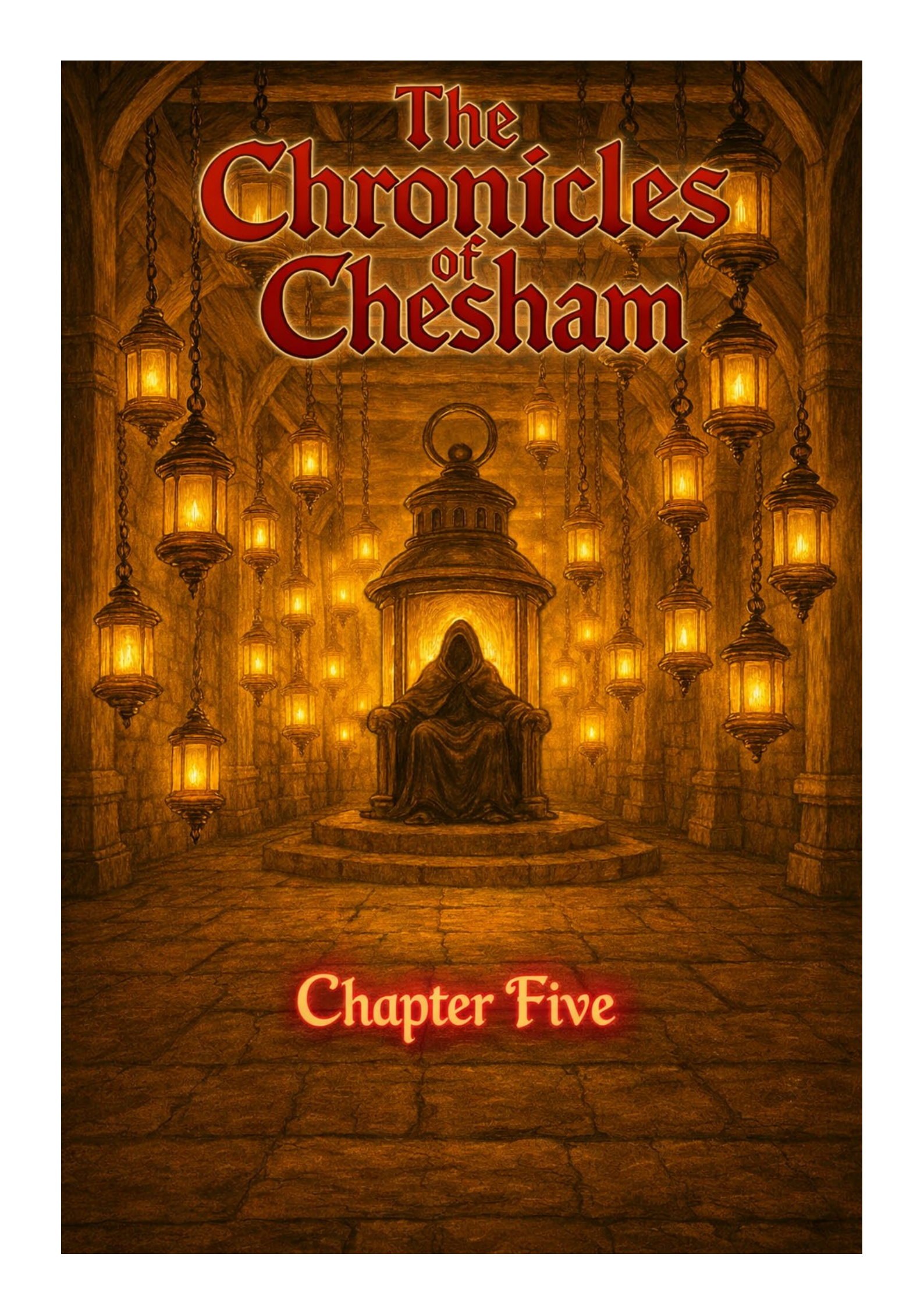


The background of the entire page is a detailed, dark-toned illustration of a gothic-style interior. In the center, a figure in a dark, hooded robe sits on a throne that is part of a larger, ornate stone structure. The room is filled with numerous hanging lanterns, each with a warm, yellow glow. The walls and floor are made of rough-hewn stone, and the ceiling features a complex wooden beam structure. The overall mood is mysterious and ancient.

The Chronicles of Chesham

Chapter Five

Chapter Five – A Magic Light

The next task was one for Frank, who after the “worm” incident with poor Bob, had now stopped laughing and composed himself.

He thought back to the words of Dave the Bastard at the Queens Head.

“A magic light can be fulfilled, if you find the man in the square of the Guild, pass his test, and please his sight, and you will find a magic light.

“You do know that you are rhyming, don’t you?” Enquired Frank.

“No, I’m not, don’t talk such rot” complained Dave the Bastard.

“See, you just did it again!” Exclaimed Frank.

“Don’t push your luck, you little

But Frank had lost interest and gone outside.

In the NorthWest of the city stood the Guildmasters Square. It was large and dark and wet, as with most things Chesham. Around the outside of the square were numerous, very old halls, which were home to the trades of Chesham. There was a Brushmakers Guild, and Beermakers Guild and Hatmakers Guild and also more, er, sinister ones.

What fantasy story would be complete without an Assassins Guild (we will leave that for book four), and in the case of this particular chapter, there was a Guild of Lanternmakers.

Lantern Making was an ancient art form, and in a place as dark as Chesham, a very necessary one. The door to the guild was a large studded oak door with iron sections, encased within a curved archway. There did not appear to be any windows but either side of the door stood two large lanterns on poles.

On the door was a metal ring for attracting attention.

“That’s a big knocker!” Said Bob.

Frank looked at him for a moment as an angry parent would scowl at a child for spurring out something filthy in front of the family.

“Well it is!” Bob said again, Jeff gently kicked him and Frank turned his attention to the massive knocker.

He grabbed it and it thudded on the door in a very satisfying manner, it was clear that there was a huge echo from behind the door where there must be a large hall.

Footsteps could be heard approaching the door. Big, giant, thudding footsteps. They stopped near the door and a shutter slid open at the eyeline of Frank.

“Who goes there?” A voice emerged from behind the door, it was most confusing. The footsteps had definitely been those of a giant man or beast but the voice was rather, er, smaller than that.

“Who goes there?” The voice questioned again.

“A band of men on a quest to save all of Chesham from certain destruction,” said Frank, in a rather grand fashion.

“I suppose you had better come in then,” the smallish voice remarked.

There was a sound of bolts being pulled back and locks being turned until eventually the door slowly creaked open. This revealed a dark hallway, almost pitch black, and gloomy. As Frank tentatively took a step forward the voice sounded again.

“Oi, watch where you are going!”

Frank stopped in his tracks and the others peered around his shoulders but could see nothing.

“I am down here!” The voice sounded again.

Frank looked down and there was the most remarkable object. A small man made completely of stone but moving as if it were a person. This was Jake, the Golem.



Legend has it that Jake originated from pile of stones that were used to create borders between fields, out as far as the Curious Stones by The Loop.

It is believed that a wizard wielding great magic had been to the Queens Head, drunk his own body weight in ale and then wandered off to The Loop for no reason that anyone can fathom.

He approached the curious stones with his, erm, wand out, and accidentally animated the stones into a Golem, he was named Jake by the magic drunkard, who quickly left him there in the darkness. No one knows how he came to be at the Guild of Lanternmaking.

Now, normally Golems are very large but because the stone that Jake was made out of was in short supply, Jake ended up being a mini-golem, a cross he would have to bear for quite some time.

“Erm, so you are,” spluttered Frank, caught a little off guard, “it is very dark in there isn’t it.”

Jake the Golem turned around and took a few steps into the darkness, his feet making the most earth shattering sound with each step that he took, the band followed slowly into the darkness.

After a few steps, no one could see anything until suddenly a flash of light went up above them and suddenly there was the most incredible scene of light (that made everyone’s eyes go squinty for a minute).

A vast hall, far larger than the outside of the Guild looked like it could hold, with many, many lit lanterns hanging down from the wooden beams of the ceiling of this hall. They burned brightly, but most curious of all was the throne at the end of the hall.

The throne was the shape of an old miners lantern, and sat upon it, almost glowing was a man draped in a cloak, peering across at them, his face entirely concealed.



Jake signalled for them to approach, which they nervously did, staring around at the magic at work in this place, as the lanterns burned bright and true.

“Who are you?” Asked the cloaked figure, in a booming voice. Frank stepped forward, taking a glorious sweeping bow, and everyone else very much stood back.

“My name is Francis of Pednor, retired merchant, lover of a fabulous lunch, owner of a glorious chariot and a man of incredible wealth.”

The cloaked figure countered, “I am the Guildmaster of the Lanternmakers, master of the light, head of this great, historic organisation, and also a lover of a fabulous lunch.”

“Well, at least we have that in common,” Frank retorted.

“State your purpose, Francis of Pednor,” the cloaked figure continued.

“We have been instructed to come here, on our mission to save the whole of Chesham. We seek a Magic Light, so that we may save our fellow citizens and get back to the pub as soon as possible.”

“I see,” said the Guildmaster, “for surely you have been sent by Dave the Bastard, is it true?”

“It is,” replied Frank, “he said there may be some sort of task?”

The Guildmaster laughed, a booming laugh, from within his hooded cloak.

“Go to the forge by the Market Square, obtain the fire that never must go out, bring it to me and a Magic Light will be yours – take Jake along, he will help you.”

Jake looked at his master and then at Frank, he hadn’t been outside of the Guild for many years, and he was quite

concerned about what may lay ahead. He did not complain though and he shuffled forwards with a great boom with each footstep that he took. The others followed behind, out of the great hall and back into the darkness of the Chesham night.

They walked along St Marys Way, past the clocktower in the Market Square, stopping briefly to allow some of the pesky flying dragons floating in the sky to go on past.

Soon a great fire could be seen and the sound of metal upon metal, as a large muscular man could be seen inside the forge, striking an anvil with a great hammer. He appeared to have some sort of antlers on his head but this did not take away the fearsome aura he was emitting.

This was Richard the Blacksmith, a tough character indeed, he had been making weapons (as well as artisan gates) for the people of Chesham for many years. Richard was a man of nature, in that he liked to catch nature and eat it. Rumour has it that he wears the antlers on his head to show that he has killed and eaten many deer, in reality Richard just thought it was fashion and looked good on him, no-one yet has disagreed.

Frank led them all to the entrance, with Jake crashing around with his loud footsteps just behind them.

Frank stood at the open entrance, the heat from the fire was incredible, Richard the Blacksmith did not look up and continued to swing his hammer down onto a red hot piece of metal that looked like it was being fashioned into blade.



A moment passed, and Richard did not look up.

“Ahahem,” Frank cleared his throat, and the Blacksmith stopped striking the blade.

“What do you want?” Barked the Blacksmith.

“Well,” Frank started, “bit of a long story but I was hoping you could spare me some of your fire that never must go out?”

Frank smiled as sweetly as he could in anticipation of a great favour.

“You want some of my fire that never must go out? For nothing?” The Blacksmith asked.

“Yes, that would fabulous,” Frank was not entirely reading the room.

Richard the Blacksmith put down his great hammer and came toe to toe with Frank, he was tall and extremely muscular, with his antlers making him appear even taller. He put his face nose to nose with Franks, who was starting to perspire from the heat and the tenseness of the situation.

“If you want some of my fire, you will have to beat me in an archery challenge, if you win then I will give you some fire. Now what will you give me if I win?”

Frank looked down at his Bolex, it was extraordinarily expensive and he didn't want to risk losing it, he looked around at the others who were peering around the side of the doorway.

“Him,” Frank said, “you can have him if I lose, to do whatever you like with.”

Frank pointed a jewel encrusted finger at Bob, who looked around to see who it was who was behind him and then realised to whom the finger was pointeth.

“Me,” cried Bob, “why does it have to be me?”

“Too late,” said Frank and shook hands with the Blacksmith who ushered him out into the yard.

This was too delicious for Frank, if he won then he would be able to claim the bragging rights, win his item and show off for ages. If he lost, then Bob was sentenced to a lifetime of being, well let's not think too hard about that now.

Richard the Blacksmith went over to the other side of his Forge and picked up an enormous black crossbow, which had a very, very pointy arrow loaded into it.

“Come with me,” he ordered, and they ventured out into the yard behind the forge.

The yard was festooned with sharp metal objects, waiting to be collected by customers, or to be melted down and repurposed. Across the yard was a short fence, about the height of Jake, and upon it sat a target board, with circular rings on and a bullseye. “You stand here with me, the rest of you get the other side of that fence,” the Blacksmith ordered.

Everyone, apart from Frank, moved to a safe distance behind the target and watched quietly, some of them could see a reflection of the target in a shiny shield hanging on the Forge wall.

“Now, whoever gets nearest to the centre of the bullseye, will be the winner,” declared Richard.

The fearsome Blacksmith stepped forward with his crossbow, lifted it with one arm, looked in the opposite direction and fired. The bolt from the crossbow flew straight and true and hit the centre of the bullseye precisely.

A few of the gang clapped politely, however Bob was starting to realise the gravity of the situation when the Blacksmith winked at him. He turned around and fell to his knees, in a crouched, curled up position, dreading the worst.

Frank's mind flashed back to the armoury, where he had obtained the Curvace bow from. The armourer had told him that if he whispered his target to the bow, then it will never ever miss.

Frank drew the bow up in front of him, and whispered gently to it. The arrow he had loaded into the bow was waiting to be fired.

For what seemed like an age, Frank aimed at his target, and then it happened.

The arrow flew straight and true at the target, it struck the bolt of the Blacksmith, splitting it in two, piercing the bullseye but unbelievably it carried on through the target.

Timmy did not know much about what happened next but his Orc instincts kicked in as he heard the rush of the arrow coming towards him, and his man reactions were telling him to jump, his gentleman area was in trouble. And leap he did, about five feet up in the air and the arrow whistled past underneath him, and ended with a thud and a yelp.

“My god that was close, I could have been made a eunuch there!” Timmy said, gratefully, not realising that he was protectively holding himself out of sheer relief.

“Crikey, where did it go?”

The gang then turned around, and there it was, poor Bob had once again taken one for the team.

For in his concern for his future, where he had curled up on the floor facing away from the competition, he now had an arrow sticking out of his posterior.

“I can help with that,” said Russ, who put his foot on Bob’s back and quickly whipped the arrow out of Bob’s rump, Bob made a squeaky noise in response.

“Well, you have well and truly beaten me Francis of Pednor,” the Blacksmith said, holding out a meaty hand for Frank to shake, which he did indeed. “Come with me.”

He led Frank towards the fire and with a pair of tongs, put a pair of tongs into the fire. The fire must have been magical indeed, because he extracted a single flame that burned on it's own at the end of his tongs.

“How am I supposed to carry it?” Enquired Frank.

“I can help with that,” and Jake came forward and held out a stony hand, “it won't burn me.”

The Blacksmith placed the flame in Jakes hand where he covered it with his other hand for transportation back to the guild.

“Thank you,” said Frank to the Blacksmith as he swept forward out of the forge. The others followed suit, at least one of them limping.

As they made their way back to the Guild of Lanternmakers, Mick caught up with Frank, who was slightly ahead of the others.

“Frank, can I ask you a question?”

“Yes, Michael, please do.”

“When we were at the armourers, he said that you can tell the bow to hit any target and it will never miss?”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Then how did the arrow end up in Bob’s bottom?”

“Funny that, isn’t it!”

The team wound there way back to the Guildmasters square through the gloom, occasionally seeing the silhouette of a dragon passing in the night sky. Every now and then Jake would look at the flame inbetween his two stony hands and it would light up his craggy face for a moment.

They returned to the Lanternmakers Guild, and the door opened as Jake approached, as if it were glad to see his return. They once again peered back through the darkness, pierced by the enormous clonking of Jake’s miraculous feet, until once again the magical lanterns of the guild lit the room and the Guildmaster was once again illuminated, as if he had never moved.

“So you made it,” boomed the Guildmaster, “bring it to me.”

Jake stepped forward, and up the steps towards the Guildmaster, holding out his hand where the flame flickered and danced but did not burn the golem.

“You have done well, my little friend,” the guildmaster sounded almost proud of Jake, as he reached forward and took the flame into his own hand – he did not burn.

He reached beside the throne and pulled out an old mining lantern, and he placed the flame within the lantern and closed it’s old metal door, capturing the flame inside.

“Behold!” The Guildmaster boomed again, “your magic lantern is here,” he gave the lantern to Jake and as he placed it in his outstretched hand, he held the golem’s hand with both of his for a moment.

“Take the golem with you, he may prove useful and he has served his time here.”

“What?!” Said Jake.

The Guildmaster released Jake’s hand, and replied “you must go now, and help these people. I fear they may fail without you.”

Jake nodded, and turned around and led the group out of the guild, back into the square, feet pounding and crashing all the way.

And as the door closed on the guild and they were all back in the square, one thing was on their mind. They could murder a pint.