

**Ronnie Hawkins****"Magica Story"**

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It has been a thousand years since the once powerful planet of Blessing lost its life-giving two suns, and countless millennia since the days of the great magicians. An expedition of alien voyagers came upon the now ice-covered sphere, drawn there by an unexplained lone beacon far below the miles of frozen moisture, they unlocked a written history of Blessing from its almost undiscovered tomb. So begins the story of Magica.

It was a time of celebration. The Book of Magica and the wizards who had used its spells so wisely for the good of the people were being honored in all the great cities of the world. There was however an exception. Where good thrives, evil survives and evil has plans for survival.

The celebration of thanks and prosperity would signal the forces of Evilsyde to begin the attack and ultimate capture and destruction of Magica. The spells from the Book would be used to turn all of those unwilling to join Evilsyde into statues of stone and send their spirits to Otherworld, where they would eventually be assimilated into the energy needed to drive Evilsyde, and maintain its power without the necessity of the Book and its incantations forever.

Defenses were naturally relaxed during the festive preparations and although the battle was well-fought by both factions, the minions of the dark prevailed. Their assault was well-planned and executed to a fault. After overwhelming their initial opposition, they pushed on to the sacred ground upon which the Book of Magica rested. They possessed a much weaker form of magic themselves, and although it would be normally quite useless against the strength of Magica, the inability of the Wizards to gather themselves together in time, coupled with the perfect timing and determination of the attackers, spelled doom for the Book and its followers.

The leader of the insurrection was the high priest and executioner known as Shadowcast. His presence could make the naughtiest of children become obedient and inspire great fear among the adult population. This man, most vile, would now be ruler of all and answerable to none. His reign would plunge Blessing into eternal darkness and prepare the way for the coming of his master, Astoroth, the Grand Duke of Hell.

The capture of Magica did not, however, mean that Shadowcast had finally reached his goal. He must now find and conquer Blessing's Grand Wizard and legendary hero, Eriel. Eriel, who defeated Evilsyde time and again with his understanding and use of Magica's spells. He would be the last stumbling block to total domination.

Eriel had removed himself from the general population in anticipation of everlasting peace and now he devoted

all of  
his energy to meditation and praise of his God. Lately  
though,  
he had been visited by many temptations in his  
dreams.  
Promises of pleasure, riches and power raced through  
his  
sleeping mind. All these lures had been placed there  
by  
Shadowcast, hoping to avoid confrontation between  
this  
dominant man and his own villainous forces. Eriel  
however  
had resisted these solicitations and was now warned of  
some  
impending danger. He managed to make his way to  
the  
sacred ground by cloaking his identity with simple  
spells, only  
to be discovered just before his attempt to rescue the  
Book of  
Magica, but not before he was able to memorize the  
most  
important of Magica's charms. The spell of  
Restoration.

The ceremony of thanksgiving was now directed  
toward the  
transmission of spirits to Otherworld. One by one the  
good  
souls of Blessing were turned to stone and sent on to  
their  
grisly fate, until only the noble Eriel remained. The  
spectacle  
that followed was meant to degrade Eriel and raise the  
courage of the cowardly supplicants of Evilsyde, but  
true to  
his indominatable bearing, he promised to return and  
banish  
Evilsyde forever. Then he was gone.

The horrors of Otherworld are now revealed to the  
masses  
huddled together for some small measure of comfort.  
First  
the adults were separated from their children amid  
cries and  
pleas for help. Next the old ones were taken away and  
assigned to a place very near the assimilation site.  
They were  
guarded by monstrous, misshapen denizens of this

mist-  
shrouded netherland, who constantly harangued the  
inmates  
with promises of pain and extermination. Intermittent  
bursts  
of flame shot up from jagged cracks in the ground,  
threatening to consume anyone in its path. Shrieks of  
torment  
could be heard piercing the murky atmosphere, further  
unnerving the petrified captives. Only one seemed  
unaffected  
by all the inflicted fear and turmoil. Eriel's strength  
and  
determination soon pacified the men and women with  
whom  
he was confined. When they all became more calm and  
subdued, he began to speak to them softly as an adult  
to his  
children. "Long ago you entrusted me to protect the  
Book of  
Magica and to be faithful to its special purpose. It must  
seem  
that I have failed you and condemned us all to oblivion,  
but  
fear not! This hell is only a test of your faith and  
resolve. The  
power of Magica did not vanish in fire. On the third day  
I will  
evoke the spell of Restoration. United we shall return to  
Blessing and, armed with the strength of Magica, we  
will be  
triumphant. Many will perish, but Magica and our souls  
cannot  
be restored until three days have passed. Take heart  
my  
friends. Victory awaits you."

Even magic has its limitations and, as Eriel explained  
to his  
flock, the spell could not be activated until a waiting  
period of  
at least three days. One third of the souls of Blessing  
would  
be melded into the Evilsyde collective before Eriel  
could be  
effective with the words of Restoration.

The old ones were the first to go. Cries of  
encouragement  
and hope were shouted to the condemned as they  
trudged

slowly to their fate. One by one they were thrown into the assimilation chamber where a blinding blue spark gave evidence of their demise. With each burst Eriel's heavy heart ached with guilt for his part in this slaughter of his charges. If only he had not become so complacent. He above all should never have let this tragedy transpire.

In the compound holding the young adults, an insurrection of sorts was occurring. A boy of seventeen years called Challis was urging an uprising among his captured companions. Futile though it was, it earned Challis a place in the cell adjoining Eriel's. His rantings and ravings were soon quelled by Eriel's quiet urging and the two settled into serious conversation. Eriel knew his time of assimilation was near and only hoped it would not be scheduled before the three day waiting period for Restoration was ended. Shadowcast wanted to personally oversee Eriel's termination but couldn't abandon his duties on Blessing until all was secure. Would there be enough time?

Eriel realized some of his own strong qualities in Challis and decided that this was an opportunity not to be lost. He instructed Challis to remove all anger from his mind and hate from his heart. Only the pure could receive and transmit this most important of spells. Convinced that this young man was ready, he joined with his spirit and gave him these words. "Sanasha Gorath Sollis Arcanna." Words that would resurrect the masses if delivered correctly and in time.

Over two days had passed before Shadowcast was ready for travel to Otherworld to deliver Eriel to his fate. His

journey  
through Otherworld was marked by what could pass for  
cheers, if they weren't shouted from the mouths of  
utterly  
inhuman shapes and forms. Upon his arrival he  
instructed the  
guards to take him straight to Eriel. Once there he  
announced  
with great satisfaction that he would personally  
supervise  
Eriel's execution in a matter of hours. Nearby, Challis  
loudly  
voiced his objection to this treatment of his newly met  
hero  
and was rewarded by kicks and punches until he could  
no  
longer speak. Eriel's heart sank. Had he misjudged  
Challis  
and entrusted his people's future to a reckless youth?  
Eriel's  
mind wandered to his own younger days. He too had  
been  
restless and foolhardy, but in time had outgrown these  
traits  
and become the adored leader of Blessing. He  
wondered if  
Challis had yet experienced love. Eriel himself had  
turned his  
back on the beautiful and innocent Annica. She was his  
intended from birth, but he couldn't let love for this  
saintly  
child cloud his duties to Blessing and the Book.

One hour remained in the wait for Restoration. Eriel's  
hopes  
were soaring. Surely Shadowcast would fail once again.  
But  
as that thought surfaced, so did Evilsyde's dark  
leader. Eriel  
was led away with head held high, but as he passed  
Challis  
he gave just the slightest nod. A gesture that wasn't  
lost on  
the youth. Eriel was then taken to the assimilation  
chamber  
and strapped to the cross-like structure in the middle  
of the  
room. Seconds were all that stood in the way of  
resurrection  
or destruction. Shadowcast walked to Eriel, presumably  
to

gloat one last time to his old nemesis. Eriel welcomed the time that would be wasted, but at the last moment Shadowcast seemed to reconsider and raised his arm in signal for the end to begin. The arm dropped and, with crackle and hiss, Eriel was no more. Shadowcast and his minions erupted with joy. Never again to be slaves. Now to be masters.

Challis heard the cheering and knew that Eriel had passed without time to summon the spell. Now only he could influence the future. He heard the rattling of armor and realized they were coming for him. Soon the guards appeared and dragged the struggling Challis from his confinement. One of his jailers struck him a mighty blow across the face and suddenly all his anger left him. He was sure of what he must do. Thunder starts from silence and he would be thunder.

Challis was taken to the chamber and secured to the cross. Shadowcast approached him and asked if he had any last thing to say before assimilation. Challis smiled and said he did. Then with an evil laugh, Shadowcast raised his arm and announced that his question was only a final killing joke. It was now or never. As the arm fell in signal, Challis shouted out the spell. "Sanasha Gorath Sollis Arcanna?" and all hell actually broke loose. Challis and the good folk of Blessing were bathed in an incredible rush of light. Shadowcast and all his wicked throng writhed in agony in the darkness they were spawned from, as the fierce illumination sought them out and consumed each troll, ogre and gargoyle in a horrible melting

frenzy. Shadowcast, hiding in the last black space to be found, watched the light creep irresistibly toward him. At the last moment he cloaked his body with his unpriestly robe and muttered what sounded like an oath as the light touched the cloth. The robe erupted into flame and then there was nothing. Surely Shadowcast was also consumed by fire! But that tale would not yet be told. Now as each remaining citizen of Blessing was transported instantly back to their home, they found themselves standing among thousands of recognizable stone statues. These monuments represented their fallen comrades and would ever be a lasting testament to the dangers of evil and the power of Magica.

Now came the time of mourning. Funeral pyres brightened the night sky for weeks and songs of sorrow could be heard across the land long after the flames had sputtered and died. When the prolonged periods of grieving had ended, the citizens and their council directed attention to the task of anointing a new leader and protector of the restored Book of Magica. The choice seemed a simple one. Challis had resurrected the populace and the Book, but many questioned his youth and inexperience.

The debate raged on as the time of choosing approached. The candidates were summoned to the sacred place. Eloquent speeches were made on behalf of them all. Only Challis lacked a champion and it seemed certain that he would be passed over. "Will anyone speak for the boy?" asked the council. The question was greeted by silence as the judges turned away to cast their votes. Then the quiet was broken. A



handsome woman with golden hair, now flecked with  
traces of  
gray, spoke: "Challis must be chosen. This is the secret  
I  
have carried with me for all these years. Although I was  
once  
rebuffed by my only true love, Eriel, our brief union  
produced  
the young man standing before you. Eriel was never to  
know  
that he had sired this free spirit, but he will live on  
through his  
son's achievements if you now find him worthy." So  
spoke  
Annica, mother of Challis.

The decision was now reached quickly. Annica's  
revelation left  
little doubt in the minds of the councillors that Challis  
should  
indeed succeed his father. Evilsyde had been  
defeated,  
Shadowcast was hopefully destroyed, Challis had been  
chosen to lead his people and, despite the huge  
number of  
casualties, the old way of life began again. But, evil  
does not  
easily die. Shadowcast did indeed survive and persist  
in his  
attempts to challenge and conquer Blessing. Great  
battles  
would be fought. Brave heroes would rise to the  
occasion and  
legends were created. There was, of course, the  
unforgettable War of the Darkpeace when  
Challis.....Ah!  
But that's another story.

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