

Men thought him queer seeing him communicate with the animals for so Men of
their kind may said to have such power.

The background of the entire page is a composite image. On the right side, there is a close-up of a woman's face with long, straight blonde hair and light-colored eyes. On the left side, there is a deer with large antlers in a dark, misty forest. The overall color palette is dominated by greens and blues, with a soft, ethereal glow.

The Grey Silk

Revis Hendrickson

The Grey Elk

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THE GREY ELK

by

Kevis Hendrickson

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The Grey Elk

It was in the days before the coming of the Avatars into the West that there was held a long peace among Men. It was a prosperous time such as they had not before known, for the great war of the Gods that had ravaged the world and sundered the great land masses was now at an end and Men lived in peace without fear of the Breghm, as few of that fell race remained in the world to trouble them. Consequently, the lords of the North had much dealing with the lords of the South, and there was a great trade of goods between them; the culture of Men flourished as it had not ere the days of their coming from the land beyond the sea long ago. And in this peace, they gave up their daughters in marriage to gain each other's favour. Hence, there was much mingling of the blood of Men.

In those days there was a young man come from the South who ventured into the Northern realm to see the great kingdoms that Men and Elves had established there, as well as the great forests and rivers. There he was met with curiosity, for he was swart of flesh after the fashion of the people of the South where the Sun is brazen and ever-shines; nor had the Northerners seen such a Man before. And he, too, thought it curious that the folk in the North were fair of hue, and light of eyes, unlike the folk of his lands. Also, the Northern kindred of Men thought him queer seeing him communicate with the animals; for no Men of their race was said to have such power. Yet, the young man was kind always to animals and the folk he met abroad and once they came to know him, they were of heart to receive him. Not the least important, the young man was a great healer. And wheresoever he went and found someone ill or hurt, he would give them aid, in the same manner that he did the animals.

In time, the young man, whose name was Naran Jasar, grew weary of his sojourn and thus continued his journey further north to the frost lands of Vigg where he was met by a race of folk even more fair. They were beautiful to him with their bright eyes and long flaxen-pale hair that was like unto gold thread spun from a loom. And again, the people looked on him warily, for his appearance was of a kind erst unknown to them. And like the folk of the mid-lands, they bethought him much queer as it was his way to converse with the animals in the woods. But for his appearance, they would have thought him of the race of Dark Elves. And yet this was the rumour taken to heart by some that perhaps, he was not a man after all but some new creature like unto Men born in the wilderness. Yet, whilst the Northern folk remained wary of Naran, ever did the animals respond favorably to him, for he was kind to them. And for his aid to

the animals was he become renowned among all the creatures of the woods.

It is said there was a woman, old and hobbled, who had a cow, a heifer, which would not bear milk. The woman was poor and survived only by selling what little crops she could grow at market. Thus, she was starved mostly. One day, she had burdened the beast with goods to carry to market, where she was always heckled by someone in the crowd for keeping a barren cow. 'Put the poor beast out of its misery and make a fine meal of her, if a fine meal all skin and bones would make!' they would say. Or, 'I've heard tell that old 'so and so' has a goat that'll give more milk than old hunk o' bones!' The old woman would tell them to get along and conduct her business in the market. But it was on this day that Naran, passing by, heard folk heckle the old woman and make insults of her cow. Thence, he greeted her and told her that were she to give him permission, he would make her cow bear milk. The old woman did not believe Naran at first, but he convinced her that this was so. Naran had with him, as always, a sack in which he carried many potent herbs. As Naran was much-wise in healing, he took some dry leaves from the pack and fed it to the cow. Then Naran bade the old woman well and went on his way. The old woman thought him a fool, seeing no change in her animal for several days, udders as dry as ever. But when a week had passed and she rose early one day to prepare the animal to go to market, she was made astonished to see her cow's udders swollen and bursting with milk. She got herself a bucket to milk the cow. But soon she had to get another bucket, then another and another. The old woman was thrilled to see that her cow could now bear milk and that she could support herself with its bountiful lactation. Then when the old woman had gone to market and saw Naran again, she kissed him on the cheek and thanked him for what he had done. This was Naran's first deed in the village that had won him the favour of the folk and soon they all brought him their sick animals and the people came to love him.

Naran tarried long in the North, doing great deeds. On one fine afternoon, when the sky was grey and the year was getting late, he met a young woman named Hala. Finding her comely in a manner no less equal to, but different from the women of the South, he earned her favor and afterwards sought her hand in marriage. As she was of heart and loved him dearly, she assented unto him to become his wife. But Hala's parents opposed their being wed, thinking Naran intended to take their daughter away from them back to the lands of his origin. But he assured them that this was not the case and in time won their trust. And so Naran and Hala were wed. Eventually, golden-haired Hala bore a child, a daughter like unto them both and beautiful as the dawn, whom they named Halan. And for a while they were happy. But there were folk in Hala's village who did not think it proper that a wanderer from the South should take to wife a

maiden of their race. Thus, they made rough insults to Naran, but he was slow to anger and did not bandy words with them. Day after day, the rude folk came to molest him with words, but he would always ignore them. This only incensed them the more. Such was the cruelty shown to Naran that Hala wept in his arms until the troublemakers were sent away. But always did the rude folk return and Naran would suffer the insults in silence. For he loved Hala dearly and knew her folk was misguided by their pride. It was decided by Hala's parents that Naran should take Hala and Halan away from the village. On the day when they were to leave, Hala wept, and kissed her parents. They wept, also, and kissed her in return. And they embraced Naran and wept for him, for he was now like a son to them.

Then Naran took Hala and Halan and went north to the land of Eikinskjaldi where lived the Dwarves. At first, it seemed the Dwarves would not let Naran into their country. But the king of the Dwarves had heard rumour of Naran's kindness to all creatures and promised to allow him to stay in his lands if he could perform one simple deed: he had but to procure a remedy for the ailing prince, his son, who was dying of disease. Hence, Naran was brought before the Dwarf king, Thrain, in his underground kingdom of Rûn, and afterwards led to the bed in which lied Thrain's son, Dvalin. It was then made known to Naran how difficult his task was. For Dvalin was nigh death and would soon go to join his ancestors if Naran could not devise a means to save him. Naran was hard pressed to save the prince for his was a great illness and the likes of which Naran had never seen before. Then was it revealed to him that Prince Dvalin had been in a duel with a mighty Elf-mage who struck him down with foul magic. Naran had thought long and hard at the bedside of the prince, searching his mind for the ingredients of an Elixir that would save Dvalin. It then came to him as if in a dream how it could be done. So Naran called the king to him and said:

“If it is your son, dear king, you would save, bring forth at once all that I require. First fetch in an urn an ash from a grave; then in a glass jar some golden wire; also, a seed from a juniper tree that has never shed a leaf from its limbs; then procure a grain of sand from the sea; and an infant's first breath in a wine-skin; then bring in a flask a dream of a dream; and in a bottle the first ray of dawn. Lastly, bring a drop of blood from a witch; and a cauldron in which to mix it all.”

Queer as Naran's request seemed to him, Thrain followed his instructions and ordered his folk to do all that he had been bidden. And so was brought to

Naran all that he needed. Using the strange herbs that he had brought with him in his travel pack, Naran began to make a mighty potion to heal the prince of his sickness. And it was done. Lo! Dvalin had but to taste the Elixir when his symptoms left him; and he was become ruddy of hue as were all his folk and his laboured breath was laboured no more. There was great rejoicing in the Dwarf realm for the prince had been saved and Naran was become as a hero to the Dwarves. For many years, Naran and his family dwelt with the Dwarves in peace until the days came that Halan had grown to be a young woman and it was time for her to take a husband.

Now Hala had seen that her daughter had grown in beauty and waxed in mind and spirit. And it came to her that they should take leave of the Dwarves to return to their own people so Halan could find a husband. As Naran also deemed it proper that his daughter should be wed, he also agreed that the journey should be made. But for the troubles they had endured in Vigg, Naran had in mind to take Hala to some other nearby land that perhaps she could find her life mate. And so, after many years of living in Eikinskjaldi, Naran and his family left for the land of Vlonndrim to the west of the Dwarf realm.

Not long after, they came to Vlonndrim where the race of people living there appeased the eyes of Naran with their beauty; for their skin was as brightly pale as hoarfrost, and their eyes a shimmering blue-grey like the starlight of night, and their silver-gold hair worn long and braided. At first, Naran and his family were well received by the Vlonndrim. But there were a few of the folk who made trouble for Naran, seeing as he was different in appearance than they. And it was as an insult to them that Naran should have a wife as beautiful as Hala and to have produced by her a daughter that was neither apart or the same in looks as her parents. And yet, the beauty of Halan stirred the hearts of many of the men of the land to love of her. Many men came to ask for the hand of Halan in marriage. So a decision had to be made by Naran and Hala as to who they should give their daughter to. But the rude folk in Vlonndrim made life difficult for Naran and his family with their base insults and ill treatment of them. As they were then of mind, Naran and Hala chose to take leave of Vlonndrim to find a more suitable place for their daughter to live. But after many months of traveling from country to country, it was discovered to them no place that was fit for Halan.

Thus, in great sadness Naran brought his family to the mid-land realm where he sought to find Halan a suitable husband in a land where the people would not mistreat her. But through all the lands they had traveled, nowhere did they find where the people would not affront them with insults. And so it was decided that they should return to the land of the Dwarves in Eikinskjaldi where

they would tarry until they figured out what to do. But it was a long journey to the North from the midlands and winter had come early. Thus, Naran and his family were caught in the deep frost of the land at unawares. Long did they travel through bitter snow and malignant winds, but they were overcome by the cold and at nightfall took to the cover of a barren tree where they wept for fear that death would take them in the night. And so it passed that Naran and his family would have perished in the fierce cold, had a great Elk not come to their aid. By the power of its kind, the Elk transformed Naran and his family into Elk-kind as well. At last was found the peace they had long sought and they dwelt thereafter in the deep woods with the Elk. As they were of a race at first apart from the Elk they were bequeathed long years of life. It is said that there in the woods, Naran still resides with his wife and daughter as one of the Elk-kindred and protector of the woods and all creatures of the wild. By the colour of his pelt that became grey as the darkling sea, Naran was forevermore known as the Grey Elk.

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About the Author

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