

SOUMOUTOU SERIES, BOOK 2
The Magician Albradra and the Wise book of Soumoutou

by Vaso Psaraki

In long ago, forgotten times, on a rugged, three-peaked mountain, on a mountain whose peaks disappeared into the clouds, there lived in a castle a wise and cunning and terrible wizard.

His name was Albradra!

His castle was built on three huge, towering rocks and down below, between them, ravines and rivers, cliffs and waterfalls kept people and animals away. From the air, birds and vultures could get to the castle. But they too would quickly fly away, seeing the place covered in traps, and netting and birdlime snares.

The wily wizard wanted no one, and I mean no one, in his castle. Only his assistant and faithful servant, Dradra had been living with him for years and years.

When supplies and merchandise arrived at the end of the path, the merchants would bang three times on the wooden gong that hung from the rock.

And then... slowly and with great difficulty, the old servant would begin to turn a heavy iron crank, and then pulleys and cogs and chains would lower an enormous bridge made of countless steps which joined the castle to the outside world.

And it was a horrendous sound that the chains and cogs made, and it pierced the clouds, the ravines, the forests and rocks, all the way down to the plain where the village lay. It was an eerie, otherworldly, ghastly sound.

Every day for the past three years –according to the calculations of the inhabitants of the region— they had suffered this horrible, awful noise. And they couldn't imagine why the wizard would need so many supplies every single day. But how were they to know that, for the past three years, the wizard Albradra and his old servant Dradra no longer lived alone.

Dragons, harmless dragons and terrible ones, dragons of many colors and many heads, dragons with scales, with savage claws and sharp teeth, land dragons, air and sea dragons filled the subterranean cells of the castle.

Growls, roars, sobs and sighs shook the hallways, chambers and courtyards.

And the wizard, the terrible wizard Albradra, cooped up in the topmost attic of his castle, studied... calculated... took notes... drew... mumbled... and muttered...

"...Three years... three whole years..."

Carefully, he closed the huge, yellowed, moth-eaten thick book that lay before him...

"...Three years of my life I've dedicated to these dragons..."

He stood up decisively, opened a chest, emptied it of cloaks, scarves, gloves and hats and placed the enormous, heavy book at the bottom. He took

off a special case made of silver and gold, which he had been wearing around his neck, and carefully placed that too inside the chest. Then he put back the clothes, locked the chest and hung the key and its gold chain around his neck...

"It's lighter than my magic mirror..." he muttered...

His notes sat in a pile. He clasped them in his arms and began to walk noisily down the iron stairs of his castle.

"Dradraaaa..." he began calling out. "Where are you... Dradraaaa... Come to the cellars..."

And his voice echoed along the hallways and inside the chambers, reaching all the way down to the dungeons, passing through secret passageways, through ventilation shafts and hiding places, to be heard in every single part of his castle... His castle, which was built on the three rocky peaks of this rugged, towering mountain.

The wizard was smiling as he went down the stairs, the countless iron stairs of his castle... He was smiling at the memory of a letter, delivered to him – three years earlier—by the witch's carrier pigeon... He was smiling because in this letter, the "wise" and "proud" witch Soumoutou had asked for his help: Could he use his magic mirror to do away with all the dragons which... she had "accidentally" created...

He was smiling, because at that moment –three years ago—he realized that the time was approaching when he would make a fool of the witch and prove to one and all that he, the terrible wizard Albradra, was the craftiest, grandest, and most respected among all witches and wizards.

After three years... who remembers details... But the wizard remembered... He remembered every minute, every second of that night.

...There was a full moon... When he got to the balcony of the witch's castle --she met him "in her Sunday best": a sober black dress with a white collar, and over it a red, blood red cloak—he asked her for her keys and said:

"Go away into the forest, walk around for a bit, and when you see the sun peeking over the mountain, come back... You can count on me and my magic mirror... Your castle will be empty."

And the witch left, and when she came back, every part of her castle, from the balcony at the top to the deepest dungeons, was indeed empty and squeaky clean.

But he, the wise wizard, the wizard Albradra, had not done away with the dragons!

He had come upon them in hallways and chambers, in cisterns, on stairways, he talked with them, studied their movement, sounds and behavior... Thoughts... thoughts... thoughts and ideas began spinning around in his mind. He locked himself up in the library. He felt admiration and envy for the witch's precious books... He found her Great Book of Magic and brought it down from the top shelf. Soumoutou had never stopped boasting about it. Albradra opened it, filled with envy and emotion. He soon discovered spells for corrections and improvements, spells for doing away with faults and habits, spells for giving, through magic words and miraculous potions, new qualities, abilities and traits...