

Quest for the Crown of Trent
Chapter Six

The power of Drak unfolds

By MIKE MACKINNON

(Summary: Jar and his two companions have left the Shaman and journeyed back across the Haln Plains towards the Haln Forest. They had just covered half the distance when a sudden storm caught them. During the storm they are attacked by flying creatures that none of them is able to recognize. In desperation Jar uses the Amulet of Drak.)

The sudden burst of light left Jar blinded and vulnerable to another attack. Had he been able to see he would have seen the charred remains of his attacker. It had been caught up the blast of brilliance as the amulet had been activated. Only the wielder of the medallion was protected.

As Jar lay on the ground he noticed that the rain had stopped and that there was no sound. He forced down the panic that rose in him and called out to the others. He received no answer. Had his companions been killed? Then he recalled swimming through an opening in a region of total darkness before the explosion. Jar realized that he must have somehow been trapped in that region. He was lost in an area of space without help and without sight.

Jar tried to force himself to remain calm and to think the situation out. The last thing he needed was to panic and make matters worse. He took stock of himself. He was without sword, having dropped it, after one attack. All he had was a useless amulet that was probably the cause of him being where he was. Jar removed the amulet from about his neck and was about to toss it away when he noticed something happening. Slowly the sight came back to his eyes.

At first the brightness of the region hurt his eyes so much that he was forced to shut them tightly. He reopened them slowly and was awed by what he saw. Standing in front of him was a strangely garbed man. He was close to seven feet in height. His clothing consisted of a heavy robe that hung to his feet. It was tied at the waist with a gold sash. The hood of the robe hung down over his shoulders to reveal long, stringy, silver hair. The sparse beard was also silver in color.

"Who are you?" Jar asked defiantly.

"I had assumed that you were a man of intelligence. Perhaps, I assumed wrong."



the stranger replied. "I am the wizard Drak, whose amulet you used to enter this realm."

Jar stared at the wizard. "You're the Drak responsible for that medallion."

"I prefer not to call it a medallion. That makes it sound harmless and it is far from that." Jar grunted his agreement. "I would imagine you are wondering how you will be able to get back to your friends." Jar nodded his head. "There is only one way that can be done and I will let you know it when I am no longer in need of your service."

"What do you mean my service?" Jar demanded.

"I see the old shaman did not tell you everything about the talisman. Very well, then, I shall. Whoever uses the amulet to protect himself, such as you did, is in my debt. The only way of erasing that debt is to perform a service for me."

Jar forced himself to control his anger. "I suppose I owe you something to repay your help, but I have not got the time now," he said evenly.

The wizard laughed. "Time? What do I care about time? There is no such thing as time in this realm. I am fully aware

of your quest, Jar Farnel, and there is no worry about me using up your valuable time. While you are in my realm time stands still. When you return to your companions they will not have noticed your absence. Your body is still with them, only your essence is here."

"I'm afraid that you are confusing me somewhat," Jar said.

"How do you think I'm able to live forever in this realm?" Drak asked impatiently. "I have been here for two thousand years and have not aged since my first day."

"You seem to have found the answer to immortality," Jar replied.

The old wizard gave a dry chuckle. "I do not want immortality." Two thousand years ago I battled another wizard who was of a higher class. I did so to move up to the next rung of the hierarchy. I was defeated and that resulted in my being banished here. At first I despaired of ever being able to leave the realm, but I discovered that my powers were growing. Soon I was able to forge the amulet. That used up much of my power and I was forced to wait until it was replenished before opening a hole in the fabric of my realm.

Using my powers I created the circumstances that resulted in your going to the Shaman."

"You mean you are responsible for the wound in my leg." Jar accused.

"You are very perceptive," Drak said sarcastically.

"Why?" What can you gain by all of this?"

The wizard shook his head. "You are my means to get out of this prison. My powers are not strong enough to break the barrier so I can escape. With your natural strength and ability as a warrior, and my powers, my freedom is possible."

Jar looked up at the wizard. "How do you know that I will help you?"

Once again Drak gave his dry laugh. "I hold the key to your reentering your world. If you do not help me escape from this hell then you will have to suffer it with me."

"You not only threaten me, but also the welfare of Kroan." Jar shouted angrily.

"I know," Drak said calmly. "That is why I know that you will help me."

Jar cursed to himself and glared at the wizard. He despised being manipulated, but there was nothing he could

do about it. The scheming wizard had planned well and he knew it. There was nothing to do but give in to the plans of Drak.

"I realize that I will have to go along with your plans, but I am not pleased about it," Jar said.

"As I did not expect your voluntary cooperation, I was forced to take the steps I did. Your efforts however, will not go unrewarded."

Jar looked at the wizard questioning. "What do you mean?"

"In return for your help, I will accompany you and your companions on your quest."

Jar refused to believe what he was hearing. The wizard Drak was going to travel with them. Why?

Drak sensed the question in Jar's mind. "I will go with you for several reasons. One is that I have nothing better to do. Also I have a strong interest in the affairs of Kroan. It was this interest that got me in trouble earlier. You see the wizard I fought was the evil wizard Valton. No one was aware of his evil intentions -except for me. It was impossible to shake the other wizards out of their complacency, so I challenged Valton in the hopes that I could defeat him. It was a vain dream. The rest you know."

"What happened to this Valton?" Jar asked.

Drak shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know. But, I fear that he may be behind this episode concerning the Crown of Trent. It follows his style."

"You mean that for the last two thousand years Valton has been scheming to cause trouble on Kroan."

"I feel so. You do not know Valton, I do. He is an evil man caring only for himself. He will wait until the situation is right for his own gain."

"What would he gain out of this?" Jar asked.

Drak looked at Jar in disbelief. "Power!" With the world in confusion from the battles over the Crown, Valton can walk in and take over. He is already very powerful."

Jar realized that he had no choice in the matter. He needed the help of Drak now that another wizard was in the picture. He decided to help the wizard.

"I will help you Drak," he said. "I have to stop this Valton."

Drak smiled.

(continued next issue)