

The Venson Mada

By **C.C Hazel**

The ways of the "mystics" of Arshea were set. Like stuck with like. Mada learned the hard way why it seemed better that way. She was meant to grow up the venson way and when given the choice Mada intentionally opted to go against the grain. With dire consequences for herself and those she loved. When tested would she be found wanting?

The question of Venson Adam had plagued those in The Forgotten Mountain for a very long time. Was this new venson, Mada, the answer?

Chapter One

Tamrip keep

It is a terrible thing to say, a heartbreaking thing to say but the death of Mada's parents was no great loss to her. Not that Mada was evil or indifferent to them, it was just the way it was. Their relationship had been the product of fate, chance, circumstance and a little more. Not maliciously instigated by any one of them. As Mada stood by their graves with her siblings and the keep people she shed a tear. Not for what was, but for what could have been. Her only other emotion was guilt. After all she had, in a way, helped put them there.

Washing her hands in the soil from each of the graves she could only sigh. More interested in the ritual she was performing than the people who lay in the ground just a couple of feet beneath her. It was an old ritual. Mavrik had said that it was done as a way of washing your hands of the dead. Necromancy and all mysticism were frowned upon, to put it lightly. No one need waste any time worrying, the children of a-Alorya and Carrab had no desire to attempt a resurrection. Still she could not help being swept up by nostalgia. As far as one could feel nostalgic about people who were practically strangers.

Carrab, their father, had been a hard man who had had a hard life who had never known or tried to be any way but hard. His duty to his family was to provide for them as best as he could. He seemed to have nothing to offer beyond that. a-Alorya, their mother, lived only for her husband. a-Alorya had come from the south. Leaving behind family, friends, security and comfort for Carrab. Believing that she was the one to save him from his "sadness", his "loneliness", his "broken heart" save him from himself, as can be the dreams of a romantic young fool. Running away with Carrab and their three sons. She had had a comfortable life with her parents and brothers, Sawen, Neneep, Ariss and Lev, she being the last. Her father, died when she was very young. Too young for her to remember him. Though not widely known her mother, Alorya, was venson. Naturally Alorya was over the moon when a-Alorya was born.

Alorya waited and watched for ten year spans which amounted to nothing. She had even gone as far as attempting to bring forth the venson. This was not strictly taboo but had adverse effects on the mind of a mere being. These ranged from minor barely noticeable quirks to madness or a total breakdown of all mental and motor skills. Depending on the nature of the mystic and the arshean involved.

But every so often an impatient venson mother attempts to bring forth the venson. The vensons did not embrace this practise as it was potentially dangerous to the girls who though not venson themselves had the potential to give venson life. The venson way was against the taking of ashean life, unnecessarily.

With her dreams dashed by the arrival, duration and end of a-Alorya's tenth year span Alorya began to pay less and less attention to a-Alorya. Until she virtually ignored her. Her hopes had been unfounded and her treatment of her daughter once the dream was not realised was unjust and cruel. Alorya felt that all that was left was to wait for the first five "children-children". Before the new hope was born a-Alorya ran away from home. Alorya searched, but never found a-Alorya or the children.

a-Alorya bore the first three year spans with Carrab thinking that if she could just give him a son, an heir, it would change him. Even though there was nothing to inherit. Their first child was a boy, who she named after his father, a-Carrab. He did not do the trick. Nor did the second or the third. Twenty-nine year spans and several children later naught had changed. Not to say it was not romantic at the beginning, at least in a-Alorya's eyes.

Before they passed a-Alorya and Carrab brought seven beings into Arshea. Daughters, Mada, a-a-Alorya and Avené. Son's a-Carrab, Mavrik, Lon and Manny, who was a-a-Alorya's twin. Ordered a-Carrab, Mavrik, Lon, Mada, the twins and Avené. Had Alorya known of them her hopes would have centered on a-a-Alorya and Mada or at least until time had proven them to be venson or not.

When a dream is thwarted and there seems no hope of it ever being realised one runs the risk of receding into their own dreamland. Such was a-Alorya's lot. Shackled to reality by the faint hope of the improbable fulfillment of unfulfilled love. The hopes of a-Alorya like that of her mother had not been realised. Both had something very good but it did not live up to their ideal. Their hearts lost in past dreams were not willing to settle on the lot the gods had deemed theirs.

Carrab lived out the last of his year spans in much the same way he had lived the first. He saw nothing lacking in their lives. He loved a-Alorya in his own way. Though hard he was a quiet man with no notions of grandeur.

Carrab and a-Alorya like everyone else went on with being. Then suddenly they were both struck down by a mysterious illness. An illness which baffled everyone. Many treatments had been tried. A hundred elixirs had been drunk. All to no avail.

Strait from the cemetery the children of a-Alorya and Carrab were to be found sitting in their little cooking room trying to decide what to do with the rest of their lives now that their parents were gone. Having been struck down by the illness so suddenly they had had no time to make arrangements for their children's welfare.

Mada looked around the table at her brothers and sisters and wondered how they would feel if they knew she had had a hand in the death of their parents. This was just another mistake, another awful secret she would just have to live with.

"I think we should go south and try to find our mother-mother. There is no point in our staying here and working on Comris' land." Lon said, seemingly from the blue.

"No one is going anywhere Lon." a-Carrab said quietly thinking it was another one of Lon's ideas which would come to nothing.

"With mother and father gone and them leaving none of us in anyone's keep means we are free as air fowls." Lon replied his older brother.

Mada had not been considering leaving Tamrip keep. But now that Lon said it, it would do her good to leave the scene of her crimes.

"How far do you think mother-mothers place is from here," Mada said brightly, 'And it is lovely weather for trave..."

a-Carrab stood up and banged his fist on the table. Rattling the tin cups that were on it and upsetting a cup that was on the edge.

"No one is going anywhere, why, what for? I am the oldest and I say everyone stays put."

This sudden outburst was a little startling. Not that he had ever been violent towards any of them. But now it seemed he thought he was now in charge of them. Knowing a-Carrab he probably had their lives planned to the last detail. Lon was going to have none of that.

"Tsk tsk tsk a-Carrab a-Carrab," Lon said, shaking his head, 'I know, I hope you know as everyone else knows the law which states that with our parents gone and having chosen no one to keep us we are all free. Free to choose where and with whom we stay providing the person is willing. Not to mention that Mavrik, Mada and I are not little children. And I,' 'puffing his chest out a little, 'have decided to go south to find our mother-mother.

a-Carrab, as soon as he realized that their parents were not going to survive had made plans for the next growing season. With his siblings providing the labour of course. He could also arrange a very profitable union for Mada. If only she would stop being so stubborn. A union to either one of Lamron's sons would bring their way mines or a union with Yuhlik would bring land. He was not a cruel or callous man. Just practical. He did what he thought was best for everybody. If he should benefit in the process, what harm? He had taken it upon himself to guide the family, with the assistance of his wife Piper.

As for Piper, marrying a-Carrab, for someone who was in her situation, was considered moving up in the world. Though she had not gone very high she was now better off. And she would not have minded it one bit if they were all to pick up and leave. After all she had her own family who could use the land. Piper, though looking to better her situation in life had had the good fortune of being genuinely in love with the ladder she had chosen to climb.

Lon too had been making plans. He had some fends saved up. That would help them buy fresh fruit along the way and pay for their accommodation, if necessary. It was unlikely a-Carrab would surrender the one ageing inga-trat the family had. He had not from the blue decided to leave as soon as he saw their parents were gone. He had always had dreams of arcadia. The passing of Carrab and a-Alorya was just the catalyst to his seeking it out. With a lot of effort and determination he believed they would make it to their mother-mothers in the

south. It was just as well a-Carrab was upset about the whole thing Lon had hoped he would stay behind. Anyway someone had to keep the home fires burning in case they had to return.

"For shame, for shame the earth is still damp where we buried our parents and all of you are carrying on like this."

Mavrik barely ever spoke but when he did they took notice. He was a kind, soft spoken and very handsome young man. He looked very much like Carrab. All the girls were after him. But he never seemed to notice them much to Lon's dismay. He spent his time helping, as the rest of the family did, with the farming. Or he could be found reading when he managed to borrow books from the other keep people. He had expressed an interest in joining one of the kentish groups of religious, some might say superstitious, men and women.

The twins, a-a-Alorya and Manny, who could have been siamese twins for the amount of time they spent together, were the first to leave the cooking room. They went outside to play as the house only had one other room. The sleeping room, which was a long rectangular affair, was divided by two curtains. a-Carrab and Piper slept in one section, the other was occupied by the other children, head to toe. The last one had been occupied by their parents.

Mada felt no love for their parents but the least she could do was not bicker on the day of their funeral. She could see that though not having been close to either parent Avené, the youngest, was upset. Death was a strange and frightening thing and Avené was hit the hardest. Though it was more confusion and fear than bereavement.

"Can I get you some bread and cheese Avené?"

"No. Thank you Mada. But I think I will go and lie down for a while. I need a little rest."

She stood up and went to their section of the sleeping room. Mada decided to take a walk. She needed to think. She decided to take the old footpath at the back of the house that led to the forest. Mentally tracing the path so she was there before sheeven left the house. Taking a basket to pick berries and mushrooms.

The forest smelt wonderful. The fantias were in full bloom and the air fowls were singing from every tree and bush it seemed.

How much easier life would be if she were an air foul. The passing of their parents seemed so unreal to her still. She wondered how they were. And loathing mysticism as they did would they have accepted it if offered them a chance of return.

Life could be such a hassle. It was too bad you could not will it to stop or to go into a state of suspended animation and reanimate yourself when things were better. She could not run away and she dared not look to mysticism to make it easier on not just herself but her family.

Mada would never forget seeing Pevious's wife being burnt alive. Alo-er, Pevious's first wife, was able to start a fire at will. So when Fente's house burnt down mysteriously, the town's people concluded that she, being the only pyrokinetic person in the keep, had to be responsible. Never mind that Fenté was a notorious drunk who had broken a leg and once almost drowned after she had been well-oiled. Most who knew Alo-er personally did not believe she had done it. But no one said a word in her defense. Being in sympathy with a mystic was almost as bad as being one. Even her parents had refused "supernatural" help as a possible cure. Though in actuality there was nothing supernatural about it. What was supernatural to one being was simply an ordinary state of existence for another. Regardless of this fact the mere mention of it sent her father into fits. Death, he had said, was preferable.

When Mada discovered she had the ability to do several things that would be considered mysticism by the Arsheans, as can be expected, though very young, she kept it to herself. Fortunately her self preservation instinct had kicked in very early. The only other person in the know was her friend Sar, a mystic herself.

While looking for mushrooms Mada found a fairy ring. Caught up in a childhood fancy she went around it clockwise and put in her left foot and moved a bit of earth with her big toe. She then went around it counter-clockwise and put in her right foot and again digging up a bit of earth with her big toe. Maybe its magic could tell her what to do.

"Do you not know that it is just a myth?"

The sudden interruption did not startle Mada because she knew that voice all too well. It was Sar. Her voice was calm, crystal clear and melodious. She seemed to sing rather than simply

speak. After listening to her for a while you would get an urge to break out in song yourself.

"Truly Sar you ought not to sneak up on someone like that."

Sar jumped down from the branch she was standing on and it was some fifteen or so feet span high. For someone her size it must have been quite a leap. Sar was barely over fourteen inches tall. She landed soundlessly a few feet from Mada. Mada smiled affectionately at the little hazel and green nymph.

"How are you Sar?"

"Is it not I who should be asking how you are. How are you Mada?"

"Much better than would be expected."

"Have you given your parents to the earth?"

She smiled at this. Sar was the only being who she knew who spoke in such a way.

"Yes we have."

Sar was looking at Mada basket and frowning. She walked over, stood on her toes and looked in.

"You only have two berries. I have, have I not, said time and again that it is only for mere beings to labour so?"

Mada could not help but laugh this time. She sat next to the basket. Sar decided to do the picking. Berries flew into the basket from all directions.

"You consider Arsheans to be mere beings, am I not a mere being too then? I am Arshean."

"You talk to the dryads. Does that not make you more than a mere being?"

Mada considered this for a while, worrying her lower lip.

"I do not think so. I do not know. I guess. You never tell me exactly what I am. Being told that I am venson does not mean anything to me. You are a dryad. What am I?"

She looked closely at Sar's face as she spoke. But it was impossible to make out a dryads thoughts from their facial expressions. They could make their faces completely expressionless if they chose. Sar's face was just like that at that moment.

"Does it matter by and large in the ways that truly matter do we not chose how and to an extent what we are?"

"Sar will you ever give me a straight answer?"

"The knowledge is of no use to you at the moment. Besides it is not my place to tell you," A berry flew out of the basket into Sar's mouth, "Mmm nice and sweet."

"Whose place is it then? So I can go and find this being that can help me seeing as the one being I know who can help me refuses to."

"Again is not my place to tell you that either. As I have told you, you will have to seek out the other vensons. Leave Tamrip keep and go. But to do that safely it will require caution on your part." Sar answered not baited.

"You never give an inch span." Mada said smiling.

"No I do not. And with good reason. The balance is maintained by everyone respecting the boundaries. Anarchy and complete destruction can be the only result if we do not observe the rules."

"Do you really think that will happen from your just telling me more about vensons?"

"It was agreed Mada. And it has been so since time immemorial."

"Could you just bend the rul...?"

"I have. More than I should have. But it would not be right for me to endanger others, even for you."

"No wonder people fear us. Everything is so surreptitious. I can understand that approach towards the mere beings. But do we have to be so secretive in dealing with each other?"

"Yes it is necessary. One day you will learn everything. But it has to be from the right source."

"Very well," she sighed, "I still think it is absurd that we are the ones to shy away from *"mere beings"*."

"The rules of the ancients were not made for their amusement."

"The ancients are not here now. So why should we bother with them?"

"Why should we bother with them? It is only a child and a fool who refuses to learn from another's wisdom and experience."

"But how do we know this wisdom and experience are complete?"

"Honestly Mada. I will see you soon. I have duties I have to attend to."

"Yes bu..." Sar disappeared.

Mada began idly picking mushrooms. Trying to decide if leaving or staying was best. She had to consider how it would affect the children. Tamrip keep was small and did not offer a lot of opportunities for them. But it was safe. Their education was not complete yet. Would they easily pick it up once they were settled again? Would their mother-mother welcome six people who are for all intents and purposes strangers?

"What troubles you Mada?" Sar said, having returned.

Mada shifted a little, it was disconcerting to have someone read you so easily. Sar already probably knew what was troubling her. Out of politeness or whatever it was she seemed to always act oblivious.

"As you know our parents are dead and my... Lon... my brother, has suggested we all go south to seek out our mother-mother Alorya who I think lives in a place called Tarrent keep. I do not know how serious he was but I think it would be best for us all. I do not want to spend the rest of my life slaving away on land that is not even ours. Besides you and maybe a-Carrab there is nothing to make me ever look back at this place."

Now that she had said it out loud it sounded all the more the right thing to do. Sar seemed to be considering this while eating another berry.

"Does not your brother still seek to marry you off? You say he has received offers already?"

"Yes he has, all of which I have declined but he seems to think he owns me!"

In her anger and a rock suddenly flew into the air toward a trundle that had been minding its business, singing its song. Fortunately it flew away in time and the rock was deeply embedded in the tree trunk.

"Has that trundle joined forces with your brother to force an unwanted match on you?"

"Sorry. It is just that it is so frustrating! I wish I were free like you Sar"

"Nothing with a thinking mind can ever be truly and completely free. Freedom is a privilege that requires constant sentry duty. You have to mind that you do not abuse it and at times you have to protect it..."

Mada had heard this speech what seemed like a thousand times.

"I know I know."

"I hope so. Is it not proven to be true? There is great power in you.' Mada shrugged, 'Use it only for good and it is great so try to get a grip on it. Once a deed is done its not easily undone. As you know, it is not wise to do things you might wish undone later. Time is a very delicate thing, no? You will remember my words, yes?"

"Yes I will remember your words. The gods know I have heard it so many times it is engraved on my mind."

"Good. But even that can prove to be not enough."

"I am not going to try to tamper with time Sar. Why would I?"

"Sometimes we *feel* that circumstances dictate and we do what we *know* to be wrong."

"Fear not Sar. I have nothing in my past that is particularly wonderful that I want to relive. Yes there are, as you know, things I would like to undo but I have learnt my lesson and will not abuse my power."

"I hope so Mada. That you have learnt your lesson. And that nothing will ever happen that will make you..."

"Oh Sar! You worry too much."

"I do not worry enough."

"Seeing as you love to worry so much. Please tell me. Is there something wrong with me, with us?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well the people who raised me have died and I am sorry they are gone but I feel no... no pain."

"You are after all only venson."

"What do you mean? That we are cold hearted by nature?"

"No. I am saying nothing about being venson."

"No surprise there." Mada teased.

"How funny you are," Sar said sarcastically, "But I understand. You cannot force a love that is not there. What is to be gained from it?"

"Nothing I guess. I just feel bad, they did feed, clothe and shelter me. Maybe I should have reached ou..."

"Regret is a terrible thing Mada. Cast it from your heart. What came of it the last time?"

"Yes I guess." Mada answered quietly with a bowed head.

"Please tell me you are not still dwelling on *that*?"

"No I am not. Its jus..."

"No Mada. No. You made a decision, hasty and foolish though it was, you made it. Do not try to undo it. I empathise with you but that has to remain in the past."

"Is it in the past? Look what I did to my parents."

"You did not kill them."

"Yes I did. It is kind of you to say otherwise but we both know what I did."

"Leave it in the past Mada. Please. For all our sakes. You can never know for sure."

"It is in the past. But I cannot help the occasional twinge of regret and guilt."

"I will see you Mada."

"Bu..."

With a leap in the woods Sar was gone. She knew it was useless to look for a dryad, in a wood, who did not want to be found. But it mattered little. If Sar said they would be seeing each other again they would be seeing each other again. At least being a mystic was not completely pointless.

After picking a couple of mushrooms Mada began to make her way home. On the way back she ran into Lon and his catch of the day. He had caught three capars. She felt the involuntary flutter she always got when she saw him.

"Well cross me in a fairy ring, just the person I wanted to talk to."

"As it happens brother dear I wanted to talk to you too."

Mada took the smallest capar and slung it over her shoulder. The best person to plan the move with was Lon, after all it was his idea. They walked a few steps in silence.

"I know it will not be easy, especially for the younger children but there is nothing to stay for here..." Lon said pitching his idea once more.

"You do not have to sell the idea to me. I have been thinking about it and you are right. If we did not have to make preparations I would pack up and leave today. It's not a nice thing to say but I do not want to end up like mother and father. Not to say that staying here will necessarily do that but I would rather leave. I feel finding our mother-mother is a step away from that direction."

Lon nodded. Thank goodness. If Mada decided to leave the younger ones would follow her without much persuasion. He still kept his fingers crossed that a-Carrab and Piper would refuse to leave. All that was left was to dry the meat he had just trapped and they would be on their way.

"I am relieved, I cannot tell you how relieved I am you agree with me. It is not going to be easy Mada so you have to be sure."

Mada smiled at this. Typical of Lon to be so kind and considerate. Even his desire to leave, which she sensed was very strong, did not stop him from wanting to do right by them.

"Worry not, I am sure. Besides anything is better than waiting around and have a-Carrab try to force on me one undesired match after another."

"You do not desire them then?" He asked cautiously.

Mada who had been walking beside Lon, but looking down as she was kicking a pebble along the foot path, looked up. She could not place his tone. But it had sounded very strange indeed. Could he be remembering? No that was impossible. She heaved the capar which was beginning to slide down.

"Of course I do not! Honestly Lon why would I want to be united to a stranger. Speaking of unions, what happened between you and Oreel?"

Lon kept quiet. She nudged him.

"Well?"

Sighing and answering reluctantly.

"It did not work out."

"What, that is it? Come on tell me the truth."

"There is nothing to tell," he answered rather sheepishly, "we did not fit well together and we do not love each other."

"No. Oreel worships the ground you walk on, the poor girl. To love one who does not love you." Mada said shaking her head in a knowing way.

"Yes it is tough." Lon nodded in forlorn agreement.

Without realizing it Mada found that they had reached the house. Time to pack and deal with a-Carrab. Piper! Why had she not thought of it sooner? Piper would have no qualms about seeing them go. All she had to do was ask her to smooth a-Carrab over.

They reached the house and put down the capars which had to be skinned and cleaned before being brought inside.

"How would you know that it's tough to love one who does not love you?"

"I just do." Lon said plainly.

There was that funny tone again. Before she could ask him about it Piper came out of the house. Good, no time like the present to get things under way.

"You have done all the work by trapping them why do you not let Piper and me prepare them"

Lon let the Capars drop and began walking towards the house.

"Here take the basket in for me Lon. Thank you."

Piper had gone in to get some bowls and knives to skin the capars with.

She returned and knelt next to Mada. She kept thinking how she could have been sharing this food with her own blood kin. If only they would really leave. a-Carrab had recounted the conversation that had taken place earlier in the cooking room to her.

"Lon is a very impressive hunter is he not."

"Yes he is. It was lucky he even got three at all. These two, pointing to the largest of the three, are quite large but they have to be split amongst seven mouths." Mada answered.

She did not know it, that was the very thought that was going through Pipers mind.

"If we went to find our mother-mother it would reduce the pressure on this tiny piece of land. If we were to go maybe you and a-Carrab could do something productive with this place,' She looks around their, or rather Comris' land, nodding her head with a sagely expression on her face, 'yes you two would get more out of this land."

Piper took a deep breath and chose her words carefully. She was eager to see them go but she was no fool. She knew when she was being baited. If she played this right this could be her opportunity to get rid of them all. The parents were gone. Albeit death would not have been her choice had it been in her power to get rid of them. All that was needed was to give Lon or Mada the courage to get up and go. She was positive the others would follow them.

"It sounds like an awfully long journey are you sure you could manage it?"

Mada was about to answer but Piper kept going.

"What with the younger children, could they manage it?"

Again she was about to reply but Piper kept going.

"And what of a-Carrab, he would not be too happy."

"I am sure we would be okay,' She rushed to put in before Piper could start again, 'we would stay on marked populated roads and travel with other suitable groups whenever we meet them and..."

"Well if it means that much to you I will discuss it with a-Carrab for you."

"Really! You are too kind. Thank you."

"It is the least I can do after all we are fami..."

That was all Mada wanted. She was now content to let Piper prattle on. If anyone could influence a-Carrab it was Piper. True they did not need his permission to leave but he was their brother and she would rather when they left it would be on peaceful terms. The sun was out it was a warm day. She was already cutting the meat into thin sheets so it would dry faster. She would put it by the fire later. Yes it was better for them to part on peaceful terms if not for her sake for the younger children and for a-Carrab's sake also. Well that was it then, Mada was going south. Mada had decided to leave a-Carrab to Piper. She could now concentrate on the other preparations. The rest of the day went by very slowly as time often does when you are waiting for something.

Piper too was waiting for the best time to talk to a-Carrab. The day time would not do, he spent most of it in town dealing with their parents affairs. He was taking over the business agreements that his father had. He was determined to make a success of the farming. Which was why he did not want the others to leave. Free labour. And if she played her cards right she would be rid of them all very soon.

The nightmeal went buy unusually quietly. Anyone who did not know them would have thought it was missing their parents that had brought on the silence. But the truth was that each was caught up in their daydreams and plans for the future.

Mada's thoughts were obvious. What would the journey be like would it be that hard? What would their mother-mother be like? When would she see Sar again? Where would she see her again? It was impossible to even try to guess. Anything was possible with Sar. If only she could foretell the future. Her parent's illness and subsequent death, she never saw that coming. Only the gods knew what was in store. Sar had spoken of mystics who had oracles. She had explained how they themselves were not oracles. How no mere-being or even a mystic could know the future. The oracles were chasms in time that could be looked into, if you knew how and had enough power. There were no mystics with oracles in Tamrip keep. At least none she knew about. Dreams often gave glimpses into the future but these were often foggy, symbolic and shrouded in mystery and took no effort other than falling asleep. Was it coincidence or true perception? It was said that the only beings to have been enlightened enough to pierce the veil of time with their minds had ascended and become demigods and goddess's. But these like dreams were also shrouded in mystery. Fact or fiction she did not know. Necromancy was out of the question. It worked but the consequences were too great.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

