

**DRAY PRESCOT: 32**

**SEG THE  
BOWMAN**

**KENNETH BULMER**

writing as

**ALAN BURT AKERS**

**A Mushroom eBook**



SEG THE BOWMAN

ALAN BURT AKERS

**a Mushroom eBooks sample**

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## Seg the Bowman

Seg the Bowman is the story, complete in itself, of the finest archer of two worlds, a man courageous and resolute in the face of adversity, a wild, fey, reckless fellow, blade comrade to Dray Prescott, a man of parts. Of Seg Segutorio it has been said that perhaps he is too kind-hearted for the harsher aspects of the world of Kregen.

Kregen, a planet orbiting Antares four hundred light years from Earth, is indeed a harsh world; but it is also beautiful and mysterious, exotic and immensely rewarding, where many a dream may be realized, many a nightmare become reality.

The story begins where Seg and Dray Prescott and a party of adventurers have successfully quitted a maze of monsters and sorcery. Prescott is called away by the Star Lords, as related in *Fires of Scorpio*. Now Seg steps forward into fresh adventures wherein he discovers the passionate problems of agreeing to act as the lady Milsis's knightly protector.

The warmth and pride suffusing Dray Prescott's words as he tells the story of Seg Segutorio confirm the powerful friendship between the two and illuminates their mutual loyalty. For they are blade comrades upon

the haunting world of Kregen beneath the streaming  
mingled radiance of the Suns of Scorpio.

*Alan Bun Akers*

## Chapter one

### Phantom of the Jungle

The woman in the blue tunic halted just inside the edge of the jungle and, shading her eyes against the twin suns, stared out toward the lake. The two men walking toward her might be deep in conversation; she knew well enough even in the short time she had made their acquaintance that if she moved another step they would see her at once.

A vague blue haze pulsed unexpectedly about the men, making her blink her eyes. She did not move. The twin suns threw down their mingled streaming lights and in the early morning radiance shadows still stretched short into emerald and ruby blobs. The strange blueness appeared to swish into her eyes like the bewildering swirl of a dancer's cape.

When she looked out again there was only one man on the little path by the lake.

Alarmed, she called out.

“Seg the Horkandur!”

At the sound of his name the man looked up instantly. He was in the act of picking up from the path a length of scarlet cloth and a longsword. From these two items he drew his attention not so much reluctantly as regretfully. He faced the woman.

“Yes, my lady?”

“Is all — is all well? Where is the Bogandur?”

“He has been — called away.”

She laughed uncertainly. “Called away? Here in the midst of this terrible jungle?”

“Do not fret over him, my lady. He will turn up in his own good time.”

“Yes, I believe that. For I thought him dead back there in that horrendous mountain.”

“As did I. He was not an apparition, I assure you. Stand very still, my lady. When I shout run, run!”

The scarlet breechclout and the longsword went thump onto the path. The longbow snapped into Seg’s left hand, the shaft was nocked and the string drawn in a blur of speed. The first arrow sped.

That shaft passed a scant hand’s breadth past the woman’s ear. Seg bellowed as he loosed.

“Run, my Lady Milsa, run!”

Milsa ran.

A gargantuan screech burst out from the jungle just to her rear. A bellow and a thrashing of densely packed foliage drove her on, panting with effort. A second arrow flew, and a third followed on while the second was still in the air.

Milsi panted down out of the jungle edge, pursued by what horrors she did not know. But she had complete confidence in Seg the Horkandur. She had known him for so short a time, yet he had proved to be the perfect jikai, the honorable warrior, devoted to her person.

With the same blurring speed Seg thrust the bow stave up over his left shoulder and whipped out his sword.

Yelling in a deliberate attempt to engage the monster's attention, he drove forward venomously.

The sword flamed in his fist.

He roared past Milsi without a glance, a word. Every instinct of his body concentrated on the slavering thing lashing about by the jungle edge. The three shafts had done their work. For Seg, a Bowman of Loh, anything else would have smacked of the impossible in any world, ordered or not. He brought the sword down and around and hacked a gouting chunk from the beast's neck. One eye remained, a glaring orb of hatred. That eye blacked into a gush of ichor as the sword punched in.

Seg leaped back.

The thing, scaled and vicious, lashed about in its death throes. As long as a man, it reared up on six legs to waist height. Its head, sharp with jaws and teeth, twisted from side to side. Twice it reached up on its four hind legs, the front claws slicing at empty air.

A voice bellowed from farther into the forest.

"Hai!"

The scaled beast attempted to turn itself around, and weakened by loss of blood, fell. It toppled into the

scrubby undergrowth by the side of the trail. It thrashed about. And then it died.

Seg gave it a last calculating look, and turned and ran back to Mils.

“You are unharmed, Seg?”

“Aye. By the Veiled Froyvil! I am glad you came to no harm.”

“Thanks only to you. I give you the jikai.”

“Aye,” bellowed the voice as its owner pounded out into the clearing. “Hai, Jikai!”

Seg ignored all that. It was not a jikai in his estimation. He’d shafted the poor thing thrice, and then chopped it a trifle. A mere nothing before breakfast for a warrior upon the world of Kregen.

“What is it, anyway?”

“That is a toilca—”

“Well, Hop, it is dead now.”

“Maybe.” Hop the Intemperate spoke through the mass of hair about his mouth, his gross body as hairy through his harness as a quoffa. “But they do not hunt singly. They wander in packs.”

Seg looked at the toilca, seeing the way the scales were patterned in brown and green to give superb camouflage. The shape was adapted to slinking through the jungle, and when the toilcas surrounded their victim, they would rear up on their hind legs and tear the poor devil to pieces with their front claws.

“In that case, friend Hop, we had best get back to the others sharpish.”

“I’m with you, Horkandur. Master Exandu sent me to follow the Lady Milsi. He complained that she wandered off into the jungle like a—” Here Hop the Intemperate belied his name, for he stopped talking at that point.

Quite clearly Exandu had passed uncomplimentary comments about a woman wandering off into the jungle like a loon.

The Lady Milsi fired up.

“I could not sleep. I was worried about where Seg the Horkandur had gone, so I followed—”

“Let us go back to the others,” interrupted Seg. “But, first...”

He ran back down the path and snatched up the scarlet breechclout and the longsword. When he got back to Milsi and Hop, the latter said: “They belong to the Bogandur! I thought the demon ate him.”

“So did I. But he has had to go off—”

“A mighty strange fellow, that. More strange even than you, Horkandur!”

Seg made no reply to this, for he agreed. Maintaining a close watch upon the forest, they walked back along the rudimentary trail to the clearing where the party were rousing out after the night’s uneasy sleep. The smell of the first breakfast filled the air with mouth-watering aromas.

Looking at the Lady Milsi as she swung along, Seg reflected that she was, in Erthyr’s very truth, a wonderful person. Her body, firm and voluptuous, filled the blue tunic. Her face glowed with the remembered horrors through which they had passed to arrive here,

and of which that poor toilca had been but merely the latest. She had managed to wash her hair in the last of the chambers in the mountain where the party had rested and eaten before at last quitting the abode of horrors. Her hair was of a bright and sheening brown, and the dinginess and stringiness were gone. She held herself proudly. Well, and so she should, seeing that she was a lady in waiting to a queen — well, poor Queen Mab was dead now. He and his comrade had taken the Lady Milsa from the next cell.

And that made Seg wonder where the devil his old dom might be now. Anywhere on Kregen, perhaps been spirited back to that funny little world he'd spoken of, called Earth, a long long way away, where they only had one little yellow sun and one little silver moon, and only had apims like him, instead of the multifarious and wonderful assemblage of diffs inhabiting Kregen.

“You look — severe, Seg.”

“It is nothing, my lady. I but thought of the Bogandur. I wish him well. But now we must look to ourselves and get out of this pestiferous jungle.”

“Yes. But where to?”

He looked surprised.

“Why — surely you will wish to return home? Of course, I shall escort you. That is, if you wish it.”

“You know I wish it..”

“So that is settled.”

“I hope so. It may not be so — so easy as all that.”

Seg sniffed and put on an air of long-suffering. He was not the kind of fellow to allow himself to be down in the dumps for too long.

For her part, Milsil looked at Seg and saw a man endowed with superlative attributes. He possessed the archer's build, broad of shoulder, trim of waist, with the muscles like live snakes upon his bronzed body. He wore a scarlet breechclout, cinctured by a broad lesten hide belt. He carried his Lohvian longbow, and the quiver of arrows, each fletched with rose-red feathers. His sword was of a pattern with which she was not familiar. His moccasins, like hers, were supple of uppers and stout of sole. The party had worn through a good many pairs of those arriving here, and were like to wear through a lot more before they escaped this place.

These surface attributes were apparent to other people as well as to Seg and Milsil when they looked one upon the other. But each saw more than the surface. Each saw in the other a spark of life, a steady sureness of purpose, loyalty, cheerfulness, a sense that each yearned for targets that more mundane folk might consider eternally out of reach.

Seg had sworn to be Milsil's jikai, and to care for her and escort her. For her part, she had promised him nothing. They had met in the maze of the mountain when the party sought bandit treasure, and Milsil had been rescued. Her party, led by the queen in search of the king, were all dead. Now, Seg realized, she would have to return and report that fact.

For some people the fact would not be sad. For some of the schemers the news would brighten up their day...

Although Milsa had said nothing to make him think he stood more highly in her affections than anyone else, he felt confident she regarded him with approval as her escort.

That was a start.

He sniffed the breakfast scents approvingly.

Milsa glanced up at him as Hop hurried forward toward the bulky and complaining figure of Master Exandu.

“It is odd, Seg. You say you are from Loh. Of course, I know nothing of that continent; but I have heard that all Lohvians have red hair—”

He laughed, his fey blue eyes very merry.

“Come and have something to eat! No, no. I come from Erthyrdrin, which is in the very north of Loh. Up there we mostly have black hair and blue eyes. There are red-headed folk among us — and I can tell you, we make jokes about that!”

“I’m sure.”

“What!” yelled Exandu. He spluttered, tottering. “This is terrible! We must move on at once, get away from this fearful place — oh, my insides. Shanli! Shanli! My insides burn — it is that infernal vosk rasher I have just eaten... Shanli, for the sweet sake of Beng Sbodine, the Mender of Men!”

Clearly, Hop the Intemperate had just told Exandu that a crazed pack of toilcas was on the loose and

threatening to rush headlong upon the camp and devour everyone about the fires.

Shanli hurried up in her graceful fashion of not seeming to fuss or hurry at all but of always being on hand to fetch Exandu a sip of wine, a potion, liniment, and most importantly of all soothing words.

“A potion of Mother Babli’s Stomach Balm, master. And I have mixed it with just a sip of Honeyed Jholaix.”

“Oh, Shanli, my treasure... Honeyed Jholaix!”

Seg noticed the way Milsi reacted to this pathetic tomfoolery. Her eyebrows rose. Yet, she was well aware of the parlous state of Exandu’s insides, and of his interminable lamentations about his liver, and bones, and aching head.

She saw Seg looking at her.

“Honeyed Jholaix, indeed! That is pure decadence.”

Jholaix, being the name of the country and of its wines, the finest, so folk swore, in this part of Kregen, was well known as a wine and not often sampled. A poor man could not afford to buy a prime bottle of Jholaix with a year’s wages.

“Yes, but, lady Milsi,” said Shanli with her deep and resigned manner giving her a transcendental appearance of purity. “Master Exandu deserves all and more anyone can offer—”

“I’m sure.”

“Toilcas!” burst out Exandu, taking a heartbeat to chatter around the cup Shanli held to his shaking lips.

“They shall not harm you, master, not with Hop the Intemperate and Seg the Horkandur and all the other fine guards with us.”

Seg caught the eye of the Pachak, Kalu Na-Fre. Kalu walked over carrying a morning cup of tea in his tail hand, his upper left hand holding an enormous slice of bread, his lower left hand a pot of preserves. His single right hand dipped a knife into the pot and smeared the golden-yellow preserve upon the bread. He wore his full harness and carried an assortment of weapons. Even taking breakfast upon Kregen, especially in a Kregen jungle, a fellow did not wander about defenseless.

“Toilcas?” He sounded pleased.

“Aye. And, Kalu, you and I know that Exandu here will swing his sword lustily enough if the time comes.”

“Do you not think, masters,” put in Shanli, still spooning the potion into Exandu, “that we should pack up and depart at once?”

“The question is one upon which a fine argument might be built,” observed Kalu the Pachak. His straw-yellow hair swirled as he turned to regard Shanli. Short, Pachaks stood in general, but fierce and ferocious warriors with one of the strongest honor codes in all the world.

“Argument, argument?” cried Master Exandu. He was a man who enjoyed the good things of life. Normally his face was rubicund and merry, with fat scarlet cheeks and eyes almost hidden in cheerful folds of flesh. And his nose! Ripe, protuberant, of a size awesome and a color glowing like the finest plumbtree fruit. “There is no

argument. We must leave before the monsters are upon us and devour us limb from limb.”

“Oh,” said Kalu, casually. “I believe they’re more inclined to swallow you whole, and make you last a whole sennight. Although,” and in his Pachak way he looked meaningfully at Exandu. “Although, Master Exandu, they might make you last a pair of weeks; they’d not take you down whole.”

Mistress Shanli decided that her poor dear master could stand no more of this, and she urged him off between the campfires to a resting place more seemly. She was not slave, for the comb in her long dark hair glittered, and although, like the others in the party, she had been at pain to strip away her old clothes and contrive fresh, she still wore her bronze-link belt.

There were six principals in this party adventuring after treasure in the mountain of the Coup Blag. Each principal took along his retainers, all except Seg, who had now lost his comrade.

The sixth member of the party, Skort the Clawsang, had been lost within the depths of the maze in the mountain. Now Fregeff, the Fristle Sorcerer, walked calmly across to Kalu, Seg and the Lady Milsi.

“Toilcas are merely corporeal,” said the catman in his hissing way. He brushed his whiskers with the bronzen links of his flail. Fregeff was an Adept of the Doxology of San Destinakon. The lozenges of brown and black patterning his gown bewildered the ordinary eye with their subtle shifts of alignment, suggesting awful superstitious fears to believers. The bronze chain about

his waist led up to the necklet of the small winged reptile that perched upon the peak of his left shoulder. Now Fregeff put up a hand and stroked the volschrin.

“And, also, my Rik Razortooth would tear out their eyes — as you know.”

Hop, about to follow Exandu, said in his bluff way: “We do know, San Fregeff. But the monsters hunt in packs. There will be many of them.”

“And if I shake my bronzen flail at them?”

Hop shivered.

“That is not for mere mortal man to say, master.”

The hissing sound from the catman might have been a laugh of satisfaction, if anyone there believed the sorcerer could take satisfaction from so small a point.

“All the same...” said Seg, and looked around. A man of parts, this strange wild archer from Erthyrdrin, and a gallant man in important matters. “Mayhap we had best move on smartly. If not for poor old Exandu’s sake then for the sake of the ladies and the slaves.”

The Lady Milsi’s beautiful eyebrows convoluted themselves again at this. “Ladies, Seg — commingled with slaves?”

Seg remained quite unabashed.

“Certainly. I lump them together because they are unable to defend themselves—”

“Seg the Horkandur!” Now Milsi really looked annoyed. “A woman is perfectly capable of taking on and beating a craggy idiot of a man any day—”

“Some women, some men, and some days,” said Seg. He spoke gently.

“Your point admits of further extension to its basic parameters,” said Kalu, twitching up his tail hand but pausing to speak before he drank. “All the same, I am of the same opinion as Seg.”

“Good, Kalu. I wonder if we will receive the usual tiresome contrariness from Strom Ormol?”

“Here,” said Fregeff, with an indicatory jerk of his flail that did not stir the bronzen links, “he comes now.”

A strom, although a little below the middle of the table of precedence, was still a rank of the higher nobility. Stroms were folk of consequence. This Strom Ormol never forgot that fact, and made sure that those around him were not forgetful, either.

The catman moved a few paces away, a small and apparently meaningless movement; but Seg was well aware that the sorcerer by that gesture was indicating that he wished to take no part in the inevitable quarrel Strom Ormol would bring with him. Fregeff, as an Adept of San Destinakon, was quite capable of taking care of himself in unpleasant circumstances, and it seemed that here and now the onrush of a pack of maddened toilcas was not an occurrence to make him worry overmuch. Let, he seemed to be saying, let you lesser mortals decide for the best for yourselves.

Strom Ormol, pale-faced as always, high of temper, a blot in the eyes of others beside Seg, came striding up in his usual furious temper.

“What is all this blathering? Toilcas? Who says so?”

Seg had really just about had enough of this insufferable young dandy. He knew that Ormol, as a younger

son, had been kicked out by his noble father. He'd been into mischief from the day he could toddle, more than likely. Because he was a lord, Ormol had assumed that he was in command of the expedition. Seg had acquiesced in that. It went down well or ill with the other members; but only now and again had they shown open revolt. After all, they were equal members in the treasure hunting party.

“Well? Am I to receive no answer?”

Ormol fidgeted with the hilt of his rapier. The matching left-hand dagger swung over his right hip. This fashion of using rapier and main gauche was still new in the island of Pandahem, although well established in other parts of Kregen. Now Ormol glared about, his face with its pallid sheen of sweat working as though he had constipation.

“I saw one,” said the Lady Milsi.

Seg said, very quickly: “Yes, pantor, that is correct.”

He glanced at Milsi. She returned his look, and then glanced away. She sometimes forgot that one addressed lords properly, and here in Pandahem called them pantor, lord.

Kalu spoke up. “Well, strom. We have taken some treasure out of the mountain and are still here and alive. Unless you intend to return we may begin our return journey in all honor.”

“Return? Into that hellhole?”

“That’s settled, then,” said Seg. He made it brisk. “Let us pack up and move out.”

“I shall give the orders,” started Strom Ormol.

Fregeff called in his hissing catman way: “Evil approaches.”

Everybody jumped.

The Fristle sorcerer had powers, that was undeniable. If he said evil was on the way — evil was on the way.

They all looked about, and hands gripped onto sword hilts, and Seg slid his great bow off his shoulder.

“There!” yelled a Gon guard, and in the same instant they all saw the apparition floating in over the tops of the trees.

A throne-like chair hung unsupported in thin air. Its outlines were not clearly defined; it shimmered with power drawn from a source far beyond the confines of the normal. Seg blinked. He could make out the throne and the trailing silks that did not blow in the wind of the chair’s passage, he could see the chavonth pelts and ling furs scattered luxuriously upon the seat and the arms, see the mantling canopy rearing out above the throne. That canopy was fashioned into the likeness of a dinosaur’s wedge-shaped head, jaws agape, fangs glittering silver. The eyes were hooded ruby lights. Anyone approaching the throne must perforce stand in awe and terror of that demoniacal head above.

And — all these awesome appurtenances were as nothing beside the woman who sat on the throne.

Clad in black and green, picked out in gold, with much ornamentation and embroidery, she sat stiffly erect. Her pallor of countenance made Strom Ormol look as flushed as Master Exandu. Her eyes were green, sliding luminous slits of jade. Her hair, dark, swept in

long black tresses about her shoulders and descended into a widow's peak over her forehead. She wore a jeweled band about that sleek black hair, and a smaller representation of the horrific dinosaur wedge-shaped head jutted from the center.

A guard lifted his bow. He was a Brokelsh, a member of that race of diffs who are coarse of body hair and coarse of manner. He loosed. Everyone saw. The arrow struck cleanly into the woman's breast. It passed on, transfixing that glowing phantasm, shot on and curved out and down to plunge into the jungle.

Somebody screamed.

As though nothing had happened the woman peered down from her throne. Her mouth was painted into a ripe bud shape of invitation. There was not a single line or crease upon that pallid countenance. Gold leaf decorated her eyelids. She looked down upon the mortals below.

Each one felt the force of her gaze pass over, a psychic probe, questing and passing on.

Fregeff the sorcerer stood supremely still. His bronzen flail did not quiver.

With a gesture that even in so simple a movement was all seduction, the woman lifted her left hand. Diamonds glittered. She made a sign, her forefinger pointed down at the camp in the clearing.

Among them all, Seg devoutly believed that lightning, fire and destruction would pour from that condemning finger.

Instead, the apparition wavered, the outlines flowed like gold within the smelting pot. The throne lifted away, turned, vanished beyond the tops of the trees.

In the next instant a horde of flying creatures swept out over the trees, the men astride them brandishing weapons. In an avalanche of fury, the flying warriors swept down upon the camp, lusting for the kill.

**That's the end of the sampler. We hope you enjoyed it.  
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## About the author

Alan Burt Akers was a pen name of the prolific British author Kenneth Bulmer, who died in December 2005 aged eighty-four.

Bulmer wrote over 160 novels and countless short stories, predominantly science fiction, both under his real name and numerous pseudonyms, including Alan Burt Akers, Frank Brandon, Rupert Clinton, Ernest Corley, Peter Green, Adam Hardy, Philip Kent, Bruno Krauss, Karl Maras, Manning Norvil, Chesman Scot, Nelson Sherwood, Richard Silver, H. Philip Stratford, and Tully Zetford. Kenneth Johns was a collective pseudonym used for a collaboration with author John Newman. Some of Bulmer's works were published along with the works of other authors under "house names" (collective pseudonyms) such as Ken Blake (for a series of tie-ins with the 1970s television programme *The Professionals*), Arthur Frazier, Neil Langholm, Charles R. Pike, and Andrew Quiller.

Bulmer was also active in science fiction fandom, and in the 1970s he edited nine issues of the *New Writings* in

Science Fiction anthology series in succession to John Carnell, who originated the series.

More details about the author, and current links to other sources of information, can be found at [www.mushroom-ebooks.com](http://www.mushroom-ebooks.com), and at [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org).

# The Dray Prescott Series

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1. Transit to Scorpio
2. The Suns of Scorpio
3. Warrior of Scorpio
4. Swordships of Scorpio
5. Prince of Scorpio

## Havilfar Cycle:

6. Manhounds of Antares
7. Arena of Antares
8. Fliers of Antares
9. Bladesman of Antares
10. Avenger of Antares
11. Armada of Antares

## The Krozair Cycle:

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13. Renegade of Kregen
14. Krozair of Kregen

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16. Savage Scorpio
17. Captive Scorpio
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