

Engelian Adventures: Transformations

Book 2: Transitions

Prologue

by

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Prologue

A dingy room in a seedy tavern was not the sort of place one would expect something so momentous to occur — it smelt too much of previous occupants and the river. The tall dark-haired Angolorian drained the last dregs from his tankard and regarded the red-gold ring in the middle of the table. For days he'd wrestled with the choice between right and wrong, fear and greed, friendship and the promise of power beyond his wildest dreams. Now fully in his cups he was no nearer to making a decision, but at least he'd decided on a course of action.

Fumbling in his purse he pulled out a large octagonal gold piece. Even drunk he recognised the danger in using that coin so he placed it on the table before him and pulled out a different coin.

As the silver Constantine spun its way to the top of its arc there was a loud rapping at the door. The man jumped, tried to catch the coin and missed. It hit the floor and rolled under the bed.

"Who is it?" he called out while reaching down.

"Blackfeather?" queried a muffled female voice.

"Aye," he replied, bringing out the sheathed long sword from under the bed.

"Dorkin? It is I, Melitta." The voice was faint but the name unmistakable.

"Melitta? How the ..." He climbed unsteadily to his feet the sword still in his hand. "You are too soon. Damn it! Come back tomorrow." He moved to door but was forced to put a hand against the wall to keep from swaying.

"No Dorkin. We must talk now. There are things you do not know ... I am alone."

"Hah! And that is supposed to make me feel safe?"

"I swear by Lord Arion that you will come to no harm ... Please.

"Please? Did I hear you say please?" He took a quick look at the ring on the table. "I do not think I have ever heard you say please before." He lifted the bar, opened the door a crack and looked out directly into her eyes. Her spell caught him by surprise and, addled by alcohol, his will quickly crumbled before hers, the sword he tried to loose falling from nerveless fingers.

The leather-clad sorceress smiled and reached up to stroke his stubbled cheek. "Poor love-struck fool. You will never learn, will you?" she said softly and then took his hand. "Now come. Not many people get a second chance before they make a mistake, and you and I have better things to do."

Less than two minutes after she'd led the besotted young man away, an older, much wiser, Dorkin Blackfeather limped into the room through the left open door. His face was haggard, scarred and full of dark purpose. He crossed to the table and looked down at the ring and the golden coin. Picking up the former with his good right hand he smiled grimly at the worn visage of the ancient priest-king on the face of the latter on the table.

"Aye, heads it is," he said and forced the ring onto the smallest finger of his twisted and paralysed left hand.