

## Prologue

*Being a History of the War of the Gods and the Acts of  
Belgarath the Sorcerer*

– adapted from *The Book of Alorn*

When the world was new, the seven Gods dwelt in harmony, and the races of man were as one people. Belar, youngest of the Gods, was beloved by the Alorns. He abode with them and cherished them, and they prospered in his care. The other Gods also gathered peoples about them, and each God cherished his own people.

But Belar's eldest brother, Aldur, was God over no people. He dwelt apart from men and Gods, until the day that a vagrant child sought him out. Aldur accepted the child as his disciple and called him Belgarath. Belgarath learned the secret of the Will and the Word and became a sorcerer. In the years that followed, others also sought out the solitary God. They joined in brotherhood to learn at the feet of Aldur, and time did not touch them.

Now it happened that Aldur took up a stone in the shape of a globe, no larger than the heart of a child, and he turned the stone in his hand until it became a living soul. The power of the living jewel, which men called the Orb of Aldur, was very great, and Aldur worked wonders with it.

Of all the Gods, Torak was the most beautiful, and his

people were the Angaraks. They burned sacrifices before him, calling him Lord of Lords, and Torak found the smell of sacrifice and the words of adoration sweet. The day came, however, when he heard of the Orb of Aldur, and from that moment he knew no peace.

Finally, in a dissembling guise, he went to Aldur. 'My brother,' he said, 'it is not fitting that thou shouldst absent thyself from our company and counsel. Put aside this jewel which hath seduced thy mind from our fellowship.'

Aldur looked into his brother's soul and rebuked him. 'Why dost thou seek lordship and dominion, Torak? Is not Angarak enough for thee? Do not in thy pride seek to possess the Orb, lest it slay thee.'

Great was Torak's shame at the words of Aldur, and he raised his hand and smote his brother. Taking the jewel, he fled.

The other Gods besought Torak to return the Orb, but he would not. Then the races of man rose up and came against the hosts of Angarak and made war on them. The wars of the Gods and of men raged across the land until, near the high places of Korim, Torak raised the Orb and forced its will to join with his to split the earth asunder. The mountains were cast down, and the sea came in. But Belar and Aldur joined their wills and set limits upon the sea. The races of man, however, were separated one from the others, and the Gods also.

Now when Torak raised the living Orb against the earth, its mother, it awoke and began to glow with holy flame. The face of Torak was seared by the blue fire. In pain he cast down the mountains; in anguish he cracked open the earth; in agony he let in the sea. His left hand flared and burned to ashes, the flesh on the left side of his

face melted like wax, and his left eye boiled in its socket. With a great cry, he cast himself into the sea to quench the burning, but his anguish was without end.

When Torak rose from the water, his right side was still fair, but his left was burned and scarred hideously by the fire of the Orb. In endless pain, he led his people away to the east, where they built a great city on the plains of Malloreia, which they called *Cthol Mishrak*, City of Night, for Torak hid his maiming in darkness. The Angaraks raised an iron tower for their God and placed the Orb in an iron cask in the topmost chamber. Often Torak stood before the cask, then fled weeping, lest his yearning to look on the Orb overpower him and he perish utterly.

The centuries rolled past in the lands of Angarak, and they came to call their maimed God Kal-Torak, both King and God.

Belar had taken the Alorns to the north. Of all men, they were the most hardy and warlike, and Belar put eternal hatred for Angarak in their hearts. With cruel swords and axes they ranged the north, even to the fields of eternal ice, seeking a way to their ancient enemies.

Thus it was until the time when Cherek Bear-shoulders, greatest king of the Alorns, traveled to the Vale of Aldur to seek out Belgarath the Sorcerer. 'The way to the north is open,' he said. 'The signs and the auguries are propitious. Now is the time ripe for us to discover the way to the City of Night and regain the Orb from One-eye.'

Poledra, wife of Belgarath, was great with child, and he was reluctant to leave her. But Cherek prevailed. They stole away one night to join Cherek's sons, Dras Bull-neck, Algar Fleet-foot, and Riva Iron-grip.

Cruel winter gripped the northland, and the moors glittered beneath the stars with frost and steel-gray ice. To seek out their way, Belgarath cast an enchantment and took the shape of a great wolf. On silent feet, he slunk through the snow-floored forests where the trees cracked and shattered in the sundering cold. Grim frost silvered the ruff and shoulders of the wolf, and ever after the hair and beard of Belgarath were silver.

Through snow and mist, they crossed into Mallorean and came at last to *Cthol Mishrak*. Finding a secret way into the city, Belgarath led them to the foot of the iron tower. Silently they climbed the rusted stairs which had known no step for twenty centuries. Fearfully they passed through the chamber where Torak tossed in pain-haunted slumber, his maimed face hidden by a steel mask. Stealthily they crept past the sleeping God in the smoldering darkness and came at last to the chamber where lay the iron cask in which rested the living Orb.

Cherek motioned for Belgarath to take the Orb, but Belgarath refused. 'I may not touch it,' he said, 'lest it destroy me. Once it welcomed the touch of man or God, but its will hardened when Torak raised it against its mother. It will not be so used again. It reads our souls. Only one without ill intent, who is pure enough to take it and convey it in peril of his life, with no thought of power or possession, may touch it now.'

'What man has no ill intent in the silence of his soul?' Cherek asked. But Riva Iron-grip opened the cask and took up the Orb. Its fire shone through his fingers, but he was not burned.

'So be it, Cherek,' Belgarath said. 'Your youngest son is pure. It shall be his doom and the doom of all who follow him to bear the Orb and protect it.' And Belgarath

sighed, knowing the burden he had placed upon Riva.

‘Then his brothers and I will sustain him,’ Cherek said, ‘for so long as this doom is upon him.’

Riva muffled the Orb in his cloak and hid it beneath his tunic. They crept again through the chambers of the maimed God, down the rusted stairs, along the secret way to the gates of the city, and into the wasteland beyond.

Soon after, Torak awoke and went as always into the Chamber of the Orb. But the cask stood open, and the Orb was gone. Horrible was the wrath of Kal-Torak. Taking his great sword, he went down from the iron tower and turned and smote it once, and the tower fell. To the Angaraks he cried out in a voice of thunder: ‘Because you are become indolent and unwatchful and have let a thief steal that for which I paid so dear, I will break your city and drive you forth. Angarak shall wander the earth until *Cthrag Yaska*, the burning stone, is returned to me.’ Then he cast down the City of Night in ruins and drove the hosts of Angarak into the wilderness. *Cthol Mishrak* was no more.

Three leagues to the north, Belgarath heard the wailing from the city and knew that Torak had awakened. ‘Now will he come after us,’ he said, ‘and only the power of the Orb can save us. When the hosts are upon us, Iron-grip, take the Orb and hold it so they may see it.’

The hosts of Angarak came, with Torak himself in the forefront, but Riva held forth the Orb so that the maimed God and his hosts might behold it. The Orb knew its enemy. Its hatred flamed anew, and the sky became alight with its fury. Torak cried out and turned away. The front ranks of the Angarak hosts were consumed by fire, and the rest fled in terror.

Thus Belgarath and his companions escaped from Mallorean and passed again through the marches of the north, bearing the Orb of Aldur once more into the Kingdoms of the West.

Now the Gods, knowing all that had passed, held council, and Aldur advised them, 'If we raise war again upon our brother Torak, our strife will destroy the world. Thus we must absent ourselves from the world so that our brother may not find us. No longer in flesh, but in spirit only may we remain to guide and protect our people. For the world's sake it must be so. In the day that we war again, the world will be unmade.'

The Gods wept that they must depart. But Chaldan, Bull-god of the Arends, asked, 'In our absence, shall not Torak have dominion?'

'Not so,' Aldur replied. 'So long as the Orb remains with the line of Riva Iron-grip, Torak shall not prevail.'

So it was that the Gods departed, and only Torak remained. But the knowledge that the Orb in the hand of Riva denied him dominion cankered his soul.

Then Belgarath spoke with Cherek and his sons. 'Here we must part, to guard the Orb and to prepare against the coming of Torak. Let each turn aside as I have instructed and make preparations.'

'We will, Belgarath,' vowed Cherek Bear-shoulders. 'From this day, Aloria is no more, but the Alorns will deny dominion to Torak as long as one Alorn remains.'

Belgarath raised his face. 'Hear me, Torak One-eye,' he cried. 'The living Orb is secure against thee, and thou shalt not prevail against it. In the day that thou comest against us, I shall raise war against thee. I will maintain watch upon thee by day and by night and will abide against thy coming, even to the end of days.'

In the wastelands of Mallorea, Kal-Torak heard the voice of Belgarath and smote about him in fury, for he knew that the living Orb was forever beyond his reach.

Then Cherek embraced his sons and turned away, to see them no more. Dras went north and dwelt in the lands drained by River Mrin. He built a city at Boktor and called his lands Drasnia. And he and his descendants stood athwart the northern marches and denied them to the enemy. Algar went south with his people and found horses on the broad plains drained by Aldur River. The horses they tamed and learned to ride and for the first time in the history of man, mounted warriors appeared. Their country they called Algaria, and they became nomads, following their herds. Cherek returned sadly to Val Alorn and renamed his kingdom Cherek, for now he was alone and without sons. Grimly he built tall ships of war to patrol the seas and deny them to the enemy.

Upon the bearer of the Orb, however, fell the burden of the longest journey. Taking his people, Riva went to the west coast of Sendaria. There he built ships, and he and his people crossed to the Isle of the Winds. They burned their ships and built a fortress and a walled city around it. The city they called Riva and the fortress the Hall of the Rivan King. Then Belar, God of the Alorns, caused two iron stars to fall from the sky. Riva took up the stars and forged a blade from one and a hilt from the other, setting the Orb upon it as a pommel-stone. So large was the sword that none but Riva could wield it. In the wasteland of Mallorea, Kal-Torak felt in his soul the forging of the sword and he tasted fear for the first time.

The sword was set against the black rock that stood at the back of Riva's throne, with the Orb at the highest

point, and the sword joined to the rock so that none but Riva could remove it. The Orb burned with cold fire when Riva sat upon the throne. And when he took down his sword and raised it, it became a great tongue of cold fire.

The greatest wonder of all was the marking of Riva's heir. In each generation, one child in the line of Riva bore upon the palm of his right hand the mark of the Orb. The child so marked was taken to the throne chamber, and his hand was placed upon the Orb, so that it might know him. With each infant touch, the Orb waxed in brilliance, and the bond between the living Orb and the line of Riva became stronger with each joining.

After Belgarath had parted from his companions, he hastened to the Vale of Aldur. But there he found that Poledra, his wife, had borne twin daughters and then had died. In sorrow he named the elder Polgara. Her hair was dark as the raven's wing. In the fashion of sorcerers, he stretched forth his hand to lay it upon her brow, and a single lock at her forehead turned frost-white at his touch. Then he was troubled, for the white lock was the mark of the sorcerers, and Polgara was the first female child to be so marked.

His second daughter, fair-skinned and golden-haired, was unmarked. He called her Beldaran, and he and her dark-haired sister loved her beyond all else and contended with each other for her affection.

Now when Polgara and Beldaran had reached their sixteenth year, the Spirit of Aldur came to Belgarath in a dream, saying, 'My beloved disciple, I would join thy house with the house of the guardian of the Orb. Choose, therefore, which of thy daughters thou wilt give to the Rivan King to be his wife and the mother of his line, for

in that line lies the hope of the world, against which the dark power of Torak may not prevail.'

In the deep silence of his soul, Belgarath was tempted to choose Polgara. But, knowing the burden which lay upon the Rivan King, he sent Beldaran instead, and wept when she was gone. Polgara wept also, long and bitterly, knowing that her sister must fade and die. In time, however, they comforted each other and came at last to know each other.

They joined their powers to keep watch over Torak. And some men say that they abide still, keeping their vigil through all the uncounted centuries.