

## Selected Endorsments for Callenlas Chronicles

“Hess exhibits a care with words that is too rarely seen – her writing is simply beautiful. *The Dark Star* is for every boy who feels the pull to be something more, and every girl who longs to choose a life of adventure and meaning.”

**Tama Fortner, ECPA award-winning and bestselling writer**

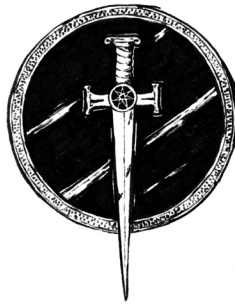
“Beautifully crafted, compellingly told ... I loved it!”

**Felicity Carswell, podcaster, Two Sisters & A Cup of Tea**

“A tale of adventure, heroism, love and daring all set in a world that hints at ancient depths and lore. What I love most is that, as you are drawn in to the journey of each character – their joys and struggles, fears and bravery, mistakes and growth – you realise that it is the same journey you are travelling under the tender, guiding hand of God.”

**Michael J Tinker, Songwriter**

# THE LOST PRINCE



Callenlas Chronicles

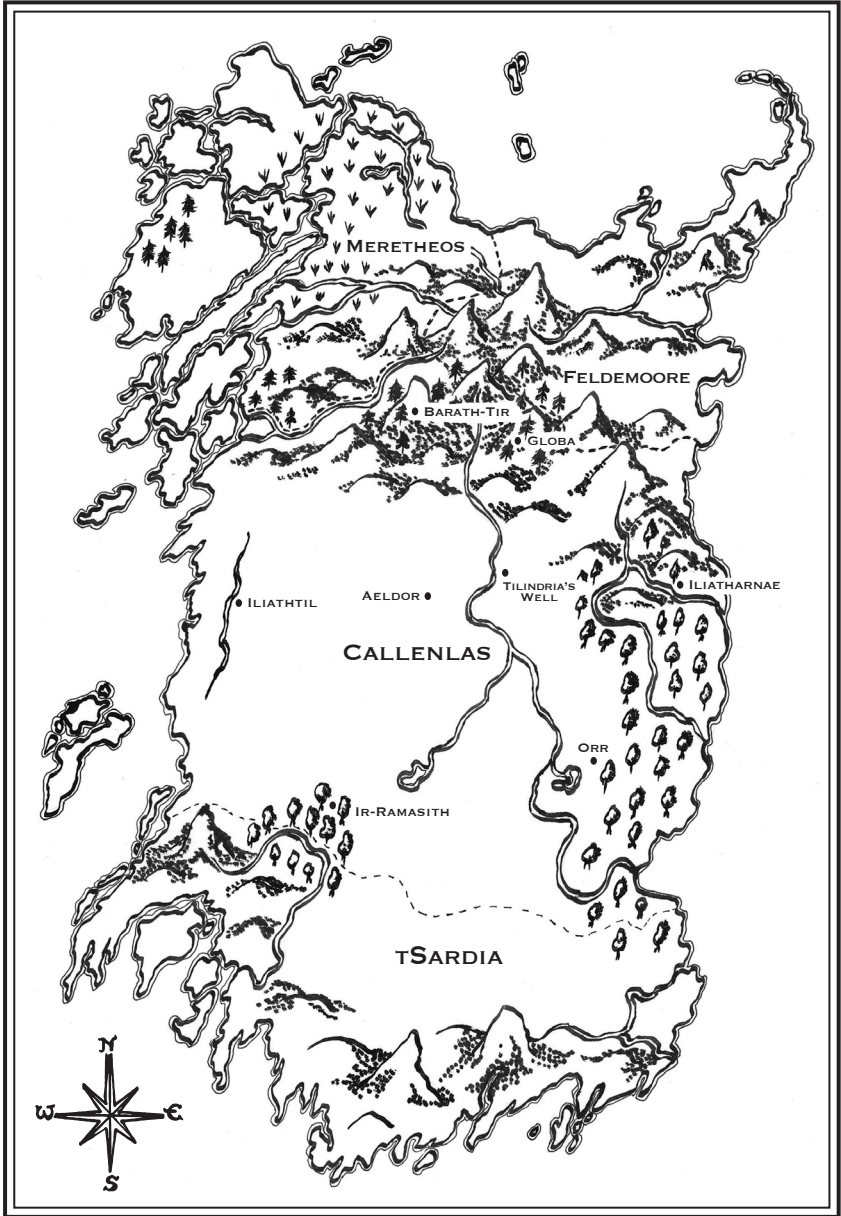
Book 3

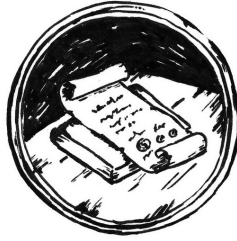
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H. R. HESS



**Reformation**  
Lightning





## PROLOGUE

*Extract from the Annals of the Princes of Callenlas  
Written by Delphum, a Watcher of Navador, and entrusted as a  
chronicler of Callenlas, in the five hundredth year of the stars.*

This record is true, as witnessed by the stars and many of Callenlas, and will be proven so when all humanity stands before the Council of Light. I, Delphum, was present at Orr when these events transpired three moons ago, and escaped with the help of the stars.

Before his father Ylain the Powerful died, Yvain, heir to the throne of Callenlas, discovered the records of Elior and the stars, long forgotten, in the library of Orr. When Yvain took the throne at the young age of eighteen, in the four hundred and eighty-ninth year of the stars, he immediately set about restoring the ways of the stars to Callenlas.

Yvain the Restorer gave resources to the communities of Watchers along the eastern coast, to rebuild their towers and restore their lands which had fallen into disrepair through the neglect of the Princes. He renewed the position of the

Guardians and began to limit the power of the city Governors. He established Watchers in every region, to teach the people the ways of the stars.

On the tenth anniversary of his reign, a great banquet was held, a celebration of all that he had achieved and all that he hoped to do with his remaining years. All the Guardians and members of the Council, as well as many governors and reifs, gathered to Orr for a feast.

Yvain's bride was heavily pregnant with her fourth child and retired early from the banquet, while the Prince remained to celebrate.

It was then, at the height of the feast, when all had left their weapons at the door of the King's hall in honour of his peace, when all were merry with wine and feasting, that the tSardian rebels rose up. Unknown to the Prince and his advisors, tSardians had been gradually infiltrating the court. Taking positions of both honour and servitude, they worked and lived close to the Prince, waiting for a signal.

Weapons had been concealed around the palace, and the tSardians worked quickly. Many nobles of Callenlas died without a sound, cut down where they sat at the table, until the floor ran with mingled blood and spilled wine.

The Prince sent the Captain of his guard to fetch the Princess and take her to safety, through a passageway hidden deep under the city.

Their sons did not fare so well. Though Thrinlas, the Guardian of Orr sought to save them, he reached their room too late. The three boys were killed where they lay asleep, their nurse with them.

Seeing that the palace was already overrun and the Prince dead from a tSardian spear, Guardian Thrinlas fled also. The great Sword of Princes was lost in the confusion of the uprising.

After the battle, the tSardians ransacked the palace and for several days disorder prevailed. With all the little princes dead and the Princess in hiding, Queen Neradi of tSardia began to rule Callenlas as a principality of tSardia. Though the Queen protested ignorance of the rebellion, many believe instead that she orchestrated the uprising, in order to take the throne of Callenlas. The new Queen immediately began to overturn all the work of Prince Yvain, and to eradicate all memory of the stars and their deeds.

As Callenlas mourns, and as Queen Neradi's grip tightens on our land, one hope sustains us. When Thrinlas left Orr, the flames of destruction lighting up the walls of the city behind him, the stars spoke. Emerging from shadow into the light of the stars, Thrinlas heard their words – a prophecy to be treasured and repeated by all who love Elior:

*Fear not the shadow, the rising of the dark,  
nor the maw of the beast consuming the heart;  
the Morning Star will rise at the darkest hour of night,  
the lost Prince's blade will make the darkness light.*



## CHAPTER 1

Rael crouched in the undergrowth near a bend in the path. His dark grey cloak concealed him well; as long as he kept the sword low on the ground he was all but invisible.

High in the trees, nearer the reifa, Ailix made the harsh caw of a crow, and Rael counted ... six calls. Six Guards.

He swallowed. Usually, only four of the Guard protected the carts. Their attacks must be making the Guard nervous. This time the cargo was a cartload of children, gifted from the surrounding reifas and heading for the main road south.

Rael pressed his lips together, stirring up his determination. He imagined Sul rocking along to the motion of the cart, her brown eyes sad and dull. His hand tightened on the grip of the sword and he shifted slightly, ready to break out of the trees.

As the Guard marched into sight, he stepped out, sword raised. In the same moment, a hail of arrows and stones whistled from the trees and bushes.

The soldiers had brought shields and easily deflected the missiles.

Rael ran forward, swiping hard at one of the soldiers before leaping into the trees and rolling behind a large trunk. As the cart ground to a halt, he crouched low and circled around to leap out at one of the rear Guards. This time, he had the advantage of surprise and managed to nick the man's forearm. The Guard yelled a curse, but Rael had already disappeared back into the trees. As he jogged towards the front of the cart, he heard a yell from the other side of the road: one of his friends. Distracted, he stepped straight into the path of a Guard. Sword raised, the man bore down on him without hesitation.

Rael tripped over a root, and fell backwards, his legs flailing in the air. He just managed to free his sword to block the swing of the Guard's blade.

The sword was coming down again and Rael rolled. The blade sank into the soft soil, just where his head had been.

Fear had an advantage: it sharpened his senses, quickened his movements. Rael ducked behind a tree and emerged on the other side, aiming his sword at the Guard's side. This fight felt different to other attacks; the Guard was in earnest, unhurried as he pursued Rael through the trees. Rael only wanted to get away. In the past, the Guard had remained on the road, alarmed by missiles that seemed to come from thin air, and the swordsman who vanished and reappeared. Unable to vanish with the Guard in hot pursuit, Rael began to panic.

He could also hear yells from the other boys. Had the Guard managed to capture them? His breathing was ragged and burned in his throat.

But the Guard was older, heavier, especially in his armour, and beginning to tire. Rael was able to pull ahead and move to a place where the pines grew thickly. He pressed into their dark branches, ignoring the scratching as he looked for the hollow tree he knew grew there. He slid into its side, into darkness and the sweet smell of rotting wood and old pine needles. He



stilled himself, hardly daring to breathe, his pounding heart seeming to echo off the towering trunks that surrounded him.

The Guard floundered through the crowding branches for a while, cursing and battling the thick growth, before giving up. Rael heard him trudging back through the woods, his footsteps muffled and faint as they landed on the carpet of needles. At last, all was still.

Rael sank into the strength of the ancient wood, resting his head on the inside of the tree and closing his eyes. He fought a wave of nausea as he thought how badly it could have ended. He wondered what had happened to the other boys and the cartload of children.

They had begun attacking the Queen's Guard when the age for gifting was lowered from twelve to seven. *Seven!* Jyann, Rael's mother, had been incensed, her face aflame as his step-father reported the new royal command. Then when Daen's sister was offered, they'd concocted a plan together with Ailix to attack the tribute cart. It had been harebrained, ill-planned, and had almost ended in disaster. But, to Rael's amazement, they had succeeded. Daen snatched his sister from the cart and carried her into the woods. His family sent her to an aunt in Heldarth, so that the Sage of Barath-Tir would not know she had been returned.

Success had fuelled their ambition. They began training, sparring with each other in the clearing in the forest, below their tree-house. Rael's step-father, Qirian, had been a soldier before the uprising and he had taught Rael a few passes with sticks, when Jyann was not looking. The three boys tested each other, spurring each other on, and had gradually accrued others from the neighbourhood, first Duliel, then Garrit, then five or six more. They began making regular attacks on the tribute carts, sometimes making away with only a sack of potatoes or a loaf of bread; once, they had captured an entire cart and

distributed its contents around the families who struggled to pay the freedom bond each moon. Rael knew their actions were like stones thrown against a city wall, against the might of Queen Neradi, but it was better than doing nothing at all.

At last, Rael felt he had waited long enough to creep out of the tree and made his way back to the road as quietly as he could.

Drawing nearer, he could hear the Guard marching along the track once more, the weary *creak creak* of the cart a miserable accompaniment to the rhythm of their feet. Rael sank low in the bushes and watched the convoy pass from a distance. He could not tell if any of his friends had been added to the cart, but he did count all six soldiers.

With the men safely past, Rael ran back to the point of attack as quickly as he could.

“Rael!” Daen hailed him anxiously from the far side of the road.

Rael joined his friend and sank down, aghast. Lying on the forest floor was Duiel, his side opened, blood pulsing out onto the pine needles.

“Give me your shirt,” Rael said, stripping off his own cloak and tunic to tear off his undershirt. He folded it and pressed it carefully against Duiel’s side. The boy was pale, his mouth drawn downwards as he fought pain.

“What happened?” Rael asked, ripping Daen’s shirt into strips and binding them tightly about Duiel’s middle. Duiel groaned as Rael moved him. The other boys were slowly gathering around them, their faces sombre.

“The Guard ran into the trees,” Daen reported, in a shocked voice. “They slashed Duiel on their way back to the cart.”

“We have to move,” Rael said, glancing up onto the road. It might not be long before a patrol passed, or another convoy.

“How?” Ailix asked. “He can’t walk.”