

The Uprising

Novron has three different areas: the north, the plains and the south. The largest mountain range is in the north called the Hemskeet. They are snowed over for all but 3 months of each year. There are the eastern plains, forests and grasslands. The western plains are arid and inhospitable. The south is green and lush with lots of rain. Novron is made up of many races: Humans, Dwarves, Goblins and Drakken.

The Humans live in the south. The largest city there is Calls Reach, with a population of over a hundred thousand. The smallest city is Locke and only about 500 Humans live there. The Human king lives in Calls Reach and is well loved by everyone. He keeps the taxes in all the cities low and has only a small guard, less than 100 men.

The Dwarves are made up of several clans, each one having a chief. The Shielder clan is the largest and is led by Colgan. Their village is the closest to the plains and they often hunt there in the winter. They came from across the sea at least five hundred years ago and live in caves in and around the Hemskeet.

The Goblins and Drakken keep mostly to themselves. They are generally friendly to the other races, but do not speak any other language. Most Humans just avoid contact with them and they never venture far from the western plains. The Dwarves know the Drakken language and their customs, but do not trade with them. The Drakken have been known to raid both Human and Dwarven small villages during the winter when game is scarce.

The southern city of Locke is home to a young man named Tolan and his best friend, Jen. Tolan is now 18 and Jen is 16. They cannot remember when they were not friends. Jen is the daughter of Riley, a wealthy lord and lives in a large manor outside of the village. He retired here from Calls Reach after serving the king for most of his life. Jen has two sisters, both younger than her. Her mother, Kate, is very happy living in Locke, away from court life. Her two young daughters take up most of her time and has long since kept close tabs on Jen, who will be of age soon. She allows Jen to practice with weapons and ride horses, which most other girls her age do not. She is also used to Jen being out in the country side all day long with Tolan and does not over worry about her.

Tolan is the son of a merchant, Marshall, that had offices in Locke. They used to live in Calls Reach and came to Locke several years ago and moved to Locke when his father sold the business. His mother, Callie, is well liked in Locke and serves on the village council.

Tolan is also very skilled with weapons, especially a bow and owns two horses. He is not sure what he wants to do in life, but he definitely does not want to be a merchant. He loves exploring the outdoors and seeking out the other races to learn their customs and language. Novron has no military, so being a scout or tracker is not possible. He could join the king's guard and request a position at a distant outpost, but that requires two years of training in Calls Reach. He knows he couldn't get through that. So, he is content just living at home and exploring the plains.

Jen was doing some shopping in the village when she heard,
“Jen! Ready for a ride?”

She knew the voice to be Tolan and turned to see him sitting on his big roan leading the smaller

black and white horse she normally rode.

“Sure. I need to take my purchases home and change. I'll meet you at the back gate in twenty minutes,” she answered.

“I need to see the groomer about the black's shoes. Then I'll pick up some supplies. Make it an hour, ok?”

“How long will we be gone?” she asked.

“Till tomorrow sometime, I imagine,” he responded.

“Ok, I'll leave a note for ma. See you in an hour.”

She was excited about an overnight trip. They had only camped a few times, but she loved sitting by the fire talking about the future. She made a mental note to take her warmest small clothes as the night air in the plains can get very cold. Someday they would go on an extended trip and visit the Dwarves in the north. Her Pa told her never to go to the western plains, though. He was worried about them running into Goblins.

Tolan was waiting at the gate when Jen came out.

“Should I leave a note for my parents?” she asked.

“Probably not, we should be back tomorrow evening,” Tolan answered.

“Ok. Let's go.”

“Your black and white has new shoes, so we will go slowly the first day,” Tolan said,

They headed north out of the village and caught the main river road to the plains. They were taking their time and just before dark they spotted a place to camp. Tolan said they could cross the river here in the morning and head northeast to the Dwarven territory. Jen started building a fire while Tolan went for more wood. She loved cooking over a campfire and brought some fine venison to cook, along with potatoes and fresh vegetables from her garden.

Tolan dumped a large stack of wood next to the fire. It would last all night. He was just setting up their bedrolls when he heard voices in the distance. Whoever it was, they were not trying to be quiet. After a couple more minutes, they realized they were not speaking their language.

“Drakken or Goblins!” he whispered to Jen.

“Take cover,” she whispered back.

They both headed for some nearby bushes to hide in, but before they got there, two Drakken stepped in front of them. They said something to each other and one went to their campfire and started grabbing all their supplies. The other pointed his long spear at them and yelled something. Of course they just froze, since they couldn't understand what he was saying. Then the other one grabbed the reins of the horses and started to walk away. Tolan yelled at Jen to run, while he grabbed his bow and shot a warning arrow the one taking the horses. He stopped and yelled to the other one. He ran off after Jen.

The other one dropped the reins, and came at Tolan with his spear. Tolan loosed another arrow, taking him in the neck. He kept coming. Tolan loosed again, this time in the leg. The Drakken went down. Tolan then ran after Jen.

When he caught up to her the other Drakken had her over his shoulder and was carrying her back in the direction where he heard the other voices. Tolan loosed an arrow directly in the back of his leg and he went down. Before he could ready another arrow two more Drakken appeared and helped the other one up. Now he was facing three Drakken. He could not take them all. And, Jen was out cold and he couldn't tell how bad she was hurt.

Before Tolan could shoot again, an axe appeared in the chest of one the three he faced. He shot one of the others, and a Dwarf appeared and engaged the third. Tolan ran to Jen and saw she was bleeding from the head. A quick check revealed no other wounds. He probably just knocked her

out, he thought. He picked her up and headed back to the fire.

He could see the first one he should and he appeared dead. Tolan started cleaning up Jen's wound and heard someone come up from behind.

"Those three back there are dead. Pretty nice shooting with that bow," the Dwarf said.

"Boy am I glad you came along right at that moment," Tolan smiled.

"Actually, I've been tracking this group most of the day. When I saw the smoke from your fire I hurried over here," said the Dwarf.

Tolan reached out and shook hands and said,

"I'm Tolan and this is Jen. We are from Locke. Who are you?"

"I am Hulgur of the Shielder clan. How is she?"

"She got a very nasty knock on the head, probably from the butt of his spear," he answered.

"My village is closer than Locke. Let's head there," Hulgur said.

"Ok. Can you help me get her on the black and white horse?"

They put Jen on the horse and tied her on. Tolan led it with his horse and followed the Dwarf. It was nearly full dark now, but the Dwarf had no trouble following what looked like a path. Within a couple hours they came to a village. Hulgur spoke to the first Dwarf he saw and he went running into camp.

They took Jen to a small hut, took her inside and laid her by the warm fire. Within a few minutes another Dwarf appeared and knelt down beside her. He checked her over and whispered something to Hulgur.

"He is our healer and says she has a concussion and should not be moved. I must go see our chief for permission to keep her here. I will return shortly," Hulgur explained to Tolan.

"Ok, I will stay with her. Will our horses be ok?"

"Yes, I will have someone tend to them," he responded.

The healer cleaned the wound, bandaged it and told Tolan she must rest at least a full day. They will know more when she awakes how much damage there is. Tolan thanked him and he left. Tolan fell asleep holding Jen's hand when Hulgur shook him.

"Colgan has given permission for her to stay. The healer said she really needs two or three days rest."

"That's good. I am extremely grateful for all your help," Tolan said.

"I have always been friends with Humans. It is not a problem for me," he replied.

"What were those Drakken doing this far east?" asked Tolan.

"Hunting. They wanted your horses. They would feed their village for days," Hulgur answered.

"The hunting in the west plains must be really bad, huh?"

"Yes, it is. Hunger is making them very bold, I'm afraid," he answered.

Hulgur told Tolan he could sleep here in the hut with Jen. He brought in all their supplies and made up a bed for the night.

"Maybe in the morning we can get word to Jen's parents," Tolan said.

"Yes. I can dispatch several runners to Locke with your message. They will be there in a few hours."

"That fast?"

"Dwarves can move very fast when there is need."

"And, they are exceptional fighters," grinned Tolan.

Hulgur smiled and him and bid him good night.

The runners were gone when Tolan woke in the morning. A female Dwarf came with breakfast.

There was food for Tolan and broth for Jen.

“Feed her this broth slowly when she wakes,” the Dwarf said.

“I will. Thank you for everything,” Tolan smiled.

She left and a few minutes later Jen said,

“I’m thirsty.”

“That’s a good sign. I have broth for you,” Tolan said.

“How long have I been out?”

“All night. A Dwarf healer attended you. He said you have a concussion and need rest,”

“What did those Drakken want with us, anyway?”

“They were hungry. Very hungry. They wanted our horses.”

“Did they get them?”

“No, I killed two and Hulgar killed the other two,” Tolan said.

“Really! You killed two Drakken. And, who is Hulgar?”

“He is a Dwarf that was following the Drakken and saw our campfire smoke.”

“Wow, how lucky for us, huh.”

“Lucky, indeed,” said a voice behind them.

Hulgar and the healer entered. The healer checked Jen again and said the broth will help restore her wound. But, it will take several days for the concussion to heal.

“Rest is what you need. Maybe tomorrow you can get up and walk. When you need the privy, I will send my assistant to help you,” the healer said.

He left and Tolan started feeding Jen the rest of the broth and said to her,

“This is Hulgar. He saved our lives.”

Hulgar bowed to Jen and said,

“I am honored to meet you Jen.”

“Thank you for helping us, Hulgar,” she answered.

“It is the first time I have done this for any Humans. I am pleased you were not more seriously hurt. Do you not have some sort of weapon?”

“Yes, I have a sling, but things happened so fast I didn’t have time to get it out,” Jen answered.

“That’s why we carry our axe at all times when traveling,” Hulgar said.

“Luckily I had my bow handy, too,” Tolan added.

“If I have to stay here for days, we need to get word to ma and pa,” Jen said.

“Runners were sent off this morning with a note from me,” Tolan responded.

“OK. You have been taking good care of me, haven’t you?”

“Of course. But just wait till you’re a little stronger. You can show Hulgar what you can do with that sling.”

“I would be very interested. And I know some younger Dwarves that would also.”

Jen slept the rest of the day. Hulgar introduced Tolan to Colgan and some of the elders. He told the story of all that happened. They were just starting to eat when a runner came rushing in. He whispered something to Colgan and a stern look replaced his smile.

“The runners have been attacked. All but one was killed and he made it back. He is Kakor and is with the healer now,” Colgan said.

“This means there is more afoot than hungry Drakken. There is no reason to attack Dwarves carrying very little food. When can we talk to Kakor?” Hulgar asked.

“Maybe in a couple hours. Till then we must assemble a war council. I must ask you to go back to the hut with Jen, Tolan,” Colgan said.

“Of course. Please let me know how Kakor fares.”

“We will.”

Hulgar escorted Tolan back to the hut and said,

"I must attend council. I will have someone bring you word of Kakor when he awakes. For now, rest and do not worry for your safety. We will figure out another way to get word to your parents, Jen."

"This is serious, isn't it?" Jen asked.

"Yes, it is. For Drakken to kill Dwarves means something bad is happening. I hope Kakor can give us some more details," he answered.

"Ma will be worried sick. Pa may even send someone out to look for us and they will be in danger."

"True. But we can't do anything about it. We must not try to get to Locke again unless we go with a lot of Dwarves."

"That could be days from now," she said worriedly.

Jen and Tolan spend the rest of the night and part of the morning talking and resting. They had used up all their supplies and were relying completely on the Dwarves for food now. The debt to the Dwarves was growing by the hour now. Just as their food was brought, Hulgar came in and said Kukor had died, but not before he gave a report. They were attacked by many Drakken and two Goblins. This means there will be war between the Dwarves and the Drakken. They are being led by the smarter Goblins and the Humans must be informed.

"I must go attend the ceremony for our lost Dwarves. I will return later," Hulgar said.

"Can we attend also?" Jen asked.

"I sorry. It is not permitted. I will sing your praises for them though."

"Thank you. Can you give our sympathy to their family?" asked Tolan.

"Yes. That I can do. And I will."

Hulgar left. He was obviously very upset about losing his runners.

"Things are a mess, huh Tolan?"

"That they are," he replied.

"This is way too long!" Kay said, a bit louder than she intended.

"I know, dear," Riley said to her.

"They have never been gone for more than a day or two before. It's been almost a week," he said.

"I think this is more than a few guards can handle. They are not lost. Tolan is too good for that. I am going to see Cedric to ask for help," Riley said, referring to the King.

"I agree. They have been on lots of these trips. Something has happened," Kay said.

"I will leave at once to see Cedric," Riley said.

"Take some men with you, Riley,"

"It's only an hour's ride, my dear. I think I can manage,"

"You don't know what is happening out there. I would feel better if you had some guards with you."

"Ok. I will take a few guards with me. We will leave in an hour," he said as he stroked his wife's hair.

The King's page announced Lord Riley later that day. The two greeted and Riley said,

"We have trouble, Cedric. My Jen and Talon have not returned from one of their trips. And, it's been almost a week," Riley said.

Riley was one of the only people who could call the King by his given name.

"Is that unusual?" the King asked.

“Very. It's never been more than one or two days. I think they are either hurt of being held,” he answered.

“By whom? We have no enemies, do we?”

“Not that I know of. But, just the same...”

“I understand, Riley. It's Jen we are talking about here. And Tolan,” the King finished.

“Can you send some of your guards with the two that came with me to go look?”

“Yes. And, I will send Sgt. Kerry with them. He is the best tracker we have,” he answered.

“Thank you, Cedric. I knew I could count on you,” Riley said.

“Send Bolt in, please,” the King said to his page.

“Yes, sir. Right away,” he replied.

“I want you to assemble a unit of guards and Sgt. Kerry to accompany Riley's two guards,” the King instructed.

“Right away, majesty,” Bolt responded.

“You are to go back to Riley's manor and have Kerry track Jen and Tolan. Find them,”

“As you order, majesty,” Bolt said and left.

“They will find them, Riley. Talk to everyone that saw them before they left. Maybe someone may know about where they were headed,”

“I will. And, my thanks again Cedric,” Riley said as they shook hands.

“Bolt will let me know what they find, right after he sends word to Kay, that is,” the King smiled.

It was late afternoon when the group returned the manor. Riley explained the plan to his wife. He increased the number of his guards to four, so now there were ten guards, Bolt and Kerry. Riley then went to find anybody that may have seen them leave. When he got to the stables, the groomer remembered shoeing the black for Tolan. He said it would be what Jen would use on their trip.

Riley was able to determine that they left in the morning six days ago. And, the black had new shoes put on that morning. He gave this info to Bolt and Kerry. The group was provisioned and on its way within an hour after arriving.

Kerry picked up their tracks right away. The new shoes left very clear marks. They followed them northeast and finally saw where they setup camp.

“I see several other tracks entering camp. Some clearly Drakken by the look of the boot. There was a scuffle. Three sets went that way. Another deep-set track joined them there,” Kerry said.

“Any tracks leading away?” Bolt asked.

“Yes, this way.”

He led Bolt to the place where the two horses and the deep-set tracks headed north.

“These deep-set tracks look like Dwarf to me,” Kerry said.

“You think he captured them?” asked Bolt.

“No, the tracks would be more disturbed. This group was going slowly. And both horses carried riders,” he answered.

“Hmmm. I guess we just follow them.”

The group started following them and before they had gone a mile or two, they saw a group of Drakken heading their way. As soon as the Drakken leader saw them and their ten horses, they attacked. There were only six Drakken, but they had two Goblins with them. The guards fought furiously and so did Bolt and Kerry. Two of the guards had bows and Bolt instructed them to take out the Goblins. They did, but not before most of the other guards were killed. Then one of the bowmen went down. Kerry was still fighting for his life with the last two Drakken. The last Bowman went down, just as Bolt killed the last Goblin.

It was over. The only two standing were Bolt and Kerry. And, Kerry was bleeding from several

wounds. Bolt patched him up as best he could and headed home. There were only four horses that he could see, the rest scattered. He was concerned about Kerry and had to stop several times before they got back home.

“We tracked them to the river Sarn and then was attacked by both Drakken and Goblins,” he told the King. “We lost all the guards, ours and Riley’s. I had to get Kerry back here as quick as possible, he was bleeding badly,” Bolt said.

“Will he make it?” the King asked.

“They say it’s too soon to know.”

“Damn! Ten guards. What in the world is wrong with these Drakken?”

“I think they are taking instructions from the Goblins, majesty. And, a couple of them were trying to take the horses away from the fighting.”

“You killed them all, right?”

“Yes majesty. But, at a terrible cost.”

The King ordered a runner to head to Riley with the news. Then, he ordered a full detachment of guards to be ready to go in an hour. That’s thirty more guards. He ordered Bolt to find Jen and Tolan, but try not to engage in another fight.

“We will head back to their camp by the Sarn and try to pick up their tracks again. It will be harder without Kerry, but we do have a couple other decent trackers,” Bolt said to the King.

“Since you all will be on horses, and the Drakken and Goblins are on foot, you should be able to avoid a fight,” the King said.

“Unless they ambush us.”

“I agree. But, if you can, try to outrun them,” the King replied.

“Yes, majesty.”

Jen was walking slowly on Tolan’s arm the afternoon of the sixth day.

“Can we go home in the morning,” she asked.

“Yes, Hulgur will accompany us. I want your pa to meet him and recognize all the help he and Colgan have given us.”

“Good idea,” she replied.

They were just almost to their tent when a scout came riding hard into the village. He headed straight for Colgan’s hut. Within a few minutes an alarm sounded and all the Dwarves started assembling to the center of the village. Tolan led Jen there.

“Our scout found the remains of a fight between the Drakken and what look to be guardsmen. They are all dead. Two of the guards got away and headed southwest towards Calls Reach,” Colgan announced.

“They brought part of a guard uniform back. Tolan, can you identify it?” Hulgur asked.

Tolan walked into the center, inspected the piece of clothing and said,

“It belongs to one of the King’s guardsman. Were all the guards dressed the same?” Tolan asked Hulgur.

“Yes. There were ten guardsmen and six Drakken bodies found,” he replied.

“This means Jen’s pa went to the King and he sent guards out looking,” Tolan added.

He looked over at Jen and she was sobbing. He went to her and tried to comfort her, but she said she probably knew all those guards. One named Kerry was her close friend.

“This changes things. Hulgur, select forty of our best fighters and have them ready to leave within the hour. Find the Drakken responsible,” Colgan ordered.

“Should we kill them all, or just capture them?”

“Try to take one or two alive. They should be taken to the King.”

Hulgar started selecting the Dwarven warriors. He came to Jen and Tolan and asked, "Will you both be able to travel with us?"

"Yes. But only I will help fight. Jen cannot yet." Tolan answered.

"I can hide and use my sling. I can hit something as big as a Drakken from forty feet or more."

"Very well. Gather your things. You ride in the middle of our group," Hulgar said.

The group of forty one Dwarven warriors, one scout and Jen and Talon headed south about an hour later. Jen said her head did not hurt at all anymore, even on horseback. She had all her sling balls in her front pouch at the ready. Tolan had checked and double checked all his arrows and had his bow already strung. The group really had no idea where the Drakken might be by now and he wanted to be ready.

They saw no sign of anyone the rest of that day and set up camp at dark. Sentries were posted and everyone got as much rest as they could.

They started out at dawn and the scout said it was only another couple hours. Just then, they all heard a loud yell and the sounds of fighting just a short way ahead. They all headed in that direction and saw Drakken and more guards fighting. They also saw several Goblins off to one side, yelling at the fighting Drakken. Hulgar told two Dwarves to take Jen to a group of rocks off to the side and keep her safe. It was about fifty feet from the main fighting. The rest of the group headed directly into the fight. Tolan and Hulgar headed towards the Goblins. Tolan could see over twenty guardsmen engaged with the Drakken. He jumped from his horse on a small rise and proceeded to shoot both Drakken and Goblin. Hulgar was deadly with his axe. He dispatched one Goblin and turned to another. The third one started running and took an arrow in the neck. He went down in three strides.

The Drakken were badly outnumbered now by both Dwarves and guardsmen and several tried to turn and run. Any that came close to where Jen was she brought down with a sling ball to the temple. Any that she missed, the two Dwarves took care of. Fighting was furious for another ten minutes and finally most Drakken were down. Hulgar called in his Dwarves. He lost six Dwarves to the huge Drakken poles.

Jen saw Bolt and hollered to him,

"Bolt! It's me Jen." and took off running towards him.

But, before she got there, a wounded Drakken reached up and grabbed her leg and she sprawled forward. The Drakken stood and raised his pole to come down on Jen's head. Bolt was moving towards her fast, but knew he couldn't get there in time. Before the pole came down an axe came out of nowhere and buried itself in the Drakken's chest, just above the heart. He was dead before he hit the ground. Both Bolt and Tolan reached her at the same time. She was fine, but Tolan scolded her anyhow for leaving the protection of her two Dwarves.

Hulgar came up and pulled the axe out of the dead Drakken.

"That was too close, he said."

"Indeed it was," Bolt replied. "But thankfully you were there."

"Which is the second time you've saved my life, Hulgar. This is becoming a habit," Jen said seriously.

"And, what is wrong with that?" Hulgar smiled.

"Nothing at all," Jen said as she threw her arms around him.

Introductions were made all around. The wounded were tended to and the dead guardsmen buried. Every Drakken and Goblin was killed. Bolt lost twelve guardsmen. Hulgar lost six Dwarves.

"That makes twenty two guardsmen the King has lost in the last week," Bolt said.

“And, what about Kerry?” Jen asked.

“He was wounded in the first fight. He should recover, though,” Bolt replied.

“We still do not know why the Drakken are fighting. Are the Goblins to blame or did the Drakken ask for their help?” Tolan asked.

“We have no way to know. We keep killing them all,” Bolt answered.

“Well, the King is going to have to sort it out. And soon,” Jen added.

“I will take our fallen and head back to our village,” Hulgur said.

“We will do the same,” Bolt added.

Jen and Tolan hugged Hulgur once more and thanked him again for everything. He asked them to report to Colgan as soon as the King finds an answer. They agree.

All the horses were rounded up and each group started home. It was a bloody day on both sides, but she asked Bolt if he could send a guard to her parents. He selected a guard and said,

“Tell them everything that happened here. And, that Jen and Tolan are going to see the King. Rest up there before you head home.”

“Yes, Captain,” the guard answered.

The King was worried about what Bolt and his guards had found. He promised Riley they would find Jen, but he has no control over these damn Drakken. He has visited Kerry twice now and the physicians say he will live, but it will be months before he can come back to duty. Maybe, once he is well enough, I will put him a special assignment to teach all the guardsmen to track. Then he can retire and take a wife. It's the least I can do, he thought.

Just then the page knocked and entered.

“They've returned, majesty.”

“Good! Call a full council meeting,” the King ordered.

Jen gave the King a hug when he entered the yard. He patted Tolan on the back and welcomed him.

“Now, I have called a council meeting and I want you two, and you Bolt, to attend,” the King ordered.

“We are very sorry, Majesty, that you lost so many guardsmen searching for us,” Tolan said.

“Not your fault, Tolan. The Drakken have a lot to answer for.”

“We have to find out why they are doing this,” Jen added.

“That is just what we intend to do at the council meeting,” the King responded.

When everyone was seated, the King called the council to order,

“Thank you all for coming on such short notice. We are joined by guard captain Holt, Tolan and Jen of Locke. You have all heard the story of Jen and Tolan being attacked by Drakken and helped by the Dwarf, Hulgur. Since then our guards have been attacked twice and we have lost over twenty men. This is intolerable and we must find out why the Drakken are doing this.”

“Or remove all the Drakken. There are not that many of them,” a council member said.

“Too extreme, Orin. We must find out the root of the problem. Is it the Goblins pushing them, or another reason? The problem is, I will not risk any more men to find out,” the King responded.

The meeting went on for another hour with lots of ideas brought up and discounted as either too dangerous or not effective. Finally, Jen said,

“May I make a suggestion?”

“Of course, my dear,” the King answered.

“I think the only way to communicate with the Drakken without risking lives is to send birds with notes. We could ask the Drakken chief to find one of his advisors to write a note back with an

explanation,” she said.

“What if they can't write back?” ask Bolt.

“We send more notes. Arrange a meeting with one Drakken and one of us to talk, peacefully,” Jen answered.

“Do we have anyone that can write Drakken script?” the King asked his page.

“Yes, we have several, majesty.”

“I like the idea. No risk of lives and we may get lucky and get an explanation,” the King said.

“Do we have a bird that knows where the chief is?” asked the King.

“Yes, we have birds that know where all the clans are,” answered the page.

“See to it, then,” the King ordered.

Tolan gave Jen a big hug after the meeting and said,

“Great idea, Jen. How did you think of it?”

“Well, if we can't send humans or dwarves into their village, an animal or bird is the next best choice.”

“Leave it up to the young to use rational thinking,” Holt added, smiling.

“I just hope they answer,” Jen said.

“Well, we really need to get you home, Jen. Your parents are probably getting very anxious,” Tolan said.

“I will ready an escort right away,” said Hold.

“Do we really need an escort?” Jen asked.

“Absolutely,” the King said, coming through the chamber door. “I'm already worrying how I will face Kay. I don't want to chance anything else happening to you, Jen.”

“I agree,” Tolan smiled.

“Please let us know the minute you hear from the Drakken chief, majesty,” Jen said.

“Of course, dear. You will be the first to know.”

It was late afternoon when Jen and Tolan arrived at the manor. The guards bid them farewell and headed back. Kay and Riley came out of the house on a run and embraced their daughter. Riley then shook hands with Tolan and Kay hugged him fiercely.

“Let's wait till dinner to get the story. It will just be the four of us. We have loads of questions,” Riley said.

“Ok. See you then,” Jen responded.

There were three birds sent to the Drakken village, just in case one of them did not make it. The Drakken chief was surprised when they were all brought to his hut. He sent for his advisor immediately.

“You can read these notes?” he asked the advisor.

“Yes,” he answered and read all three notes to his chief.

“Hmmm. I guess we had better respond. The promises from the Goblin leader have all fallen through and we have lost many warriors. It is time others knew what we are facing here. Explain about the lack of game and rain to grow anything,” the chief said.

So, the advisor wrote notes for all three birds and sent them on their way.

The Drakken chief then explained to all those in the village what was said to the Human King. Maybe the Humans could figure out a way to help him get food for his Drakken. They all agreed it was better than the Goblin plan to take land by force and grow their own food. Or to kill Humans and eat their horses. This has caused nothing but problems and the Goblins have now disappeared. Everyone there agreed that there should be no more killing.

The King stood in the chambers before all the council and as many people that could fit in the huge room.

“We have our answer! The Drakken are hungry,” the King exclaimed.

He proceeded to read the note from the chief. Many understood their actions, but some did not.

“The Drakken are warriors. It's all they know. And, the Goblins convinced them to kill for horses to eat and land to grow food,” a council member said.

“True. They just made things worse,” the King responded.

“I believe it is up to the other races to help them,” the page spoke up.

“I agree. Let us get together with the Dwarves and collect as much food as we can spare to send to the Drakken chief,” the King said.

A runner was sent to Colgan explaining everything and asking if they also could supply some food. Hulgur and several dwarves loaded several wagons with meat and vegetables and headed to meet the King's wagons. In all, there were ten wagonloads of food that pulled into the Drakken camp several days later. On the lead wagon was Kerry and Bolt. Hulgur drove the Dwarven lead wagon.

When the Drakken chief saw all this food, he bowed as each wagon driver. He sent runners to all the other villages telling them to come get their share.

Bolt stepped down from the lead wagon and said,

“Greetings to you Drakken chief. We are happy to help the hungry Drakken and the King wants you to know if you do not get rain before this food is gone, we will bring more.”

“This will last all winter and well into the spring. By then we hope to have brought in enough water from the Sarn that we can water our own crops. It is a good thing the Humans and Dwarves have done here. The Drakken will not forget,” the chief said, shaking Bolt's hand.

“Let there be peace between the races once more. And, hopefully the Goblins will not try to ruin it again,” Bolt said.

“It shall be done,” the chief smiled.

About a week later, the King summoned Riley, Kay and Jen. A runner went to Tolan and said his presence was requested also. When everyone arrived, the King said,

“I have decided to travel to see Colgan and would like you all to go with me.”

“That's a great idea. We need to personally thank Hulgur for what he did for Jen,” Riley said.

“Might we also take some gifts for them?” asked Jen.

“Yes. I have several nice things for both the healer and Hulgur. I would imagine Colgan would not want a gift, being the chief and all,” the King said.

“This is a very nice goodwill gesture, Cedric,” Kay smiled.

They all traveled to the Dwarven village the next day. Many Dwarves came in to meet the King. Colgan and Cedric had many long talks over the two day stay. The gifts for the healer and Hulgur were very much appreciated. There was a complete medical kit for the healer and a small sturdy pony for Hulgur.

“This is for whenever you need to travel with Humans,” the King explained.

Hulgur was overcome with gratitude. He thanked the King and said to Jen,

“Now, can you come and instruct me how to ride?”

“I'd be happy to,” Jen smiled.

There was peace between the all races for many, many years to come.