

DRAY PRESCOT: 35

STORM OVER VALLIA

KENNETH BULMER
writing as
ALAN BURT AKERS

A Mushroom eBook

STORM OVER VALLIA

ALAN BURT AKERS

a Mushroom eBooks sample

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Drak the Prince

Storm over Vallia is a complete story of the magnificent and mysterious, beautiful and terrible world of Kregen, a planet orbiting Antares four-hundred light-years from Earth. On that world of headlong adventure much may be achieved and much lost. Far more than merely a strong sword arm is required for victory. Far more than a cunning and devious brain is needed to secure success.

For Drak, Prince Majister of Vallia, son of Dray Prescott and Delia, emperor and empress of Vallia, and Queen Lushfymi of Lome, passionate, willful, extraordinarily beautiful, mysterious, and Silda Segutoria, daughter of Seg and Thelda Segutorio, are caught in a web of fate and intrigue, of blood and death, that demands of them all that they are.

But the story begins with Lon the Knees, animal handler, as, dragged from caring for his domestic animals, he marches in the victory parade of Kov Vodun Alloran, traitorous and usurping master of all Southwest Vallia.

Under the streaming mingled lights of the Suns of
Scorpio the fates of these people of Kregen twine among
the destinies of that exotic world.

Alan Burt Akers

Chapter one

Lon the Knees

In Vodun Alloran's victory procession the wild beasts, placed ahead of the lines of carts containing trophies and treasure, followed immediately on the heels of the captives. The wild beasts, carefully and expensively gathered, were of many varieties, different of shape and form, of color and physiognomy. One thing they shared in common. They were all hungry.

At the rear of the sweaty reeking mass of savage beasts penned in the cage-carts, Lon the Knees marched along sturdily, for all his legs in their bandiness might have circumscribed a barrel — whence his sobriquet. He was of *Homo sapiens sapiens* stock, clad in rough homespun with decent sandals upon his feet. The long ash stick he carried was more sharply pointed than perhaps the authorities might have allowed in a beast handler, had they known.

“They're restless, bad cess to 'em,” said Fandy, walking at Lon's side.

She did not wave her stick at the animal in the cage for which she and Lon were responsible. As a Fristle, a cat-woman, Fandy the Tail's whiskers bristled and her gray-marbled white fur slicked sheening where the universal dust did not coat it in a dull ocher.

"They should have fed them." Lon's nostrils filled with the savage beast smell, thick and clogging. The noise hammering into the bright air made conversation impossible beyond a few paces. "The lord saves money where he should least afford it."

Up ahead, squadrons of cavalry rode clearing the way past the mass of onlookers thronging the streets of Rashumsmot, the town having gained greatly in importance since the capital, Rahartium, had been tumbled down into ruin during the wars. Following the wild beasts, bands blared music, and gauzily clad girls, flowers in their hair, flower garlanded, strewed the roadway with petals. Only when all this pomp and pageantry had passed would the high and mighty of the land ride arrogantly along, luxuriating in their wealth and power and prestige.

Fandy the Tail glanced sidelong at Lon, seeing his florid face scowling and paler than usual, the nose still purple but with harsh lines extending downwards to the corners of his mouth, which, uncharacteristically, resembled a snapped rat trap. She was well accustomed to reading facial expressions of other races, as anyone must do who lives on Kregen.

"Lon! You feeling—?"

“Oh, I don’t know, Fandy. We’re ordinary beast-handlers. I don’t care for these monsters. And I suppose I worry over Nol — for a twin brother he’s so vastly different from me as to make me wonder at times.”

“Twins from different fathers?” Fandy flicked her tail, long and thick and glossy where the dust did not cling. “It’s been said. I am not so sure.”

The bands played, the people shouted, the soldiers marched, trumpets blew and the beasts penned within their cages paced forward and back, forward and back, bristling.

“Well, Nol went for a mercenary, having the shoulders for a slinger. They took me into the cavalry stables. He fought for our lady the kovneva and when the new kov defeated her—”

“You’re here, Lon. He will be all right, you’ll see.”

“I pray to Opaz that be true. I just feel — by Black Chunguj! I would this damnfool procession was all over!”

The roadway here was ill-paved, cobbles having been ripped out for the catapults, and the wheels of the cage-carts snagged and leaped in the ruts.

Among the gawping crowds Lon was well aware that his friends and acquaintances would be busy. They left the poor folk alone. They dipped the fat and wealthy. It was said Crafty Kando could slide the gold ring off the finger of a woman who’d never taken it off since the day it was placed there. Lon was not a member of the thieves’ fraternity. When his work was done and theirs, they’d enjoyed good times in one another’s company.

In all the shrieking bedlam of bronze gongs, of brass trumpets, of drums and bells, the screams from ahead and the snarls and deep-throated growlings could not be mistaken.

Into that clogging miasma of smells, the raw rank taste of blood shocked through like red wine spilled onto a yellow tablecloth.

“I knew it!” Lon’s face pinched in. He gripped his pointed stick. “I told you so!”

Instantly, Fandy swiveled to glare not up ahead where the bound captives were being slaughtered by the escaped beasts, but at their cage. Everything remained battened tight. The latching, the bolts and bars, were all in place.

Inside the cage the silver-blue unpatterned hide of the churmod reflected light in a ghostly silky-smooth patina. Her blunt head lifted. Her tail thumped once upon the floor of the cage. Languidly, with all the arrogance of a churmod, she lifted on her four rear legs, so that her head, ferocious and deadly, rested still upon her front legs. Two crimson slits regarded Fandy with all the malevolent enmity of any churmod, surly and sadistic and vicious beasts that they are.

Everywhere people were running. The procession broke up, fragmented. Demented with terror, men and women hurled themselves into doorways, clambered up into windows, tried to shin up the pillars to the safety of the balconies where the bright scarves and the flowers and feathers waved still in mockery of the pandemonium below.

The churmod stood up on her eight legs. Eight sets of claws whicked out like razors. Without a sound, the churmod stood there, swaying with the lurchings of the cagecart. In the last moment before the cart stopped, its off fore wheel dropped into a rut. The whole cage tilted, groaning, and remained canted.

The churmod's enormous hissing sounded like a volcano spitting steam.

She hurled herself at the front bars, splintered them through, catapulted out onto the roadway, a lethal silvery-blue phantom of horror.

Fandy the Tail vanished in the opposite direction, the last tip of that fat tail flicking out of sight past a bundle of bandmen all struggling to rid themselves of their instruments.

The churmod in those long lazily-leaping bounds soared toward the fracas ahead, toward the screams and toward the luscious scent of blood.

Cursing everyone — and Kov Vodun Alloran most of all — Lon the Knees did not give himself time to stop and think. Had he done so he would have followed Fandy the Tail.

He began to run toward the sounds of death.

Just why he was doing this he didn't know; of course, he was scared stiff, of course he was an Opaz-forsaken fool, but he did owe a responsibility for the safety of the churmod. Churmods are amazingly rare and costly beasts. Larger than leems, more treacherous than chavonths, they are highly coveted prizes in the Arena. And rumor had it that Vodun Alloran, the new kov, was

intent on introducing all the spectacle of the Jikhorkdun, the Arena, the training rings, the barracks, all the gambling and the panoply, into this newly conquered island of Rahartdrin.

Lon ran on his bandy legs, and his tongue lolled.

Very quickly he came upon the ghastly work of the untamed animals.

Headless bodies, and disembodied heads, arms and legs, a scattering of inward parts, bestrewed the roadway. Some of the animals had stopped to appease their hunger. Others, the more unremittingly hostile, continued in their orgy of slaughter.

There was no sign of Lon's churmod.

Sense slapped back to him like a shower of ice across his face.

By the sweet name of Opaz!

What had he been thinking of!

At once he scuttled across the littered roadway, thankful not to be encountered by a stray leem, or a strigicaw, or anything with sharp teeth and claws, and dived into the black rectangle of an open doorway.

His feet tangled in a body by the doorstep. He caught his balance and glanced down. He frowned.

The body was that of a young woman, a firm, proud young woman, who had been slashed so grievously by giant claws that she must have died almost instantly. She wore black leathers, tightly fitting along slender legs and around a narrow waist, flared as to hip and breast. Her helmet with the brave feathers lay rolled into the angle of the doorway.

She was, Lon saw readily enough, a Warrior Maiden. Her rapier and left-hand dagger had availed her nothing, although the sword was still gripped into her black-gloved right fist.

Thoughtfully, he bent and picked up her dagger.

As a mere animal-handler, he could never aspire to wearing a rapier. The dagger, awkward though it might be in his right hand, was still of far finer workmanship and temper of metal than anything he was likely to be able to afford to buy down at the Souk of the Armorers.

The street outside looked something like the aftermath of a battle. Bodies lay everywhere. Blood ran to foul bright clothes and dabble in artfully curled hair. Some of the escaped beasts still roamed looking for fresh victims. The sounds of other animals eating crunched sickeningly into the brightness of the day.

Lon stepped over the dead girl and ventured farther inside, anxious to put a strong door between him and the horrors outside.

Along the short passageway from the front entrance to the inner courtyard he padded. A door stood in each wall, that on the right being closed, that on the left open. He looked over his shoulder before moving to the open door and saw a chavonth putting an inquiring head into the entrance. Lon swallowed. The chavonth, his fur in the familiar blue, gray and black hexagonal pattern, spat in sinister fashion. He braced on his six legs. Treacherous, are chavonths, and Lon knew that this specimen would spring in the next heartbeat.

With a yelp of pure terror he dived past the open door and without hesitation flung the solid wooden door shut.

He stood with his head bowed against the door, shuddering. He was just a simple animal-tender, and so the kov had ordered him, along with others in the same trade, to take charge of his new menagerie. These savage beasts had been gathered from far afield across the seas. Lon was used to ordinary sensible animals, used for pulling carts and ploughs, for riding on, for performing the ordinary sensible tasks demanded by ordinary sensible people.

He was not used to these ferocious assemblages of claws and fangs. No, by Beng Debrant, patron saint of animal husbandry!

A low spitting awful growl from the room at his back stiffened his spine as though he'd been shot through by an arrow.

He wriggled himself around, slowly — slowly! — to stare in appalled horror upon the scene in that downstairs chamber of an unknown house.

The girl clad in black leathers like the poor dead girl in the entranceway snapped: "Stand still, dom!"

Lon the Knees had no intention of doing anything else. Long before he could get the door open the chavonth in the room would be on him. And if he did, the thing's mate waited for him outside.

The sweat ran down his nose and into his eyes and he dare not move. The blue and black and gray hexagons upon the hide of the beast pulsed. He lifted his front left

paw and Lon saw the blood glimmering upon it. There was more blood upon the beast's hide, fouling that hexagonal pattern.

There was blood, too, upon the sword in the girl's fist...

Lon did not know the name of that sword or of what pattern it might be. It looked something like the common clanxer, the cut and thrust sword of Vallia; but there were differences that even he could see. His brother Nol, now, would probably know. Lon stood and sweated and was thankful he was so bandy his knees could not knock together and so enrage this frightful beast.

Of the details of the room Lon took in absolutely nothing, apart from a vague awareness of a heavy table in the casement window, a few chairs, and the three bodies on the floor. The Warrior Maiden stood with her black-booted feet firmly planted in front of the three corpses.

The twin suns, Zim and Genodras, slanting their mingled streaming light upon the scenes of carnage outside, twinkled in odd refractory reflections of jade and ruby within the shadows of the room. Lon just stood, petrified.

He could feel that both his hands were empty. Now, if he'd kept his long pointed stick... The mere idea of actually trying to push that stick in front of him at the chavonth gave him a dizzy feeling of extreme ill health.

From the time before dawn when the twin suns rose in the sky, Lon had been murkily convinced that this was

an evil day. He'd said as much to Nath the Goader, an intemperate and ill-humored fellow at the best of times. Nath, in charge of the wild animals and worried out of his wits by the unwelcome responsibility, had merely growled in his beard and sent Lon off with a flea in his ear, or, as Kregans say, a zorca hoof up the rump. The truth of Lon's premonitions was here, awfully here, in this savage chavonth, and the corpses, and the blood, and the shambles outside...

The girl's downdrawn level gaze did not waver from the chavonth.

When the thing launched itself into its lethal leap, she would be ready. Lon knew that. It was evident in every line of her body, every vibrant inch that, he saw with suddenly uncluttered eyes, was of extraordinary beauty.

Her sword did not waver.

Her left arm was held at her back, the hand hidden.

She was a Jikai Vuvushi, a Battle Maiden, and she had been riding with the cavalry at the head of the procession. No doubt these three poor corpses, all men, with the girl at the entrance-way, had been also with the advance guard. They'd spurred back to find out what the trouble was and had encountered horror.

So now this girl, this Jikai Vuvushi, faced the terror alone.

Lon swallowed again and slowly began to draw his right hand down to the awkward hilt of the main gauche thrust through his belt. Something about this girl attracted him in ways he was too wise to encourage. She was not for him. He tumbled the girls in the taverns

when he could, and joyed in that. This girl possessed an aura, a flickering flame of power and allure, and she was tough. No doubt of that. She was battle-hardened.

The blood along the chavonth's flank matching the blood on her blade proved that.

The chavonth sprang.

The girl leaped aside with such grace, such beauty of movement that the breath caught in Lon's throat.

As she leaped and so avoided the long slashing stroke from the beast's front claws, she struck. Her sword scored all along the animal's fore sixth. She span about, sword blurring up for another stroke and the chavonth backed off, spitting.

"By Vox!" she said, viciously disappointed. And still her left hand remained invisibly at her back.

The hunting cat showed no interest in the three bodies on the floor. He glared from hating, slit eyes upon the living breathing form of the girl. And, again, he lifted one front paw, the claws sharp and curved and shining.

A scratching began on the door, and a hideous meowling. The other chavonth, mate to that one penned here, sought entrance. Lon felt his famous knees giving way; but still his right hand dropped cautiously lower and lower to the hilt of the left-hand dagger.

With the sudden and ferocious changes of fortune that overtake anyone who lives on the world of Kregen, the noise outside the door changed. The chavonth's scratching ceased. The mewling screeched into a

spitting snarl. Mingled with that noise another noise penetrated, a long ominous hissing.

Whether or not chavonths, or any other of the many and varied life forms represented by Kregen's savage fauna, could communicate with one another, Lon didn't as yet know. But the noise outside the door was easily understood within the room.

That low evil hissing was the churmod — Lon's churmod for which he was responsible to the lord. In the next heartbeat it was all over. The snarling uproar ceased on a long screech of agony. No sound of the chavonth remained. Then, again, low and demonic, the hissing of the churmod.

What happened then Lon could not afterward well remember. His hand reached the dagger hilt and he drew ready to throw. He ranked himself as a man who could throw a knife, even one so clumsy as this left-hand dagger.

The chavonth, distraught at the death of his mate, for he had read those bestial sounds outside the door as accurately as the humans, whicked his tail and leaped.

Lon hurled the dagger.

He saw the point go into a blue patterned hexagon. He was aware of the girl's sword sliding up and then he blinked in the abrupt blinding wink of fire, he caught a blurred impression of steel slashing, of the brilliance of the emerald and ruby suns light glancing off polished metal. The girl swung back and the sword licked again. The chavonth reeled about spouting blood, half its muzzle ripped away. One eye dangled. It screamed. The

Jikai Vuvushi, very assured, very calm, stepped forward and drove her sword deeply into the beast's side. That blade, Lon knew, and trembled, had burst through the savage heart and stilled its beating forever.

Strangely, without speaking, the girl turned her back on Lon the Knees. A brown canvas strap and sack thumped against her side. She swung about to face him, the sword dripping red in her fist.

She spoke evenly enough, yet lightly, on a breath, as though the horror of the past moments had not been so easily disposed of in the thrust of a sword.

"I give you my thanks, dom. Your name?"

"Why, my lady — it is Lon the Knees—"

"Yes."

And she smiled. And Lon the Knees was overwhelmed.

He licked his lips and swallowed and got out: "My lady! You have slain a chavonth! It is a great jikai!"

He would not dare, naturally, to ask her name in return.

Her smile did not falter.

"A little jikai, perhaps, Lon the Knees. To gain the great jikai, let alone the High Jikai, one must do far more than this. Far more."

He opened his mouth, and she went on: "Now give me a hand with this young lord. His companions are dead, which is unfortunate for them, although no doubt somewhere in this land of Rahartdrin someone is giving thanks to Opaz for this eventuality."

Lon didn't follow all this; but he stepped across, knees trembling, and helped to raise up one of the corpses.

This body was clad in gorgeous clothes of a nature that, while they filled Lon with envy, filled him also with repugnance.

As though inconsequentially, she said: “You throw a cunning knife, Lon.”

“Aye, my lady.”

“It did the trick. Gave me time — hold his arm, the idiot keeps on falling over — now, you young lord, open your damned eyes!” She slapped the corpse around the face and, lo!, the corpse’s eyes opened.

“Help!” The puffy lips shook as the man screamed.

The girl shook his shoulder. “It is all over! You are safe, Jen^[1] Cedro.”

This young lord Cedro in the foppish gaudy clothes took some time to calm down. He was sick. His eyes, of a pale transparency so unlike the normal deep Vallian brown, stared vacantly at the room, the dead chavonth, his two dead companions. He shuddered and vomited again.

Only now, this close to the girl as he helped with this petulant young lord, was Lon aware of the blood scored along the rip in her black leathers. The slash from razor-sharp claws bloodied her left shoulder. That, Lon surmised, was why she’d held her left hand at her back.

“My lady! You are hurt—”

“A scratch. As soon as I’ve handed Jen Cedro over I’ll have the needle lady attend to it.”

“At least let me bind it up—”

“Don’t fuss, Lon the Knees.”

He felt chastened, and so said no more.

“That damned churmod is still prowling about outside.” She sounded fretful and just as savage as the damned churmod. “I don’t fancy having to go up against her with—”

“My lady! That would be madness!”

“Oh, aye, by Vox, absolute madness. So I won’t.”

“Thank the good Opaz!”

“We’ll sit tight in here and wait until Kov Vodun sorts out the whole stupid mess. You can tell me about yourself.”

So he told her, not that there was much to tell. Orphaned at an early age and sent to work on a farm, been looking after animals all his life. His twin brother, Nol, gone for a mercenary slinger and who might have any sobriquet now, a source of ever-present foreboding.

“Why, Lon?”

“Soldiers get themselves killed, my lady.”

“Oh, aye, they do that. But then, so do beast-handlers who don’t know their job.”

“My lady!” Lon was aware of deep disappointment that he should not have felt. The great ones of the land would always blame someone other than themselves. “I am not trained to handle wild beasts — give me a Quoffa, or a mytzer, a zorca or—”

“I know, Lon. I am not blaming you. Far from it.”

“They should not have put the captives so near the wild beasts, and—”

“And the cages were ludicrous. Yes, I guessed that. But, Lon the Knees, do you not think it strange that so many wild animals escaped — all at once?”

“I saw the churmod break the bars. It was frightening.”

“Assuredly. Yet I suspect that a hand loosened the bars of the cages — not yours, Lon, believe me, I did not intend to mean that.”

Oddly enough, given his usual attitude to the high and mighty of the world, Lon believed her, believed she spoke the truth. She was, he could see, a most remarkable young lady.

“You do not ask my name, Lon.”

“That is beyond my reach, my lady, as you know.”

“Oh — I see. Yes. I am a Jikai Vuvushi and am used to rough ways. Well then, Lon the Knees, I am Lyss the Lone — well, that is one name by which I am known.”

Very gravely, Lon said: “Llahal and Lahal, Lyss the Lone. Now we have made pappattu properly.”

“Lahal, Lon.”

So the introductions were made.

Lord Cedro groaned and started to roll over so Lyss the Lone pushed him away to avoid his own vomit.

Added to the rank smell of blood in the chamber the sour stink of Cedro’s sick gave Lon a queasy sensation, he who was used to the stench of a farmyard!

Lyss walked to the window and looked out. She shook her head.

“The beasts still stalk arrogantly. There is no sign of a human being — alive, that is.”

“Oh,” said Lon.

“The kov will be rounding up his people now. Pretty soon they’ll come back and try to round up the beasts—”

“I should be there to help them.”

“You will stay here and help me.”

“Quidang, my lady.”

“So you never wanted to go for a mercenary, then?”

“Oh, I went off with my brother Nol. They took him for a slinger; me they sent home, laughing. But I was in one army for a time, looking after the totrixes.”

“Someone has to, otherwise the army would not ride.”

Nervously, trading on this amazing friendship he sensed between them, Lon ventured: “And you, my lady. You have been in many famous battles?”

“Some.”

“A — I see...”

“A battle is a battle, Lon. A messy business.”

“Yes, my lady.”

The idea that a battlefield was not exactly the right place for a young lady could only occur to Lon the Knees, or any of his contemporaries, as it might apply to one particular girl, one prized loved one. Girls had always fought in battles, and the Jikai Vuvushi regiments were justly feared.

Lon was perfectly content, now, to sit tight in this chamber and wait for Kov Vodun to come for them. That the kov would come, Lon felt no doubt. Now he knew this young and unpleasant lord was Jen Cedro, he knew him to be one of Kov Vodun’s nephews. If the

foppish idiot was valued by his uncle, then rescue would not be long delayed. Thus reasoned Lon the Knees.

Also, and in this Lon felt unsure, he would meet the kov, face to face. Vodun Alloran might lord it over wide lands; the common folk could hope to see him barely more than a handful of times during their lives. The great ones of the earth rode past in a glitter of gold amid the trumpets and banners; the common herd cheered from the crowds and saw only what the dazzlement in their eyes allowed.

Assured that Cedro was still alive, Lyss the Lone did not seem bothered that he relapsed into unconsciousness. She sat on one of the chairs twisted to face the windows. She sat still and trim in her black leathers, and Lon felt the pang strike through him. If only...!

Well, jolly fat Sendra down at The Leather Bottle had been kind to him in the past, and he could always shut his eyes and dream.

Noise and fresh uproar in the street told that at last rescue had arrived. The clatter of hooves, the screeching fury of wild beasts skewered and feathered, the high yells of men and women drunk on slaying, filtered in through the window. Lyss stood up. She hitched her rapier and main gauche around, picked up her other sword, solid and powerful, and started for the door.

“My lady!” Lon was alarmed to such an extent he scared himself at the intensity of his own feelings.

“Well?”

“You cannot — I mean — why go out now?”

“I am a Jikai Vuvushi.”

Lon stiffened his spine.

“Aye! And like to be a dead one if you go outside that door now — my lady.”

Thankfully, she did not say: “And you would care?” Such banality, they both recognized, had long since vanished between them. She smiled that dazzling smile.

“I believe your justified concern no longer applies — listen!”

From outside the door the sounds of the churmod’s death hissed in, and Lon had no difficulty visualizing the hail of bolts from the crossbows, sleeting in to shred and bloody that ghostly silvery-blue hide.

Lyss opened the door.

“Hai! The lord Cedro is here, unharmed. Hurry, fambls, and take him up carefully, for he is beloved of the lord kov.”

Men and women wearing a variety of colorful uniforms entered the room, and at once began to attend to Cedro. Lon stared at the open doorway.

Vodun Alloran, Kov of Kaldi, conqueror of this island of Rahartdrin, entered. Lon stared, fascinated, quite unaware of his own peril in thus staring so openly at a great lord.

Alloran looked the part. His clothes were sumptuous, for he no longer wore the normal Vallian buff tunic and breeches; golden wire, lace, feathers and folderols smothered him in magnificence. His shrewd, weather-beaten face contained harshness engraved as a habit, and the bright brown Vallian eyes, partially hidden by

down-drooping lids, revealed a little of the fury of ambition seething within him.

He wore an aigrette, the feathers of maroon and gray, the colors of Kaldi, and the golden device, that of a leaping sea-barynth, a long and sinuous monster of Kregen's seas. His own personal retainers wore sleeves banded in maroon and gray in the old style of Vallia. He stared about from under those drooping eyelids, and Lon abruptly switched his gaze to Lyss.

She stood, upright and slim in her black leathers.

"My nephew," said the kov. "He is unharmed?"

"He is well, my lord kov, praise be to Opaz—"

"Yes. He would escape from a pack of leems without a rent in his coat."

Lyss said nothing. Lon stood with his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

Alloran stared about with that aloof, disdainful look of the great ones of the world.

"There has been a mischief done here," he said. He spoke through his teeth. "And I will have the guilty ones hung by their heels over the battlements until they are shredded to bone."

Watching Lyss the Lone, Lon saw the way she held herself, the tautness of her, the poise. Was that a fine trembling along her limbs, the ghost of a twitch of muscle in her cheek? He'd conceived the instant idea that this glorious girl feared nothing. She had faced and overcome a savage wild beast, not even claiming a jikai for the deed. Now she stood watchful, like a falcon poised ready to take flight, alert and wary.

Naturally Lon stood in awe and fear of Kov Vodun Alloran.

But did this Battle Maiden, this superb Jikai Vuvushi, stand in fear of the kov?

No. No, Lon the Knees could not believe that this girl feared anything in Kregen.

**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, and at wikipedia.org.

The Dray Prescott Series

The Delian Cycle:

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:

12. The Tides of Kregen
13. Renegade of Kregen
14. Krozair of Kregen

Vallian cycle:

15. Secret Scorpio
16. Savage Scorpio
17. Captive Scorpio
18. Golden Scorpio

Jikaida cycle:

19. A Life for Kregen
20. A Sword for Kregen
21. A Fortune for Kregen
22. A Victory for Kregen

Spikatur cycle:

23. Beasts of Antares
24. Rebel of Antares
25. Legions of Antares
26. Allies of Antares

Pandahem cycle:

27. Mazes of Scorpio
28. Delia of Vallia
29. Fires of Scorpio
30. Talons of Scorpio
31. Masks of Scorpio
32. Seg the Bowman

Witch War cycle:

33. Werewolves of Kregen
34. Witches of Kregen

35. Storm over Vallia
36. Omens of Kregen
37. Warlord of Antares

Lohvian cycle:

38. Scorpio Reborn
39. Scorpio Assassin
40. Scorpio Invasion
41. Scorpio Ablaze
42. Scorpio Drums
43. Scorpio Triumph

Balintol cycle:

44. Intrigue of Antares
45. Gangs of Antares
46. Demons of Antares
47. Scourge of Antares
48. Challenge of Antares
49. Wrath of Antares
50. Shadows over Kregen

Phantom cycle:

51. Murder on Kregen
52. Turmoil on Kregen