in being for full minute

without base passion rising, their souls forever will be as one.” And she moved her face quite close to his, and he began to kiss her mouth. But soon he was aware of lust arising in himself and he fought it, to be worthy of the maiden, but it began to overwhelm him, but something scalding splashed his chest as kiss of Elven maid turned into grimace against his mouth, and Orogald opened his eyes to find horror on Nilenditha’s dying face. A sword-point stood through her neck, and on the hilt of sword was hand of Nuenfoliad, Prince of Elfland. Orogald swooned. He recovered in his bed, with great despair at heart and Nuenfoliad and the King beside him, in deep grief.

“My son,” the King said, “we left you open to great grief, and even greater harm to soul, but no choice in this had we. Your companions were tested in like manner and are still in summonis, with learned healers tending them. Our loss is as great as yours, for she on whom you were about bestow whole heart was a minion of Liculdura who, with the others, must have slain my daughter and four of her friends, and taken the place of them. That they had fared through Elfland into Narbicana and back shows that her power has grown, and such faring would have added to it, enough for her to work this woe. Had her kiss with you not been

interrupted as it was, you had been in great danger of being enslaved by lust and being no fit man for facing Kryffyr: you had been mayhap a slave of Liculdura.”

“See,” said Nuenfoliad, pointing to the grimaced mouth of dead minion of Liculdura, “she hath broken sengil tooth as did the wolf ye told us of, and slingithil was the tale she told to pass it by us, which made us doubt her and suspect that she was Liculdura’s servant. But for that, we had likely been deceived. But we could not know certainly without a test.”

Fresh horror went through Orogald, and left him free and clean, and he joined in grieving with the King and Nuenfoliad for loss of lovely Nilenditha, whom he would have loved so much had the seeming of her unto him been real.

But there was a thing that irked him, until the King said, “Regret not, my son, that you did not respond with action to the death of her you thought loved you. Nuenfoliad cast upon you an action of Elvenkind which we may make on friends when they are so beset that mind may be unsure of friendship in dire strait.”

Then Orogald attended the healing of his friends and shared their griefs. And the dragon-quest was postponed a day to help them regain full strength with Elven healers’ help. And on the third day after the Narbicanans had entered Elfland, the quest set out: the five mortal men and seven Elves among whom Nuenfoliad was

leader. And they rode toward the east of Elfland, through lands and forests strangely fair and passing perilous to men if they were not welcome guests of Faerie. They rode three days, taking guesting in houses of the Fair Folk, and on the third day there was heard a harsh cry overhead, and Nuenfoliad pointed skyward to where the Kryffyr flew, and it was flying west, and Nuenfoliad said, “Here part we friends, for here our quests do separate, and it may mean bad luck for both, but your quest will end in glory however it may end, and ours may be taken by others.”

Therefore the five mortals returned the light Elven armour they had borrowed, for armour may not be worn in fight with Kryffyr, and they rode west, and the Elven warriors’ hearts were sore for them, but the Elves were not yet weeping, for their mortal friends were yet alive.

When Orogald and the four others had ridden west a full day’s ride, they heard again the harsh cry of Kryffyr, ahead and above, and saw the Kryffyr swooping down. So fast it came they had no chance draw swords, and the Kryffyr swept down on Omidfulos and stabbed him to the heart with two claws of right forepaw, and then swept up again and around and landed in front of them. And they dismounted and faced the Kryffyr, drawing swords.

Miclas was on the left, and Dormufals next to him, and then Andrieth and on the right was Orogald. They stood on guard, in thirmion. As they stood waiting, the Kryffyr leaped into the air and beat its wings and flew away a short distance, and then flew at them. And they were close together to make it fight all four at once if they could. And as it flew close, descending till it was almost skimming ground, it suddenly turned broadside, belly to the front, and threw up its paws, and each paw struck at a man, the hind-paws at Miclas and Dormufals, and the forepaws at Andrieth and Orogald. The four companions found these attacks, with gleaming claws striking, hard to parry, but parry them they did, each at very last moment, so swift was Kryffyr. And the Kryffyr cried harsh cry as it wheeled away after striking, and quick disport by men had no effect on it that they could see.

The Kryffyr came at them again, and as it seemed about to turn broadside, it quickly flew over their heads and turned broadside at what would have been their backs had they not been swifter in turning round than ever in their lives. Again they parried, but just barely. And Orogald saw that Kryffyr respected parry against paw by sword, though sword hurt not paw or leg at all and parry was not

powerful enough to turn aside the limbs of mighty Kryffyr, but it let itself be overborne by parry as mighty as the men could make.

They fought thus for long time, the Kryffyr varying greatly the pattern of its strikes at front and rear, and they were exhausted much sooner than would be in battle ordinary but greatly hopeful some dispart, which Kryffyr never dodged or parried, would strike the Kryffyr's place of fatal wounding. And the Kryffyr's strikings, though it seemed itself untiring, were always just fast enough to be turned aside by fastest and strongest parry each man could make. Thus the fight went on till all were weary much and nearly falling, stumbling when they turned, and still they fought with valour great, though each prayed many times that God would end at once the combat, one way or the other, but not let him quit resisting, until a moment came when into fighters flowed a new strength of body and soul alike and they felt they could parry, turn and parry all the day and all through night if that were needed, and they all looked up at sky and laughed a mighty laugh and stood again on guard. And the next attack, made broadside at the front, was just too swift to parry, and the Kryffyr struck each man in the heart, killing them all in the same moment.

XIV

When Dunard had well begun his married life with Euvona on the wizard-kin's farm outside Mufolle, there came one day out of Elfland a funeral procession of the Fair Folk, such as had not been seen before in Narbicana, and with them Father Flanos with the body of Ealina kept from decay by Elvish art, and Munifiliad, an Elven Lord who led the procession, brought it to Mufolle, for Father Flanos remembered Ealina's mention of Larnidolal when she spoke in trying to save the Kryffyr. Larnidolal and Dunard and Euvona were sore at heart for death of Ealina, and they told Munifiliad where Ealina lived, and they took counsel concerning what action should be taken against Nordig, and Larnidolal said he should be brought to trial for treason if Mabinia would give evidence against him (for she could not be compelled), and he said it seemed to him that a



strong case could be made against him, especially if a message which the Fair Folk had found on Nibolahad were found to be in Nordig's writing.

After the taking of counsel, the funeral procession went southward along the roads of Narbicana to Norrimnos, with Larnidolal and Father Flanos going ahead to tell Ealina's parents of her death. And great was their sorrow when they heard it, and Ealina's father was shown the message taken from Nibolahad's body, and he said it was in writing of Nordig, and Father Flanos said he would lay the charges of treason and murder. And that was done, and Nordig was brought before the court of the Duke of Korferd for the offence of which he was accused, and he gave one great sob at first but stiffened and then challenged his accusers to bring proof. And he was imprisoned in the Duke's castle until the time when he should be tried. But Larnidolal was greatly glad that the Kryffyr had scaped sacrifice.

And some days after the first procession had gone from Mufolle, there came another, longer one with five coffins, and the Elves in that procession told all who asked that they brought home for burial five heroes of Narbicana, but they would not say who the heroes were, and word of that procession reached Mufolle before it, and Dunard was greatly grieved, for he knew who the heroes were. And

Nuenfoliad, who led this procession, told Dunard and Euvona and Larnidolal what had befallen the five in Elfland until they had parted from the Elven warriors to fight the Kryffyr.

“And we went on to seek the dragon,” said Nuenfoliad, “and as we drew near its lair and it came out to face us, I heard a calling of my name in voice of Orogald, and others of our party heard in that cry their names called in other voices of our five friends, and we looked up and saw the Kryffyr coming down, and it swooped and fought the dragon, a thing it never did before, and slew it, saving all our party who had been in dread of death. And for that the memory of Orogald, Miclas, Andrieth, Omidfulos, and Dormufals shall live in song in Faerie.” And Dunard was greatly proud of his three friends and of Omidfulos and Dormufals, and he was glad he would follow one day their journey into Elfland. And he went ahead of Nuenfoliad to break the word to parents of his friends, and all of these were grieved and proud, though some felt it somewhat amiss that Dunard and Kryffyr should both be living. But they were cheered when told Dunard would have to face the Kryffyr by himself when his children, if he had any, were come of age. But Dunard’s folk were glad he was alive and pleased to

see him married, especially since his marriage meant his life would be longer than if he had stayed single.

Time passed, and the trial of Nordig was held in the Court of the King's Judge, and it ended in a hung jury, and another trial was held in which he was convicted, and then he was beheaded, he by turns bellowing curses upon Narbicana and weeping and begging for mercy till the axe came down.

Father Flanos went to the kin of the slain hunters and told them how the hunters died and had been given honourable burial in Elfland.

And there was war with Zanod over the plot against the Kryffyr, and Dunard went to that war, and the Kryffyr sought him not, and he was wounded but not gravely, and Narbicana won that war.

And more time passed, and Dunard enjoyed his life with Euvona and Larnidolal, and he had twin sons and a daughter, and he raised them till his daughter, who was three years younger than his sons, was come of age. And on the morning after her twenty-first birthday, he kissed each member of his family and bade them all farewell, and mounted his horse and rode away, and all who saw him travelling up Nelbarn knew that the last of the Venturous Five now celebrated in song throughout the land, rode north to seek the Kryffyr. And no one

Burke – Kryffyr – 172

again saw him in Narbicana. But there was on Narbicana for fifty years thereafter a peace bounteous and secure, such as Narbicana had never had before. And a month after his passing up the Nelbarn, Euvona and her sons and daughter were invited by the Elves to pray at grave in Elfland, and the tombstone there bore in Elvish writing the words “Dunard Tharngoladth,” and “Tharngoladth” in the Elvish tongue upon Tellaes means “dragon-bane.”

DUNARD AND SON

By

SCYMNUS DU BERG

“Dincaro, no man should ever try to avoid the pain which ought to accompany any doing of what is wrong,” Dunard of Mufolle told his eldest son on the evening of the latter’s twelfth birthday, which was a day before the birthday of Dincaro’s twin. “At least, he ought not to try to avoid such pain except by seeking to right the wrong whereof a doing causeth it. Pain ought to accompany or follow wrong, preferably in form of sorrow at wrong’s being done, whether we ourselves do it or another. That is why wrong oft causeth bodily pain full actual. For bodily pain doth imitate, one might say, the lower sorts of sensations wherein what we call moral grief showeth sometimes itself to our own inner selves. When another man doth what is gravely wrong, then either we should feel such pain of moral

grief as rendereth easy our enduring what ought to be endured if we are to fight for the right to punish him, or we should pray for strength to take upon ourselves such bodily pain as may approach that sorrow, in our being ready to fight for that right. For sometimes, for divers reasons, wrongdoers will not admit their deeds are punishable, or may deny wrongdoing with good will and clear conscience, accordingly as they use different principles from our own or argue differently from these. Understand you this?”

“I fear not, Dad. Not clearly, at the least.”

“Not much matter, as of now. We shall discuss it much at length in time to come. But this is lesson that all Narbicanan boys get from their dads at twelve and on several birthdays thereafter until lesson be well learnt.

“If any man at all denies the right of any authority however high to punish him for any deed however heinous, he must be fought for right to punish him. That is of the essence of the law of Narbicana, and every man of Narbicana when he comes of age must fight, when need is, to uphold that law, before all other laws. For all men are equal in their rights and in their conscience.”

“I understand that, methinks. I mean, I see it. Mayhap there be more than I do see. Anyway, I believe it, Dad.”

“Good boy. ‘Tis important that a man see such things as early as he can. That is why we teach it when it might be but too early for some. But, till he can see such things for himself, a boy ought trust his Dad.”

“Well, I trust you, anyway, Dad. Mom trusts you so much, I don’t see how I could do otherwise.”

“My thanks, Dincaro. And thank you, Euvona.” Dunard smiled at his wife, sitting across from them in the main room of their house.

“Anyway, son, it is the basis of life in Narbicana that men’s souls are most fulfilled by having joy in right or sorrow at grave wrong, and that these our responses to right and wrong are most intense in family life, so that there is where men best find their fulfilment. God’s own Nature as believed by all true Christians confirmeth that, but this merely ethical view is open even to all unbelievers. It is why nothing is done or made in Narbicana which cannot be done or made by a family and which doth not enable a family to do by itself what it needeth or desires. The exception is our building halls or churches or castles, wherein families work together at what they will together use as people. We even shrink from building together great windmills for common use, since families can make querns and families use them well.

“So the second law to be upheld after the sacredness of conscience and its principles, is the family’s duty to support itself with least assistance from without, since the family is life’s foundation, or to support itself by helping other families to support themselves. For though no family ever sufficeth to itself, all families must try together to make themselves and others do so as nearly as may be. You must uphold that Second Law if you would be happy in your own family when you grow up and marry.

“But remember, son, that though you must ever be ready to duel fairly for what is right in our public life in Narbicana, duelling for any motive of purely personal honour is always gravely wrong. Men may duel only over general principle of right and wrong, or when one man hath accused another of wrongdoing and the courts have no evidence but the word of these, and they two agree to trial by combat. That law is sometimes abused by evil men who want to fight from hatred of each other, so that one will accuse another of a crime with no other evidence that might support his charge, but no system of laws however good can be made infallible by fallible men.

“Now, the merely ethical principle that economic authority rests in families is confirmed by the Revelation of Christ Our Lord that God’s Nature consists in



unselfish Generation, so to speak,” Dunard went on. “It is His being Genitor primarily, that enables Him be Maker of all else. For since Our Lord revealed God’s Nature, it is clear that a ‘God’ whose Nature was ‘fewer’ than Three Persons could not ever be able to Create. That meaneth, of course, that the human unit which generates, which is the family, ought be the human unit which maketh other things that men do need or want, so as to perfect in man that image of the Godhead which God meaneth that we be and that Our Lord died for to repair after our first parents marred it by doing violence to the human need, and even taste (in the unfallen), for moral good.”

And then Dincaro was much curious and sought to have these things explained in full, all of them, that Dunard had mentioned. And Dunard discoursed thereon in simpler speech and clearer words, until the boy did grasp them well. But it were not seemly to employ such speech unto a reader well sophisticated.

Now, in the week after that wherein they two held that converse, Dincaro was playing one day in a wood outside Mufolle, wherein he feigned himself a scout in followance of deadly foes of Narbicana, for to find out their designs. And lo, there passed upon that path whereby he lurked two men whom he knew, that himseemed might serve him well for practice of such scouting, that himseemed

also to be engaged in converse somewhat sinister. And they seemed bound upon that path for a small glade that bore a reputation somewhat ill, or mayhap beyond that glade. And one of those men was called Munostur and the other Fornuntur. And they held converse on the path while Dincaro sneaked through woods quietly at same distance always therefrom.

“Minasa had no right whatsoever to give you that secret of carving in spunter-wood that I invented,” said Munostur. “I had meant that ye should have it later, but through teaching of Goroet, as it befits a pupil to reward his master with further lore.” Minasa was Munostur’s wife and Goroet his son, nigh on nineteen and apprentice to Fornuntur. “Meseems she gave it ye in place of gift adulterous less sordid as would seem to her, but similar in spirit. Is that not so?”

Fornuntur said: “I will nowise indulge your wild fancies anent your wife and me, that are unworthy of you both.”

“Swear you, then, that they are indeed unworthy and full false?”

“I have said I will nowise indulge ye therein, and thereto I hold me.”

“Then we duel,” quoth Munostur.

“I am loth thereto. We and our families have ever been good friends.”

“And now ye are better friend of mine own wife than I am. We duel, or I murder ye.”

“I would spare ye that, for sake of friendship that ye would slay. How like ye our duelling: by free play of blades or by set pattern of stroke and parry?”

“Set pattern.”

They went on to the glade reputed to be site of some private duelling aforetime, and Dincaro lay hid and watched. For he felt he could not call authorities in time to stop the duel, and he wanted therefore to bear fair witness after wrong was done.

The duellers agreed on simple pattern, wherein speed and stamina mattered most and both men were well matched in both. First, one man would strike at left flank of foe and then parry with elbow level with his shoulder and held leftward, so that sword was aslant down and forward, guarding right side, from hand that was beside the head. When stroke was taken thus, he would swing sword behind his head and strike at right flank of his foe. The defender would parry with sword slanting down from hand which was at right of head, then turn hand down with palm upward so that sword swung at side, which would be parried by attacker's raising his own hilt up to left of head, with blade down aslant therefrom. And so

would attacker swing sword around again behind to strike at left flank another time. They would repeat this pattern for five passages, and then exchange the turn of the attack. This fighting by set pattern of stroke and parry was oft deemed fairest way to duel by foes in Narbicana who were at odds over matters of plain justice.

When Munostur and Fornuntur had fought much upon their pattern and the bladework went more fiercely and more fast, Munostur of a sudden broke pattern with cut at knee that severed shank and then disarmed his foe as latter fell, by striking sword from loosened grip as Fornuntur cried out, “Coward!”

“Not so. I am but murderer,” quoth Munostur. “That were better than adulterer, especially adulterer that prevailed.” And he stabbed Fornuntur to the heart as he lay. Then Munostur left the glade and Dincaro hid trembling for long time.

Now, Munostur made false report unto Duke Austros the next day, that Fornuntur had accosted him in woodland and bade him fight or die, for that Fornuntur accused Munostur of adultery with Fornuntur’s wife and would not be gainsaid, so that they fought fairly with free play of blade and he severed leg almost with same swift stroke that pierced the heart of foe in one fell turn.

Dincaro had already told the truth unto Dunard, and Dunard bade him tell thereof

unto the Duke. Therefore Munostur claimed right of duel with champion of the boy, since there was none other evidence between them. Dunard would then have fought, but that his younger brother Lonclas asserted his authority of unwed uncle and was made Dincaro's champion in Dunard's despite.

Munostur told a trusted friend, whom he swore to secrecy until Munostur's death, that if he could prevail in fair duel with Lonclas, he would then duel any who upheld law forbidding private duels. But it was agreed that Lonclas and Munostur should fight in pattern set, that was more manifold than what Dincaro had said was fought aforetime. And fierce and fast again was fighting, and it gan go hard with Munostur to keep up, and so he cheated again with cut at knee, that none had forethought in formal duel in public view for justice, and so he slew Lonclas by such dastardy, that was the younger brother of Dunard.

"Justice be damned," quoth Munostur then. "I am revenged upon the brat." And he was taken to fair and speedy trial and then beheaded, for even he could not try to warrant such a dastardy as he had done so openly.

And all of the friends and relatives of Lonclas grieved much at his untimely death, and none of them more than young Dincaro.

THE SWORD GILVARNENG

by

Scymnus du Berg

A skilful smith in an idle mood did forge the sword Gilvarneng.

His wife, who passed the smithy, saw him making it, and how his back and shoulders bent as he worked upon it. She took the sword when he had finished, and weighed it in her hand.

“Whose sword is this?” she asked.

“It is a sword for Rognirth.”

“Has it a name?”

“It is the sword Gilvarneng.”

She said, “I thought so,” and took the sword outside and threw it down the road. For more traffic went that way, and more strangers passed in that direction.

And a young man passed that way soon after, a farmer's great and heavy son, named Maron, who was on his way to join the king's muster of the men of Narbicana.

It was decided when the men of Narbicana met their foes, that the battle would be done by single combat. And it was settled by throw of dice that the Zanoden propose terms first and if these were accepted, that they would also appoint first champion. The men of Narbicana could then decide whom best to venture under these conditions, against that man.

The Zanoden proposed a fight with swords and not with shields, with or without armour as the champions each should choose. The men of Narbicana agreed to this. And the Zanoden set forth Narmanath.

Narmanath used no shield in combat, except when faced with arrows, and it was his boast that his armour, light and thin, guarded him only against a dagger stab in crowded battle, or from treachery.

Now there had been a rumour spread among the men of Narbicana – through no fault of King Vanulor, who was an honourable man and knightly king – that Narmanath was away on quest in southern lands.

And the young man Maron asked leave to fight for Narbicana. When the king asked him why he should choose Maron rather than one of all his noted warriors, Maron would only say, “I have the sword Gilvarneng.” But how he knew its name, he could not have told.

And King Varesdard sent him forth.

Narmanath looked to combat with a wary fighter, and one aware of his great skill, who would seek to meet his speed with stratagems.

Maron walked forth and struck him hard. The sword leapt upward, singing, from Narmanath’s thin armour. Maron struck again and again, sounding a changing note with every blow.

But when astonished Narmanath realized he had not got his deathblow, and that his fate seemed not upon him after all, he struck with Farmoth. The swords by chance met edge to edge. His blade was cut through, as soft wood is cut by a light stroke with a heavy axe.

Both men were savage now. Narmanath thought his armourer, more skilled than he had known, had been too much concerned with safety and had trifled with his honour. And Maron could not kill the man so at his mercy.



Maron, swinging lustily, made melody on metal till Narmanath, springing back, seized with either hand the high wings on his own helmet and then advanced as only he could leap. He smote Maron upon the helm, knocking him down, and breaking off a wing. Then he fled, and Maron flung Gilvarneng after him. Stepping from the ranks, a warrior of the Zanoden picked up the sword.

“Is this another challenge, knights of Narbicana?”

Warriors, it seems, fear laughter more than death. But the king’s son of Narbicana came forward right away. When the veteran struck, he caught the blow, not as a swordsman should, but upon the flat instead of the edge, and Gilvarneng rebounded.

The king’s son was a crafty fighter, for his age. Perceiving that the warrior would strike to rebound, that the blade might swing at once to an opening on his side, he met it with his edge. His point sheared off, he lunged across the other’s arm as Gilvarneng passed, and caught him in the throat with what remained. A quick blow finished him.

The king’s son took Gilvarneng, and when the terms of peace were signed he brought him home and had an ancient smith he knew make a sword that to the eye was like Gilvarneng. He wore both swords, one at his hip and one behind a

shoulder, and on which side he bore Gilvarneng, on that wrist he wore a bracelet hidden by his sleeve.

And when the king's son fought, men knew not at first whether to turn the side or use the edge.

Because of this advantage, his father let him, his heir, adventure as did other knights. But he fought always with the sword he drew, until the fight was ended. And to those whose swords he broke or cut or otherwise attained by this, he gave quarter at once, nor mocked a knight with musical Gilvarneng.

And his renown went so far abroad that it came back, and he believed the latter. So that when the news was heard that a dragon menaced Valrad, he went to seek it out.

With ten picked men of Valrad he found the dragon's lair. They ringed the entrance in a wide half circle, that the dragon's fiery breath – he was known to be an old and cautious dragon – would swing round at all of them, not harming anyone to death. The king's son of Narbicana stood in the centre of the line, so that, whichever way the dragon swung its head, he could spring before it turned again.

He drew no sword just yet, nor did the other men, lest the dragon enraged attack too soon. It was to be single combat – for the first, at least.

The king's son felt the breath upon his softened shield and saw the scaly head swing past. He flung the shield aside and sprang, and his hand drew out Gilvarneng. Then he stopped – he had not thought to ask the sages whether a dragon's scaly hide would be considered armour.

And in that pause the dragon turned.

When the dragon had been slain, with four men killed, another wounded, and several badly burned, a deputation from Valrad took his son's body home to King Varesdard, with all his armour and both the swords.

The king tried one sword against the other, and placed Gilvarneng on the wall behind his throne, with his son's crest coronet hanging on the hilt.

There Gilvarneng stayed, though its fame went far, and its name was heard wherever warriors fought or rested. And no one yet, since then at least, has tried Gilvarneng's edge on human flesh. And that fame did come, when it was yet in infancy, to a gathering in a tavern where the warrior Rognirth sat drinking by the fire at evening. And, "By the High and Mighty Ones," said Rognirth, who was

Burke – Kryffyr – 188

seldom heard to swear, “if a knavish smith should make for me so tricksome a brand, I’d stuff it down his throat hilt-foremost did I survive my first use of it.”

“Proper thing,” said a smith quiet-spoken who was of the company, who was rumoured to be of Elvish ancestry remote. He left the company soon after for an early bedtime: he was to begin a sword for Rognirth in the morning.

## HOW SILVERWRATH WAS STOLEN

By

Scymnus du Berg

A fierce warrior and a just but exacting law-foe was Northolon the Fell, of Galmdal.

And these Northolon had, that he valued above all else: a younger brother named Segnac, and a sword called Silverwrath, made long ago for a forefather who had lived in the olden time, in the days of Rognirth. It was said that Silverwrath was forged by the smith who fashioned Rognirth's weapons, that smith of blood part Elven (it was said) who had at times played subtle tricks on Rognirth.

And it was said by those who knew him well that Northolon valued, of the two, his sword the more. But to Segnac it seemed he kept them parted in his mind and heart and maybe valued both alike, for never in his dealing with them would Northolon let either touch the other, almost as though he thought that magic in the sword for sons of Sargenac was meant for only one to bear.

Now, Northolon and Segnac had a sister named Kabina, deemed fairest of the women of Galmdal then, who were no more ill-favoured than most of Eve's daughters in any other place. And these three that remained of their family now, had a neighbour named Tarbenal, who desired Kabina and coveted the sword.

And one day while Northolon worked in the fields of a friend who was ill, Tarbenal came to the door of Northolon's house and said, when he was bidden enter and had sat, "I have come for Silverwrath." For he was grim to look upon, and thought to cow the youth by seeming easy about a deadly matter. But when he saw that Segnac then grew stern and quickly reached for his own sword upon the mantelpiece, he laughed and said, "Nay, boy, I will not take what you would die for. Leave us, that I may delight me with your sister, so that in softer mood I will not feel the need of warlike things."

And Segnac, angered, said, “You’ll fight for sword alone.” He took Silverwrath in its sheath from its higher place above the mantel and said to Tarbenal, “Outside.” And Tarbenal, well-pleased, obeyed.

When Segnac came outside he bade Kabina shut the door and bolt it, and she did so. And Segnac placed Silverwrath before the threshold, for though he realized he had been baited by reason of his youthful pride, with no one now at all to aid him and protect the sword, he would not use his brother’s favoured blade to save his life. He raised his lesser sword on guard and said, “Take Silverwrath.”

And Tarbenal slew him and took the sword. And in his battle-rage he then broke down the door and sought what else he wanted. But Kabina fought him with a dagger, the only weapon left within (for Northolon had his spare sword with him) that was short enough to use there. She fought with skill befitting one who shared the blood of Northolon and Tarbenal had lost an ear before his sword-point found her arm. And before the shock had left her and she knew it had been done, he pierced her other arm, to make her helpless. And she was thereafter called Kabina of the Skewered Arm, in token of honour kept despite the deed that followed.

And her foe was called thenceforward Tarbenal of the Single Ear, a name that followed him from Galmdal but one he seldom heard, for he awaited not the moment of its giving nor stayed long in any place where the cause of it by chance was seen. For he hid it with his hair.

But when Northolon came home and found what had been done, he went to the smith of Galmdal and had his dagger made again. The blade was ground to bodkin width and was then no more than three inches long. More metal was welded to the guard, which then was filed to make it round and smaller. And above the guard the tang was filed to weaken it, to make the handle break from blade if hand should push it sideways.

And to follow Tarbenal and find him, Northolon went alone.

Northolon found Tarbenal some months after, sitting at table in an inn at the Zanoden town of Tornooth, and saw him start with fear. But Tarbenal saw he was alone, and bethought him which man had weapon magical, and smiled.

“I have something that belongs to thee,” said Northolon, and sitting, he placed between them on the table the ear he had found beneath his chair at home, that he had cured in wine. “My sister caused its loss, and my conscience will not let me



rest until I put it back upon thy head for thee.” And he showed what the smith had fashioned for him, which was in truth more nail than knife.

Tarbenal stood up, for he welcomed the matter’s ending, and drew the blade he thought enchanted.

And Silverwrath gleaming in a foeman’s hand reminded Northolon, as holding it had done before so many times, that through his body flowed fierce blood of Sargenac the Skilful. And when some strokes had been exchanged, when Tarbenal missed narrowly a hard-aimed cut at Northolon and only by luck and a dodging leap escaped a running-through, then fear grew great in Tarbenal.

And he drew back, and put into the floor his sword-tip, and said, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.”

Then Northolon himself stood back and raised his eyes, though not so far that he trusted Tarbenal in doing this, and said, “Work Thou Thy vengeance on him, Lord, when soon he comes to Thee. For all I ever wanted is revenge.”

He looked again at Tarbenal and said, “On guard.”

And when the fight was done and Tarbenal had once more what he had lost, Northolon took Silverwrath and brought it home and buried it with Segnac his brother.

THE BRINGING BACK OF SILVERWRATH

by

Scymnus du Berg

When Northolon came riding home to bury Silverwrath, after slaying Tarbenal who had killed his brother and taken the sword, an old man from the nearest village saw him arrive. And he walked to the grave of Segnac, brother of Northolon, when he saw that Northolon was going there.

When the old man came there, Northolon was uncovering the grave of Segnac. The old man watched awhile as Northolon was digging and then he said, "Is this wise?" For Northolon had laid Silverwrath, wrapped in cloth as if for burying, beside the grave.

But Northolon said, "It is fitting."

The old man said: “There is an old foretelling, known to few, that a sword named Silverwrath shall some day save the kingdom. There is only one sword named Silverwrath in Narbicana or in the lands around.”

Northolon answered, “What work he does for the kingdom now, he will have to do from here.” And he buried the sword.

Now, after Silverwrath had lain for four years in the ground, war came upon Narbicana as war had done before. It was a war with the Zanoden, and that war went not well for Narbicana. For the Zanoden took part of Narbicana early in that war and could not be driven out from it.

The King of Narbicana at that time sought counsel from beyond the walls of his own court. And a wise man came to the King and said, “It has been foretold that the sword called Silverwrath, which is the sword of Northolon of Galmdal, will some day save Narbicana from the High Chieftain of Zanod in a time of war. But it must be wielded by the hand of Northolon.”

Now Northolon was a fierce warrior, but he was a lone man and a grim one, and he was not among the leaders of the King’s men. But the King had heard how Northolon had hunted Tarbenal of the Single Ear and slain him and given back the lost ear of Tarbenal. And he said, “Tell this thing to Northolon.” The

wise man went with captains of the King to where Northolon was staying in the camp of the King's army and the wise man said to Northolon, "It has been foretold that Silverwrath will save Narbicana from the High Chieftain of Zanod in time of war." But Northolon answered him, "It may be that the point of Silverwrath will hurt a mole, and that the mole will turn aside from the way he would have taken and instead will dig where the horse of the tyrant of Zanod will stumble and the tyrant of Zanod will die and the war will be ended thus. For Silverwrath is in the ground with my brother Segnac."

The wise man said, "The foretelling of which I speak says that Silverwrath must be in the hand of Northolon." But Northolon answered again, "Silverwrath is no longer for my wielding. He is in the ground with Segnac, and must stay there."

A captain said to Northolon, "You must get Silverwrath from Galmdal."

But Northolon said: "I must not. Silverwrath must stay there." And he said, "I will die for Narbicana, but I will not dig up my brother's grave. Who among you is less brave than I am?"

No one made answer to him, nor would any order him to go, but at night the captain who had spoken to him told men to ride to Galmdal and bring him the

sword that lay in the grave of Segnac. Then men went and dug up the grave and took the sword. And the sword was bright and sound and sharp, and there was no rust anywhere upon it. And they brought the sword unto the captain. The captain wrapped the sword in a piece of cloth fine-woven, and went with it to the tent where Northolon was. And he sent warriors before him, to talk with Northolon before he came there. They talked with Northolon and stood about him. The captain came into the tent and put the sword, in its wrapping of fine cloth, on the floor of the tent in front of Northolon. And by his mien as he put down the sword, Northolon knew what was being set before him, and he began to draw the sword he wore. But the warriors who were there seized Northolon and held him and bound him, but left his right hand unbound, and they took the sword that he was wearing and put Silverwrath near to the hand that they left free. Then they ran from that tent and stood far from it. Northolon took the sword and cut his bonds, and went outside. And his spirit was raging in him. But he did not waste time with seeking those who bound him or those who brought the sword, but went at once to where his horse was kept, and put the saddle on him, and left the camp, riding toward Galmdal.

Now, a lord in Zanod had made traitorous alliance with the overlord of Angolb, and these two had agreed that Angolb should conquer Zanod while its ruler was at war with Narbicana, and that the traitor lord should then rule half of Zanod for the overlord of Angolb. But four loyal Zanoden who were in Angolb at the time heard of this plot and rode south across Narbicana at great risk toward that part of Narbicana which their ruler had taken and was holding. But their way crossed the road that Northolon took to Galmdal, and when they saw him fiercely ride, they had the thought that he might be on an errand of some weight for the King of Narbicana. And therefore they went into the road before him, that they might stop and seize him, and they drew their swords.

When Northolon saw that these men barred his way, he drew out Silverwrath, that had been the sword of Sargenac the Skilful, and he set upon these four and slew them, one after another. Therefore the ruler of Zanod learned not of the plot against him and his rulership, and his life was taken by a minion of the traitor lord, and the overlord of Angolb led armies into Zanod.

But when the King of Narbicana learned of this, he hastily made treaty with the generals of Zanod, and the generals went back to Zanod and Narbicana marched on Angolb. The overlord of Angolb made treaty then with the King of

Burke – Kryffyr – 199

Narbicana and the High Chieftain's son of Zanod, and there was no more war among those nations for many years. These are the things that happened while Northolon rode home with Silverwrath and while he rode back, and after that.

But Northolon rode on home to Galmdal, and opened again his brother's grave and put the sword therein a second time. Then he rode back to the camp of the King, and he challenged to single combat the captain who had sent for the sword, and slew him. And Northolon was one of those who marched with the King to Angolb.

ORONIDAN OF NARBICANA

By

Scymnus du Berg

In a battle with the Angolben, Oronidan of Narbicana and eight of his men made prisoners of six.

But General Azgarbanth told him to slay these men, because his force was needed elsewhere quickly, and they had not time to bring them to a place secure.

And Oronidan told his men to bind the prisoners and depart, leaving them with him. And his men trusted Oronidan, though they feared they knew what the general's messenger had said to him, and left. And they took with them the horses of their foes, and all their armour save their swords, as Oronidan commanded.



And Oronidan removed their swords some distance and said to Garazdad, the chief among the six: “When I have cut your bonds, take up your swords from where I placed them, that you may show your gods some courage if our men should come upon you, and go quickly and with stealth to your own camp. And when you have reached your camp and have been welcomed, then go home.”

And Garazdad said, “We will.”

But they were Angolben, and they did not.

And later in that war, Oronidan was set to hold a pass, with two great archers only. And it became the task of Garazdad, who had eleven with him then, to clear that pass.

Because the men with Garazdad were skilled in throwing stones, the archers with Oronidan died quickly, after killing only six of those with Garazdad.

And Garazdad said, “This coward cannot kill men weaponless and bound. The pass is clear.”

But Oronidan, who was a Champion of the King, slew four of them before he got a mortal wound.

And as Garazdad dealt it, the last of his men still living cut off the head of Garazdad, for having lied to them. And Oronidan killed the last before dying.

KING FRANORD THE LEFTHANDED

By

Scymnus du Berg

On the Third Day of Judgement of the month of Karmorthan, King Franord of Narbicana sat upon his carven throne, waiting to give sentence upon a murderer his judges had found guilty. Behind the throne, at the king's left shoulder, stood Marforstinan, counsellor to the king, and at the king's right side and at his left stood one of the Lords Attendants of Narbicana, each holding before him a sword that pointed upward. And Marforstinan watched the swords, lest they droop or waver more than one inch. For when the sword of a Lord Attendant had thus moved twice, by reason of his hands' tiring or his arms' wearying, then another took his place and that lord left the throne room. And what would happen if such a sword should falter three times, was written in the Book of

Tradition of Narbicana, which was kept by Marforstinan and had been kept by counsellors before him.

On a low table near the King's right hand, upon a cloth of purple velvet, lay the Sword of Judgment and of Justice of the King of Narbicana, which had in its pommel an amethyst. And the sword was in easy reach of the King's right hand, and the table on which it lay stood so that it pointed toward a door at the end of the throne room. And that door was guarded by two armed knights.

At the time appointed for the giving of judgment by the King, the door at which the Sword of Judgment pointed, was opened from without, and the King's Accuser entered, who wore a purple robe. Behind him came a man whose hands were bound before him, between two guards who both were armed. And the King's Accuser let them pass. These turned to their right and came to the carpet that ran the length of the middle of the room, and walked upon it until they stood before the throne.

Behind the man whose hands were bound there walked a judge, whose robe also was purple. And he stood behind the man whose hands were bound. The man's face was white, and he was very stern. And King Franord raised his head and looked toward the wall beyond these men, where no one stood. And he

spoke, as one might speak who thinks no one is there to answer – for such is the Tradition of Narbicana – and he said, “What has this man done?”

Marforstinan the King’s Counsellor looked at the King’s Accuser, who still stood by the open door, and bent his head a little, slowly. And the King’s Accuser said in a loud voice, from his place beside the door, “He has done murder.”

And the King spoke to his judge, with the bound man standing between them, and he said, “Was this man fairly tried, according to the laws of Narbicana?”

The judge answered, “O Narbicana, he was fairly tried.”

Then the King said to the man, “Do you appeal to Narbicana from the judgment of the court?”

The man said, “Narbicana, I do not appeal.”

And the King asked, “Whom did you murder?”

And the man told him.

Then the King took up the Sword of Judgment and held it up and out, over the man who stood before him with bound hands. The man and those who guarded him turned and walked again upon the carpet down the middle of the room, and they turned again and went out by the door at which the King’s Accuser waited.

And the King's Accuser closed the door behind them, and stood solemnly to watch the King. And Marforstinan watched to see that the swords of the Lords Attendant did not waver, and they did not.

The King held high at his arm's length the Sword of Judgment, though he might not stand while doing so, until a bell tolled. It tolled but once. Then the King's Accuser came forward upon the carpet and took the sword, and raised it to his forehead in salute and then put back the sword upon the velvet cloth that covered the Table of the Sword. And the swords in the hands of the Lords Attendant wavered not, nor trembled. The King's Accuser bowed and returned upon the carpet and turned right, unto the Door of the Accuser, and went out. And one who had stood near, closed the door behind him. For thus said the Tradition of Narbicana.

Now, when a short time had passed, such as tradition demanded, a knock was heard upon that door. And the door was opened from within, and the two guards who stood beside it barred with halberds the way of him who stood there. But he said in a loud voice, "I am the King's Accuser," and they let him pass. Behind the King's Accuser there came a man who was not bound, walking between two guards who bore daggers drawn. They came and stood before the King. And the

King's Accuser turned to his right and walked three steps and walked upon the carpet until he stood behind the man who stood before the King.

King Franord looked upon the man between the guards and beyond him to the King's Accuser, and he said, for such was the wording tradition demanded, "What has this man done, that we must judge him?"

And the swords of the Lords Attendant stood firm in the hands of those who held them.

But the King's Accuser said, "He ravished a maiden."

And the King said, "What maiden?"

The King's Accuser answered, "The Lady Acaltha."

And the sword trembled strongly in the hands of Lord Akethan, Lord Attendant who stood at the King's right hand, and its point moved more than one inch. For Acaltha was a daughter of Lord Akethan. And Marforstinan saw that the sword wavered but once, but he signed for a servant to stand near. For Acaltha was also a godchild of the King, and one he dearly loved.

And King Franord cried out a loud cry and seized the Sword of Judgment and stood to leap toward the man who stood between the guards. But Lord Akethan stepped more quickly and cut off the King's right hand, which was the only duty

given him by the Tradition of Narbicana. And the sword fell down upon the carpet, with the King's right hand near it. And Marforstinan watched to see what Lord Akethan would do then, for the Book of Tradition declared not all the things that should be done, for none had dared to think of them, and there were others to attend the King and his wounding. But Akethan took the Sword of Judgment and gave it to the Lord Attendant who took his place, and he put his own sword upon the Table of the Sword of Judgment and of Justice and he said, "I am exiled from Narbicana."

And Marforstinan wrote these things down in the Book of Tradition of Narbicana.

KING GARNILDAN THE JESTUOUS

by

Scymnus du Berg

In the days of King Garnildan the Jestuous, there came one day to the court of Narbicana a young ambassador who would not kneel before the King. He walked up the purple carpet where other ambassadors had gone before, and where others would soon follow, and he stood straight before the King and said, “Good morrow, King Garnildan. I am Aribur of Maerery, sent as ambassador to you by the Council of Spokesmen of Ectuon.” But he did not kneel.

King Garnildan said, “I have heard good things of Ectuon. I believe it a fair country and its men are fair-spoken and its delegates courteous. All of these have until now followed the custom of our country and knelt before its King.”



But Aribur said, “It is not the custom in our country for one man to abase himself before another. What other men, less true to our beliefs, have done, I care not. I will not lower the honour of my country before another who is but a man as I am a man.”

King Garnildan answered, “It is true I am a man, but I sit before you as one who stands, if you will excuse that word, for the country you visit. I would be its living self, if that were possible. You would kneel not to me as one man to another, but to me as to the country of Narbicana. Mark you that I said ‘country’ and not ‘nation’, for I am, by legal fiction, the land as well as the people. To all of the people I am but one man, but to each man I am all the people and I am the land. It is this that we ask you to honour.”

But Aribur said, “Why should one man thus be exalted above his fellows?” And he heard another mutter, “This boy’s father hath sent him here for learning of manners,” but he deemed that beneath his notice and looked steadily at King Garnildan.

The King answered, “I am a king that all men of Narbicana may put themselves by their minds in my place and may more readily feel what is to be King of Narbicana. Thus do they honour their country and thus do they show

their love, and thus by their love are they most willingly, more greatly bound to their country's defence in war. It is as a game my people choose to play. And all other peoples so far have joined in their sense of fun. Will you not join us?"

Aribur said, "I did not travel all the way from Ectuo to play children's games with men." And the nobles who were there then muttered sternly among themselves.

The King answered yet again, and said: "Just before the High Ones intervened and chose Narbicana's first King and lords and nobles, and settled all the other ranks in their due places, the men of Narbicana meant to set these things by lot, because they knew, as we still know, that all men are, indeed, equal. We choose to express that sense of our equality by letting accident of birth, as some would call it, give rank and duty. It is therefore our custom that men of lower rank give honour to the offices of those above them, and that all should kneel to the King. If you were a king, you should not kneel, for countries do not bend before each other. But in refusing to kneel now, you dishonour me, our people, and our country. Will you not kneel?"

And Aribur said, "I will not; it is contrary to all I believe."

King Garnildan said then, “I will give you this choice, that you kneel before me willingly, that you kneel before me under force, or that you kneel before the lowest born of all my servants.” And the nobles suddenly hushed their muttering, but Aribur heard not the silence. He was minded to say that he would kneel before the servant, but he saw in the King’s eye a glint as of a jest that the King knew and he did not, and he was minded then to share the jests of such a man, for in laughter surely all are equal. And he raised his voice and said, “I will kneel willingly before the King.” And there he knelt, and men applauded him.

Now, because Ulfal had just died and Ichnael was not yet hired, the lowest born of all the King’s own servants, at that time, was Corern the King’s headsman. And those who knelt before him did not again rise. When Aribur heard of this, some weeks later, he turned pale, but he spoke of it to no one.

LARHADAND THE AVENGER

By

Scymnus du Berg

Larhadand the Avenger, of the tribe of Galgardth, was riding west with men of Zanod – for there was peace with Zanod at that time, and both their countries were at peace with Narbicana – when Atholod of Neybant came after them.

“Where is Corbat?” he asked of Larhadand. For Corbat and Nehedind had gone with Larhadand from Tarbinth.

“He went an hour ago with a party to the south of here,” Larhadand told him. “Why do you look for Corbat?”

“Talad lenth tarnad – the son hath slain his father,” Larhadand heard, and said, “You need look for him no longer.” He looked to his sword and tested his rein, and rode south at great speed.

And he thought of Corbat’s pleasure at being asked to come with him from Tarbinth.

And Atholod followed far behind, for Larhadand’s mount was fresh and for it was his duty to carry a message, and one could not, but for great need, ask a horse from men of Zanod.

Now when Larhadand came upon their party, Corbat rode forth to meet him. And Larhadand slew him there.

And those who had been with Corbat said nothing, nor did they move toward him, for they knew Larhadand was the Avenger of Galgardth. But they waited.

And Larhadand told them, “He slew his father.”

And he took Corbat’s sword and dagger, to bury them with Tolban his father, if for some cause the funeral had been delayed.

When he came to Tarbinth someone asked him, “Where is Corbat?” and he said, “Who knows?”

He went to the home of Corbat and saw Tolban's body lying in an inner room, as if asleep, and it was to be buried that evening. And he wondered. He asked, "How was it done?"

And they who were in the room, though they found his wording strange, replied, "He went too far in the heat of the day, without covering for his head, to find a flower for his daughter's child. He was slain by the rays of Tald."

He said, "Who gave the word to Atholod?"

And someone said, "Atholod was here. It was his first visit to this house since he had come from Teldanhool."

For Atholod had been courting in that city, which its people call Teldanhoo-el, because they speak many words slowly and at greater length than do men of Galgardth (which they say as Galgardeth).

And Larhadand sought his older sister's eldest son – for Avengers of Galgardth do not marry – and gave the younger man his sword. And he took a shorter blade and left, riding at great speed.

THE LEGEND OF THE MAKING

By

Scymnus du Berg

Before the world was, the Lord Who Rules the High Ones called some of them before Him and said to him who was chief among them: “Lightbringer, I will make a world of matter, for my delight and for my children’s.” And He put into the mind of the Chief among the High Ones that which matter is, and He made matter for the High Ones’ use. And the High Ones He had summoned began to move in matter, and to shape it in the light of their Lord that fell upon it through their Chief as through a window of fine crystal.

While the High Ones made shapes in matter, under the will of Him Who Rules, and while they were making the world that was to be, He Who Rules spoke further with their Chief. And He said: “Lightbringer, I will make Men to

rule this new world under the guidance of the High Ones. And He put into Lightbringer's mind that form to which Men are made. And Lightbringer then was gladdened greatly and he said: "So be it, Lord." Then He Who Rules spoke further, and He said: "It will be the task of Men to learn from you the ruling of this world, that they may take it as a gift from you and from your fellows." And Lightbringer was further gladdened, and he said, "So be it, Lord."

But He Who Rules said then unto His Chief Among the High Ones: "It may be that men will choose to shun the light that shines through you, and to make use of shadow that can be made with it, and use some lesser aspects of the Laws of Truth to work against the Truth and to do all manner of foulness with the bodies being shaped for them." And Lightbringer saw the foulness that might be done, and how the bodies could be made to dull the light that is made for the souls of men, and he was saddened, but he said: "So be it, Lord; they are your creatures."

And He Who Rules said then: "It will be your task to keep the Laws of Truth in force upon the world even if they do these things and give themselves to the lesser aspects only and shun the Truth itself entirely and forever while the world shall last."



And the Chief Among the High Ones said: “Let it be so. We are your creatures.”

But He Who Rules spoke yet again, and said unto His Chief Among the High Ones: “It may be that Men will deal thus not only with their souls and bodies but also with the world which we are making. It may be that they will use the lesser aspects of the Laws of Truth to shape the flesh and bones of the very world into devices which will mock the things that live. And still must you keep the Laws of Truth in force upon that world, that none may say we turned from that which we have made.”

And then Lightbringer fiercely said: “Not to *my* world shall they do these things. Not for this shall I be used. *I will not serve.*” He darkened then the window of himself, that the world might not be made. But the light of Him Who Rules was stronger than that darkness, and the world was made despite the darkness. Yet through the darkness was it made, and it was not what had been planned. And other of the High Ones, when they knew what might be done, entered also into the darkness their chief had made within himself. And through their darkness also the world was made, under the guidance of Tarendiel the Just, who was made Chief among the High Ones in the place of him who had

brought light, who now is called Azardizog the Fallen. And there was war, in the making of the world, between the High Ones and the Fallen High Ones who were darkened, and that war still is waged. For such was the making of the world in darkness, that no new thing is made to be, without the breaking of a thing that was. And no breaking can be done that is not somehow turned toward the making of what will be. And the High Ones rule to make things grow, and the Dark Ones rebel to break things down, and only the wise can say whether good serves evil in this world, or evil serves the good.

Now, when He Who Rules made the First of Men on Tellus, the soul of that First Man was made wholly and only by Him Who Rules, for even the light which shines in the Chief Among the High Ones is not enough for the making of a soul that knows itself. Therefore was the soul not touched by the darkness of Azardizog the Fallen, and it held all the light of Truth which He Who Rules would have it bear. And that light shone fully even in the body shaped by light that shone through darkness, so that the body bore no taint of shadow. And that Man's task, and the task of the Woman his mate, was to spread this light through all the world, by giving life to more of his own kind, that they might fill it and thus rule it and thereby free it from the shadow of the Dark Ones. Where such

men were, the light would be. But the First Man chose to enter the darkness that Azardizog the Fallen had made within himself, so that his soul was dimmed and his body went under shadow. And the men who came after the first and were his sons had souls which were dimmed by being joined with bodies shaped in shadow, because the First Man had darkened his own soul, which had ruled his body well. Therefore were their bodies ruled not wholly by their souls but in part by the High Ones and the Dark Ones.

When the first men of Tellus came unto a place where they were minded to build themselves a city, they were minded also to build a tower that would reach the heavens. And Azardizog the Fallen saw that a time was ripe for showing them many of the lesser aspects of the Laws of Truth, that men might use such shadows of the Truth to wield great power over matter and so in time to unmake the world of which He Who Rules had willed the making. For Azardizog the Fallen in spite and stubbornness had decided to destroy the world he had not been permitted to preserve for his own pride. And it is possible for men to find great power quickly in the breaking down of things instead of gaining strength more surely by following the laws which rule the growing of things that live. They may find in the earth dead bodies of things that once had lived, which are

returning to the earth to strengthen it for earth's renewal later, and they may break these down more quickly above the surface of the earth, in devices made from the bones of earth to mock the things which live. For some of the power which had been in those bodies to move them while they lived, can be used to move such mockeries.

Now, since a tower could not be built that would reach the heavens only by reason of its being high, Azardizog the Fallen began to teach those men to build a tower that could be moved away from earth, by the power that remains in bodies of things which used to live, to go beyond the sky of Tellus and to go into the heavens. But he Who Rules forestalled that time the scheme of Azardizog the Fallen, and made confusion in the tongues of those who planned the tower, so that men dispersed throughout the world. And some of them, as they moved from the place where the tower was begun, were taken away from the world by High Ones and were put into a similar place in a world that was like Tellus, which the High Ones had made in the likeness of Tellus and which is called Tellares. This was done by the will of Tarendiel the Just, with consent of Him Who Rules, that the men of one world might have chance of learning from errors that in the other might be made. And it has been written that when

the worlds are ending, Tellus and Tellares will be joined, as they were meant in the beginning, to make one whole world new. For Tellares was fashioned from matter which was meant for the making of Tellus but which the Darkness of the Fallen kept therefrom.

The men who were brought from Tellus began to spread through the world Tellares, and they did not, nor did their offspring, make any use whatever of those devices which mock the things that live. But of these mockeries on Tellus some further use was made, in two cities which were close together by an inland sea. For the men who dwelled in those two cities learned of the movements which are made in matter by the High Ones and the Dark Ones, not to make or destroy things that are (though destruction was much desired by the Dark Ones), but only to move some things which could be used, and this was a great twisting of the power which is meant to make things be, and the men who used it thus became twisted in themselves and learned to abuse their bodies among themselves for pleasure even as they abused the body of the earth. He Who Rules was much angered by those evils, so that He used the very power they had warped to destroy them and their cities. And from one of these cities did the

family of one good man escape before destruction, though his wife indeed through her own fault did not escape as she had been allowed to do.

After the evil cities were destroyed, the Order of the Knights of Felcath roamed the earth to seek out and destroy those shards of dark unwisdom which had been learned by men outside, from the evil men within those cities. And through their toil was Tellus cleansed, and so remained for many centuries.