

THE HORSE WITH THE BROKEN HORN: A Stellark Saga, YA historical/sci fi/fantasy (work in progress):

## Chapter One

A clatter of hoofbeats in the castle courtyard woke me out of a daydream, and I looked out from my window seat to see Father on Thunderhead, his great grey war horse. With him was a host of other armed and mounted men, many of them uncles and cousins of mine.

Strange—the scene below me was a near echo of my dream. In it, I had ridden a small white horse, beautiful but for a knobby lump on his forehead. Father wears on his head the golden circlet of the crown prince. In my dream, it was I, Princess Coriander, his only child, who wore that circlet—and found it heavy out of all proportion to its size, so that I lifted it from my head and cast it wide, watching my many male relatives scramble for it.

Today, in reality, they had gone out to deal with a band of men who robbed and killed on roads to the south of the city. Tonight there would be a banquet—which cousin would boast the loudest about cutting the throat of a cutthroat? Who would hope his feats of valor could jump him over those ahead in the line of succession for the throne?

That they would leap over me because I wore a kirtle was a given. I, newly come to womanhood, was sure that I could rule as well as any man, not that any man I knew would consent to being ruled by a woman. And I was just as sure that I would not want that burden. I had no love even for the obligations of being a princess.

I itched for my secret escape from those duties. My governess was napping in another room. I pushed aside my embroidery frame, and from the storage space beneath the window seat, fetched a satchel that kept the secret for me. Mayhap I could use it to avoid the banquet, where even the strongest of spicy aromas would fail to mask the smell of battle sweat.