

THE SOUMOUTOU SERIES-BOOK 1  
*The Witch Soumoutou and the Dragon*  
by Vaso Psaraki

Long ago, in the time of witches and wizards and dragons there lived a mighty witch famed and respected for her wisdom and cunning—but also feared and hated for her power. Her name was Soumoutou.

Soumoutou lived in a hollow hill, a vast subterranean castle with curving staircases, long galleries, endless passages, enormous rooms with high vaulted ceilings, chambers so low it was not possible to stand upright in them, musty cellars, dark, narrow cells and, deep dungeons.

Soumoutou spent all her time in her lookout, situated just below the very top of the hill. From there she had a perfect view of the woods, the village, the fields, her magic lake and the mountains beyond. Standing on her balcony, she was able to see and hear all that went on.

And that was just what she did. She watched and listened, day and night. Only, devoting so much of her time to it left her with no time to eat or sleep. So busy was she following what went on on the ground and in the air, that she had even stopped cooking her favourite dish, toad soup, from which she obtained much of her strength and power.

Instead, she lived on a variety of magic powders, leaving her kitchen to stand empty, the range cold, and the pots and pans to become rusty from lack of use.

One night, while a terrible storm was raging outside, she climbed up to her lookout. Sitting in her armchair, peering into the darkness, she thought of the wizard Albradra and his hatred for her.

This is how it was. The title "The Greatest" had always gone to Albradra. Then, one year, it went to Soumoutou. For reasons best known to themselves, it might have been just a whim, their fellow witches and wizards had voted her the wisest, cleverest, most sly, most cunning and most respected wizard of them all. Purple with rage and seething with envy Albradra swore, there and then, before everyone, to get his own back on her some day.

Which is why poor Soumoutou spent her days and nights in her lookout, scanning the horizon for him so that should he suddenly swoop down on her he would not catch her napping.

Consequently, she no longer visited her magic lake, the mountains—her mountains—the forest or the village. Even worse, she stopped tending her magic trees, leaving them to grow wild. Nor did she have the time anymore to direct the waters of the river according to the weather and everyone's needs. With no one to keep it in check, it flowed as it pleased.

So long was it since she had last left her fort—she had even given up gathering the plants and herbs needed for her magic—she was almost forgotten: by the people in the village, the birds, the animals, and the insects in the forest...

With no new supplies coming in, her cellars soon emptied of magic powders. She examined the bags hanging from her belt but found them empty—except for two, and there was not much left in those. Even the ones she fed on were down to nothing.

Soumoutou became angry and began to curse and swear and hurl bolts of lightning at the mountains opposite.

Having shed some of her anger, she felt much better. Calm once again, she told herself the time had come to end her miserable, fear-filled existence.

“Shame on you, Soumoutou,” she scolded herself. “All these years wasted. Where’s your cool, your cunning, your wisdom... You are supposed to be the greatest, remember?”

“What if Albradra does come? Let him. He’ll not fool me. I’ll know him when he appears, be it as a bat or a shower of rain. I will stand up to him. With my cunning, wisdom and magic I will get the better of him.”

Plunging her hand deep in her pocket she pulled out a ragged piece of paper. It was a list, torn, creased and yellowed with time, the letters so worn and faded it was hard to make them out. Peering at it closely she began to read:

Ground peacock wings.  
Legs of termites  
Turkey feathers  
Snake scales  
Leopard’s whiskers  
Alligator teeth  
Armadillo tails  
Armadillo tongues  
Centipede legs (all one hundred of them)  
Scorpion venom  
Hairs from Elephant tails  
Owl down  
Piranha teeth  
Rats’ tails  
Black Widow poison  
The list went on and on....

Soumoutou stopped. She could not possibly get it all. Not anymore. Once, when she was younger, it would have been easy. In those days she had run like the wind to the four corners of the earth, searching for new plants, herbs and other things possessing magic properties, all unknown till she discovered them and brought them back with her.

But times had changed. And so had she. Nowadays, except for drops of rainbow dew (she had to fly to the rainbow to get those), she gathered only what grew on and around her hill.