

THE KNIGHTS OF ARRETHTRAE

BOOK 4

LADY CARLISS



AND THE WATERS OF MOORUE



CHUCK BLACK

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Lady Carliss and the Waters of Moorue

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AND THE WATERS OF MOORUE



CHUCK BLACK



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*To the lady prayer warriors of the Kingdom.
Be strong and of good courage!*

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Kingdom of Arrethtrae



KINGDOM'S HEART

An Introduction to the Knights of Arrethtrae



Like raindrops on a still summer's eve, the words of a story can oft fall grayly upon the ears of a disinterested soul. I am Cedric of Chessington, humble servant of the Prince, and should my inadequate telling of the tales of these brave knights e'er sound as such, know that it is I who have failed and not the gallant hearts of those of whom I write, for their journeys into darkened lands to save the lives of hopeless people deserve a legacy I could never aspire to pen with appropriate skill. These men and women of princely mettle risked their very lives and endured the pounding of countless battles to deliver the message of hope and life to the far reaches of the kingdom of Arrethtrae...even to those regions over which Lucius, the Dark Knight, had gained complete dominion through the strongholds of his Shadow Warriors.

What is this hope they bring? To tell it requires another story, much of it chronicled upon previous parchments, yet worthy of much retelling.

Listen then, to the tale of a great King who ruled the Kingdom Across the Sea, along with His Son and their gallant and mighty force of

Silent Warriors. A ruler of great power, justice, and mercy, this King sought to establish His rule in the land of Arrethtrae. To this end He chose a pure young man named Peyton and his wife, Dinan, to govern the land.

All was well in Arrethtrae until the rebellion...for there came a time when the King's first and most powerful Silent Warrior, Lucius by name, drew a third of the warriors with him in an attempt to overthrow the Kingdom Across the Sea. A great battle raged until finally the King's forces prevailed. Cast out of the kingdom—and consumed with hatred and revenge—Lucius now brought his rebellion to the land of Arrethtrae, overthrowing Peyton and Dinan and bringing great turmoil to the land.

But the King did not forget His people in Arrethtrae. He established the order of the Noble Knights to protect them until the day they would be delivered from the clutches of the Dark Knight. The great city of Chessington served as a tower of promise and hope in the darkened lands of Arrethtrae.

For many years and through great adversity, the Noble Knights persevered, waiting for the King's promised Deliverer.

Even the noblest of hearts can be corrupted, however, and long waiting can dim the brightest hope. Thus, through the years, the Noble Knights grew selfish and greedy. Worse, they forgot the very nature of their charge. For when the King sent His only Son, the Prince, to prepare His people for battle against Lucius, the Noble Knights knew Him not, nor did they heed His call to arms.

When He rebuked them for their selfish ways, they mocked and disregarded Him. When He began to train a force of commoners—for He was a true master of the sword—they plotted against Him. Then the Noble Knights, claiming to act in the great King's name, captured and killed His very own Son.

What a dark day that was! Lucius and his evil minions—the Shadow Warriors—reveled in this apparent victory. But all was not lost. For when the hope of the kingdom seemed to vanish and the hearts of the humble despaired, the King used the power of the Life Spice to raise His Son from the dead.

This is a mysterious tale indeed, but a true one. For the Prince was seen by many before He returned to His Father across the Great Sea. And to those who loved and followed Him—myself among them—He left a promise and a charge.

Here then is the promise: that the Prince will come again to take all who believe in Him home to the Kingdom Across the Sea.

And this is the charge: that those who love Him must travel to the far reaches of the kingdom of Arrethtrae, tell all people of Him and His imminent return, and wage war against Lucius and his Shadow Warriors.

Thus we wait in expectation. And while we wait, we fight against evil and battle to save the souls of many from darkness.

We are the knights who live and die in loyal service to the King and the Prince. Though not perfect in our call to royal duty, we know the power of the Prince resonates in our swords, and the rubble of a thousand strongholds testifies to our strength of hearts and souls.

There are many warriors in this land of Arrethtrae, many knights who serve many masters. But the knights of whom I write are my brothers and sisters, the Knights of the Prince.

They are mighty because they serve a mighty King and His Son.

They are...the Knights of Arrethtrae! 

PUSHING BACK THE DARKNESS



The kingdom of Arrethtrae is vast, and though it harbors havens of good, it also shelters many strongholds of treacherous evil, places where darkness thrives. The Knights of the Prince are called to rescue countless souls, not only from the danger of sword and knife but also from those who would poison the mind and the soul. It takes an extraordinary knight to take up the cause of the Prince in the face of such danger. Such a knight was Lady Carliss.

Though Lady Carliss's mission befell her by what may seem mere happenstance, you may rest assured that chance had nothing to do with her calling. Her pure heart and strong commitment to the King and the Prince had prepared her for the mission she rose to fulfill when she saw the grip of evil tighten around the throats of the people.

While evil seems to be ever encroaching upon the territory of our good King, I have discovered that oft the battle that pushes back the darkness waits only for one who is willing to rise up and fight. Come and hear the tale of one who was willing...the valiant Lady Carliss! ■

LADY CARLISS



She seemed an ordinary enough girl on the outside—a quiet, plain, and simple girl—but within, Carliss was as unique and complex as the snowflakes that sometimes fell upon her father's farm when she was a child. On those special days, Carliss would take a dark cloth outside and catch the intricate flakes so she could gaze upon them and marvel at their perfection and beauty. She would close her eyes before they melted and try to hold each exquisite detail in her memory for as long as possible.

As she grew out of the delightful and carefree world of a child and into the reality of the kingdom, Carliss began to realize that just as the beauty of her perfect flakes had melted away, so had the perfection of the kingdom where she lived. In her spirit, she knew something was amiss, and this is what made Carliss so unusual. She ached for something she knew did not exist and yet believed it should.

This yearning was something she could not quench, and it stole away the silliness of youth before her time. Those who knew her thought her a bit peculiar, a bit too intense and serious—certainly not like the other girls. But then, Carliss had never aspired to be like the other girls. What she did aspire to was something she couldn't quite name—until the day her world changed.

It happened when Carliss was fifteen. A man dressed in the garb of a knight arrived at their farm. He was quite short and unimpressive in

appearance. He asked for room and board for a night, and he offered to pay a good price in exchange.

Carliss's father hesitated, for he had learned to be wary of all men in a kingdom where treachery was as likely as a good deed. Carliss knew her father was concerned for the safety of her mother and the five children, but she sensed something noble in this man's peculiarity.

When her father denied the knight's request, Carliss felt the ache in her spirit swell to the size of a chasm that seemed to swallow her. She watched the fellow turn and leave the farm. But when he was a short distance away, Carliss could not contain herself. She ran after the man, ignoring the warning calls from her father and mother.

"Who are you, sir," she panted when she reached him, "and why did you come here?"

The knight gazed down at Carliss from his steed and seemed to know the ache that called her to him. "I am Sir Orland, a Knight of the Prince, and I come to share His truth with you. Would you like to hear it?"

That was the day Sir Orland shared the great story of the King and the Prince with Carliss and her family. By evening, another family had been added to the Prince's cause, and Carliss felt the ache in her spirit fade away. She closed her eyes and envisioned her perfect snowflakes in a perfect kingdom with a perfect King. Joy filled her heart, and so did her zeal for service to the Prince.

On that day, Carliss became Lady Carliss, noble daughter of the King. She and her family donned robes of a nobility that far transcended the caste nobility of the kingdom. Sir Orland also opened their eyes to realities both glorious and potentially frightening. For as the King and His Son transformed in their minds from myth and legend to reality, so did the King's enemy, Lucius, and the ongoing battle for the kingdom... a battle in which they now had a significant role.

Over the course of the next two years, Sir Orland found many opportunities to come and train the family in the ways of the Prince and in the sword. Then, when Carliss was nearly seventeen, she and her brother Koen began training at a nearby haven for the Knights of the Prince. Carliss was commissioned a year after Koen, and her father arranged to have her mentored for a time under Sir Orland.

Now, at the age of twenty, Carliss was truly a knight of great skill by her own right. By the kingdom's standard, she was still a quiet, plain, and simple girl. On matters of the King and the Prince, however, a fiery spirit rose up strong within her. It is what drove her to defend the meek and help the hurting and battle with all her might against the servants of the Dark Knight.

Her mettle as a Knight of the Prince had been tested just weeks before, when she helped Koen and his friend Sir Dalton defeat the evil Lord Drox. Together they had fought the terrifying four-winged death ravens and the ravenous hounds of despair and had freed many knights from Drox's horrific prison. The three of them had grown close on that mission, and it was then that Carliss began to struggle with feelings for Dalton.

This was what troubled her on a brilliant summer day as she rode her horse, Rindy, along the road to Salisburg.

How was it possible, she wondered, to want so much to see someone...and yet dread it at the same time?

And why did it all have to be so complicated?

"Lady Carliss," a voice called out from behind.

Carliss turned about on Rindy to see a young woman galloping to catch her. Carliss reined in her horse and waited. She had only been on the road a short time, having just left the haven at Varlaken.

Carliss had come to Varlaken with a contingent of fellow knights to help retrain those who had been imprisoned by Lord Drox. She had worked tirelessly for the past two-and-a-half weeks to reestablish the hearts and hone the skills of those men and women recently freed from Drox's dreadful cave prison. The immensity of the daily tasks at Varlaken had kept her mind occupied, and the weariness of each day had pulled at her limbs and mind at sundown. In the quietness of the evenings, however, she had been unable to avoid the honest tugging of her heart in a direction she desperately sought to avoid.

So now she was headed for home...and Sir Dalton. Her thoughts of him confused her, and she welcomed the interruption of her ride.

The young woman slowed her horse and smiled broadly at Carliss as she approached. Carliss recognized the short, dark hair. It was a young knight named Salina.

“May I ride with you for a distance?” she asked.

Although Lady Salina was a couple of years older, Carliss had mentored and befriended her while at Varlaken. She was a beautiful woman who had fallen prey to the same deceptions of Lord Drox that so many other knights had. When Carliss, Koen, and Sir Dalton, along with the help of Sir Orland, freed Drox’s prisoners, Salina had immediately attached herself to Carliss.

Carliss, who didn’t have many female friends, had liked Salina from the beginning. She seemed like a strong knight, and Carliss was impressed with how quickly she recovered from life in Drox’s prison. Her warm brown eyes often seemed to reflect a mind that was deep in thought.

“I’m glad for the company,” Carliss told her now with a smile. “I didn’t realize you were leaving Varlaken just yet.”

Salina matched her horse’s gait to Carliss’s. “Once you left I didn’t see much need to stay,” she replied. “I think I’m ready to move on.”

Carliss nodded. “I think so too. You did very well at sword practice yesterday.”

“Not as well as you did at archery,” Salina answered. “You’re incredibly skilled with a bow, aren’t you?”

Carliss flashed a quick smile. “I guess I have a knack for it. I hunted a lot on our farm when I was growing up.”

Salina tilted her head. “It’s more than just a knack. I was in Drox’s prison, remember. I saw how you used your bow against those awful hounds—it was almost as if you knew where they were going to be before they got there. You’re quite a knight for one so young.”

“I only hope to serve my King,” Carliss ducked her head. “So, you are going home now?” she asked, anxious to change the subject.

Salina shrugged. “For a while, I guess, though I hope to receive another assignment soon. You’re heading back to Salisburg?”

Carliss nodded. “My family is there. My parents and my siblings.”

Salina gave her a teasing smile. "Isn't that where Sir Dalton is from as well?"

"Yes...yes he is," Carliss replied, feeling her face flush slightly. She turned to adjust her saddle pack. "Sir Dalton's a courageous knight," she answered carefully. "He's a good friend, especially to my brother, Koen."

Salina tilted her head toward Carliss. "That's all? I thought perhaps you and he—"

"That's all," Carliss worked to keep her voice even. "Sir Dalton has an...understanding with Lady Brynn. We were all in training together."

"Hmm." Salina nodded thoughtfully as they picked up their pace to pass a precariously loaded cart. Once they were safely past, she glanced over at Carliss.

"Listen, do you remember when my brother visited me at the haven last week?" she asked.

Carliss raised her eyebrows. "Yes, I think so."

"Well, he was so grateful for how you were helping me, and he didn't get a chance to thank you in person."

Salina gave Carliss another meaningful glance, and Carliss shifted in her saddle, wondering where this was leading. Sir Alston had arrived at a time when Carliss was feeling overwhelmed with her duties. He had only stayed a day, and she had seen him a few times with Salina but never actually talked with him. Carliss was perfectly fine with that, for he was a handsome fellow, and such men tended to make her feel uneasy...as Dalton had.

"What I'm saying is...I would love for you to come to my home and meet my family."

"Oh, I don't think—"

"It's not far, Carliss, just a short ride north of here near Pembroke," Salina continued. "I owe you so much, and I know that Alston and my parents would love to have an opportunity to thank you properly."

Carliss pretended to consider the request out of courtesy, fully intending to decline. But Salina persisted.

"Please, Carliss. It would mean so much to me. At least come and share a meal with us."

Carliss looked at Salina and couldn't think of any reasonable excuse. Her family wasn't expecting her on any particular day. Besides, truth be told, she had been dreading her return home, for she knew she would have to face her own emotional dilemma at the haven there. Perhaps this diversion would help clear her mind.

"All right, Salina. I'll come," Carliss said with a smile. "But only for a little while. Thank you for the invitation."

"Wonderful!" Salina exclaimed. "They will all be so excited to meet you."

Carliss ducked her head again, embarrassed at Salina's exuberant response.

"It's off toward Pembroke then," she said, wondering if she had just committed to something she might later regret. ■■