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**THE WIZARD'S  
DAUGHTER AND THE  
HUNTER**

**Based on a folk Scandinavian story...**

**1998**

I dedicate this book to my sister Miriam,  
a future writer and journalist,  
and a profound fan for swords, Medieval times, mist and mystery.

## CHAPTER 1

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**T**here was a time in Sweden when all people started to feel hungry and thirsty, when the sun did not shine so brightly and the moon smiled at the earth with a pale face; there was a time when the children fought against their parents and there was no peace and silence on land; there was a time when life was suffering and men no longer laughed.

This time came along when the throne was taken by force from King Drasil by the terrible wizard Lokel. It happened six hundred years ago. Sweden was in perfect harmony and flowers spread everywhere; then the dark cloud covered the King's castle and Lokel came down on his threatening dragon Uk.

"Poor king Drasil...", Lokel said, "I've been waiting for this moment for so long! Now I can see the throne is mine! Sweden will be ruled under my hands". The king was taken aback. "You will take over my throne only under my dead body!", replied King Drasil, pulling out his sword. "Ts, ts, ts... how fool you are, my king Drasil. You can't fight against the power of Lokel". And the wizard said some magic words, waving his hand and looking at the moon. "*Vrash nontil gwayn hvaran...* the power is mine!"

Lokel repeated these magic words three times and the King's sword broke in two. His golden and diamond crown flew to the wizard's head and he sat sarcastically on the Swedish throne. "Drasil, you doubted my powers... now I shall keep you under my fist!" And, with a movement of the wand, Lokel transformed king Drasil in a little lizard.

"I want to see you beg for pardon, Drasil! And, as a result of your foolish behavior, this land will get into darkness and let the evil govern everywhere!!! Let the evil govern... ha, ha, ha!" Lokel's dreadful laugh echoed away in the empty castle.

## CHAPTER 2

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**D**rana was reading a book which told the old stories of the vikings and the Swedish people. She was surprised to read how violent those people were and how many bad things they had done. "They were really bad!", she thought to herself. "I don't think they should have done such things so violently... nonsense! Can't they see the beauties of the world, the flowers and the sweet smells of the forest? And the moon at night... so bright and silver. I can't understand why..." She was suddenly frightened with his father's coming into her room.

— What's that you can't understand, my little daughter?

Lokel came into her bedroom in the form of a fly.

Drana looked startled. Lokel continued:

— You seem to be sad, thinking too much... tell me what disturbs your mind, sweetheart.

Drana got furious.

— Dad, you know you can't read my thoughts and be around all the time... I feel like a prisoner with your reckless behavior!

Lokel had a frank smile on his ugly face.

— Doesn't matter... you know what happened today? You should congratulate your father. I'm the King of all Sweden. And I shall be king of the whole world!

Drana didn't seem to have liked the idea at all.

— What did you do to King Drasil?, she interrupted her father's laughing.

— Oh, dear, Drasil's a donkey, he's all gone... forever! But let's stop this ridiculous chat. I came here to tell you that from now on you are my princess, and you ought to take care of the kingdom's poison lab. You are the only one on all Sweden who knows the herbs and the secrets of plant fluids.

Lokel had a serious face now. He sighed in deep graveness and studied his words for a moment:

— And you ought to get down to the mysteries of the black magic which came from my ancestors, generation after generation... you shall be a great witch. Your grandmother, Nanyn, before leaving this world predicted your destiny, reading the runes with her own blood. She said you must know these secrets and everything. It's your fate, you can't flee.

Lokel spoke with much authority.

— I can't dedicate my life to black magic, Drana tried to reply, trembling the voice and staring at her father, because I...

Lokel didn't give her time to go on.

— No comments about my decisions!, said the wizard, loud enough to awake the sleeping birds in their cages. You can't go against your destiny. You shall be a witch and that will be done, with or without your comprehension of it. You have no right at all to defeat my rules and you won't disturb the way. And, because you did not want to take my words at once, you will be kept in the Bottom of the Ocean Kingdom, where there is plenty of time for you to think over my decisions. You will be a fish, yet with consciousness and human thought. And that's final.

Lokel became once more a fly and disappeared from Drana's sight. She was completely desperate and did not know what to do. Suddenly she was taken to the Bottom of the Ocean Kingdom by the power of her father's magic and her body got into a fish...

## CHAPTER 3

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**F**ar away from the castle people lived their way poorly. Everywhere everybody looked for food, for water and other goodies. The strongest of each family in the villages had to hunt, because that was the only hope they could see in order to survive and overcome the starvation.

There was a good-natured boy, Vranin, son of Lonwal and Thyrl, the shoemakers of a very poor village north of Stockholm. Every morning he woke up early and went up the hills, looking for animals to chase. It was very hard to find food... Lokel had spread a curse all over those lands, including the lakes Vättern and Vänern. No fish could be seen there either. Many people were dying, and Vranin was worried about his parents. His mother Thyrl was heart feeble and his father Lonwal, after having worked for all his life long, suffered from awful pains and felt himself weak. Vranin had no brothers or sisters, so every time he went up hunting he left his parents with a neighbor.

But one day Vranin had a strange dream and got up with that vision in mind. In his dream, he saw a fisherman on a boat, taking out the net from the icy water of the Baltic Sea. The fisherman saw nothing but a different fish on the net. He had never seen that. All of a sudden that strange fish started to talk to him! And the fish revealed some secrets, which were kept at the bottom of the sea for centuries. When the last secret was told, a huge wave came from the far sea and the boat was swallowed into the angry waters... Vranin woke up with his heart pumping out of the chest. That dream really impressed him.

And so he thought a little on that. "Why such an odd vision? I can't understand... but maybe there is something I can do to help these people here in my village. I can get down the path way to the ocean. There is no food here on land... but I doubt Lokel cursed the sea as well. The sea is so full of creatures, rich on animals. Fish everywhere..." Another perspective showed up in his horizon. "I can fish! It takes me two days to get down to the ocean. If I take good fish, in two days I'm back again, full of food for everybody. I think mom and dad will like the idea!"

Vranin hurried to his father's bed and told him what he thought was the right thing to do. His father Lonwal accepted it with pleasure. "My dear son, if that's what your heart holds for now, go follow it. Just tell mom and let her pray". Vranin did as his father told and his mother blessed him.

In two days Vranin found the sea. The Baltic was extremely cold at that time of year but Vranin luckily found a fisherman he had met some years before. The man told him about the disgraces which were surrounding Sweden and how the people in Stockholm suffered from the cursings Lokel had thrown. Fortunately, there was still food in the sea. The fisherman went on his boat and could get some fish everyday. He was surprised with Vranin's decision to fish. "You're not a fisherman", said the man to Vranin, "but your strong will to keep your people alive for sure helped you. Today you can fish with me, hunter". Vranin couldn't hold back his thrills. It was just too good for him.

## CHAPTER 4

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**D**rana was feeling lonely there, at the bottom of the ocean. That kingdom was boresome, and she couldn't think of anything but go out of that place. She decided to go up to the surface and see how things were, even though she knew that could be a risk to her life.

And she did as so. Up and up she swam, waving the fins and speeding her tail. She had only one thing in mind: get back to her human body and try to stop her evil father.

The water was so cool she thought it could be better to stay down at the bottom of the ocean. But the idea of looking at the world again and trying to help people were stronger than the sensation of cold.

Vranin and the fisherman got on the boat and went to the high sea. The fisherman told Vranin that the water was good for fishing; with some luck, they could fish well.

The net was thrown to the water and soon some fish were caught in it. The fisherman and Vranin took it out from the cool sea and spread it open on the boat. A lot of fish! Vranin and the fisherman were surprised with the amount taken, but... wait a second! There it was, all in all: a strange fish the fisherman had never seen before. Bigger than the others, in more vivid colors, different body structure. "What are you looking at?", Drana said, almost shouting. "Why don't you try to make me a girl again?". Vranin and the fisherman couldn't believe what they were hearing; but the hunter remembered the dream he had two days before getting to the seashore. The odd-talking fish... yes, it was it. Drana was getting suffocated. "Help me, please! I have to be a girl again!" Vranin put her in water and jumped to the ocean, diving a little near the boat. The fisherman was all astonished, frozen.

Vranin could understand everything Drana was telling him under the water. She told him how her father, the terrible Lokel, had transformed her into a fish and how mischievous he was in relation to King Drasil, overtaking the throne by power. Vranin couldn't say anything, but Drana could guess what he was thinking. "Yes, my courageous hunter, you can help me and all the people in Sweden. You've got to kill Lokel... as soon as you do it, the magic which relies upon the King, who is a little lizard now, upon me and upon all the Swedish lands will be over. King Drasil will be the ruler again and peace will once more reign in this deserted kingdom. You have to

face his power... I'll tell you how to defeat him. His heart is not in his body. As a magician, my father hid his heart in a secret place. The only way to kill him is to destroy his hidden heart. You have to cut it in three parts. Please, hunter, do it in benefit of everybody." Vranin went up to the surface to breathe a bit more. "Okay, hunter, I won't hold you long. Go to the castle and look for a person called Ånkenn. She is the person-in-charge of the kitchen. She likes me very much, but doesn't agree with Lokel's decisions. You will tell her that you talked to me and I sent you there. She'll give you a job as a servant in the castle kitchen. You will then discover where my dad's heart is concealed. Be careful with him; as a wizard, he can be in the form of anything. Be careful when you talk to Ånkenn, be careful when you try to discover his heart. Be careful all the time. Your life is in risk now, but if you succeed, Lokel will die and... well, better get started in your journey. Good luck, my hunter, and don't forget: find Lokel's heart and cut it off in three parts". Drana turned back to her Bottom of the Ocean Kingdom.

Vranin appeared on the boat and the fisherman was still in the same position, staring at the waves. Vranin took the rows and went back to the shore. His thoughts were traveling away, surrounding the haunted castle and laying eyes at the dreadful ruler and his hidden heart. A strange sensation of fear ran along his back. He knew that his future and the future of his parents and every folk on land depended on him.

The journey back to his little village lasted two days. The fisherman gave him some fish and Vranin handed those to his parents. He told them he'd be going on a very dangerous trip to the royal palace in Stockholm. His mother embraced him and his father just asked him to turn back home as soon as the mission was over. Vranin told them nothing bad would happen.

## CHAPTER 5

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Ånkenn heard Vranin's story with much anxiety. She loved Drana and cried when she knew she was made a fish by her own father. "That monster... *jag ha ont i min fot*. The pain in my foot was his fault. I'll help you in everything. Everybody wants to see king Drasil again on the throne. But you have to be careful. Lokel is a damned wizard who knows everything that goes on around him. He'll despise you, he'll try to find something wrong with you, and then he'll try to kill you. But think of us, think of your parents, think of Drana and yourself and for sure you'll be successful. *Du måste gå nu*. Go now."

Ånkenn gave him all the directions and instructions about what to do and Vranin got dressed. He would be the person who served Lokel in his private room. This idea was too terrifying and his heart pounded as though it were coming out of his chest. His forehead was wet. He knew the graveness of the task.

The wizard's chamber was terrible in appearance! Many strange things spread all over the floor, on the tables and covering all the walls; odd-looking birds and creatures were in huge cages, moaning supernatural sounds; and the mist in the room gave it an even more mysterious air. Lokel had a triangular bed, covered with a black and purple blanket, which jabbed sharp knives outwards. What a view!

Vranin got into the bedroom shivering from up to down. He couldn't believe what his eyes were seeing. It seemed he was lost in a nightmare... but the bedroom was empty. "Where is the awful wizard, huh?", Vranin thought to himself. "I'm waiting for the chance to cut your heart, you diabolic creature..." He was starting to look around when Lokel's face appeared in front of him.

— Afraid, boy?, Lokel broke into his thoughts.

Vranin stuttered a little.

— We..we..well. Sir, I mean, you..your majesty! I..I..I was goin..

— Never mind. Everybody gets scared when my face shows up. Is it so awful anyway?

Vranin knew that Lokel was trying to get him trapped.

— Well, your majesty, I wouldn't say it is the prettiest I've seen.

Lokel didn't say a word. Vranin risked stating something more.

— With your excuse, your majesty, I'd say that I got scared with you. But here I am, ready to serve you.

Lokel laughed very loudly.

— Boy, you're courageous... nobody ever spoke to me like that. I liked your sincerity. Who sent you here?

Once more Vranin felt the mousetrap about to catching him.

— I am a far relative of Ânkenn. She told me that there could be a job as a private servant to the king.

Lokel thought deeply for a second.

— Humm... you're too young. Let me see... you have no brothers and no sisters; your parents are too old to work, and your dad is a shoemaker. Right?

Vranin started to wet heavily.

— Your majesty, everything you said is right. How do you know?

Lokel got sarcastic.

— Fool! You probably thought I read your mind... but I didn't. I used my perspicacity and logic to conclude. An only child would risk his life coming to the castle to protect his family and feed them; the parents are too old to work and let the son go; and your well done shoes show that your father, a shoemaker, dedicated special care when manufactured them.

Lokel paused for a second. He seemed to be elaborating something serious.

— Our mind is much faster and flexible than we imagine. And the heart of a person is not where it seems to be, but in his mind.

Vranin heard the last sentence with extra attention. "...the heart of a person is not where it seems to be, but in his mind". That repeated many times.

Lokel went on.

— I see that you're a smart guy. You're learning fast. Soon you'll know what to do here. By now, let me rest and disappear from my eyes!!!

Vranin closed the door and went to the kitchen.

## CHAPTER 6

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**T**hat sentence remained in his thoughts all night long... "the heart of a person is not where it seems to be, but in his mind". Why did Lokel say that? Was he fooling him? And where was the heart indeed? He couldn't sleep. He saw the sun shining and went for a walk in the back yard which was reserved to the cattle and the servants of the kitchen. It was very cold outside but Vranin didn't feel the low temperature. He was too deep in concentration.

Vranin started imagining things and theories which could be applied to the sentence. Then his mind traveled... and he remembered his dad at night, by his side, telling him stories of the old vikings. His dad used to tell him stories and myths which were passed on from grandfather to father and from father to son. In one of those stories, his dad explained how mean the vikings were and how they used to commemorate victory. "My son, our ancestors were really mean people. When they invaded a village or the land of an enemy, they used to capture the principal of the village, kill him and cut off his skull. They believed that the brain contained the soul of the person... it was like the heart, the vital power. Then they put beer on the cut skull and drank the liquid, mixed with the blood. They believed that the power of the person was there, in the brain". Vranin was taken aback and sat down, startled. "That's it! Now I understand why he said that the heart is in the mind. Mind and brain... my father was right. I'm in the right way!".

Vranin stood up, with a feeling that danger was coming up soon. "I have to be very careful from now on. The right moment will show and I'll have to act!".

He got back to the kitchen and told everything to Ânken. She didn't say anything but a warning: "Dear Vranin, care is necessary now. I think you're in the right way. Don't let your intelligence ruin your task. Follow Drana's recommendations and remember that the success of your plan depends on your prudence. Go now boy and good luck!" Vranin knew that the crucial moments were arriving.

Morning beams were bringing new feelings to Vranin. He was going up the stairs to the wizard's chamber. A strange thought came to his mind. "And if the wizard was just testing me... or fooling me? I'll never know. I'll follow my intuition and see what happens."

Lokel's bedroom was open. Vranin got into the bedroom with the daily food for the wizard. A small lizard came out of the bedroom, and stared at him. Vranin looked at the lizard. "What are you looking at, little lizard?" The animal seemed to understand him.

— You want to talk to Drasil, boy?, interrupted Lokel, coming into the chamber in the form of a peafowl.

Vranin was surprised. He had in front of his eyes, at his feet, the king of all Sweden, Drasil His Majesty!

— I didn't know the lizard was the king.

Lokel got furious.

— He isn't the king, you dumb! He is a lizard now. I'm the king, stupid! Did you bring my food?

Vranin started to perspire again. His forehead was wet.

— Did you bring the food?. Lokel seemed to be suspicious.

Vranin showed him the tray with the goods on it.

— Yes, your majesty. It's all here.

Lokel entered the room and observed Vranin's walking.

— Are you a hunter?

Vranin almost tripped on a red and yellowish stone.

— Yes, my lord.

Lokel gave his back to Vranin and started talking.

— Many people super estimate their intelligence and pride consumes them like fire on paper. A wizard is smart enough not to let himself die. I can see that...

Lokel was speaking and Vranin seized the opportunity to take a look around in the bedroom. He wanted to find a skull. Yes, he wanted a skull. If there were any there, for sure Lokel's heart would be inside. His head turned round, looking into every detail of that mess. So many things together! How could he find the skull? It seemed to be an endless task. But... there it was! Behind a strange map, a perfect human skull! Vranin thanked his ability of being a hunter and his acute vision which always helped him to find the preys. Now his perfect accuracy helped him find the skull.

Lokel turned to him abruptly and asked:

— What is that you've been looking for?

Vranin didn't know what to do and what to answer.

Lokel was getting impatient. He felt something was wrong and that Vranin was about to killing him. But his dragon Uk started shouting from outside and Lokel rushed to the window to see what it was.

Vranin felt that it was the moment. He took one of the knives that were on the tray and hurried to the skull. He put the skull upside down and there it was! Lokel's heart!!! He took the knife and started cutting it. Lokel fell down to the floor, feeling terrible pains. Vranin cut the third slice of the heart and a strong wind blew into the bedroom; the castle trembled in an earthquake and Lokel died. The castle got its former structure and furniture.

Immediately after Lokel's death, all the creatures, which spread over the bedroom, came back to life in their human bodies. Lokel had transformed all of Drasil's servants and counselors into strange creatures. The little lizard gave life again to the King.

— Your Majesty, King Drasil! Vranin was extremely happy.

— My loyal hunter, you showed courage and will. And saved all of us from those evil claws. You shall be called "the King's Prime Counselor". Your authority will be respected on all Swedish lands.

Vranin knelt and King Drasil put his sword on his shoulder.

— Dear lord, there is a person who helped me in this task. She is Lokel's daughter, Drana. She was made a fish by the wizard. She must be now at the seashore. I'd like her to be here with me.

King Drasil nodded.

— Your wish is my wish. Bring her.

## CHAPTER 7

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**T**wo days later Drana arrived at the castle with the fisherman. Vranin ran toward them and embraced Drana. She was prettier than ever. Vranin thanked the fisherman and invited him for dinner.

Vranin and Drana fell in love and got married. King Drasil reigned for twenty-five years after Lokel's death and Vranin had a son of Drana. He named him Drasilāj Vraninek, which means "Drasil, the strong son of Vranin". And he fought for peace during all his lifetime.

## COMMENTS ABOUT THE BOOK

This story, *The Wizard's Daughter and the Hunter*, is actually a version of a Scandinavian story entitled *The Wizard's Daughter*, written by Chris Conover. It tells the story of a mean wizard who kept his daughter, a beautiful young lady, under the sea because she had to learn the principles and secrets of black magic. As she refused to do it, his father made her remain alone at the bottom of the ocean, in order to think over his wishes. In my version, the wizard's daughter, whose name is Drana, falls in love with a hunter, Vranin, who in turn attempts to find and destroy the wizard's (whose name is Lokel) heart. The story ends up with Vranin's cutting off the heart of the wizard and his marriage to Drana. They have a son, Drasilåj Vraninek, who keeps peace on all lands of Sweden.