



THE PIRATE KING

TORNO  
THE  
HURRICANE  
DRAGON



*With special thanks to Cherith Baldry*

*To Elliot*



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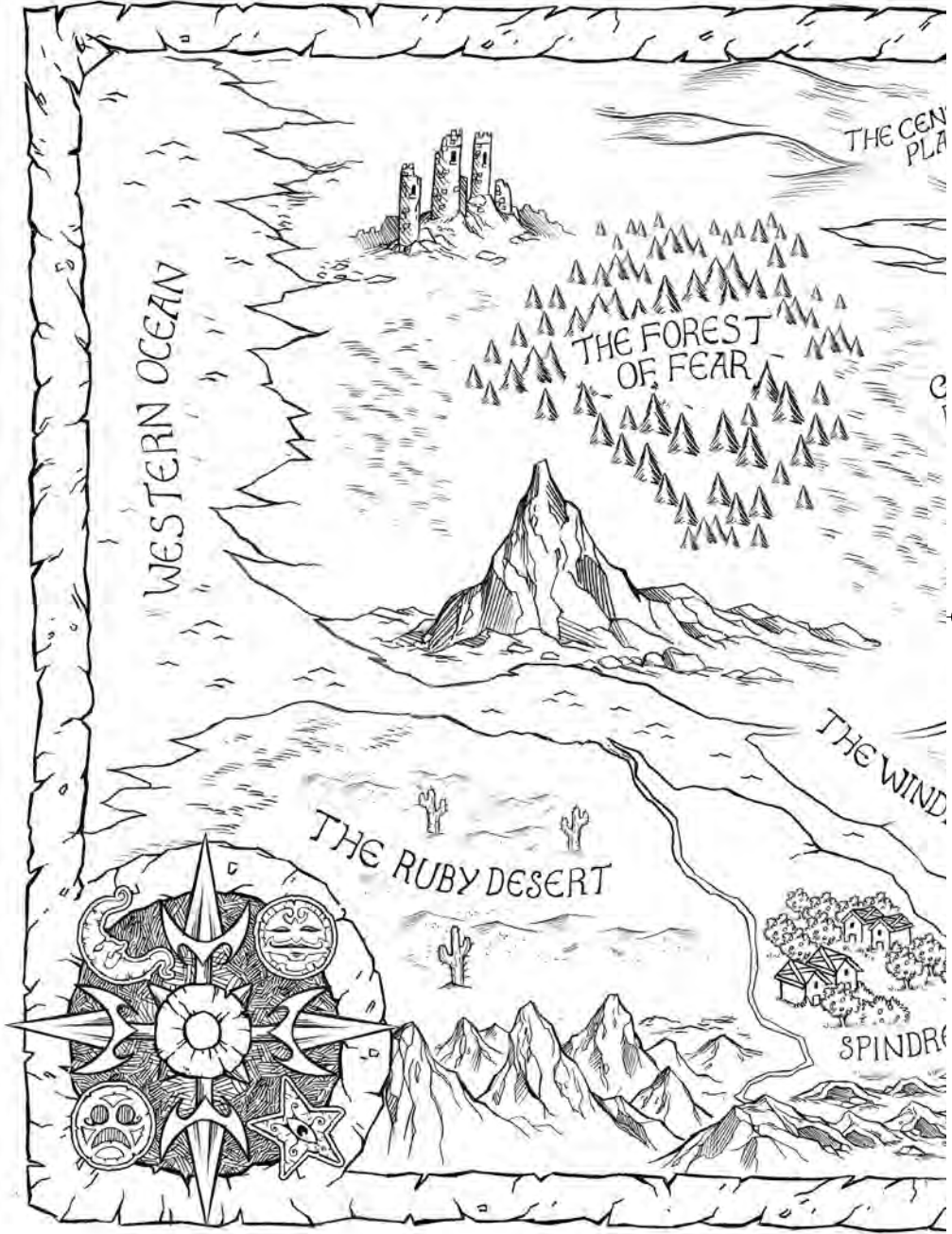


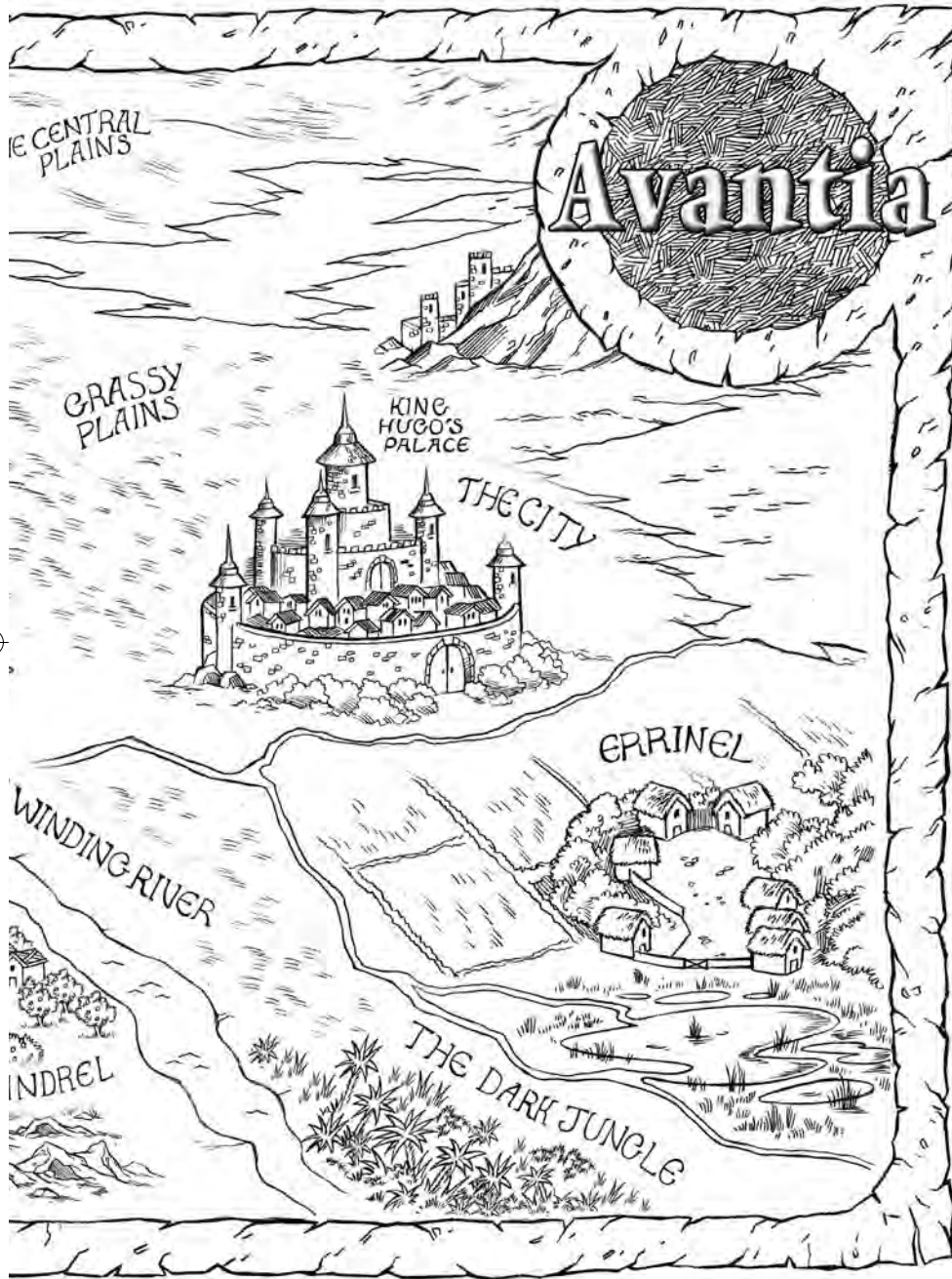
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BY ADAM BLADE











*Tremble, warriors of Avantia, for a new enemy stalks your land!*

*I am Sanpao, the Pirate King of Makai! My ship brings me to your shores to claim an ancient magic more powerful than any you've encountered before. No one can stand in my way, especially not that pathetic boy, Tom, or his friends. Even Aduro cannot help you this time. My pirate band will pillage and burn without mercy, and my Beasts will be more than a match for any hero in Avantia.*



*Pirates! Batten down the hatches and raise the sails. We come to conquer and destroy!*

*Sanpao, the Pirate King*





## PROLOGUE



“Go, Redwind!”

Hal smiled as his beloved falcon spread its wings and mounted high into the air, the bells on its legs tinkling. The sight of the magnificent bird soaring over Avantia’s northern mountains had gladdened Hal’s heart for years.

Redwing was on majestic form today. Hal had to narrow his eyes against the sunlight to pick out the shape of the falcon swooping in and

out of the rocky mountain peaks.

“You’re the finest bird in all Avantia,” he said. “And you’re going to win the annual Northern Avantia Wing Race – I just know—”

Hal broke off. Redwind had paused in mid-flight. At first Hal thought the falcon had spotted some prey on the mountain slopes, and was preparing to swoop. But Redwind’s wings were spread wide, like he was soaring. And yet, he didn’t make the slightest movement. It was like he wasn’t a real bird at all, but a painting on the sky.

Hal raised his arm, in the signal for his falcon to fly down to him.

“Redwind, here!”

But Redwind didn’t move.

*What’s going on?* Hal asked himself anxiously.

He was about to call again when

a fierce gust of wind came out of nowhere, snatching his breath away. The gust knocked him to his knees.

Hal struggled against the force of the gale, which felt like a giant hand pinning him to the ground. Finally, he managed to get to his feet, looking up to see Redwind beating his wings. Now Hal understood: the magnificent



bird was trying to fly against the freak wind, but he couldn't make any progress.

As he fought to stand upright, Hal glimpsed a shimmer of gold gleaming from behind one of the rocky mountain tops. An enormous, lizard-like head appeared just below the struggling falcon, its scales dazzling in the sunlight and its wide jaws gaping open.

*The gust of wind seems to be coming from its mouth, Hal realised. Oh no – Redwind!*

Hal tried calling out a warning to his falcon, but the wind swallowed his voice again. He could do nothing but stare in horror as the Beast's jaws snapped shut over his winged friend.

Instantly the hurricane disappeared as if a giant door had been slammed

against it. Hal dropped to his knees.  
“No!”

Through his tears of distress, Hal looked up and saw the full form of the terrible Beast as it emerged from behind the rocks. Trailing back from the lizard head was a long dragon’s body covered in shining golden scales and a row of spikes running along its spine. A pair of wings jutted from its sleek, muscled body, sweeping strongly down as the creature leaped into the air to hover over the topmost peak.

Its claws glittered like diamonds and dug deep into the rock as the Beast alighted on a mountain ledge. Perched on the stony peak, the monster let out a snort of triumph and angled its head downwards.

Hal backed away, sensing the



Beast's eyes fixed on him, then turned and ran. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw the Beast taking to the air, its mighty talons ripping great gouges in the mountain as it swooped. Hal caught the foul reek of its breath and heard the swish of its wings cutting the air. His feet pounded the rough moorland grass, which was so long he couldn't see the jutting stone that tripped him up. He crashed headlong to the ground. Everything went dark as the Beast's shadow fell over him.



## CHAPTER ONE

## THE ROAD NORTH



Tom tugged on Storm's reins, drawing his black stallion to a halt, and pulled out the tree-bark map from his saddlebag. He and Elenna had reached the very edge of Avantia's Central Plains, and the Northern Mountains reared up ahead, their forbidding rocky peaks outlined against the sky.

Tom unrolled the map and peered



at the outlines of Avantia's roads, rivers and hills, then shook his head. "The Tree of Being still hasn't appeared," he told Elenna.

Elenna manoeuvred closer on her white mare, Blizzard, so that she could lean over and look at the map.

"It's never taken this long before," she said. "We need *something* to tell us where to find it. Otherwise..."

Elenna didn't finish her thought. She didn't need to.

Tom rolled up the map and put it away, trying not to think about what would happen if Sanpao and his pirates caught up with them. He and Elenna needed to get to the Tree of Being first.

Tom pulled his golden compass out of his saddlebag. "The needle is still pointing towards Destiny," he said.



“We should press on northwards.”

“If the Tree of Being reappears in the south or west,” Elenna murmured anxiously, “we’re in big trouble. What if it’s wrong?”

“The compass has never steered us wrong before,” said Tom. Stowing away the compass, he urged Storm into a trot. As they moved on, Tom glanced over his shoulder to see that the last traces of the forest had disappeared behind them. He and Elenna were tired from their battle with Hecton the Body Snatcher, but Tom knew that they couldn’t rest yet. Avantia was still under the gravest threat it had ever known.

“We *have* to get to the Tree first,” Tom muttered to himself. “If Sanpao the Pirate King gets his hands on it, he’ll be able to use its powers to raid

any other land he likes.”

But that wasn't the only reason why Tom's stomach churned at the thought of losing the race with the pirates. The Tree of Being would also open up a portal to Tavana, where Tom's mother, Freya, and Elenna's pet wolf, Silver, had been left stranded at the end of their last Beast Quest.

*Getting to the Tree first is our only chance of rescuing them,* Tom thought grimly. “Sanpao may be clever,” he said, “but we can out-think him, and we've got the best reason in the world not to give up.” He touched the trident that he had won in his combat against Hecton; he had cut off the shaft so that it would fit into his sash. “We have the weapons we need, too. Nothing can stop us!”

As he finished speaking, a fork of

blue lightning crackled down from the sky. Storm reared, striking at the air with his hooves. Tom had to grip tightly with his knees to stop himself being thrown from the saddle. Blizzard let out a high-pitched whinny and stepped sideways, her hooves slipping on the stones. Elenna leaned forward, patting the nervous mare's neck soothingly.

Tom was still tugging hard on Storm's reins when the crack of lightning expanded into a shimmering blue globe, with the figure of Wizard Aduro inside it. His form was faint; Tom could still see the outline of the mountains through it.

"Aduro!" Tom glanced at Elenna. "Do you think Sanpao has sent him?" he asked her quietly.

"I don't know." Elenna's voice was

sharp with suspicion. “But we shouldn’t trust him.”

Before Tom and Elenna set out, Sanpao had put the Good Wizard under an evil spell. During the last stage of their Quest, Aduro had managed to send a faint message to Tom that showed he was fighting



with all his strength against the dark magic. Tom hoped that Aduro was sending another message now, to prove that Sanpao's hold on him was beginning to weaken.

Tom's hope died as he saw the cold sneer on Aduro's face and the malicious glimmer in his eyes.

"Why don't you just turn back?" the Wizard asked, his voice an unrecognisable snarl. "What hope do you have of taking on so many pirates?"

"We've vanquished tougher enemies than Sanpao," Tom told him, trying to sound strong.

"It takes more than cutlasses to frighten us," Elenna added.

Aduro snorted in contempt. "Your luck is soon going to run out."

For a moment Tom couldn't find the words to reply. Aduro had never

sounded as hostile as this, even when he first fell victim to Sanpao's magic.

"I hope the real Aduro can hear me," he began, keeping his voice calm. "Don't worry – while there's blood in my veins, I shan't rest until you're set free."

Aduro let out a wordless growl and vanished, leaving behind a wisp of blue light that quickly faded.

"Strange," Elenna said, a faint frown furrowing her brows. "All Aduro did was to spout a few empty threats. What was it all about?"

Tom shrugged. "Sanpao is up to something. I'm going to check the map again."

He delved into his saddlebag and produced the thin bark scroll. A rush of relief filled him as he looked it over. "Now I understand!" he

exclaimed, pointing at the map.

With Elenna leaning over to look at the outline traced on the bark, Tom studied the tiny picture of the Tree of Being that had finally returned, sprouting among the topmost peaks of the Northern Mountains.

“Sanpao can’t land his ship among all the rocks and outcrops, can he?” he asked, feeling a grin spread over his face. “He knows we’ll beat him to the Tree, so he sent Aduro to scare us off.”

“Well, it didn’t work!” Elenna said.

Tom dug his heels into Storm’s side, spurring the stallion into a gallop. Elenna and Blizzard raced along at his shoulder. As the wind blew through his hair, Tom felt a surge of new energy. *Maybe this Beast Quest is turning in our favour at last!*

