



Being an excerpt from the examination paper of Prince Callash, in his 14th year, as reported by Finnak Llay, the Royal Tutor

*Question Six (The hourglass should be half full at this point. If it is less full, you are ahead: go back and expand upon your previous answers. If it is more full, you are behind. Answer quickly!)*

### **Who is the Sorcerer Sanwe, and why must we fear him?**

The sorcerer Sanwe is many things, but what is most important is what he is NOT: he is not of this world.

He came to our world over 100 years ago, transporting himself from some other dimension of magic and strange machinery. His pattern is to stay for one year, burning lands and slaying inhabitants, and then to demand tribute from the ruling clan. After he receives his tribute, he leaves and does not return for twenty years. When he leaves, he takes his tower with him. The tower is called "Tyre nak Branwe," which translates to "Tears of the Dragon" in the Younger Speech; it is so named for the endless waterfall that cascades from its upper window.

The ruling clan should not be blamed for acceding to Sanwe's demands: the sorcerer has many deadly powers, as he demonstrated during the Battle of Hightower a century ago. During the Battle of Hightower the sorcerer was actually struck a sword-blow on the leg by my ancestor, Claxas, but it was not enough to defeat Sanwe: Claxas was himself killed and the invasion scattered. The sorcerer's tribute was delivered as usual.

This tribute typically consists of various foodstuffs (including grains, fruits, cows, and vegetables), gold, other metal ores, and farm products such as cotton and sheep's wool. No one is sure what the sorcerer does with these items, especially the metal ores, for he has no visible army to carry swords in his defense.

He does not need them, however, for he is said to have many magical devices and protections; some say the very stones of his tower are alive and will slay all intruders. Others say that the tower is a living being loyal to Sanwe; it has eyes and a mouth, and will speak to intruders before slaying them. Sanwe is also said to have spell-stones and magical maps and spheres of crystal that grant strange powers to those brave enough to gaze into their depths and make a wish. No one knows if these rumors are true, for no one has ever entered the tower and returned to tell the tale.

Physically, the sorcerer is said to be rather unimposing. He wears loose robes so that his true physical form is hard to see. Those that have been near him and lived report that his face is always obscured by a large hood. Only his glowing red eyes are visible.

Sanwe has never been defeated, and there are those who believe that he cannot be defeated. The royal wizard, Ner-Tom, admits that his own powers are at best equal to Sanwe's. Prophecies concerning Sanwe's demise speak of three stones of power that somehow must combine their strengths to banish the sorcerer. Since no one knows where these stones might be, the more important part of the prophecy concerns Sanwe's invulnerability to all other forms of attack. This has caused a great many leaders to despair.

But not my father! He and I and Ner-Tom rode forth one year ago, and essayed a spell that was intended not to defeat the sorcerer, but to imprison him in Hightower forever. The spell-shield still stands, protecting all from the ravages of the sorcerer, and it shows no signs of weakening. Ner-Tom has created a dragon-homunculus, which he says represents the sorcerer himself; he has imbedded it in a sphere of liquid and crystal, which represents the spell-shield. If that sphere should ever crack, or the dragon stir, then we would know that Sanwe was trying to break free. To date, the dragonsphere has not stirred.

Nor, I am confident, shall it ever. So, the answer to the question must ultimately be: Sanwe is a threat from days gone by, and there is no reason to fear him. No reason at all.