LIES WEEPING



THE BOOKS OF THE NORTH

The Black Company
Shadows Linger
The White Rose

The Silver Spike

THE BOOKS OF THE SOUTH

Shadow Games
Dreams of Steel

THE BOOKS OF GLITTERING STONE

Bleak Seasons
She Is the Darkness
Water Sleeps
Soldiers Live

Port of Shadows

A PITILESS RAIN

Lies Weeping

LIES WEEPING

A CHRONICLE OF THE BLACK COMPANY



GLEN COOK



An Ad Astra Book

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For the Tunnel Rat, Glenn Beatty, and
Mrs. Tunnel Rat, Susan. Love you guys.



ARKANA'S VIEW

That airheaded, freckle-faced bimbo Shukrat wanted to start our Book with: "So there I was … and yada yada … and alcohol may have been involved." Yeah. That girl has no sense of dignity. Although I think that opening would have worked for about half of the episodes that Pop recorded in his Books, you want to know the truth. But that does not fit this time.

Sorry, Shukrat.

So, anyway, all right, I will do the writing thing, just to have something to do, until I can figure out how I can get myself back home. If home is still there. The news from over there is never good.

You would think I would have learned that that dream is really a nightmare.

We need to get more serious, both of us girls. We need to start where it all started. Only trouble is, some parts started in fifty different places, even some of them back before anybody's parents were born. So, I figure that I will start where this started for us. When we took over writing the Annals for Pop. Not even a little bit enthusiastically. Like, Pop bugged me and bugged me and I managed to stay away from it until he ascended, but, then, nobody else wanted the job and then … Lady says, "Why don't you girls take care of it? You should do something more around here than just hang out, turning chow into crap and distracting the soldiers." I mean, what is that? And … I hate her. She is looking gooder than me, lately, only nobody notices that but me.

Anyway, after Pop ascended to god status … I guess that is an exaggeration, but it is all the same to me. Whatever it was. Me and Shukrat finally gave in and started keeping these Annals.

So, the Book of Arkana and Shukrat Voroshk: In those days the Black Company was in service to no one. In those days the Company was a nation unto itself.

So, there we were …

We—meaning the Black Company, in which I include myself because I seem to be serving a life sentence here for my sins—were retreating from one world, across the plain of glittering stone, toward a shadowgate that would let us trade the dangers of the plain for the questionable safety of the Company's onetime haven, Hsien, in the world we called the Land of Unknown Shadows, a realm that Shukrat and I do not know because we came to the Company while it was headed the other direction, mad-bound to reconquer a whole lot of crazy that they helped create before they ever made the Hsien-ward journey the first time. Behind us lay the great fortress with no name where Croaker became the Steadfast Guardian and whence, at the very last minute before we left out of that place, Lady, finally recovered from an almost crippling bout of depression, decided to bring out her daughter Booboo, that Croaker had put into the frozen storage down under, after she died. Which was kind of good for her because she never got any older while she was down there, dead, but, somehow, not permanently. Shivetya must have done something, maybe as part of his deal with Croaker. Maybe he did something about Lady's head, too, and that was why she was all get-up-and-go again.

I do not understand Lady's thinking on Booboo. Booboo could only get older and die again eventually if she was out in the Land of Unknown Shadows. But Lady was Lady and not even the Captain or Croaker could get her to do something that she did not want to do.

Anyway, Shukrat and I only knew about Hsien through hearsay—and what we had heard did not make us look forward to the Hsienish experience. They told us that things could be even

weirder over there than anything we saw in the world that we just left. Where we had to leave so many Company people in the ground, all because of stuff that I still did not understand.

Suvrin is Captain now. I feel sorry for him sometimes. I never met anybody so sure that he was unfit for the job that he had been chosen to do: to be Lord Commander of an army of eleven thousand unruly, bitter combat veterans.

Only reason I am here is, I got stupid. I let my dumbass cousin Gromovol talk me into believing that if we got in with some outsiders who were raiding our world, which they called Khatovar, when they were hunting for some old enemy, we could go with them to some other world where we could take over and make us an empire of our own, and not have to put up with any more crap from the old men of the Voroshk. There were six of us to start but Aijee chickened out before we got started and Daiskei stayed with her even though he was as hot for the scheme as Gromovol was. Daiskei was just hotter for Aijee.

Shukrat had already been captured by Pop and Lady, then. Us other four were, too, before we got a real handle on what our situation really was.

Looking back from today I have to admit that Gromovol had to have been the most blind-ass arrogantly overconfident, *stupid!* Voroshk that I ever knew.