

K. S. MICHAELS



TABITHA  
and the kingdom  
of SHADOWS

# *The Prophecy*



“The Kingdom of Shadows flees before light,

And retreats to a dark exile.

So, justice and mercy rejoice, for but a brief while.

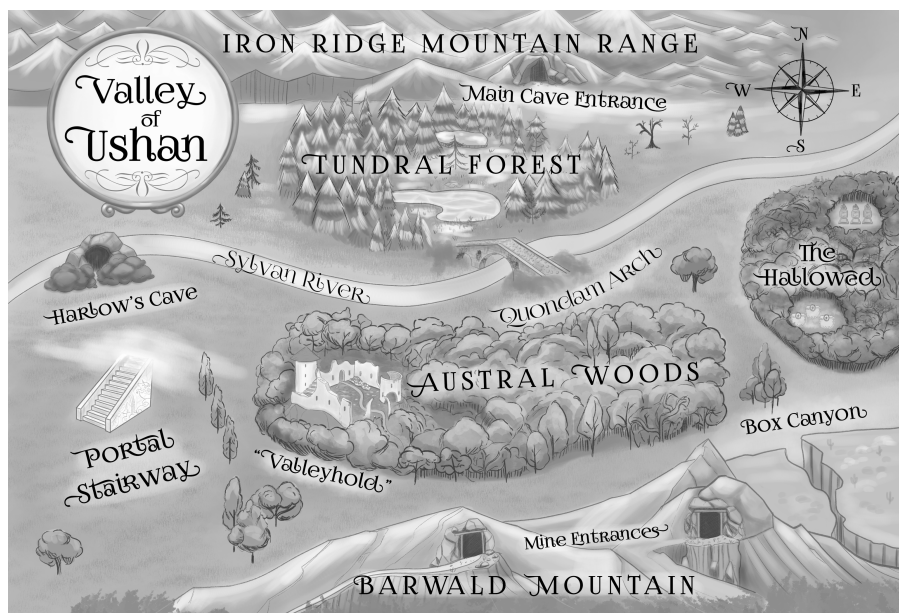
The exodus of Man builds darkness in might,

And the strength of the Council is hollowed.

In attacking its symbol, death of the innocent follows.”

*The Monoceran Prophecies, verses 7 & 8*

# The Kingdom of Light



## One

### *Trouble in River City*



**I**n a dimly lit cave in the Iron Ridge Mountain range in the land of Rigaran, a brown-gray fog slid slowly across the floor. The cave was cold, and water trickled in streams down the dark stone walls. Murky figures arose from the mist, forming slowly in the center of the cave, with their arms and heads taking their various shapes. Veiny arcs of electricity crackled through the fog and up into the figures. Dull, whitish orbs emerged where eyes ought to be. Wispy streams continuously slid down the figures' bodies, spilling back onto the ground. A large blackish-gray figure with glowing red eyes, known to his kind as the Visitant, materialized before them. One of the creatures spoke to him in a hissing, reverberating voice.

“Now, sire?”

The Visitant responded. “Yes. The unicorn alliance with man has been broken for long enough. We’ve gained in strength, while they’re now sufficiently weak. I have been denied that which is mine for far too long! Capture them alive for questioning - for now. And find the Symbol of that Prophecy!”

One of the creatures asked, “And those who protect them?”

The Visitant sneered. "What of them?"

The Visitant and the other figures slowly collapsed and receded into the fog on the floor. The cloud slowly migrated out of the cave and into the valley outside.

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Tabitha Jean McPherson ran down the concrete back steps of her tri-level house with her soccer ball in tow. She kicked it straight across her backyard where it bounced off the cyclone fence and rolled toward her in the grass. It was late afternoon in Plainstown, Illinois. Her tenth birthday party was soon to begin. Her mother was setting up the picnic table while her father was firing up the grill. The back of her house had a large, spacious concrete patio with an ample wooden pergola which provided lots of shade. It was a pleasant space in which to spend a summer afternoon.

Tabitha was tall for her age with tawny brown hair, bright blue eyes, and cute cleft chin. She also had quite the interest in mischief, books, and adventure, and particularly liked stories in which the girl heroine had plenty of exploits. When she read, she loved to imagine herself living in those stories and having some daring experiences of her own.

"Tabitha," said her mother, "you should kick your ball further out in the yard. We're getting set up here."

Tabitha nodded. "Okay Mom," she said and headed down the lawn to the back of the yard. Her grandparents arrived, greeted Tabitha and her parents, and began placing food and presents on the picnic table.

Tabitha smiled and waved at them. She loved seeing her grandparents, and certainly didn't mind getting presents, but she was even more enthused than she normally would be about her birthday. And she wasn't quite sure why. She just had a good feeling about today, that somehow it would be special.

In a wooded area in the park behind Tabitha's yard, a white, opalescent stairway quietly manifested itself slowly, emerging into view with a hum. Fog obscured the top of the staircase, which shimmered in numerous pale colors in the sunlight. A dappled gray unicorn followed by a filly ran down the stairs in a panic. A purple glow sparkled around them and the stairway. The sounds of cries and arrows whizzing through the air could be heard.

The unicorn said hurriedly to the filly, "Stay here for now. Find someone who can help us. You'll know when you can bond with one of the children of man, and you'll know when to return. Trust your instincts."

The filly, with a troubled look, sniffled and said, "Bond?"

The unicorn responded, "There will be a powerful connection between you and one of them. It'll give you a feeling of strength, and you'll feel and see as they do, and vice versa. At least, that is what we are told. I'm sorry, but I've got to go back to help the council if I can. Be careful," the unicorn said.

She placed her head next to the filly's and then dashed back up the staircase. She and the stairs slowly vanished, growing dim and pulsating out of view. The filly shrank in size and transformed into a small toy, laying in the grass.

Tabitha heard what she thought were voices and walked toward the back of her yard to explore. She was certain she heard someone talking but didn't see anyone in the wooded area. She sat down on a small bench her grandfather had made for her, which was on top of an old tree stump. It was a shady, tranquil place where she had spent many a quiet summer day reading. While looking around, she noticed a silvery glint in the grass.

Tabitha walked out to it, seeing a small toy horse lying on the ground. It was ivory colored with a silver mane, tail, hooves, and a multi-colored horn. A soft pinkish hue surrounded her mane, tail, and muzzle. Her horn had pale colors of the rainbow in it, starting with purple at the base and ending with red at the tip. It was a toy unicorn, although it looked nicer than any toy she'd ever seen. Tabitha looked around, wondering where it'd come from.

"Well, aren't you cute," she said. She picked it up and examined it, holding

it gently in her hand.

An electric, purple glow began to imperceptibly radiate from the horn, surrounding both her and the toy. The hairs on the back of Tabitha's neck and arms stood up and tickled her. A surge of unexpected warmth ran through her body, which surprised her.

*What is going on?*

The wooden unicorn became warm and soft in her palm. It stretched and whinnied as its black, sparkling eyes grew large. For an instant, Tabitha saw her own face, and then she realized she was seeing through the unicorn's eyes, looking up at Tabitha as she held it. Tabitha was so startled by all of this that she dropped the toy to the ground just as she heard someone walk up behind her.

Tabitha stared in astonishment at the wriggling unicorn in the grass as it slowly stiffened again into a toy. The purple glow ebbed and faded.

"Say, young lady, do you know where an old Grandpa can get a hug around here?"

Tabitha turned and hugged him. "Grandpa!"

"Happy birthday. Ten years old. I can't believe it," he said excitedly. He noticed the toy on the ground.

"Hey, what's that?"

"Grandpa, she moved when I picked her up. I think she's alive," Tabitha insisted.

Her grandfather picked the unicorn up and looked it over. Tabitha studied his face as he held it. She saw him smile briefly as the toy unicorn made faint, slowing movements and a fading glow came from it as it stiffened. Tabitha had the impression that the toy reminded him of something. Perhaps a fond memory.

"Hmm," he said. "Well, young ladies and unicorns usually share a special friendship. She probably does seem alive to you."

"No, Grandpa. I'm serious. She moved and made a sound," Tabitha insisted.

Tabitha noticed that her grandpa seemed to be thinking about something and was nodding. "You know, unicorns are truthful creatures and good friends to mankind. We should always take what they say seriously. You



## About the Author



K.S. Michaels, who remains hopelessly mired in childhood despite his best efforts, lives in the outskirts of Plainstown, Illinois. His first book, *Tabitha and the Kingdom of Shadows* was inspired by the celebrated appearance of his first grandchild. He has a personal appreciation for the Valley of Ushan and is enjoying retirement after a long career in pest control. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, and devotes his spare time to consulting on cordless drill technology.

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