



DARK SHADOWS OF YESTERDAY

AN EARTHDAWN NOVEL BY HANK WOON

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For Calliope.



I would also like to thank the RedBrick team for all of their hard work (and talent!) and my early proofreaders: Angela “Itza boy!” Howard, Noël “Cold Foot” Carroll, and Mollie “taekwondork” Bryan.

The Age of Legend



Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend.



As the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic lured the Horrors from the depths of astral space—nightmarish creatures that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, entire nations hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.





A century ago, the people of Cathay emerged from their dragon lairs. Trolls, dwarfs, elves, orks, and humans live side by side with exotic races: the lizard-like t'skrang, the mystical storm children, and the earthen obsidimen. Fantastical creatures dwell once more in the forests and jungles. Arcane energies offer power to those willing to learn the ways of magic.



But instead of a new era of peace and prosperity, the Imperial Dynasties that had ruled over Cathay for millennia ended suddenly and without an heir, casting the shining Empire into civil war. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Cathay's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures, while villains plot from the darkness.

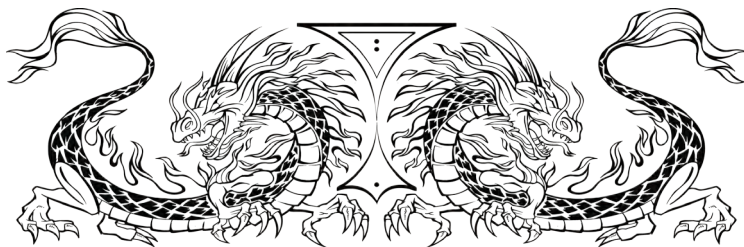
This is the Age of Legend.



Daylen's Journey



PROLOGUE



"This place smells of wet dog," Bik-Bik complained bitterly into Ping's ear. The Thief did his best to ignore him, focusing instead on the thin, silk rope he was steadily climbing down. "Do you hear me?" Bik-Bik went on, "What treasure could possibly be worth suffering this intolerable stench?"

"Would you be quiet?" Ping hissed, "Or are you *trying* to get his attention?" He paused, sliding down the length of the rope another yard. "You don't smell so great half the time yourself, you know."

Bik-Bik bristled. The small Cathayan ferret shifted on his shoulder before saying, "Would you hurry up? This is the longest anyone has ever taken to climb down a rope."

"Your constant whining isn't helping!"

"Oh don't try to blame me!" Bik-Bik shifted again.

"Would you sit still?" said Ping, irritably. It wasn't unusual for Bik-Bik to complain, though he normally didn't do so while they were trying to be quiet. He sensed that his ferret companion was trying to cover up his fear with irritability. He couldn't blame him; he looked down the shaft to the dim light far below, perhaps another thirty feet. The shaft was maybe four feet in diameter, the granite worn smooth. It was one of the many vents leading down into the lair of the giant-king Du Shu.

He had received the knowledge of the vents' locations from a trader in the city of Shong-Xai about a month back. The trader, a one-eyed dwarf, was standing on the side of the dirt road in the

middle of the city, loudly proclaiming he had a map showing a secret way into the lair of Du Shu, where “priceless treasures are just waiting to be claimed by someone bold enough to retrieve them!” Intrigued, Ping deftly lifted the map from the clueless dwarf and headed to the nearest inn, where he gave it some serious attention. The map showed a location marked high in the Pillars of Heaven, a mountain range in northwestern Cathay. Bik-Bik was against the journey from the start.

“You do know that they call Du Shu the giant-king because he’s a giant, don’t you?” The ferret had asked while nibbling on a slice of *tofu*. Ping had ignored him, and the next day they were headed northwest in the back of a merchant’s wagon.

The snow was deep, up high in the slopes, the air clear, crisp, and very cold. For a time Ping had his doubts about the veracity of the map. Bik-Bik’s far from encouraging bickering did little to assuage his doubts. After hours of climbing, he finally sat down on a large, weathered boulder to catch his breath: and that’s when he saw it—a thin wisp of steam rising above a scattering of maple trees. The shaft didn’t take long to find after stepping through the tree line. Despite Bik-Bik’s objections, he tied his rope securely to a large trunk and began the descent. But now that he was halfway down the shaft, he could feel fresh doubts gnawing at his mind. And Bik-Bik was right—the smell was terrible.

The bottom of the shaft opened into a wide chamber through the ceiling, which was easily thirty feet high. The chamber was constructed of simple granite blocks, the walls forty feet apart. It only took Ping a moment to recognize what it was—an enormous hallway, lit by torches as tall as men. The end of his rope dangled just beyond the opening, far above the cold stone floor below and twenty feet from either wall.

“Got any more great ideas?” the ferret asked. Ping ignored him. He slid deftly down to the end of the rope, hanging below the gap