

**A  
YOUNG MAN  
WITHOUT MAGIC**

**LAWRENCE WATT-EVANS**

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# A Young Man Without Magic



A TOM DOHERTY ASSOCIATES BOOK  
NEW YORK

This is a work of fiction. All of the characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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Map by Rhys Davies

A Tor Book

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Tor Books by Lawrence Watt-Evans

THE OBSIDIAN CHRONICLES

*Dragon Weather*  
*The Dragon Society*  
*Dragon Venom*

LEGENDS OF ETHSHAR

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*Ithanalin's Restoration*

*Touched by the Gods*  
*Split Heirs* (with Esther Friesner)

THE ANNALS OF THE CHOSEN

*The Wizard Lord*  
*The Ninth Talisman*  
*The Summer Palace*

Dedicated to the memory of Rafael Sabatini

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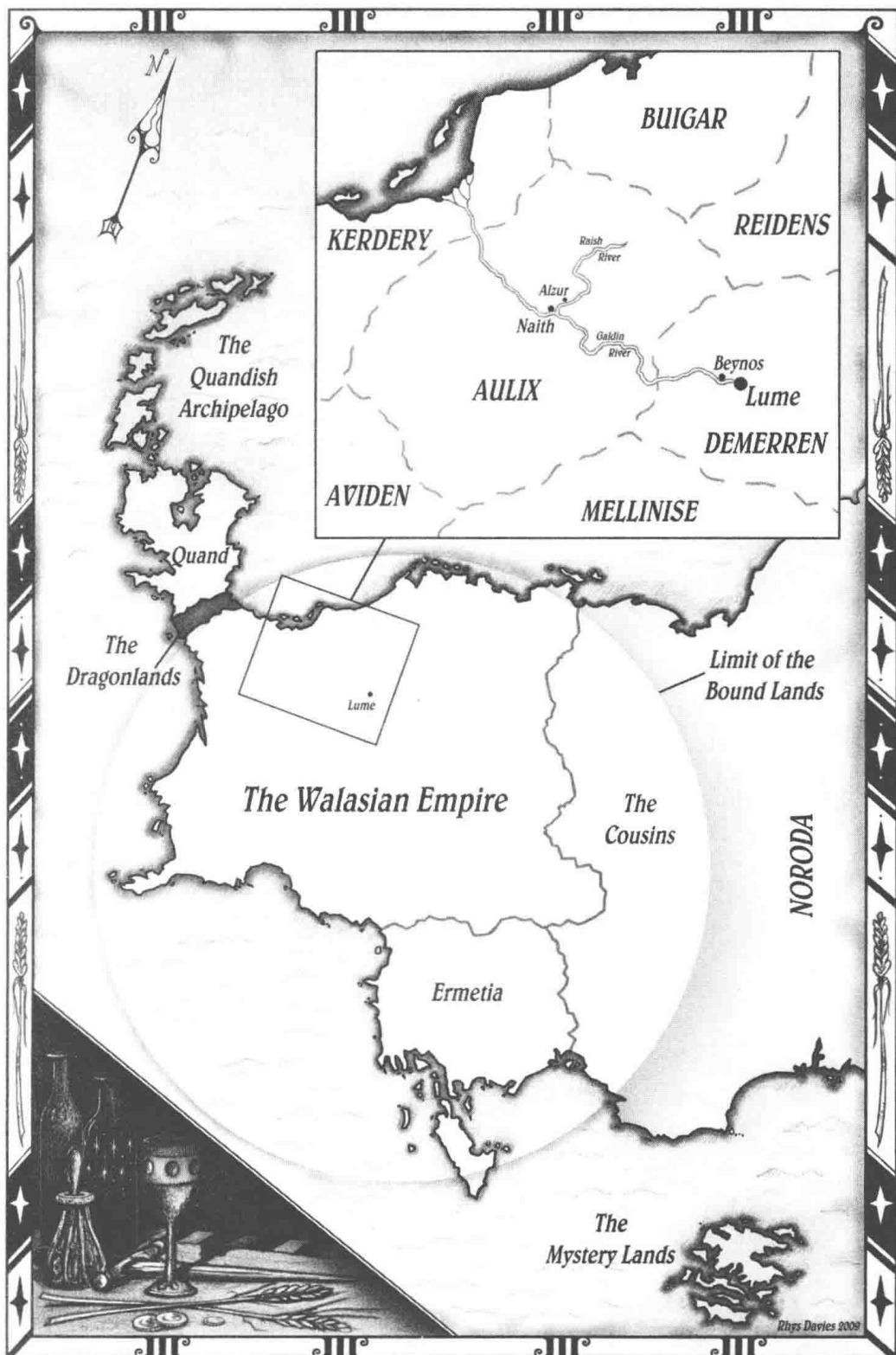
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# 1

## In Which Anrel Murau Returns Home to an Uncertain Reception

The rain had finally stopped, and the public coach's sole occupant was able to roll up the blinds and look out the unglazed windows without getting soaked. The countryside was still green, even this late in the summer and in the gloom of a heavy overcast; the passenger wondered how that could be, when so much of the talk in Lume for the past few seasons had been of crop failures and famine.

The coach jolted over some unevenness in the road, and Anrel Murau braced himself against the window frame as he gazed out at a harvested field. He could not tell what had been grown there, or how much the land had yielded, but the rain-darkened earth certainly looked rich and fertile—as it should. After all, this was Aulix, one of the richest provinces in the Walasian Empire. A famine in Walasia, the heart of the Bound Lands—could that really be possible? This was the realm where the forces of nature had been brought under control, where the Mother and the Father looked kindly upon humanity and its sorceries. It wasn't some wild hinterland like the outer reaches of Quand, or the Ermetian mystery lands, where days might be different lengths from one to the next, or monsters might prowl the fields, or snow might fall in mid-summer, if the seasons were even regular enough to *have* a summer. No, this was a land of order and stability, where farmers had been feeding the population reliably for centuries, where sorcerers regulated the weather, where most of the wild spirits and negative forces that