

PREFACE

Hello there, fellow adventurer. Welcome to the start of your magical journey through the majestic land of Asterra. I am, most humbly, your storytelling guide and tale collector, Penniforth Rodgers, but everyone calls me Penny for short. Now, you might be asking yourself, what does this guy with the odd name and spiffy clothes know about adventures and storytelling?

Well, when I was a young boy growing up in the realm of Caris, an old local merchant had grown quite fond of traveling into my village of Rectitude every week. He set up his wares, which he procured from trading throughout Asterra, in the town square, and it never took him long to grab the attention of all the townsfolk. The other children and their parents were always amazed by his eclectic goods, but to me these paled in comparison to the stories he shared: knights' deeds, pirate curses, fairy parties, and dragons' treasure, all out there somewhere in Asterra—a place that seemed incredibly distant to me in Rectitude.

As a boy, I was nervous and shy, and every road that wasn't my own seemed closed off to me. But each tale the merchant told gave me strength to explore that which I didn't know. In time, I soon found that I was living within just such a magical reality all along, and the majesty of this life was there for me to take whenever I was ready to start my own story. So I promised myself that when I was old enough, I would travel throughout this magnificent land, collecting and documenting the grand stories of Asterra just like the old merchant.

I put faith in my feet and courage in my mind, and I have since spent my years exploring Asterra. Each adventure I embark on leads to a new discovery, a new face, and a new tale. I have met some of my best friends out there on the road yonder. And I receive mail from all over Asterra. That is a lot of postage. As you may or may not know,

Asterra contains well over fifty realms, each of which boasts its own unique culture, traditions, languages, currency, and of course, tales. In these stories, you will explore and witness many of these differences for yourself. You will see realms in the past that feel more current to our present year of 4124 A.L.Y.; other realms, though their tales are not far removed from the present, have been simply lost somewhere far in the past. Yet all realms harken back to a period before our record of time started: the Lost Years. Every year since then has been marked as A.L.Y. or “After the Lost Years.” This naming convention is a monument to the shrouded mystery of our distant past. And the curiosity to discover what came before our records is the catalyst that sparked Asterra’s unique and vibrant cultures—forged together and torn asunder by differences known only in truth to time. There are 4,124 years to cover, so there is much to learn, my friend. And our journey shall start with the oldest tale in the collection, nestled deep within the dunes of the great desert realm of Xirtis. From there we shall explore magical forests, quaint seaside towns, and dreadful dungeons together.

You will find that this diverse continent is home to elves, fairies, dwarves, varenijar, esterelians, q’zardi, humans, and many more. The flora and fauna are rich and diverse. Plants rare to the eyes add wonder to every venture, such as the royal regjar root with its regal and medicinal qualities, its beauty contrasted by the peril the ever-watchful ice trolls provide, who often passionately guard it, believing it sacred to their lands.

Some may say that I have made quite the name for myself. Whether this has been for good or bad I do not know. But my goal through these stories is for you to see that there is a tale out there for everyone: that no story is insignificant and no step too small. Unexpected turns and paths can lead us to where we ought to be and discover where we should dare not venture. And at journey’s end, know we are better and braver, now that we have left our mark on the road ahead. Go make a name for yourself in this wonderful land—that is, if you haven’t already. Never forget that the magic of this reality is here for you to grasp. Within this book, I have compiled fourteen unique tales

and one special poem, which come from different times and different areas throughout Asterra.

In my retellings, I have kept true to the tales’ original sources while also adding a bit of my own creativity throughout each story in hopes of letting the splendor of Asterra’s people shine through brighter than ever. I shall guide you, when need be, but I will let the narrative of each tale draw you in and make my voice known only when truly needed. I have also compiled a glossary of terms, places, flora, fauna, and important figures to enrich your travels. And with the special help of one of my magical friends, I have also created an appendix to summarize the four fundamentals of magic.

I hope you enjoy the journey, and I wish you all the wonders of this life. May you step forth to create and share your own magical tales. You have already made one friend on this path, and I shall be there with you till the end of this journey and hopefully for many more journeys to follow.

Your friend, truly,
Penniforth Octavius Rodgers