

UNKNOWN

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TWENTY CENTS

FANTASY FICTION



ALL ROADS Mona Farnsworth

The detour was peculiar, a detour that led to a nestled little town called Rome. There were six other roads to Rome, but none—



TOMBI SINK J. Vale Downie

The natives said a very strange and deadly god lived in the African lake the engineers sought to drain. And the god—very strange, and mighty—fought it out with the metal god the civil engineers had brought with them—



The SPARK of ALLAH . . . Marian O'Hearn

A novel of the French Revolution, of one too well-born to be cared for by the Revolutionists, not noble enough for the Commune to hunt—and of the immortal witch Elith seeking a strange gem in the chaos of upheaval!

THE MATHEMATICS OF

Magie

A novel of science gone witchcraft by L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt



THE

MATHEMATICS OF MAGIC

by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP and FLETCHER PRATT

Put a man with knowledge of the scientific method in a world where magic works, and—Devil take the hindmost enchanter!

REED CHALMERS' mild eyes bugged as he watched his young friend and colleague. "Good gracious! That's the third of those steaks, somewhat inadequately called small. You'll . . . uh . . .

professionals learn by experience just how much force to put into their incantations. It's an art rather than a science. If I could solve the quantitative problem, I could put magic on a scientific basis. I wish, Harold, that tomorrow you could . . . uh . . . manage to distract Grantorto for long enough to allow me to possess myself of one of his textbooks. His place is such a hurrah's nest that he's certain not to miss it."

X.

THE THREE riders—Grantorto had conjured up a horse because, he said, taking the form of one for a long journey would be fatiguing—had been going for miles through Loselwood. They saw deer, but no other living creatures. Conversation was scarce till they came out on a road, once wide and well graded, now much overgrown. Shea reasoned that this was one more sign of how the enchanters were getting the best of the Faerie knights.

He pushed his mount alongside the magician. "With your superlative powers, Grantorto, I wonder they didn't elect you head of the Chapter instead of Busyrane."

Grantorto shrugged. "I could have had the post at good cheap, ho-ho! But I would not strive and toil for it. I'm really a very good judge of human nature, so I arranged Busyrane's election, knowing he would do it well."

"You must be just about perfect," said Shea.

"'Just about,' my 'prentice friend, is a weak phrase. I *am* perfect. I've no doubt that people in ages to come will date the history of true wizardry from my entry into the field."

"Modest, too," remarked Shea, drawing a quick glare from Chalmers.

Grantorto dropped his eyes. "Too

modest, I sometimes think. Yet do I guard against such affectation—hola! Here's an encounter!" An armored horseman had appeared at the far end of the defile through which they were riding. His lance came down and he trotted toward them.

Grantorto cried: "Ten thousand devils, 'tis Artegall himself! Flee, or we are undone!" Looking a bit undone himself, the magician whirled his horse sharp round on its hind legs.

A woman's voice behind them called, "Stand, all of you!" Belphebe was perched on a rock at the side of the defile, covering them with bow bent full.

"To the air!" screeched Grantorto, the last word going beyond human pitch as he changed to hawk and flapped slanting upward. There was the flat snap of the bow, the whistle of the arrow, and there was a puff of feathers. Down hurtled the hawk, changing to Grantorto with an arrow through his arm as he fell. He landed, *plop*, in a soft spot. Shea observed that these people really knew something about swearing in the minute or two before Artegall's lance jabbed him.

"Dismount, runagates!" roared the knight. It seemed the best thing to do. The man was as big as Cambell, cased in steel, yet moved quickly. Besides, Belphebe had another arrow already nocked.

Artegall pushed up his visor to show a stern, swarthy face with a broken nose. He produced a couple of looped chains, which he slipped over the victims' heads, tightened, and locked. "You're in arrest," quoth he.

"What for?" asked Shea.

"For judgment by the high justice of the court of her majesty, Queen Gloriana."

Chalmers groaned. "The high justice," he explained in a low voice, "means the death penalty if we're found guilty."

"Then I'll take low," said Shea.

"You had better not ask it. He probably has the privilege of low justice himself, which means he can sentence you to about five years in prison right here. He probably would."

Belphebe had come down from her rock. "Grantorto, by the splendor of heaven!" she cried. "I bear witness, Sir Artegall, that when I met this pair in Loselwood but yesterday, they were asking after magicians. Guard the young one well; he bears a blade of much power, which I doubt not has some enchantment on it."

"Say you so!" observed Artegall, with an unpleasant expression. "By my halidome, we are well met, then. A pretty gift for the queen's justice! Let's see that little sword." He yanked Shea's baldric up over his head, nearly taking off an ear.

He climbed back on his horse, holding the end of the three chains. The prisoners had no choice but to trot along behind him.

Chalmers managed to whisper: "Don't try to tell them we're on the right side. Britomart will clear us if necessary. We must . . . uh . . . retain Grantorto's confidence."

They plodded on. The more Chalmers thought about it the less he liked the idea of being dragged off to the Faerie court for judgment. If they were released with Britomart's help, any enchanters they met afterward might reasonably ask them how they came to escape when Grantorto was condemned. Of the master magician's condemnation there could be little doubt. Artegall looked at him with pure detesta-

tion. Belphebe, trotting along beside them, was amusing herself by catching the enchanter's eye, putting one hand around her neck, and making strangling sounds. The great Grantorto did not seem to be enjoying it.

SHEA? Shea was admiring Belphebe's springy stride. Anything Chalmers did would have to be on his own. Fortunately, Chalmers had succeeded in purloining and sneaking a look into one of Grantorto's textbooks that morning. There was a simple weakness spell in it; not much of a spell, lasting only a few hours and easily guarded against if one knew it were coming. But it required no apparatus beyond twelve blades of grass, a small piece of paper, and some water.

Chalmers stooped and pulled up the grass blades as he stumbled along, holding them in his mouth as though he merely wanted something to chew on. He slipped a hand inside his robe, ostensibly to scratch, really to tear a page corner from Grantorto's book. This also went into his mouth; saliva ought to be a fairish substitute for water. He mumbled the incantation. If it worked, Artegall and Belphebe ought to be weakened enough to let the prisoners escape.

Shea decided that he liked the little spray of freckles across Belphebe's nose, but that it was difficult to admire a girl who had a bead drawn on one's right kidney with a long-bow. He would like to see more of Belphebe. She had about everything, including an adventurous spirit not unlike his own—

Why the devil was he so tired? He could barely drag one foot after the other. He should be hardened to strenuous living by now. Belphebe was drooping, too; the spring

had left her walk. Even the horse's head hung.

Artegall swayed in his saddle. He made one monstrous effort to balance himself, overcompensated, and slowly fell into the road with the dignity of a toppling factory chimney. The crash halted the procession. The horse sat down jerkily and sprawled beside its rider, its tongue lolling out. Chalmers and Grantorto followed suit, their chains jangling.

Artegall heaved himself up on one elbow. "Sorcery!" he drawled languidly. "The rascals have tricked us! Skewer them, Belphebe!"

The girl fumbled with her bow. Chalmers rolled over and reached hands and knees. "Come on, Harold! Rouse Grantorto!" he said. He smothered a yawn and started to crawl. "Dear me, I wish I could learn to keep these spells within bounds!"

Shea tried to leap over Grantorto; lost his balance and fell across the magician. Grantorto grunted as Shea's knees dug into him, but he, also, made his hands and knees. The three prisoners set off down the road in that fashion.

Shea looked back. Belphebe was still on her feet, trying to draw the bow, but lacking strength to pull it more than a few inches. She aimed up and let fly at random. The recoil knocked her over backward. The arrow soared in a whispering parabola and thwunked into the seat of Grantorto's pants with just enough force to stick. The magician yelped and increased his speed to almost a mile an hour.

"Hurry," said Shea. "They're coming after us." Belphebe was crawling along at a fair rate, regardless of the abrasion of her bare knees. Behind her, Artégall brought up the rear of the bizarre parade like some monstrous tailless lizard. In his ar-

mor he could barely move.

"Belphebe's gaining," remarked Shea, after a minute.

"That sorrows me not," said Grantorto, with a nasty expression. He fished a knife from his boot.

"Hey," said Shea, "not that!"

"And wherefore not?"

While Shea was trying to think of a reasonable answer, a man in a kilt appeared at the side of the road. For a moment he stared in astonishment at the singular procession, then put a willow whistle in his mouth and blew.

"The Da Derga!" gasped Grantorto. "Ah, who are we, to be caught thus!"

A swarm of the wild men came trotting through the trunks. All wore tartan kilts. With them were a number of lean, rough-coated dogs. The five crawlers were efficiently bowled over and frisked for weapons. Shea found himself looking into the ugly, bearded face of a gigantic redhead, who moved a rusty broadsword back and forth an inch from the prisoner's throat as though he were sawing. The redhead seemed to think it very funny.

"Sure an' is it not a strange thing to find them so?" remarked a benign-looking graybeard. "The folk would be taking poison to make them so weak."

"Do we be takin' them back entire," asked another, "or just their heads to put in the hall, now?"

"Shame on you, Shawn! 'Tis a month now since the gods have had a proper sacrifice. 'Tis a lack of proper reverence you show, I'm thinking."

SHEA COULD HAVE thought of one or two terms more appropriate than lack of reverence. But he was not consulted. He was tied up and suspended from a pole. For the next

hour or so, as the carriers of the pole jounced along, the pain in his wrists and ankles was too exquisite for him to think coherently.

They followed deer trails, ultimately emerging into a clearing with tents around it. The Da Derga were evidently on a raiding expedition; there were no women or children to be seen. The captives were dumped in a row near a rough-hewn wooden altar with ominously dark stains down its sides.

Shea whispered: "Can't you work a spell, Grantorto?"

"Aye, as soon as I recover from this curst weakness. Malediction on the bungling knave who clipped us in it!"

"I'm afraid I was . . . uh . . . responsible," said Chalmers humbly.

"May Beelzebub fly away with you then! After this, stick to your dragon-juggling tricks, and leave true magic to the great Grantorto. Was it not the grass-and-paper spell?"

"Yes."

"I trow I recognized the symptoms. Haro! 'Twill not wear off for hours, and by that time we shall be dead as Judas Iscariot. Ah, 'tis foul that the greatest master of magic the world has seen should come to an end thus, like a netted herring! The tragedy of it makes me weep."

He lapsed into gloomy silence. Shea thought desperately—what could they do? If neither the wily Grantorto nor the powerful Artegal could help, the case appeared hopeless. Another last-minute rescue from outside would be too much of a coincidence to hope for.

Three men in long white robes, absurdly garlanded with leaves, came out of a tent. One of them thoughtfully whetted a long knife. The sound it made on the stone was hard to bear.

The one with the knife came over and looked down at the captives. The amiable-looking chieftain remarked: "Sure, 'tis a likely lot they are, isn't it?"

"They'll do," replied the Druid. "For a chance-met lot, they'll do. The two younger are the handsomest. We'll take them first. But if it's so weak they are, how shall we ever get them to walk to the altar?"

"A couple of the lads will support them. Oh, Murrahu! Would you be getting your pipes?"

The Da Derga had formed a circle around the clearing. One of the Druids stood with his arms out and face to the sky, chanting, while another gestured symbolically over the altar. A third marched round the clearing, followed by the bagpiper. The piper cut loose with a sound like a thousand angry beehives. It seemed to Shea that a procession of ghostly figures was following the two marchers, floating in some medium of faint iridescence that made their forms and even their existence uncertain. The Da Derga bowed low as priest and piper passed, and stayed bent over till that trail of misty things had gone by.

It was extremely interesting. Shea wished he were in a position to appreciate it without being dominated by the thought that these were probably his last sense impressions. He wondered if the gods of the Da Derga had something in common with the ancient Celtic deities—By the great horn spoon, he had an idea!

A barbarian was cutting his bonds. Two others heaved him and Belphebe to their feet and supported them by the arms. Their expressions were of rapt ecstasy. Shea muttered out of the side of his mouth: "Hey, Belphebe, if I get you out of this,



Not quite a classical unicorn, Shea decided, but as a charger it left almost nothing to be desired save docility!

will you call a truce till we can explain?"

The girl nodded. The Druid with the knife took his place at the altar. Another came over to the captives, faced about, and started to lead them. Summoning all his strength, Shea barked: "Hey, Mr. Priest!"

The Druid turned. He had a kindly expression. "Now, laddie," he said, "it's no good shouting! Sure, 'tis an honor to be the first to go to the gods."

"I know it. But you don't think the gods will be satisfied with a bunch of weak fish like us, do you?"

"True enough for you. But the gods do be giving credit when a man offers the best he has, and faith, you are that."

"You could make us better, though. We're under a spell. You're a pretty good magician; why not take this weakness off us?"

The Druid's expression showed cunning. "I'm thinking you're saying that for your own benefit and not for ours, but 'tis rare good sense you speak, my boy." He looked at Shea, then at Belphebe and waved his hands toward them, mumbling. Shea felt the force flow back into his body. The old priest addressed the two with him: "Hold them tight, now, lads. It wouldn't do at all, at all, if they used their strength to get away."

THE ROUGH HANDS of the Da Derga clamped down on Shea's arms till he winced. He saw that Belphebe wasn't enjoying their grip either. He held himself relaxed, as though putty in their hands.

The procession approached the altar. The piper was red-faced, but seemed to be maintaining himself by that unique power all pipers have of keeping going long after ordinary people would collapse for lack of

breath. Shea's feet dragged. The Druid with the knife awaited him with the supremely peaceful expression of a man who is rendering his own happiness sure by a great and noble act. The altar was only four paces away. He glanced toward Belphebe. Three. She was looking anxiously at him as though awaiting a signal. Two. He felt what he was waiting for—the relaxation of the tired, sweaty hands of the huskies. One. It was now or never.

Shea snapped his left heel up and back. It hit a hairy kneecap, and the barbarian went down with a yell of pain. He let go. Shea spun around on the other heel, driving his left knee into the other guard and at the same time punching him in the Adam's apple. The second guard, not expecting this demoniac burst of energy, let go and dropped, strangling in the agony of the throat punch.

What followed took seconds. The other two guards got their signals crossed, and instead of one of them holding Belphebe, both let her go to run at Shea. The woods girl pounced on the Druid with the knife and sank her teeth into his hand.

The guards were good rough-and-tumble fighters, but under the handicap of having to take their captives unharmed. Shea was under no such inhibition. He jabbed one in the eyes with his fingers and kicked the other in the belly. Somebody screeched. Belphebe ran past with a bloody knife in her hand, yanking Shea after her.

The other Da Derga were too dumfounded by the sacrilege to interfere. Shea and Belphebe raced through a hole in their circle just as the barbarians began reaching for their broadswords.

Then they were among trees, running madly. Belphebe glided ahead

of Shea without even breathing hard. He guessed she could leave him behind if she wished. She seemed to know the woods by instinct. She swerved right, squeezed between a pair of trunks, down to a brook, splashed along its bed for fifty yards, then was off into the woods again.

"Up!" cried Belphebe suddenly, and climbed a trunk with the agility of a small boy, lending a hand to help Shea. They crouched together in a crotch and listened.

Scattered sounds of pursuit came, now here, now there. The Da Derga had spread and were beating the woods. Shea and Belphebe held themselves still, almost breathless. There was a rustle of snapped twigs and a pair of the barbarians walked past a few yards from their tree, leading one of the huge dogs. "Sure, 'tis a terrible thing," said one of them. "Three men cut up, and one of them a holy man."

"A wicked, cruel thing. And poor Fion, with his lovely neck all broke in. It's inhuman monsters they are, those two."

The sounds died. They waited, and Shea explained his and Chalmers' plan to her in a whisper.

BELPHEBE gave Shea a level glance. Apparently satisfied with his sincerity, she asked: "Why said you not so sooner, good squire?"

"I couldn't in front of Grantorto without giving the whole show away. If you don't believe me, Britomart will give us good characters. Honest."

"You mean you plan still to go on with this witless scheme?"

"Of course, if we can rescue our people."

"You think Artegall would let Grantorto go?"

Shea hesitated. "I don't know Artegall. But you're right; he's the

kind that, once he gets an idea, he won't change it for hell or high water."

Belphebe gave a gurgling little laugh. "You should be a court jester, Squire Harold. But your wit is well taken; that describes Artegall exactly."

"Well, we'll have to see to it that Artegall can't interfere till we've left."

"Nay. In honor I cannot take the side of that foul enchanter—"

"Look, Belphebe. Use your head. The nights of Faerie have been trying for years to catch up with these enchanters, haven't they?"

"That is good sooth."

"And they haven't made out very well, have they?"

"Gentle squire, you argue like a doctor. But I fear me you are right."

"All right. This riding around in an iron shirt and knocking off an occasional enchanter isn't going to get you anywhere, either. Now, my boss and I have a plan for getting into their organization and rounding up the whole batch at once. Why not let us try?"

"But how shall I—"

"Oh, tell Artegall we made a private truce to escape the Da Derga, and one of the conditions was that we get a head start before—" He stopped, listening.

Faintly, the drone of bagpipes wafted to them.

-Belphebe cried: "The ceremony has begun again. Haste, or our friends are sped!" She began to climb down, but as they went Shea asked: "What can we do?"

"I'm not without some knowledge of things in the woods and their secret ways." She dropped to the ground and started to whistle a strange little tune. When the whistle reached an ear-piercing pitch, a

unicorn came trotting forward. It nuzzled up to her, pawing the ground, and she vaulted onto its back.

"How about me?" asked Shea.

Belphebe frowned. "Right glad would I be to have you ride with me, but I misdoubt this steed will bear the weight. And they are ever jealous beasts, not liking to go two and two. You could hold the tail."

That seemed unsatisfactory. But Shea thought, "After all, I know some magic and ought to be able to conjure one up, and a conjured unicorn probably won't object to this one. 'If you'll show me that brook, I'll see what I can do,'" he said.

He composed his incantation on the way to the stream. At its bank he made a model, as well as he could, of the animal's head in wet sand, and stuck a stick in it for a horn. Then he recited:

"Oh, steed that feeds on the lightning
And drinks of the whirlwind's surge,
In the name of the horse of Heimdall,
I conjure you, now, emerge!"

"Strong and docile and valiant,
Decked with the single horn,
In the name of the horse of Mohammed,
I conjure you, be born!"

The brook exploded outward with a *whoosh* of spray. Shea jumped up and rubbed the water from his eyes—then rubbed them again to make sure. Once more, the travelers' magic had been almost successful.

Standing in the creek was a fine big bull Indian rhinoceros.

XI.

SHEA HAD a moment of panic. Then he remembered that the bad reputation of the rhinoceros tribe is based on the cantankerousness of the two-horned black rhino of Africa. Anyway, he couldn't fool around

conjuring up more animals. As he had asked for a docile one, this was presumably it. He landed astride the rhino's back.

The rhinoceros might be docile, but it was unaccustomed to riders. When it recovered from the shock of its arrival in an unfamiliar section of spacetime, it scrambled out of the creek and galloped off through the trees in the wrong direction. Shea dug his fingers into the folds of its armor and hung on, yelling at Belphebe: "Hey! See if . . . ugh . . . you can . . . ugh . . . herd this thing!"

The rhino, seeing the unicorn on its right, charged, snorting and baring its incisor tusks. The unicorn whirled aside and poked the rhinoceros in the ribs as it lumbered past. The rhinoceros, now thoroughly upset, tried to flee. Belphebe skillfully herded it toward the camp of the Da Derga.

The bagpipes were louder. The rhinoceros, now more afraid of the unicorn than of this noise, headed straight for the sound. Shea clung to its back, hoping it wouldn't ram a tree. The trees sprang apart in front, and there was the camp of the Da Derga. A couple of guards held Chalmers across the altar. The Druids had found another knife.

Shea yelled: "Yeeeeeeow!"

Heads turned toward him. The upraised knife hung suspended. Shea had a blurred picture of the camp streaming past, and everywhere the backs of the Da Derga departing in a swirl of tartan. They screamed most gratifyingly.

Beyond the altar Shea tumbled off his mount and walked back. Belphebe had already cut the bonds from the others; but, stiff and weak as they were, they could not move.

"I trust," said Chalmers feebly, "that you are . . . uh . . . con-

vinced of the inadvisability of visiting ancient Ireland, Harold."

Shea grinned. "Well, yes, since you mention it." He turned to Grantorto. "I can take this weakness off you. But I'm sure a master like you would have a much better method than anything I could use. If you'll give the spell to me, I'll use it instead of my own."

"Marry, that will I. Few youngsters are so polite as to appreciate the powers of the masters these days. Bend down—"

Artegal raised a feeble hand to Belphebe. "What ails you, girl? Fall on these catiffs! Slay them!"

"The squire and I have a truce."

"A truce!" he growled. "Make a truce with the devil, or the Da Derga, but not with these enemies of humankind. The queen's majesty shall hear of this."

Shea was working the spell on Chalmers. As he got up he grunted: "Thank you, Harold. Really, do we have to go on—"

"Shut up, doc," snapped Shea. He didn't intend to have his delicate bit of finagling gummed up at this stage. Then he turned to Grantorto and worked the spell again.

The magician seemed annoyed that Chalmers should have preceded him, but it turned out to be a good idea. The moment Grantorto was on his feet, he snatched up one of the discarded sacrificial knives and flung himself toward the helpless Artegal. Belphebe tripped him as he tried to go past. Before he could get up, Shea was on his back with one hand on his neck and the other on his wrist. "Drop that!" he yelled.

THE MAGICIAN'S bulbous body heaved convulsively. Shea found himself gripping the neck of an enormous snake of the python type. With horror he felt the immense rub-

bery strength of the thing as it writhed a section from under him and tried to throw a coil around his body.

But, as snakes have no hands, Grantorto had perforce dropped the knife. Shea put the edge of it against the scaly throat. "Change back," he gritted, "or I'll saw your head right off!"

Grantorto changed back. "Are you clean daft?" he sputtered. "There's a stinking fool 'prentice for you—ruining our chance to get rid of our greatest enemy."

"Not at all, master," said Shea, relaxing his grip a trifle. "You forget there's a truce on. Belphebe and I agreed not to have any scrapping until we've separated."

"You mean to keep your word with *them*? 'Tis against nature and therefore void."

Shea clamped down his grip again and turned to Artegal: "If I release you from the weakness spell, will you give me your word of honor to let us have a two-hour start?"

"Fool! Doltard!" shouted Grantorto. But Artegal settled the question. "Covenant with an enchanter? Not I! Slay me if you will; you shall not rid yourselves of all Gloriana's knights so easily!"

Shea sighed at the unreasonableness of men. "Doc, watch Grantorto for a minute, will you?" He got up and said to Belphebe: "Take care of him after we go." Then, more softly: "Say, how can I get in touch with you again?"

She thought. "If you go not beyond the confines of this great wood, and know but how to call my unicorn of the forest—not that ungainly great beast of yours—"

"Can you whistle the tune for me—softly?" She did so, and he followed till he could do it. But she finished with a smile. "I misdoubt

you could entice her close enough. These unicorns fear not maidens, but men they are greatly wary of."

Shea pondered, then drew Chalmers aside, leaving Belphebe to guard Artegall against Grantorto. "Doc, can you conjure up sugar?"

"Harold, you are a continual source of astonishment to me. I really feel quite worn out, though. I'm incapable of coherent effort—"

Shea shook him by the shoulders. "Listen, doc!" he said fiercely. "I'm pretty close to the edge of collapse myself, but if you ever want to see Florimel again, you can't let me down! This is just a little applied psychology; to wit, setting up a homophiliac fixation in the libido of one female unicorn. Now, go to it!"

Water, charcoal from the remains of one of the Da Derga's cooking fires and a spell produced a double handful of neat patty-shaped molds of maple sugar, which Shea rather dubiously guessed would do. The unicorn sniffed suspiciously from a distance, then under Belphebe's coaxing teetered close enough to taste. It munched meditatively, wiggling its ears, then reached out its muzzle for more. Shea fed it another piece, then ostentatiously put the remainder in his pocket.

"All right," he said, "we're off. Say, Belphebe, maybe you better hitch J. Edgar Hoover's feet to the unicorn and haul him off before the Da Derga come back to see what happened." He glanced at the glowering Grantorto. "Two hours' truce, now, and you can thank Heaven they took her bow away."

XII.

THE DARK was beginning to close in. As they reached the road, Grantorto worked a spell and produced a horse. He mounted.

"Hey!" said Shea. "What about us?"

"I say a pox on you, 'prentice, for a rebellious rogue. Wend afoot and learn what it is to flout the great Grantorto."

Shea put on a sly grin. "You don't understand, master. Don't you think it pays for the Chapter to have someone that the opposition thinks is a real man of honor? I'm just building myself up for the job. When we get ready to put something really good over on that bunch and catch a lot of them at once, instead of just these two; I'll come in handy."

Grantorto considered a moment, then a smile ran round his red, full lips. "Oho! Sits the wind so? You want that red-polled baggage, eh? Well, when we capture her, you shall have her before she goes to the torture chamber—if the Chapter chooses to admit you. For I tell you fairly I doubt you are skilled enough in the more practical forms of magic."

Chalmers spoke up. "Ahem. You confessed, Grantorto, that you of the Chapter occasionally . . . uh . . . work at cross-purposes."

"Aye. 'Tis in the nature of things. For look you, magic is an art disorderly."

"But it isn't! We can show you how to change all that."

"Here's strange doctrine! Do you jest?"

"Not at all. Didn't you notice the Druids' methods of doing magic?"

"Those priests of the Da Derga? Magic they have, aye, but so meager a sort any lout can outdo them."

"That's not the point. It's not what they do, but how they do it. One man invokes their gods; another changes the altar from wood to stone, and so on. One man per