

THE KNIGHTS OF ARRETHTRAE

BOOK 3

SIR DALTON

AND THE SHADOW HEART



CHUCK BLACK

Praise for
Sir Dalton and the Shadow Heart

“With sanctified imagination, Chuck Black transports readers back to the days of chivalry and valor, clashing steel, and noble conflict—but ultimately he transports readers to the eternal triumph of the King who reigns!”

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—SOPHIA, an avid reader

“I was so caught up in the books I would not do anything but read them. They were amazing...full of action, a little romance, and most of all, a love for the King and His Son. They made me feel as though I were truly traveling with the main character on his noble quest to spread the word of the King and His Son and standing in the middle of the Great Kingdom Across the Sea. I plan on reading the books over and over again. I loved the series so much!”

—ETHAN, an avid reader

SIR DALTON

AND THE SHADOW HEART



ALSO BY CHUCK BLACK

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SIR DALTON

AND THE SHADOW HEART



CHUCK BLACK



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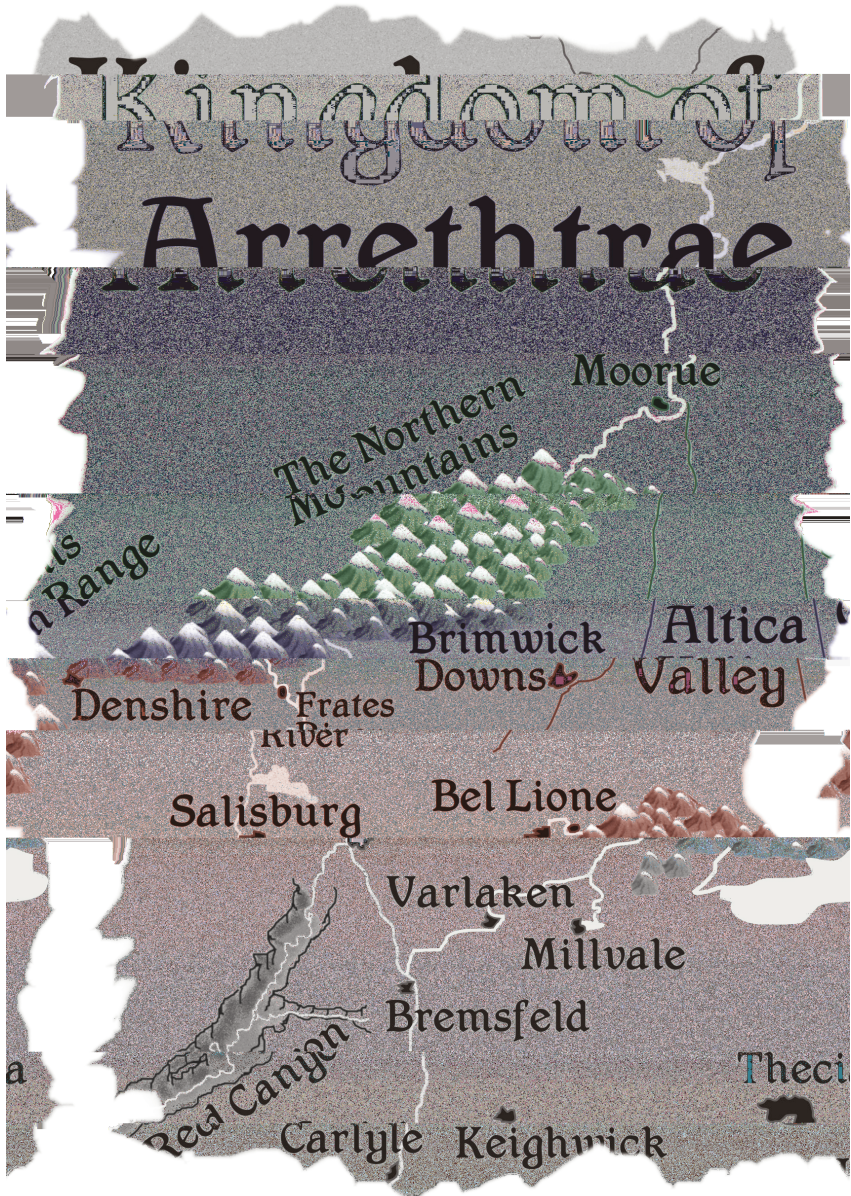
*I dedicate this book to all of the young men
and women who seek the truth of the Lord.*

*Be courageous, bold, and prepared,
and may your faith stand firm on the solid rock.*

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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 heart and soul.

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! 

THE SHADOW OF A HEART



Some tales tell of gallant deeds done by men and women of might. Some tell of great battles fought to free the innocent from the tyranny of wicked men. But some tales tell of the journey of the heart, and such a one is this.

I am Cedric of Chessington, Knight of the Prince. I have taken upon myself the duty of chronicling the stories of many of my fellow knights... those living now and those who came before. Please do not think me overbold if I should implore you to pause in your own life's journey and sit with me these few moments. I have learned that pondering the life of another oft reveals both strengths and weaknesses in my own devotion to the King and his great Son. Such ponderings can beckon hearts to a nobler call and thus are worth every moment spent upon them.

Sir Dalton discovered an enemy lurking in the shadows of his heart—an enemy we must all face at some point. The Prince called one of his mightiest knights “greatest among all,” and yet he too faced this enemy. Therefore judge not Sir Dalton, but glean from his tale the wisdom and the courage to let the light of the Prince so illumine your whole being until your heart holds no shadows at all.

Sir Dalton dared to look into the shadow of his heart... Shall we? 


THE PIERCING SHADOW



Dalton dared not close his eyes, but he wanted to. He thought that perhaps if he closed them long enough he would awaken from this nightmare. His heart quickened, and his palms began to sweat. He tried to swallow, but his throat was so tight that the motion of his tongue stopped at the roof of his mouth and would not allow it.

“You fool!” The condescending words came from a dark, evil voice. “Did you really think you could escape me?”

Dalton stood before a true monster of a warrior. Lord Drox was a tower of muscle clad in black chain mail and gleaming black armor. He swung his gruesome blade from side to side as if to taunt Dalton. The warrior stood over seven-and-a-half feet tall, but to Dalton he seemed twice his own height. Dalton was facing a giant of evil and there was nowhere to run.

Dalton quickly loosened the dressing that bound his wounded left arm to his side. He gripped his sword tightly as Lord Drox swung his blade in an arced slice. The swords collided, and Dalton nearly lost his grip. Stunned by the power of Drox’s cut, he fought the paralyzing fear that rose up within him. 

Surely this will be the end of me.

He gripped his sword tighter and made a diagonal cut toward the hulking form in front of him, but Drox's blade easily met his blow. Dalton's sword vibrated as though he had struck a brick wall instead of an opposing sword.

Dalton recovered his position once more and held his sword before him. Drox actually lowered his sword and began to laugh. The warrior's deep chortles reverberated off the granite walls of the box-canyon arena where they fought. The canyon's walls rose high around them, and though Dalton had searched for an exit, he had found none. He thought of ducking into the trees or maneuvering behind some of the jagged granite outcroppings nearby, but such moves would be futile. There was no place to run.

Drox finished enjoying his moment of mirth and fixed Dalton with a look of leering hatred.

"Oh how I love to kill the incompetent Knights of the Prince!" He raised his sword and attacked again.

Dalton tried to stand firm and brought his sword to meet the first few cuts, but he quickly found himself in retreat. Drox's blade seemed to pound into Dalton's blade like the blows of a war hammer, and he could not sustain his defense. Drox brought a powerful two-handed horizontal cut from Dalton's right side.

Dalton gripped his own sword with both hands, hoping to withstand the impact, but the force of Drox's weapon sheared Dalton's sword in two and sent him stumbling backward. He flailed for a handhold to keep from falling, but there was nothing to grasp. Time seemed to slow as he fell to the ground and watched the upper portion of his blade fly end over end away from him. It landed in the dirt of the box-canyon floor just as his back hit the ground with a thud.

Dalton closed his eyes and hoped against reality that he would awaken from this nightmare. He saw the dark shadow over him through

his closed eyelids and opened his eyes to see the evil form of Drox looming over him.

“Now you know who is truly lord of your life, knave. It is he who has the power to kill you.” Drox’s face twisted with utter loathing as he raised the hilt of his sword high above his head, the tip pointing downward toward Dalton. With both hands, Drox plunged the blade through Dalton’s armored abdomen and deep into the ground beneath.

Dalton screamed against the steely invasion of his body as the fear of his imminent death fully gripped him. He released his grip on the worthless hilt of his broken sword and grasped the blade of Drox’s weapon, convulsing in unbearable pain.

He wondered briefly why Drox had not pierced his heart instead. Then he understood. This warrior was so vile that he would draw even greater pleasure from executing a slow, painful death rather than a quick one.

Drox loosed his grip on the sword and knelt down beside Dalton. He looked into Dalton’s eyes, clearly enjoying the fear, pain, and hopelessness he saw in them. His thin lips twisted into an evil grin.

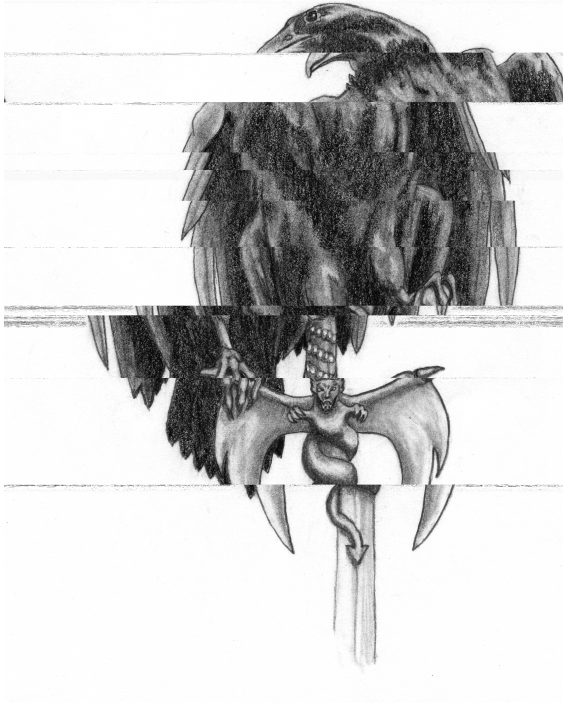
“My pets prefer their meat fresh.” Drox lifted his hand into the air, and a large raven with two wings on each side of its body landed on his wrist.

Caw! The eerie bird screeched as it looked down at Dalton with impenetrable black eyes.

“When you are too weak to fight them off, they will come,” Drox said as he stood. “Knight of the Prince”—Drox spat—“He never cared about you, fool! You’re just a dispensable pawn.” He turned and walked away.

Pain saturated Dalton’s body. The slightest movement amplified the agony tenfold. The sky above him filled with twenty hungry ravens, each one calling for others to join in the final torture.

One of the birds landed on the handle of Drox’s sword, and the



movement from its landing nearly sent Dalton into unconsciousness. He screamed at the double-winged bird, but it showed no fear. Its feathers were sleek and glistening, its eyes as dark and evil as its master's.

Dalton knew he had but one faint chance—to lift the sword from the ground through his stomach and free himself. He grasped the blade tightly with both hands and took as deep a breath as he could, then pushed up against the embedded steel with all of his remaining strength.

The avalanche of pain crushed him into a semiconscious state, where his mind wallowed between the worlds of reality, memory, and dreams. The vision of a beautiful young woman filled his mind as he was taken back two years earlier.

“Lady Brynn...,” he whispered, and reached to touch her...but she was not there. 