

# THE ROAD OF DREAMS AND DEATH

by

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The awful words rang over and over in Luanna's head until she wanted to place her hands over her ears. But this would not stay the command given her by her father, the Lord Eoin, ruler of Rozdale.

Luanna stood on the keep's low battlement and peered into the distance as if she could see where her lover awaited her. Anscom of Arvon was but a farmer gone to market in Quayth when they had met. Luanna had held herself apart from the market barter, as was fitting for a woman of her station.

Anscom's quick wit and quicker smile had drawn her irresistibly into the bargaining and Luanna had pushed aside her faithful companion, Oletha, to carry on the dickering personally. Anscom had prevailed. And Luanna cared not. She had fallen under the rugged young man's spell.

So had begun their love the better part of a year ago. Many times they had met in other places, in assignations made all the sweeter by the forbidden nature of their love. Luanna had examined her heart and discovered that she loved Anscom truly, that the blossoming bud of her love

had not been nurtured in simple rebellion against her strict father.

"To make him realize," Luanna moaned. She rested her hands on the rough stone battlements and let the breeze from the distant sea catch the soft brown strands of her hair and whip it away from her face. Luanna shrugged her shoulders and pulled close the fine cloak given her on her last name day. "Why must Father be so obstinate?"

This time she did put her hands to her ears. Luanna relived the horrible meeting with her father when she had proclaimed her love for Anscom.

"By the Nine Words of Min!" Eoin had roared. "No daughter of mine will marry a common farmer! 'Tis not enough that your sister, Kathenia, exchanges Cup and Flame vows with a *merchant*. No, that's not enough shame heaped upon this noble house."

Luanna had tried to withstand the waves of dark anger radiating from her father as the sun gives off renewing warmth. She had tried. She had failed. Even her love for Anscom paled beside the man's wrath. Kathenia, her older sister, had been given reluctantly by Eoin to a merchant in Quayth, but never again had the ruler of Rozdale allowed Kathenia within the keep to share hearth and bread. The match had been one of love and respect. Luanna thought her sister's husband too staid and dull, but the marriage suited both parties well. Luanna knew that hers with Anscom would be as filled with love—and much more excitement. Anscom's farm bordered the Waste and often, he boasted, strange creatures came from the depths of that sundered land, some peacefully, some not so peacefully, as they traveled the roads to the sea and the Gray Towers.

Luanna had tried to reason with her father, to convince him that none of the neighboring Dales held a man matching her age and station. Even letting this single thought flutter across her troubled mind now brought a shudder to Luanna. Although Eoin had not spoken of such

a thing, she feared that he negotiated her betrothal to Lord Wexo, whom she had loathed since her youngest days. Wexo, twenty years her elder, laughed as if choking on broken glass, carried a stench that perfumes failed to mask and had the disgusting habit of spitting large black gobbets of *minz* weed into a linen handkerchief that he kept in a stained coat pocket.

A sudden flash of lightning in the direction of the Waste brought Luanna up to her full height. She thrust back her shoulders and silently dared the elements to do their worst. She was strong and young; she could overcome any obstacle—even her father and his desire to see his sole remaining daughter joined in wedlock with another noble.

Brown eyes focused firmly on the distant mountains now wracked with the spring storm. Resolve stiffened within her breast. She loved her father dearly and respected his desire to see her well married, but she loved Anscom the more and knew that with no other man could she find such happiness. She might give up the servants—dear Oletha!—and the fine garments and food for a simpler life, but she was no delicate flower carefully nurtured. The war that had flowed and ebbed through the Dales had proven that.

The life of a farm wife might not rival that of a lord's court, but Luanna cared not. With her love for Anscom burning warmly, she turned from the wind's slashing cold and went inside, circling down the stone staircase and finding her quarters, neat and well tended. A small, sad smile crossed her full lips. She would miss Oletha and her devotion to even the tiniest of needs bespoken by her mistress.

For a moment, Luanna considered asking Oletha to accompany her. Then all such madness left and cold logic replaced it. Oletha would instantly fly to Eoin, thinking this a service to her mistress. Oletha had been born a peasant and hungered for the station afforded nobility. Luanna and she had spoken many a long night, and

Luanna knew that Oletha would think it wrong what must be done and that she would be acting in Luanna's best interests to stop any escape from Rozdale.

Luanna lingered for a while over a note to her father, trying to console and yet seem firm against any attempt to stop her flight into Anscom's arms. She finished the brief letter and sealed the parchment with wax and the impression of a small signet ring.

She held the ring for a moment, staring at the shining golden surface of the crest. With hand atremble, she laid the signet on the note. In Arvon she would have no need of such a ring.

She hastily prepared a trail pack from her wardrobe, taking only those items which would prove warm and durable against the spring rains pelting down on the mountains between her and Anscom.

With great force of will, she kept herself from looking back in longing as she left the bed chambers that had been hers since birth some eighteen summers ago. Luanna knew that if she hesitated now, even for a quick glance, that she would lose nerve and be lost.

An hour later, her cloaked figure hunched over the neck of a strong gelding as she rode toward Arvon and her love.

"You don't understand!" protested Luanna. "I *must* go."

The innkeeper shook a graying head, then ran thick fingers through his hair. He frowned as he told Luanna, "'Tis not possible. The storms are too fierce. Even for this time of year, seldom have we seen their like."

As if the gods accentuated the innkeeper's words, a timber-rattling barrage of thunder drowned out the din of the heavily falling rain. The whiteness from the lightning blast lent all within the room an eerie aspect.

"I must reach Arvon," Luanna said firmly. "I *must*."

"There's naught but death on the roads this eve," said the innkeeper. "Even if the storm abates, 'tis folly to

venture forth through the Waste." He shuddered, his heavy shoulders rippling beneath his stained and worn shirt. "Only death, only death awaits," he said, turning and leaving Luanna beside the massive fireplace.

She turned and peered into the dancing flames, her mind achurn with frustration. The storms had been severe; rumors of the Gray Ones abounded. Worst of all, Luanna felt the pressure of time weighing heavily upon her. She had thought to ride directly for Anscom's farm, little knowing—or caring about—the dangers between Rozdale and her love. Her horse had tired in the mountains, but she had reached the edge of the Waste, only to find a vast, desolate plain of destroyed lands that would require a guide to cross.

None in this small village would guide her. All spoke of the dangers. Luanna fumed at the delay caused by the storm and bordered on tears at the thought of skirting the Waste, possibly going the entire distance to the coast, then entering Arvon. Such a route would add weeks to her journey.

How she missed Anscom!

"I won't," she said firmly. No matter that the Waste presented little shelter against the battering storms, no matter that were-creatures prowled in the area. "I will find Anscom and enter into sworn troth."

A sudden gust of wind and rain pelted through the opened door. For a moment, Luanna's heart caught in her throat. She thought a Gray One had entered. The silhouette left by a dazzling lightning bolt showed only a hunched and inhuman figure. She relaxed when the door swung shut against the storm and firelight revealed a wizened old man, bent by the weight of a heavy pack.

"To the giver of the feast, fair thanks," the old man said. "For the welcome of the gate, gratitude. To the ruler of the house fair fortune and a bright sun on morrow morn."

"We can all use a bright sun," agreed the innkeeper.

"Welcome to you, Pearr. How was the hunting?"

"Good, very good," the old man said. He shuffled toward the fire and warmed his hands. From the corner of a watery eye he studied Luanna. She primly pulled her cloak more tightly around her and tried not to stare. Seldom in the Dales did she see one such as this. Pearr wore no cloak but depended on many layers of tattered shirts and jerkins to keep warm and dry against the storm. His feet were bound as if they carried myriad wounds, but only age slowed him, Luanna realized.

"What brings a fine lady like you to this small inn?" Pearr asked. He did not turn to look squarely at Luanna. He shuffled to one side, his glance still sidelong.

"Such impudence!" Luanna said, unused to those so obviously lower in station addressing her familiarly.

"There's something you seek, I can tell it from your face," Pearr said.

"Leave her be, Pearr."

"I can lead you through the Waste, if that be what you seek," Pearr said.

"By the Favor of the Likerwolf, Pearr, don't go leading her on like this." The innkeeper turned to Luanna and said, "Don't believe a word of his rantings. Pearr's been out in the Waste overlong collecting his debris."

"Debris, is it?" barked Pearr. "I get top price for the scraps of metal I find. Only I know the best places to find the metal of the Old Ones." He cackled and settled down, his feet thrust toward the warming fire.

Luanna looked to the old man's pack and shivered at the sight. Pale blue radiance danced like witchfire about it. He had found valuable metal, but it had cost the man his mind.

"No, Pearr's not crazy, don't you believe it, fair lady," the old man said, as if reading her mind. "I was a soldier, one of the finest that ever swung a sword."

"Not that story again," groaned the innkeeper. The man

left, a gesture to Luanna indicating that she ought to retire for the night or be bored by Pearr's recitation. But Luanna found herself strangely drawn to this solitary scavenger in the Waste. If he could lead her through, she would be but a few day's ride from Anscom's farm on the far side of Gatekeep.

"You need to get to the other side of the Waste, is that it?" Pearr asked.

"It is. Would you guide me?"

"Hasn't he told you of the Gray Ones?" Pearr inclined his head toward the innkeeper.

"He did," admitted Luanna, "but my business in Arvon is important."

"What's his name?"

"Anscom," Luanna said, the name slipping free before she could check it. "How do you know?"

"Just because I'm old and crazy from scouring the Waste for the Old Ones' leftovers doesn't mean I am stupid." In a voice almost too low for Luanna to hear, Pearr added, "Or what it is like to be young."

"You consent to guiding me through?" she pressed.

"What are you willing to offer as a fee?"

Luanna pulled her cloak so tightly around herself that her upper arms began to tingle from lack of circulation.

"Nay, fair lady, 'tis not your fine body I seek, though you remind me greatly of one long lost. I require only enough coin to spend another season searching the Waste."

"Searching for what? More scraps of the Old Ones' metal?"

"Aye, there is that, but it is a windfall for me. No, fair lady, I seek the Road of Dreams."

Luanna frowned. "I have never heard of such a road."

"Few have." Pearr glanced around, almost guiltily. "None here admit to believing in its existence, but I do. And one fine day I shall find it!" He fumbled within the onion-layers of his clothing and pulled out a parchment

turned amber with age and brittle with many foldings. As if touching a religious relic of the Lady Gunnora, he spread out the sheet for Luanna.

She peered at the rune characters and blinked, thinking that the occasional lightning flash confused her eyes. But the characters did glow with a green light of their own.

"A map," Pearr said eagerly, almost pathetic in his attempt to instill his vision in her. "It shows the path leading to the Road."

"And at the end of this road?"

Pearr looked around to be sure no one overheard. "This I have told but a few," he confided. "At the end of the Road of Dreams is . . . life eternal!"

Pearr remained silent. She had heard dozens of fables as a child, all promising immortality or resurrection of the dead. The war had chilled such thoughts and turned them to ice in her mind.

"I see it in your expression. You think old Pearr a fool, too. But that matters naught! I *know* the Road exists somewhere out in the Waste. 'Twas built by the Old Ones and carries the full import of their magics. All I need do is tread the pathway of dreams and the years will fall from me like a discarded cloak."

"We won't have to hunt for the Road of Dreams, will we?" asked Luanna. She saw that Pearr, of all those in this village, would know the Waste the best because of his long years of hunting through it. But she did not want to tarry, going off on silly excursions to nowhere seeking a fable.

"This Anscom, he's special to you?"

"Very," she said, softening in mood. The mere mention of Anscom stirred longing within her. Each moment they were apart turned into an eternity.

"Methinks I have heard of him. A farmer in Arvon, isn't he? Quite a successful one. Rich, with dozens of servants and field hands to aid him."

Luanna blinked in surprise. She had no idea that Ans-



com was rich. He had said that his farm spanned two valleys. This had seemed grand and exotic to a woman of the Dales where all was compressed into a small area, but rich? She had fallen in love with him for himself, not his wealth.

"This Anscorn might pay a goodly bonus for a speedy reunion?"

"He might be inclined to do so," said Luanna.

"We leave in the morning, weather willing," said Pearr. "If that's all right with you, fair lady."

It was.

The days had passed too slowly for Luanna. Pearr had guided her well through the Waste, of that she had no doubt, but the dangers of this twisted, ruined land vaulted past her reckoning. Twice they had ridden off their course to avoid the Gray Ones. The were-creatures indeed stirred and roamed the land. And Pearr had insisted on waiting a full day without travel, such to her anger, to avoid a fierce storm.

The evidence of flash floods as they passed once dry riverbeds the following day had convinced her that Pearr knew this land and its dangers better than she. In spite of further delays that caused her to worry, she remained silent. The creatures caught in the flash floods had been strange beyond all reason.

"Spoor of the werewolves," said Pearr, dismounting from his swayback horse and peering myopically at the ground. Like an animal, he dropped to all fours and sniffed vigorously. "Recent, to boot. We might have to range farther west to avoid them."

"Must we?"

Pearr craned his head about and peered up at her with his sidelong gaze. "The Gray Ones are not to be taken lightly. Even when I was a soldier and in my prime, I'd consider twice before swinging a sword at them. Fierce

they are, and fighters second to none. And when a shape-changer shifts to another form, it's doubly hard to strike. Blade cuts thin air and harms them not."

"That's a myth," Luanna scoffed. But she worried that it might not be from the look that Pearr shot her.

They rode the remainder of the day, riding directly into the setting sun, crossing several storm-erased tracks. Pearr began stirring nervously, his head moving like a sea bird's, swiveling about restlessly. Once, he stopped and for more than an hour, studied the rising land and the small range of hills ahead.

Luanna did not question his strange behavior. He had proven too accurate in his warnings. She had dismounted and walked about, studying the ground.

"Do you see it?" Pearr asked, startling her. She looked up, guilty.

"What?" she asked.

"The spoor. Evidence of a lone human's passage. Came from Arvon, unless I miss my guess."

Pearr shook her head, a soft brown halo of hair forming as she did so.

"Silver cinch buckle here." Pearr tossed it to her. She caught it deftly, then dropped it as if it had turned molten. Luanna fell to her knees and immediately retrieved it. Her eyes welled with tears.

"When did you find this?"

"When we stopped. Markings familiar?"

"Anscorn has marked many of his belongings with this chop."

"Lone rider from Arvon, coming from the north even as we come from the south."

"No," Luanna said, words choking in her throat. She could say no more. Anscorn wouldn't have ridden south toward the Dales for her. He had said the crop planting would take weeks. She had intended to arrive as he finished, a surprise. But what if he, like her, had been

unable to stand the pain of separation and had ridden to find her in Rozdale?

"Might be one of his servants. Heard tell that Anscom's business ranges far and wide."

Pearr stared at the silver buckle. What servant rode with such fine trappings?

"Must be a servant," Pearr repeated. "Your Anscom wouldn't be so foolish as to get himself boxed in like that."

"What are you saying?"

"The Gray Ones herded the rider toward those hills, possibly into a box canyon. This part of the Waste is new to me. Been exploring deeper in and to the east."

"What can we do? It . . . it can't be Anscom, but if it's one of his servants, as you say, we must help him. We can't let anyone fall prey to the Gray Ones!"

"Precious little to fight with," said Pearr. "Haven't used a sword in years. Prefer to use this." He tapped this side of his head. "Kept me alive ever since . . ." His voice trailed off. He heaved a deep breath and straightened. Luanna watched him curiously. A definite change had come over the old man. He seemed stronger, quicker of step, taller.

"Since what?" he asked.

"Since my lovely Evona died," he said, his voice distant. Pearr might have been speaking to himself. "So beautiful, so very beautiful. The sun itself envied her brightness."

"What happened to her?"

"She died, at the onset of the war." Pearr straightened even more. "I fought as if driven, and perhaps I was. Perhaps I sought death to ease the sorrow of my loss."

"It didn't happen, did it?"

"My death?" Pearr laughed harshly. "No. I fought too well. I have medals heavy enough to stagger a pack animal. At the war's end it occurred to me that I might walk the Road of Dreams and bring back fair Evona. As the years wore on, I sought the Road only to recover my youth. There can never be another Evona, but with youth once

again mine, I may find a woman of wit and charm and beauty to share life anew." He looked squarely at Luanna for the first time. "A woman such as yourself."

Luanna did not know how to react to this odd compliment.

"We cannot deal with the Gray Ones, you realize this? Nor can we fight them. But we can follow and hope that whoever fled their viciousness has survived. Only then can we be of any aid."

Luanna felt torn between pressing on to Arvon and finding if they could help against the werewolves. She looked out over the storm-wracked land, saw the destruction left ages ago, the palely glowing blue patches, the deep pits and sudden hills.

"The rider requires assistance," she said. "We dare not abandon him."

"Aye," said Pearr. "And there is more."

"The Gray Ones?" Luanna swung about, seeking the savage creatures.

"Nay, fair lady. This." Pearr pulled his parchment map from the depths of his clothing and carefully unfolded it. His fingers silently traced the contours. It took Luanna several seconds to realize that she looked at a map of this very land.

"The Road of Dreams lies in those hills?" she asked.

"Mayhap. Many's the time I have found similar formations and been deluded, but this time." Pearr shook his head. "A feeling grows within me." He flashed her a broken smile. "Mayhap you bring me luck!"

"Let's hope the luck extends to the rider," she said.

They rode less than an hour into the twilight before savage storms prevented further travel. Rather than allowing Luanna time to reflect and control her emotions, the idle time drove her crazy with worry. If Pearr felt it deep within his breast that he'd finally discovered his Road of Dreams, Luanna felt that they followed Anscom's path. It

hardly seemed possible, but she *knew* that their separation had worn on her lover as it had on her. He had journeyed forth to join her even as she set her path from the Dales and toward Arvon.

What fate had befallen Anscom? She fell into troubled sleep, visions of werewolf fangs flashing and rending human flesh in an unholy feast.

“Faster, Pearr, we must go faster!”

“Stay your concern, fair lady,” said the old man. “The rider lives. He has stopped much of the blood flow and rides on, weakly to be sure, but live he does!”

They had found the battleground where the solitary rider from Arvon had fought no fewer than three of the Gray Ones. For a swordsman to kill a werewolf required magics far beyond most human’s command, but a combination of storm and luck—and skill, Luanna thought—had allowed the rider to escape. The copious flow of blood had marked part of the trail; rains had washed away much of the spoor. But the trail led deeper into the hills and Luanna felt magics advance around her.

Again, as if reading her thoughts, Pearr said, “It’s that very magic that prevented the Gray Ones from following our unseen friend. Truly, I think this is the Road I seek. I feel years younger just from riding between the markers along the path!”

Stone pillars engraved with the same curious runes that had caught fire and burned on Pearr’s map lent credence to his belief. Although Luanna felt no change in her well-being, she saw new strength in the old man.

“There!” Pearr called. “Upslope, in the mouth of the cave. See him?”

“Anscom!” cried Luanna, once she saw the fallen figure. Even at this distance she recognized her lover. Her heels brutalized her gelding’s flanks. The horse strained to reach the side of the fallen man. Luanna flew from the saddle

even before her faithful horse could dig in all four hooves and come to a halt.

Luanna tumbled forward, skidding in the mud on her knees. She took Anscom's head and cradled it in her arms.

"My love, your wounds!" Luanna weaved with dizziness at the sight of such injuries. The Gray Ones had ripped away at Anscom's flesh, taking huge, bloody chunks from thigh and torso.

"Luanna?" came the man's weak voice. "How? You could not have known."

She laughed and cried as she clutched him to her breast. "I rode to join you, even as you sought me."

"I'm so cold, even in the circle of your warm arms," Anscom said. "I fought the werewolves the best I could, but I am no warrior."

"You drove them off, you live, we're together." Luanna's words gushed like a freshet born after a storm. "That is all that matters. We will never be apart again."

She felt hands on her shoulder. Pearr knelt beside her and said, "Let me tend his injuries. They are serious ones. He had lost much blood. See the paleness in his face?"

"He will live. He must!"

"He is sorely injured. I saw many in better condition during the war who died. And their wounds came not from werewolves but from mortal steel. There's no telling what damage their magical fangs might cause."

"I'll tend him," Luanna said, pushing Pearr away. She took a deep, steadying breath and began working to save the man she loved.

Pearr built a small, warming fire, then left her with Anscom and her misery. The man fell into a coma, thrashing about weakly at first, then showing no sign of life.

Luanna's concern mounted. She bent down and pressed fingers into Anscom's throat. Only cold flesh and no pulse

met her frantic probings. "Pearr!" she shouted. "Come quickly!"

Minutes later, the old man came from the depths of the cave. He saw the frightened expression on her face, then placed his hand in front of Anscom's nostrils.

Sidelong, Pearr looked at the woman and shook his head. "He is dead, fair lady. The werewolves' teeth left marks deeper than his wounds, and those are serious enough."

Luanna sank down, stunned, staring at Anscom and seeing nothing.

Gentle hands shook her from the trance of sorrow. "There might be a way," said Pearr, his voice clogged with emotion. "I have translated the runes on the cavern walls."

"What?" she demanded. "What are you saying? Even the Lady Gunorra cannot bring the dead back to life."

"The Old Ones were powerful, oh so powerful," Pearr said softly. "This cavern is the destination of the Road of Dreams. Within the cave lies a chance for Anscom. Will you risk it?"

"Risk what? He is dead."

"We know naught of the effects. His soul might be forfeit to evil because of the Gray Ones and the wounds they inflicted."

"You're saying Anscom might return to life but be . . . one of them?"

"I know so little. I have had no time to examine fully the runes."

Luanna looked at her slain lover and made the decision with her heart. "To be with him again is all that I seek in life."

"No matter what?"

"Even if my life be forfeit, I wish only for him to live again."

Pearr nodded. "I thought as much. Here, help me with

him. We must take him deep into the cavern, to an altar I found.”

Together, they wrestled Anscom erect and carried the dead man into the dark cavern. The deeper inside they walked, however, the lighter it became. The dull blue glow so prevalent in pieces of the Old Ones’ metals blazed and illuminated a large chamber. For a moment, Luanna stopped and simply stared, mouth agape.

Machines of strange and alien design lined the walls. Many glowed blue, some gleamed with a green light unlike anything she had seen before. But what caught and held her attention was the granite altar in the center of the chamber. More a trough filled with water than a traditional altar, Luanna still knew its purpose—and the risk she took.

“Anscom *will* be all right?” she asked.

Pearr only shook his head. It was as Luanna feared. They called on powers beyond human ken.

“The Road of Dreams,” Pearr muttered, “ends here.”

They got Anscom’s corpse to the water-filled trough. Runes shone brightly on the stone sides of the trough and high above on the vault of the cavern burned a simple red cross, its reflection dancing in the water.

“No hesitation, no doubts,” ordered Pearr. With a surge of muscle, he heaved Anscom up and into the water.

Luanna gasped. She had thought Anscom would sink. He floated—and the water began to sizzle and boil around him. As if evaporating, the water vanished until he lay in the dry trough.

“Anscom?” she called hesitantly. No response. She turned and buried her face in Pearr’s shoulder, hot, bitter tears soaking into his filthy shirts. “How long?” she sobbed out. “When can we try again?”

“Not for long years,” said Pearr. “The runes said that the trough must again fill before use. Only a drop every



year is added, a single drop of the magical moisture.”

Luanna pushed back and stared at the old man. “You mean that—”

“Yes,” Pearr said gently. “My chance at youth is gone, but it was a noble attempt.”

“You gave up so much just to resurrect Anscom? But why?”

Pearr’s smile carried no sadness, just longing. “How you remind me of Evona. For her I would risk anything.”

Before Luanna could speak, a rustling sound brought her around in the circle of Pearr’s arms. Her brown eyes shot open and tears ran down her cheeks. In the trough Anscom stirred.

“Luanna?” he said in a weak voice. “What has happened? I remember being so cold. Then came odd dreams.”

She helped him to sit. She felt the familiar flow of his muscles as strength returned. He slipped from the gelid, dry stone of the trough and stood on shaky legs.

“You’re alive,” she cried, weeping unabashedly now.

“I’m only alive when I am with you,” he said. Anscom reached over, lifted her chin and kissed her gently on the lips.

Luanna broke off. “Pearr sacrificed so much. Anscom, he . . .” Luanna looked around the chamber populated with its strange metal machines and echoes from times long past. Pearr had vanished.

“Perhaps he has left the cave,” suggested Anscom.

“Yes, let’s find him. And then hurry back to your farm. It is planting season and we shouldn’t be gone long.”

Arms around one another, they left the chamber of the Old Ones. But they did not find Pearr. He crouched behind a blue-glowing machine long after the lovers had departed. Through weak eyes he watched as four droplets formed at each end of the cross on the ceiling, drifted slowly to the

center, and coalesced into a single large drop. Its weight eventually caused it to break free of the red cross and fall downward, splashing in the bottom of the trough.

How many years would it take before the trough again overflowed with the life-giving magical fluid of the Old Ones?

Pearr didn't know. What he did know was that he would be long dead when it occurred. He had walked the Road of Dreams and found life—but it had not been his own that he'd restored.

He hustled about the cavern, gathering small bits of metal. Somehow his loss did not seem too great when he saw Luanna and Anscom together. Dreams cannot die.

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## Afterword

*The magic of Estcarp and the plight of Simon Tregarth captivated my imagination from the first pages of Witch World when I read it almost twenty-five years ago. I followed subsequent forays into this world and my imagination began to reach beyond the words and ideas and characters Andre Norton had penned; I started making up small stories of my own. Of all the odd niches in the Witch World, the desolation of the war-ruined deserts appealed to me the most. The notion of men—and beasts and magical creatures—prowling the wastes looking for scraps of old metal conjured up the most potent pictures.*

*What else lay in those wastes? Odd bits of inspiration intrude from other sources and in this case it was the Jefferson Starship's song "Winds of Change." Somehow, the pieces from the song about winds of change blowing*

*through a person's life and the life a scavenger might lead in the deserts of the Witch World came together. From this basic mix I added the ultimates in a person's life: love, hope and . . . death.*

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