

## Chronicle of Prince Boyra Simone Hubbard

Evgeni was glad he'd come to this mystical place to which he'd traced his ancestry. It was peaceful by the edge of the beguiling lake with the faint tapestry of colours reflecting the winter sky. His ancestors' castle was shrouded by the forest. Sable Mountain, where they'd been skiing, stood majestically in the background. The snow made it look so magical. But then there was the peculiar pyramid-shaped mountain in front, looking rather out of place.

Evgeni found a perfect place to stop and read *The Chronicles of Prince Boyra* away from the ski resort. He spotted something glistening in the water. It was a ring. He picked it up and admired the large agate stone with ribbons of purple running through it. He placed it on his finger. A deafening crack of thunder broke the silence and a blinding lightning streak hit the ground near Evgeni. He was catapulted into the air and hit the ground with a thud. Then he was shrouded in darkness ...

Boyra laid the wreath he was carrying at the water's edge. It was a year ago when his father, mother and sister had been so cruelly taken. The tears he'd held back ran freely now, stinging his eyes in the freezing air. Anger swept over him. 'Why, Why Why?' he yelled, his question echoing through the mountains.

He pulled a gun from his coat. The grief he felt was unbearable. He held the gun to his head. His finger was poised on the trigger. 'Please God forgive me. I can suffer no more,' he whispered into the still air. His finger tightened and a shot rang out. He fell to the ground. The gun had been knocked out of his hand. The moment of madness passed and he stood up and looked around. There was no one in sight. 'Damm you, Serafina!' he screamed at the pyramid. He repeated the words over and over again as he ran back to the castle.

The guards bowed as he crossed the drawbridge. Tomorrow he would become King and the castle would be his. He climbed the spiral stone staircase and entered the regal great hall. The light in the room was flickering from the torches. The logs on the fire were now giving off some heat. His faithful hound Yeagar looked up at his master from his fireside bed. 'I'm sorry,' his master whispered. The hound's ears had pricked up but he was looking past Boyra.

The silence of the room was shattered as the family shield hanging above the fire crashed to the stone floor. Yeagar rushed to his master's side. The swords above the fire moved through the air, clashing together, heading towards Boyra's family portraits. All were slashed and blood-red drops trickled down each one.

'This castle should have been mine. You will pay for this with your life and my son and heir will be the King of this land.'

Boyra was afraid. His Uncle's evil spirit was back for revenge.

He felt the ground beneath shake. The dungeon trolls scurried into the hall.

'Sir, please come quickly.' The head troll was out of breath but Boyra understood his words.

'Rasputin has escaped and Sable Mountain is spewing jets of fire.'

'Guards, immediately prepare the soldiers for battle. Trolls, hunt Rasputin down and bring him to me. I will be in the battlement tower!'

Boyra's footmen appeared at his side with his armour and quickly dressed him. The swords were still swooshing round the room. Boyra felt the evil of his uncle and wondered if he was fighting the spirit

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of his father. There was an almighty clash as the swords fell near the fire. Boyra could see something gleaming in the firelight. He knelt and picked it up. It was the buckle on his father's belt. He put it on and slid his father's sword into the scabbard. He prayed that his father's spirit would will him to defeat Rasputin and his Uncle's evil spirit.

He ran through the passageways and up the spiral stairs to the tower. He could feel the ground shaking and as he reached the top he could hear rumbling.

'Sir, look at the mountain. It's crumbling apart!'

It was exploding from the inside.

'Sir there's a monster's head coming out of the mountain!'

Moments later the creature had emerged from the mountain. It was a dragon.

Boyra and the others were speechless. This wasn't like the dragon they'd seen on the ancient tapestries; this was huge. It was twice the size of Boyra's warhorse. It had a fierce-looking mane from its head to the end of its long menacing tail, which it was now thrashing. It had a body of crimson and a belly of gold and two fearsome horns on its head. It flapped its enormous wings and reared up on its hind legs, snatching a couple of the fleeing villagers and eating them whole. Then it breathed fire from its long jaws and his Uncle's voice echoed through the mountains: 'I am going to kill you all!' The threat was followed by a sickening laugh.

'Trolls and soldiers, quickly, take your positions on the battlements and line up your arrows. Soldiers, prepare the cannon and all the ammunition you can find.'

The dragon was now breathing fire on the forest and the snow was melting fast. Within minutes the forest was on fire and the snow had disappeared. The villagers were powerless against the beast. A stench of burning flesh rose with the smoke to the castle battlements.

The arrows rained down on the dragon and seemed to have little effect. Boyra was running out of ideas. His advisor appeared at the top of the battlement tower steps.

'Sir, come quickly, your father's astrologer has asked for you.'

Boyra knew the astrologer would only request his presence for something extremely important. He'd only seen him once before when he visited the lake the day his family were drowned. He'd heard the astrologer whisper, 'I'll make sure this kingdom passes to Boyra. Rest in peace, your Royal Highness.' A single tear had slid down the old astrologer's face.

Boyra put his most trusted soldier in charge on the tower, ordering him to fire anything they could down on the dragon. He ran down the stairs and back to the keep where the astrologer was waiting in his room, sitting behind a long oak table, his face shielded from Boyra's gaze. Many charts were laid on the table. After a few moments the astrologer spoke.

'Boyra, I made a promise to your father that I would make sure that you would rule this kingdom if anything should happen to him. Now I must make good this promise. Your father, mother and sister were murdered by your uncle and his accomplice was Rasputin. You too were meant to drown, but on that fateful day the stars and planets were aligned in your favour. You thought you'd drifted ashore, but the water nymphs carried you.

'Your father and uncle were twins, but Serafina was convinced he was the elder twin and therefore entitled to be the King. Such was his delusion when he built that hideous tomb. He was allured by

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the stories of a land called Egypt where each King had a pyramid built, which was their tomb, and all their worldly goods were buried with them. Your father should have locked him up but he was too kind and you are now paying the price for that kindness. You must unlock the magical powers of your father's ring and save this kingdom.'

His father had told him and Inna many tales about the ring's magical powers. He placed it on his finger and slipped his gauntlet back over his hand.

'You need to leave the castle through the secret passageway and go to the lake. There is a stone. Follow the inscriptions for the spell to work. May the good spirits be with you.'

'Thank you,' Boyra replied.

He summoned a couple of trolls. They were tough creatures. They carried a torch to light the hidden passageway and emerged into the forest, which was now alight. The trolls beat back the flames dancing around their feet. Boyra thought he'd end up burning to death, but the forest cleared to an open path untouched by the flames.

They found the stone with the inscriptions. Boyra hadn't even known of its existence until now. He followed the symbols and placed his hand wearing the ring in the freezing cold water. Nothing happened, and in the preoccupation of looking at the stone, Boyra and the trolls hadn't noticed the dragon heading towards them. They could feel the heat from its mouth. One of the trolls looked at the inscriptions again.

'Sir, you need to swap the ring to the other hand!'

The troll was right: the ring was on the wrong hand. Boyra threw his gauntlet to the ground, swapped the ring and thrust his hand into the icy water just as the dragon reached them.

'It's too late, you are going to die ...'

Boyra dodged the flames that were being expelled from the dragon's mouth. His life was surely going to end. The magic must have ceased when his father died. Then the sky suddenly blackened and a huge rumble of thunder shook the mountains.

'It is you that is going to die, Seraphina, but for good this time!'

Boyra recognised the voice - it was his father's.

There was a huge flash of light, which momentarily lit the whole area, followed by a lightning bolt that struck the dragon. The force threw Boyra and the trolls into the air. Boyra was whirling round in the sky. Eventually his body thudded to the ground but he couldn't wake up. He was stuck in a nightmare. There were blood-curdling noises, screaming, and rivers of blood flowing to the lake. Then came a torrent of rain, followed by hard frozen pellets stinging Boyra's face. He was paralysed. If he could just wake up ... if he could just wake up ...

He felt he was floating like a feather. He could feel something light touch his face. For a moment he thought he saw his mother. He put his hand on his face to feel it; there was nothing there. He slowly opened his eyes. He could see the castle in the early morning sun and hear the water of the lake gently lapping the shore. It was snowing. Then he gasped: the dragon and the trolls were impaled on the nearby trees.

'So the Sleeping Prince has finally woken up and his eyesight has not been affected. Yes, the dragon is dead, along with the spirit of my father. He should have just died in that fire I pushed him into but

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he wanted more. You, cousin, are the last piece of the jigsaw. Today I am going to be crowned King and you are going to watch. I thought your head would look good on the end of this lance.'

Boyra knew Rasputin wasn't fooling about. He'd ruthlessly murdered his own father, propelled by greed and a desire to rule a kingdom he believed was his. He saw him raise the lance and spit out the words, 'Farewell Boyra.'

Boyra closed his eyes. He would now be reunited with his family. He heard a swoosh and then a colossal thud. He remained still. Surely he should feel different? He opened his eyes. Rasputin had gone. Boyra slowly sat up and he saw him impaled on a tree. There was no one else in sight ...

Evgeni felt something soft and gentle on his face. 'Take the ring to the castle,' a soft voice whispered. It woke him from the vivid dream. It was snowing, but there was no one else in sight.