

# ELVEN HEART

Evrix Jofoloy



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The snow crystals glistened, and the stars shone modestly behind the clouds. Evrix's hands were red from the cold and the wind felt like needles against his skin. His fingers could hardly bend.

There was a small green two-story wooden house in the outskirts of the village of Maeneth, the windows had been completely covered by the white snow and the smoke from the chimneys of the other houses lay like a blanket over the village. Torches lit up both houses and roads. They were made by the powerful magicians of the village; their dark blue glow could shine for months without going out.

Evrix pulled a sleigh that was filled with the snow that whirled all around him. He parked it next to the stairs leading to the front door of the green house. He stomped his shoes outside and before he could knock, the door opened with a faint squeak.

"Evrix, come in," Saerelyn said, giving him a warm hug.

Her silvery and curly hair twinkled in the glow of the torches. Evrix stood just outside the door. He was an elf with a brown, bushy beard that currently was embraced with his mother's arms. His clothes were old, smelled musty and had several patched holes.



"In with you!" he said to Hallbjorn who ran into the house.

Hallbjorn was his tame little bear that he saved from the forest in Cienth. He was so small that he would be classified as a dwarf among his kin.

"How is he?" Evrix asked as he stepped over the doorstep and hung his coat on a crooked nail near the front door.

"His pain has worsened, and he sleeps most of the time. He can barely speak," Saerelyn replied anxiously.

A small table with two chairs on each side stood in the hallway. There was a large fireplace in the living room further into the house. A large dark blue sofa with several large holes stood in front of the fireplace. It smelled of moths but was very comfortable and Lorsan would rather stand for the rest of his life than to replace it.

Behind the sofa was a dark, almost black bookshelf that was overflowing with books. Among the most interesting was *The round cookbook for magical being*, *How to win in trio magic* and *The striped rhino's progress*. On top of the mantelpiece was a pipe with half-burnt tobacco in it, as if someone had lit it but just left it there. Next to the bookshelf was a staircase to the upper floor, where Evrix's old room was situated.

Saerelyn's and Lorsan's bedrooms were found beyond the kitchen. In the hall that led to the bedrooms was an old sideboard made of dark abiel wood that still smelled sour. The walls were painted in a dark red color that almost

swallowed the light in the house. The paintings on the wall were made by Saerelyn herself.

The bedroom door creaked when Evrix closed it behind him. Lorsan lay in a large bed with two small tables at each side. A chest full of things stood beside the window. Evrix sat down on the edge of the bed next to Lorsan who jerked and opened his eyes.

"Evrix?" he whispered in a raspy voice.

"I'm here now," Evrix replied, grabbing his father's hand.

Mother Saerelyn gently opened the door and sat down on the stool next to the bed. She wiped her husband's sweaty forehead with a cloth.

"Is it far gone?" Evrix asked and saw how Lorsan struggled to breathe.

"His lungs are full of oth, it's been going fast lately," Saerelyn said.

Oth is a kind of rot that eats up one's body from within.

"How are you, Dad?" Evrix whispered, trying to stifle the anxiety in his voice.

Lorsan coughed so deep that it sounded like his throat would burst. Saerelyn wiped Lorsan's forehead again and after a while he fell asleep.

"It's probably time for you soon," she said, walking to the window to light a candle. The smoke from the candle made a sour smell of citrus spreading in the room. "Let's go to the kitchen and get you something to eat."

She laid the sweaty cloth to dry on the table next to the bed. Evrix closed the door as carefully as he could, but it

still creaked and Lorsan moved uneasy under the covers. His mind was gloomy as he walked down the stairs to the kitchen.

In the middle of the kitchen was a small table in front of the window. A gray cloth, that Saerelyn had made, adorned the table. The red curtains in the window had dust on them. Shelves full of cookbooks and recipes stood along the walls. The floor was worn, but it still smelled of fresh wood. Saerelyn poured water into a saucepan and placed it on the stove. She fetched chen and ciethren herb from the cupboard and put it in the boiling water. She fetched bread, butter and a piece of meat from another shelf and laid it on the table in front of Evrix.

"You look so skinny, do you eat anything at all?" she asked, shaking her head.

Evrix spread butter on three pieces of bread and placed a thick slice of meat on each.

"I eat a lot," he replied between bites.

The tender meat almost melted in his mouth.

"It doesn't look like it," she muttered.

The scent of the boiling tea water spread throughout the house while Saerelyn placed a cup on the table and poured herbal tea into them. She sat down opposite Evrix and spread butter on a piece of bread.

"Do you know why he got oth?" Evrix asked.

Saerelyn drank a little from her cup and her eyes watered.

"It's believed that he got it from all these years in the Turmaling mine. Chopping tourmaline every day and inhaling the dust into the lungs is certainly not good for you. And back then there wasn't any magic or equipment to protect you," she replied, placing her cup in front of her while staring into nothingness.

"Mother?"

She put her hands in front of her face and cried. Evrix approached and hugged her.

"Why him?" she sobbed and drilled her face into his shoulder.

"He's old and has been through a lot, it's his time now," Evrix replied, running his hand comfortingly over her back.

"Why...", she whispered faintly between sobs.

In the morning the streets were white from the snow that had fallen during the night. Lorsan lay in bed and writhe in agony. He had woken and screamed from pain several times since dayfall. Evrix and Saerelyn had put a sheepskin in the sleigh so that he could lie warm and comfortable during the journey.

They grabbed him under each other's arms and carefully laid him down in the sleigh, he grunted in pain. Saerelyn kissed him goodbye and went back to the kitchen table and cried with his photograph in front of her. Winter clouds hid the sun and the wind hadn't calmed down. Evrix shivered from the cold.

Near the parents' house was a magic fountain that kept warm all year round. It emitted hot steam that the wind

swept away to the village. The cold turned the moisture into crystals that sailed down over the people on the streets. Evrix took a firm grip on the sledge's rope and whistled to Hallbjorn that he should follow. The sleigh was heavy and slid slowly through the thick snow. Most of the villagers warmed themselves inside by their fires, only a few bold souls were out in the cold.

The houses in Maeneth were old and on some the paint had almost completely dried out so that the grain of the wood was visible. Lorsan lay in the sleigh with his thick coat pulled over his face. Only his closed eyes were visible. Neither Lorsan nor Hallbjorn suffered from the cold, but Evrix was already cold as ice.

They passed the last houses in Maeneth where the torches were so weak that they barely lit up the road; the magicians must have forgotten to add magic to them. The sled was heavy and Evrix struggled to keep the traction. He brushed away snow that had swirled into the sled and accumulated on Lorsans body. Lorsan grimaced in pain from the gentle touch.

"Hold on, Dad. We can do it," Evrix said as he pulled the sledge onto the road that led to the Muennán mountains.

He looked over his shoulder. Some people followed their struggle from their windows. The wind tightened and snow whipped around them like a hurricane. Evrix sighed deeply and continued his journey with Hallbjorn and the sleigh behind him. Hallbjorn's fur was covered with snow, and shaking his body only kept him clean for a few minutes.



Evrix pulled a bottle of water from the sack on his shoulder and warmed it in his palm until the ice in the bottle melted and they could drink. Hallbjorn's tongue hung on the side of his mouth from thirst after several hours of walking. The road to the Muennán Mountains was perilous. The rocks and mounds of earth under the snow repeatedly caused the sled to tilt from side to side and threatened to overturn it.

Although the road was difficult, it was easy to find the way to Muennán because there was only one road leading there. It was lined with mighty thyllár, long trees with crowns that spread in all directions and needles that change in blue and purple all year round. In the autumn, they all lose conifers, but new ones appear in just a few days.

A twig broke off in the forest and Evrix tried to see where the sound was coming from. After a while, a white-tailed ghenie jumped out of the bushes and waved its little white tail. Hallbjorn growled loudly, which caused other animals to stare at him as well.

"Leave them alone now," said Evrix.

Hallbjorn lay down next to the sleigh near Lorsan and looked anxiously at Evrix.

"I know... We have to move on before it's too late."

Evrix put the bottle back in his bag and massaged his hands a little before grabbing the sledge's rope again.

The wind was calmer as they approached the mountains of Muennán and the clouds had begun to disperse. Lorsan

grunted from the pain and could barely lie still. Evrix knelt beside him.

"We are close now, Dad. Just one more bit," Evrix said as Lorsan grinned.

Stars began to appear behind the scattering clouds and a faint streak of northern light was forming just above them. The air felt colder, and the white snow twinkled as the moon peered through the clouds.

"The last bit left now before we arrive at Muenntith."

Evrix's hands were red and sore from pulling the sled. Muenntith was a plateau halfway up Muennán and had a beautiful view from there you could see Maeneth and the neighboring village of Nhiekar. They arrived after an hour and Evrix pulled the sleigh to the middle of the plateau. He crouched down over Lorsan and brushed off the snow before pulling his coat down from Lorsan's face so he could see. Evrix made a fire that loudly crackled several times. Large flakes of embers sailed high into the air above them.

"She's dancing, Dad. Look!"

Evrix pointed to the sky and helped his father upright in the sleigh. The most powerful northern lights in a hundred years danced beautifully in the sky. The colors were abundant as they were autumn leaves. Lorsan slowly opened his eyes and his green pupils dilated when he saw the dance in the sky.

"She is ... beautiful," he whispered, his eyes watering.

The colors shifted to look like waves that washed in over the shore. It looked like the most beautiful, animated

painting. It was very quiet, not even the wind or the trees made any noise. Animals, that had followed them, stood completely silent as they admired the spectacle in the sky. The white-tailed ghenises raised their mighty horns high in the air, the hares perched on their hind legs, and the pupils of the red-spotted vonithes dilated.

"It's the nicest thing I've seen, quite unusual for the northern lights to be so big," Evrix said, not noticing that Lorsan had closed his eyes.

"Dad?"

Lorsan's eyelids were blue.

"Dad..." he said again.

The white-tailed ghenises roared loudly and shook their horns, the hares sat on their hind legs and waved their noses and long ears. Evrix gently shook Lorsan, but he did not react. It was over now. Evrix gently put Lorsan's head in his arms and shed a tear.

The magical northern lights in the clouds stopped for a while and then disappeared completely in the dark clouds above.

The last stone Evrix laid on his father's grave rolled a to one side before stopping completely and resting.

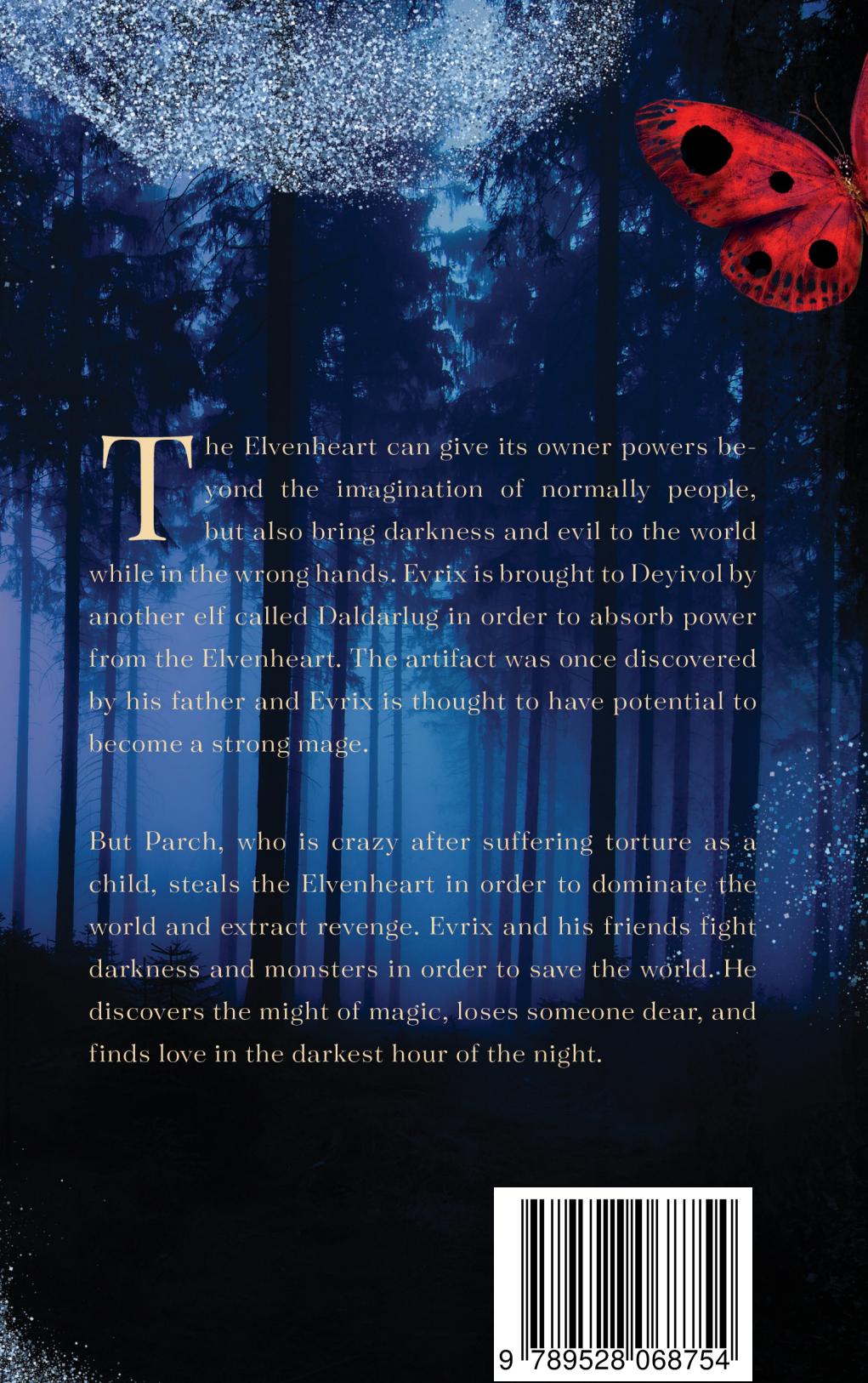
"Thank you for everything, Dad."

Evrix and Hallbjorn turned back home and the animals that had followed them disappeared back into the forest. The winter darkness felt grimmer every step back to Maeneth felt heavier than before. Maeneth's magical

torches seemed to burn strong in the distance and their sour smoke spread way outside the village.

All the houses in the village had candles in the windows. The candles are cast in a mixture of ash and ithus leaves and are only lit at mourning. The ithus leaves are blue and smell sour. Ithus trees shed their leaves only every five years, but already the following summer, new leaves have begun to crack.

People watched from their windows as Evrix pulled the empty sleigh, the house lights flickered, and the glow grew stronger as he passed. His eyes watered and a lump formed in his throat.



**T**he Elvenheart can give its owner powers beyond the imagination of normally people, but also bring darkness and evil to the world while in the wrong hands. Evrix is brought to Deyivol by another elf called Daldarlug in order to absorb power from the Elvenheart. The artifact was once discovered by his father and Evrix is thought to have potential to become a strong mage.

But Parch, who is crazy after suffering torture as a child, steals the Elvenheart in order to dominate the world and extract revenge. Evrix and his friends fight darkness and monsters in order to save the world. He discovers the might of magic, loses someone dear, and finds love in the darkest hour of the night.

