

Poems from
DONZALO'S DESTINY

by Stephen Brooke

DONZALO'S DESTINY is an epic fantasy by Stephen Brooke, originally published in four books: The Song of the Sword, The Shadow of Asak, The Sign of the Arrow, and The Hand of the Sorcerer. Throughout the Donzalo saga are found bits of poetry and song from the characters.

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The first is from THE SONG OF THE SWORD, a 'courtly' poem from the young diplomat Jobareth Nafal:

IN LOVE'S SERVICE

Though oft I wear Love's livery,
No mistress of mine shall she be.
Of Love's bonds I will be free
To sup on life and have my fill,
To take my pleasures where I will;
I'll remain my own man still.

So if Love's praises I may sing,
Know that my words mean not a thing;
They are birds that take to wing.
They bear sweet songs to whom they might,
And, leaving naught to mark their flight,
Are away and out of sight.

I'll stay not long in Love's service,
Only a while, to have her kiss.
Then I'll go, rememb'ring this:
She welcomes back all former men,
However long it may have been,
Come to share her gifts again.

*Later in THE SONG OF THE SWORD, the two minstrels
Guesare and Oder exchange verses of an old song. This is the
poem that more-or-less inspired the novel:*

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

The song of the shining sword, I sing,
The song of a bird with a bright steel wing;
I sing of blows that make blades ring,
The life it has, the death it will bring.

My tales of time-lost battles I tell,
The sieges where great cities fell;
Of men who fought bravely and well,
The many souls sent down to hell.

To music made by clashing shields,
The sword sings over many fields;
A scythe Death unrelenting wields:
Men's lives, the crop his reaping yields.

I watch by the light of a blood-red moon,
Where broken ramparts rise in ruin;
The cold wind carries a song of doom
As armies march to the ancient tune.

Before the sword, each nation falls;
It overthrows their high-built walls.
Barbarians plunder Tesra's halls;
The mighty end their days as thralls.

The sword cares naught for prideful powers
That gather wealth and build high towers.
It throws them down as mankind cowers;
They lie forgotten beneath the flowers.

Oh, I shall sing the song of the sword,
Of that which ever is man's lord;
A song arising from discord,
For we march still to the song of the sword.

*In THE SHADOW OF ASAK, the bard Guesare sings a silly
song about Donzalo to entertain a group of children:*

Donzalo's deeds are all the talk,
I hear he did wondrous things;
He took old Asak's dogs for a walk
And clipped the Rupa's wings!

Donzalo's deeds are wise and just,
And widely sung by the bards;
They say he is a man to trust,
Who never cheats at cards!

Donzalo's deeds make maidens swoon
And villains shake with fear;
He often visits the man in the moon,
Just to bring the old fellow a beer!

Donzalo's deeds are known by all,
The lowly and the well bred;
And maybe if he weren't so tall
He wouldn't bump his head!

Later in THE SHADOW OF ASAK, Jola sings this riddle song to Donzalo in her cottage, following the first time they make love:

What shadow does a shadow cast?
How long does forever last?
Where sleeps the wind before it blows?
Where is love when it goes?

If I passed beyond the sea,
would you wait and watch for me?
If I crossed the mountains high,
would you pray for wings to fly?

Who am I without my name?
Are the gods or we to blame?
Why must dreams fade with the dawn?
Where is love once it is gone?

If I passed beyond the sea,
would you wait and watch for me?
If I crossed the mountains high,
would you pray for wings to fly?

Could a man count every star?
Why are all things as they are?
Do you love me when you sleep?
Answer these or silence keep.

Guesare sings a song he learned from the Fay:

WHERE THE DWARFS DWELL

Legends they tell, where the dwarfs dwell,
of fires that well from the hearths of Hell.
There chains of gold were forged of old,
to bind, to hold, in caverns cold,
where the dwarfs dwell, where the dwarfs dwell.

In secret mines a captive pines;
and the runic lines form mystic signs
to tell her tale. A whisper, a wail,
all voices fail — doomed and pale
a captive pines, a captive pines.

In caverns deep the hours creep;
to wake from sleep means but to weep,
caught in this spell. Does a distant bell
their passing tell? Within her cell,
the hours creep, the hours creep.

The clamor, hark, in caverns dark;
an anvil spark, a dwarf-smith, stark,
to his tasks settles, he casts, he fettles
his magic metals, the crystal kettles
in caverns dark, in caverns dark.

What fate befell, where the dwarfs dwell?
The hammer's knell would rise and swell
on the fetid air, a song of despair
for the captive fair, beyond all care
where the dwarfs dwell, where the dwarfs dwell.

*In THE SHADOW OF ASAK, the Lady Fachalana declaims
this piece from the stage, at the close of an old play:*

Where has gone the king?
Man no more is mighty;
silence spreads its shroud
where heroes sang of old.

Lizards doze upon
the walls of ruined cities;
the wells hold nests of snakes;
the wind rules realms of dust.

Victories forgotten,
sword beside him broken;
the king lies in his grave
and sleeps eternally.

*In THE SHADOW OF ASAK, the ambassador Lord Doufan
quotes this aphorism from an old poem:*

Make sure your bearings in what lands you roam:
The wisest man is he who travels far,
Yet keeps his eye upon a guiding star
That someday serves to show him his way home.

A short bit of song that the minstrel Guesare repeats to himself in
THE SIGN OF THE ARROW:

Travelers all, we wear
the dust of yesterday.
The rain will fall at last,
and gently wash away
each fragment of the past,
the long road's clinging clay.
Travelers all, we fare
yet upon our way.

A funeral prayer and response:

As an arrow flies my soul,
into darkness, into night;
none whom I have left behind
sees the ending of its flight.
Flies to Kamat, ever watchful,
waiting in the realm of light.

As a comet through the sky,
burning with creation's flame;
as an arrow flies my soul,
without substance, without name.
Flies to Kamat, ever waiting,
to the one from whence we came.

*A campfire song from Guesare, later in THE SIGN OF THE
ARROW:*

A cup of wine may make me jolly
But two can turn me melancholy,
And taking three is simple folly
For I'll fall asleep, by golly!

I'll have one for my stomach's sake,
Though several more seems a mistake;
Too many cupfuls surely make
Anybody's tummy ache!

Good food is certainly a sign
To pour another cup of wine,
So bring enough when we may dine
To fill up yours and fill up mine!

A cup of wine just might enhance
The mood that leads us to romance;
But sometimes we make an advance
When we shouldn't take the chance!

Later in SIGN, Ansa sings this song:

Moon of silver, sun of gold,
I who was young now grow old.
Daylight dims, night grows cold,
Should I fear death, I who was bold?

Life is short, forever is long,
I tried to do right, often did wrong.
Will is weak, wine was strong,
I would forget the words to my song.

Moon of silver, queen of night,
I knew you once, grown full and bright,
And madly I danced, by your light,
But those who danced with me fled from sight.

Last fading stars, by dawn swept away,
I, as you, may no longer stay.
Yet you return, come end of day;
Where I might go, I can not say.

Every road walked, every tale told;
All I then loved I could not hold.
Sun of morning, spun of gold,
I who was young have grown old.

*In THE HAND OF THE SORCERER, Prince Modareth reads
a piece from Jobareth's second book of poetry:*

What bow has set me to this futile flight,
Has sent me arcing to your armored heart?
Dare I trace the journey of that dart
To some willful archer of the night,
Some jokester god who, laughing, took his aim
At a mark no man might penetrate,
Leaving me to curse both love and fate?
No, I will myself take all the blame
And know I was a fool, as are men all,
For we choose to fly and, spent, must fall.

In HAND, Lord Radal recalls a prayer he wrote as a boy:

Darkness, Asak's eldest child,
Lady of the Lifeless Lands,
on your carved ebon throne,
scatter Time's unnumbered sands.

Wisdom comes as nightmare runes,
written on the lids of eyes
that beheld you, vast and still,
ere stars rose in ancient skies.

All the children of the day,
generations raised in light,
shrink from the Abyss's gaze,
waste and wither in your sight.

Darkness, born of endless Void,
Goddess to the men of old,
reign as Queen of endless realms,
worlds where all things grow cold.

*An early effort by young Sir Pol, in THE HAND OF THE
SORCERER:*

Never trust a poet —
he'll only tell you lies
and pretty bits of nonsense,
pretending to be wise.

The words have all been crafted
to bring tears to your eyes;
he'll beguile your hearts,
he'll seek to hear your sighs.

But, in time, he knows
whatever words he tries,
you'll turn the page and read
some other poet's lies.

In HAND, Pol reads from a tragedy he is writing:

The line dividing life and death
is measured by a single breath.
Exhale what is and all that might,
a wisp to fade into the night.
When next we breathe, what unknown air
fills souls now past all mortal care?
That dark divide breaks ev'ry bond;
breathe deeply ere you cross beyond.

A song from Pol's comedy "Bumbiap," in THE HAND OF THE
SORCERER:

I've given you my heart
to do with as you please,
to break beneath your heel
or heal its injuries.

And nothing more I'll ask
of you, no words save these:
remember how my love
came singing on the breeze.

Oft wounded in the past,
I'll not avoid love's dart
nor falter on a journey
I once feared to start.

This starry, vernal night,
though we be far apart,
remember how my love
came singing from the heart.

In THE HAND OF THE SORCERER, a Pol poem, read at his patron's salon:

I'll hang the moon from a silver chain
to wear beside your heart,
And fashion ear rings of the rain
that drip in subtle art

Against the midnight of your hair
and dawning of your skin —
A glowing, flushing morning fair
with hints of flame within.

I'll set the sun in a ring of gold
to place upon your hand
And kiss your fingers, making bold
but making no demand;

No, only asking for your love,
that you be mine and stay
Each night of gem-starred sky above,
each jeweled golden day.

*And that concludes the songs and poems found in the
DONZALO'S DESTINY books.*

*The novels are available in print and ebook formats from Arachis
Press.*