The princess Sellithar will inherit the kingdom of Everran, small, peaceful, secure. And stilling under a dynasty’s traditions, that Sellithar burns to strip away.

But when she takes the throne, peace and security end. Lords rebel, once-friendly neighbours hatch plots and threaten war. Everran cannot save itself by force. The one hope of help comes in a dream. Look eastward, the omen says. Find salvation in the desert, where Everran’s kings have turned before.

But in the wild, harsh, fickle, fragile, beautiful desert of Hethria, Sellithar meets a legend she has refused to believe exists. An aedr, a genuine wizard, myth and history come to life. An enigmatic, infuriating, unexpected ally in a war she never thought to fight.

She rules a kingdom. He’s warden to half Hethria. But he doesn’t do well with people, and she’s not so good at tact. Yet to survive the threat of an invading empire, Hethria will need them both.

She knows about tactics. He understands reality. They both love Hethria. But what if, to keep something you love, you have to change yourself?

Some wars just can’t be won alone.

*The Red Country* is the third book in the Chronicles of Rihannar, successor to *Everran’s Bane* and *The Moving Water*, praised by reviewers for the depth of their world-building and attractive characters. This is another vividly realised high fantasy, where love and magic are tested to the utmost in saving a land more beautiful and fragile than any human kingdom, but whose spell no-one who has experienced it will escape.
THE RED COUNTRY
BOOK THREE OF THE RIHANNAR CHRONICLES

THE RED COUNTRY

SYLVIA KELSO

FIVE STAR
A part of Gale, Cengage Learning
For
Lillian Stewart Carl
(from the White Queen to the Red Queen . . .)
For all the usual reasons
And with more than usual thanks
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks again to John Helfers at Tekno Books for prompt and useful responses to queries. And to Tiffany Schofield at Five Star Publishing for her help and patience over the last five years.
Everran, Hethria, Western Assharral
Everran, Eastern Hethria, The Confederacy
Had I been capable of speech on my name-day, my parents would never have succeeded in calling me Sellithar. A name like Starflower may be very pretty, and doubtless it is splendid to further a long and noble tradition, but I had little interest in the past and less patience with those who worship it. “Daughter of five royal generations,” and “child of an illustrious heritage,” and “namesake of the dynasty’s founder-mother,” bah. I was sure then, and I am surer now, that the first Sellithar would not have given a rotten hethel for such balderdash. Moreover, the palace brats had even less respect for tradition, and I was “Silly-cow” from the first day I ran with them, royal nurse, royal fingernails, royal rank and dignity or not.

The one good thing was that it made me fight for respect instead of being tamely ceded it. I was ten years old, with a most reckless disposition from proving my superior mettle in all the scrapes available, before I won the place to which birth should have entitled me, as leader of the palace pack. By the time the boys’ muscles overtook mine, I was fifteen, with my hair up and my skirts down, the contest had shifted fields, and I was still ahead. How easy it is to rout callow suitors when you have a sharp tongue and wit to hone it with! By the time they forsook courting I was eighteen, and all of us were growing into our proper roles, I as the crown princess Sellithar, they as the heirs to Resh-lords or soldiers or wine or hethel-oil magnates who would be the pillars of my realm.
Proper names given with capitals.

Coll., collective noun

Imp., imperative

Lit., literally—literal translation

Neg., negative particle

aedr (pl. aedryx), in common sense, wizard. In aedric usage, practitioner of Ruanbrarx, q.v.

ahltar, sun

aivrifel, (now) antique musical instrument. From aivre, seven (strings), wrifel, honey

alsyr, peace. From ax, neg., syre, to weep

Ammath, evil. From ax, neg., math, good

anor, song, tale

arskan, V., third sing. Lit. It is forbidden

as, Everran prefix, village

Asleax, Everran village. From leax, barley

a'sparre, aedric art. From ax, neg., yn-ynx, hands, sparthe, to kill

aspnor, hemlock. Lit. white killer, from sparthe, to kill, nur-
nor, white
Glossary

Assharral, empire. From asshar, roof-tree
asterne, watch-tower, outpost, lookout post
Asthyn, pl. of axthir, dead. From ax, neg., thire, to be, with
play on thira, light
Astial, Everran village. From ilien, water
axos, aedric art. To blind. From ax, neg., os, eye
axvyr, infinity. From ax, neg., vyrne, last, end
axvystar, everlasting daisy. From ax, neg., vyrne, end, tar, flower
Axynbrarve, aedric art. Telekinesis. Lit. to act without hands,
from ax, neg. particle, yn-ynx, hands, briarve, to act or have
power to act
az, blue
azian, sapphire. Also Hethrian flower, prob. Leschenaultia bi-
loba, from az, blue, iahn, fire, flame
Azilien, Everran river. Lit. Blue-water

ber, sea
Berheage, first Everran royal dynasty, from ber, sea, heage,
family
Berrian, Aedric personal name. Lit. Sea-fire or flame
brenx, peak
breve, pass
Breve Tirien, pass between Everran and Estar. Lit. South-pass
briarve, to act, with sense of having power/competency to do
so

cerisval, galah. From cerisk, pink, val, wing
Chake, aedric art. To command by compulsion
Climbros, Assharran province. Lit. Grain-walls, from climbar,
grain, os, wall
Coesterne, Everran northern garrison town. From coed, farm,
asterne, lookout post
Glossary

**Cruin Los.** Lit. Sometime-spring, from los, lios, spring, cruir, occasional

**culphan,** cape

**Darrior,** Assharran province. From darrith, room, space

**dassyk,** Hethrian caravan halt. Sathellin (q.v.) dialect. From dassyre, to halt

**del,** gold

**Deltyr,** Everran mining town. Lit. Narrow-gold

**el-ela,** tree. Coll.

**elond,** ironbark tree

**emsparyx,** lizard. From yrk, yrx, legs and emspar, snake (from ema, poison, sparthe, to kill)

**end,** apple

**Eskan Helken,** Lit. Red Castle. Aedric fastness in Hethria, q.v.

**Estar,** Confederate republic. From tar, flower, ais, sweet

**Etalveth,** Assharran town. From etal, sunset, veth, first, i.e. westernmost

**Everran,** Confederate kingdom. Possible corruption of Berrian, q.v.

**eygnor,** magpie. Lit. black-white, sweet, from eygja, black, nor, white, with play on anor, song

**fanx (pl. fann),** dog

**femaere,** demon. Lit. cruel-shadow, from feng, moon, fell, cruel, with supernatural overtones

**femaerel,** ghost-gum. From femaere, demon, el-ela, tree

**feng,** moon

**fengthir,** aedric art. To command imperceptibly. Lit. to draw like the moon

**Fengthira,** Aedric personal name. Lit. Moonlight, from feng, moon, thira, light
Glossary

**feox**, derogatory aedic term for humans

**fimbravos**, desert spider lily. From *fimber*, lily, *havos*, spider

**fimbrethal**, fringed desert lily. From *fimber*, lily, *ethal*, hair, beard

**fing-fyng**, green

**finghend**, emerald. Lit. green stone

**finlythe**, water-loving tree. Lit. green-leaf

**Frimmor**, Assharran province. From *ferim*, dairy-herd

**fyr-x**, kelpie sheep-dog

**gar**, skin, hide

**Gebasterne**, Everran town. From *geber*, east, asterne, lookout point

**geber**, east

**Gebría**, Everran province. Lit. East-land

**Gebrós**, Lit. East-wall, from *geber*, east, *os*, wall

**ghend**, stone

**Gjerven**, Assharran province. From *gjer*, grass, *ven*, way, road

**gweldryx**, parrots. Lit. tapestry

**gyar**, foot (Gjerven dialect)

**Haskar**, Lit. Harran’s child, from *iskar*, child

**hasselian**, swamp. From *haz*, earth, *iliën*, water

**Haz.** Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Earth

**Hazghend**, aedic line and Confederate nation. Lit. Earth-stone, from *haz*, earth, *ghend*, stone

**hazian**, ruby. Lit. earth-fire, from *haz*, earth, *iahn*, fire, flame

**Hazyk**, inhabitant of Hazghend, q.v.

**heage**, branch (tree) family (sentient beings)

**Heagian**, aedic line. Lit. Fire-branch, often called Flametree

**Helkents**, range in the Confederacy. Untranslateable term for red of earth or rock

**hellien**, eucalyptus. Coll. From *iliën*, water, *el-ela*, tree
Glossary

**helve**, V. imp., to go

**helymfet**, echidna. From helym, barb, fetha, hat

**heshnor**, Hethrian desert flower. Lit. white-sheep, from huesh, sheep, nur-nor, white

**hethel**, olive (both fruit and tree). Lit. desert-tree

**Hethmel**, region of western Hethria. From heth, desert, meldene, west

**Hethox**, indigenous Hethrian inhabitant

**Hethria**, country. Lit. Desert-land

**hisgal**, box tree. From his, gray, gar, skin, el-ela, tree

**Histhira**, Confederate range, aedric line. Lit. Gray-light, from histh (pronounced hiss), gray, thira, light

**Holym**, Confederate country. Coll., cattle

**hyrne**, fang

**Iahn**, Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Fire, Flame

**idrigg**, cold

**Ilien**, Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Water

**Ilienlythe**, parakeelya, Hethrian desert plant. From ilien, water, lythe, leaf

**imlann**, prized type of wood. Possible “dead finish” tree

**imsar Math**, invocation. In the name of Math, q.v.

**istarel**, saltbush. Lit. salt-tree, from istar, salt, el-ela, tree

**Keerphar**, wild bauhinia tree

**Keld**, mine

**Kelf**, river. Possibly connected with helkent, q.v., and keld, mine


**Kemrestan**, Assharran province. From kemres, border, march

**Kemreswash**, Everran River. Lit. Border-water, from kemres, border, wash, river

**ker**, house, in sense of dynastic dwelling place
Glossary

kerrothar, Hethrian desert yam. From quorroth, yams, tar, flower

Kerym Iswyre, Hethrian salt-lake. Lit. Great Salt-lake, from kerym, lake, istar, salt, wyre, great

keva, orange fruit

langu, python. Assharran semi-mythical being

lase-lash, suffix, meeting, crossroad, junction

lathare, aedic art. “Mindspeech,” verbal telepathic transmission

lethar, dream

letharthir, aedic art. To mesmerise. Lit. to make dream, from lethar, dream, thire, to be

los, spring, or contraction of lios, face

Lossian, aedic personal name. Lit. The Well or Face of Flame

Los Velandryxe Thira, aedic artifact used for wreve-lethar, the supreme art. From los, well, velandryxe, wisdom, thira, light

lydel, possum. Lit. tree-hopper, from el-ela, tree, lyde, to hop

lydsith, kangaroo-paw flower, staghorn ferns. From sith, paw, lydwyr, kangaroo, q.v.

lydwyr, kangaroo. From lyde, to leap, hop, wyre, great

lydyr, hopper. Coll. Small marsupials, bandicoot, paddy melon, kangaroo rat, etc. From lyde, to hop

lyffanx, kangaroo dog. From lydwyr, kangaroo, fanx, dog

lyng, morning

Lyngthyne, Confederate mountain. Lit. Fang of the Morning

Lynglos, Everran town. Lit. Morning Face or Spring

Lyngthira, country. Lit. Morning Light, from lyng, morning, thira, light

lythian, poinsettia. From lythe, leaf, iahn, fire, flame

maer, shadow
Glossary

Maerdigg, aedric personal name. Lit. Cold Shadow, from maer, shadow, idrigg, cold

Maerheage, aedric line. From maer, shadow, heage, family

Maerian, opal. From maer, shadow, iahn, fire, flame

Maer Selloth, Everran town. Lit. Shadow of the Stars

Mallavos, Hethrian desert plant. From mallar, orchid, havos, spider

Math, good

Math, abstraction. Aedric equivalent of god

Meldene, west. Region of Everran

Morg, black

Morgar, “Moreton Bay ash.” From morg, black, gar, hide, skin

Morglin, coolabah. From morg, black, gar, hide, bark, el, tree, ilien, water

Morglis, Hazghend cape, or black kite. Lit. black-nose, from morg, black, perraglis, hawk

Morheage, aedric line. From morg, black, heage, family

Moriana, aedric personal name. Lit. Black Fire

Morrethan, Sturt’s desert pea. From morg, black, rien, crimson, iahn, fire, flame

Morrya, Assharran province. Lit. Black-land, ref. to volcanic soil

Morval, crow. From morg, black, val, wing

Nerrys, ocean

Nerrysyr, Lit. Peaceful Ocean, from nerrys, ocean, alsyr, peace (from ax, not, syre, to weep)

Nerthor, Lit. Inheritor

Ningu, Hethox dialect. Nardoo seed

Norgal, ti-tree, paperbark. Coll. From nor, white, gar, skin, el, tree

Nullik, Hethox dialect. Edible seeds
os, wall

Ozym, personal name. Lit. Subtlety

Pellathir, aedric art. To cause illusion. From pelere, to bear, carry, lethar, dream

pen, Everran prefix, town

Penhazad, town. Lit. Flat-town, from hazad, plain

perraglis, hawk. From perra, eagle, aglis, small

pharaon, Lit. maker, creator. Loose aedric usage for “god”

pharaone, aedric art. Telepathic vision. From phare, to see

Pharaon Lethar, Lit. maker’s dream. Aedric term for (1.) the physical universe and (2.) the Other World of ghosts and shamans. Cf. Hindu concept of Brahm who creates by “dreaming” the world

phare, V. to see. Aedric art—to “read” an entire psyche

phathire, aedric art. Mental re-creation of the past. Lit. see-being, from phare, to see, thire, to be

Phathos, soothsayer. Lit. seeing eye, from phare, to see, os, eye

Quarred, Confederate country

ras, source (of a river)

Raskelf, Everan district. Lit. Kelf-source

resh, Everran district or province

rhodel (pl. rhodellin), gold coinage of Everran. From rho, round, del, gold

rienglis, red kite. From rien, crimson, perraglis, hawk

Rienzar, Hethrian gibber-plain. From rien, crimson, hazad, plain

Rihannaar, continent. Lit. The Island

rivannon, scented tree. Possible kind of cassia

ruagestyn, aedric “black” (outlawed) art. Lit. to call the dead, from ruagyre, to call, asthyn, dead
Glossary

ruan, mind

Ruanbrarx, aedric arts. Lit. mind-acts, from ruan, mind, briarx, p.part. of briave, to act, q.v.

Ruanbraxe, aedric art. To block from other aedryx’ awareness.
From ruan, mind, braxe, shield

ruand, numeral one. Also leader, head capital, etc.

saeva, wind

Saeverran, Everran tableland. Lit. Windy-Everran

saeveryr, wagtail. Also cape, “where the wind turns,” from saeva, wind, ryde, rythe, to turn

Saphar, capital of Everran. Lit. Delight

Sathel, wanderer, nomad

scarthe, aedric art. Telepathic perception. Lit. to read verbal thought

Sellithar, personal name. Lit. Starflower

sellothahr, frangipanni tree. Lit. sun-star, from selloth, stars, ahtlar, sun

sha, adverb. That way, there

shophet, annually elected Estarian head of government

slief, plateau, tableland

Stirghend, region of gibbers in northern Hethria. From stiriand, north, ghend, stone

stiriand, north. Region of Everran. Aedric line

tar, flower

Tasmar, Assharran province. From tassa, cloth

terrephal, sandstorm fore-runners. Lit. sand-dancer, from terre, to dance, phallyr, sand

terrion, jacaranda. Corruption of theryx, purple, iahn, flame

Thangar, Assharran province. From thangos, hilly

Th’Ilahn, Aedric personal name. Lit. The Flame

thillian, diamond. Lit. light-water-fire, from thira, light, ilien,
Glossary

water, iahn, flame
thira, light (physical)
Thiryx, Sky-lord, worshipped in Everran. Lit. Air. See also Haz, Ilien and Iahn
thorgan, king
tingrith, numeral. Eight, all. Quarred government, loose confederation of aedric lines
Tirien, aedric line. Lit. South-water, from tirs, south, ilien, water
Tirien Neth, part of Kemreswash river. Lit. Southern Channel, from tirs, south, neth, watercourse
tirs, south. Region of Everran
Tirstang, Crux Australis. From tirs, south, tang, cross
torjer, spinifex. From torq, ugly, gjer, grass
ulfann, dingoes. From ulce, wild, fanx (pl. fann), dog
Valinhynaga, Venus. Lit. Horns of the Morning, corruption of valin, horn, lyng, morning
vannor, cicada. From val, wing, anor, song
vaxy, Hethox dialect. Grass with edible roots
Velandryxe, wisdom. Lit. high-seeing, from vel, high, andeir, second or non-physical sight
velandyr, sage. Lit. high-seer
ven, highway, main road
veth, first
vist, adverb, now
Vorn, aedric personal name. Lit. The Tooth
vyrne, Lit. the last. Nickname of Vorn, q.v.

wash, river
wreve, V. to master, control
wreve-lan’x, aedric art. Beast mastery. From wreve, control,
Glossary

lanyx, coll., beast

wreiviane, aedric art. Pyrokinesis

wreivurx, aedric art. To control the weather. From wreve, control, vur, sky

wrock, ridge, esp. watershed

wyre, great

wyresparix, goanna. From (1) wyre, great, (2) emsparix, lizard, from emspar, snake (ema, poison, sparthe, to kill) and yrk, yrx, legs

xaira, farewell, separation, aedric myth of same

yeld, blood

yeldtar, poppy. Lit. blood-flower

yeltath, bloodwood tree. From yeld, blood, tath, wood

yst, truth

Ystanyrx, Lit. true songs. Cosmogony as preserved by Everran harpers

Ystir. Invocation. Truth it is

yx, sing., before, pl., eyes

yxphare, aedric art. Clairvoyance. Lit. to see before

Zem-and-Zam, Assharran personal names. Lit. This-and-That

Zyphyr Coryan, Assharran capital. From zyph, city, wyre, great, coryan, maze, labyrinth
Sylvia Kelso lives in North Queensland, Australia, and has been writing or telling stories for as long as she remembers. *The Red Country* is her third fantasy novel, the sequel to her well-received *Everran’s Bane* and *The Moving Water*. She has also published poetry in Australian literary magazines, and has a Creative Writing MA for an alternate-history/SF novel set in alternate North Queenslands. She lives in a house with a lot of trees in the garden, but no cats or dogs. She makes up for this by playing Celtic music on a penny whistle and is now learning the fiddle as well.
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Author photograph by Elisabeth Vonnarburg
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Evernarn’s Bane

"Kelso knows how to use fantasy to fathom the depths of the human heart."
—Van Ikin, Sydney Morning Herald

"Strong characters and a fully realized world combine with action and adventure"
—Library Journal

The Moving Water

"outstanding . . . readers looking for the best Australian fantasy has to offer would do well to find this novel . . .”
—Lorraine Cormack, As-If Speculative Fiction Web Site