

Morgan Quicksilvertongue

by Susan Cerniglia

The tavernkeep's daughter turned tavernkeep herself, Morgan was a young woman when both of her parents succumbed to illness. With a twin brother and a younger one besides, she helped keep the business within the family's ownership, while the trio continued to make the living that must needs support them. Perhaps they had a bit of help from an obliging neighbor or four, but by the time Morgan was a woman grown, the siblings had established the inn as a refuge by their own right.

They had no aspirations for travel or grand deeds, beyond being the owners of a rest that might enable great men and women to tell those tales to others. No aspirations, until an elegant man of arrogant demeanor stopped to rest his horse on his travels. Jethry was a self-established hero, a man of nothing become something, a guardian of the Order of the Sun. For weeks after, his travels would often take him by Morgan's tavern on the lakes, and where both brothers found themselves enamored of his heroism, the young woman could be but left in love with him.

He was everything a hero of story ought to be – chivalrous, dynamic, a spellword of competent skill and unwavering principle. Morgan and her two brothers felt their inferiority in his presence, his cool declarations of justness and right. His stays became more frequent, winter months leaving fewer opportunities for the grand adventures of summer.

By spring, both Jethry and Morgan's two brothers were dead at the hands of a lord accused of consorting with the unnatural. The quest on which they had followed the hero to assault said lord was little more than a folly of a headstrong mind, and it claimed not only his life, but both of theirs which happened to have comprised everything Morgan loved. She had argued with Jethry against the adventure in the first place and refused to join him. His last words to her were cold disgust.

It was with heavy grief that Morgan sold her rights to her tavern on the lakes. With the money she raised and travelling gear of her mother's, Morgan set out to join the bands of adventurers seeking glory. In her heart, she could not bear to stay in a place of such sorrow. Neither, however, could she forgive dead Jethry for his part in this wasted grief. Because she had heard the stories of Bristol and of dragons, Morgan set her path in that direction. The Lunar Tribe made camp there still, she knew, and they were ever at odds with the blind morality of the Order of the Sun, which had cost her so much. With naught else to lose, she could only plan her hopes around a goal that she might help raise the Lunar Tribe to prominence and, in doing so, wipe the Order from all record of heroic deeds so that no such men or women might ever again raise to prominence.

Of course, as must be with a traveler wearing gear of a finer cut than their deeds have merited, bandits attacked Morgan leagues from Bristol. They took everything from her possession, from armor to staff, and left her in cast-off clothing without a coin or weapon to her name - though

blessedly with her life. And it was under such inauspicious circumstances that a sardonic, ill-pleased Morgan stumbled into the camp of the Band of the Twisted Claw. Revenge, sweet as it was, had become a secondary motive to earning a meal, but there would be time enough for both to her patient mind's judgment.