



Shadow Blizzard: The Chronicles of Siala

By Alexey Pehov

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In *Shadow Blizzard*, the third book by international bestselling fantasy author Alexey Pehov, already the armies of orcs and the Nameless One have begun their assault on the Northern Lands, and the days of despair and devastation have commenced. Even if Harold can successfully steal the Horn, will he be in time to save his world from destruction?

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Editorial Review

Review

“The second of the Chronicles of Siala is as mesmerizing as *Shadow Prowler*...Former friends become the enemy, and there are plenty of undead and magic to contend with, all described in beautiful detail. Again, Pehov's mastery pulls the reader into the story, creating vibrant interpersonal encounters in a believable world.” *?Booklist on Shadow Chaser*

“Employing all the standard trappings of the genre, this sequel to *Shadow Prowler* enjoys a freshness of vision that elevates it beyond standard fantasy fare.” *?Library Journal on Shadow Chaser*

“Toothy, gritty, and relentless. Alexey Pehov sneaks up on you and fascinates with the wry voice of a young Moorcock. Clear space on your shelf--you'll want the whole series.” *?E. E. Knight on Shadow Prowler*

“Those who like fantasy novels offering ogres, elves, undead creatures, wizards, and the like joined in an epic quest will be delighted...pitched battles are described so well that they seem to unfold before one's eyes. A first book in a series that piques interest for the others.” *?Booklist on Shadow Prowler*

“Bestselling Russian author Pehov translates easily in his English fantasy debut...protagonist Shadow Harold proves modest and witty enough a narrator to carry the series.” *?Publishers Weekly on Shadow Prowler*

“[Shadow Harold is] almost like some character out of *The Adventures of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser* by Fritz Leiber. He's an unlikely sort of hero for a series... *Shadow Prowler* is a very good beginning to Alexey Pehov's trilogy.” *?BSC Reviews on Shadow Prowler*

“The story is engrossing, the characters intriguing and dynamic; there are mysteries galore and the very real sense as we set out that far creepier things are waiting down the road. In short, a book that I didn't want to put down.” *?Chris Claremont, bestselling writer of the X-Men and Wolverine, on Shadow Prowler*

“A book that most fantasy readers will want to read and explore.... In short, if you like reading fantasy, you'll love reading this book.” *?Graeme's Fantasy Book Reviews on Shadow Prowler*

About the Author

Alexey Pehov is the award-winning author of *The Chronicles of Siala*, a bestselling series in his native Russia. His novel *Under the Sign of the Mantikor* was named "Book of Year" and "Best Fantasy Novel" in 2004 by Russia's largest fantasy magazine, *World of Fantasy*.

Andrew Bromfield has many translation credits to his name, among them the bestselling *Night Watch* series.

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Shadow Blizzard

The little green goblin reacted rather sensitively when I criticized the Forests of Zagraba. “So what were you expecting, Harold? A fanfare?” Kli-Kli asked, waxing indignant. If I expressed dissatisfaction with anything,

even some withered little flower, the royal jester launched into a passionate tirade in defense of his home country.

“No, I just thought Zagraba was a bit different from this,” I relied peaceably, already regretting that I’d started this conversation.

“So what do you think it ought to be like?” Kli-Kli asked me.

“Well, I don’t know...,” I drawled thoughtfully, trying to get the tedious goblin off my back.

“If you don’t know, then why are you talking nonsense?” The blue-eyed fool kicked a tussock of grass that was unfortunate enough to be in front of his foot. “He doesn’t like this! He doesn’t like that! What did you hope your naïve and innocent gaze would behold? Majestic trees ninety yards high? Or streams flowing with blood and oburs under every bush? I’m sorry, we don’t have that here. Zagraba’s a real forest, not a collection of children’s stories!”

“I realize that,” I said with a placid nod.

“He realizes, hah!”

“Kli-Kli, don’t make so much noise,” Eel said without turning round. He was walking in front of us.

The surly titch gave the tall swarthy Garrakian a resentful look, pouted, and stopped talking, and for the next two hours it was impossible to drag a word out of him.

This was our fifth day of walking through Zagraba. Yes, yes, that didn’t seem to make sense. Nine crazy characters, including two dark elves, one goblin, one broad-shouldered dwarf, one cantankerous bearded gnome, one gloomy knight, two warriors, and a fairly young, rather shifty-looking guy, striding along between the pine trees and bawling at the tops of their voices.

Why were they bawling? Because they were all crackpots.

Why were they crackpots? Because no normal person would stick his nose into the Land of Forests for any kind of money, and especially not into the territory of the orcs, who were famous throughout Siala for the warm welcome they give to strangers.

But in actual fact we weren’t all that crazy (speaking for myself, at least). It’s just that we were forced to stick our noses into Zagraba by a certain circumstance that went by the name of the Rainbow Horn.

What in the name of darkness did we want that damned tin whistle for anyway? Well, if it was up to me, I wouldn’t go to Hrad Spein to get the Horn for love or money. But I wasn’t a free man; I had a Commission hanging over my head, and by midwinter, I had to bring the Horn back to the Order of Magicians in the glorious city of Avendoom, otherwise we could say good-bye to the kingdom.

The Rainbow Horn, stupidly hidden by magicians of the past in the very depths of the Palaces of Bone, was the only thing holding back the Nameless One, who had borne a grudge against our kingdom for the last five hundred years or so. And the power of the Horn was weakening, and next May we could expect the sorcerer to come visiting, together with all the forces of the entire Desolate Lands. Naturally, nobody was exactly waiting to greet the Nameless One with open arms, and the Order of Magicians was desperate to get hold of the Horn in order to drive the enemy back into the icy wilderness.

So that was what we were doing in Zagraba. We were collecting the Horn, saving the world, and getting up

to all sorts of other useless and foolish nonsense.

Stupid? Well, maybe. I woke up every morning with that idea in my head, but for some reason no one wanted to listen to me. Miralissa didn't—and Alistan Markauz most certainly didn't.

But it was my own fault—I accepted a Commission that couldn't just be torn up. So I had to puff and pant, run and shout as I struggled to clamber out of a heap of ... problems.

But then, the Commission did have its good points, too. When the work was done, I'd get fifty thousand gold pieces and a royal pardon ... it's just that I'd never heard of dead men being in any need of money or a pardon. What corpses usually require is a deep grave and a headstone.

Why would I say all this? Because everything that happened to our group on the way from Avendoom to Zagraba was a mere afternoon stroll in the park. But in Zagraba, and especially in Hrad Spein, things were going to get really tough. I didn't have any illusions (well, maybe just the tiniest little one) about the success of our mission.

"Harold, are you playing the fool again?" Kli-Kli's voice distracted me from my gloomy thoughts.

"Playing the fool is your job. I'm a thief, not a royal jester," I told the little swine morosely.

"That's your bad luck. If you were a jester, you wouldn't have got caught out with this Commission from the king. You'd be sitting at home, swigging beer...."

I suddenly felt an irresistible desire to give the little green wretch a good kick, but he evidently read my thoughts and went darting after Eel, so I had to postpone my reprisal for another time.

From the very moment we set foot in Zagraba, Miralissa had set a frantic pace for the group, and at the end of the first day I almost died. We stopped for the night in a forest clearing, and I felt like I wouldn't be able to get up next morning. If everyone else liked tramping through the forest so much, then that was their right, but I'd rather lie on the grass and take a rest. If they liked, they could take turns carrying me piggyback, because I was willing to swear by Sagot that I didn't have any strength left for strolling through the woods.

And the next morning really was tough. I had to force myself to get up, grit my teeth, and tramp, tramp, tramp. But by lunchtime I'd more or less got into the rapid rhythm, and the next day I almost stopped feeling tired. In fact, I began to suspect the elfess was adding some of her magical supplies to the cooking pot to make our daily marches easier to bear.

Since we entered Zagraba, all the fires had been lit by Egrassa. And amazingly enough, a fire lit by Miralissa's cousin gave almost no smoke. The first night I was a little bit nervous that the flames might attract unwelcome attention, but the cautious elf didn't seem too worried, and that meant there was no point in me getting agitated, either.

Despite my skeptical attitude to Zagraba, during the five days we had been walking through the forest, we had seen many wonderful things. We followed animal tracks that appeared and then disappeared again in the tangled ferns and prickly brambles. We walked through dense copses of black Zagraban oak, pine groves, forest clearings, and small meadows flooded with sunlight and overgrown with forest flowers. We jumped across babbling brooks with crystal-clear water. The forest stretched on and on: leagues and leagues of groves and copses, impenetrable tracts of fallen timber that we had to skirt round, losing precious time in the process, dozens of meadows and boggy hollows in places where streams dammed by unknown creatures had overflowed.

And not a sign of orcs.

Only the squirrels greeted us with their furious chatter and followed the group, jumping from branch to branch and tree to tree. The day before yesterday, after clambering through trees felled by a spring storm, we came out into a beautiful forest meadow covered by flowers in colors so bright they seemed to ripple in front of my eyes. But the moment Egrassa stepped into the meadow, the flowers exploded into a brilliant rainbow and went soaring up into the sky, turning into thousands of butterflies of every possible size and color. With his natural curiosity, Kli-Kli tried to catch one of them, but he wound up stuck up to his ears down someone's burrow. We wasted a lot of time getting the goblin out of there and he caught it hot from Miralissa and Count Markauz. From then on Kli-Kli tried to keep out of their sight and strode along in the company of your humble servant.

Beside a copse of oaks, where there was a jolly babbling stream carrying along the fallen leaves like little boats, we came across a wild boar. He was a mature tusker—two men could easily have sat on his back at the same time. If a beast like that ended up on the dinner table, two companies of ravenous soldiers would have had a hard time finishing him off.

Deler, as the most intelligent and agile, was up a tree in a moment. And that despite the fact that the beech had no branches near the ground, which any self-respecting dwarf would have needed for climbing up. The tusker gazed at us with his small, black, malicious eyes, grunted furiously, and came for us.

But Miralissa only had to flash her yellow eyes and hold out her hand for the boar to stop dead and then just walk away, grunting apologetically.

Deler looked down at the elfess with sincere admiration from the height of his refuge and then climbed back down. We moved through the forest in single file, following Egrassa's lead, with the rear of our little column brought up by Alistan Markauz. The count's hand never left the hilt of his beloved sword, but the triangular oak shield hung behind his shoulder.

The elf said that moving in this way had already saved our lives three times. With true gnomish stubbornness, Hallas objected rebelliously that that was absolute nonsense, and he definitely didn't like seeing a dwarf's backside right under his nose. Egrassa simply laughed at that.

"As soon as I get the chance, I'll be glad to demonstrate the surprises of Zagraba to the respected master gnome," he said.

His chance came soon enough. Egrassa jabbed at the ground ahead of him with a stick that h...

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