

The Golden Trio

&

The Quest for Ladon

By: Mathew D. Miles

Written from the perspective of:

Archmage Guildmaster

&

Mariah the Champion of the Virtue of Honesty

Part 1

My wife passed on when my two boys were very little and I have not seen or talked with my youngest son for nearly ten years. The last report I received about him, was when he decided to become a privateer, then set sail with an outfit out of the city of Jhelom. I have not heard from him since then, but did send word to several outposts and left many messages for my son, with the local magistrates over the first few years.

My youngest son was never one for correspondence with me anyways, but it was strange that no one had seen or heard from him and I worried about him often. As the years started to add up, my mistakes with our relations compiled on me like an albatross around my neck and now, I would just like to know his fate and what happened to my boy. I have lost hope at this point about his wellbeing and I know my oldest son blames me for this too, of which I most likely deserve. Still, if he is alive, I hope to see him again and if he does find his way to me, my heart will always be open to him, as I hope he would only give me that chance to welcome him back home.

My oldest son lives in Vesper as a curator in the museum and he is happily married with three beautiful little girls. When I get the chance, I go and visit his family, but it is painfully clear that those visits are only one sided. I don't blame him at all, as up until I had moved into the PAWS Soulforge, I still lived in Britain and I did not spend very much time with my children when they were younger. My boys lived with me in the capitol and that was the place where their mother had gotten sick and left us. That was the place that their father was also too busy to pay them the attention that they needed, when they needed me the most. They don't have many memories of their mother and I never talked with them about her much either, as that was quite painful for me. This very selfish mistake, on my behalf was not a decision that I carefully considered and I deeply regret that.

My duties as being the Archmage Guildmaster, working for the king and cleaning up my family's reputation, because of my own misguided brother, who shall not be named, took nearly all of my time in the service to the realm. There was always some kind of emergency that required my time or expertise. I entrusted the care of my sons to the scribes that worked under me, which I had hoped would teach them what I was unable to, for my obligations were many.

I can see now that I have neglected my fatherly duties and picked the realm over my own blood, through some kind of misguided desire to create a better legacy for my boys, that I see was a bit foolhardy.

When I think about Kumara's brother Ladon and his time-traveling abilities, I have to admit that I am a bit jealous. If I had a chance to change my past, I know exactly what I would change and when I would change it. I would travel back to the months leading up to the death of my wife, take my family, leave the capitol, focus on being a better father and a better husband, instead of the Archmage Guildmaster for the Mage's Guild. Perhaps I would travel back to Moonglow and settle there, as I always enjoyed that place. Besides, there are many books and understandings in the great Lycaem Library to pass the time and reading the many accounts of our realm, brings me joy.

I do appreciate everything that Lord British and Mariah did for me early on, which I felt I owed the realm through a debt of great service. The consequences of my choices had never been starker though, as when I retired from being the Guildmaster. I found myself with more time to spend with my family, but found a family that had gone adrift and who didn't have time to spend with me. I have worked hard to correct the mistakes I made as a father, by being the best grandfather that I could, but my sleepless nights are often filled with those choices replaying in my head. Those choices are reenforced with an obvious notion, that I am mostly alone in my later years and the worst part is, I know that I likely deserve it.

The events of the past few months have drawn me back into the fray once again and I worry that I am starting to neglect my grand-children in the same way that I had neglected my own children. History always seems to have a way of repeating itself, as irony would have it. I suppose that is why the scholars refer to fate as a cruel mistress. I think though, perhaps fate is less cruel and more deserved. I see now that fate less of a mistress and more like a marriage.

So, with this notion, it becomes something easy for me to understand, that not only am I the captain of my own-fate, but only I am accountable for those outcomes that transpired from decisions. My actions or all actions, for that matter, carry on to deliver the consequences, of which they are quite inescapable it seems. Sometimes we only have one chance to get it right, when often we don't have the ability to even know what correctness might even look like and thus irony wins out in the end.

I have decided to write my grand-children more often, even if this action takes away from the help, I am to provide to Kumara. He has requested of me to write what I have witnessed, as well as assist with locating his brother Ladon and I know this task is very important, but I cannot abandon my family all over again either, for this I know full-well, that I must not do.

I look down in my hands now and as I see two parcels, each representing two paths and I must work very hard going forward, so as to not neglect either. In my left hand is a letter to my family in Vesper and in my right hand is the package for Mariah, containing copies of the "*Logic Matrix*", "*The Book of Virtues*" and a hope for her assistance.

Through the work of the realm, after Zara had recovered "*The Book of Virtues*", we were able to solve the riddle of how to unlock this book. six blessed [Order Shields], the very crest of Lord British himself, had to be melted down at the Dragon Soulforge and this metal was poured over the tome, unlocking the words inside.

Sadly, most of the concepts within the book are already known. This discovery caused me to spend some time thinking about this too. Was this book available to the people of our realm, at some earlier point? Did Lord British somehow know these things, when he established his book of virtues, which was long believed to be the original primer for all of the virtues and their understandings? Or, did our realm reveal these virtues separately, but exactly the way it was supposed to be discovered? Was there some kind of guiding hand at work then? That would suggest a high degree of fate or destiny being at play, which also suggests little input to change the outcome.

These deep seeded philosophies would require some thought, and more thought than I alone, could contribute. These notions also unravel the bedrock understandings of my own decisions regarding my family and I find myself more confused and less certain, as I think about them. This struggle of mine is not something typical for someone who was the Guildmaster of the Mage's Guild, but since my mind does toil regardless, I know these complex problems require some help to solve.

As for the new details within "*The Book of Virtues*", There were some interesting revelations I noticed with regards to the mottos of each virtue, especially the motto of Humility, that read: "Only the worthy receives a bended knee", which seemed to be nothing of what we understood Humility to be. Also imbedded in this book were reference numbers that relate to "*The Logic Matrix*", so there must be a correlation to both that book and "*The Book of Virtues*".

It would be good to get Mariah's perspectives on these matters, as she is the Keeper of Lore for our realm and knows a great many things. Perhaps even, one day I may ask her about my other thoughts that I have been thinking lately, but I will leave that for another time.

First stop, will be to the city of Moonglow, to see if I can hand deliver this parcel to Mariah herself, as I am not entirely sure I would trust any kind of currier with this sensitive material. Next, I will travel to Vesper to spend a few days with my son and his family. Valkyries has made me some small trinkets and gifts to hand out and I can't wait to share them and the stories of our recent exploits with my granddaughters.

-Archmage Guildmaster

Markus arrived in town today and he seldom visits Moonglow anymore, especially since the upheaval that took him from this very place to Britain so many years ago. As I looked over the sandals on display, I remembered the task fell to him to honor the Unknown Mage and I was very careful when I put them back, as to make sure I placed them in the exact way, to arranged them as he had first done. I laughed a bit, as Markus being back in Moonglow had triggered inside of me, those memories from so long ago. I continued to stare at the sandals of the Unknown mage, [A Pair of Completely Normal Sandals], for surely nothing was normal about those shoes.

I was so over-zealous once I got discovery-fever, as I always am about anything I focus on and I often witnessed the same affect overtake my friend Markus too, so many times before. I eventually discovered the sandals belonging to Ladon, then later found that Ladon was the Avatar of ImaNewbie

and the Unknown Mage as well. I could never prove the following, but I always believed that Ladon was the stranger that Lord British summoned to this world, that later became the Avatar himself.

It was not becoming of a champion of honesty to steal sandals, but I did return them, as I didn't want those sandals to go missing, as things usually have of a way of doing just that, during times of great upheavals. The mark on the side of the sandals, was the thing, the one thing that eluded me, of which I could find absolutely no reference for. I knew once I could compare that mark with something else, I would be very close to proving something very profound, but that wasn't the task at hand.

I looked down to the parcel in my hands, of which Markus had given to me and then he left again, to visit his family in Vesper. Shall I dedicate myself again to the research and shall I develop a case of discovery-fever one more time?

Of course, I shall, but not for any selfish reasons, such as personal ambitions or my petty desires, for this wasn't about me. My friend needed my help and this realm owes him a great debt too.

When he moved to Britain, he was crucial to the events that eventually led to many discoveries and victories that others so easily claim, yet he never complained or even questioned the matters. Instead, Markus loyally worked for the King as his personal scribe and as the Archmage Guildmaster for the Mage's guild.

There he stayed in service to the king and the realm and when he retired, he continued to serve the realm loyally. I wish he could find peace at-last, as I could tell something was bothering him very much. He has been through so much suffering, for the deeds of his brother, Mondain too. I know he feels responsible for Mondain's actions in some way, but he shouldn't, nor should he blame himself for anything else, as to me, the man is blameless of any wrong doing.

Over the years I have come to really admire my friend and, in another life, I might have quite fancied him too. Still though, something was off about him today, as something was very different now and it wasn't his age gaining a foothold either, for this I could sense. Perhaps it is his work at the PAWS Soulforge and perhaps it is something else entirely.

No, it must be his work, as he is always so dedicated and focused on his research, for it takes one to know one, indeed.

I unwrapped the parcel and took a look at the notes that the Archmage had left for me. I looked down at both of the books, "*The Logic Matrix*" and the "*The Book of Virtues*", then hurried over to a dusty bookcase, where I found a copy of "*ImaNewbie Does Britannia*" waiting for me. I sat the books down and arranged them in front of myself, as I also sat down at the table. I placed the books in a near perfectly aligned array, forming a suitable symmetry to my liking. Almost, I thought, as I shuffled the books a bit, until I was happy with their formation and then I opened the first book, "*The Book of Virtues*".

Several hours later Anna the Scribe came in and asked me how I was doing or if there was anything that she could assist with me. "Put some coffee on my dear and bring more candles please", I replied. "But Milady it is nearly the middle of the night and everyone has gone to bed already", Anna the scribe interjected.

“Then wake them up, for this is going to be a long night and a very early morning”, I said with a smile.
“Yes Ma’am”, she returned to me, as she exited the Lycaenum Library.

I turned back to the book I was studying, then peered upon the many open and discarded books that lay upon the ground around me, as I then I said to myself:

For there is much work to be done.

-Mariah the Champion of the virtue of Honesty

I had been away from Valkyries’ house for several days and I really enjoyed the time-spent with my family and they seemed to enjoy my company in return, which made me feel quite good, considering my thoughts that consumed my conscious leading up to the visit.

I approached The PAWS Soulforge and from a distance and I could tell we had visitors, two horses next to a very familiar friend, Kumara’s black and white dire wolf, the very same dire wolf who could understand words. The dogs’ ears piqued up as he heard me approaching and walked over, intercepting me to say hello.

Why hello dog, good to see you, I said, as the hound fired back a noisy bark to greet my return.

The door opened and Kumara walked out to see what had the dog’s attention. “Archmage, welcome back”, he said, as Zara ran past him, to my location.

I got off my summoned steed so I could greet Zara and Kumara. Zara put her hands out to her side, holding out an imaginary dress-skirt, then curtsied, as she said, “hello Archmage”. I put both of my hands together and bowed before her in proper etiquette, as this now seems to be our custom, then said, “Malady”, then looked towards Kumara to greet him as well.

Zara then ran up to me, hugging me and hurriedly-ushered me inside of the house, to greet her father, the ranger-scout and her mother, for which I had yet to meet.

Zara then shared with me a book that Saint Valentine had created for her entitled: “*Rabbit & the Hound*” and then told me that she was tasked with the responsibility of giving the dog his name and she wanted me to be a part of this. Zara felt very strongly that the naming of this animal was a rather big deal. I promised to read the book and the next day we could arrange a small naming ceremony for the dire wolf.

After several hours, it was getting late and Valkyries had gone up into the attic to make sleeping arrangements for our three guests, in the Christmas room. This was when a knock came to the door and Valkyries wasn’t there to answer it, so I took the liberty to do so. Upon opening the door, standing before me was Anna the scribe of the Lycaenum library in Moonglow and I knew she had word back from Mariah.

“Archmage”, as Anna bowed to me and I returned the gesture. Anna removed from her traveling-pack a book entitled: “*Research Codex*” penned by Mariah and told me she was instructed to deliver this to me. As Anna continued to speak, I opened the book and began to read, then she said:

“Milady Mariah has traveled to Trinsic, to meet with Sir Dupre and his paladins a day ago”. I quickly closed the book and looked at her in a puzzled way. “Everything she found is inside this book Archmage”, she insisted.

Valkyries came down the stairs, noticed the girl and took her by the arm, then closed the door. “You should not travel at night, so let me make a place for you down here by the forge, as it is very warm down here, to counter the cool-spring evenings”, Valkyrie affirmed, ignoring the woman’s half-attempt at protesting.

I looked down at both of the books in my hand, to the stair case next, then to the occupants in the room and then, I excused myself to my reading chair on the second floor, for I had much reading to do.

“Shall I make some coffee Archmage”, Valkyrie asked of me. I looked down at the books again, then back towards Valkyries and gave her a reassuring smile.

Thank you, my friend, that will be of great use, as it so-seems to be required, I gratefully responded.

I spent the night reviewing the material, the first being the “*Research Codex*”, then that of the book that Zara had given to me, then back to “*The Research Codex*”. I re-read the book, “*Rabbit & the Hound*” and then back to the work that Mariah had uncovered, for I was completely taken back by both volumes. It was clear that it was in-fact a big deal to name this dire wolf, for his exploits were indeed great.

I was especially interested in the section about Kumara traveling to Covetous to meet with the dragon Sudiva and what the purpose of this mysterious green crystal was all about.

I would need to also involve Kumara with the discoveries that Mariah had made, as she was off to retrieve Lord Dupre and then to the dungeon of Wrong. It was almost morning and I was extremely tired, so I closed my eyes to get a couple of hours of sleep, before the next day, which I would need my rest for.

The next day would clearly be a very busy at that, so with my eyes closed, I drifted off to sleep.

-Archmage Guildmaster

Lord Dupre is a very fascinating individual, as everyone knows his storied past and exploits. He might be the greatest champion of our virtues, but a stranger may never know this by simply having a conversation with him, instead they would have to read about it.

I have shared some of those exploits with him over the years, but his history is vast and because of his journey, he is extremely old, one of the oldest known citizens of our realm. Hundreds of years in-fact, though he does not look it, as he is still very youthful. Magiks are always an interesting and

unpredictable course, as with our own history too, for both-often paint our own picture, in a way as they could only see fit to do so.

He seldom speaks, in-fact none of the paladins seem to speak much as we make our way to the dungeon of Wrong, so I dispatched with the small-talk and got directly to my curiosities. I had asked him to review the material in "*The Book of Virtues*", "*The Logic Matrix*" and "*ImaNewbie Does Britannia*" regarding his specific virtue, of that-of honor.

From my research I felt that each champion of virtue, would be able to discover some significant meaning embedded within the "*ImaNewbie Does Britannia*" works, that Ladon had made many years before. His specific episodes were that of episode 23 and 13. Episode 23 says, "Ima meets the girl of his dreams!", while episode 13 is entitled, "purchases his first horse". I explained to him that I felt the first episode must be related to a sword in some way, while the last episode is more conceptual in nature. I further explained to him the discovery I had made about my own virtue, that of honesty, which was now consuming our attention, as the mountain range that held the dungeon of Wrong was coming into view. I was to travel to this place and look for something "DARK" and that was why I needed his help.

When Lord Dupre did speak-up, he told me that he often had re-occurring dreams of a woman he had never met before and she was always the same woman, yet he has never met her. He had no way of understanding the importance of this, he said, but did add, that she had suffered greatly in some horrible way. This sounded more-like a nightmare to me, then perhaps a dream, but maybe a vision.

Yes, I thought, as this clearly was something of significant value, yet the nature of this vision had still-yet to be revealed.

As for a sword, he pulled his weapon from his side, a brightly-colored and golden sword to show me, then said, "this weapon founded the paladins of Trinsic. This weapon is as old as the city itself is and belonged to the very first paladin, for this is the only sword that comes to mind, as you ask your questions". He mentioned that the sword, over the years has gone missing, but has always returned the head of the Paladins of Trinsic, even before there was an official order.

That last part was profound indeed, but sadly, I did not obtain a very good look at the weapon, though I have seen him with this artifact several times before. The glare of the day, had prevented me from getting a decent view of it, but perhaps I would ask to see it again when we were off these horses, in a place that was more suitable for conversation and thought.

A few moments went by, as our expedition on horseback marched on, the entrance to the alcove that harbored the graveyard mausoleum just outside of Wrong came into view. Lord Dupre spoke up again by saying, "Chalice", as he looked at me. Confused by this, I raised my eye-brows as if to ask what he meant.

"My first horse was named Chalice, named after our sigil of the order of the paladin". Are we to find a cup I wondered and how does this refer to a concept, what is this Chalice, I asked?

"I looked at your book, the *Logic Matrix* and the overall design of the numbers, how they are displayed is familiar to me, as I know about this thing", he said. "For the way those numbers are formed in this book, create a symbol and that symbol is the sigil of our first paladin, Maleki."

“I am directly related to him, as these things were taught to me by my guide of this world, prophetess Xenka, who is a master of some kind of ancient magic herself and she is a wise-guide indeed.”

What does the sigil mean Sir? I asked of Dupre.

“The sigil is the chalice, it is the very nature of what it means to be a paladin, for that nature is represented by a cup, which is the foundation of our paladin order and the virtue of honor itself. It is not an actual cup, but instead the chalice is a process of purification as the paladins are the protectors of this process. This book speaks about the same kind of process too, for it is clear to me that this book, that you say comes from Hathors, bestowed to Kumara, given to the Archmage, who gave to you and now has given it to me, is in-fact our chalice”, Lord Dupre said. The lord added a small pause of speak, then added, “Of this, I have no doubt”.

He also told me that Venus had left a message for him at the pub in Trinsic, on a message board of all places and this made me giggle a bit, as I was drawn back into something a little less grand. He was instructed to explore a dungeon and eventually find his way to the Empath Abbey.

Why the Abbey of all places, I wondered to myself and then I had a sense of some discovery on the horizon, something that was mulling around in my head that seemed to latch onto this notion. I could not place my thoughts on what it was, but something very important as he said the words “Empath Abbey”, clicked inside of me. I would need to think more about this at another time.

Lord Dupre does not speak often, but when he does, he has much to say it seems, which is perfect by my standards, as also, we have much to uncover together. I have always appreciated working with him, though he has his own way and that way is clearly unique in some grand presentation, as this is unmistakable. It is like watching destiny itself, unfold around him and he so casually accepts or wades through it with ease.

We were almost to the dungeon of Wrong and I was going to need his help there, for this place is very dangerous. The heavy iron doors of the mausoleum were directly in front of us now and Sir Dupre ordered his men off their horses and to clear the path ahead.

Dupre got off his steed and helped me down, then he pulled the sword from his side and looked upon it. The detail work on this blade was rather impressive, as I could clearly see it now. I have never seen anything like this weapon before either. It looked to be made of gold, but it wasn't, for it was something else, some kind of metal that I was unfamiliar with. The guard above the hilt had a pair of dragons on either side, with an unmatched craftsmanship about them, each holding in their mouth a ruby. Those rubies were very magnificent too, because they shined so-brightly, even without the sun bearing down upon them.

Lord Dupre smiled as he looked at the weapon then looked over to me, winking at me in some kind of reassuring over-confidence that always possessed him, then said: “Shall we?”

The paladins had secured the entrance to the cave with little effort and after searching the first floor we proceeded to the second level. The lizard-men and ogres that we had faced thus far were quite superior in strength to how one may expect them to be, but Dupre and his paladins did not seem to have any trouble dispatching with them. His men encircled the Lord as he walked and as he did, they moved and struck very accurate strikes, dealing the creatures to the next paladin in the formation, for further

punishment. If anything-ever encroached the circle, the paladins formed around Dupre, the Lord himself would engage the target, which only required a few strikes from his mighty sword. It was clear his weapon was exceptionally sharp, by the way it cut down its foes. In-fact it was oddly and dangerously sharp.

I realized this formation that the paladins created around Lord Dupre, wasn't for his benefit, but for mine instead and I felt embarrassed by this notion. I decided to cast a few spells myself, as to show Lord Dupre what real arcane power looked like, for he must have clearly forgotten.

On the second floor we reached a group of cannibals who didn't look to be human any longer and I rained meteor strikes down from above them. The entire room full of these horrific looking human-like things fell to the ground, laying before his paladins, as they instantly were no longer a threat to us.

Lord Dupre looked to me and I winked back at him, in the same way that he had done to me, a few moments earlier outside. Dupre laughed with a beaming-smile on his face, then quickly dropped his smile, turned to his men and yelled: "Search the cells" and so they did.

Inside one of the cells was a prisoner, a rogue by the name of Seguin, who we freed as his rescuers. He explained to us he had just been captured a month prior and that on the first floor was a prize that he was after, so if we freed and fed him, we could have it. He went on to explain this place to Lord Dupre and as he spoke, I looked around the room and noticed several skeletons. Some of these remains were very old and must have been prisoners here a very long time ago, then I noticed something unexpected in this very room of torture, something of a profound significance too.

In the corner of the room near a pile of bones lay a very old piece of cloth with a metal button on it. On this semi-rusted piece of metal was a mark and as the item came into my focus I yelled out:

"The mark!"

Lord Dupre stopped questioning the rogue for a moment and looked my way. "What did you find" the paladin commander asked of me. The mark on this bottom, for it is the exact same mark as the one on the sandals in Moonglow. I have never seen another mark like this, until just now, I responded to the Lord Commander, as I continued to inspect the item, now in my hands. I then searched the area for more clues, regarding this item and who owned it.

Lord Dupre went back to questioning the rogue and then I found another button, with the same mark on it as the first one.

"Darkness", said Seguin the rogue.

What? I quickly piqued up and interjected. What did you just say? I asked.

"I said, I was here to recover the Blanket of Darkness", replied Seguin and that is when I was captured. Where is this Blanket of Darkness located, I demanded?

"The first floor, as I mentioned earlier of course. I will show you the way", replied a nervous Seguin.

Our party moved out of the cell and I secured the finds in my pocket and as we came to the hall with the pathway to the first level, loud noises could be heard from the room just ahead of us. Some kind of feast or party was underway.

“Fezzik the cook, for they capture and eat their prisoners”, the rogue commented about the ruckus.

Lord Dupre commanded his paladins to escort the rogue and myself to the Blanket of Darkness, then he held his sword, in both of his hands, as if caring for a newborn. The paladin commander strung his thumb across the sharp part of the blade, which gave out a loud singing noise and the occupants in the next room fell silent. He looked to me and smiled, then walked into the room with two other paladins to meet the lord of this house.

The rest of us continued to our destination, where I introduced the inhabitants of the room, that Sequin had pointed out to me, where the blanket was located, with the sting of a thousand pieces of class erupting around them. The paladins with me, entered the cell-block and cleared away the remaining survivors of ogres and lizard-men and as they did, Seguin showed me where this blanket was.

I picked up the item and clearly saw that there was something strange about this thing, I could feel its dark magik around it, but this was not the place to inspect or research such a find, so we made haste for the entrance instead.

I handed the blanket to one of the paladins in our party and we ventured back to the front of the dungeon.

Dupre had already finished with his task and was waiting for us outside and he said, “the Lord of the house has been delt with and I shall see that you safely arrive at The PAWS Soulfroge, as I assume this is your next stop”.

Yes, I responded and thank you Lord Dupre, I added.

“It seems we are now bound together on this quest, you and I, as I have many questions still”, he said.

I put my foot into the stirrup of my horse and climbed upon the steed, as I settled into the saddle, I looked over to the mighty paladin commander, then returned back to him:

As do I Lord Dupre.

-Mariah the Champion of the Virtue of Honesty

End of part 1

The Golden Trio and the Quest for Ladon

Sandals of Time

Author: *Mathew D. Miles*

The Golden Trio & the Quest for Ladon part 1: *Part of the 3rd series entitled: “The Golden Trio”*

About the books: Each book within each series acts as a character in a much larger play. They will tell their own story from their own perspective written by a specific avatar in a specific way. All the books of each series will develop themes and concepts unique to each series, while the 5 series of books in total will tell a much larger story. In addition, a repeating theme is on display in every way possible within all works. They are the following:

*To remember, is to find your way.

*This is the story of your realm and everyone has a part to play.

Book series: *Sandals of Time*

Series 1: *The PAWS Soulforge and the Quest for Ladon*

Series 2: *The Star of Zara and the Quest for Ladon*

Series 3: *The Golden Trio and the Quest for Ladon*

Series 4: *Tocatta and Feud and the Quest for Ladon*

Series Finale: *Succubus & Valkyries and the Quest for Ladon*

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