

## The Quest for the Crown of Trent: Chapter Two



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*(Summary: So far in the story of Jar Farnel, Jar and his two companions, Tran the Dwarf and Althar the Elf, have journeyed to the Plains of Haln. There they encountered Plain Wraiths, the lost souls of men long since dead. Though victorious in the ensuing skirmish, Jar takes a wound in his right leg. This wound must be treated soon or he will fall into an irreversible coma.)*

Jar knew that he did not have long before it became of extreme urgency that he check out his leg. There was still at least another day and a half to travel before reaching the Haln Forest. By that time the coldness of the wound would have entered enough of his body that he would be beyond help. His only hope was to detour to the northern edges of the plain and visit the shaman that lived in that region. Only he would have the power necessary to reverse the damage of the wound.

Raising his hand as a signal to stop Jar slowed his mount. Tran and Althar rode over to where he had stopped, questioning looks on their faces.

"I'm afraid that our battle with the Plain-wraiths cost us more than either of you two realize." Jar stated. He told them of his wound. Both men knew what such a wound could do to a mortal.

"What are you planning to do?" Tran asked gravely.

Jar took a deep breath before answering. "The only person who can help me is the shaman that lives in the northern regions of the plain."

"That means a delay of at least two days." Althar pointed out.

"I know," Jar said, shaking his head. "But if I don't go then I will not be able to make it to the forest. That means that you two will have to continue alone."

Tran scowled down at the dirt. "You know that all three of us have to go together. We have to go to the shaman."

"I agree," Althar said. "I would have gone anyway but this delay may be costly. After all we have only a certain amount of time to reach Turin."

Jar urged his mount into motion. "Let's go."

Once again they pushed their horses to the limit and the ground sped away below the horses hooves. On they raced, the only sound the rhythmic breathing of the horses and the pounding of their hooves. Jar glanced over his shoulder to see how Tran was doing. Despite the pace the dwarf was managing to stay on his mount. Both of his hands gripped the reigns tightly. His face was set determinedly.

Suddenly Althar's horse stumbled, throwing the young elf through the air. Jar stopped and went back to check on him. He was sitting on the ground rubbing his shoulder and staring at the thrashing horse. Jar could see that it had broken one of the forelegs. The only thing to do was to kill the animal. Jar drew his sword and with one quick stroke silenced the horse's agonizing cries.

He reached down a hand and pulled Althar up onto his horse.

## The Shaman

The elf sat behind him, holding onto his legs. Jar could not feel the touch of the elf's hand on his right leg. The numbness had completely spread through the leg and was now working its way into his torso.

Tran had continued so now Jar had to try and catch up to him. Fortunately the dwarf's discomfort on horseback had caused him to slow down some. It did not take him long to catch the dwarf. Tran glanced over quickly and was able to take in the situation immediately. Then he turned all his effort into concentrating on staying on the horse.

By mid-afternoon the grass was starting to thin and they crossed the occasional patch of rock or bare ground. This meant that they were coming to the edge of the plain. Jar looked around for signs of the shamans lodging. This was a little more difficult than thought because the healer was continually changing his place of residence. No one really knew why he did this and the shaman did not think it necessary to let them know. He seemed to prefer his privacy.

A shout from Tran caused Jar to look over in his direction. He looked towards where his outstretched arm was pointing. There in the distance was a thin rising line of smoke. They had found the shaman.

It did not take them long to reach the healer. He sat in front of a small fire, legs crossed and eyes closed. Behind him was his home, a simple lean-to made of poles and leaf-covered branches. In the lean-to were his few belongings; a small bag which, undoubtedly contained his healing herbs, a long thin pipe and a flute. The purpose of the last two items was not readily apparent to any of the trio.

They dismounted and sat on the opposite side of the fire. None of them spoke because it was dangerous to scare a shaman while he was in a trance. Jar massaged his leg while he waited for the healer to acknowledge their presence. The wait was not long. The eyelids of the shaman fluttered open and he fixed Jar with a stare. The pale blue eyes seemed to almost bore into his head as if searching for his soul.

"You have arrived Jar Farnel," the shaman stated. It was not a question.

"How do you know my name?" Jar asked with a start.

"Such things are simple to my people," the shaman replied. "I not only know your name but also the events that transpired and resulted in your coming to me. It was a wise decision that you made Jar Farnel."

The three companions sat there, silent. The shaman rose from the fire and went over to his lean-to. Reaching into his herb bag he pulled out a small packet of dried crumbled leaves. He returned to the fire and sat down.

"If I am to heal this immortal wound," he started, "I will have to enter your body. This I can do should you want me to or not. However you would resist the intrusion involuntarily. It is a protective action of your body. The resistance I could overcome with a minimum of effort. But the healing that I have to do requires a great deal of energy and I do not wish to expend any unnecessarily. Therefore I am going to give you a potion that will weaken you and thereby reduce your resistance."

While he had been talking he had mixed the potion using the leaves from the small packet. He handed the small vessel to Jar. Jar lifted it gingerly to his lips and sipped its contents. He scowled at the bitter taste but continued at the urging of the healer. As soon as he had drank down the potion he began to feel drowsy. Smiling groggily he laid back on the ground.

The last thing he saw was the shaman closing his eyes. Then a pain started in the back of his head. He tried to fight against the pain but was too weak. Grudgingly he gave into the pressure and soon the pain began to diminish. The shaman had entered his body and the healing was about to begin.

(to be continued next issue)