

## CHAPTER ONE

# DECEIVED BY MALVEL



Tom took a short run, pushed off from the ground and soared into the air. Even though he wasn't wearing the golden armour, he had not lost its special powers.

But as Tom landed, pain stabbed through his leg. He looked down and saw that a sharp rock jutting up from the ground had torn through his

trouser leg and cut his calf. He could have sworn that a moment ago there hadn't been any rocks ahead. But things were never quite as they seemed in Malvel's kingdom.

"What's the matter?" Elenna asked, riding up on Storm, with Silver, her wolf, loping alongside.

"I cut myself on a rock," Tom explained. "I'd better heal it before we go any further."

Tom removed his shield, which he carried over one shoulder. It held the six tokens he had won from each of the good Beasts of Avantia. Tom took out the talon of Epos the flame bird; it felt warm in his hand as he passed it across his bleeding calf. At once, the blood stopped flowing and Tom's skin drew together until there was no sign of a wound.

“Impressive,” Elenna smiled.

As Tom replaced the talon, he felt a tingling in his shield. Sepron the sea serpent’s tooth was vibrating again. The good Beast was being held captive by one of Malvel’s evil Beasts, and Tom couldn’t help but wonder what shape his enemy would take this time.

“Let’s get moving,” Tom urged, clenching his fists. “Sepron is still in trouble, and while there’s blood in my veins, I won’t let him die!”

Malvel had dragged the good Beasts into Gorgonia, leaving Avantia defenceless without its guardians. Tom knew that the Dark Wizard planned to send his own evil Beasts to conquer the peaceful kingdom.

“Let’s have another look at the map,” Elenna suggested, “and make

sure that we're heading in the right direction."

Tom took the map out of Storm's saddlebag, shuddering as he unrolled it. Malvel had sent the map to Tom and Elenna when they first arrived in Gorgonia. Made from the skin of a dead animal, it smelled disgusting.

Elenna looked over Tom's shoulder as he traced a glowing green line that appeared on the map. It showed a route that passed through gentle-looking fields and ended at the Black Ocean, where a tiny picture of Sepron was now etched.

"At least the path ahead looks easier," Elenna said. "Fields all the way to the sea."



“Maybe this place isn’t all bad,” Tom said, shaking away thoughts of the next Beast he would have to face. “Let’s go!” He stowed the map in the saddlebag again and strode out confidently along the track. Elenna urged Storm into motion and Silver bounded alongside.

As the day wore on, Tom found that the track didn’t take them across fields, but wound upwards into craggy hills that grew steeper and rockier with every step. Storm picked his way carefully among the boulders, letting out whinnies of protest when sharp stones stabbed his hooves. Silver whined softly as he tried to find a flat spot to set down his paws.

“I don’t understand this,” Tom said, gazing around. “Have we come the wrong way?”

“This is the only way we could have come,” Elenna replied. “The track didn’t divide anywhere.”

Shaking his head in confusion, Tom pulled out the map again. “Look,” he said. “We should be on flat ground now. The map shows green fields.”

Elenna looked bemused. “Why does it show fields if there aren’t any?”

“Think about it for a second,” Tom said, rage flooding through him as he realised what had happened. “Who gave us this map?”

“Malvel.” Elenna’s voice was tight with anger.

“Right,” said Tom. “We must have been stupid to think we could ever trust it.”

Elenna brought Storm to a halt. “We should stop,” she suggested. “The map could be leading us in circles.”

“There’s one thing I do trust,” said Tom. He dug deep into his pocket and pulled out the compass left to him by his father, Taladon. He held it in front of him, pointing it up the track.

Elenna leaned over Storm’s head to look, and Silver darted around Tom’s feet excitedly.

The compass needle was swirling backwards and forwards between *Destiny* and *Danger*.

“Does that mean we’ll face both if we go this way?” Elenna asked.

“Yes, it does.” Tom stowed the compass away again and straightened up, squaring his shoulders determinedly. “We’ll keep going. We have to save Sepron – and ignore Malvel’s tricks.”