

# Erikk the Giant

## Part 1

Omar Abedin  
Mississauga, Ontario.

To my mother who always had big dreams for me...  
My father, who is a giant in every way...  
My brother who encouraged me and believed in me...

But, most of all, to my wife  
without who's support, love and dedication  
this could never have been started,  
let alone gotten this far...

And especially, to my beautiful children who loved  
the stories I made up for them and listened with rapt  
attention to tales of  
Erikk the Giant.

## Chapter 1

Erikk crouched silently among the trees of the Bokring forest. He was always patient in the hunt and he had a gift for blending in with his environment. Now that he was the one being hunted, he quickly became one with the lush greens and browns of the forest around him. The Bokring is a wooded area that covers thousands of square miles, with heavy undergrowth and extraordinarily verdant plant life. It also boasts the largest selection of fauna in the Middle Kingdoms, which is why it was one of Erikk's favourite hunting grounds. He knew it better than even the elvish rangers tasked with its protection, so he was not worried that he was being followed. Curious, but not worried. And he was definitely being followed because he had tried a few casual maneuvers to shake off the pursuer, but they had stuck to his trail. So now he had decided to

see who or what was following him. *Can't be too careful* was ever his motto.

The birds that had stopped chirping when he had entered the woods were once again talking amongst themselves. His complete stillness calmed their anxieties - they saw no threat in his presence. This was no mean feat, especially when you consider that the birds of the region are renowned for their bad tempers and are notorious for their language.

*After all, dear Reader, Erikk is not exactly built for discretion. At ten feet tall, his mountainous height, plateau-like shoulders and massive musculature give him a strong resemblance to a stone tower. His craggy features and clean-shaven head do nothing to dispel that impression, and the forbidding expression his face currently bears is causing the flowering bushes upon which he gazes to wilt and wither. His clothes are of simple leather, well worn but well maintained. The leather is waterproof, which comes in handy in moments such as these when the water dripping off the leaves and ferns of the forest can be quite unpleasant if one of those drips makes its unwelcome way down your neck...*

Erikk was not however, actually looking at the flowering bushes. He was listening intently, and with every passing moment, his gaze grew sterner if that were possible. He was just a few feet in from the path. When he had come to realize that he was being followed, he had taken one large stride sideways into the surrounding foliage and disappeared. So silent and still was he that even the most observant passerby could have been forgiven for not seeing him at all.

That is exactly what happened.

A long minute passed. Then the figure of a man came into view, hurrying forward. In reality, his gait was quite considered, almost graceful, but he gave off an aura of urgency. Erikk could almost see the concern radiating off his brow – *his* brow? Even as realization dawned, the woman had reached his position and had passed it. He caught a glimpse of hazel eyes tinged with gold, and red hair tightly coifed under a hood drawn low.

Erikk made an assumption – unconsciously, perhaps – but having made that assumption, he quietly stood and stepped back into the road. His human half often led him astray that way, but what to do? It was done.

*In hindsight, if he had not given in to that impulse and had stayed to watch that figure out of sight, perhaps none of what is recorded here might have taken place. But then again, dear Reader... you be the judge of that.*

As he stepped back in to the path, the figure ahead whirled around, disbelief and dismay writ large on her features. She seemed too stunned to speak. It was her eyes, at once questioning and alert, that started Erikk wondering. A moment later, that wonderment turned to uncertain alarm bells as the woman smiled. It was a slow smile, meant to be pleasant, but with strange undertones.... To Erikk, it seemed like the smile of a cat that has spotted a mouse, and he immediately concluded that her uncertainty, dismay and disbelief were sham.

When she spoke, the alarm bells coalesced into a warning screech. Her voice was low, warm and inviting, and what she said was harmless enough.

“At last.”

However, the way she said it was - horrific - in a way that Erikk could not place. There was something just out of sight that he could not put a finger on, but his instincts were at full alert now, and he had learned to trust his instincts almost from birth. He said nothing. Whatever was going to happen would happen soon enough.

She wore black from head to toe; even her cloak was of the same colour, edged with darker trim. Bowing low from the waist like a man, she said:

“I apologize for following you. I have an urgent message to deliver, but I was told to wait until all else failed before approaching you. I heard this morning that all else had indeed failed - which is why I was hurrying to catch up to you. My queen would be most unhappy if I was not able to deliver her missive.”

She paused. Erikk said nothing, continuing to examine her without seeming to stare. The overall impression she gave was one of cold beauty. Her face was quite pleasing to the eye, its planes sharp and well-defined. She was slim, her physique muscular, and she carried herself with the grace of a martial artist. A question arose in his mind but he held it back. If she was an elf as he suspected, it would soon become clear. And a moment later, it did, as she loosened

the scarf around her neck, and her ears, pointed and sleek, became clearly visible.

Before he could say anything further, the elf woman spoke again.

“Why do you not speak? Can it be that you are not the one I seek? *What is your name?*”

The last question erupted from her as a command – clearly she was not used to being ignored. Erikk continued to look at her, and started to smile. This seemed to infuriate her, and she took a half-step forward, then stopped herself. She seemed to remember that she needed to maintain control of herself. Erikk preferred her a little off-balance, personally. It would be easier to get the truth if she was riled up.

“Who is it asking my name?”

The woman seemed put out by the question, although it was a gentle inquiry indeed.

“It is I who is asking the questions – answer me now or face the consequences!”

The arrogance of this elf was quite amazing, not at all what he had learned to expect in his limited dealings with that race. Erikk decided to ignore her one more time – and this had the desired result.

“I - will - not - ask - you - again.”

The woman ground out the words.

“What – is – your – name?”

Before he could think of another way to goad her further, she lost her temper entirely. In one fluid motion, her cloak fell to the right, her scarf to the left and she leapt directly toward him. The path that they were on was no more than six feet wide. Its surface was reddish clay, and provided a good grip under the feet. It was an excellent fighting surface. She was thirty paces away from Erikk when she erupted, and in that first leap, seemed to cover more than half that distance.

She is like a deer! thought Erikk. Then, watching the sinuous pose she adopted, he thought – No, this one is more like a viper!

She closed in on him, weaving an intricate pattern with her arms, her legs crossing and criss-crossing beneath her, at times barely seeming to touch the ground. His initial assessment was correct – she was highly trained in the martial arts. The series of punches and kicks that she was executing so flawlessly were complex and violent in the extreme, and so fast that Erikk could barely follow the movements. Her clothing was form-fitting, and the black fabric seemed to flow with her every motion, making it seem even more effortless. It looked comfortable.

When she did launch her attack, Erikk was caught off guard at the speed of the kick that seemed to hit him under the chin even as her right leg arced off the ground in a blur

of motion. The kick was powerful enough to decapitate a man and swift enough so that the average opponent would normally not even see the foot that delivered the lethal blow. Although Erikk was completely focused on the whirling figure in front of him, he almost did not see the kick coming. It is only because Erikk's neck closely resembles that of a bull elephant in its dimensions that it did not snap back as though on a hinge. Still, the impact was jarring. He could only watch in disbelief, staggering slightly as she vaulted over him, landing lightly on her feet directly behind him.

Without pause, she launched another attack as Erikk whirled to face her. This time he was ready and his reaction time was correspondingly shorter. He was able to see the telltale way her muscles bunched and the build-up of tension in her legs moments before the next kick started. That gave him a chance, and his own response was so fast that the elf had no chance to react. He brought his right hand up as though to block the kick, but instead, he grabbed her leg and straightened his arm. The elf found herself suspended upside down at arms length by a now very curious Erikk.



“Now elf, let me ask you a question - who are you and what do you want? Do not make me ask you again elf.”

There was no threat in what Erikk said; the message was delivered as though he was chiding a small, rather disobedient, yet loved child.

The elf woman had undergone a complete transformation.

*Dear Reader, I put it to you that it is nearly impossible to be hung upside down by your ankle and maintain your dignity, but this elf managed it without seeming to try. Her clothing certainly helped in that it did not flap around her upper body as it might have, and protected her from that ignominy. But it was really her demeanour that made the difference. Her face was calm, unclouded by the anger of a moment before – in fact, she managed to look contrite and satisfied at the same time. That is*

*no mean feat when you are suspended upside down in the grip of a man-mountain who may or may not shortly attempt to disconnect your various body parts.*

Erikk found her composure in this situation – disconcerting. Most creatures would have been squawking by now.

“I am Ard of the Sama’waat clan of the Eastern elvish tribes. I have been looking for you for ten years, and if you will put me down, I will explain everything.”

The fact that she answered him so readily, and with such a different mien, was surprising to Erikk. Why, he did not know, except that he kept making assumptions about her and her intentions, and this had to stop. This situation was not one to be judged easily.

“Explain first – then perhaps I will let you down. Or perhaps not. Depends on what you have to say.”

“Very well. I realize I appear to have behaved strangely, and for that I offer the first of the seven formal apologies, but it was necessary. However, I still need to confirm your identity, because what I have to say may not be heard by any except the Chosen One.”

“The chosen one? Chosen by whom? For what?”

“Please – allow me to ask you three questions that I must ask in order to proceed. If you knew my frustration – I have been looking for you for ten years! The fools that I

have questioned to no avail... this is why my frustration rises to the surface so easily. My life has been a quest after something that I had begun to believe would not be accomplished, yet here I am, again on the edge of a sword."

Erikk relented. After all, there was only so much time in the day, and this was not going anywhere.

"Very well woman - ask your questions. I do not guarantee that my answers will satisfy you, but ask."

"I humbly thank you, and ask the first question."

The sense of urgency that Erikk had noticed earlier had returned. It made him a little nervous.

"Are you the giant who single-handedly defeated the army of King Jabor of the Angalistas some years ago?"

Erikk actually laughed. His bark rolled through the trees disturbing a flock of birds that flew off cursing. The elf jerked in his grasp, then relaxed when she realized the implications of the sound.

"And what is so amusing about that question?"

"Nothing at all, except that I have not thought about that episode in many a year. To answer the many questions within your question, no, yes and it was not a very big army."

“What?” It is hard to judge expressions from an upside down perspective, but Erikk thought the elf looked perplexed. “I am not sure I understand.”

“Well, first I am not a giant (to which the elf muttered something inaudible and looked disbelieving). Second, yes, I did have a – disagreement – with Jabor regarding taxes that he thought I should pay for the privilege of crossing over his bridge. And third, his ‘army’ was not over 200 Angals – which means it was at best a troop. And not much of a troop at that. A platoon of suitably mounted elves would have had no trouble with them.”

“It would have taken 50 elves to overcome 200 Angals???”  
The patent disbelief in the woman’s voice was amusing.

Erikk ignored her, simply asking “So what is your second question?”

“Yes. Of course. Are you the same – person – who wrestled the twin monster boars that had been ravaging the countryside of Pescina some months ago?”

“They were not really that big – but they tasted mighty fine once they had been spitted and slow-roasted for a couple of days.”

“I see. Thank you. My final question. Do you realize that you are alive right now simply because you have not harmed me?”

Erikk stiffened and cursed under his breath. Too late he realized what the woman had been doing – her distraction had worked perfectly. While she asked her inane questions, he had neglected to focus on the forest around him. And now that he looked around, he saw several elves in the trees around them. Erikk instantly recognized them as *sabzpush*, the most skilled and dangerous segment of the considerable elvish armies. At a quick glance, he counted at least twenty of them in various branches in the trees and shrubs around their position. And those were the ones he could see. There were probably as many again that were invisible, blending with the foliage to the point where even his vision could not make them out.

The *sabzpush* are famous for many things, not the least of which is their fighting capability. Members of the *sabzpush* train for decades in every type of martial art known, and many not known outside their training manuals. Their invisibility in almost all types of terrain, and their unswerving commitment to their creed make them deadly adversaries. One member of the *sabzpush* would have been a handful even for a fighter as skilled as Erikk. This looked like an entire platoon – at least fifty elves. And all these elves were pointing weapons at him, predominantly the long-bow favoured by the elvish military. He knew what that long-bow could do – it would easily put a barbed arrow through a man at a half-mile. These elves were not fooling around.

He was surrounded, and there was no way out.