



BRACON
HORN
HORN

"Sharp, gripping, and captivating."

JOHN TELLEGEN, executive producer and writer, *DreamWorks Dragons* franchise

BATTLE OF LION ROCK

D. J. WILLIAMS

BOOK
THREE

Praise for *Battle of Lion Rock*

From the very first page, *Battle of Lion Rock* is sharp, gripping, and captivating. A pulse-quickening, soul-searching, epic journey walks a tightrope from the edge of this world into stunningly terrifying realms. Such a thrilling and thought-provoking adventure draws you deeper into the world of Beacon Hill, leaving you gasping for breath until the end.

JOHN TELLEGEN, executive producer and writer on the DreamWorks Dragons franchise

Praise for *Secrets of the Highlands*

As with *Hunt for Eden's Star*, this next installment in the Beacon Hill series promises a continuation of characters quickly becoming fast favorites for my bookshelf! The intoxicating story takes me places I didn't expect to go with intense adventure, supernatural allegory, and characters that resonate with a warrior's soul. This sweeping series will enthrall readers of all ages and give you a serious book hangover. Get ready!

JAIME JO WRIGHT, author of bestseller *Night Falls on Predicament Avenue* and *Specters in the Glass House*, winner of the Christy Award and Daphne du Maurier Award

The Beacon Hill series just keeps getting better! *Secrets of the Highlands* is a sequel worth the wait.

JESS CORBAN, author of *A Gentle Tyranny*

Praise for *Hunt for Eden's Star*

Fast-paced action and a rich setting boost the beginning of a promising paranormal saga.

KIRKUS REVIEWS

A blistering, high-stakes, fast-paced supernatural thriller that's impossible to put down.

RYAN STECK, author of *Out for Blood*

An original and riveting great read from start to finish, *Hunt for Eden's Star* is a prime action/adventure fantasy from an author with a complete mastery of the genre.

JOHN BURROUGHS' BOOKSHELF, *Midwest Book Review*

An imaginative, immersive story with strong characters worth rooting for. I honestly couldn't put it down!

JESS CORBAN, author of *A Gentle Tyranny*

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D. J. WILLIAMS



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Battle of Lion Rock

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Battle of Lion Rock is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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Defend the light.

A passage from

MISCHIEVOUS ESCAPE OF THE NINE DRAGONS

Once upon a century, a young woman with a striking stare strolled through tilled fields on the outskirts of a village near a riverbank. She walked beneath wooden towers and entered a town square alive with traveling merchants offering goods for coins or trade. Villagers bargained, milled about, and lost themselves in the only tavern for miles. She nudged through the crowd with her sights on a carriage parked outside a wooden chapel.

The pounding in her chest intensified as she neared the rear of the carriage, her gaze shifting all around to be certain no one else was watching. She approached with caution, casually reaching beneath the burlap covering the carriage's cargo. From underneath she grabbed two silver bars and hid them inside her coat. Heat flushed her cheeks as she hurried across a muddied road while Rhoxen saddled destrier horses, then watched as each surrounded the carriage and escorted its treasure from the village.

With fiery hair draped over her shoulders, she slipped inside a sweltering shack. A burly, scraggly-bearded man with charcoaled hands slammed an iron hammer against raw metal. *Clang. Clang. Clang.* She stood awestruck by the blacksmith's lair, which was filled with iron horseshoes, picks, shovels, axes, spears, swords, shields,

BATTLE OF LION ROCK

and armor. An orangish glow emanated from a cauldron nearby, and she inhaled a pungent odor. She eyed the blacksmith closely as sweat dripped from his round nose while he shaped soft metal into one of the finest Rhoxen swords she had ever seen.

“I woke before sunrise,” his gravelly voice mumbled. “Still, you forge in the shadows.”

The blacksmith’s beady eyes turned their attention toward the young woman, and she sensed his uneasiness with her presence. She waited until he carried the newly crafted weapon with iron tongs into another room, leaving her alone. A second cauldron was empty yet searing from a flame underneath. She retrieved the silver bars and dropped them into the cauldron. For a moment she watched silver melt slowly until metallic liquid swirled.

Skilled beyond her years, she fueled the forge with charcoal and set the anvil and tongs aside. She had never thought of herself as a blacksmith, but loss fueled her desire to one day become the greatest bladesmith ever known. Flames flickered and silver glistened in the cauldron within the dimness of the shack. Her imagination swarmed with the weapon she dreamed of crafting—one to bring peace to a land threatened by witches, sorcerers, Nephilim, and Merikh.

Night curtailed daylight as she worked diligently, stirring the liquified silver to remove all impurities as it percolated and bubbled. She grabbed the tongs and tilted the cauldron enough to pour the silver onto the forge. Silver oozed smoothly from the cauldron and began to harden. She hammered forcefully, sharpened edges, and worked across the anvil masterfully to form an exquisite long blade. Using the tongs, she carried the silver blade and plunged it into a deep bucket of water. Steam wafted in the air, sweeping and swirling mysteriously around her as she prayed.

With eyes opened, she stepped over to the blazing furnace and slid the blade inside. She reached out her hands with palms

glowing softly. Crimson fire flared, then dissolved into an icy-blue flame wrapping around the beautiful sword—sealing and protecting its purity from a fallen world.

With the sword in the furnace, she reached for an intricately crafted hilt she had left on a workbench the time before. Her fingers touched the engraved dragons wrapped around the handle, and then she placed the hilt at the very edge of the icy-blue flame. Immediately, the razor-sharp sword and hilt became one. Her palms glowed brighter as she grabbed the hilt and removed the sword from the furnace. With both hands she gripped the sword and swung it back and forth, noticing a gleam of silver in the darkness. She touched the blade with her palms, and its blank canvas of pure silver morphed into engraved etchings of fire-breathing dragons.

Alone in the blacksmith's shack, she sensed Elyon's presence and dropped to her knees in reverence. The flames beneath the cauldrons and inside the furnace vanished, yet the silver sword shone brightly. She snatched a burlap sack from the floor and wrapped it around the sword, then rushed out the door. She couldn't stop herself from knocking down a young man who was passing by the shack. He stumbled and fell into the mud with a great splash, surprised and angered. However, when their eyes lingered on each other, the greatest love story of all time began.

聯合

VICTORIA HARBOUR, HONG KONG

A tidal wave of tarred water peaked over Tsim Sha Tsui as screams echoed across the promenade. Unable to see the chaos above, Jack watched chunks of concrete plunge into dark waters of the harbor. In a matter of seconds, the Windstrikers left all three tunnels to Hong Kong Island destroyed. He braced himself on a concrete platform barely wide enough to stand on and only inches above water level.

“Your own father wants you dead,” Will seethed. “No one is left to save you, Jack.”

“I’m not the one who needs saving.” Soulweaver hummed and vibrated in his grasp. “But I’m done running, so you’ve got one last chance.”

“We both know you are the weakest one.”

The fire-breathing dragons etched into forged metal of Dragon Soul resurrected into a two-headed beast. At the sharpest point of the blade, the beast’s fangs dripped with onyx fire. *Reminds me of Asiklua—except even more wrathful.* A vile shriek shivered down Jack’s spine as Soulweaver spun rapidly between his fingers.

“I have killed Elders,” Will taunted. “Only one remains. She’s next after you.”

With his jaw clenched, Jack gritted his teeth hard, knowing Will was talking about Xui Li. He recognized the rage burning in Will’s eyes as he harnessed his own fury. Bursts of white lava spit from the heartwood of Soulweaver, surprising him with an astonishing intensity. Will charged and swung Dragon Soul side to side. Jack lunged forward, the power of the rod emanating pure magnificence.

Centuries after the First Great War and the Battle of Everest, Dragon Soul struck with a vengeance against the Rod of Elyon. *Soulweaver.* Black fire exploded against white lava, sending Jack and Will sliding backward in opposite directions. Jack stopped himself on the platform, inches from the water’s edge. He stared in amazement at the spinning heartwood, still in one piece. Wide-eyed, he felt a surge of adrenaline rush through him as he turned from defender to raider.

Jack stabbed Soulweaver toward Will, who dodged his attack with a skillful slash of the sword across his ribs. Jack doubled over and lost his grip of Soulweaver, sending the rod skidding across the platform before teetering near the blackened water. Will shoved Jack onto his knees as the two-headed beast’s fangs dripped from Dragon Soul before vanishing. With the blade’s razored point against his chest, Jack glared defiantly into Will’s soulless eyes. He

felt the point of the sword press even harder, but it never pierced the tailored hoodie he wore.

“Addison will never be free again.” With his bare hands, Jack grabbed the blade and squeezed, attempting to shift the sword away. Blood dripped from his fingers down his forearms beneath his hoodie sleeves as pain ripped through him. “Whatever he’s done,” he groaned, “it’s not too late for you to turn back.”

“You think your barmy father used me to get Dragon Soul because of my gifts?” Will forced the blade harder against Jack’s chest as his eyes narrowed. “You are nothing without Eden’s Star, and you are no one once the compass belongs to me.”

“Michael Chung is the one who killed your mom,” Jack blurted. “Not me.”

Will’s eyes flared, then his gaze narrowed. “You’re a liar.”

Pain seared from the gashes on his bloodied hands. “He killed Rachel too.”

“Everyone has suffered because of you . . .” Will pushed the point of the blade harder against Jack’s chest, seemingly unfazed by the revelation about his mum or Rachel. “Doesn’t matter if it was Chung who pulled the trigger—you’re the one who loaded the gun, Jack.”

Fighter jets screamed across the harbor, nearly skimming the surface. Will spun around as the Windstrikers sliced through the military aircraft. A fiery inferno exploded, and titanium shrapnel plunged into the harbor. With his head on a swivel, Will turned back and unleashed a pulse of violet lightforce. Pain erupted through Jack’s bones as he struggled to defend himself. Another pulse sent him rolling across the platform, gasping for air.

Dazed, Jack balled his bloodied fingers into fists as he crawled onto his knees and readied for another onslaught. Will reached out

with his lightforce, then twisted his hand clockwise. Jack's body arched as he cried out in pain, his spine on the verge of splitting in half. As the energy grew stronger, there was no doubt—Eden's Star was being ripped from his body.

He eyed Soulweaver, within arm's reach. *Eden's Star is gonna be torn from my chest—or he's gonna cut it out. Either way, we'll all be dead.* Another burst of lightforce slammed against him, leaving him barely conscious. In the fog of his mind, he kept his sights on the rod as he was left sprawled on the platform. Blood flowed from the gashes on his hands. He tasted bitterness on his lips. With his arm outstretched, his fingers barely wrapped around Soulweaver.

Elyon, I need you now.

Jack mustered up one last ounce of strength and pulled himself to his feet while holding Soulweaver in front of him. Will's eyes narrowed as if realizing the sword and lightforce had not finished Jack off. The Windstrikers whipped overhead as the tarred tidal wave crested, then plunged with deadly force onto the promenade. An eerie silence washed over Victoria Harbour and Tsim Sha Tsui. No more screaming or shouting. He locked eyes with Will a split second before dark water gushed over from the promenade above, sweeping him off the platform into the harbor.

Violet lightforce punched beneath the depths, narrowly missing him as he frantically dove deeper. He barely dodged one of the Windstrikers as the dretium war fan bolted past, hunting for its prey. In the pitch blackness, a searing heat spread across his chest, and he struggled to hold his breath. Without oxygen, his muscles seized and his heart slowed.

One beat at a time.