

THE KINSMAN CHRONICLES + BOOK ONE



KING'S FOLLY

JILL WILLIAMSON



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KEY PLAYERS

ARMANIA

House Hadar

- Echad** [EE-kad]-**Rosâr Hadar**, king of Armania
- + **Schwyl**, Echad's onesent
 - + **Captain Lebbe Alpress**, captain of the King's Guard
 - + **Filkin Yoththehreth**, prophet to Rosâr Echad
- Avenelle/Mother Rosârah**, mother of Echad
- Brelenah-Rosârah**, Echad's first wife, Wilek and Inolah's mother
- + **Sir Rayim Veralla**, captain of the Queen's Guard
 - + **Hawley**, Brelenah's onesent
- Wilek** [WILL-ek]-**Sâr Hadar**, son of Echad and Brelenah
- + **Sir Kalenek Veroth**, Wilek's High Shield
 - **Novan**, Kalenek's backman
 - + **Agmado Harton**, Wilek's backman
- + **Dendrick**, Wilek's onesent
 - + **Lebetta**, Wilek's concubine
- Laviel-Rosârah**, Echad's second wife, Janek's mother
- Janek-Sâr Hadar**, son of Echad and Laviel
- + **Sir Jayron**, Janek's High Shield
 - + **Oli** [OH-lee] **Agoros**, Duke of Candan, Janek's backman
 - + **Timmons**, Janek's onesent
 - + **Mattenelle**, Janek's concubine
 - + **Pia** [PEE-ah], Janek's concubine
- Thallah-Rosârah**, Echad's third wife, Trevn's mother
- Trevn-Sâr Hadar**, son of Echad and Thallah
- + **Sir Cadoc Wyser**, Trevn's High Shield
 - + **Hinckdan Faluk**, Earl of Dacre, Trevn's backman
 - + **Beal**, Trevn's onesent

KING'S FOLLY

Valena-Rosârah, Echad's fourth wife
+ **Hrettah-Sârah Hadar**, daughter of
Echad and Valena
+ **Rashah-Sârah Hadar**, daughter of
Echad and Valena

Ojeda-Rosârah, Echad's fifth wife

Others in Everton

Father Tomek, high priest of Arman,
tutor to Trevn
Eudora Agoros, Oli's sister
Pontiff Barthel Rogedoth, head of the
Rôb Church

Admiral Hanray Vendal, admiral of the
king's fleet

Captain Aldair Livina, captain of the
Half Moon and the *Arzah*

The Omatta Clan

Rand, leader of the Omatta
Meelo, Rand's son

Teaka, Rand's mother

SARIKAR

House Pitney

King Jorger Pitney, king of Sarikar, the
God's King

Prince Loran Pitney, King Jorger's
second-born son and heir

Princess Nabelle Barta, Jorger's daugh-
ter, widowed mother to Zeroah

Princess Saria Pitney, Prince Loran's
daughter

Zeroah Barta, Nabelle's daughter, be-
trothed to Wilek Hadar

+ **Mielle Allard**, Kalenek's ward, honor
maiden to Lady Zeroah

RUREKAU

House Orsona

Nazer Orsona, emperor of Rurekau

Prince Ulrik Orsona, son to Nazer and
Inolah, heir to the throne of Rurekau

Inolah [IN-oh-la]-**Sârah Orsona-Hadar**,
Nazer's wife, daughter of Echad and
Brelenah

Prince Ferro Orsona, son to Nazer and
Inolah

+ **Ree**, Inolah's nurse

Princess Vallah Orsona, daughter to
Nazer and Inolah

MAGONIA

Ruling Clan

- | | |
|---|--|
| Mreegan , Magonian Chieftess | + Nuel , number Two of Mreegan's Five Men |
| + Kateen , First of Mreegan's Five Maidens | + Vald , number Three of Mreegan's Five Men |
| + Astaa , Second of Mreegan's Five Maidens | + Morten , number Four of Mreegan's Five Men |
| + Roya , Third of Mreegan's Five Maidens | + Torol/Thirsty , number Five of Mreegan's Five Men |
| + Eedee , Fourth of Mreegan's Five Maidens | + Magon , a great shadir, bonded to Mreegan and Charlon |
| + Rone , number One of Mreegan's Five Men | |

Also in Magonia

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Charlon , a kidnapped woman | Grayson , a boy with a gray rash |
| Onika [ON-ik-ah], a blind girl | Jhorn , a prisoner |
| + Rustian , Onika's dune cat | Burk , a thief |

TENMA

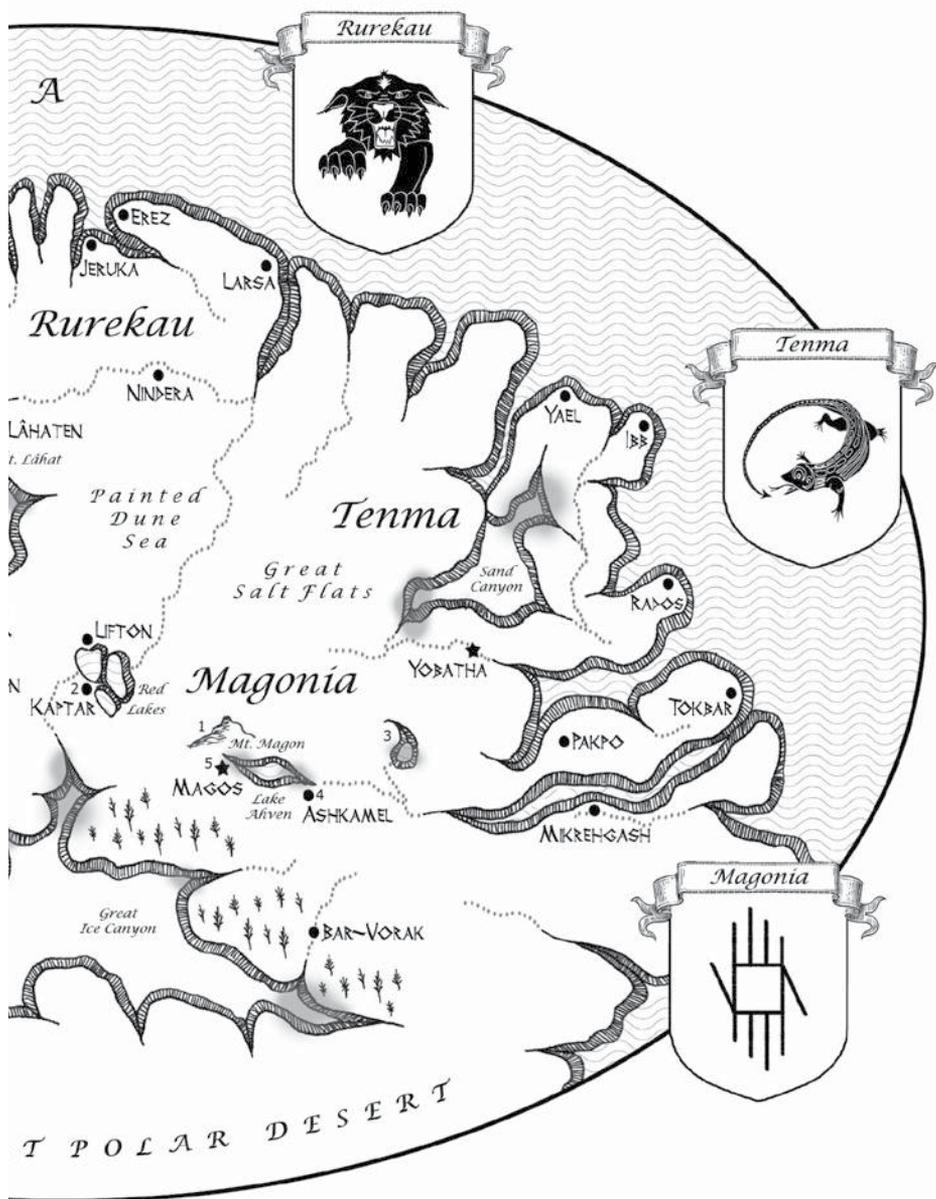
- | | |
|---|---|
| Priestess Jazlyn , the Sixth Great Lady of Tenma | + Gozan , a great shadir, bonded to Jazlyn |
| + Qoatch [KO-ach], Jazlyn's eunuch slav, a seer | |

THE GODS OF THE FIVE REALMS

- | | |
|--|--|
| Arman , the father god | Magon , goddess of magic |
| Athos , god of justice and law | Mikreh , god of fate and fortune |
| Avenis/Avennia , god/goddess of beauty | Nivanreh , god of travel |
| Barthos , god of the earth/soil | Rurek , god of war |
| Cethra/Cetheria , god/goddess of protection | Sarik , god of wisdom |
| Dendron , god of nature | Tenma , the mother god |
| Gâzar , ruler of the Lowerworld, bringer of death | Thalassa , virgin goddess of the sea |
| Iamos , god/goddess of healing | Yobat/Yobatha , god/goddess of pleasure and celebration |
| Lâhat , god of fire | Zitheos , god of animals |

The Five Realms





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The king did evil in the eyes of Arman. He erected altars to Bar-
thos, consulted black spirits, and sacrificed his sons in the fire,
following the detestable ways of the priests of Rôb.

—Prophetess Onika, House Hadar 871



PART ONE

DARKNESS REIGNS

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PROLOGUE

Aldair Livina sat at the table in the great cabin of his privately owned ship, the *Half Moon*, looking over his most recent chart of the Eversea. After an eleven-night voyage north-northwest from the Port of Everton, he had discovered a new island. He had named the isle *Bakurah* in honor of the first ripe fruit of the season. Aldair hoped that this island would be the first of many.

Father Tomek believed that the Five Woes had come upon them at last. Aldair wasn't convinced that the world was ending, but he appreciated the challenge set before him. And the pay.

The *Half Moon* was a lateen-rigged ship built for exploring. Smaller, lighter, and faster than the merchant tubs that frequented the Eversea, or the king's galley ships, it took only fifteen men to sail her and no oarsmen. It had taken three days to circle the new island, which Aldair believed to be slightly smaller than Odarka. Strangely, the water on its northern side was a great deal warmer and bluer than the aqua waters of the Eversea. Aldair succumbed to boldness and scratched the word *Northsea* on the chart above the newly discovered isle.

After rounding the isle, the *Half Moon* had started the long journey home for supplies. Any moment now they would reach the Everton Harbor. Since dusk grew nearer, Aldair had given the order to sail between the cliffs and the reefs. It wasn't the safest route, but his men had taken the journey countless times. And if they didn't reach the harbor before dark, they'd have to anchor out for one more night. Everyone was eager to get home. Tonight Aldair would sleep in his own bed in his own house. He would give his crew five days' leave

before returning with haste to Bakurah with a second ship to explore the isle while Aldair sailed the *Half Moon* farther into the unknown.

The ship suddenly quivered as if the anchor chain were running out of the hawser pipe. Aldair straightened and stilled, feeling the movement. Bottles of wine rattled on the sideboard. His inkwell shook its way across the table. That hadn't felt like a reef. And there were no shallows here that they could be up against, yet the trembling continued as if the vessel were dragging over soft ground.

It had to be another earthquake. Ground shakers were common in the Five Realms, ever more so in the past year. Dozens of ships had been lost, capsized by massive waves. Surely this minor tremble was nothing to worry over.

Yet shouts rose outside his cabin. Aldair left his chart and went to the door, opened it, and ran smack into the ship's boy.

"Captain!" Ottee said. "Your presence is requested on deck, sir."

Aldair pulled the door closed and followed the boy. Thunder cracked overhead, though the graying dusk sky was clear. A glance over the rail revealed very little surf. The water was instead marred by endless rings, similar to those produced when one jarred the side of a washtub.

Thunder rolled again, though not from the sky. From land—and this time it did not stop. Aldair spotted movement at the rock wall of the cape. Silt and rocks raining down. Boulders. The surf churned white and foamy against the cliffs. That landslide would push a wall of water toward them in a matter of minutes.

"Landslide!" Aldair yelled, jogging onto the main deck. They'd dropped sail to slow into port, and there was no time to raise them and get up enough speed to turn.

Ottee yelled, "Captain on deck!"

"I have the deck," Aldair said to Carlus Breck, the first mate. "Hard a port."

Breck yelled the order down the hatch to the helmsman, who was manning the whipstaff in steerage.

"Drop the port anchor," Aldair added. "We've got to turn now."

Breck echoed the order to two sailors and added, "Go, go!"

The men scurried across the deck toward the bow as Aldair watched the water. If they didn't turn, the wave might roll them. The dropped anchor line would hopefully swing them around in time.

"It's going down!" Breck yelled, staring at the cape.

Chunks of rock the size of houses fell and plunged into the sea, creating

a swell that rippled out toward them. Aldair waited, tense, for the anchor to dig into the sea bed. He didn't have his charts handy to know how deep—

There! The ship trembled as the anchor struck bottom. A tug and the bow swung around just in time to meet the water, which rolled monstrously large toward them. Some of the sailors cheered. One stumbled at the sudden movement.

"Hang on!" The order ripped from Aldair's mouth. He grabbed the port rail and hunched down to protect himself as the mountain of water raised them up. He could hear the strain on the timber as the anchor line held taught.

Ottee yelped and slid toward him. Aldair reached out and grabbed the boy, helping him get a grip on the rail while watching the movement of ship and water. Mikreh's teeth! They were going to clear it!

He hadn't realized he'd been smiling until the sound of timber splintering off the port bow made him frown. No, no!

The ship lurched, twisted roughly, then jerked as the anchor line snapped. They hadn't let out enough line! Without the anchor's support, the wall of water pushed the ship backward. The incline was so steep that the men tumbled about, grabbing for anything to hold on to.

"Gods help us!" Aldair yelled moments before the ship jolted from the stern.

They'd hit something. The reef, he guessed, despair welling within him. The wave surged past, yet they remained in place, jerking back and forth, the reef chewing up the hull.

"Check the bilge!" he yelled, starting for the stairs. "And the forward and stern bulkheads!" He needed to see for himself what he already sensed. Was there time to fother the leaks? The nearest beachhead was a good hour south, likely longer with the dinghy towing them. Could they make it?

Halfway down the steep steps, his boots met water. Nortin, who worked the pumps, looked up at him. "It's up to my knees, Captain"—which Aldair could plainly see—"but it's past my waist at the bow."

Wolf waded through the water from the aft, eyes bright with fear. "She's breaking apart at the stern, Captain."

"Abandon ship!" Aldair yelled, turning back up the stairs. "Launch the dinghy!"

The men scrambled to the main deck and set to work. The cliff continued to crumble, sending more waves that caused the ship to thrash against the reef. The fate of the *Half Moon* was out of Aldair's hands now, sitting helpless on the reef, grinding apart bit by bit.

The freeboard was nearly under at the bow. They needed to get off before they were all in the water and the waves threw them between the ship and the reef. Most of his men couldn't swim.

It spoke well for his crew that they were able to launch the dinghy in a sea that had quickly become lumpy. One by one they boarded the dinghy. Aldair was last to leave his doomed vessel for the smaller one.

"Get us away from the ship," he told the oarsmen, "then take us into port."

The men rowed hard. Gradually, stroke by stroke, they put open water between themselves and the wreckage. A leak sprouted through a hole knocked in the dinghy's side when the men had launched, so those who weren't rowing set to bailing with hands and hats. The rough sound of the *Half Moon* grating against the reef faded with each pull of the oars that carried them toward home.

By now the sky had blackened. Night was upon them. The surging waves came in bunches, pushing the dinghy south, toward the harbor. They would indeed make it to land before the night bells tolled, but home? For Aldair?

There was no longer any evidence of the *Half Moon* on the empty sea. No sign of the rocky peninsula. Cape Waldemar was gone. Completely. The entire cliff, which once had housed two score of upscale homes and over fifteen hundred people, had gone into the deep. Maybe Father Tomek was right about the Five Woes.

Aldair's family. His home. His boat. All gone.

WILEK

A procession of fifty men made their way through the cool desert night from the royal retreat in Camden toward The Gray. Fifty-one men, technically, though the king did not count the wailing convict riding in the cage since the man would soon be dead.

Despite the glow of the full moon, twenty guards carried lit torches. For once they entered the thick fog of The Gray, the moonlight would be snuffed out.

Prince Wilek Hadar rode on his father's right, a few paces back from the carriage, as was customary. The only one allowed to ride ahead of King Echad—or Rosâr Echad, as he preferred to be called—was Pontiff Rogedoth, the high priest of the Rôb faith. Only on the night of an offering was this permitted.

The first hint of warm mist tickled Wilek's nose and he flinched. His heart pounded in his chest, warning him to rein his horse around and flee this cursed place.

He could not do such a thing if he wanted to remain in the king's favor, and he believed his father was close to naming him Heir. Therefore, he must remain strong.

It was childish, really, for a man of four and twenty years to fear this place. Yet as drops of moisture beaded over Wilek's sleeves and the torchlight fizzled in the damp air, he found it difficult to breathe. He fought to draw in the humid air without calling attention to himself. As far as he knew, only his grandmother and Kal were aware of his phobia.

The moonlight suddenly vanished, bathing the desert in darkness but for the dwindling torches. Wilek clutched Foxaro's reins, his chest tight.

They had fully entered The Gray, the dominion of Barthos, god of the soil.

Several of the horses nickered and lashed their tails. The prisoner's keening grew louder. Foxaro lifted his head, ears stiff, eyes wide and white. He shuffled his feet and tried to turn back.

"Whoa, boy. It's all right." Wilek held the horse firm and tried to calm down. His fear was making things worse. He breathed deeply and slowly, trying to steady his heartbeat. He leaned forward and petted Foxaro's neck, which, after a few strokes, steadied his own shaking hands.

"We'll get through this, Fox," he whispered. "We always do." He scratched Foxaro's withers. The horse nickered, the sudden darkness forgotten.

It was easier to be brave when someone needed you to.

Wilek glanced back at the cart carrying tonight's caged offering. Inside the iron bars sat a middle-aged man. The convict. Had killed another in a tavern brawl. Wilek had failed to negotiate a lighter sentence. The man would die tonight, just as the others had.

Just as Chadek had. Small hands holding tight—

"Halt!" a voice cried up ahead.

Wilek shook off the memory of his brother Chadek as the procession slowed to a stop. He glanced at Kal, who met his gaze with a somber expression. Kalenek Veroth, Wilek's shield, sat his horse like a demigod, his warrior hair twists loose around his scarred face. Like all King's Guards, he wore a deep blue tabard over his blacks. But rather than King Echad's red Barthos insignia, he bore Wilek's five gods emblazoned in white on his breast. Kal also wore the gold belt of a shield. He hated these offerings almost as much as Wilek, but for another reason entirely.

Ahead, shadowed men holding torches dismounted and moved forward on foot. They slid their torches into brackets on the shrine and dim light flashed off the bronze. Once all were in place, the men returned to their horses, the shrine now fully visible.

It had been built on the edge of a cliff that overlooked a deep canyon. Ten paces from the shrine, a half-circle of melon-sized rocks separated the holy ground from that of the desert wilderness.

The shrine itself was like any other in Armania: a five-sided bronze platform with five pillars that held up a pointed roof. In the center of the clearing between the altar and rock barrier stood a bronze pole of the god the shrine represented. This shrine honored Barthos, and it was Barthos's likeness that stared down at Wilek now. The god of soil had a man's body and a canine's

head with long pointed ears, a shaggy mane, and three eyes. Wilek looked up into those eyes and shuddered.

Inside the shrine, a chest-high box had been built over a trapdoor. That door opened to a chute that carried the offering down a steep slope into the sulfurous canyon of Barthos's realm. The sight of the box brought a memory of small eyes peering over the top, small hands gripping the ledge, the Pontiff prying those hands loose so his brother would fall.

Movement shook Wilek away from the haunting past. Pontiff Rogedoth and Wilek's father exited the carriage and walked forward. The king, hugely overweight, was in his late sixties, ill, and rarely walked anymore, preferring his rollchair. Rogedoth was a decade younger, though his hardened expression made him look as old as the king. The men stepped over the rock barrier and approached the pole. They knelt before it and muttered a prayer. When they finished, four guards were called forth to help the king stand. Then he and the Pontiff walked around the pole five times before ascending the shrine. In the center of the platform, they turned and looked out at the men.

"Bring the offering," Father yelled, his voice as large as his ego.

Two guards went to the back of the cart and set about removing the convict from the cage. This was no simple task, as the "offerings" nearly always fought back.

"No!" The convict backed into the corner of his cage, as far from the guards as possible. Torchlight glistened in eyes wild with fear.

The guards called forth two more, who jabbed pikes between the iron bars at the man's back until he had no choice but to move toward the opening.

The first guards caught his arms and pulled him from the cage, dragged him toward the shrine. The others followed.

"No! Please!" The man dug his bare feet into the chalky gray dirt. "Don't put me in there. I'll serve you. I'll do anything!"

Wilek closed his eyes and reminded himself that Athos, god of justice, had answered his prayers that Father would only sacrifice criminals deserving of death. This man was guilty. Still, Wilek wanted to be far away from this place, in his bed, tangled in Lebetta's comforting arms.

"Assume the formation," the king yelled.

Wilek looked up. The guards had the convict inside the barrier now, on his knees before the Barthos pole. Wilek nudged Foxaro toward the line of rocks. Father demanded his son occupy the very center of the arc. This was considered the best position one could have short of the honor bestowed on

the Pontiff and king in conducting the ceremony. One more small sign Wilek hoped meant he'd be declared Heir.

King Echad didn't believe in the right of first blood. He would choose his Heir when he was ready and not a moment sooner. With two sons of age and a third nearly so, the longer he tarried in making a decision, the more divided the realm of Armania became. Hopefully Father would declare Wilek his Heir soon and end the matter.

Kal rode up on Wilek's right. Agmado Harton, Wilek's new backman, appeared on his left and, thankfully, remained silent. The muscular nineteen-year-old had only been serving Wilek these past two weeks since Wilek's previous backman had moved to Grayswood to marry. This was Harton's first time attending the offering, and Wilek had warned the chatty young backman to be silent until it was over.

The other King's Guards moved their horses until, side by side, they formed a wide arc along the rock barrier.

"Prepare the offering," the king yelled.

The pikemen prodded the convict in the back, and he cried out as the sharp weapons forced him to his feet. He began walking around the pole with the guards, five times as was customary before approaching the shrine.

As the convict walked, the Pontiff spoke. "We, the children of man, sit in the shadow of Barthos's glory. Our sins bind us in misery and we deserve his wrath. Barthos shakes the foundations of the earth again and again to warn us of his displeasure. He casts the shadow of death over his children to remind us to revere him."

Wilek held in his contempt. No god forced the king to make these offerings. They were fueled by superstition. Something Wilek was powerless to fight.

"Barthos alone can lift this shadow," Rogedoth continued. "Only he can still the ground, can save us from our afflictions, can deliver us from the grave. We thank Barthos for his kindness. We proclaim his wonders to all who have ears."

Rosâr Echad looked down to the guards. "Bring forth the offering."

The guards and the convict had finished circling the pole and approached the platform. When they reached the steps, the convict shied back. Another jab of a pike sent him scrambling up the steps until he stood between Father and the Pontiff.

The convict fell to his knees and clutched the hem of Father's velvet robes. "Rosâr, have mercy! I beg you. Don't send me to Barthos." He fell forward and hugged the king's ankles.

Father lost his balance and grabbed hold of one of the bronze pillars to keep from falling. "Get him off me!" he yelled.

The guards pried away the convict. It took some doing, but they finally managed to drive the man to the other side of the platform and into the chute box. The convict gingerly touched the shards of broken glass that had been set along the top edge of the chute box a few years back.

No place to hold on anymore. Wilek pushed away the unwelcome thought and tried to think again about Lebetta.

"You have been convicted of wrongdoing and sentenced to die," Father said. "Tonight you will atone for yourself and all Armania."

"Not The Gray. Please! Anywhere but The Gray. I beg you, Holy Rosâr, have mercy!"

Rogedoth lifted his gaze to the Barthos pole. "Here is our exchange, Barthos! Here is our substitute. Here is our atonement. This man will go to death so that we might earn your favor and proceed to peace and long life." The Pontiff yanked down the lever that opened the trapdoor. The convict dropped, yelped, reached for the jagged top of the chute box.

He did not hold on long.

As he slid down the chute, his scream stabbed through Wilek, who swallowed and eased Foxaro back a step. The man's cries and pleas continued as he slid toward the bottom of the canyon, but the clarity of his words was drowned by the growing distance.

Now they waited.

Gâzar, god of the Lowerworld, take him swiftly.

Time passed and the men grew restless. They ignored the convict's distant imploring and began to talk and joke with one another.

"Is it over?" Harton whispered.

"No," Wilek said. "We must wait for Barthos to accept the offering."

"What if he doesn't?" Harton asked.

"He always does." Wilek had witnessed over two hundred sacrifices.

"Gods," Harton said. "They don't do anything like this in Highcliff."

"Welcome to the court of Rosâr Echad," Kal said, his tone tinged in disgust that only Wilek would recognize from having known him so long.

Something rattled in the distance.

"Is that a snake?" Hart asked, eyes wide.

"Silence!" Rogedoth yelled, then lowered his voice. "He comes."

The men fell mute. The only sounds were the nickers and slapping tails of

the horses, the steady hiss of the mist against the torches' flames, the convict's distant pleas, and the rattling.

The rattling rose in pitch until it became the familiar, maniacal screeching cackle that frequented Wilek's nightmares. The sound intensified. Foxaro's ears twitched.

The screeching stopped.

A breath of silence.

A shriek pierced the night, horrible and lingering: the cry of a man being eaten alive.

Wilek gritted his teeth and scratched Foxaro's withers, pretending he was back in Everton outside the stables, getting ready for a ride to the beach. Foxaro loved to run on the wet sand where the air was cool.

"Your Highness." Kal nudged his arm. "It's over."

Wilek jumped, exhaled a shaky breath, sickened by the eerie silence. He glanced at Harton. His backman clutched the pommel of his saddle, face pale, eyes haunted and staring past the shrine.

King Echad might force his son to attend the monthly offerings, but once they were over, Wilek was always the first to leave.

"Let's go." Wilek backed up Foxaro from the stone barrier until he had room to turn. The King's Guards urged their mounts to part, and Wilek kicked his heels into Foxaro's flanks. The animal took off through the throng of blue, red, and black uniforms, as eager as Wilek to leave.

As Foxaro carried him away, the mist dampened his face, and soon his hair clung to his cheeks. He did not slow until Foxaro carried him out of The Gray and into the moonlight.

He found the road and waited for Kal and Harton to catch up. He did not wait long. Hooves pounded the dry desert. Kal appeared and reined his horse in front of Wilek's.

"Are you well?" Kal asked.

"Same as always," Wilek said.

They let their horses walk along the road toward the lights of Camden. In the distant blackness, rivers of orange fire snaked down the foothills of Mount Radu. The last earthquake had destroyed two dozen homes in the mountain village outside of Dacre. Hearths had caught fire, and then, due to the dryness of the area, the hills had too.

Harton shot out of The Gray and circled Kal and Wilek's horses, coming alongside Wilek's left. "That was harrowing. You do that every month?"

“So long as the earthquakes continue,” Wilek said. “My father fears that Barthos is angry he stopped human sacrifices at the end of the Centenary War.”

“Did the king really kill his own sons?” Hart asked. “Because that’s what I’ve heard, and I—”

“*Harton*,” Kal snapped.

The young man leaned forward in his saddle to see around Wilek to Kal. “What?”

“I don’t mind questions, Kal,” Wilek said. “It’s good to question. It’s something I intend to do more of if I ever become king.” Something his father should do more of. He accepted every word his corrupt advisors uttered—never bothered to confirm a single fact for himself.

“You mean *when* you become king,” Harton said.

“No, Hart, I mean *if*. Don’t mistake me. The chance I’ll someday rule is greater than ever before. But my father remains an impulsive, superstitious man, and I often fail to please him. To answer your question, yes. Years ago the king did indeed sacrifice three of his sons to win Barthos’s favor. We were at war then, and the Pontiff convinced my father that only the most precious offerings would appease the god of the very soil we were fighting over. Father rose to the occasion and encouraged many of his most trusted men to do the same. Fifty were fed to Barthos that day.” Wilek paused to let that sink in. “These earthquakes have my father worried. If they should continue . . . who knows? He may decide to make another *precious* offering to his favorite god.”

“His?” Harton asked. “You don’t serve Barthos?”

“I have chosen my five,” Wilek said. “Barthos is not one of them.” He would never worship the god who took his brother.