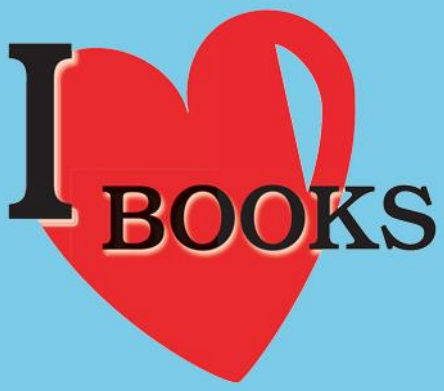


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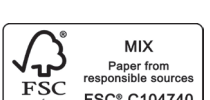
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When I was a young apprentice wizard, there was a secret chamber my master forbade me to enter. But even then, I did not like being told what to do. With a simple unlocking spell, I found my way in.

I was very disappointed. For that room contained no potions or poisons, no magical weapons. All I saw was a single oval stone, grey and speckled, lying on a cushion.

My master found me. To my surprise, he did not beat or curse me. Instead he smiled.

"Jezrin," he said, "behold the key to immeasurable power!"

"What, an old rock?" I replied.

At that, his face turned grave. "That is no rock, apprentice. That is a dragon egg. And one day it will allow you to spread Evil to every corner of every kingdom."

As he led me from the room, I was not impressed. My master never lived to see the egg hatch. But his promise proved true.

The time of Evil has come. And nothing – no one – can stand in my path.



1

THE SNOWLANDS



Tom stood on a barren hilltop, gazing across the kingdom of Drakonia. All around him, volcanoes spewed smoke into the sky, and rivers of lava trailed down rocky mountains. Using the power of the golden helmet, Tom scanned far into the distance.

"There's no sign of Jezrin," he said, sighing.

Petra placed her hands on her hips. The witch's red crow, Rourke, squawked on her shoulder. "Either he's using magic to hide from you, or he cast a speed spell," Petra said. "Either way, he's heading for the Well of Power."

"Maybe Berric knows which way he went," said Elenna.

Tom turned to the stone figure of Jezrin's apprentice, hands frozen over his face. Under the Evil Wizard's control, the dragon Quarg had encased Berric in a layer of rock.

"He would never tell," said Tom,

shaking his head. "And we can't waste time trying to free him."
He sat down on a boulder, worry churning in his stomach. "The moment Jezrin drinks from the well, he'll become invincible," he said.

"Well, obviously, I could always track him," said Petra, feeding a bit of stale bread to Rourke.

Elenna raised her eyebrows. "Why didn't you say that before?"

Petra shrugged. "You didn't ask."

"How can you?" said Tom, urgently.

"Every wizard leaves a trail on the air when using magic," said Petra. She wrinkled her nose. "Jezrin's scent is most powerful. I could smell

him two kingdoms away! Sulphur, boiled cabbage and bad feet."

Elenna grimaced. "Rather you than me," she muttered.

"Then your nose can guide us," Tom said to Petra. He led them down the hilltop to where Ferno lay waiting. The great fire dragon's wings were folded along his ridged back, his scales reflecting the red glow of the volcanoes. Drakonia was the kingdom where all dragons came from, and only dragons knew how to cross into the realm. Jezrin and Berric had used Quarg, and Tom had summoned the Good Beast Ferno to carry them there.

Tom climbed on to the Beast's back

and spoke to him through the red jewel of Torgor. *We need your help again, old friend.*

Petra and Elenna settled

