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R. A. E. GENO SALVATORE

The Slowaway
STONE OF TYMORA • VOLUME I





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The Stowaway

Stone of Tymora Book I



THE STOWAWAY

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Twelve years old and already guarding a secret that could jeopardize his young life, Maimun is marked for death. With a demon called Asbeel tracking his every move through Baldur's Gate, the orphaned boy flees out to sea, stowing away on the pirate hunting ship, *Sea Sprite*, where he comes across a most unlikely ally: the dark elf Drizzt Do'Urden. As the ship careens through the Sea of Swords, fighting pirates and agents of Asbeel, Maimun must come to terms with the secret he carries and find out what family really means.

For young readers seeking the next great fantasy saga or for long-time fans who can't miss any installment in the story of Drizzt, this book delivers all the action, intrigue, and magic you've come to expect from the Salvatore name.



Hiding within the hold of Sea Sprite, Maimun believes he has found shelter from the dangers he escaped in Baldur's Gate. But he underestimates the threats of the sea.

*One night he awakes to the sound of sailors above-deck, rushing to and fro, shouting and yelling. One word, shouted over and over, catches his attention:
"Pirates!"*



My heart dropped: Pirates! If they took the ship, they would loot the hold, and my hiding spot would be compromised. If pirates took me, they would not be so lenient as the elf had been a few nights earlier. They would throw me to the sharks, or keelhaul me, or worse.

I caught myself. They would not take the ship, I thought, not with the elf and the giant aboard. And if they did, they would not take me, I would go down swinging.

I drew my dagger—Perrault’s dagger—and rolled it over in my hand, feeling its balance, its magic, its power. I took comfort in that powerfully enchanted dagger. I had seen Perrault use its magic before: a simple flick of the wrist, and it would

extend into a fine sword. I knew how to wield such a blade, and though I had never been forced to do so in real combat, I was confident of my ability to defeat any drunken pirate.

And, if more than one pirate came, I would hold them off long as I could. This corner of the ship was my kingdom now, my little patch of the world, and I decided it would not fall, no matter the foe. I would rather die here than be taken by pirates.

But my determination died as *Sea Sprite* tried to evade her pursuers. A battle at sea is not like a battle on land, where the armies simply line up and charge at each other, and the victor is usually determined by who can bring the greatest numbers to the battle most quickly. On the sea, the battle is won or lost by positioning, by eliminating threats singly and moving on to the next. *Sea Sprite* was a sleek and speedy vessel. I hoped the ships chasing her were not.

As *Sea Sprite* rolled, breaking through the swells, I figured out Captain Deudermont's tactics. The pirates would try to prevent her escape, while Captain Deudermont was trying to get the pirates out of each others' range, that he may face them

individually. On the great expanses of the ocean, that probably meant hours of sailing before the first arrows were launched.

* * * * *

I had drifted back to sleep, somehow. I only realized it when I was suddenly thrown back into consciousness.

I say "thrown," because I awoke suddenly, and in midair. The ship cut a turn, the sharpest turn I had ever heard of made by a ship. *Sea Sprite* cut so quickly, her bow lifted clear out of the water and she pivoted on her stern. The sudden move sent all the barrels and crates in the hold—as well as me—tossing and tumbling, head over heels and end over end, to bump and bang against each other. A cask of water burst, a barrel of salt spilled open, a box of carved ivory slammed into the wall barely an inch from my head.

With a crushing grinding noise the ship came down as quickly as it had lifted.

Abovedeck, the hoots of victory and cries of rage turned to steel clashing against steel, shouts of pain and the stomp of many, many boots over the deck.

My adrenaline raced, and I gripped my dagger, ready to stab any enemy who dared approach. But for the time being, no one entered the hold, and the waiting became unbearable.

I decided to take a peek at the action, through the little hole I had used to climb aboard. I stuck my head out just enough to see that we were entangled with another, larger ship. In the distance, a ball of fire arced off the hull of a third ship. As soon as the ball cut through the air I realized what it was: pitch, burning tar, launched by a catapult and headed directly for the *Sea Sprite*. Headed directly for the stern of the ship. Headed directly for . . . me.

I ducked.

I heard no crash of the missile against the hull, so I poked my head back up to look. Directly below me, the water churned and I watched with great relief as the last lick of flames sank beneath the waves.

Another ball of fire soared over the other ship. But this one was not arcing toward us. It was not arcing at all. Was this a dragon? Was it a powerful spell? If a wizard had thrown such a fireball as this,

then that wizard must be a god. I was certain then that one of the stars had dropped out of the sky.

Orange flames rent the cloudless blue; it seemed to me as if the sky and sea were just a painting, with a great fire roaring behind it, and someone was tearing a jagged line across that painting to reveal the flames.

But I soon realized those flames had a definitive shape. This was no fireball and no dragon, it was a chariot of fire, horses and carriage ablaze!

I lost my breath as the fiery thing cut sharply around *Sea Sprite*, then soared off for the second pirate ship with purpose. The chariot plunged right through the pirate ship's mainsail, lighting the canvas ablaze. Then a silver streak leaped out toward the ship. A woman seemed to be on the back of the chariot firing some kind of magical bow. The catapult tried to fire back at the woman. But its shot barely lifted into the air. Then it simply dropped back down onto the deck of the ship.

I couldn't take my eyes off the spectacle. My heart raced as the chariot raced, and leaped as she cut graceful turns, and I nearly cried out when

I spotted the driver, a red-bearded dwarf, hollering as if he was truly enjoying the wild ride. The chariot whipped around again, clipping the top of the mainmast, lighting it up like a candle. Then the flaming craft turned away, moving toward us.

Something dropped off the back of the ship—the woman archer, I guessed, had abandoned the chariot. I leaned out, trying to see where the woman had splashed down, and to see where the chariot had headed.

I held my breath at the sight of a third pirate ship approaching, and I prayed that the chariot would similarly cripple her.

But the chariot did better than that. I heard a cry for Moradin, a dwarf god, and that crazy driver dived the chariot right onto the deck of the third pirate vessel. If all the wizards of Baldur's Gate had lined up side by side and hit the ship with a fireball, it would not have been as grand an explosion! The sight of it stole my breath, then the brightness of it stole my sight.

I fell back and spent a moment blinking. I quickly recovered, and returned to my perch, not wanting to miss this incredible battle.

But then a green, scaly hand, its long fingers ending in sharp, filthy claws, hooked over the hole right in front of my face.

I fell back and lashed out with my dagger, on instinct as much as thought. My blade bit deep into the monster's hand, severing a finger, and the hand withdrew. But it did not loosen its grip—it simply ripped a few planks out of the hull as it fell back.

I peeked out the now-massive hole in the hull, hoping to watch the beast splash into the sea below.

But instead I saw it dangling from the launch by one hand. It would have been perhaps nine feet tall if it were standing, and its arms were long even for its body size. It glanced up at me, and its hideous pointed nose and crooked teeth would have been enough to unsettle the heartiest of soldiers, but the murderous look in its eyes made it truly frightening.

My mind cried out to stab it, to attack it, kill it while it was hanging. But my body would not answer that call. All I could do was retreat a few steps as the thing ripped at the hull, pulling planks

off with ease. When the hole was large enough, it swung itself easily through.

A surge of fear snapped me from my stupor, and I took the only course I could think of.

I turned and fled.

I hoped my small size would help me, as I was able to navigate through the tight spaces of the hold easily, and the hulking thing surely could not. I realized my error as the first few boxes went soaring over my head.

“Comen out, leetle snack,” the thing gurgled.

Its voice was somewhere between a roaring bear and a drowning cat, and every bit as ugly as the monster itself.

I tried to pick my way through the familiar cask maze, to head for the exit to the deck, to anywhere the beast was not. But the sharp turn and the crash had tossed the contents of the hold, and I could barely keep my footing.

The troll tossed another barrel, and it crashed among several flasks of water, one of which burst open. Other crates and boxes tumbled about.

One of the crates, full of dried food, landed directly on me, knocking me down and blasting the

breath from my lungs. The troll ripped through the last stack of barrels right behind me.

“Oh ho, eet cannot hide!” the brute shouted in delight. Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, it stopped.

When I dared to glance back, it was just staring at me.

Staring at my chest, where my shirt had been torn open. Staring at the sash holding the stone.

“Oh, eet be the leetle one the demon wants, don’t it be?” Its voice was a whisper, like a nail pulled across a chalkboard. “’E’ll be payin me well for thees one, won’t ’e then? Mighten be even worth the loss of me sheep.”

I snapped my wrist out, extending the magical blade, and swung as hard as I could. But the creature was quicker than I had thought, and it stepped back out of my range.

“Eet has some bite, eet does!” snarled the troll in a strange half-laugh. “But so does I!” It lunged forward suddenly.

I dodged to my left and cut a quick backhand with my saber, aiming to hit the creature in the ear, or at least force it back again.

It caught my arm in its hand.

In desperation, I reached my empty hand into the nearest barrel and grabbed a handful of powder. Without thinking I hurled the white stuff into the beast's ugly face.

Now the sea-green thing howled, but it did not loosen its grip on my forearm. "Salt!" it shrieked. "The leetle snack ees attacking me with salt! Oh ho! I leeve in the sea, foolish leetle thing. The salt, she is my friend, she is not yours."

At least it wasn't eating me as it spoke, I thought, reaching into the next nearest barrel. Again, only powder, but again I threw it in the troll's face, hoping to buy some time.

But this time the powder was black, a substance called "pepper" imported from the town of Nesmé, the same rare spice I had found when I first came aboard. And this time the creature yelped in pain.

It released my hand and reached its filthy claws up to its face. I grabbed another handful and ran between its massive legs, heading back to the wall by the path the brute had just cleared, a plan formulating in my head.

I pocketed the pepper as I approached the gaping hole in the wall. Quickly I scanned the nearby barrels to be sure everything I needed was still there, opening a choice barrel and a box.

Then I went to the hole, using my sword to pull the dangling rope back onto the ship. Perrault's sword was a good one, and I was able to quickly cut the other rope tying the launch to the hull, allowing the small craft to swing freely from the overhead rope.

Heavy footsteps thumped behind me like the beating of my own heart. I had no time!

I turned and grabbed three small objects from the open box—some of the ivory-like carvings.

Quickly I put the three up into the air in a graceful juggle.

"Hey, you," I called to the monster. "If you don't eat me, I'll give you these!"

"Oh ho, the leetle snack does not want to be a snack, does it then? So eet tries to bribe me! But no, I thinks, I would rather has the snack. Sailing is hungry work, so eet ees." The thing stopped, deep in thought—or as deep as such a creature was capable of, I figured. It spoke again: "I can take

the treenkets from eets corpse, can't I?" It started forward again.

I tossed one of the pieces up in the air toward the beast, yelling, "Catch!" Sure enough, the dim-witted troll glanced up at the flying object—not for long, but long enough. I pegged off the other two pieces, hitting the thing right between the eyes with both. But it hardly seemed to feel the blows.

It roared and charged.

I quickly grabbed the open barrel, tipping its contents—hundreds of tiny ceramic marbles—directly into the wretch's path.

The monster slipped and fell, crashing heavily into the wall beside the gaping hole.

I did not wait to watch.

As soon as the barrel fell, I grabbed the loose rope and swung myself out toward the launch, climbing as fast as I could hand-over-hand up onto the small boat. The creature oriented itself quickly and appeared again at the hole, snarling in rage.

"Now you die." Its voice, that unearthly gurgle, was much lower in pitch now, but more intense. Even several feet away I could feel and smell its horrid hot breath.

The creature reached out at me with its long arms and grabbed the side of the launch. Slowly, it began to pull me in.

I could have cut at those hands with my saber, but somehow I knew I would not dislodge the thing. Instead, I grabbed the one rope still attached to the launch and began to climb.

"You will not escape," the troll promised, pulling harder, trying to bring the launch close enough that it could grab me before I got away. It leaned out from the boat, its foul breath reaching out at me, its teeth gnashing hungrily. It leaned, and it pulled . . .

And I put my sword below my hand, and cut the rope.

Overbalanced, suddenly trying to hold the weight of the boat while leaning too far forward, the troll toppled and fell. It reached up with one hand to swat at me, but there was no strength in that strike and its claws did not dig in.

Down fell the launch and the wretched beast along with it. The boat landed first, with a splash, and the troll landed atop it, smashing right through, reducing the rowboat to kindling. The

ripples looked an awful lot like those created by the ball of pitch, and were in precisely the same spot, relative to the ship.

The troll's strike had put me into a swing, and suddenly I was swinging back toward the ship, toward the hole, now even bigger where the troll had ripped back out of the vessel. And more jagged, I noticed, as my grip on the rope slipped. I saw the sharp edge of wood rising up to meet me even as I fell, but I only felt the pain of it gashing my chest for a moment.

Then I felt no more.

Find out what happens next! Don't miss:

The Slowaway

Stone of Tymora Book I

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About the Authors

R.A. Salvatore is the author of forty novels and more than a dozen *New York Times* best sellers, including *The Two Swords* which debuted at #4 on *The New York Times* best seller list.

Geno Salvatore has collaborated on several R.A. Salvatore projects including Fast Forward Games' *R.A. Salvatore's The DemonWars Campaign Setting* and *R.A. Salvatore's The DemonWars Player's Guide*. He co-authored R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars Prologue*, a *DemonWars* short story that appeared in the comic book published by Devil's Due Publishing. He is a recent graduate of Boston University and lives in Massachusetts.

Nearly two decades ago, R.A. Salvatore introduced the world to Drizzt Do'Urden in a series that has since become a fantasy classic and a consistent presence on best seller lists. Now, for the first time, Salvatore partners with his son Geno to craft a brand-new story just for young readers, featuring a cameo of one of the most beloved fantasy characters of all time.

“There’s a good reason this saga is one of the most popular—and beloved—fantasy series of all time: breakneck pacing, deeply complex characters, and nonstop action.”

—Paul Goat Allen, *B&N Explorations* on R.A. Salvatore’s *The Legend of Drizzt™*



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