

PROLOGUE

The people of the twenty-first century nearly destroyed the earth in a global nuclear holocaust. This is the story of what God did next.

The horrific war followed a viral rampage that began in the year 2042. Together the biological threat and the human conflict reduced the earth's population to a tiny fraction of its former size. The survivors viewed those who lived before the Great War of Destruction as an ancient culture whose ways were now lost. Clawing their way back from brutal chaos, the people of the postwar centuries recalled some of their former technologies and learned other skills anew. Thus, in a strange rewinding of history, the society of the twenty-fifth century became medieval once again. Men rode on horses and fought with swords; they sailed ships without engines and built civilizations without machines. And what about their religion? That too they rebuilt with little reference to the distant past—until a young soldier and a beautiful farm girl stumbled upon an ancient book.

The alpine Kingdom of Chiveis had forged a noble society when Captain Teofil of the Royal Guard's Fifth Regiment and Anastasia of Edgeton found themselves swept up in their great adventure. Anastasia was kidnapped by outsiders and relinquished all hope of returning to her home. Everyone in Chiveis feared she had been lost forever—everyone, that is, except one soldier who believed in action more than fear. Teo set out alone to find Ana in the Beyond, snatching her from the outsiders at her most desperate moment. They galloped away on a single horse into the black forest around the outsiders' village.

Although Teo and Ana only wanted to return home, circumstances led the pair to a lost city and its forgotten temple, a building the Ancients

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had called a cathedral. In that vast edifice of mystic beauty, Teo and Ana found the Sacred Writing of the one true God. The language of the book called him Dieu, or Deu in the Chiveisian speech. It was a name they would learn to treasure.

The recovery of this long-lost book opened up new spiritual horizons not just for Teo and Ana, but for a community of seekers who longed to know the God of the Ancients. Yet their knowledge was incomplete, for only a portion of the Sacred Writing had survived the ravages of time. Though the first Testament remained intact, the pages of the second had dissolved. The New Testament could not be found in Chiveis.

Opposed by enemies who did not want to see the religion of Deu return to the world, Teo and Ana faced the ultimate choice: to curse the name of their newfound God or be run through with a sword. Ana was willing to die for her faith, but Teo—always fiercely protective—offered her a third way. He would take her across the snowcapped peaks of Chiveis into the unknown world on the other side. Though it broke Ana's heart to leave her beloved homeland, she agreed to go. The army closed in; the die was cast; Chiveis refused to believe. And so it was that Teo and Ana joined hands and stepped into the Beyond once more.