



Robert Schwarz

THE  
**ENDWIN**  
**CHRONICLES**

Dark Shadows

spieberg

# The Endwin Chronicles

Reading Samples

by Robert Schwarz

## Foreword

Nowadays, when you watch a movie trailer, you don't even have to go to the cinema anymore, since the trailer already contains the best scenes anyway. Sad, but true! You would think it's the same with reading samples, but the friendly reader can rest assured that this is not the case here.

The following excerpts were chosen carefully. They contain scenes that shall stir your interest, but won't reveal too much. If you liked the selection, take a look inside the book. The first volume of the Endwin Chronicles with the title »Dark Shadows« was published by Spielberg Verlag in August 2014 and can be ordered via bookstores or Amazon (German version only!). For news and background information on the novel, please check [www.the-endwin-chronicles.com](http://www.the-endwin-chronicles.com) or its German sister-website [www.die-endwin-chroniken.de](http://www.die-endwin-chroniken.de)

Especially the German website will be updated regularly with the latest developments. Additionally, the Chronicle, Endwin's biggest and only daily paper, will offer ever more new issues containing background information on the characters and the fantastical world of Endwin.

And now I hope you enjoy reading these samples.

Yours truly,

Robert Schwarz

Welcome to the fantastical world of Endwin!

One night, thirteen-year-old Kyra catches a bold burglar scavenging in the pantry. The thief is Rodin, the talking raven of Archwizard Horgard. Rodin is on a quest to find the last dragons, which are bound to live somewhere in Endwin, at least according to him. He manages to persuade Kyra to help him with his search.

As if such a quest weren't adventurous enough, a sinister, long forgotten force stirs in the shadows of the world, whose schemes are going to throw Kyra and Rodin into an adventure they never could have imagined.

Come along and accompany Kyra and Rodin on their courageous quest for the last dragons, halfway around the world and to locations never before seen by the human eye. Together with Horgard, the Archwizard, pay a visit to the Midnight Palace in the heart of the realm of dwarves or the dusty archives deep below the mountain. Explore dark caves, exotic bazaars, citadels and colourful harbour towns. Sinister characters, shadow wolves, demons, ice giants and last, but not least the Great Shadow himself are going to stand in our heroes' way over the course of this adventure.

Fortunately, they frequently encounter friends like Horgard, the dwarves Krisp and Fisgard, Baldur the court librarian, Niri the beautiful elf princess, or Janek Dagnor, captain of the 'Sea Star', on their way.

Preview of Volume 1 - Reading Sample

*Previously in Endwin ...*

*Zerdoban, leader of a gang of bandits, has managed to capture the troublesome Arch Wizard and to take the document coveted by his ominous client. Unfortunately, the Arch Wizard manages to escape shortly thereafter and Zerdoban has to explain himself.*

Nobody would have noticed Zerdoban's growing concern, except maybe for those who had known him long enough to interpret the signs. His employer did not tolerate failure and Zerdoban had now disappointed him twice already. Their prisoner had escaped! Someone had helped him and to date, all efforts to catch the wizard had been without success. Disgruntled, Zerdoban made his way to his client's tent.

Silently pulling the strings in the background, his client had arrived a few hours after his conversation with the Arch Wizard. He had never met his employer before. The negotiations were usually held by a middleman, a creepy guy called Morgarth. By all appearances, his patron was a highly respected person, at least judging by the equipment and servants he had brought along. Well, that had actually been to be expected. Such missions had, as he knew very well, often to do with schemes at court. Highly suspicious, however, was the fact that the carriage with which his client traveled had no windows at all. Servants had immediately begun to put up a tent made of black canvas. The carriage had then been moved so close to this tent that neither he nor his men had been able to tell who exited the coach. Admittedly, this was all very strange, but not strange enough to warrant any concerns. The calamities had begun, when shortly after this display a servant had

come to him and demanded the prisoner to be brought to his master's tent. But when he consequently had gone to fetch the wizard he had discovered that his captive had escaped. In his rage he had killed the man responsible for guarding the prisoner. Afterwards, he sent out every available man to scout the area surrounding the camp for the escapee.

But what happened next was ...

Involuntarily, he found himself thinking back to his first fateful encounter with his patron, the shadow. Zerdoban, who was considered amongst many to be the toughest fellow left and right from the border, felt an icy chill run down his spine at the mere thought of it. He couldn't put his finger on it, but something about this figure hiding in the shadows gave him the jitters. It was like standing on the edge of a cliff. Just a small step and one would plummet into depths no human soul were able to comprehend. It was his luck that he had been able to appease the shadowy figure with the scroll he had taken from the Arch Wizard. But now he had to report that the search for the wizard had been fruitless.

One of the servants threw back the flap of the tent's entrance. Zerdoban squared his shoulders, stooped forward and entered.

Just like last time, there was no light. The air in the tent was uncomfortably chilly. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to this twilight. Then he thought to have made out a shadow among all the other shadows. An absolute darkness, darker still than the blackest night! But everytime he thought to have caught the shadow with his gaze, it seemed to vanish and appear again in a different spot. Zerdoban shivered. Suddenly there was a voice, very close to his right ear:

»Well, Zerdoban?« The voice sounded cold and eager. »What news are you bringing?«

Zerdoban shuddered. It took him all of his strength not to step back blindly and flee from the tent in a mad rush. He kept his nerve and answered: »My men have

searched the grounds for the wizard and his companions, but they have found no trace of him.« He added quickly: »Maybe he used magic to cover his tracks?«

»That …«, the icy voice directly in front of him hissed, »… is highly unlikely! I would have noticed, if that had been the case.«

»Of course«, Zerdoban swallowed.

»Your repeated failure is inexcusable, Zerdoban!«, the shadow hissed, his voice seemingly coming from above. »Find the Arch Wizard. Do whatever is necessary. Don't dare to show your face until you have found him and don't disappoint me again!« The threat in the shadow's voice could not be overheard.

»Yes, Master.« Zerdoban gritted his teeth. He had made a mistake. He should have never accepted this mission, but it was too late for regret. He had made a pact with the devil and if he couldn't deliver his sacrifice, the devil would hold him to it.

Hurriedly and without looking back, he left the tent. After a few dozen yards, the constricting feeling in his chest subsided a bit, leaving him to breathe easier. He ordered his men to widen the search perimeter. Then, he took several deep breaths. He had to get hold of this wizard! Involuntarily, his hand reached for the bruises on his face.

*Previously in Endwin ...*

*Kyra and Rodin have set off to explore the Fairygrim, a mountain 6000 feet tall. There they hope to find the entrance to a long hidden dragon's lair ...*

The sun had reached its peak and still there wasn't any sign of a Dragon's cave to be found. Kyra groaned. Somehow she had imagined this to be easier. The thought that such a hike would be this exhausting had never entered her head. She estimated that she had to have already rounded a quarter of the mountain. She was mentally preparing herself for spending the night up here, when the sound of rumbling rocks interrupted her thoughts. Shortly after, she could hear someone cursing loudly. Kyra froze on the spot and let out a shriek of pain when a similarly terrified raven buried his claws into her shoulder.

»Ouch!« she gave him a reproachful look. »Mind what you're doing!« she said with a low hiss.

»Sorry!« Rodin replied miserably. »What was that?«

Kyra only shook her head in response, pointedly put her finger to her lips and listened carefully. There! Once again she could hear the sound of rumbling rocks rolling down the mountainside.

Kyra tried to catch a glimpse through the trees. When this failed she mustered all her courage and together with Rodin, who had relaxed his grip slightly, snuck to the forest's edge. Cautiously she took cover behind one of the last trees. Then she took a look in the direction from which the noise had come. When she noticed what moved in her direction, not far from her hiding spot, she thought for a moment her eyes were betraying her. She stepped out of the shadows of the trees and put herself in the approaching figure's path.



Rodin hissed in Kyra's ear: »Kyra! What are you doing?«

»No need to worry, Rodin,« Kyra stroked Rodin's beak in a reassuring motion. »That's Karl, one of the boys from my village. I wonder, what he's doing here?« She called loudly: »Hello, Karl! What a surprise meeting you here!«

Karl made a face as if he had eaten a lemon. Instead of returning the greeting he only said: »No need to act friendly! Did you believe no one had noticed your little field trips?«

For a moment, Kyra was speechless. Surprised, she said: »Did you follow me?«

»You and that thing on your shoulder. I know very well what you're looking for! Thought you could keep all that gold for yourself, did ya?«

»What gold?« Kyra was thoroughly confused now and also a little startled by Karl's behavior.

»Well, the dragon's gold, of course!« Karl spat on the ground. »I overheard you talking. You're looking for a dragon's lair or do you want to deny that?« With these words, Karl's face registered a menacing expression.

»N- No! But we're not looking for gold!« Kyra stammered.

Karl's gaze became hard. »Sure you do! You can keep playing dumb for all I care. I know what I heard!«

He reached out and pointed his arm at Rodin. »And now give me that little demon on your shoulder. If you give him up freely, nothing is going to happen to you. «

»Karl, what has gotten into you? I don't recognize you at all!« Kyra was deeply alarmed. »Honestly, you're scaring me. «

»I don't care! Now give it to me!« Karl took a step towards Kyra.

»Never!« Kyra raised her hands in defense »And Rodin is not a demon, for that matter - and he doesn't belong to me. He doesn't belong to anyone, do you hear me?«

»Even better!« Karl's face had morphed into a grotesque grimace, when he made another step towards Kyra and reached out to grab the bird. But there was one thing he hadn't reckoned with, as Rodin hacked at the outstretched hand with his beak.

»Argh!« Karl jerked his hand back. For a moment, Kyra was hoping Karl would give up, but he recovered quickly. Holding his injured hand he grunted: »You're gonna pay for this!«

Kyra couldn't help but back off. That wasn't the Karl she knew, but a stranger! With a jerk she turned around and fled with Rodin into the woods. With an angry howl that went right through her, Karl took up the pursuit.

In that same moment, Rodin buried his claws once more into her shoulders, but this time she hardly seemed to notice. Her attention was focused on trying not to stumble over one of the abundant roots on her neck-breaking retreat.

When she thought to have lost Karl, she stopped. Exhausted and gasping she leant against a tree and wiped the sweat off her brow.

»I can't believe it! What has happened to Karl? I've known him all my life! He is my brother Laar's best friend and often comes to visit us at home. I've always thought he was a nice guy! How could I've been so wrong?«

»Well, supposedly you didn't know him as well as you thought?« Rodin snapped. »With this Karl in tow our search might be a bit more difficult,« Rodin remarked in an irritated tone.

»What? Are you crazy?« Kyra blurted with a horrified look. »Forget the search! That's much too dangerous for now. We have to get back to the village. Who knows what Karl is capable of in his current state?«

Rodin was about to reply, when suddenly a loud crack could be heard somewhere behind them, as if someone had stepped on a branch lying on the forest floor. Kyra and Rodin both jumped at the same time. As Kyra turned she was suddenly staring in Karl's furious face. The cold blade of a knife gleamed in Karl's left hand. For a moment, Kyra was paralyzed with fear! Rodin then shrieked with a panic-stricken voice in her ear: »Run, Kyra, run!«

Previously in Endwin ...

*Horgard, the Arch Wizard, and the pitiful remains of his escort have arrived in the dwarf city of Verndûr and have made it right up to the throne of the dwarf king. Here, the councilor Gamrin gives them trouble. The following scene takes place after Gamrin has been sent out of the hall.*

*At an unknown place, somewhere outside of the palace walls ...*

»You assured me the Arch Wizard would never make it here and what happens? He's standing right in front of Denôr's throne, alive and fresh as a daisy!« Gamrin bristled with anger and slammed his fist on the table standing next to two chairs in an otherwise empty room. »This man can ruin everything! These wizards have to put their nose everywhere!« He looked up and his angry gaze turned towards a dark figure draped in a hooded cloak residing with him in the shabby chamber. »This is your fault alone, Morgarth!« Gamrin cursed, letting himself fall into one of the chairs, groaning.

»Your worries are misplaced«, Morgarth tried to reassure. He took a seat in the other chair. With a fluid movement, he peeled back the hood. Underneath, a chiseled, pale face and dark eyes appeared, framed by long, black hair. The pointed tips of narrow ears were showing conspicuously. He considered the dwarf with one of those incomprehensible expressions that sent Gamrin cold shivers down his spine time and time again. »It's true we couldn't get the Arch Wizard under our control.« Morgarth shrugged regretfully. »Good people are hard to find nowadays! But in his wisdom, my master sent me and I won't fail. So do not worry! Everything is going according to plan. Just take care of your part of the deal. I will deal with the Arch Wizard when the time is right.«

With these words the servant of the Shadow got up and moved towards the door. On the threshold, he stopped and turned around. »A lot depends on the success of this enterprise, Gamrin. So, no mistakes!« Then finally he turned his back on the dwarf and disappeared into the dark corridor leading to the chamber, pulling the hood back over his face. The door slammed shut with a thump. All that was left was a dwarf getting the creeping suspicion that it had possibly been a bad idea to take the offer presented to him that night three months ago.

Preview of Volume 2 - Reading Sample

*Previously in Endwin ...*

*Morgarth, the dark elf and dark wizard has managed to take Kyra prisoner. After interrogating her, he's meeting Zerdoban, leader of a gang of scoundrels and cutthroats, in his chamber for a talk ...*

The chamber was stuffy and smelled of burned oil mixed with the strong odour coming from Zerdoban's unwashed body. Zerdoban was sitting at a small table, its battered and stained surface covered by an oil lamp, a pitcher of stale beer and a half empty tankard. A skinny figure cloaked in dark robes was sitting across from him. A pale, bony hand reached for the tankard and lifted it to thin, pale-blue lips. For a while, only the gargling sounds of foamy beer could be heard, rushing over the edge of the mug like a waterfall, only to disappear down the throat of the emaciated figure.

»Torturing young girls seems to make thirsty«, Zerdoban remarked with a slightly sarcastic undertone. Morgarth's hand, in the process of putting down the mug, stopped dead in its tracks. The elf's usually so composed face twitched dangerously.

»You should choose your words with care, Zerdoban«, Morgarth said, putting down the tankard and wiping the remaining foam from his mouth with the seam of his robe. His dark eyes bored themselves into those of his opponent. Zerdoban withstood Morgarth's gaze for several heartbeats, then blurted out a curse and averted his eyes. Morgarth laughed and leaned back in his chair with satisfaction. Zerdoban, scrunching his face, reached for the pitcher and poured the elf another drink. His next question sounded unfriendly: »Well? Have you learned what you wanted to know?«

The pitcher came down crashing on the small table. Beer sloshed over the brim, adding new stains to the surface of the table.

»Indeed.« Morgarth allowed himself a faint smile. »Tomorrow we leave.«

»We?« Confused, Zerdoban blinked »Do you really want me to accompany you?«

»No, no!« Morgarth lifted his hands in defense. »You should stay here and make sure these country bumpkins don't get any stupid ideas. When I say >we< I mean this little ginger witch and her friend. Somehow I have the feeling those two might possibly become useful some day. At least until I got what I want.« Zerdoban didn't seem to mind Morgarth's rejection. Instead, he decided to dig deeper: »Surely you mean this shining trinket the girl was holding in her hand, don't you?«

Morgarth darted a calculating glance at his opponent. How much could he tell these thug without revealing the true value of the stone? His hand enveloped the handle of his mug once again. He wanted to take another mouthful from his freshly filled tankard before answering. He would let Zerdoban wriggle a bit. He felt the dark, thick beer slowly running down his throat, a malty aftertaste being left on his tongue. Morgarth stopped short. For a short moment, it seemed as if the room was spinning around him. He blinked several times while putting his empty mug on the table with erratic movement. Slowly, the dizziness that had taken a hold of him seemed to dissipate. Pensively, Morgath considered the mug sitting before him. This brew seemed to be stronger than anticipated. He cleared his throat and directed his attention towards Zerdoban. »This trinket, as you call it, is a special sort of crystal. It is the heart of a dragon, to be precise.« That part of him not under the influence of alcohol marveled at the fact that he revealed these informations so easily. Hadn' t he just been wondering whether to let Zerdoban in on this?

»I see«, Zerdoban remarked with interest. He didn' t seem to notice his opponent blinking heavily from time to time. »And what do you do with such a dragon

heart? I mean, you don' t want it just because it' s pretty, do you?« Morgath burst out laughing.

»Oh no! No, surely not.« He leaned forward until their faces were only a handwidth apart. Then he lowered his voice and whispered: »The dragonstone is a very powerful magical artefact I have you know. Indeed!«, he emphasized when he noticed his opponent' s skeptical expression. »My master covets it more than anything else. With its help, he is going to restore his former power. And what' s more …«, Morgath put his hand on Zerdoban' s right arm in a familiar gesture. »What' s more is that with the stone' s help I should be able to free your people from the curse, as well as the dragon gold.«

Zerdoban' s eyes went wide with astonishment. »Is that possible?«

Morgarth nodded heavily. »As soon as the stone is in my possession.«

Zerdoban fell silent for a moment. He seemed to ponder the elf' s words. Then, a sly expression crossed his face. „And you are sure you could control the stone just as well as the little ginger witch did?«

A frown appeared on Morgarth' s forehead and rage flashed in his eyes when he exploded: »How dare you comparing me to this brat? Her skills, if she has any at all, are nothing next to my powers!«

Appeasingly, Zerdoban held up his hands und put on a reassuring smile. »Nobody doubts your powers, Morgarth, not even in the slightest. However, well, don' t get me wrong. I' m just asking myself why the old dwarf gave the stone to her, of all people, you know?«

Morgarth moved back and sat up straight, in his eyes a blazing fire. How did that good-for-nothing bandit dare to talk to him like that? He was about to give an unfriendly retort when his mouth closed on its own. Instead he furrowed his brow. Of course this brat had nothing on him, who could take on an Arch Wizard without



effort. Regardless, Zerdoban's words were sinking deeper into his thoughts like a poisoned thorn. Why had the guardians of the stronghold left the stone with this girl? Why hadn't they tried to take away the stone when the situation became dangerous? Had he overlooked something? His eyes became narrow while thinking about this. No! Impossible! The girl had accompanied the old guy during his escape. Certainly she had only carried the stone for him. Yes, that had to be it! There couldn't be any other explanation. Calmer now, he exhaled, his features relaxing. Everything was alright. If only there wasn't this leaden exhaustion that seemed to consume him more and more. He blinked involuntarily and with a jerk he pushed back his chair and stood up. He had trouble keeping his balance, an unsteadiness betraying his condition. His voice sounded husky when he noted: »I think it's time for me to retire for the night. It's been a long day and I intend to head out very early in the morning.« He nodded towards Zerdoban who was still sitting at the table, while almost losing his balance once again. Then, he turned towards the door and slightly uncoordinated stepped into the corridor. Zerdoban looked after him with a pensive expression on his face. His gaze was still directed towards the door long after his guest had closed it.

Preview of Volume 3 - Reading Sample

*Previously in Endwin ...*

*Kyra and Rodin have finally discovered a vital clue that lead them to the legendary dragons.*

Z'har was lying in the middle of a treasure of gold coins, jewels and pompous armour. The cave which he had chosen for his lair measured hundreds of yards in every direction. The ceiling was at a dizzying height.

Dozing contently, he was mumbling to himself. Not long ago he had snatched a sheep from one of the meadows in the valley, which now filled his belly. Just as he was about to indulge himself in another dream, the ever-wafting air brought a new scent to his nose.

Z'har sniffed. He knew that smell: Humans.

*Not again*, he thought to himself. Will those creatures never learn? Always these so-called heroes, trying to make away with his treasure. The mostly magnificent suits of armour they flaunted were piling up in a corner of his cave.

It was always the same with them!

Though he had to admit it had been many years since a human had gotten lost in his hideout. Did they think that was why they could try again? Were they hoping he had succumbed to death in the meantime? These fools! Oh well, let them come. After all, a bit of a diversion now and again couldn't hurt.

Z'har sniffed again. Ah, the smell got stronger. He thought about the best way to proceed. Then he got an idea. He could pretend to be asleep,

only to rise with a loud roar at the right moment and to obliterate the unfortunate ones with a jet of flame from his throat. He liked the idea and so, he closed his eyes and acted, as if he were in deep slumber.

Time passed. The unpleasant scent got stronger and as it threatened to become unbearable, he finally heard quiet steps approaching on the gold coins scattered throughout the cave. Suddenly, the sound ceased. The human seemed to have stopped directly in front of his head.

Was this champion bold beyond all measure or simply stupid? Never before had someone dared to approach him like that. And directly in front of his snout, for that matter!

Z'har decided to transform this obtrusive intruder into a pile of ashes without much further ado. He opened his eyes, rose up and opened his jaws wide to bathe this obnoxious trespasser in flames.

However, it didn't come to that.

He was about to summon the hot fire from a place deep within him, when his gaze landed on the figure standing in the torchlight on a pile of gold before him. If his lower jaw hadn't been down anyway, it surely would have dropped at the sight of the young girl.

The girl couldn't have been older than thirteen or fourteen and was wearing nothing but a simple linen top, a pair of trousers and worn-out looking boots. No armour was protecting her from his claws or his fiery breath. Z'har was bewildered. Did the people send children to fight him now? How dare they! He felt wrath well up in him. This was by far the worst insult he could imagine!

Right at that moment, the girl moved and spoke: »Hello! How are you? I am Kyra and what's your name?«

Z'har's anger vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

That voice!

Until now he'd had only dealt with rough types. But this? Fascinated, he looked down at the girl, whose long red hair seemed to emit sparks in the light of the flame. All of a sudden he realized that he still had his mouth wide open. He shut it with an audible >clack<. Secretly he was bothered by the bad first impression the little girl must have gotten. He cleared his throat: »My name is Z'har!« his deep voice rumbled through the cave.

»It is very nice to meet you, Z'har«, replied Kyra with a firm voice. A smile crept upon her face. »You have to know, we've been searching for you for quite a long time. In fact, we had almost given up hope of finding a living dragon.«