**Synopsis: BLOOD AND WATER by Oliver Gordon Brewer IV**

JUNAYD has reached his seventeenth year and, by the laws of his tribe, taken his first steps into manhood. As the son of his tribe’s chieftain, he accompanies his father on a voyage to pay homage to House Harsonine, the ruling family of the neighboring Aurean Empire. Having never set foot outside the desert he was born in, Junayd is overjoyed at the chance to see the famous city of *Vere Aureus* for the first time.

The white city and its inhabitants, as well as the royal House Harsonine, are everything Junayd hoped they would be. That is, except for the emperor’s spoiled daughter, MIRACEL, who makes her disdain for Junayd and his “desert-dweller” kinsmen clear from the start. Nevertheless, Junayd is proud to have completed his first diplomatic mission with his father. Little does he know it will be his last.

On their way home, Junayd’s father is killed in an ambush. In the blink of an eye, Junayd is forced to take up his father’s mantle—and, as if that isn’t enough, his next visit to *Vere Aureus* ends with the bloody beginning of an Aurean civil war. Choosing to follow in his father’s footsteps and honor his oath of fealty, Junayd absconds with the late emperor’s son and daughter, leaving *Vere Aureus* and the northern half of the empire in the hands of the usurper, OREN LICINIUS MARTHAL.

Junayd reluctantly welcomes the newly orphaned princess and her younger brother into the safety of his household. During her time in the desert, Miracel resolves to seize the reins of her destiny—something she has been denied since birth. Determined to do more than sit and watch as the events around her unfold, she begins learning the ways of war.

Meanwhile, Junayd and the Harsonine host assemble and march against Marthal. They are dealt a crippling defeat and must retreat.

At this point, Miracel decides it’s time take part in her house’s struggle. Though the men in her life do not see fit to let a young woman participate in affairs of state, she travels to the distant land of Balakar, and enlists the help of a ragtag band of mercenaries known as the Mongrels to bolster her family’s forces.

Impressed with the success of her endeavor, Junayd invites her to a parley with the chieftains of the neighboring tribes. Soon, he comes to a disturbing realization: although he is required to marry a woman of his tribe, he is falling in love with Miracel.

At the parley, Junayd and Miracel appeal to the other tribal chieftains(including the son of the man who killed Junayd’s father), asking them to join their cause. The negotiations are difficult due to generations of bad blood between the tribes. But after Miracel, now a formidable warrior in her own right, thwarts an ambush set for the assembly, she gains the respect of the desert-dwellers and they agree to ride with her. Junayd is still reluctant to fight beside the son of his father’s killer, but he and the young chief begrudgingly agree to set aside their differences until the war’s end. Upon their return home, the burgeoning relationship between Miracel and Junayd reaches its climax. The two finally give in to their passions and make love.

Still, Junayd knows that the prospect of marriage between them is impossible. Under duress from his tribe, he reluctantly chooses a bride, Karam, who proves to be a faithful and dedicated wife. But because of his attachment to Miracel, he treats Karam rather poorly, while remaining warm and loving towards Miracel.

A short while later, Miracel receives a visit from an enigmatic sorcerer bringing troubling tidings: Miracel is carrying Junayd’s child, and their offspring is destined to shake the very foundations of the world they live in. While the two can never be together, the silver lining will be the child born from their union.

The forces are gathered, and the next battle between the Harsonines and their enemies finally begins. By the day’s end, Marthal is defeated and trapped within a besieged *Vere Aureus* with most of his allies subdued or deserted. Victory is finally within reach for Junayd and Miracel. But Marthal still has a card left to play. Just when the war’s end seems so near, a traitor within the Harsonines’ camp snatches Miracel’s brother from under their noses and escapes to the city, where the boy is held hostage.

Rather than give in to Marthal’s demands, Junayd, Miracel, and their allies hatch a risky plan to rescue the prince and bring a swift end to the conflict. Using an underground passage, a small party will launch a daring raid on the palace; Junayd volunteers to join the party, while Miracel joins in secret.

But Marthal has anticipated this move. The rescue party walks right into his trap and is captured. Then, when all seems lost, Junayd and Miracel manage to turn the tables on their captors. Miracel herself slays Marthal and hangs the usurper’s head above the palace gate. The city is retaken shortly after, and the war is won.

Junayd and Miracel know they can never join hands for good. While they must go their separate ways, both vow to care for their child, who is prophesied to change the world that separates them.