

## STRANGE SOBRIQUET SYNOPSIS

By Brent Bowen

Strange Sobriquet is set in NYDIMM, an alternate world, during the early 1900s. Gabriel, a common, teenage squire who was orphaned at birth, completes errands for his mentor MACALLAN. Preparing for the announcement of the King's successor in the castle grounds he once called home, he wishes for a return to the more thrilling work of serving a Grand Warden. The common belief in the world is utopia is near, but Gabriel discovers among the courtyard's crowd that tragedy is closer when he thwarts a vile attack on the king's daughter VIOLET.

This act of heroism thrusts him into a greater conflict, when they discover that Violet's assailants are the Sundu, an ancient, fanatical order who have been dormant for decades.

Halfway across Nydimm, the canine adventurer RANGE awaits the return of his Skuhy comrades. They, too, have succeeded in a

rescue, stealing away a newborn from the clutches of a menacing specter, and are returning him to the scholars they serve. The boy is believed to be a legendary wizard's grandson and the prophesied hero of Nydimm. Referring to him as MITH, the name reserved for this prophetic child, the scholars regard his birth a miracle, considering his presumed father HALE went missing before the boy was conceived.

When Range and his friends finally arrive, reports from across Nydimm confirm all twelve Cirri children, royal prophets identified by a gemstone birthmark, are targets of the Sundu. They have resurfaced successful in most of their attacks, either murdering or kidnapping ten of the children for their diamonds. If the Sundu obtain all twelve stones, legends predict they will open the Union, a bridge to other worlds, and make Nydimm hell for all creation.

Once the king's head priestess ELIZABETH promotes Gabriel to a Warden, Macallan contracts an excommunicated wizard and begins a series of life-draining extractions, reserving his essence in a NECROMARKER, a mineral intended to grant the last rights of the dead. Even though Macallan sits nowhere near death's doorstep and—as the most legendary of the Grand Wardens—owes nothing further to Nydimm, he sees protecting the boy as his final legacy.

While Macallan looks to the future, the princess concentrates on her past. The only known Cirri child to have had her stone severed and survived, she discovers a connection between her father's lies about her "accident," the missing Hale, and the quest. With the revelation, she decides she must help Gabriel.

Believing the boy holds the key to Nydimm's salvation, the scholars task Range with escorting Mith to the Union's keeper for passage to our world and safety. Their destination is a vast valley ravaged with tornadoes and guarded by a race of angelic cloud creatures. Days into their journey, they encounter the creatures, along with, unexpectedly, Violet and her entourage.

The creatures attack Violet and her companions, driving the two groups apart. The onslaught keeps Mith from reaching the keeper, but pushes them toward the Sundu. After a deadly race, Range manages to elude a barrage of attacks from several of the order. A struggle ensues. The Skuhy demonstrates his accuracy with the crossbow and defeats his enemies. But in the skirmish Mith's food supply is spoiled. With the simple loss, what had once been an escort mission to the Nimbi Valley, now is a mission of survival.

Range is left with no choice but to travel to SOLGRAVE, an ancient city of great beauty, but one filled with peril and a temptation that might jeopardize his duty to Mith.

After returning Violet home, Gabriel and Macallan join the quest to rescue the remaining Cirri children and face four eerie horsemen and their Sundu battalion. A spectral horseman holds the final Cirri child.

In an attempt to rescue the girl, Gabriel and Macallan pursue the specter but are separated when another rider intercepts the child. Macallan battles the dark being, but the prior extractions of his spirit have left him in no condition to fight. He succumbs, but before he dies, he learns his killer is his best friend Hale. These last moments sear his final thoughts with not only betrayal, but also another discovery: Elizabeth leads the Sundu.

When Gabriel presides over his mentor's last rights, he pieces together the clues left in the marker, uncovering Hale and Elizabeth's betrayal of his mentor, Nydimm, and the children. But he finds little solace in their exposure. He misses Macallan, his dependency on his mentor more pronounced than he realizes. Furthermore, his aloofness, Elizabeth's lies, and the events leading up to Macallan's death contribute to the Wardens' open suspicions of him. As a result, Gabriel defects from the order.

Range reaches Solgrave and despite the city collapsing all around him, he restores Mith's food supply. As they flee, he faces his temptation: an ancient staff that will restore the city's vitality. It proves too great and he neglects Mith, only to

witness his friend's death in saving the boy from drowning. After this failure, he commits himself to Mith and decides to travel with the boy across the Union. Fortunate for the boy, because when they arrive in our world, Hale is waiting. Range races to an old Orthodox cathedral, where the keeper told them they could find sanctity.

Elizabeth fears Gabriel's growing skill and the knowledge he possesses about her. She wishes to kill him, but she answers to a master who will not order the boy's death. She decides on a curse, determined to render him unknown to all who love him. But in a moment of malice, she extends the curse so he will be forgotten to everyone of their world.

Driven by his desire to reach Violet and the last child, Gabriel uses his newfound powers to accelerate his return. Gabriel fails to rescue the Princess, but unwittingly obtains her stone. His skills as a Warden have grown, but burdened with so many failures, his confidence is shattered. He finds solace in alcohol and the anonymity of a tattoo parlor. New tattoos inked on his body serve as symbols of his recent trials. He considers quitting, but Macallan's spirit beckons him to save the final child ISABEL.

Gabriel overcomes his hangover and steals the girl from Elizabeth. But the Sundu strike. Pierced by a poison dart, she dies clutched in his arms. He breaks down and, without a purpose,

nearly gives up. Only his hatred for Elizabeth gives him the strength to make an escape attempt from the Sundu.

The Union's keeper must intervene to rescue him. He tries to relieve some of Gabriel's guilt, explaining the girl was a fraud, not one of the Cirri children. Plus, Gabriel has a greater duty to perform yet. His curse will help him protect Violet's stone from the Sundu (for only those who can cross the Union will remember him). And he must protect her stone until, the keeper tells him, he faces another warrior who will not only be his equal, but will also remember his God-given name. Only to this man should he give the diamond.

After several months of solitude, Gabriel becomes more comfortable with his circumstances. In his travels, he hears rumors Cirri children still live, so he departs on his own search. This purpose keeps him from languishing in despair.

And so, even after all of his resignation, Gabriel becomes the STRANGER, a champion whose name is forgotten and lost on the world, but not his deeds or his spirit.