

back to the city by a detachment of foot-warriors. Then he returned to the battle. The fighting raged only to the west, before the castle now, where only about fifteen hundred Daralar were still alive and fighting. They were led by Wuque, who had somehow been carried away from the Alonian in the ensuing fighting.

He headed toward that fighting now, remounting his steed and setting off in search of a fight. As he approached the remaining Daralar, who were vastly outnumbered by the remaining five thousand or so men of Koldasar who had survived the first part of the battle, three lone riders broke away and headed toward the Alonian.

As they neared each other, Vastari saw that it was Wuque and two leaders of the Daralar, fleeing from their imminent defeat. A few Koldasarians set out after them, but they would never catch up with them, Vastari realized.

It would be his job to kill the Kullarian. He ran his horse at a breakneck charge, crashing into the other party and killing a short, dark blue Daralar with a terrific swipe of Conalan that cleft his skull.

Then, Wuque whirled and tried to hit the Alonian with a wide swing of his huge mace. The mace swung by his head, as Vastari ducked and thrust strongly into the other's vitals, tearing the blade through his abdomen, and literally shearing the Kullarian in half, so great was the force of the blow.

Wuque fell, without a parting sound, where he lay silently in two rended pieces, with bulging mad eyes. The remaining Daralar fled, and Vastari caught up a spear from the ground where the first slain Daralar had dropped it. Leaning far back, he cast the spear with a great effort, and it went all the way through the Daralar, tearing him off his mount.

Then Vastari turned back toward the battle.

The mopping up operation took only a few more hours. The remaining force of the enemy, numbering only around two hundred, had fled into the hills, and far away toward their own stronghold, where they might brood on their defeat in peace before once more going forth against True Men.

Vastari was saddened by the loss of Gurlok, and by the loss of so many men, but the city was joyed with the victory, and jubilant with the knowledge that the threat was gone, for a while, if not forever.

There was, of course, many parades and celebrations, in which he was expected to participate as the guest of honor. The people of Koldasar now recognized him as their leader.

But he knew that he could not stay. He had places to go, things to learn, and many long years of wandering ahead of him before he might return to Koldasar. Vastari went to Laryn in his temple fastness and told him:

"My duty here is done. Now I must go. But do not lament my departure. Let me go quietly, silently, in the night, and let the people be told only after I am gone. For I fear they would never let me leave, and it would break my heart to tell them 'no'. Let, instead, a joint rulership of you, the temple power, and the son of Gurlok, Karkmi, whose recent rise to age fits him to his honored rule, be instituted. He has

the maturity and wisdom to aid you in guiding the fate of Koldasar. But again, I say, farewell!"

And, without further word, he turned away and faded swiftly down the long temple corridors -- into the unknown.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We, too, bid you, Vastari, brave leader that you are, a very, very, fond and heartfelt farewell!!!!!!)

---

#### FOUR ACES

Con't from page 22

space opera stuff, with a truly modern flair and without layers of corn, from a guy who knows what it's all about Out There.

**HIGH SORCERY** by Andre Norton, Ace Books, New York, 1970, 156 pp., 60 cents.

Andre Norton is going into her third writing period, and it is by far the most ambitious. (Her first period was the mature juvenile line that began with STAR MAN'S SON and such; her second was with the introduction of WITCH WORLD; her third has been heralded with HIGH SORCERY.)

HIGH SORCERY is a curious collection. It contains two reprints from IF, a long short story and a novelet, "Wizard's World" and "Toys of Tamisan," respectively. Both pieces build on the reputation in sword & sorcery that Miss Norton acquired for her excellent WITCH WORLD series. (The stories are not in that series, but are of that genre.) Both tales are featured selections in the Ace edition, thereby

drawing her usual rabid fans to the book.

Sandwiched between the two pieces, though, are three short stories that are more mainstream, more unusual to the genre, more oriented toward a general audience. They are packaged so as not to frighten away any old Norton fans. They should, once they catch on, garner an entirely new crop of followers for the prolific Miss Norton.

"Through the Needle's Eye" is a beautifully done short story of a slightly strange, very much alienated old woman, as seen through the eyes of a young girl who is crippled; the story is very much like some of the late Shirley Jackson's best. "By A Hair" is a story of a post-World War II village, where things are not as they ought to be; it is very smoothly done. "Uilly the Piper" is a folk fable that is sure to become a classic.

The new period is unpublicized, hidden so as not to offend; a jewel in the rough that within the next few years will sparkle quite fiercely in mainstream markets. Watch for more of these Norton pieces to begin appearing in some of the biggie magazines, if my intuition serves correctly. (More into detail on the third phase of Andre Norton in the next issue's editorial columns.)

--Richard Benyo