



"THE WALLS OF DIBANCA HAD BEEN BREACHED. THE SKIES BLAZED WITH MACHINE-FIRE. AND BELOW —



"— THE FOUL RAMFASTI WAITED, THEIR SHEENERIES AT THE READY. THIS WAS THE END, EVEN SUCH AS THEY KNEW.

"BUT THEY WOULD GO DOWN FIGHTING.



**HOLD HIM BACK!  
HOLD HIM BACK!**  
*He must not enter!*

"...SHOUTED THE WIZARD NILOTICUS, KNOWING A JOLT OF FEAR.

"THEY FOUGHT TO PROTECT THE HEART. THE PRIZE THEY HAD STOLEN. THE PRIZE THEY NEEDED TO ENSLAVE THE WORLD.



"BUT IN A CLATTER LIKE THUNDER AND A MIGHTY LEAP, HE WAS THERE —

Aah!

Aah!





# Blade BO of the One Foretold

THE WIZARD NILOTICUS shrank back, in sudden, atavistic panic. He was here. *He was here!*

The Great Champion laid about him with the Blade of Storms, and the foul Ramfasti fell before his relentless onslaught. They were the best their makers could offer, the pinnacle of enginery in a world that teemed with it. And still they fell, crushed beneath

his sandaled feet, or in the jaws of his mighty steed Grylla.

The Great Champion was there, and he would not be denied. The end of the long battle was finally at hand.

•  
He had sought the Heart of Az-Terassak across wondrous lands. Through burning deserts of shimmering fire, through the

Ursine Forests which none had lived to traverse, through ice-capped mountains where lurked ice-fanged jaws. They had thought it a new kind of enginery, a machinery that dwarfed all machineries that had come before, and they thought to dominate with it, to bring all before them to their knees.

But the Champion knew differently.

He knew magic when he felt its call. And he knew it must be freed. To save Earth's peoples, to rebuild its shattered lands. To unleash wonders that could belong to no one ruler. He knew the Heart's true worth, and he was sworn to liberate it.

Niloticus snarled a deathspell, but the Champion vaulted over it. His blade swung back in one mighty arm...

by MONAR T. WIRTHAS

Illustrated by GROZ GRAZZINI



...and even as the dead wizard's blood glistened on his feathers, the Champion strode forward, to the cage that held the Heart...



Feathers? His mane, you mean.



Everyone knows the Champion was of the lion tribes.

Lion tribes? Sure, one of the lion tribes that was all forest diggers!

A blind digger? Ha! That's such a —

Hsst.

No need to fight about it.



Maybe he was an eagle, like Enna's scholars say. Or a greatwolf, like in the Keneil Tapestry.

Or a lion, or bear.

Or a mole!



Right. Maybe even a mole. We don't know. No one knows. But if that wizardess Gharta and the others are right...

...we may be about to find out.





LITTLE WAS KNOWN OF  
THE GREAT CHAMPION.

ONLY THAT HE FOUGHT A GREAT BATTLE, AND  
LOOSED MAGIC INTO THE WORLD. AND THAT  
HE DISAPPEARED, LEAVING NO RECORD BEHIND.

BUT NOW, WE COULD ONLY  
WONDER. DID HE DISAPPEAR  
THROUGH TIME? WAS IT  
WE WHO CAUSED HIM TO —

Look!  
It — it —

CRICK-CRIKAKK

Nothing.

It  
fades...



This is *your* fault, wizardess. You destroyed a city, killed hundreds — and for what?

A corpse? Some insignificant hanger-on? The gods forbade this, Gharta, and you still —

Sandorst, really. This is not the time to —



Is it not truly *him*? Pecanna's reading said —

I can't see —

We must delve deeper through the Unremitting Pearl's shell. The *Third Instance of Concentrated Sight* should —



The *Scrolls of Perceptos!* I require them!

Someone bring —



Gentlebeings, gentlebeings.

Calm yourselves.



I am as eager as all of you to free our prize — and it is the *Champion*, I'm certain of it.

But we are alone in the Grand Footkills, at night, with no shelter but ruins. We have more immediate concerns.

