

Battle of the Bards

Book 6 of "A Wonderful Week for a Quest"



MICHAEL D. YOUNG

THE SIXTH QUEST FINDS ITS RHYTHM

Battle of the Bards

Book Six by Michael D. Young



**Jackdaw needs one perfect potion.
Pixie Post has other plans.**

After a year of toiling, Jackdaw and Petra are seconds away from finishing a valuable potion. Then a singing postpixie arrives in an explosion of glitter, ruins everything, and delivers a message from the one wizard Jackdaw cannot ignore.

THIS SAMPLE INCLUDES

**Chapter 1
Pixie Post**

New to the quest? Book Six follows The Whatsit's Rebirth with wizards, rival acts, enchanted music, and footnotes that still refuse to behave.

TURN THE PAGE. MIND THE GLITTER.

Chapter 1: Pixie Post

*I'm a simple wizard who loves simple pleasures: colorful unicorn horns, a warm dwarven strudel, the sweet warblings of siren death metal. (Note: Don't knock it till you try it. It's strangely cathartic.) No, really, I do all my best potion-making to it.

I'm not the kind of wizard who watches the skies every morning for pixie post. And you should look out for it if you know it's coming. You'll see what I mean. My whole life changed one morning when a piece of pixie post reached me at the worst place at the worst time.

Have I piqued your interest yet? Good. I started in first person to say that though this is my tale, I'll be relating it mostly in the third person. This fits better with the rest of the narrative. I do, however, reserve the right to interject in first-person mode should the story require.

So, strap in. I warned you this one would be bumpy.*

Jackdaw the Wizard toiled and troubled over a steaming cauldron of bubbling blue liquid. He and his apprentice, Petra, had been toiling and troubling over this potion for the better part of a year. The time approached at last to add the final ingredient, and wild drakes would not pull him away now.

"Is the flask ready?" He called to Petra. "At exactly 3.2 DB?" (Note: This is a measure of temperature called "dragon's breath, which in this case denotes 3.2 times hotter than standard dragon's breath.)

"Holding steady at 3.1!" She cried. "We need more power!"

Jackdaw nearly ripped the pointy hat from his head. "Are you givin' all you've got? Pump that bellows like a hyperventilating giant!"

Petra redoubled and re-tripled her efforts. If h.er face had been anything but stone, it would be flushed and sweaty. As it was, it glistened a bit more than usual.

“3.2!” she cried. “Get ready because it won’t last!”

Petra dashed toward him, white-hot flask grasped in both hands. All she had to do was dump the superheated mixture into the cauldron, and the potion would be complete. He’d earn his handsome commission, and the two of them would go out for Hero’s Gyros. (Note: The proprietor there gives you a hefty discount if you can pronounce the name of his establishment correctly.)

She was a mere step or two away when Jackdaw heard the worst sound imaginable. Normally, this is either a dragon sneeze or troll flatulence--depending on the surrounding ventilation. This sound, however, was only circumstantially horrible.

“Pixie post, pixie post...” A high-pitched voice sang. “...it’s just the post you want the most!”

Annoying as the jingle was, it wasn’t what worried him. That came after.

Jackdaw leaned over the cauldron as far as he could stand it. But it was too late. There was a loud pop, like a miniature cannon going off. A shower of glitter and pixie dust that always accompanied pixie post rained down on them. It coated Jackdaw’s robes, spilled into the cauldron, and turned Petra into a glittery statue.

“That’s pixie post!” the postpixie sang.

Scarcely able to believe his ill fortune, Jackdaw stood completely still. He watched the glitter and pixie dust mix with the contents of his prized potion, polluting it beyond all hopes of saving. He broke his stance a moment later when he heard a soft throat-clearing sound.

He glared up at the pixie in her pink and blue postpixie uniform. "What? Haven't you already caused enough mayhem? I ought to turn you into a wasp!"

The postpixie cleared her throat again. "It's customary to tip your postpixie, sir. It doesn't have to be much."

Jackdaw's eyes widened, staring at the flitting creature with the seriousness of a dragon about to lose his horde. "A tip? You want a tip, do you? I'll give you a tip!"

With uncharacteristic swiftness, Jackdaw summoned a fireball and lobbed it at the pixie. The postpixie yelped and zoomed out of the way.

"Never deliver to a wizard when he's making a potion!" Jackdaw cried. "There's your tip!"

The postpixie nodded and zipped out through the window.

Now, Jackdaw had the unenviable situation of having another fireball without anywhere to throw it. Muttering to himself, he tromped to the window and flung it into the sky.

"And don't come back!" he called after the pixie, who was almost out of earshot. (Note: I later learned that this incident caused the pixie such trauma that she quit the Pixie Post and devoted her life teaching fire safety to young pixies—in my estimation, a much nobler profession.)

With a long, shuddering sigh, he turned around slowly. "You will never speak of this incident to anyone. Is that clear?"

Petra, who was vainly trying to rid her arms of the glitter, nodded grumpily. "It won't come off! Don't you have an anti-glitter spell or something?" Jackdaw crossed back to the cauldron. "No, but it's number one on my list now. But it might be easier just to move. Pixie glitter ranks up there with a cursed ducat with the hardest things to rid yourself of."

“Then why do they do that? Doesn’t everybody complain?”

“Most do,” Jackdaw replied. “At least those of the older generation who have any brains. Alas, it is a trend among the youth, who shall now grow up inhaling so much glitter they’ll remain infantile forever.”

Petra, still trailing glitter, stooped and retrieved the scroll written on light-pink parchment. “Shouldn’t we see what this is all about?” She held up the scroll, and Jackdaw eyed it suspiciously.

“Hm,” he said. “If this is from Wally, I’m going to drop-kick his crystal ball into the next kingdom.” As he unrolled the scroll, however, the message it contained was anything but a prank.

“Read it out loud!” Petra prompted. “I worked on that potion for months, same as you. I deserve to know what was so maging important.”

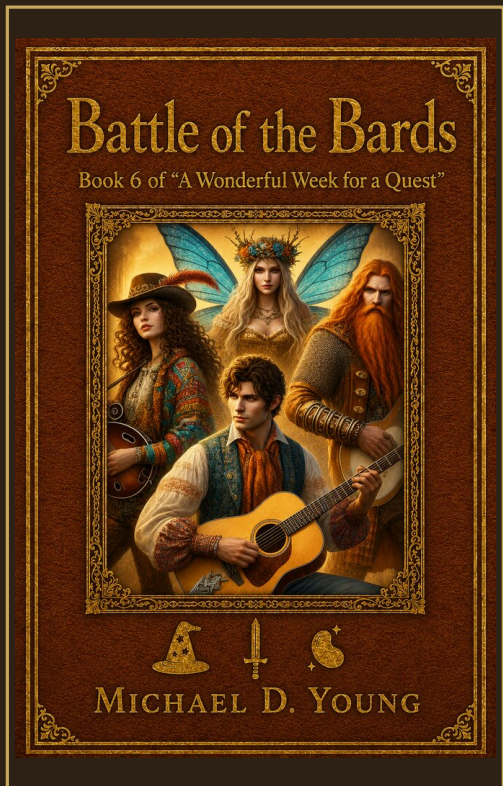
Jackdaw licked his lips but couldn’t seem to get wet them. He coughed a few times, and when he tried to speak, it was as though he had swallowed Wally’s prized crystal ball.

“Sphinx got your tongue?” Petra asked. “What? Is it from the ERS?” (Note: The Elven Revenue Service is arguably more feared than the Mafaea in the Beandom as they are known to use even more brutal tactics than their fae counterparts.)

“Worse,” he finally managed. “It’s from Merlin.”

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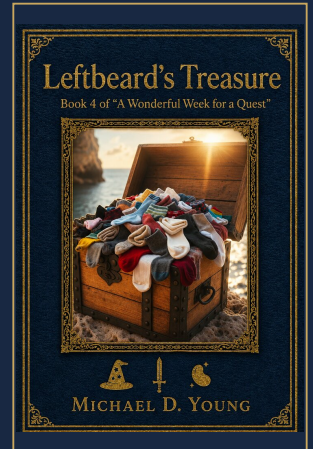
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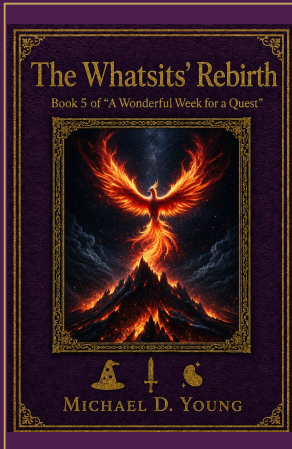
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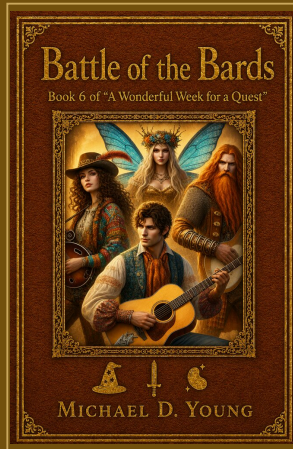
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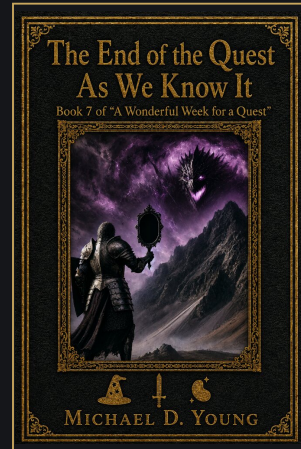
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