

*Jan Dobšenský*



*Born in the Dust  
of Rath*

*1. vydání*

*vydáno v dubnu 2020 jako 98. publikace  
vydal Pavel Kohout ([www.knihy.cz](http://www.knihy.cz))*

*ISBN 978-80-7570-178-7 (epub)*

*ISBN 978-80-7570-179-4 (mobi)*

*ISBN 978-80-7570-180-0 (pdf)*

*Copyright:*

*Author: Jan Dobsensky © 2016*

*Illustration: Peter Elias © 2017-2020, Pavel Talas © 2016*

*Book cover: Peter Elias © 2020*

*Translation © 2018-2019 Gabriela Bošková, Tom Czaban*

*First English edition 2020*



[www.yorran.com](http://www.yorran.com) / [www.yorran.cz](http://www.yorran.cz)

# CONTENT

---

Preface.....	5
Farewell Azraphel.....	8
Brin .....	65
This Is Not Your War .....	136
Today Is a Good Day to Die .....	191
The Battle.....	276
Each Stands Alone .....	297
Maps.....	307
Index .....	311

# PREFACE

---

*The story of Yorrân saga started a quarter of a century before the events described in this book came to be. It all begins in a small port in a country called Seaside. Here lives a merchant named Tharnizir who, with his wife Serniphel, got onto his wagon on one bleak fall morning, setting off on a long trading voyage. The destination of this strenuous journey is the White City far in the North. After two weeks the merchant wagon arrives in the city where the big fall festivities are just about to begin. Trading, however, is only a cover for their stay there. A much more important goal is the fulfillment of one hidden, but longingly expected wish, as Tharnizir and Serniphel have for years desired an offspring. Unfortunately, fate has not yet granted this hidden wish. During their stay in the White City, a palace coup takes place. Chaos and violence breaks out in the city. Tharnizir and his wife escape these wild and bloody events unharmed and in spite of all the danger they see the realization of their most pressing wish. The prophecy that a son awaits them in the White City becomes fulfilled. Happy Serniphel, sitting on the coach box of the merchant wagon, cradles a little boy in her arms. Neither the merchant, nor his wife know anything about the boy's true origin and since they don't even know his name, they name him Abarhil.*

*This is the concise preface to the saga that bears the name Yorrân which, at the time of publication of this book, consists of five complete parts. The first part of the saga, *In the Times of Shadow*, depicts Abarhil's adolescence and coming of age, which preceded his voyage to the South. The long and strenuous journey across the Southern wilderness during which the boy becomes a man and the man then becomes a warrior is depicted in the second part of the saga, named *From the Dust of Path*.*

*After due deliberation I have decided to offer this part as the first one to the English-speaking reader, as it was well-received by Czech audience. I have conformed the contents to create a complete story that does not require the reader to be well-versed in the happenings of the previous events. And so a novelette came to be, which I named *Born in the Dust of Path* and with this I present it to foreign readers to consider its merit for themselves. Should it be well received, I shall gladly work with my colleagues on translating the next parts.*

*J. Dobsensky*



# 1. Chapter

# FAREWELL AZRAPHEL

---

*Brighin, the Month of First Blossoms,  
year 574 e.d.*

Azraphel, forced by a strong wind, was heading south. Stubbornly she struggled through the restless sea, rearing up like a horse before a hurdle, only to plop between the tops of the waves again and again. Each additional impact wrenched the sea open. Salty spray rose up like a mist towards Abarhil, who was standing on the bow holding onto the railing. Since the first journeys, the bow of the ship had been his favorite spot to let his imagination run wild. He felt like ancient seafarers who, like messengers of ancient kings, spread their fame along the shores of the great ocean in bygone ages of faded glory. He raised his head and looked around at the horizon. On the right, he saw only the silhouettes of several dolphins, which were following their ship for a second day since its departure from Nirruch. The occasional shadow of an albatross flashed on the sea surface and from the rear, the upset shouts of seagulls could be heard as they argued over residue from the ship's galley, which the chef rolled into the sea.

While standing there alone, he remembered the last few days. When he had returned with Oghlar from the Eagle's nest, he had found Azraphel in the harbor with an angry captain and a lazy crew. More than two weeks had passed since he had left and they had fallen behind schedule again. Lominas had yelled at him, red from rage, as if he were a cabin boy.

"Abarhil, you are completely irresponsible. Do you even remember what you promised to your father? Instead of taking care of the ship, you are running around the mountains. This journey isn't normal. This can't end well! From the beginning, there are problems and difficulties! Gods, why do I have to be a captain on such a journey?"



Lominas had been irritated to the point of insanity by everything associated with the number of delays and unexpected events that had accompanied this sail. Before their departure, he had had a long conversation with Tharnizir, which had placed more pressure than usual on his shoulders; beginning with overseeing the business matters, through directing the restless Abarhil, and ending with complying with the plan of the journey. It had been similar to when he had had to hold a wet rope of a swelling sail in turbulent wind. Despite trying as hard as he could, he had felt like it was slipping through his clenched fingers. He felt the same this time. He did not have things under control.

Abarhil had to admit that he had been devoting his time to adventures and long postponed plans instead of small dull tasks so important for the business. Reluctantly, he had to admit that his fierceness and impatience were to blame for the failure of his previous trades in Osttar.

He was just about to return to the rear to talk to the helmsman when Oghlar joined him. He instinctively sensed what was going on in Abarhil's mind. He stood beside him in silence, then broke it after a while.

"I think we should go further south than usual this year. What do you think?"

Abarhil looked at him briefly and said: "I don't know, maybe. I've thought about it. Why do you think it's a good idea?"

"I have got eyes, so I watch. There is an odd atmosphere on the ship and Lominas is as nervous as a primipara. I assume he got some tasks from your father. He should watch you and he knows well he is not managing. I must confess that I do not envy Lominas. Indeed, it is not easy to watch over such a wild stallion and stick to the plan."

As always, merry flames sparkled in Oghlar's eyes when he teased Abarhil. But he did not agree to partake in the game today.

"And how can going further south help us?" replied ratty Abarhil with his eyes still fixed on the distant horizon.

"Well, I heard that further in the south, in the middle of the humid forests, a mighty river flows into the sea, and there sinam, ganilva, and spices can be bought. Furthermore, I heard that the locals trade, perhaps with gold. There we could make up for our losses so far. What do you think?"

"Perhaps you're right," replied Abarhil thoughtfully, "I don't trust the gold but spices could be a win. I'll give it some thought."

Oghlar stood beside Abarhil for another moment, but when he did not speak again he shrugged and left for the rear, leaving him to his own thoughts.

In the following days, the journey went without any difficulties or problems. They sailed along the coast where the continuous cliffs were broken only by the mouth of the Red River. The red water of Birighin flowed into the sea in split branches, creating a reddish spot which dissolved into the surrounding blue sea water. Two days later, they saw a distant dark volcano cone with a red irradiated top, which spewed clouds of ash into the sky from time to time. According to Chyrrkhan legends, it was the seat of Durghár, a dark lord of the underworld, who had been defeated by his brother Maghúr at the beginning of time and had been shackled and imprisoned in the underworld. Madrughin flowed through the desolation under the volcano, breaking its way through the plains of volcanic sediments that gave it the dark color that left the dark red spot in the sea. Madrughin was translated as the Border River in the common language. Indeed, its flow separated the sparsely populated plains of the southern Anghir from the deserted land of swamps and hills called Bôghir, the Wild land. Those were savannas covered by thick high grass, which turned into vast swamps and wetlands around the basins of the Falghin and Welghin rivers.

The mood on the ship was slowly improving during the calm journey and even Lominas ceased his grumbling for a while. Therefore, Abarhil was able to dedicate his time to his great interest, cartography. He had loved maps since his youth, they appealed to his imagination and he

could spend hours pouring over them. He liked comparing them, marking new landmarks, measuring distance and he improved them and made them more accurate with every journey. It was difficult work but he liked it, so he never regretted the time and effort. With each journey his map gained accuracy and was quickly becoming his pride. After he exchanged the map of the northern coast with Deón, he was quite certain that there was a set of maps in his cabin which could not be found anywhere else in Merélos.

Meanwhile, Azraphel continued along the deserted coast, which Abarhil jotted down in his map as Azar Gôwilb, the Sea of Tranquility. Their next stop, however, was much further south, on the border between Bôghir and Schadarghir. Two weeks after their departure from Nirruch they arrived at their annual target, the mouth of Ogghin, the Southern River. Here, like every year, the crew of Azraphel met Nomghans to exchange the products of craft workshops from Merélos for local goods. As mentioned earlier, those were only shepherds and hunters but they could still offer interesting goods for trade. The most valuable commodities were ivory, exotic furs, colorful feathers and exceptionally rough gems which were collected by the locals in the streams and caves on the upper reaches of the river. Like every year, hundreds of locals awaited Azraphel in the temporary camp. Although the trading went well, Abarhil could not stop thinking about what Oghlar had told him. So far, Azraphel had never dared to sail south so far that Tharnizir could buy rare southern spices himself. Pepper, sinam, ginger, cinnamon, ganilva, those were all goods the price of which was rising in proportion to the distance it traveled to the North. On the market in Merélos, the price of these spices was twice as much in Osttar, and four times the price in Nirruch where Tharnizir traded with Tighan sailors. Abarhil could only guess what price would he get from the locals who collected spices in the forests or grew them on small fields near their villages.

Spurred on by Oghlar's notes and his own thoughts, he decided to persuade Lominas about this plan. He invited him to his cabin where he

had prepared his maps and calculations. He was expecting a lack of understanding, however, he was not ready for the fierce resistance he encountered. When he briefly presented his plan, Lominas' face flushed with anger and resentment and he blew up: "Abarhil, I do not agree! By the Gortar's whip, you have gone mad. It is madness to go further south. No, and again no! Damn it! Have you not had enough of adventures?"

However, the outburst calmed him down, and so although his attitude and gestures still expressed disapproval, he continued calmly: "The lower deck is half-full and we have to pick up the goods in Nirruich we left there. Where do you think we will store it all?"

Abarhil went back and forth across the cabin several times. He was trying to read Lominas' eyes and gestures and find a way to persuade him. But Lominas stood like a statue. Clenched fists and arms crossed against his chest revealed his internal struggle and the strain with which he controlled his feelings. He looked out the window at the open sea. Abarhil spoke unusually softly and slowly.

"But Lominas, you haven't heard my reasons yet. We're friends, aren't we? Could you then at least hear me out?"

Lominas turned his attention back to the cabin and nodded almost imperceptibly.

"You know as well as I do that spices aren't ivory, fur or bags of cotton. They won't take up much space and the profit of each pound we deliver will be much higher than of any other goods. And trust me, I calculated it maybe ten times."

Abarhil paused and watched Lominas to see whether his reasons somehow eroded Lominas' solid disapproval. He saw nothing, so he decided to play another of his trump cards in this strange game. "And you know very well that until now we haven't done such good trades. My father won't praise us for that. Neither one of us. Do you really believe that I propose this only because of my adventurous whims?"

Lominas was not ready to back down. "Very well, Abarhil, but it is almost the end of the month of first blossoms and in a few days Slaven begins. Azraphel has been sailing for three months. Autumn storms may begin in the next four months and what if we do not return on time?"

Yes, this was a compelling argument but Abarhil was prepared even for this.

"They may or may not. Usually the storms begin at the end of the month of withering. Trust me! To Nirruch, it's two weeks and from there to the mouth of the Great River it's another two weeks. We will have a couple of days in Nirruch and another one or two in Osttar. Altogether, it's about a month and a half. I think we still have a good two months!"

Lominas walked away from the window and came to the table where the unfolded maps, a pitcher of water, and a few tin cups lay. He poured water into one of them and drank it all. Reluctantly he had to admit that Abarhil made some sense. However, he was not going to back down easily.

"Of course, Abarhil, but you are counting on good wind and no delays or difficulties. You know yourself what we have encountered during this sail already. I know I have been complaining a lot over the last few weeks. But I have had an unpleasant feeling about this sail from the very beginning. We have talked about it already." He turned to Abarhil and looked him directly in the eyes, before forgivingly adding: "Please, consider everything very carefully!"

Abarhil turned the unfolded map toward Lominas and pointed a finger at it.

"I agree with you. I'm also aware of the delays and difficulties, but you must admit we've managed so far. Therefore good fortune and the Gods are on our side. I think that with their support we'll manage sailing even further south."

He put his finger on the map.

"We're moored here. According to Oghlar, it's the same distance to the mouth of the Forest River as it is from the Western Cape to the mouth of Ogghin. About two weeks."

When Lominas heard the navigator's name, it looked like Abarhil had just pricked a hornet's nest.

"Oghlar! Oghlar said so! Oghlar agreed! I talked to him too. Only the Gods know why he yearns to sail south so much! Does he want to surpass his father? And furthermore, has our navigator become our captain to say where we'll sail?" His face became tight and tense as he grabbed Abarhil's hand. "Abarhil, please, I repeat what I've said from the beginning. I do not like this. I have never seen so many unexpected difficulties. And it is not only me. Even the others say that this sail cannot end well!"

Abarhil slid his arm from Lominas' grip. He crossed the cabin and then walked back again. Silently, he turned and looked into Lominas's strained and worried face. Lominas is right, he thought, this year's sail has certainly not been usual. What if something unexpected happens and they do not manage to return? He recalled his conversation with his mother just before their departure. She had told him he might need to spend the winter in Osttar. If they got caught up in the autumn storms before they were able to return, Azraphel could anchor in Osttar Bay and sell the goods there. Spices can earn amazing sums even there. He could leave Azraphel in Osttar over the winter and travel to Merélos with a caravan across the Wastelands. At present, he was not even thinking of the crew and their families who would be awaiting them in vain. He looked at Lominas again who silently watched him and tried to guess what was going on in his mind.

"Lominas, do you have an answer for my father prepared? What will you tell him if we return only with the goods we have and which we've traded so far? I don't think I'm wrong when I say that this will hardly cover the cost of this year's sail. Will this be the first time Azraphel returns with so poor a cargo?"

Lominas hesitated. Until now he had only seen and complained about the difficulties of the journey. He had not thought of what he would tell his employer after the return to their home port. He was well aware that his reward was dependent on the profit of the journey. Abarhil sensed what was going on in his mind, so he let him think before he showed his next card.

"We'll sail south. Two weeks. Not a day more. If we don't find the mouth of the river, we will turn back and sail back up north. If we find it, we will stay for a week, maybe two. No more! Then we will go back immediately. If I count correctly, we'll be back here, at the mouth of Ogghin, in the middle of the month of winds. And then we'll sail without stopping, I promise! If it all goes well, we'll see the mouth of Dardún at the end of the month of harvest."

Lominas still did not say a word. Leaning against the desk he watched Abarhil and continued to think. If Azraphel were to return with a rich cargo, he could expect a heavy reward. He knew well that Tharnizir could be generous. If he returned with an empty lower deck, Tharnizir would ask for reasons. He was aware that blaming Abarhil was not possible. Success has many friends and asks for no explanation, but there is no sufficient explanation for failure.

"Well, I agree, two weeks and not a day more. And we will not stop on the way back!" confirmed Lominas, almost persuaded by Abarhil's promises. "In Nirruch, we will stay only for as long as loading the goods takes. No trips!" he added, stating the conditions. Abarhil smiled broadly. He knew he had won, so he held out his hand to Lominas.

"I agree. Done! Let's shake hands!"

"Good, tomorrow at dawn we will leave for the South. Let us pray to Guiar to be on our side," said Lominas as they shook hands.

When he had left, Abarhil sat down on his bed relieved. So he had done it, he had convinced Lominas of his truth. Every wish can come true when one is persistent enough.

A wish. He recalled what his mother had once told him.

*He saw himself as a young boy running around the kitchen. Waving a small wooden sword and getting in his mother's way. He had just won one important victory, so he turned his cheerful face to his mother.*

*"Mom, did you see it? Was I like Elómir?"*

*She began to laugh.*

*"Of course, you fought like a lion, exactly like Elómir Râur, little one!"*

*He nodded enthusiastically but then his child's face became thoughtful.*

*"Mommy, I will have to practice a lot before I will be like Gothwin. Do you think that if I'm diligent I will be like Elómir when I grow up?"*

*His face waited anxiously for his mother's response. Serniphel felt that at that moment she could not joke because she might hurt that little heart which longed for heroic deeds. She sat down and drew him to her.*

*"You can do it, Abarhil! You can do anything you wish for in life! It's just that your wish must be strong and you must be persistent!"*

*He remembered how he had, back then, stubbornly shrugged his eyebrows and said firmly: "I will! I will be persistent and I will practice every day!"*

*I what you wish for, because your wish might end up like Bregedôr's winning crusade! Do you remember the story about the crusade of the king Bregedôr?"*

The memory vanished. Beregedôr's winning crusade was a saying that was used for great deeds and plans that led to the overrating of one's abilities and ultimately to the destruction of the one who started them.



Abarhil felt tightness in his chest. These images, together with Lominas' resistance, sowed the seed of doubt in his mind. Was his wish to sail south the same as Bregedôr's Crusade?



The next day, the ship raised the anchor and to the surprise of the entire crew, except for the navigator and the captain, it did not turn its prow to the expected North, but to the South again. They sailed along the flat coast, covered with large sandy beaches slowly turning into large grassy savannas, for ten days. These waters were marked in Abarhil's maps as Azar Estâr, the Sea of Hope, because they were looking for the mouth of the Forest River every day. However, so far nothing had indicated that the mouth could be anywhere near. When they circumnavigated the tip of the mainland, which Abarhil named the Dark Cape, the coast finally turned dark due to a thick forest which reached out to the seashore.

"Exactly as Oghlar recounted," said the sailors tentatively, watching the terrifying dark green wall. Nergal's stories had the effect of water poured onto hot oil, and they prophesied that Azraphel would end up in a huge vortex which supposedly awaited them at the end of the world. The sailors began to recall all the horrifying stories about captains who had not heeded the warnings and had gone to seek the lost shores of Dairané and had never returned. Such stories were told all around the Sealands for dozens of years. Many crew members began to gripe, and Korah, who became their spokesman, complained the most.

"I was hired for a sail to the south, to Nirruch. But now we've gone a month worth of sailing further south. Who do they, for Dâurkhôr's sake, want to trade with here? Will someone explain, dammit? We're not paid for this!"

Excitement and nervousness on the ship increased when they came closer to the coast. The sailors saw what they, until then, had only known from Oghlar's stories, a sea dragon. At a distance of fewer than a

hundred feet, a huge lizard, about ten fathoms long, swam along the side of the ship.

"Dragon, did you see it? Was it a real dragon? I was right, the old legends don't lie, dragons live!"

Nergal was the only one who felt no joy from the unusual encounter. He felt that after some time he had the upper hand and this feeling fully dissolved his worries. Unfortunately, it concerned only himself. The same day, in the late afternoon, the sea shore turned sharply east into the mainland. They sailed around a low cape and with the sails half pulled down they continued to head east within reach of the shore. The sun was setting behind the distant horizon when Amarsin, who was charged with cleaning the deck, lowered a bucket over the lateral bracing to draw out water for cleaning. In a little while, his shouting resounded across the deck.

"The water is fresh! Hey, can you hear me? The water is fresh!"

This attracted the entire crew, including the captain and Abarhil, on the deck.

"You see, it's fresh! Go ahead, try it!"

The cabin boy could not get enough of his discovery and playfully splashed the water from the bucket on those standing around.

"It's a wonder, fresh sea water! No one will believe us!" The approval of the helmsman and the rest echoed around. They were licking their drenched palms and faces and nodding in wonder. What a strange land they had found themselves in. Fresh sea water! But, like a lightning out of a blue sky came the voice of the navigator, who had also been attracted by the cabin boy's shouting.

"You are such a bunch of fools! Do not tell me you believe it? Fresh seawater! Who ever heard of that? You are like old women hearing about far away sails for the first time. They too would believe everything!"

Oghlar was sneering at all of them standing there. "Yes, maybe a sea of fresh water, but fresh seawater? Do you really not understand this?"

The men stared at him in amazement. The only response were frowning faces, puckered eyebrows, baffled eyes. The helmsman, who at first was amazed, agreed with the cabin boy. Now he turned to the captain but he only shrugged his shoulders in uncertainty. Even he did not understand Oghlar's sarcasm. Only in Abarhil's eyes did the sparks of enlightenment flash.

"Oghlar? Are you saying? No? It can't be true! This can't be..."

A triumphant smile crossed the navigator's face. "Thank Maghúr, at least one understood. Yes, crew, we are here, it is Brighin, the Forest River!"

Darmúk, the first officer, pulled himself together and sarcastically said: "Oghlar, do you have a heat stroke, man? You're making fools of us, right? River! Do you even know what a river looks like? A river's got a bank here and another one on the other side. Where's the other side then?"

"The water is fresh, we are in the mouth of the Forest River!" insisted Oghlar with a triumphant smile, not even paying attention to Darmúk's jeers.

The mouth of a river. The sailors looked amazed at the distant shore, which was, by all accounts, one bank of the mighty river. The second was out of sight and hidden away behind the horizon. A river of such proportions exceeded their imagination. They had measured every waterway against the Great River, but in comparison to this one it was just a poor stream. But whatever doubts the crew had, they would be able to find out for themselves the next day.

The moment came when the unclear outline of the second bank ascended over the horizon. It took more than two days before the river narrowed to less than a mile, approximately the width of Dardún before its mouth. Meanwhile, Azraphel continued slowly against the mighty

flow, using either favorable wind, or the power of the human arms of rowing sailors. The flow of the river was dark brown and full of mud, which had washed off the shores at the upper reaches of the river. The riverbed was divided into many branches made of a number of islands and islets covered with wild vegetation. It was difficult even for the navigator to decide which branch they should take, so they sailed very slowly and carefully. They had had to return several times when they had chosen a branch where the shallows and large fallen trees blocked Azraphel's way. Abarhil and Lominas, knowing they were pressured by time, eagerly pestered the navigator with questions of when they were going to finally see human settlements. Oghlar only scratched his neck awkwardly and smiled guiltily. According to what he had heard, there were supposed to be several villages near the mouth, but it looked like the earth had swallowed them. Could he have been wrong? Or might they have been on the opposite side of the huge river? Similar questions were running through his head and he had no idea that he would soon receive answers to these unspoken questions.

It was around midday, with the sun was directly overhead, and Azraphel was threading her way through a net of shallows and small isles when a small fleet of full riverboats blocked their way. The boats were hollowed from a single piece of wood with around ten small dark-skinned men sitting in each of them. Their boats had a high fore and stern decorated with ornate carvings and drawings. In the center of the fleet was a boat, twice as big as the others, which appeared to carry the local chief.

"Well, now, Dâurkhôr help us, there's at least a hundred of them," said the helmsman Henderch with a grimace after he saw the fleet. Abarhil commanded the crew to anchor the ship and to arm themselves, but apart from that he decided to wait. It did not take long for one of the boats to separate from the fleet and float within earshot of Azraphel. A small man stood up on the boat and shouted something in an unknown language. However, no one from the crew understood