



Charon's Claw: Neverwinter Saga, Book III (The Legend of Drizzt 22)

By R.A. Salvatore

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In the 3rd book of the #4 *New York Times* best-selling Neverwinter Saga, Drizzt draws his swords once more to aid his friends. His lover, Dahlia Sin'felle, can speak of nothing but the moment she will face the Netherese lord Herzgo Alegni once again. Drizzt has already followed a trail of vengeance beside Dahlia. Can he justify one more battle to settle a grudge he does not understand? Artemis Entreri too seeks vengeance. He offers to aid Dahlia in her mission to destroy Alegni. But Charon's Claw, Alegni's sentient sword, dominates Entreri's movements—if not his mind. And then there's the way Entreri looks at Dahlia. Can Drizzt trust his old foe?

Praise for the Neverwinter Saga:

“Emotional, respectful of its characters, intelligently written and structured, and finally summons a sense of nostalgic sorrow throughout”—Fantasy Book Review on *Gauntlgrym*, Neverwinter Saga Book I

“Full of excitement. Salvatore has mastered the art of showing a beautiful fight scene, and he is at the top of his game in this one. We meet many characters with many different fighting styles, and Salvatore does a great job of distinguishing between them. He manages to take these scenes from so much more than just a fight scene, to an integral part of the story.”—The SFF Hub on *Gauntlgrym*, Neverwinter Saga Book I

“A quick read with some very satisfying fight scenes. It's also deeply layered with emotional atmosphere” —California Literary Review on *Gauntlgrym*, Neverwinter Saga Book I

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Exclusive: A Reflection on Charon's Claw

Charon's Claw, the legendary sentient sword which serves as the namesake for the third book in the Neverwinter quartet, made its first appearance in Servant of the Shard (The Sellwords, Book I):



The sword had a slender, razor-edged, gleaming red blade, its length inscribed with designs of cloaked figures and tall scythes, accentuated by a black blood trough running along its center. Entreri opened his hand enough for the wizard to see the skull-bobbed pommel, with a hilt that appeared like whitened vertebrae. Running from it toward the crosspiece, the hilt was carved to resemble a backbone and rib-cage, and the crosspiece itself resembled a pelvic skeleton, with legs spread out wide and bent back toward the head, so that the wielder's hand fit neatly within the "bony" boundaries. All of the pommel, hilt and crosspiece was white, like bleached bones--perfectly white, except for the eye sockets of the skull pommel, which seemed like black pits at one moment and flared with red fires the next.

"I am pleased with the prize I earned," Entreri admitted. Rai-guy stared hard at the sword, but his gaze inevitably kept drifting toward the other, less-obvious treasure: the black, red-stitched gauntlet on Entreri's hand.

"Such weapons can be more of a curse than a blessing, human," the wizard remarked. "They are possessed of arrogance, and too often does that foolish pride spill over into the mind of the wielder, to disastrous result."

Artemis Entreri reflects on the power of the blade, in this never-before-published scene below, followed by R.A. Salvatore's thoughts on the power that weapons of legend hold over readers--and himself.

"Are you the stronger?" Artemis Entreri whispered as he felt Charon's Claw's balance and its strength. Could he control the tremendous will of such a blade? He thought of the many women who had wondered the same of him. They thought they could understand him, even "fix" him. They were gone and he remained.

He recalled a wizard he once knew, young and proud, reaching into the Weave of magic recklessly, convinced that he alone could pull from it powers greater than the arch-mages. Entreri winced as he recalled the charred remains of that silly boy, smoke red and purple wafting from his shrunken corpse.

But better that the boy had never tried? To what end? To live a life of the mundane, another prestidigitator in a world of tricksters? Artemis Entreri was many things, but not mundane. He held up the shining blade and studied the threat of the etched figures and their death scythes.

Entreri smiled. Charon's Claw was his . . . possibility, his dream and his nightmare. But he soon came to know that to make the nightmare end, he must abandon, too, the dream.

Ah, the weapons of legend. They are not merely items in a tale of adventure, oh no. They are characters, with all the promise of past feats or future glory that one might see in the secret lineage of an unwitting protagonist or in the hopes and dreams fostered by the muscles of a budding warrior or the cunning of a young wizard's apprentice. It's that simple. Whether an ancient sword, forged in magic lost to the world and thus holding the promise of deeper strengths and secrets, or the creation of a warhammer wrapped into the storyline of the present heroic tale, to the reader, the weapon will have an identity of its own, a possibility full of dread or glory.

An ancient artifact ties the story to the mysterious past; a new-forged one hints that the present will not be forgotten in centuries to come.

Excalibur, Andúril, Stormbringer, the Mace of Cuthbert, the Wand of Orcus . . .

And Aegis-fang. I cannot forget that one! When I was writing *The Crystal Shard* all those years ago, I hadn't intended to include a scene of Bruenor forging the warhammer, but the joy of writing is to let the story take you on its own journey. My road led me to Bruenor's forge, and I watched, fascinated, as he created the warhammer. I hadn't even thought of it before I started writing, but when I began, I found that I couldn't stop. I felt the scene, viscerally. The image of Aegis-fang came clear to me. I could feel the heat of the forge and see the intensity in Bruenor's eyes. When that happens, a writer knows he's onto something good. Fortunately, most readers agreed.

These are more than weapons and artifacts. They are stories unto themselves. If you're writing a fantasy novel or designing a video game or DM'ing a Dungeons & Dragons session, give a player a +2 sword and study her expression. Perhaps a nod, as she adjusts her statistics to account for the numerical upgrade. Perhaps a groan of disappointment, because she already has a +2 sword.

Now give someone else a Glamdring and watch his eyes light up. You have just opened the door of possibility.

--R.A. Salvatore, July 2012

About the Author

R.A. Salvatore is the *New York Times* best-selling author of more than forty novels, including the popular **Forgotten Realms** series *The Legend of Drizzt*. He's an avid gamer, father of three, and loyal citizen of Red Sox Nation. Residence: Massachusetts

Users Review

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Robert Bryant:

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