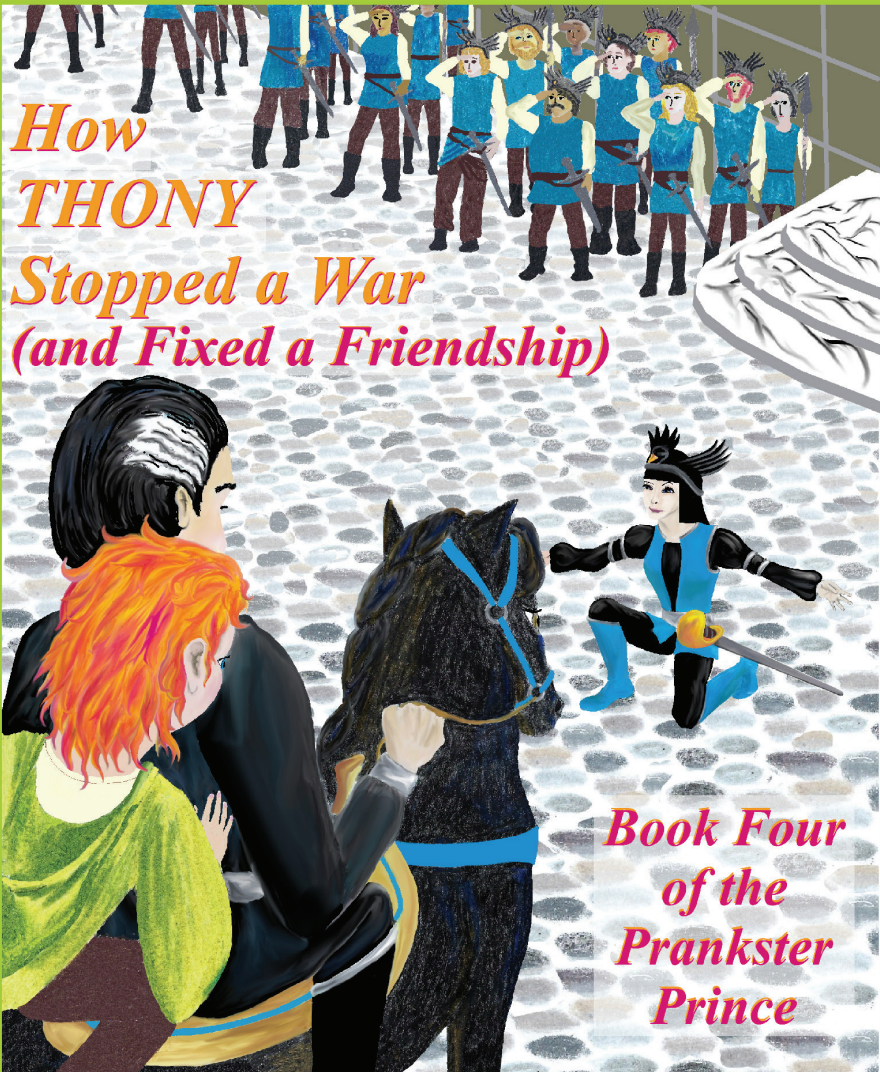


SNEAK PEEK THROUGH CHAPTER ONE!!

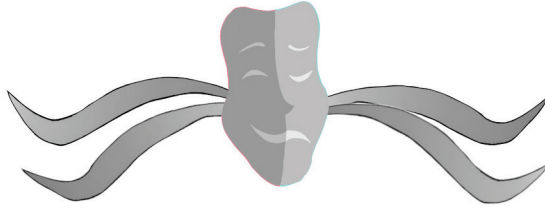
AUTHOR OF A NOT-SO-SACRIFICIAL MAIDEN

# MANGALA MCNAMARA

*How  
THONY  
Stopped a War  
(and Fixed a Friendship)*



*Book Four  
of the  
Prankster  
Prince*



***“EEEEeeek!”***

***Amanita hid quickly to avoid being seen by someone running by – then peeked out as a sergeant and captain in Raven-soldier colors came out of a door down the hall.***

“You realize you’ve roused the entire garrison, Captain Fayorn,” the sergeant growled. “I can’t imagine His Sorcerousness is going to be particularly forgiving that you disturbed their rest because of a *mouse*.”

“A *rat*,” Captain Fayorn corrected with a shudder as they stopped in front of another door. “Or so I thought at first. It wasn’t real. Someone was trying to rattle me.”

The sergeant grunted. “I don’t suppose you were able to apprehend the culprit?”

Fayorn flushed. “I most certainly did.”

The sergeant entered the room and emerged moments later with a ‘rat’ in each of his massive paws. Thony and Dae, held in place by the scruffs of their collars. Thony looked chagrined; Dae, indignant.

“*Children?*” Sergeant Sterevor said in amusement. “Go back to bed, sir. I’ll take care of this little rodent problem.”

Captain Fayorn glared back at him, then stalked past and went back in his room, slamming the door behind him.

The sergeant chuckled, letting go of his captives, but turning them so they both had to face him.

“So, you’re the scoundrels who disturbed Captain Fayorn’s beauty sleep.”

“Yup!” Dae said proudly. Thony groaned.

“Hunh.” Sergeant Sterevor shooed the pair of them back down the corridor.

***They passed within inches of the darkened doorway where Amanita stood frozen.***

*How THONY  
STOPPED A WAR  
(AND FIXED A FRIENDSHIP)*

*Book One of the  
Prankster Prince*



MANGALA McNAMARA

RISING DRAGON BOOKS

## MANGALA MCNAMARA

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# HOW THONY STOPPED A WAR (AND FIXED A FRIENDSHIP)

For my son Griffin, who said I had to write this book  
before he left for college.

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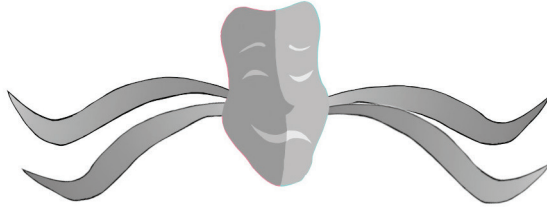
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## Prologue

**(Because this story has gone on for long enough that now we need a re-cap)**

**C**ROWN PRINCE ANTHONY DEVINTHAL OF Aldyrwald (*known officially as ‘the Affable and the Affirmative’ due to an unfortunately adorable episode in his infancy, and continuing to be used despite his penchant for playing pranks... and his distaste for the title*) was faced with an impossible home-situation: his parents were planning to make him get married shortly after his fifteenth birthday.

That was, of course, a horrible idea, but the whole thing only got worse.

Papa and Mama (*aka King Bill and Queen Annabel of Aldyrwald*) weren’t choosing him a proper Princess-Bride – the youngest or oldest daughter of a set of three or seven or twelve – and then setting up a proper Quest full of adventures and derring-do to win her. Nor were they going to arrange for a Worthy Miller’s Daughter to go through adventures and derring-do to win Thony (*which is the nickname the prince*



*strongly prefers to go by... well, until he's crowned. Because 'King Thony' just sounds stupid).*

No, Papa was trying to pacify the neighbors – who want to invade on the pretext of the Devinthals having lost the Divine Right of Kings, because Thony's sister, Priscilla, was born with a bushy black tail. (*And nevermind that Priscilla – and their other sister, Joanna, and Joanna's husband, Prince Roger – have all become honest-to-goodness GODS, after some crazy thing called a Ragnarök where all of their world's Gods somehow kicked it at once.*)

And 'pacifying the neighbors' meant making Thony marry a *middleborn* princess. One of the ones who wouldn't likely be able to find a husband otherwise because of her unlucky place in the birth-order. And if that weren't bad enough, it's likely to be an *old* middleborn princess – a maiden-aunt or even a maiden *great*-aunt of a reigning king. With a provision in the betrothal agreement that if Thony should die without issue, Aldyrwald and its three prosperous valleys would belong to his wife's family.

Which *probably* meant that said-wife would almost certainly be under instructions to off Thony and Papa both at her earliest convenience.

And since Aldyrwald was already one of the larger countries in the Mountain Region, that would mean that the newly-combined country would *definitely* be the largest... most powerful... and therefore *most dangerous* country. Which meant that the *other* neighbors weren't likely to let such a marriage go through in the *first* place...

...Thony might, in other words, be single-handedly responsible (*or something*) for the end of the five-hundred-year peace in the Mountain Region. Not to mention the end of the Devinthal dynasty and the existence of Aldyrwald as an independent nation.

So, what choices did he have?

None, really.

## HOW THONY STOPPED A WAR (AND FIXED A FRIENDSHIP)

He ran away from home— erm, that is, set out on a Grand and Noble Quest to find a solution for this problem.

To find his own Princess-Bride. (*Hopefully one with a royal father who possesses a large and active military that he's willing to lend Thony – and Aldyrwald – for his daughter's protection and continued prosperity.*)

To have his *own* adventures, full of derring-do.

Or, at minimum, to grow up a little bit before getting married.

And on this brave endeavor, he took with him as boon companions, the prankster stable-girl cum assistant pastry-chef Amanita, and the unicorn, Twinklestar. (*More like they horned in on his adventure, but once he heard about the carnivorous plant-people he might run into, Thony was inclined to be generous about it all.*)

The three of them – and his horse, Silverfoot – bravely entered the Fairy Wood, known to be a Gateway to Worlds Unknown. Therein they met with foul monsters (*and fled for their lives*), beautiful maidens from another world (*well, a decent-looking student-wizard and novice-priestess anyways*), visited Fairyland and met with the Fairy Queen (*okay, that part was just plain cool*), and were awarded a second Quest of Great Mystery. And another boon companion, the fairy-prince (*and Prankster-in-Chief*), Puck.

And... Twinklestar decided to pick Thony as his unicorn-maiden.

And they exited the Fairy Wood onto Amanita and Puck's home-world (*because, oh, yeah, she **wasn't from around Aldyrwald***) and got dropped into the middle of a war.

A war that's been instigated by an evil sorcerer named Valderon Raven'sWing, who seemed to be turning people into zombies to fight for him if he couldn't buy their loyalty. And who either wanted to invade Amanita's homeland (*of which*

*she just happens to more or less be the Crown Princess, and never mentioned it, so... awkward*) or he plans to invade all the worlds in the universe through the Fairy Wood... possibly also including Aldyrwald.

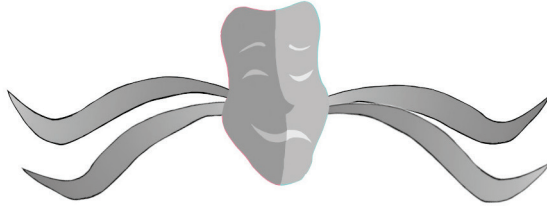
But, y'know, stuff happens.

Of course, all that's standing between Valderon Raven's Wing and his plans to *Conquer the Known Universe* are Thony, Amanita and Twinklestar (*because Puck had to report in to the Fairy Queen about the war*).

Oh, and also an accident-prone mercenette (*a mercenary, but she's only fourteen and way too small*) named Dae Goldeneyes. (*Who's being hunted down by a well-meaning mercenary friend who realizes that Dae does **not** belong in warzones.*)

And a trio of spies, including the famous Bard, Julanna Silversea, and the somewhat infamous mercenary-spy, Istevan Slyblade. And another guy named Davril, who seems to be in charge of taking care of Julanna's baby, Daphne.

And a gang of street-kids in the plainsland city of Flowerdust where all of the crazy seems to be converging...



## Chapter ONE

### Not-So-Scary Little Girls

“SERIOUSLY?” DAE WAS LOOKING OVER Thony’s shoulder. “You decide to write some sort of chronicle of things and you don’t even mention that I’m the most amazing warrior in the *world*? And we call them Evil Wizards here, not evil sorcerers.”

Amanita peered over his other shoulder. “*That’s* your biggest concern? Not that he might be *giving away our secrets*?”

Dae shrugged as Thony winced. “It’s not like it’s up-to-date. I mean he didn’t even mention how he *rode into town on the back of Valderon Raven’s Wing’s horse*.”

“I thought we decided we weren’t going to talk about that,” Thony muttered, looking down at what now seemed like a really bad idea.

“We said later,” Amanita pointed out. “This is later.”

She leaned onto the table he was using as a desk, resting her head on her left hand which she was propping up on her

bent elbow. On his other side, Dae mirrored her, prompting the young prince (*and unicorn-maiden*) to note again how similar they were.

Those girls that he and Amanita had run into in the Fairy Wood had said something about Amanita being the *mirror-twin* of one of them, Girona Starshine. Which basically meant they were identical twins born on different worlds to different parents. But Amanita and Dae had been born on the same world, and Girona had said that although there were hypotheses (*she might have said 'theories,' but Thony couldn't remember for sure. And anyways he was a Prince and knew the proper difference*) that there could be mirror-twins born on the same world, there was no evidence for it that anyone had been able to find. And anyways, the wizards Girona was studying with were apparently looking for a *theoretical* proof, not an *empirical* one, so whether they would even appreciate actual evidence wasn't clear to Thony.

All of which was basically a way to avoid thinking too hard about what the two of them were trying to intimidate him into talking about.

Luckily, two tiny girls – even if they looked a lot alike and were bracketing him like a pair of bookends – were not really all that intimidating. Not by comparison to the various embarrassments of the day, anyways.

“Come on, dude,” Dae wheedled as Amanita narrowed her eyes at him.

All right, maybe *Amanita* was intimidating.

A little anyways.

He knew all about her penchant for malicious pranks and they were sharing a room right now, so she not only *knew* where he *slept*, but would have *unlimited access* to his sleeping self.

Hmmn. And considering his speculations that Dae might actually be her mirror-twin, perhaps he actually *should* be wary of... Nah. They couldn't be. Dae was way too accident-prone,

## HOW THONY STOPPED A WAR (AND FIXED A FRIENDSHIP)

and her dark-brown hair didn't seem to bleach reddish in the sun the way Amanita's did.

They were still too much alike. There must be a word for it, somewhere.

But the important thing right now was... to put the kibosh on Amanita's overly healthy sense of vengeance. As regarded himself anyways.

"Hey, I just realized," Thony said. "We should probably rearrange who's sleeping where."

"What?" Amanita looked a bit thrown by the completely random-seeming comment.

He leaned back in his chair casually... and not so incidentally out from between the two of them. "You two are both girls, so you guys should share this room. I can use the other one."

Amanita straightened up, frowning.

"Puck warded this room to keep the two of us safe," she began.

"And I like my privacy," Dae added. "Besides, it would look strange. You're supposed to be a girl, too. Unicorn-maiden, remember?"

Thony gave her a dark look. "Look strange to *whom*, exactly? Who do you think is watching *us*? According to anyone and his uncle we're just a bunch of *normal kids*."

Yeah. 'Normal kids.' Not runaway royalty and underage warriors.

"Well, they might be watching *you*," Amanita said a bit uncharitably. "After all *you* rode into *town* on the back of *Valderon Raven's Wing's* saddle."

Abruptly she dragged the other chair around and plopped herself down next to Thony.

"What happened to you today?" she asked, her tone serious

MANGALA MCNAMARA

and quiet. “You told us you rode in with the sorcerer, but... did he *hurt* you or something?”

“No...” Thony sighed. He was going to have to give them the whole story. They wouldn’t understand otherwise...

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