

# **Engelian Adventures: Transformations**

## **Book 1: Transgressions**

### **Chapter 17**

**by**

**Phillip Berrie**

A Story (Vers 1.01); © Phillip Berrie, 2009.

Check [www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction](http://www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction) for other episodes and other tales.

## Chapter 17

*Already a man of much experience in languages and esoteric knowledge, Wamzut easily mastered both the language of Gunde and the basic lore of sorcery. With the advantage of his psychic gifts he also mastered the skills of the sorcerer in very quick time. However, he was not considered an easy student to teach. His teachers complained that he was too eager to argue against the tenets of accepted lore.*

*The Life Story of Wamzut by Sarel Minton.*

In the courtyard I was about to turn towards the gate when I noticed Master Smit waiting for me at the entrance to my tower. I walked across to where he was standing.

The strange occurrences he had mentioned were mostly of my own making. In the turmoil of that morning it might have seemed that Nessa had disappeared; to my knowledge she had not returned to the castle since. And who knew what rumours might have been spread by the guards she'd told to flee? As for the other strange things that Smit mentioned, I thought it likely they were all products of over active imaginations set against the backdrop of Wamzut's reputation.

"Hello, milady," he said and hurriedly removed his hat. "Are you free to have a look now?"

"Yes, but only briefly, I am afraid."

He gestured for me to precede him up the stairs to the tower door.

Did you see the ghost of Wamzut?" I wanted to find out the effect on the castle staff of my illusion.

"Nay, I was not there, but I have heard that the evil spirit was no match for him," he said. "It is a pity that he did not come back sooner than he did. Captain Hurst and Master Willis was good men, they will be missed."

"I imagine that coming back from the dead must be extremely difficult," I offered in my own defence. "I am sure he did as much as he could under the circumstances."

"Yes, milady, and even though his spirit vouched for you, I expect you will have a hard job living up to his memory and all. No offence intended, milady."

"None taken, Goodman Smit. I hope that I will be remembered with such fond memories when I pass on to the next life."

The furniture and most of the collapsed stairs had been removed, but the blades were still in place and, on closer inspection, I could see there was still dried blood on some of them. I asked Smit to leave me while I investigated the tower for restless spirits and noticed how he quit the building with some speed. I suspected that despite my offer of help he did not want to have anything to do with me if I started using magick.

Summoning Hhaah to fly me to the first floor landing would take too much time and be a waste of his, so as I was now fully recovered and my aura full of magick, I decided I would try to levitate the short distance. This was a difficult spell for me at the best of times but it would suffice for such a short distance. I closed my eyes and concentrated on feeling the gravitational force holding me to the ground. Then, when I had measured its worth, I mentally recited the incantation that would extend my sorcerer's aura to create an invisible cage about myself, a cage that I could lift myself off the floor with by force of will. The stirring of my hair indicated some success so I opened my eyes to gauge the measure of that success and almost lost concentration for I was about to strike the underneath of the stairs above. Recovering from my surprise, I pushed

myself off those same stairs in the direction of the first floor corridor and landed lightly on the floor. I was both surprised and delighted at the ease with which I had risen the distance from the ground floor. This was worth experimenting with further but, first things first.

There were no restless spirits in the tower, so I did not bother looking for them. Instead I concentrated on something more mundane. If I were to go to Constantine, I would need money and my sorcerer's travelling kit as well as clothing and the like. Certainly, the purse Victus had given me amply covered the first requirement. But a wizard, like a woman, does not travel light if they wish to be properly prepared.

Unfortunately, my usual travelling kit had been destroyed in the Void, so it was a poor substitute that I put together. I made a mental note to replace it properly in Constantine. I laid the prepared satchel on the floor next to the stairs and proceeded to gather up all the golden runes from the ruins of my psychic refuge. Their effect was still active, but this did not deter me and, after a little judicious alteration with a long-handled hammer, they joined the Engles in my purse.

On an impulse I picked up the bundle of Attina's personal effects from where they lay on the sideboard. Having a second persona might prove useful in certain circumstances and that would require its own clothing and equipment. As I had not had the chance to inspect her belongings I spilled them onto the bed to have a quick look.

They were wrapped in a travel-stained cloak of surprising quality with stitching and ornamentation of a style I did not recognise. It was also nice and thick and would certainly be useful for keeping the elements at bay.

The largest of her possessions was her knife, a good solid foot of sharp steel in a leather sheath. It had a sturdy bronze guard attached to a strong wooden hilt that had been shaped to make it easy for her fingers to hold. To my eye it was nothing special as far as weapons went though it was

obviously serviceable and well cared for. It would come in handy, as my own travelling knife had also been destroyed in the Void.

There were a number of other items in the bundle: two leather pouches and a shallow leather cup from which trailed two long, supple leather cords; I recognised this last item as a sling. This was confirmed by the contents of the larger pouch, which turned out to contain lead shot. Attina had obviously been proficient with this weapon. Most of the young lads I had seen using similar weapons were content to use specially selected stones as their missiles. The extra expense of purchasing lead shot and the fact that she had it on her when she died indicated that hers was not a casual acquaintance with the weapon. The smaller pouch was her purse. It contained only copper coins, a couple of Lions and three Cubs. Not much for a life but then, it had not been money her assailant had been after.

There would no doubt be other belongings stored wherever she was staying. Perhaps I could find them using magick and with that find her friends. It had worried me that no one had come looking for her, either when she had been struck down, or since. There was obviously a story behind Attina's presence in Ilbarsis and something of a mystery as well. More unfinished business, but Ilbarsis must come first.

I left the sling and the pouch of bullets next to the boiled leather jerkin on my sideboard. These were aspects of Attina's life that did not interest me. Perhaps someday I would test to see if I had her skills with the sling to compensate for her lack of skill with a quill. For the moment however this equipment would be just extra weight that I did not need. I wrapped the knife and her purse back up in the cloak and placed it next to the satchel to take with me.

I then went back upstairs to my workshop to return the hammer I had used on the runes. I also took pity on the fire sprite trapped in my hot water system and released it back to its own elemental plane. Then, after

much searching, I found the large spanner I needed. Now I was ready to help Goodman Smit with his problem.

By the time I had carried it back to the first floor the hand I held the spanner in was tingling. With my mage sight I watched as the cold iron of the tool leached the particles of magick from my skin. Nasty stuff iron, from the point of view of elves, or so I'd heard, and here was the direct proof.

I wrapped the hem of Attina's cloak around the tool and with some effort undid the bolts that held the mounted blades in place. Then, with a push of my foot, I sent them crashing to the floor.

By the time Smit ventured inside to find out what had happened, I was back where he had left me feeling very smug — levitating back down had been even easier than getting up.

"Are you well, milady?" said Smit, taking off his hat and surveying the wreckage.

"Yes, Goodman Smit, I am well," I said. "The stairwell is now safe enough for your workmen to start work. I have also made sure there are no spirits abiding within the tower and am removing some of the more dangerous items of magick." To emphasise my point I showed him the bundles I carried.

"Thankee, milady," he said, eyeing the bundle as if he expected it to hurt him if I brought it too close.

"Goodman Smit, I would suggest that you keep a close eye on your men while they work in here," I said making sure I had his full attention. "For although the stairwell might be free of dangerous magick, I cannot guarantee their safety if they explore places they should not. The ways of Wizards are passing strange and who knows what dangers might await the unwary."

"Yes, milady," he said, "And what would you have me do with this?" he said, pointing to the tangled mess of metal at our feet.

"Give it to the Smithy ... perhaps he can turn it into ploughshares."

I left through the gates and immediately turned right to follow the road that skirted the castle wall. Some distance past the Glass and Window Emporium there is a seedy public house called The Frog and Toad. Behind it and above is my tower and the outhouse in the back yard hides my secret entrance. When I had been younger and spryer I had been a sometime customer of the tavern as it was here I bought my supplies of Jartinal Weed; it also used to serve a decent dark beer.

This was not the day, nor the identity, for renewing such an acquaintanceship, so I hadn't planned on loitering here until someone I recognised stepped out of its door. The man seemed to live in public houses. I smiled, but upon seeing me, Kol turned on his heel and walked back inside without breaking step.

*Oh, no you don't*, I thought and also turned on my heel heading back to a small alleyway I had just passed. A tall wooden gate in the seven foot fence of the tavern yard gave access to this lane and I had used it enough myself in the past to know that this was the best way to leave the premises without being seen.

I reached the gate and stood on the side that would be hidden from view as it opened. I put down my bundles to free my hands and waited. Sure enough it wasn't long before I heard someone lifting the latch. With his eyes on the street Kol stepped out and carefully closed the gate behind him.

"Hello, Long Kol," I said.

He started to run but as before I stopped him with my voice. "*Come here*," I commanded.

He turned and stumbled towards me against his will. His hand fumbled at his side and he brought out a small belt knife.

"*It burns,*" I commanded, and he dropped the knife hastily.

"Please," he gasped, wide-eyed with fear.

I took pity on him. "Kol, I do not want to harm you, I just want to talk. I will even pay you for the right information."

He seemed not to hear my offer and a wet stain appeared on the front of his trousers. Perhaps I had overdone it a tad.

"What do you know of the female Alfaren? She probably called herself Tina."

"What?"

"The Alfaren woman known as Tina. What do you know of her?"

"Nothing!" he said and then, in an effort to please me, blurted out, "I saw her the night of the trouble. I know I should have reported her but she saved me from a beating. I could not rat on her after that."

"What else do you know about her?"

Still terrified, he thought fast coming out with anything he could think of, "She called me a cheat once. I was gambling with her mates and she said I had rigged the dice, but I was playing fair — "

"Her companions, who are they? Where might I find them?" I was more interested in her companions than his morality.

"Uhh. We was in the Bounty, they be ear cutters. Mithra only knows where they are now."

Bounty hunters! Collecting the bounty on Itich ears was a dangerous way to make a living. Attina must have hated the Itich with a fierce passion. The memories of bloodshed began to make some sense.

"C-can I go now?" asked Kol, edging away from me; my attention on him had wavered.

"Yes, but wait, I said I would pay you." I dug into a purse for a coin. It was an Engle; that was the only type of coin in the purse Victus had given

me. He snatched it from the air with his usual adroitness when I threw it at him.

He looked at what he'd caught with some surprise then put it to his mouth and bit it. Satisfied, he gave me a shrewd look. "Glad to be of service, your Ladyship. And, any time I can be of assistance I am your man, and there will be no need for your magick either."

I bent to pick up my belongings and by the time I looked up he was gone. It had been an expensive way to find out that it was unlikely that anyone would be looking for Attina. No doubt her companions were long gone and if there had been any sort of emotional attachment, it wasn't one I wanted to re-establish.

**Enjoying the Story?  
For more, and other stuff, visit  
[www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction](http://www.phillberrie.com.au/Fiction)**