

Dead to the World - Sacrifice

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Prologue

The rain was pouring down in all its might, buckets fell from heaven along with purple lightning that touched the ground. The purple colour during each flash gave the scene a non realistic effect. It was like staring into a different world, a different reality. This world, forsaken by God since the dawn of the new age, was home to a new breed beside humans. Monsters.

Lying in wait for his newest prey, a Greptodon, Kane was hiding just beneath a projected path the monster was taking. A beast, six meter in height. It was two legged and it had massive back legs, bristling with muscles. Its skin was a black leathery colour, very thick on the legs and lower body. The chest area was a light grey, stark in contrast to the rest of the body. It was very vulnerable at the center of its chest, in the middle of the light area where there was just skin and meat. It had unusually long arms with sharp claws at the end. The arms were covered in dark green scales, but they were still as flexible as a human beings. The only exposed area was at the joints, between its upper and lower arm, just a few centimeters. The neck was elongated and also covered in green scales, making it a safe spot for the thing. The head looked like a slab of stone. It was almost flat, eyes on top of its head and a very wide mouth, full of sharp, rending teeth. The tail was covered in small spiked areas, used to crush and pierce opponents at the same time. It was strolling casually through the plains, as if being its owner. Greptodonts were pretty rare, but that's what made them a nice target. The cost to payout factor.

Kane was as silent as the night, unmoving, unwavering. It walked right past him, almost crushing his head with its huge feet. The camouflage net he had laid on top of him had done its part, now it was time to get out and do something. He slowly pushed it aside and kneeled, observing its stride and behaviour for a few more moments.

"Soul forge, weaponize!" he yelled under his breath. Two long swords appeared a feet away in front of him, floating in mid air. He took the swords and stood up, getting ready for a sprint.

"Blood forge, incantation!" he said, a bit louder. His veins burst open and a small quantity of blood mixed with the weapons, going from a bright white to a light reddish colour. The weapons were glowing and vibrating in his hands, making for a strange sensation. It had taken him so many years of practice and self taught fighting to finally master soul and blood forging, but it was the one thing that kept him alive in this world.

The greptodon stopped walking and turned around immediately upon noticing Kane's presence, opening its mouth and snapping its jaws at him. Its legs were visibly tensing up up and folding in on themselves, partially. A second later, the greptodon launched itself towards Kane, mouth wide open, snapping its jaws as it was flying through the air. At the last possible moment, Kane ducked to the side, stabbing through the air the greptodon was traversing. Kane's swords connected and he got swept away accidentally, flying through the air for a dozen meter, still hanging from the monster's torso, connected through the swords that were sticking out of it, crashing to the ground just beside it, his hands still gripping the swords. The monster

was laying on the ground quietly, like nothing was amiss in the world, until Kane stood up and tried to pry his swords out. No luck there. The swords wouldn't budge at all. A slight nauseating feeling started creeping up his body, from his guts to his head. No matter how hard he pulled and prodded, not an inch. 'Shit' he thought to himself. 'Guess i have no other choice but to do this, u damn thing!' Kane yelled as he hit the monster with his foot. Slowly it was getting up and he had no other choice.

"Blood forge, blood surge!" Kane yelled and more blood was drawn out of him, the weapon starting to glow with a darker red hue, only a hint of white remaining. "Dont make me go to the next level u damned beast" Kane yelled again. He was starting to hyperventilate, blood rushing to his head, big drops of sweat running down his forehead, neck and eyelids. He took the swords again in his hands and tried pulling them out. Slowly they gave way and he managed to pull them out just as the thing stood up. The extra added amount of blood drawn from Kane had empowered the swords and they had begun vibrating violently, so the meat around the swords was ripped loose as he had pulled the swords out. As its legs and the lower body were huge, it had difficulties getting up, which worked to Kane's advantage. He jumped backwards for about a meter as the greptodon swiped the area where he stood a moment ago with its long arms and huge claws. It kept swiping at him until Kane crashed the arms to the ground with two hits from his swords, the long claws embedding themselves in the muddy soil, making it harder to pull them out. Kane ran up to the monster and jumped on top of its long arms, running upwards all the way to its head. The scales on its arms were a blessing, as they gave him the necessary foothold to run up without falling. As Kane was running up the arms, he tried to cut its torso, but he failed as he was in a bad spot, so instead he went for the head. He hit the neck once with full force, no luck there, the blow just deflected and he almost fell off. The greptodon managed to get one arm out of the muddy soil and slashed at Kane, straight with the claws extended. Kane jumped sideways at the last moment and the greptodon hit itself at the other arms joint, ripping its own arm off. It howled in pain as it thrashed around. Grey ooze spilling out from the wound together with a horrific sound, like cutting an animals neck. The greptodon started changing colour, as for why, Kane had no idea, nor did he care. All he wanted was for the greptodont to just die. Kane ran around the thing, towards its back, cutting at the kneecaps, making the giant stagger forwards onto its only hand, falling through with the force of the immense weight of the monsters body behind it. Kane jumped up on its back and carved his way up towards its head again, the thing trying to shake him off its back, but failing at the attempt. The lost blood was getting to Kane's head by now, so he needed to finish this as fast as possible. He jumped upwards one last time, placing his swords next to each other, bringing them down on top of its unarmored head. The swords dug in a dozen centimeters deep, stopping at its neck, the head splitting into three parts, a fountain of ooze spraying out. Kane started feeling dizzy and his sight was already becoming fuzzy. "Shit. I really overdid it this time. I have kept the blood surge on too long, but if i hadn't i would have died" he murmured to himself. He felt dizzier with the moment until he lost consciousness and landed next to the greptodon, hitting his head on a rock.

Everything was the same, every time Kane fell asleep. The same dream kept on creeping into his vision. A giant monster was ravaging the land and he stood there, swords in hand facing off against the demon. There were more shapes moving in unison with him, fighting the giant monster, but they were blurred out, everyone

except him. The whole group dies each time Kane closes his eyes, but each time differently. However, after wiping out the whole group except Kane, the demon faced him and smiled.

"It is almost time. You and me will meet very soon" the demon said and smiled, manically. The laughing kept ringing inside of Kanes eardrums, deafening him until he awoke. His head was throbbing and he was in a world of pain. There was dried blood in his hair and on his forehead and face. How long had he been out? And what the hell was up with that demon and the difference in the dream this time? Did it actually mean anything? Anything more than just a dream. A nightmare would fit the description far better. Kane shook his head and slowly tried getting up, his head a mess. His orientation was off and instead of pushing himself off the ground he just crashed into it again.

"What the fuck happened to me?" he groaned, laying on the ground, blood streaming down his head. He looks down next to himself and sees blood on a big rock. His head is still throbbing with pain and instantly his vision is blurred again. "Must have hit my head on the damn rock when i fell out of exhaustion" he said to himself. He tried to stand up but nausea floods him over. He falls down again and lays down for a while, staring up at the purple haze. Suddenly he remembers fighting the greptodon and he look around to see if its still there. To his relief it was laying unmoving a meter away from him. Good, all that trouble only to see it not there would have been a mighty blow to his ego. After all, greptodons had a few pieces that sold mighty good. Kane decided to lay down and rest for a bit longer.

His mind wandered off to the dream he just had. Twenty years have already passed since he was left alone. The helplessness he felt back then, the sorrow, the sadness. Soon he will have his revenge, just a bit longer. All the times he yearned for love, affection, for someone to take him in their arms and say "Everything will be all right, son", but there was no one. He just managed to ruin his own mood, how typical. So many times did he have thoughts about letting himself just die during combat, let his blood get used up and leave this God forsaken place. Tears started falling down his cheeks, he could not help it. There was just this empty void inside of him that could not be filled. His parents had left him as a seven year old and gone off to do the kings bidding. Ever since he had to look after himself, fend for himself, live alone, as an outsider.

After a few long heavy minutes, he tried sitting up again, this time succeeding, without the nausea and discomfort. He stood up and walked over to the greptodon. To his displeasure, a little wolfling was eating the head of the greptodon, where he had sliced it in multiple pieces.

"Why you little rascal, shoo, shoo!" he yelled at it. It just looked up at him with big yellow eyes and started growling. Damn the thing was cute. No way he could kill it. He tried kicking it to make it go away, but then, suddenly, it materialized a bigger version of itself in front of it.

"What the fuck?! It soul forged?" he yelled more to himself than anyone else present. It looked at him longingly. The weaponized version had a will of its own. It walked up to him and started licking his hand.

"By the Gods. What the fuck is going on here?" Kane murmured to himself. It drooped its head slightly to the side and shot him a glance, staring right into his eyes. "Does it understand what i am saying?" he asked himself.

"Hey little guy, do you understand me?" Kane asked. It nodded its head. What the hell is going on, Kane thought to himself again, thinking about what to ask next.

"Can you speak?" Kane asked again incredulously.

"Sure i can" it answered. Kane fainted at that exact moment.

"Wake up" a voice yelled. Kane's face was all wet for some reason. Was someone licking him? He opened his eyes to see the little thing licking his forehead. He screamed like a little girl and backed away from it.

"You! How the hell can you talk!" Kane yelled at the little creature. It was rather ironic how Kane did not find it strange to see a ten meter monster and kill it, but a talking wolfling made him squeal like a little girl. Right.

"I can not. We are communicating telepathically. Well, at least i am, you are just yelling around, mind you." it said and snorted. Kane just looked at it, incredulously and sighed. Man, he did not need any more things happening in his life that he could not explain. He had enough on his plate already. But then again, a wolfling who can talk, and, mind you, use soul forge, now that was rare as much as a behemoth, and those things are rare, like so rare that you can live a thousand lifetimes and not find one rare.

"Why did you not attack me while i was unconscious?" Kane asked confused. "I was easy prey, an easy meal for you."

"Why would i eat my master?" he replied even more confused then Kane was.

"Huh? Master? What the hell you talking about pup?".

"I do not know. I just came to be, right here next to you, beside this big dinner. You were so kind to prepare it for me, i was hungry as hell. Say, what is hell? I just say stuff i do not know what they mean, but they are in my head."

"You came to be? How the hell can you just appear?" Kane asked. He was silent, no reply. So was Kane for a long moment and then he decided to check his own soul forge.

"Soul forge, weaponize!" i yelled. A bright light erupted from his chest, forming into two swords. Nothing beside the light seemed any different. Kane took the swords in his hands, and they were lighter. He swirled them in his hands with ease. He went

over to the greptodon and tried cutting its neck. The swords cleaved through with ease, like a knife through butter. What the hell was going on?!

"Master, how should i call you?" the wolfling asked.

"Don't master me you, you, you thing. Whatever you are, you are not normal!"

"Neither are you, master. Should i just keep calling you master, master?"

"Stop it with the master already! My name is Kane, not master. By the way, am i the only one who can hear you?"

"Probably, Kane. I have no idea as of yet, but, what my mind tells me, yes, you are the only one."

"Can you hear me?" Kane thought to himself, sending the thought towards the wolfling.

"Yes i can" he replied. Neat. This was beginning to look good. A wolfling, and he was his master.

"He can soul forge, is annoying as hell, and we can communicate telepathically. Hell yes. The assassination will be a cakewalk" Kane said to himself.

"I will call you Alpha." Kane thought towards him.

"Thank you for naming me, Kane. This way we will function better."

"Tell me what you know about yourself? Any important memories?"

"What i know is, i somehow, am a part of you. I do not know how, but i came to be the moment you fell unconscious. I am your slave, and will follow any instruction you give me. I will give my life to protect yours. That is all i know and am programmed to do" he replied. A part of him? How? Hmm, somehow this didn't make any sense, but all right. He did not mind having such a handy beast with him.

"Kane, can i finish my meal?" he asked. Man he was so funny. He was not much bigger than a month year old pup. But he seemed so mature and serious.

"Sure you can Alpha. Dig in" Kane replied. "Make sure to leave the bone marrow and any gems you might find for me, it fetches an insane price if done correctly. O hell, he sure did dig in. Within a few minutes the whole, maybe eight ton greptodon was gone, only half a dozen small gems and a single large gem were all that was worth it from today's hunt. Kanes jaw almost hit the ground when he saw what had happened. With a loud burp, the wolf had grown about ten times its size, roughly a meter and a half in height and two in length. He was huge and looked menacingly. Kane liked it immediately.. He was amazing, and he was all his. "I will not ask where all that meat went, nor will i ask how u grew this big in a few minutes, all i will say is, i love you already. You sure will come in handy" Kane chuckled to

himself like a maniac. "Let us go" Kane said finally after he straightened his thoughts.

"Where are we going?" he asked in return.

"To kill a king" Kane replied. "That is, after we made some preparations and i tie up some loose ends."

"Oh my, how kinky" he said as he chuckled. Damn, he frightens me. He has a sense of humour and is dangerous. I love it.

Two figures were standing atop of a hill overlooking the scene that had taken place, unnoticed by anyone.

"Finally you did it" one figure said. "I can't wait to see what you are gonna do. What you will make for yourself, my son".

"Our son, Nemesis. He is not just your son. Remember that very well!" the other person said with a certain tone in her voice, as if threatening. Whatever, my dear. He will be a marvelous asset when he grows enough to do what he was destined to. The two figures laughed and disappeared with a gush of wind.

Chapter 1 - Homitage

As Kane was walking back towards the town of Homitage, Alpha at his back, he saw more and more people walking the roads. Homitage was a decently sized harbour town located to the east of Kravnje. It housed roughly about thirty to forty thousand citizens with a decent standard. There weren't many poor citizens, mainly because anyone who wanted to work, could actually find something to do and be paid for it. The group of people Kane just passed by seemed to be some type of merchants. Their horses were pulling long wagons that were covered by a fabric so he couldn't guess what they were carrying. He greeted them as they passed each other, the merchants shooting them wary glances, hurrying past them to avoid the big wolf walking just behind him. Kane chuckled and shook his head, loving the wolf more by the moment. Neither talked to each other, Alpha not as to avoid drawing attention, Kane to avoid strange stares.

As they walked up to the guard house, just outside the city gates, they approached but stopped and drew their weapons as they noticed the big wolf.

"Is that your wolf?" One of the guards asked, stepping a meter closer than the others. He must be the guards captain, but Kane wasn't impressed at the sight of him. He stepped up to the captain and looked into his eyes.

"Yes he is. Any problem with that, captain?" Kane asked, rather sarcastically. The captain gave him a nasty look, as if talking to a beggar. The fear, however, didn't leave his face and Kane knew it. The anger on the captain's face grew and he looked like he would explode. Luckily for him, he just turned around and waved him off, sticking out his hand, palm down. The universal gesture for bribe. Kane shook his head slightly, took a piece of silver out of his satchel and put it into the captain's hand, closing his hand around the captain's and squeezing. Kane was disgusted by the corrupted officials, but he had to play their little game. For a while longer that is.

As Kane and Alpha walked under the castle gate, a busy atmosphere replaced the previous. The streets were full of people, workers, merchants, servants, horses and other animals. Alpha walked up beside Kane and sent mental note.

"Can i eat them?" He asked with a hint of anticipation. Kane stopped in his track and stared at Alpha in amazement.

"Ofcourse not! You can't eat just anything you like, you stupid wolf" Kane yelled. The crowd around him stopped and stared at him. "What?!" Kane yelled and stomped forward, heading to the guild house. The guild house was located at the far end of the town, at the harbour. The reason being that Kane was going there without first stopping by at his own home was to gather the money the kill would bring him. He had gathered some parts that were in extreme demand and would probably net him a months pay hunting smaller game. As he was walking through the streets with Alpha walking behind him, the gasps nor the staring seemed to stop. Everyone noticing the wolf behind him stopped and gaped at the big wolf who was trailing him. Kane smiled inwardly, glad about the envy the others felt for him.

As they walked up to the guild house, Kane stopped just in front, searching for something with his eyes. He took a moment to appreciate the sheer beauty of the building every time he visited. It was just marvelous. The guildhouse looked like a miniature castle with a keep. There was a one meter moat dug around it, six towers and the gate. The gate looked far heavier than it was, and he could easily lift it himself, but he never longed to show off his strength, it would just attract problems, problems he didn't need right now. Kane and Alpha crossed the little bridge and through the big door into the guildhouse.

There were about forty people scattered around the guild room, most drinking at the bar, a few sitting at the lounge and some delivering items and cashing them in. After the door slammed close behind them the whole room became silent as a grave. Everyone was staring at them, some were whispering between themselves. Kane strode casually towards the exchange as if nothing was amiss. Alpha stopped a meter behind him, sitting on his bottom, his head swiveling around, checking for trouble which never came.

"I would like to exchange these items" Kane said as he threw down the pieces of the greptodon which were valuable. The exchange clerk looked at him, baffled. Not knowing what to do he ran off and a few moments later the manager came waltzing behind him. When he saw who it was his tension evaporated but renewed upon seeing the wolf sitting behind him.

"Mister Kane, what a pleasure to see you today. I see you have found some... company?" he managed to utter after a few unpleasurable moments later. Kane just smiled and nodded his head.

"The money, would you?" Kane added. The manager, a thick, short man with a large mustache bowed three times in succession, hurriedly and motioned for the clerk to open the door and let Kane in. Kane was unsure of how to proceed but decided to follow the short man into his private office. Alpha stood up but waited in front of the door, pacing around impatiently. Kane just sent him a mental wait for me and Alpha sat down again, yawning. It was a few long moments before the crowd went back to semi normal. Chatter sprang up again slowly, but the topic were Kane and his new companion.

"Please take a seat" said the manager as they entered the room. Kane did so and even poured himself a drink, which the manager frowned to but didn't say anything. He took his seat opposite Kane and put one hand into the other. He put up a fake smile and started. "These items are of high value. Would you care to tell me how you got them?" Kane frowned, annoyance showing on his face.

"I killed a greptodont. That is how i got them" he said with a strong voice. The manager almost flinched at the power behind Kane's words, but did good to hide it.

"Please, forgive me. There have been others who had claimed similar things but brought us stolen goods. We do know that you are our esteemed customer, but still, when it involves such outrageous numbers we have to make sure, you understand, yes?" the thick man said hurriedly. Kane lifted one eyebrow and asked in return.

“How outrageous?” and leaned back on his seat. The guild manager put on a sly smile and replied.

“We have a request for the item at a thousand gold coins. Even a finders fee for my poor self, of ten gold coins if the item is delivered within time” he said openly. Kane barely managed to hide his shock and awe. A thousand gold coins? That was more than he had made for all these years combined. His total savings were two hundred and seventy five gold coins and three hundred silver coins. Who would have posted such an outrageous amount for greptodon ingredients? The king? He laughed inwardly, maybe that would be his ticket inside, to finally do what he longed for all this time.

“When will i receive the money?” Kane asked calmly.

“As soon as you give me the ingredients i will hand out your money, mister Kane” the manager said, touching his mustache in a sadistic manner. How irritating and ugly for a sight that made, Kane thought to himself.

“Show me the money, manager” Kane said, putting the items in front of him on the table. The managers eyes became golden coins, Kane would have sworn if he hadn’t known better. The money reflected in them as soon as the manager saw the items. He stood up and went over to a vault, turned a few valves in opposite directions and the vault opened. The manager walked in and took out two big bags which he laid out in front of Kane.

“Here you go. Pleasure doing business with you, as always” the manager said, going for the items.

“Not so fast. Let me count the gold first and see if its the real thing. Something about this deal seems off. I assume you have no issue against it?” Kane said as he pushed away the managers hands. The manager showed a face of incredulity, insult and outrage at the same time. But he nodded and sat back down. Kane took one of the bags and turned it over on the table, examining the heap and biting into random gold coins to see if it really was gold. The first bag counted exactly five hundred pieces and every piece tested was real. Kane then turned over the second bag and poured the coins onto the table as well. Much to his surprise, three poisonous snakes were also a part of the bag and they immediately went for him, launching themselves towards him, mouth open, fangs out. Luckily for him, his reflexes were out of this world and he never had problems dodging anything, so this was also not an issue for him. He grabbed the snakes in midair and hurled them at the manager, who squealed like a pig as the snakes injected their deadly poison into his bloodstream. Mere moments later, the bites became blue and the area around the bites went from a light to a dark blue colour within the minute. The poor manager first started breathing heavily and then convulsing, throwing up all over himself as he choked on his vomit and died. Guards came running into the room, weapons raised. Kane just put up his hands and kept sitting on the chair, not moving a muscle as not to provoke the soldiers. He could easily take them out, but it wasn’t in his own interest to make a scene here. He rather liked the harbour town and enjoyed its women even more. One of the guards came over and examined the dead manager and at that

exact moment a crash was heard from the vault. The guards turned towards it and approached it slowly. The words that followed were a shock for everyone present.

"Guild master?" the guards yelled at the same time. Kane looked over and to his surprise, the guildmaster was laying sprawled on the floor, his hands and feet tied up, a gag in his mouth. "Untie him, hurry up!" one guard yelled to the other. What a fuss, Kane thought to himself. And all i wanted here was just my money.

Some half an hour later, Kane was sitting in the guild masters office, across from the guild master who looked better than half an hour ago.

"You sure saved me, mister Kane. I have no idea how to ever repay you" he said. Kane bowed slightly and smiled.

"No need to thank me, i honestly was just protecting myself. I am glad that the circumstances were as they were, otherwise i might have found myself in quite the mess, guild master" Kane replied. "I rather like to avoid trouble, but i do not mind getting into trouble if it means helping others, or in this case, the whole guild. Speaking of which, what happened?" Kane asked sincerely. The guild master leaned his old back to the leaning chair and sighed.

"The greptodont ingredients really are worth the money he told you. When i told the manager about the request we had gotten, he put me out stone cold, as his clerk had entered the room we were sitting in, tied me up and put me into the vault. I... am getting old, my dear child. I trusted the wrong person and that was it. That is the whole story, nothing fancy. I am damn happy that you were the one bringing the items and not some scoundrel or i would have been dead for sure and he gone with the money" the guildmaster explained.

"What stopped him from just taking the money and leaving with it?" Kane asked in return.

"You see, anyone leaving the guild house gets checked. The employees get checked even worse than the manager or me. No one can bring out such a quantity of money and be employed at this place without a very strict document. He couldn't get it as i have to be the one to put it together. No one even knows it exists, hence there is your answer" the guild master replied.

"I see. The amount would be too big for him to be available to carry out of her by himself, and if he had tried to, there would have been a reckoning. But i still don't get why he tried to kill me. Obviously, he would have had the same problem" Kane replied.

"Not really. He might have said you tried to kill him but got bitten instead and he automatically inherits whatever you have here at the guild. A guild managers word weighs a lot, so we probably would have believed him. How wrong i was. The greed of mankind weighs heavy on this world shoulders" the old man said and sighed, drooping his head and shoulders. "Maybe the Gods left us for that reason, among a few others. We are a hungry, selfish, greedy, warmongering breed. All we desire is this world's pleasures. Of course, not every single one of us is like that, but most are.

Please, forgive this old man's ramblings. It is not every day i get to talk to people, especially those willing to listen" he finished and stood up, holding his hand out. Kane sent him a warm smile and took his hand, standing up.

"Thank you for sharing your wisdom, guild master, and for explaining what had happened. I am glad i was of service and even more that it saved someones life. Now, if you would excuse me, i have a lot of gold to spend" Kane said and laughed, taking the gold bags with him. He waved once more to the old man and left the room. Alpha was silently awaiting his return at the entrance. Again, upon his entry the room went quiet. He didn't give it any thought as he walked out of the guild house, Alpha following him closely.

"What now?" Alpha asked.

"Now, my new friend, we go celebrate" Kane said and laughed out loud. "I will buy you the biggest cow or bull or whatever you would like to eat, and as for myself, i will eat and drink until i die.

Chapter 2 - Complications

That evening as Kane and Alpha were indulging themselves in this world's pleasures inside of the taverns, the door crashed open and a man came crashing in. The tavern's mood dropped to zero instantly upon seeing the man. He was cut up and bleeding everywhere. He managed another few steps and fell over, probably out of exhaustion. One of the tavern maids came running up to him and another two customers stood up and helped her put the man on the chair, slapping his face to wake him up.

"What has happened to you?" one of the men asked when the torn up fellow woke a few moments later. The poor soul started to cry and hit himself, tearing at his hair and the two men had to restrain him in order to protect him from his own actions.

"They have them!" he yelled out, crying. "They have our women and daughters! They even killed most of the women and children!" the crying and yelling kept on going.

"Who has done what to where?" one of the men dared to ask.

"Ithice. They burned it down to rubble and killed all the men and older folk outright, then they raped and pillaged what they could. My dear girl, they have her. Someone has to go help her! I beg of you!" the man pleaded. The two men just shook their heads and murmured something. In the meanwhile, the tavern owner had come out of his room and was standing at the counter, looking over the whole crowd, spotting Kane and walked over to him with heavy footsteps, adding to the effect.

"Mister Kane, we all know your courage, strength and fierceness. Is there any way we could convince you to check out this man's story and verify it. If it is so, we need to do something about it! Immediately the whole room was staring at him, hope in their eyes. Kane just went on eating as well as did Alpha, downing the roast goat he ate. What seemed an eternity, the food was gone and Kane looked up.

"Sure" he answered as he stood up, all eyes on him. Kane walked over to the crying man and kneeled beside him and whispered in his ear. "What do you want me to do to the bandits?" The man looked over at him, incredulously as if he was saying he was a monster and was going to eat him.

"Kill them all?" the man whispered back. Kane nodded and said

"Consider it done" and walked out of the tavern, not even paying his food bill. He knew it would be awaiting him so no need to walk back in and ashamed himself after the cool exit he just made.

Outside Alpha looked up at him and asked

"How do we proceed?"

"Ithice is some fifty kilometres to the southwest. It is a small town in between bigger ones where travelers usually spend the night, rest or just get food and be on

their way. In other words, the perfect target for bandits. We go sleep for a few hours and then we run. I have decent stamina so i think i could run the stretch within a few hours” Kane replied in strides as they walked towards a small house to the side of the bigger buildings all around it.

“I don’t need any rest” Alpha said and Kane snapped back at him

“But i do. I’m just a human being, wolf!” Immediately he was sorry at the rebuke but he kept his quiet. He opened the door to his home and strode in, leaving the door wide open for Alpha to join him inside. Alpha just did so and closed the door behind him with a flick of his long tail. Kane turned on some candles and sat down on his bed, staring at the wolf. He was magnificent. He was black as the night, red eyes gleaming in the dark. Snow white paws which looked somehow strange, more like hoofs. His whole body was muscled ending with a white tail. What a strange sight to behold, he was sure. There was something noble about the creature, but Kane thought better of it than to talk now. “We talk tomorrow during our trip. Get some rest, even if you don’t need it. In approximately four hours wake me up. Can you do that?” he asked Alpha who just snorted and curled up on the floor beside the door.

As Kane and Alpha were walking down the road, Kane was telling Alpha about his past, well, more like sending thoughts over, but it was easier and better that way they had figured out. People might think he was crazy, or well, crazier than he already was. Alpha was listening patiently, only howling softly whenever something sad or painful was said. It was as if they were two parts of a single whole.

“So our lifes goal is to assassinate the king?” he asked.

“I guess so. He is the biggest fault my parents left me as an orphan. I was forced to fend for myself my whole life, the past 20 years”. He drooped his head a bit and howled again as if in pain as well. Kane’s soul felt burdened as well in a weird way. It was such a long time ago, but it still hurt whenever he thought about it. All his life he had been a loner, and now suddenly he had a companion, a friend.

Some running and more time later they arrived at Ithice, or at least where Kane thought it would be. Instead of a village he heard the sound of a waterfall. “Let us go take a bath” Kane said anxiously, starting to walk faster. Alpha jogged after him, catching up easily. As they arrived at the riverside they were stunned by its beauty. A small waterfall was pouring down into the river. Chiseled rock and plants, trees and flowers and wildlife all living in harmony at the same spot.

A two meter fish jumped out of the water and back in, leaving droplets in the air, falling down after the fish. It was as a sight out of a fairytale. Both Alpha and Kane were gazing at the sheer beauty, their jaws dropping almost to the floor. Before long Kane was naked and rand headfirst into the water, Alpha on his tail, longing for the big fish he had just seen pop up. The water felt almost divine. Exactly the right temperature, not too cold nor to warm. Kane swam towards the middle where he saw some bubbles coming out to the surface and dove down to see what was coming up. There was hot water coming out of a big gap in a rock and the hot water mixed with the cold coming down from waterfall to create this heaven on earth, or rather, in water.

"I could make a fortune with this" Kane said out loud. Alpha laughed mentally and Kane laughed with him, liking the sound of Alphas laughter. It sounded so innocent, but when Kane looked at him, shivers ran down his spine. He was huge, and he didn't even want to imagine what Alpha was capable of doing to him if he wanted.

"No need to worry, Kane. I am your slave, i am part of you. I will never harm you" he said. Shocked, Kane looked up at him. Alphas face was one of bewildered amusement, to a certain extent.

"U can read minds now too?" Kane murmured inwardly.

"Why yes. Did i not mention this before?" he said with a grin.

"Somehow it slipped your mind, i guess" Kane said . Not that it mattered much, even easier. Just think about it and he knows. How practical. "How about catching some fish, Alpha" Kane said. Immediately he dove and disappeared under water. Few moments later he appeared with what looked like the big two meter fish from earlier, clenched between his teeth. "Now that is what i call a catch!" Kane yelled in joy.

Kane swam towards the shore and walked up towards where he left his clothes, deciding not to put anything on before he dried as the weather was something you could only wish for. He walked around, gathering firewood. As he bent over to gather a few bigger branches, taking them in his arms, there was this gorgeous angel standing in front of him when he stood up again. She was standing there, innocently, staring at Kane's body. He had forgotten he had nothing on, but didn't seem to mind much as he regained his posture. She was a gorgeous brunette, with big round eyes, the colour of a dark abyss. I saw myself drown in her eyes just before she looked away. She was slim and seemed to have a rather fit physique. Her large breasts were showing through the white, wet shirt she had on. Beside it, she just had a ribbon around her neck, the rest of her body in plain view for all to enjoy. At that instant, Alpha joined me and as she saw him, she gasped at the sight of him and tried to turn around and run off, but tripped over a large branch, face planting into the muddy ground, her bare ass mooning at the world.

Chapter 2 - Complications

That evening as Kane and Alpha were indulging themselves in this world's pleasures inside of the taverns, the door crashed open and a man came crashing in. The tavern's mood dropped to zero instantly upon seeing the man. He was cut up and bleeding everywhere. He managed another few steps and fell over, probably out of exhaustion. One of the tavern maids came running up to him and another two customers stood up and helped her put the man on the chair, slapping his face to wake him up.

"What has happened to you?" one of the men asked when the torn up fellow woke a few moments later. The poor soul started to cry and hit himself, tearing at his hair and the two men had to restrain him in order to protect him from his own actions.

"They have them!" he yelled out, crying. "They have our women and daughters! They even killed most of the women and children!" the crying and yelling kept on going.

"Who has done what to where?" one of the men dared to ask.

"Ithice. They burned it down to rubble and killed all the men and older folk outright, then they raped and pillaged what they could. My dear girl, they have her. Someone has to go help her! I beg of you!" the man pleaded. The two men just shook their heads and murmured something. In the meanwhile, the tavern owner had come out of his room and was standing at the counter, looking over the whole crowd, spotting Kane and walked over to him with heavy footsteps, adding to the effect.

"Mister Kane, we all know your courage, strength and fierceness. Is there any way we could convince you to check out this man's story and verify it. If it is so, we need to do something about it! Immediately the whole room was staring at him, hope in their eyes. Kane just went on eating as well as did Alpha, downing the roast goat he ate. What seemed an eternity, the food was gone and Kane looked up.

"Sure" he answered as he stood up, all eyes on him. Kane walked over to the crying man and kneeled beside him and whispered in his ear. "What do you want me to do to the bandits?" The man looked over at him, incredulously as if he was saying he was a monster and was going to eat him.

"Kill them all?" the man whispered back. Kane nodded and said

"Consider it done" and walked out of the tavern, not even paying his food bill. He knew it would be awaiting him so no need to walk back in and ashamed himself after the cool exit he just made.

Outside Alpha looked up at him and asked

"How do we proceed?"

"Ithice is some fifty kilometres to the southwest. It is a small town in between bigger ones where travelers usually spend the night, rest or just get food and be on their way. In other words, the perfect target for bandits. We go sleep for a few hours and then we run. I have decent stamina so i think i could run the stretch within a few hours" Kane replied in strides as they walked towards a small house to the side of the bigger buildings all around it.

"I don't need any rest" Alpha said and Kane snapped back at him

"But i do. I'm just a human being, wolf!" Immediately he was sorry at the rebuke but he kept his quiet. He opened the door to his home and strode in, leaving the door wide open for Alpha to join him inside. Alpha just did so and closed the door behind him with a flick of his long tail. Kane turned on some candles and sat down on his bed, staring at the wolf. He was magnificent. He was black as the night, red eyes gleaming in the dark. Snow white paws which looked somehow strange, more like hoofs. His whole body was muscled ending with a white tail. What a strange sight to behold, he was sure. There was something noble about the creature, but Kane thought better of it than to talk now. "We talk tomorrow during our trip. Get some rest, even if you don't need it. In approximately four hours wake me up. Can you do that?" he asked Alpha who just snorted and curled up on the floor beside the door.

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"May i be of service, madam?" Kane mused. She was struggling to reply, trying to catch her breath. He could see her breathing more and more heavily, struggling to even stand up. Kane moved a few steps closer to her, with a smirk on his face. Easy prey, a gift from the gods, he didn't care either way. "Oh God, how i loved women" Kane thought to himself, already imagining himself on top of that lovely looking creature. What he especially loved, were godly creatures like her. She

was perfect, even good enough to be his wife, he thought to himself.. She moved a step backwards and tripped over a branch, laying flat on her back, one leg bent and up the other moved to the side. Between her legs was a cave of pleasure which needed to be explored. The sight of her womanhood was aroused Kane even more. She wanted to scream, Kane could see it in her eyes, but she did not dare to. She was too afraid what would happen to her. Kane loved every moment of it.

“What the hell are you staring at, creep!” the girl yelled. Her long hair was moving in waves as if crashing upon a cliff. Kane had taken a lot of women back in Homitage, but not one of them made him even want anything more than raw sex.

“I am looking at you” Kane replied to the girl, innocently. “You look like someone i should meet in a fancy place, take out for dinner and talk to. O and no need to scream, i am not going to do anything to you unless you try to do something like stabbing me with that little knife you are holding there. She flinched and released her hold on the knife she thought she had so perfectly hidden.

As Kane was observing the pretty girl, Alpha sent him a mental note that something was wrong, something felt off. Suddenly a dozen of arrows flew Kane’s way, all pinpointing his head. That is as far as they got, more or less. Due to Alphas warning, Kane had summoned his two swords and with a whirling motion he cut the arrows up in mid-air. There in the trees were a dozen bandits, bows drawn, aiming at him, again.

“I will give you one more chance to kill me, or i will come up there and kill all of you, one by one. Or would you rather i kill this fine young lady here?” Kane yelled out at the men hanging from the trees.

“We can not leave her to die here!” one voice said.

“If we do not run right away, we wont get away alive ourselves!” another said.

“Let’s beg him for mercy!” a third yelled.

“Mercy, no, you shall not have it. What would other people think of me if i let these ruffians get away” Kane said more to himself than the others present. Instead of indulging himself with the bait, he did the only other logical thing, kill them.

Kane rushed towards where the voices were coming from and climbed up the tree one was sitting on, using his blades to propel him upwards and keep his balance. As he got up to a thick branch one of the archers was sitting on, Kane just smiled, spread his arms apart and brought the swords together, cutting him in three pieces, his head hit the ground first, then the upper torso and then his lower body. Blood was everywhere, combined with guts that got entangled in the branches. Kane’s blades glowed red immediately, as if excited from all the blood it just had absorbed. “What a strange sensation? Why is this happening? It never happend when i killed monsters” Kane thought to himself. He stood still for a moment, thinking about it. Never before had his blades become excited when drawing blood until now. What had happened to him during the greptodon fight. First Alpha, then the swords and now this.

Using the opening Kane gave them, the others loosed another volley of arrows, only about ten came his way this time. He cut the arrows apart again with two slashes and leapt towards the other tree another archer was sitting on. He landed with his blade piercing through the mans thigh, taking out a part of his body when the blade exit the other side, blood gushed out of his mouth and wounds. He was dead immediately. He dropped close to the other victim to the ground some ten meter below, with a loud thunk. An evil smirk grew on Kane's face. He was laughing now, ecstatically. The rush of a kill, the power over life and death, choosing who dies and how. He liked it every single moment of the ride. Alpha came running up to Kane a few moments later and barked at him.

"Stop doing this, Master. Please! Why are you enjoying in slaughtering normal humans?" he begged.

"Normal people? They just tried to kill us, Alpha." Kane replied angrily.

"Yes they did, but in your current state, you are on par with a small army! Does that make killing them right?! Just because you can?" he yelled back at Kane. He just stood there, motionless, lost in Alphas words, trying to grasp the meaning and the feelings Alpha projected into him.

"Yes, this is not like me. I would never kill for fun, would i? I have never enjoyed taking a humans life, only monsters, and that is because i needed the money! What the hell is happening to me?" Before Kane could even think, he just yelled out to them.

"Drop your weapons, belongings and any riches u have and run the fuck away without looking back. The woman stays with me. Try anything funny or be near enough within the next few minutes and you will die" Kane said and jumped down, landing beside Alpha. The bandits lowered themselves one by one from the trees, walking over and dropping their weapons in front of Kane and Alpha, anything they had of value and food and drinks. "Thank you, my friend" Kane said to Alpha, rubbing his forehead. "Without your words earlier, i probably would have just massacred them all, just for fun, just because i could". He looked out onto the group, running from him with all haste and shook his head. "Weaklings".

When Kane looked around for the girl, she was standing behind a big log, hugging it as forcefully as she could, probably hoping to be invisible or some other childish thing. When Kane approached her she screamed as if being startled in the middle of the night by a robber.

"You, how do you see me?!" she demanded. Kane looked over at Alpha and then back to her, his head flowing with confusion.

"Why wouldn't i see you, woman? You are standing right in front of me" he said and laughed. Her face went pale and then she fainted, Kane barely catching her on time. Damn, he was still naked, and so was she almost. He laid her down gently and used the firewood from earlier to start a fire, put on his clothes and took the fish

Alpha caught earlier and sliced it up, cleaning it from scales and anything unnecessary.

The fishes great aroma woke the girl up some time later, and she screamed again, seeing him sitting next to her. He shot her a lustful glance and she flinched.

"You wouldn't dare!" Alpha yelled again. "Master, do not do it, i beg of you".

"Alpha... you are starting to be a nuisance" Kane said with a menacing tone. "If i wanted to do anything to her, i would have done so already, with or without your approval" Kane said. Hearing his words the girls tension released itself slowly, though she was still on guard.

"Why the hell did this have to happen to me" she murmured.

"What was that?" K asked. He didn't quite get what she said so he asked her to say it again.

"I have never hurt anyone!" she yelled out suddenly. "They made me do this. They have my little brother, i had to. They said they will kill him and the other girls and kids unless i did this for them!" she said and started to sob uncontrollably. I turned around again to look at her. She sounded sincere, so Kane decided to believe her.

"Who were those men?" Kane asked.

"Bandits who raided Ithice a few weeks ago. They pillaged and burned and raped. They killed anyone not pretty or young enough. They are using my brother as one of the cooks in their hideout, and us girls they drag out to random places, making us approach strangers half naked, tied up or wounded, depending on the group's. You are my fourth time already" she said and started crying again. "I will give you my body, willingly, if you save my brother. Or at least kill him to make his suffering stop!" she begged as she threw herself at kane's feet. He bowed down and took her by her arms, pulling her up again. Her face was a mess of mud and tears, anguish and pain. Something inside Kane just broke and he agreed to.

"Alright, i will free or kill him. Alpha, search and destroy".

Chapter 3 - Destruction

"Alpha, do u read me?" Kane asked.

"Yes master, i do?" Alpha replied.

"Ugh again you and the master thing, stop it already. Did you trace the scent of the ones running away?" Kane asked.

"I can smell them for kilometres. Their fear has left a... strange odor which is hard to miss".

"All right. Hold on while i talk to her for a moment" Kane replied and walked over to where the girl was kneeling on a patch of grass. She jerked up as she noticed him approach, her eyes darting all over the place, as if searching for someone to save her.

"Do not be afraid. If i wanted to harm you in any way, i would have done that already" Kane said.

"What are you going to do with me, then" she asked, narrowing her eyes on mine, and staring at Kane defiantly.

"That all depends on you" i replied as if i could care less. I could actually, but, i chose not to. "I will give you a choice between two things. One is that i kill you, go after the others and do the same to them, but more gruesome. The other is, i track them down, kill them for you, avenge your village, free the prisoners and then you will join my company of merry men. And a woman, by that time. I will not use you as a disposable doll, i will treat you with respect and care for you, keep you safe. I have never really cared much about women, but, something has changed, and i need a woman's hand now. It gets rather lonely when you are all alone, every day of your life" he said with a sad voice. His feelings were earnest and he hoped she would accept the latter. Her defiance faded and she looked up at Kane's eyes, seeing genuine sorrow inside of them, but at the same time, violence and death. She looked away and after a few long moments nodded.

"I accept your proposal" the girl said.

"Very well, my lady. You will not regret it" Kane said and smiled gently at her, then stood up and walked over to Alpha again.

"Promise me one thing" she yelled as she stood up. Kane turned around and looked at her, questioningly. "I want to watch them die. And make them die a horrible death".

Kane's smile was as a child's after getting candy. He liked the idea and nodded.

"Very well, milady. You will have a front row seat to the play of your life. Now, let us go. Take a seat on Alpha's back and hold on. We will be visiting Ithice first. It is

near and i promised i will have a look there". She walked over to Alpha, warily, afraid he would rip her apart.

"Do not fear, i will do no such thing" he said. She jumped slightly, startled at the wolf being able to read her thoughts and even talk.

"What a magnificent beast" she thought to herself.

"Yes i am. Thank you for the kind thought" he replied back and growled softly, almost as if purring. "Get on and hold my fur tight with your hands". She did just that and got on, her face getting red instantly as she realised she was naked from the waist down, and was sitting atop Alpha. He didn't reply, though she knew he had felt her thoughts, but didn't make fun of her.

"You are so soft, wolfy" she said as she leaned into his ear. "I like you" she added. He got flustered and shuddered for a second, almost throwing her off his back but managed to keep her atop him.

"You hitting on my wolf?" Kane asked.

"What? No i am not. I just said i liked him, nothing else!" she replied, now thinking it was a bad idea.

"Master, shall we proceed?" Alpha asked, to change the topic.

"Sure thing. Let me dress first and we can go." Kane replied.

Alpha started running and Kane ran after him. Weapons already summoned, in his hands, ready if there were any more soldiers around Ithice. The trees around them grew thicker and the forest grew darker by the moment they were running. Of course, they're speed was far greater than a normal human's, so they were running at about a hundred kilometres per hour. No animals and no birds were anywhere to be seen, just a few minutes running inwards from the place they got ambushed. It was strange, like something was keeping the wildlife away from the area. The trees became darker and darker by the step. No leaves, no greenery, just a dull grey and brown everywhere. Then, a bit further up, smoke was rising above the treeline. Soon they arrived at the charred ruins that had been called Ithice mere days ago. They stopped some distance from the entrance and slowly approached the ruins. Alpha motioned to scout ahead since his perception of surroundings was far greater than Kane's.

Alpha morphed into an almost translucent state and walked up to the closest building he was facing, all the while taking care not to make any sound. As he was sure nothing was near him, he slowly walked to the corner and peeked around. Again nothing. He turned the corner and walked in between the two houses and stopped at the far end that lead inwards into the town. There he stopped, rooted to the ground by the display of the bandits savagery. In the middle of the town square a massacre had played out. Bodies atop bodies, burned into each other, a great mass of smoldering meat was displayed for all to see. There was a row of stakes drilled into the ground on top of which naked women and men equally had been beheaded and

staked, their heads laying at their feet. It was a horrible sight to be seen and Kane almost threw up, seeing it through Alpha's own eyes.

"We leave. You do not wish to see this, milady" Kane said as he turned the girl around and pushed her in the opposite side of the massacre. She didn't protest, understanding the message he was conveying to her. "As soon as Alpha is here, I will go and search for some female clothes for you to wear. Afterwards, we hunt them down" Kane said with an icy conviction.

Some minutes later Alpha had joined them after checking the rest out, searching for possible survivors. Not a single one. He cuddled up to the girl in comfort, but he felt that nothing could take away the pain inside her heart. She had lost everyone she knew. Maybe even her brother now. That would remain to be seen.

Kane moved towards the village, keeping his eyes on the ground. He did not want to see the dead people again. He entered the first house he encountered and went up to the first floor, searching for a bedroom. Luckily he had found it full of female clothing. He packed some female clothes and for himself some spare underwear. He left through the window and ran towards Alpha and the girl.

"Put something on and let us leave this place. We should not linger here any longer" Kane said as he turned away from her, to give her some privacy. She came up to him and hugged him, putting her head on his back.

"Thank you for saving my life. Even if we don't find my brother, or he is dead, I will keep my part of our arrangement. I will stay with you for as long as I live, or for as long as you want me to. Also, feel free to use me as you see fit. You have earned that right, treating me the way you did, when you could have just killed me or taken me forcefully, and you would have been even in the right then" she said, softly. The words gave Kane the chills and he was actually at a loss for words.

"What is your name, milady?" Kane finally asked. She turned him around and looked up at his eyes.

"Janine. Please call me Janine" she said and kissed him on the cheek. His face went beet red instantly and pressure rose to his head. Again he was at a loss for what to do. She giggled and turned around, walking over to the clothes he brought with him. She turned around towards him, taking off what she had on and standing there, displayed for him to see and worship from that day onward.

"Why are you so flustered?" he murmured to himself. "You have slept with many women and done some nasty things, yet you lose your cool over a naked girl in front of you?"

"You know, the reason might be, because of the situation" Alpha said. "When you look at all of this as a whole since she met you, just some hours ago, the whole situation is kind of awkward. Also, I have to admit, there is a certain attraction between the two of you. Is it natural? I can not say, but what I do know is, you are in love head over heels, master". Kane tried to talk back, but inside of his heart,

something stirred, sending goosebumps up his back into his neck. He shivered and turned around, letting her put her clothes on.

Some time later they were moving again, this time in search for the bandits. Alpha had taken up the scent again and they were following it closely, keeping to the bushes and tree lines, not wandering out in the open. After all, they had to avoid being seen, or their attack could fail.

As they moved inland, they came upon a big cave, four sentries standing guard, laughing and drinking something, probably some kind of alcohol. The cave was cut into a cliff by hand, probably by this same gang of thugs. Two big barrels with wood were burning fiercely, the flames licking the air, crackling and making strange sounds. The guards didn't seem to notice much around them as they were making so much noise, it could almost raise the dead. Kane told them to stay behind until he took care of the guards, so he climbed onto one of the trees, high overhead jumping from tree to tree until he was just above the unsuspecting guards. He crossed his legs on one side of the tree, hung himself downwards and slowly slid down, holding his weapons out. When he was a few meters above them, he dropped to the ground. Before his feet had hit the ground, he had rotated himself in midair, beheading two of the guards on one side. Obviously they were not expecting any trouble as they had a hard time reacting to the attack. The two living guards just looked at Kane, not believing their eyes and a second later lay on the ground, in their own blood and intestines. Two swift slices had gutted the two remaining guards who were sprawled around him, still dieing. When Kane noticed the blood on his clothes, he swore inwardly and thought about how it was going to be a pain to get the blood out. Then he remembered he won't be the one to clean them this time, and chuckled inwardly. "Alpha, stay at the entrance and let no one get in and surprise me" Kane added and walked inside, stealthily. Outside were a stunned Janine and an annoyed Alpha, who walked up to the guards and started chewing them.

Kane ran towards the entrance of the cave and peered in slowly, seeing barrels of burning wood every ten to fifteen meters, barely casting enough light around the cavern. The cave was damp, cold and dark. Everything one would expect from a cave and more. Sleeping guards were strewn all around the cavern, but no one suspected even anything. Kane ran further inside and checked every corner and entrance to each room slowly, stealthily. He did not want to waste his surprise, in case something unexpected happened. More or less all of the rooms were just a mess with mattresses, booze and food laying all around, drunken thugs asleep, snoring, not a single worry in their despicable lives. Then, some rooms later he stumbled across a dark room with a single candle in the middle. The room stank to the heavens and was very damp. Kane looked closer in and there were a few dozen kids and women, probably sleeping. Those must be the prisoners, he thought to himself. He closed the door again and made a mental note as to remember the room in case something happened.

Kane proceeded to what looked like a main hall, a number of barrels standing in front, lighting the area around the room up. No way would he get inside undetected, but, that didn't really matter. Nothing he couldn't handle coming at him from behind, and nothing would get inside the cave, since Alpha was outside. Kane decided to just walk in nonchalantly, and take it from there. Upon entering he wished

he hadn't done that. No use crying over spilt milk, as they said. There was a big group of people inside, no idea how many, just a rough guess of a score of people. What the hell did over a hundred of ruffians do inside the main hall, armed, he thought out loud.. As if they knew he would be coming. Every one of them had a sword or saber out and a bowgun in the other hand. It looked like some kind of trap, no idea how they had known, but he didn't really care. He just laughed and took up a battle stance. Basically all of them looked around at each other, puzzled expressions on their faces. Then they burst out in laughter, pointing with their weapons towards him, making stupid suggestions. One of them, sitting on a golden throne, stood up and walked slowly towards Kane. He stopped a few meters away from him and put up his hands for the crowd to be silent. The man was pretty tall, muscular, dark skinned. He had short black hair and two oversized earrings in his ears, one gracing his nose. He held a large two handed sword in his hand, wielding it with ease. The clothes on his body were all ragged and with blood stains, tho a good pair of boots on his feet.

"I do not care how you got in, nor do i care for the four guards you probably killed. What i care for, is the girl that is with you." he said with a sly smile on his face.

"How do you know of the girl?" Kane replied, acting dumb. His face brightened, mouth widened, as in joy over the question.

"Why now that is a good question!" he yelled out. "My mage told me. He can sense things, the future, the past and so on."

"Oh my, how intriguing." Kane replied, interested in the mage. "Where is this mage, if i may ask?"

"None of your concern!" he yelled at me. "All you need care about is dying" he said sarcastically.

"Did your mage tell you how this battle will play out?" Kane asked with a smile on his face.

"No. He did not see, but that doesn't really matter. U die here, now, at my hands" he said, full of himself. "Attack, now!" he yelled, pulling his sword close to himself, taking it in two hands and rushing towards Kane who leapt backwards, just out of his reach. He did not know how strong the man was, nor where the mage was, but that did not mean he couldn't have his way with his cronies. Kane backflipped a few meters, landing inside of a cluster of goons, spinning in a circle, he made a gory mess out of them. Body parts were flying everywhere. Hands, arms, legs, heads falling to the ground in a pile of gore. The poor unsuspecting men didn't even have time to raise their weapon as Kane was to fast and his spin was almost too fast to be seen with the naked eye. The swords were excited, as if alive, just like before. He could feel their heartbeat throbbing in his hands, a strange sensation. The more blood they drew, the more excited they got. He decided to test something and launched himself to the next grouped up meat wall, a group of a dozen goons. They didn't make the same mistake and attacked him viciously, slashing at him with swords, failing miserably, while one of them had almost hit him with hsi bowgun, bringing him almost to the ground. Lucky for him, he was as agile as a cat. The

swords broke on contact with his now vibrating, red blades, or cracked in best case. With a wicked smile, Kane launched himself at them, slashing into their bodies like into air, cutting them apart in a few motions. It was as if there was an after motion. Even if he missed slightly, they got cut or severed a second later. How exhilarating. He loved it and enjoyed every single drop of blood he drew with his blades, and at that moment, he knew he had lost a part of him, since he had not been like this. To his own surprise, he didn't care much about it. All he cared about now was carnage, death, destruction.

Seeing the carnage in front of them, the goons lost heart and did not rush at him anymore. The leader stepped forward again, boldly. He raised his sword in both hands and lunged at Kane who deflected his sword with one blow to the left, bringing up his other blade to cut him up, when a follow up attack occurred just to his left. A small one handed sword, or a big dagger, embedded itself into Kane's side, drawing blood. Kane got infuriated and slashed around him, his blades not connecting. The sword disappeared and footsteps could be heard running around.

"What the hell?" Kane said more to himself than anyone else. The leader used Kane's distraction to swing at him again, almost getting Kane who had to use both hands this time to deflect the sword, cracking it in the process slightly. Only one more clash with the sword and it will be almost useless, for offense anyway. The sword appeared again, this time inside of Kane's back. Luckily it did not have much force, so it didn't penetrate too deeply. The sword pulled out, blood flowing out with its disappearance. Kane's rage took over and his mind went blank. Something made a sound behind Kane. He did not look back to see what it was, instead lunging forwards stabbing the goon with both blades, ripping them out to the sides, almost cleaving him in two. He gurgled something and fell to the ground. The crowd was stunned silent and for a long moment no one moved.

The sound behind Kane could be heard again and he slashed behind him, finally connecting with something. He smiled and went silent.

"Boo!" he said loudly. Then the hysteria began, trying to get away from him, the bandits tried running outside of the cave. He rushed towards the exit of the room, to prevent them from leaving. They just rushed at him, trying to move past through sheer numbers. A few managed to get past Kane and were mowed down by Alpha. The ones who had not made it were staring at their reaper. They all knew there was only one outcome. Death. Kane ran into the group of survivors, deflecting blows whilst ripping out limbs, like plucking an insect's wings. The room was filled with screams and curses until the last bandit was laying on the ground, dying.

Not a single sound could be heard within a minute tops. Kane opened his eyes and he was standing in the middle of a heap of gore and blood. He smiled, wickedly. "This is what you get for attacking me, the future God king of this God forsaken place" he roared. "I will remake it in my own image, and i will stop at nothing to get there".

Kane released his swords and they disappeared, immediately the blood lust disappeared and a feeling of nausea swept over him. He fell down to his knees and threw up everything he ate for the past day. Almost a hundred dead people laying

around him, disemboweled, gutted, cut apart. He had done the same as the bandits had done to the village of Ithice. At least they were avenged.

After opening his eyes, the sight of them sickened him again and he threw up again. Kane somehow got up and ran outside, coming to another sickening sight. Alpha had done his share. A few dozen bodies were laying around, in almost as much a mess as what he had done. Alpha just stood there, with his own soul forge summoned. He held a smaller body in his mouth, chewing on it. The arms and legs dangling to the sides, Janine sitting a few meter beside him, unmoving, pressing her back against the wall. Her eyes were wide open, in shock, horror, disbelief.

"Alpha, what the fuck are you doing!?" Kane yelled at him, still sick to his stomach.

"Huh?" he replied incredulous. "Why, i am having a snack?"

"You moron, you are eating a human! Spit him out immediately!" Kane yelled at him. He chewed a few more times, then threw him to the ground.

"Spoil sport" he murmured to himself.

"What?!" Kane yelled in exasperation. The damn wolf was giving him attitude. "What the hell is wrong with you man? I mean wolf, obviously since you're not human. Anyway, why the hell would you eat such a disgusting human. At least eat a pretty female!" He put his head up slightly, staring Kane in the eyes. Then suddenly his face went all mellow, placing a huge smile on his wolfish face. It was too funny to see and not laugh at. Kane burst out in laughter and fell to the ground on his back, laughing and rolling on the ground. The idiotic look he had on his face was too much for Kane to take. A short while later, he sat up and looked at Alpha. "Never do that again, Alpha. U will laugh people to death." Alpha drooped his head slightly and growled at Kane, then launched himself on top of him and started licking his face. Kane was taken by surprise to be honest. Such a big beast, and then to show affection and emotion? It was strange to say the least.

"Say, Master. I felt something strange going on when u were fighting inside of the cave. A presence kept appearing and disappearing. Did something happen?"

"Yea. There was someone there who kept stabbing me with a shortsword and then disappearing. But, i got him, or her, or whatever it was. U can become invisible, maybe, but, my swords will still slice through you, since your physical form is still present. They sure were annoying though, that much ill give them. Come to think of it, I'm bleeding like a pig" he said and fell over.

"What will we do now?" Alpha asked Janine. She was still in shock but managed to get to Kane and check him. She bandaged the wounds with clothes and sat next to him, waiting.

A short while later Kane woke up and sat up straight, looking around him. Janine was sleeping next to him, snoring softly. It was so cute to listen to. Alpha looked up and walked over. "What next?" He asked while he cuddled up against

Janine. Janine woke up as well at that moment and turned toward Kane, who was standing up. Then she felt the soft fur of Alpha all around her and she nested in deeper.

“Where are you going?” she asked Kane. He turned around and answered.

“I’ll go inside again, look for anything edible, then have the woman prepare dinner for all of us. In the meanwhile, i will go scavenge all the corpses, or rather, the body parts. I still have to set the prisoners free as well and look for your brother. What i did earlier was just massacring the bandits... nothing else” Kane said and dropped his head, sad over the lives he had to take, but what was necessary had to be done.

“Go wash yourself at the river. Alpha will escort and keep watch over you. No need to hurry. When you are done, come back here with Alpha. I will go and see if there’s anything you can prepare for us to eat, while i scavenge the bodies inside. I still have to set the prisoners free as well and look for your brother. What i did earlier was just massacring the bandits... nothing else. Trust me, you do not want to go inside” Kane said and laughed out loud. He could see shivers running down her spine and her imagining the horror that had played out inside. She hurriedly stood up and ran towards where a small river was flowing. The sound of it could be heard close by. Alpha ran after her and Kane turned around and walked back inside.

Chapter 4 - Reunion

Kane walked back to the main room, where all the slaughter had happened, then proceeded towards the far end, where he saw another door. He opened the door slowly, weapons in hand, and was almost knocked out by the stench. It was the galley, but, what a galley. Rotten food laying everywhere, barrels of booze fermenting, dead animals decomposing. It was a brightly lit room, but the stench was horrible. Tables and benches overturned, broken, even a few drunkards laying asleep. How the hell did they not wake up with all the ruckus going on around them. Kane walked over towards one and kicked him in the ribs. He did not move. Probably dead, how amusing. He walked over towards the cook and did the same. He didn't move either. Kane turned around and started walking, but he felt a presence. A deadly intent, an intent to hurt or kill him. The two blades emerged instantly in Kane's hands and he turned around. The cook pulled his arm back, going for a stab, holding a big kitchen knife in his hand. Kane blocked the move with one of his blades and cut his arm off at the wrist with the other in a fluent combination. He howled like a banshee, falling down to the floor, gripping for his stump with his left hand.

"Do you want me to help you? Save your miserable life?" Kane asked him without an inch of emotion in his voice.

"Yes, yes, yes! I want to live! Ooooh, the pain. Why the hell did you have to cut my hand off!" he yelled.

"Because you were trying to stab me" Kane said nonchalantly. He did not reply, instead just howled on and was trying to eb the blood coming out of his stump. Kane used a second degree blood forge on his blades to heat them up and burn his stump to make the blood stop pouring out. However, it did nothing for the man's pain. Though he wouldn't die for now, he would be howling for a long time to come.

"Is there any edible food here?" Kane asked the cook who nodded over to the right, behind the counter. Kane walked over and through another door into a small, dark room. Luckily his eyes were used to darkness, so he had no trouble spotting the other lone figure. He was shaking like a leaf in the wind, all alone in a corner, just behind a stack of crates.

"What is your name, kid?" Kane asked the boy as he approached. He screamed, probably thinking he would be killed as well, now that he was found. "I will do you no harm lass, just tell me your name" Kane said reassuringly.

"I.. i.. its Thanis sir" he replied stuttering.

"Do not fear me boy, i will do nothing to you. If i would want to i would have done it by now. Are you one of the kidnapped villagers from Ithice?" Kane asked. The boy nodded enthusiastically.

"How do you know, sir?" Thanis asked.

"I was asked to take care of the filth that done what they did to your little village. Trust me, they are all dead" Kane said, trying to reassure the boy, but instead the boy got frightened again.

"Do you know how to cook, kid?" Kane asked. He just nodded as fast as he could. The poor soul. "Would you like to live?" Kane asked again. He nodded again. "Then stand up and move it. Grab as much as fresh ingredients as you can and come outside with me. Start preparing food for when my companions are back. I will help you with starting the fire" Kane said. He took some meat with one hand, and with the other he slashed the old cook dead as they passed him. Thanis looked at Kane but he just shrugged and lead the way out, telling him to cling on to his cowl and not to look at all the corpses laying around. He stumbled a few times but in the end they made it outside. He dropped the oversized bag to the ground and got dragged himself with it to his knees. He tensed for a moment, as if afraid of being scolded, slapped or whatever. When he noticed nothing happened, he looked up and saw Kane looking the other way, so he stood up himself.

"I am getting some firewood. U start preparing the food" Kane said. Thanis nodded to him and opened the big bag. Kane turned around and walked a bit, gathering smaller branches and dry wood for the fire. When he got back, he saw Thanis had prepared most of the stuff and was waiting on him. Pottery, spoons, a long knife. He must have gone back inside, despite being scared to death. Kane's respect and appreciation for this kid went just a bit higher than it was a few minutes before. Kane walked over to him and put the firewood down then started the fire without speaking to the kid, stood up and walked towards the cave. "Listen, when a huge wolf and a pretty girl come from over there" Kane said, pointing his finger to the general direction of the river, "tell them that you are now a servant of Kane and you are preparing food for everyone. Also, tell them that i am inside looking for any valuable stuff" he said and turned around to move.

"Please wait, master." the kid shot out. "The bandit boss had a sorcerer, who could go invisible!" he said excitedly. "His cape made him go invisible! And he had a very expensive looking dagger!" Now that was an interesting item if it could be found.

"What do you think about this, kid." Kane said. "A sword was appearing and disappearing around me, stabbing me during my fighting. Could it be possible that the person was hiding the sword under their cloak, so i could not see it?" Thanis nodded excitedly. "All right, i will go look for it then. Thank you for sharing the information, please go on with preparing dinner, alright?" Kane said gently. Thanis went back to cooking and Kane went in back again.

Everything was as he had left it. Except there was a little bit more blood, having been drained of it, the corpses would soon start to rot. Kane walked casually towards the main area where the fighting had been going on and searched for the sword. He kept overturning bodies, or body parts, tossing them about, searching for the bloody sword. After a long while, he finally found it, under a pile of corpses. He felt around with his hands and stumbled upon something physical that was not there, or, it was there but it was not visible. He took the body and carried it to a clean part of the room, where no blood was laying on the floor and put the body down and started touching the body with his hands, trying to figure out how to get the cape off the

body. Kane fumbled around the chest and neck area, or what he assume was that area, loosened the cape and tore it off. In front of Kane a man appeared, dead, drained of all blood. His hand was still clutching the short sword. Suddenly, Kane felt the urge to take that sword out of his dead hands and stab him repeatedly until he was a gory mess. He dared to attack Kane from behind, the insolent worm! What had happened to chivalry?

“Breathe, Kane. Slowly, in and out. No need to rage over a damn corpse” Kane told himself. He checked through the dead man’s pockets and found a few trinkets, a talisman and some precious stones. Then he walked over to the goon leader and checked him. Again gems and gold coins. “Sure is a nice haul” Kane mused to himself. Deciding not to look in each bandits pockets and hoping there was something in there that was worth something, Kane walked over to the throne, checked around it and there it was, a small casket. In it was a vast number of gold coins and precious gems. Roughly about a half a thousand pieces he guessed.

“The scum must have pillaged a lot of villages and people to have gathered this large a number of gold coins” Kane said to himself, taking the casket in his other hand, since one had the cape and the two purses holding them. Kane stood up, looked around one last time and walked towards the exit. The closer he got, the fainter the stench of death was filling his nostrils and the lesser the urge to hurt someone or something. When he exited the cave he saw Alpha and Janine standing next to Thanis, talking and laughing. Kane walked over to them and greeted them. She jumped at the sight of Kane, literally. She ran into his arms, hugged him and kissed him fully on the lips.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” she said cheerfully, kissing him again.

“What the hell is going on?” Kane asked in return, baffled.

“You saved my brother!” she said, still holding Kane tightly. Now this was a piece of good news.

“O, thats good. I didn’t know that Thanis was your brother. I just assumed he was one of the survivors from lthice. O damn it, i forgot to free the other ones from the dark room. I have to hurry back in, i will be right back” Kane said, turning around and running into the cave again. Some moments later he knocked on the heavy door, the sound an echo in all the silence. Some noises could be heard from the other side, as if feet shuffling.

“I am opening this door to free you. Stay where you are until i tell you otherwise” Kane said, trying to reassure the people on the other side of the door. Slowly, he moved the door until light spilled inside. A little girl was standing on the other side of the door, looking up at him with big blue eyes.

“Are you here to save us, mister?” the little girl said. Kane’s heart broke at that moment and he fell through his knees hugging the little girl.

"Yes, i am" he barely managed to say. The rest of the prisoners slowly approached Kane, bowing to him as if he were a saviour, which he in all honesty was, but he didn't feel comfortable with how they bowed to him as if he were royalty

"Everyone, please follow me. Do not look at the floor, it is full of dead bandits. You do not wish to dream about this place" Kane said and lead the group outside. Some minutes later, the whole group was standing at the fire he had made a bit earlier. The food Thanis had prepared wasn't enough for all, but Kane and Alpha had denied their portions and gotten more meat for Thanis to make for the group of seventeen. There were seven girls and ten women. After they had eaten, Janine had shown them the river where they had gone to bathe, so the women did the same. In the meanwhile, Janine had started a big fire close to the river bed and after bathing, all of the women had washed their clothes and hung them near the big fire to dry faster. Kane had just been sitting at their own fire and not moved at all, thinking about everything that had happened that day.

First the massacre in Ithice, a sight which had embedded itself in his memories for all time and now this. His own massacre which he would remember until he died as well. Janine came over and sat next to him, her head leaning on his shoulder.

"Thank you again, Kane" Janine said. "You have given us back our lives, you have saved these women and children from a horrible fate. I honestly do not know how we could ever repay you, but, i hope that one day we will be able to".

"No worries, milady. The pleasure was all mine. Though honestly, during the ordeal something has happened to me, which i rather hadn't experienced, but, what is done is done" Kane replied and gazed off into the sky, a dark, brooding look on his face. "Tomorrow we need to move. We will bring the women and the children to Homitage and settle them in with someone. I will give them some money to start out with and then we will see how to proceed. Are you all right with that?" Kane asked Janine.

"Yes, it is more than we dare to ask for, kind sir" she said with a smiled, curled around Kane and kissed him again on the lips, ending in a long embrace. Kane's heart started pounding in his throat and he started sweating. Janine feigned ignorance and acted like nothing was amiss, staying in his embrace for a long while.

Thanis and Alpha joined them in the meanwhile, just sitting down and gazing up at the sky, enjoying the view of the countless stars, until Kane broke the silence.

"Thanis, is this the cape?" he asked. Thanis looked at it and shook his head.

"I do not know, master. I have never seen the sorcerer, only heard about him. Tho, i have heard rumours about the cape. They said that, if you are to be invisible, you have to share your blood with the cape. Now, what they meant with that, master, i do not know, or, if it is indeed true" he finished and looked up at the stars again.

"We will have to take a look at that when we get back to Homitage" Kane said to no one in particular.

Later when the mood got a bit better, Thanis was telling us about his experience in the hellhole we saved him from, about all the people they had robbed, killed, tortured. How they had threatened him they would kill his sister if he wasn't a good boy, if he tried to run. He was barely sixteen and had gone through a lot. Kane decided he would take care of him now, take care of both of them.

"Hey big guy. What do you think about them?" Kane asked.

"Hmmm, they look tasty, but, aside from that, i think they are decent people. Honest people. We could definitely use them. If nothing else, you will pass as a family with them around, so you will stand out less where ever we end up, one day."

"Right. Say, ever since you appeared i have been feeling somewhat strange. I am confused, angry, horny, filled with bloodlust, rage, destruction, menace. My mood swings were far and between, now they are almost hourly. Do you know anything about that?" Kane asked him seriously. He was silent for a long moment, looking up at the sky, as if seeking an answer in the stars. Kane looked up as well, looking at the dark sky, filled with countless tiny lights. They say, every star was supposed to present a soul, a life. How stupid of them. There were countless stars up there in the sky, and far less humans. Alpha's thoughts broke the silence.

"I think, that when i appeared, i appeared as a part of you. A part of your soul was taken out of you, and from there i was born. I also think, that most of the soul that i came to be from, was your good side, and some of your bad. Most of your bad side was left inside of you, hence you losing control so often. Of course, this is only speculation, master." he said.

"Stop it with the master already, idiot. If you are a part of me, how the hell am i your master?" Kane asked angrily. "Before, i would have only gotten angry over a huge insult or an attack by another lover or something of the like. But now, i get angry over anything" Kane said.

"Alright, i will call you Kane, or just talk to you" he replied. They were silent again. Thanis and Janine were staring at them, as if waiting for an answer to an unasked question.

"Huh?" Kane asked and smiled sheepishly.

"As i was saying, master, what is our next destination?" Thanis asked.

"Ohh, right. We will move the whole group to Homitage and leave them there, taken care of, don't worry. Then we will see what to do next. Also, i am glad you are with us, Thanis. Please cook more for us and take care of us in the future" Kane replied. Thanis's face brightened and his smile widened. At that moment, it was as if the whole world was given to the boy. Praise. Something he surely was not familiar with.

"Thank you master!" he almost yelled out in delight. "Please, go rest now. I will take care of everything else so you do not have to. Please, do not feel obliged to sit in our company" he said.

"It is not an obligation kiddo. We are family now, and i will take care of you two. Pardon me, WE will take care of you both. Just know your roles, and you will be happy as long as you are under our wing" Kane said. Alpha shot him a strange look.

"I couldn't have said it better myself" he mused and turned his head away from Kane again.

"What? I'm not a piece of stone, nor a heartless being. It just happens that i have a lot of positive feelings and emotions towards Janine" Kane said.

"Yea right, towards her body you have" Alpha barked back. Ugh, he sure did struck a nerve, Kane thought to himself. To be frank, he lusted for her. That didn't mean he wouldn't have any feelings for her. Later maybe? No, the feelings were already there. The pounding in his heart and throat was proof of that. He stood up and looked at her. She dropped her gaze towards the fire after meeting my eyes. She knew what she had to do, even though she didn't like it.

"Good night all" Kane said and walked away from them, heading towards the forest. There was a bushy area, perfect for hiding. Though Kane wanted Janine, it didn't mean the poor kid had to watch them do things. "Alpha, be vigilant" Kane said through their link.

He just sent a thought of acknowledgement. Kane took a thick blanket out of his backpack and prostrated it on the ground, laid down and waited. Kane knew he wouldn't be able to sleep without her visiting, but, neither was he going to make her come to him. He would try to treat her with as much respect as he was able to, depending on it if she deserved it, of course. He would take good care of them, feed them well, keep them safe, give them a home. But they would have to work for it, he would make sure of that. All kinds of jumbled thoughts went through his head as he heard a rustling towards the fire, where he had left them.

"Will you have me sit with you, kind sir?" a gentle female voice said. Kane found her eyes staring at him, void from any hate or malice.

"Sure, sit with me please" Kane said and motioned for her to sit next to him. Somehow he was nervous, as this was unlike anything he had done before. Usually it was just him flirting with women and bedding them, this time however, it was different. "Are you afraid?" Kane asked. She just nodded slowly, dropping her gaze to her feet. "You do not have to be. I think i showed you i harbour no malice towards you by killing the bandits and saving your little brother." She just nodded again.

"It is not just that. I saw what you are capable of. You are.. like a monster" she said softly. "I am afraid if i ever say something wrong, or do something to displease you, that you will just kill me without a second thought". With those words she struck him worse than any weapon could. Did it really look like that? That he would just kill

with ease, as if it was nothing? Was he really like that? No! He was not! He would not be like that. He would not allow himself to be like that.

"If i tell you that i will never hurt you or your brother, unless you try to hurt me or Alpha, would you believe me?" Kane asked. She looked up at him, with those big blue eyes. The innocence in her eyes rattled him even more. "Will you believe me?" Kane asked again.

"Yes.." she said with a low voice. As if afraid that if she said it any louder he would harm her. Damn it, why was she so afraid of him? It's not like he attacked people first. They were just bandits, they deserved to die!

"Go" Kane said. "I do not wish you like this" and he turned away from her. She was puzzled and afraid at the same time. He felt her hesitation at that moment. She got up and stood right behind him for a while, probably thinking about what to do. Then he heard a sound, like a piece of clothing dropping to the ground. She kneeled behind him and tried to undress him, pulling his shirt off and unbuckling his pants. Kane stood up, still facing her with his back. She pulled his pants down and threw them aside, then embraced him from behind, her soft skin touching his. She was as hot as fire. Her hands went up to his chest and embraced him, pressing her body hard into his. After a long, joyful moment, her hands reached down and they got lost in the moment.

"Are you a virgin?" Kane asked. She looked away and nodded slowly. "Damn. Marry me, okay?" Kane said. She looked up at him, confused. He put up as much as possible of a sincere look and looked her into her big blue eyes again.

"Do you mean it?" she whispered.

"Yes i do. There is something about you, that i can not resist. Be it fate that has brought me here, the hand of the Gods or just pure coincidence. I do not care, but what i do care about is, what happens to you. It's as if i were under a spell" Kane said.

"She laughed softly. Well my dear, you are" she said.

"Huh?" Kane said, dumbfounded. "I am?" He asked.

Suddenly he got thrown off of her, as if an invisible hand picked him up and dropped him a few meters away from her. He stood up and looked over at her. She stood up also and was gazing at him. From his face to his manhood. She whistled appreciatively, knowing a good tool when she saw one. He couldn't help himself but look her over as well. She looked like a Goddess. Everything was perfect, every inch and line on her body. But the face, the face was beyond Godlike. It was pure lust, desire, raw, pure pleasure. Her smile brought Kane to his knees and he bowed down in front of her. Bloodlust took over and he summoned his swords, instinctively. He walked over towards her and panic was gracing her face. She was terrified. A mere meter away from her, Kane pulled up his hand to cut her down as something hit him head on, sending him sprawling to the ground. During the moment of bloodlust and, well, pure lust, he hadn't noticed anyone walking up towards him. I looked up and it

was Alpha. He was keeping Kane down with his own body, pinning Kane's arms to the ground with his paws. A few moments passed and Kane came to his senses.

"What happened?" Kane asked confusedly.

"That is what i would like to know as well" Alpha said, his fangs bearing towards Janine She flinched upon seeing his fangs pointing towards her and stumbled backwards, falling on her back.

"Nice view from down here" Kane said, looking up directly into her womanhood. She hurriedly sat upright, covering herself with her hands. "You can get off me now, Alpha" and he did. Kane stood up as well, not bothering to cover himself up.

"Could you please cover yourself up already?!" she hissed at Kane, not to be heard by her sleeping brother.

"No i will not cover myself up, nor will you. Frankly, i like to look at your body" Kane chuckled. All he got from her was a tongue pointed towards him. "Now would you care to explain yourself. Or do i need to make you" Kane said with a serious tone. She dropped her hands on her knees, exposing her breasts again and the slit between her legs. Man this woman sure knew how to get him going. He was dying to get her. He would even slit his own wrists at that moment if needed. Seeing this, she used it even more, splitting her knees apart a bit, exposing just an inch more.

"Easy there boy" Alpha murmured to get Kane's attention. First get the info, then do what you want with her. She stuck her tongue out towards Alpha as well. It made Kane laugh, sort of, dropping his guard again. Damn he needed to change, he thought to himself. He was too weak with women, especially nude women.

"I am a witch. It's easy as that" she mused.

"How about a bit more information, wench" Kane said angrily.

"How dare you call me names, u horny toad! Just look at yourself, you're pointing towards the sky for the last five minutes. Imbecile!" she yelled back.

"Thats it. Now you're done for woman!" Kane yelled as he walked towards her but stopped after a few angry steps. Keep yourself in check moron, she's playing you like a fool. "Thats not enough. Why would a witch be with this bunch of goons. You could have escaped whenever you wanted" Kane asked.

"No i couldn't. They had Thanis. And another sorcerer. He could have gotten to him anytime, since he was invisible to me, and to anyone else for that matter most of the time. I tried to once, and Thanis got beat up to an inch of death because of that. Of course, they wouldn't harm pretty little me. So i had to play along with their crap and whatever they wanted to, because i did not want to lose him! He is my only family and i would do anything to keep him safe!" she yelled at Kane again in frustration.

"All right, that explains why you were with them" i said angrily, "but that doesn't explain what you were trying to do with me. Were you trying to hex me or something?" She looked down in frustration.

"I..." she started and then stopped again, searching for words. "I was afraid that you were dishonest, that you were just sweet talking yourself to fuck me, and nothing else. I cast a spell on you to be honest. But it somehow backfired, you were partially immune to it, and it somehow made me tell you what i did. If it's worth anything to you, i think the same way about you. And no, i am not lying, making things up or whatever just to save my skin. It really is the truth"

"Truth or not, i know at least one someone who wants to keep you around here so, i will take your word for it. At least for tonight" Kane said and winked at her. Her mouth opened wide and he could see she was speechless for a moment.

"Is he always such an asshole?" she asked Alpha.

"Sure he is. But, how come you can hear my voice" he asked shocked at the thought someone else could hear him.

"Why shouldn't i? You are just a familiar. I have one as well. Look, its up there" she pointed up towards the sky. A huge eagle was soaring through the sky, soundlessly, its presence undetectable.

"What the fuck?!" Kane yelled out in exasperation.. "What the hell is going on" he asked no one in particular. She just laughed again, and playfully stuck her tongue out towards Kane and winking. "Thats it, i have had it! Alpha, go keep that bird company, i don't need someone watching us. I am thrilled. I am excited and i am hungry" Kane said as he jumped on top of Janine, sending her sprawling on her back, again. He couldn't control himself any longer as he bit into her left breast, caressing her right with his hand. After a few moments she stopped struggling and let in to temptation.

"Come on... wait... please... stop it.... let me turn... around..." she moaned and groaned, trying to free herself from Kane's weight and raw power. After a futile struggle she gave up and started caressing his neck and chest. There Kane lost control and lost all sight as he entered her. Her moans and screams could be heard quite far, but Kane did not care. He knew Alpha would keep Thanis and the hawk away. He took what he wanted, and he wanted it badly. A good hour later, they were laying beside each other, covered in fluids and sweat, panting. She put her head on his chest and he caressed her hair as he was looking up at the clear night sky. The fire in the background still crackling. Kane could hear Alpha, the hawk and Thanis talking silently.

"Let's go clean ourselves at the river" Kane said and pushed her up, standing up as well. She just took his hand and followed him. The river was a mere hundred meter away from where they had done it, so they did not have to walk far. Kane just jumped in, head first, not waiting for her. She jumped in behind him and swam after him. They went to a shallow place and stood up next to each other. He cupped her face with one hand and looked her in the eyes. She put her hand on his and looked

back. "I promise you one thing, Janine. No one will ever have you, nor harm you. You are mine, and you always will be. Remember that very well. I speak now from the bottom of my heart. If you ever cheat on me, there is no God or king or monster on this world that will keep me from ripping you and him apart" Kane said seriously. She shivered and dropped her gaze for a moment. He could see he had scared her pretty badly, but, better scare her than kill her, he thought to himself.

"All right" she said softly. "But promise me one thing. You will never cheat on me, nor make me do it with anyone else. I am only yours, and no one else's" she replied.

"I like the sound of that" Kane said with a big grin on his face. Life was getting better and better by the moment. "Let us wash up and join our little group" Kane said with a grin on his face. She just dipped herself into the water and swam for a while, so Kane did the same, chasing her all over the water. After a while longer they walked out of the water and towards the camping spot. They arrived both stark naked, wet and hungry for more. But it had to do for tonight. Endure just some 20 hours longer and you will have her again, he kept thinking to himself. Kane and Janine walked towards the three who were sitting at the fire, chattering, still naked. Thanis looked away shyly, not wanting to stare at his naked sister.

"Get used to it boy" Kane said and sat down next to Alpha, leaning on him. Janine sat next to Kane, leaning on him. "You will see a lot of us like this in the coming time. We will find you one also that's not shy, so you can join us, in the nude" Kane teased and laughed.

"Is it really necessary, master?" he said, obviously disturbed. "It is my sister. I do not wish to stare at her naked body all day long."

"O do not worry, it's only during night, or morning, or day, when we are horny, or, in our case, I am horny. I can't help it. Your sister is a Goddess. She is just perfect, any way you look at it. She's strong, has a good sense of self preservation, knows when to show gratitude."

"What the hell are you talking about?" she snapped towards Kane, moving away from him.

"Huh?" he said not knowing what he had said wrong. O well, he could care less. She was his for all eternity.

"Nothing." she said, lowering her head and leaning on him again..

"All right if that is the case. We need to talk, as in, all five of us. I assume your bird understands me and can talk as well?" Kane said sarcastically.

"Ofcourse I do, you vulgar creature" it hissed. Alpha growled a bit and the bird lowered its head in submission.

"Now, I will make some things clear to all of you. Even though I use Janine as my sex slave, I do care about her, and about the others as well. We will keep you

safe, as i said once already, and provide for you. You will in return do what you are asked to. Nothing like go die for me or get eaten by monsters or whatever, just everyday stuff. Our plan for now, is to get the women taken care of at Homitage. From there, we will see how to proceed further. My original plan was to kill the king, but, somehow that keeps dropping into the background” Kane said.

“Talk about bloated egos” Janine murmured. He pretended not to hear her and went on.

“I give you both a choice now. Leave together and i will not try to stop you, hurt you, kill you or whatever you think i might do. I honestly hope you both will stay, but i will not force you” Kane said to his own surprise, more than theirs, and to top it off, he meant it. They just looked at him, dumbfounded, and then at each other.

“We stay, of course. The answer couldn’t be any different, kind sir” Janine teased. A huge rock fell of Kane’s heart, one he hadn’t even know was there. She wasn’t with him anymore against her will, she was with him out of free choice. He put his arms around her and pulled her towards him, kissing her on her forehead.

“I do not know what happened to me, but what i do know is, that you are the best thing that happened in my life, Janine” Kane said with tears in his eyes. Happy for the first time. How things can change in the blink of an eye, from bad to good, from good to amazing and to bad again. He just hoped it goes only upwards from now on. “Please, Janine, tell me more about yourself” he said curiously.

“Hmm, where to start.” she said and looked upwards, to the stars, thinking. “We were born in Ithice where we lived until a short while ago when the bandits plundered it. They took a number of us captive, but most died on the way here, or were killed outright at the bandit caves. Thanis and me only survived because i was a sorcerer, and was helping the bandit leader with magic and stuff. Anyway, when we were taken here, it was hell. All the men trying to get at me. I was still a kid, only 20, but luckily the leader didn’t let them. The one who did try to do something to me, he gutted him like a pig. But, i had to help them because they had Thanis, and then there was this other guy, Lombre, who had the invisible cape. He was always around, but i couldn’t detect him, so i didn’t dare do anything. Then, some days later, we met you. Long story short.” she said.

“So, what are your specialties?” Kane asked curiously.

“Manipulation, familiar magic, charms. Nothing too fancy like throwing meteors down on castles. Tho, if we came upon some scrolls, maybe i could learn something like that” she said laughing out loud.

“Right. I will see what i can do” Kane said seriously. Her face went dead serious as well.

“Do you mean it?” she asked.

"Ofcourse i do, you are my woman now. I will do anything for you" he said. She blushed and looked away. Man it was such a hard thing, not to take there then and there, next to the fire.

"What about the hawk?" Kane asked.

"I can summon multiple animals. The hawk, for scouting. The tiger for battle. The mouse for spying on people and umm, thats it for now, haha" she laughed.

"Good enough. We won't need more i hope" Kane said. Her face grew bright and a smile graced her face. Shadows dancing on their bodies, flames crackling in the sky. They would remember this until they died. This very moment, here, everyone together.

"Let's go to sleep. We got a long day before us tomorrow".

Chapter 5 - Death

"Good morning, love" Kane said, stroking Janine's hair. She snuggled closer to him, absorbing his warmth into her own body. "How did you sleep?" he asked.

"Morning, love" Janine replied cheerfully, her eyes closed. "Awesome. Have you slept well?" she added.

"I slept like a log. In fact, i haven't slept so good since i can remember going to sleep" he said, laughing. "Let us get up, the day will be a hard one and we need every moment we can get. Janine lift herself off him and sat up straight, her naked body gracing his eyes. A smile appeared on his face, but she just winked and stood up, getting dressed as fast as she could. He did the same a few moments later.

Thanis approached Kane after they got up and were dressed.

"Good morning, master" he said and he bowed his head slightly out of respect. It kind of startled Kane. He wasn't used to that kind of behaviour.

"Good morning, Thanis. U slept well?" Kane asked cheerfully.

"As good as one could sleep with all the noise you were making with my sister" he murmured. Kane just greeted his comments with a broad smile.

"Oh boy, she is worth every breath. Trust me when i say that" Kane teased. All he got in response was a flat look coming from Thanis.

"Breakfast is almost ready. Since you two woke up so late, i took the liberty to prepare food for the women already and your own breakfast is waiting for you at the fire. Do you want me to heat it up for you?"

"Sure thing Thanis, we would appreciate that a lot" Kane said and nodded.

"Anyway, master, i have an idea. Behind the cave, there is a small stable i have built myself. There are two horses which i used for getting groceries or other stuff and a cart. We could use those to travel from here. Do you agree?" he said, hoping Kane would say yes. Kane could see it in his bright little eyes.

"Sure thing, Thanis. Need help with setting them up?"

"No sir!" he yelled. "Everything is already prepared, sir!" he yelled again.

"We are not in the military Thanis." Kane said amusedly.

"I know. Its just, i've always wanted to say that" he said and smiled.

"Ok then. Go fetch the horses. We will prepare the bags and tell the women to prepare their own stuff in the meanwhile. Will they all fit?"

"Ok master, right on it. Regarding the women, i think so. The cart is pretty large. It will be a little cramped, maybe, but they should fit on. I will ride on front with Janine and i assume you will ride Alpha? Anyway, i am off heating up the food for you. Eat up fast and don't do anymore naughty stuff for the morning!" he said and ran away. Kane walked over to Janine and kissed her on her forehead.

"Ready to eat?"

"Yep. Let's go eat, i'm already dressed for the trip, so dont even think about undressing me. Eat, now!" she said and pushed Kane towards the fire. His head drooped like a little cub's, but he complied. Thanis had put the food already into plates and was gone, getting the card ready as they sat down to eat.

"Say" Janine broke the silence as they ate. Kane looked up at her, awaiting the question but Janine kept dragging it out.

"Yes?" he finally said, annoyed by the long wait.

"Don't give me that tone or i won't give you something else" she said. His mouth opened wide up as he almost choked, giving her a mean look. "Why did you take the man up on the plea to check in lthice?" she asked finally. The question was something he hadn't really expected so it took him a few moments to reply.

"Well, i honestly have no idea. Life was dull for me. All i did was live a day at a time. Go kill a monster, sell some necessities, drink, eat, get laid. The people at Homitage more or less all know me and they know my skill. It just evolved from a check it out to a search and destroy to a rescue operation. I just basically went with the flow" he answered.

"Liar, you ain't really telling the truth, but you are close enough" she chuckled. Kane stood up and leaned forward, kissing her forehead.

"You have no idea how much i love you. It's basically over night, but, there just is something between us no one can deny. Poor anyone if they dared to take you away from me. You are everything i want and desire, so they better not dare try to do anything, whoever they might be" he said, honestly. Janine smiled gently and kissed him back.

"I love you too. I have no idea why or how it came to be, but i sure am glad, my love" she replied. At that moment Thanis came back to clean up.

"Let me clean this up. You gather your stuff and i will go get the cart and set up the women in the meanwhile. We should depart within half an hour" Thanis said and turned away.

"Everything done, Janine?" Kane asked.

"Yes. We can leave whenever the other women are done, which should be soon"

"Good. We are waiting on Thanis to come with the horses and cart" Kane said and walked over to where Alpha, a tiger and a hawk were seated.

"Hey there big boy" Kane said tapping him on his broad shoulders. "Slept well?"

"Guess so" he answered, somewhat sluggishly. "Been all night up, talking to Hawk and Tiger"

"O, Janine's familiars?" he asked.

"We are right here, you ignorant fool" the tiger said.

"So it seems. You sure got her temper, kitty" Kane teased. The tiger stood up and growled and to whose response Alpha stood up and growled a bit louder. The tiger lowered his head in submission and sat down again, the hawk standing on his head.

"Turns out i'm superior to them. Who would have guessed" Alpha said and roared out in laughter. Something was off with him. He was too cheerful this morning, but Kane decided not to pry any further. Suddenly, a scream could be heard. It came from the general direction Thanis ran off to.

"Shit, Alpha, move it! You two as well!" Kane said as he started running towards the way Thanis went earlier. "Soul forge! Weaponize! Materialize!" Kane yelled, arms out to his sides as he was running. Two blades appeared in his hands, glowing white. He gripped them firmly as he was getting around the bend to the spot the stables should have been. When they rounded the corner, from the earth emerged a monster. A silvaren, and a big one at that.

A snake like monster, up to thirty meters in length, generally up to three meters thick. The general populace usually just called it an earth snake or earth dragon. Its skin was slick with a greenish fluid, giving it abnormal slickness. It glided through the earth like through water. The head was wide and thin, giving it the necessary form to be able to glide through the soil. It had eyes on both the forehead and on the back of its head. Three on each side, huge, half a meter in diameter, with hundreds of small eyes inside of them. Believers even compare them to Gods forsaken children. The snakes could foresee movement with all of their eyes. Given enough time, they could deduce patterns and foresee what the opponent would do, before he even knew it. The tongue was long, rolled up and razor sharp. It looked like metal, but it was organic. It could spew poisonous mist as well as just dart out its tongue at extreme velocities, to pierce opponents. The tail was razor sharp and very thin. The body was generally brownish and the head was pitch black with red markings. As Kane was absorbing the view, Thanis was leaning on the stables as the silvaren was taking its time strolling towards him, probably wanting to enjoy the fear Thanis was showing. Kane couldn't help himself, he just had to stop to look at the thing. It was huge, maybe even bigger than the biggest one observed yet. Maybe even forty meters long and five thick. It looked like a huge, crawling meat wall.

"Thanis!" Kane yelled. "Snap out of it. Run towards Janine and do not look back!" He was still standing still, afraid to move. "Thanis!" Kane yelled, even louder this time. Finally, the boy snapped out of it, turned around and started running. By then the silvaren had noticed the newcomers, Alpha, Hawk, Tiger and Kane approaching and it moved its front body upwards, as if readying for a frontal blow. Thanis had cleared the back of the cave already so at least he wouldn't get in the way.

Kane snapped out of it as well and ran towards the silvaren, Alpha right behind him. Hawk and Tiger transformed, partially, as well. Their bodies became almost translucent and double their size. Hawk's talons grew longer and his wings turned into steel blades. Tiger's paws turned into big claws, half a meter in diameter. His whole body had somehow morphed as well, but stayed the same. He looked like a giant razor. And finally, Alpha yelled, "soul forge, immortalize" and summoned his own soul gear, projecting a monstrosity as big as twenty meters in height.

As if knowing what Kane was thinking, Alpha hit him with one of his paws, sending Kane flying towards the silvaren's head, while he kept moving towards the general part of the silvaren's body. Kane could hear the trio scream and roar as well as they were going in for the battle.

"What the hell?" was all Kane could say as he flew at the silvaren a lot faster than he thought he would. Alpha collided head on with the silvaren, knocking it backwards, it fell onto the ground on its back, what it seemed like. Again, as if Alpha could read Kane's mind, he pinned it to the ground with his huge paws, clawing at the thick meat. It was slick so the attacks just bounced off harmlessly. Hawk and Tiger had closed in as well and Tiger jumped on top of Alpha, running all the way towards the silvaren's head, jumping down on its head and shredding into it. The head was different and didn't deflect blows as well, so every now and then a chunk went flying through the air, blood and meat spraying him. Tiger seemed to enjoy the moment and kept on it until a tentacle that appeared out of its head sent him flying, at which moment Hawk flew in and severed the tentacle with its wing. A number of tentacles grew out of its body now, going for Hawk and Tiger was there again, shredding at the tentacles.

"Good, they are keeping it busy" Kane thought. "Blood forge, incantation" he whispered, as if afraid someone would hear him. Kane's blades turned a slightly red tinge, imbuing them with a new power, a moment before he landed on the silvaren. Upon landing, he stabbed his blades into the beast. "Blood surge, explode" Kane yelled, not even knowing what he was saying. A few meters in diameter of where his blades had embedded themselves inside the silvaren's body, the silvaren exploded into red mist, shaking violently, trembling in pain, hissing uncontrollably. When Kane looked at his blades, he saw that they were absorbing the blood and gore. The chunks of meat, instead of flying all around them, floated in mid-air, disintegrating into a fine red mist and flowing into his blades.

"More, more, more, more, more, more!" a voice in Kane's head screamed to the point of his head almost bursting. The silvaren was trying to get free from Alpha's weight, cringing underneath him, trying to move the wounded part away, but it was engaged against four enemies who were drawing its attention constantly. It

succeeded slowly as it slid underneath Alpha towards the hole in the ground, probably wanting to run.

“What the hell was that voice?” Kane thought. He shrugged it off as he had no time to think about it now as the silvaren’s head was gaining ground after slipping underneath Alpha’s weight. It opened its mouth and snapped towards Kane who got saved in time by hawk, who had lifted him off the ground at the last moment. Tiger was climbing up its body towards the head again, Alpha trying to get a hold of its body again, now also covered in the slick green stuff.

“Hawk, lift me up towards its head where Tiger is, hurry, i have got an idea” Kane said. About ten seconds later, he was landing next to Tiger and ran straight into the silvarens mouth. Everyone was stunned at the moment, including the silvaren, who hadn’t expected that move.

“Explode, explode, explode” a voice kept yelling, becoming louder and louder each time. The silvaren’s body kept shaking and it screamed in agony, a painful sound of a dying animal.

“Blood surge, explode!” Kane yelled out over and over again and finally he exited at the monster’s side. Kane was covered in gore and bile, blood and intestines of the beast. Everything that kept exploding was being absorbed at an extremely high rate. The silvaren was already shuddering and in extreme pain, but still had some life in it.

ed me, as i had no idea what was going on.

“Again!” Alpha yelled at Kane, trying his best to keep the silvaren down. Suddenly, the silvaren rolled around, bringing its wounded part to the other side and threw Alpha off of its body. He brought the tail down and hit Alpha fully into his right leg, cleaving it almost straight off. Alpha howled in pain and rolled on his back, the soul particles flowing outside of the stump. Kane’s mind went blank at the sight of Alpha being wounded so badly, and then, the blood lust took over. He tore his gaze away from Alpha who was being protected by Tiger and Hawk, subconsciously knowing he wouldn’t die even if his soul forge died. He would just be severely wounded, so Kane lunged at the silvaren.

“Blood forge, exodus” came out of Kane’s mouth, and suddenly, the two blades grew a good meter in length and some thirty centimeters in width but remained still as light as a feather. He cut into the silvaren’s body and every time the blades connected, a chunk of meat flew into the air and vaporized, the swords becoming a darker red by the moment. After a long minute, there were gashes and holes in half of its body. It kept trying to catch Kane eat him, but every time, instinctively, his body moved of its own and evaded, cutting the beast up even more.

The silvaren’s moves were less and far between, it was obviously dying, but still dangerous. Kane ran up its body towards its head, cutting the body up as he ran upwards, slipping almost with every step, as it turned its head towards him and went for a bite again. The gush of air warned him a moment before its tail struck him to jump aside, so instead of hitting Kane, the tail stuck itself into its own body, cleaving it almost in two. Kane dropped to the ground a moment after the collision, and the

silvaren followed a few moments later. Before it even had hit the ground, Kane was already running towards its head, and the moment the head hit the ground, he jumped on, stabbed the swords into both halves of the head and said "blood forge, explosion". The head exploded and chunks of meat were flying in all directions.

"Next time just call me" a voice in Kane's head said. "Just say the magic words, demon appear, and i will take over, and in the meantime make sure to do the job, since you yourself aren't very capable of doing so" it said and laughed maniacally and disappeared. Was that a dream or was it real?

"I heard it too" Alpha murmured through clenched teeth.

"You in a lot of pain, big guy?" Kane asked as he ran towards Alpha who was trying to get up with the help of his new friends.

"Not really. It will be over in a few minutes. I heal fast. What about you? What was with that voice? I heard it as well" he said.

"No idea. When you got hit, i froze up. Suddenly, my body started moving from itself. It was as if i was just a spectator, looking through my own eyes and doing nothing else, the body moving on its own accord" Kane said and slumped to the ground. Janine came running towards him, screaming. He couldn't understand her since she was too far away and he was exhausted, but she was trying to say something with her hands. As if dreading the act, Kane looked back, slowly, afraid to even think about what was happening there. As he turned around, a huge fang pierced right through his chest, leaving a gaping hole in its wake. The world became blurry and his eyes began to tear. A fuzzy feeling like drowning in quicksand came over him and his thoughts were drifting away. The last thing he could see was Janine dropping to her knees, her hands over her mouth and weeping. "Damn, wish i could have been a bit longer with her" were his last thoughts.

Chapter 6 - Egeryon

"Are you in pain?" a voice asked. Everything was dark around Kane and he couldn't see anything. It seemed that he was laying on his back on a pool of liquid, but no matter how he prodded and turned, he couldn't get a firm hold and stand up. Somehow he turned towards the general direction of the voice.

"No" Kane replied. "Where are you?"

"Everywhere and nowhere" it replied again.

"What do you mean? Who or what are you?" Kane asked annoyed.

"I am you, and i am not you. It is hard to explain. Are you sure you want to know? If i do tell you, you have to promise me that you will let me take control over your body more often than just when you are weakest. I have to save you time and time again. I do not like that. I want to enjoy freedom every now and then." it said sinisterly. Kane did not know what to say or think at the moment. The voice really sounded awkward and fearsome, sending chills down his spine. Then again, where the hell was he? Was he dead? Oh yes, he remembered. He died. Shit! He died! "Janine, my love" he managed to speak.. What will happen to her and the otehrs now?

"What will happen to her now? Is that what you ask yourself?" the voice said sarcastically.

"Yes i am. How the hell do you know?"

"I just told you. I am you, even if i am not"

"Ugh. Alright, just tell me. Where am i, who are you and what is going on, please" Kane said. The voice was silent for a while.

"I am Egeryon. Who or what is Egeryon, you ask yourself. Well, i will tell you young one. I am an ancient monster. A demon to be more precise. Your cursed father and mother somehow trapped my soul with yours. How or why you ask? I have no idea. One moment we were fighting, the other i awakened inside of you, taking control when you were fighting your first monster. Now, even though i no longer have my own body, i still possess some powers which grow by each drop of blood we take. Some of my powers are mental, some are metaphysical. One of them is regenerative, the other is destructive, the third is possessive. Maybe more will awaken in time, but for now, i have already shown you some interesting things, haven't i?" he said and roared in laughter.

"So every time i lost control, or did something new without prior knowledge, it was you?" Kane asked

"Yes, it was me, young Kane. I know a lot more things, and i will teach you in time, that is, if you let me heal you. Before you even just say yes, my price is the following. When i ask you to, you will relinquish control over your body. I need blood,

massive amounts. Especially for what i am to do now. I will use up all of my reserves to heal this wound. Still, the hole will not close up, but just the edges. I do not have more power than that at the moment. Do you agree?"

"I do, but on my own terms. I will not just relinquish my body whenever you like. If you are ancient, you must have lived for thousands of years. The relinquishing will not happen in my lifetime. You will stay with me and protect this body until i am ready to move on. By then, you should have enough new reserves to get into another body or regenerate this one, make it younger or whatever you are able to. Also, you will never hurt Janine, Thanis or Alpha, even if it is self defense. Do you agree?"

"I do" he said after a few moments. "Man did I mess up. I took all of your goodness and transferred them into that mut. Somehow, you managed to regain some of it and prevented me to take control of your body. You have a strong will and a strong sense of justice. I will refrain from doing anything stupid for the moment, as it will only endanger myself also. Anyway, now, close your eyes and count to ten" he said and his voice disappeared.

Kane did what he instructed, praying with all his soul it would work. As he arrived at zero, intense pain came over him and he convulsed, throwing up on himself, almost choking in the vomit. Something turned him over and he threw up again, on the ground this time.

"He is alive!" a female voice yelled. "Do something, Alpha!" it yelled again. Kane slowly tried to open his eyes, but everything hurt as hell. Even his eyelids felt the weight of the whole world as he couldn't even open them. It was as if the silvaren had run him over and ground him to dust. He tried to get up, but instead convulsed again and lost consciousness for the second time

When he came to, he was covered in darkness, again. A harsh voice was singing a song, which sounded awful.

"Why are you back so early?" the voice asked. Kane then figured out who it was after getting his bearings again.

"Egeryon? Why am i here again?" Kane asked.

"How should i know?" Egeryon responded and went quiet. "Well, maybe the sudden recovery was a too big shock for you mentally and got sent back here. Let me try something else. Again, count to ten".

"Wake up, Kane" a voice whispered into his ear softly. He tried opening his eyes slowly, and bright light assailed his eyes. Slowly he opened them wider and saw a beautiful face close to his. It was his dearest Janine. The love of his life, the one person whom he would come back from the dead for. And he literally did.

"What happened?" he asked whilst groaning in pain. His chest felt like something heavy was sitting on it. And with heavy, he meant a silvaren sitting atop of him heavy. He couldn't even move his fingers, his head, feet, or any part of his body. "What is going on?" he asked more panicking this time.

"I have no idea" Janine cried out falling over me.

"Damn woman that hurts, get off of me" he said laughing gently, painfully. She immediately withdrew and took a gourd and poured some water into his mouth. It tasted better than anything in his life before.

"Help me sit up" he said groaning. She took him slowly and helped him to sit up. Alpha came sitting next to him, letting Kane lean on him for support. They both were expectedly waiting on Kane to talk. "What? Is there something on my face?" he chuckled.

"Damn you! You scared me to death! Don't you dare leave me so early into our life together!" Janine cried out, hitting his chest, then remembering he was in pain and apologised. It hurt like hell. The hole was hurting like nothing before in his life. The edges of the wound were already mostly healed up, but the hole in his chest remained.

"Shit, what will the people think when they see me with a hole in my chest" he chuckled to himself. "Anyway, sorry to worry you guys, but, i got owned. I was careless. I'm sorry" Kane said pulling Janine closer until she leaned her head on his bloody chest. After a few moments she withdrew her head, an expression of fear painted on her face, the like he had never seen before. An expression of pure horror.

"What the hell is wrong, woman?" he yelled.

"Your heartbeat. It's gone." she said with a low voice. "How the hell are you still alive?" she asked. Yes, if Kane hadn't known better, he would have said God. But, this was no God. This was a devil. Sell your soul to live on your life. At least for a bit longer. Life sure is ironic.

For a long moment he was gathering his thoughts, thinking about how to give them the news they surely did not want to hear. Then just decided to keep it simple.

"I have a second soul living inside of me" Kane said abruptly. "Basically, he offered me help, in return for favours. He would let me survive and i would let him eat our enemies. Simple as that".

All of them were stunned by this turn of events. Thanis had walked up to Kane and kneeled, his head bowed forwards, whilst looking Kane in the eyes. He could see the shock and terror in his face.

"You don't get skewered like a pig every day and survive to tell the tale" he laughed, trying to soften the mood up. "Speaking of which, what the hell hit me?" Kane asked no one in particular. He felt Alpha moving behind him so he turned around and looked at Alpha. He stood up and walked a few meters, took something into his mouth and returned. He dropped it next to Kane. It was like a fang. The silvaren must have somehow been able to launch one of its teeth towards Kane. Brutal. O well, he was alive again and that was all he cared about at the moment.

"I am going back to sleep" Kane said and he slumped back over and fell asleep right away. When i woke up again, what looked like half a day later, he found himself bandaged and covered in a blanket, Janine, Thanis and Alpha sitting just a bit away from him, around the fire, a big pot on top of the fire. A bit further away was another, bigger fire where a big group of women was sitting. They all turned to him as they noticed he woke up.

The smell of deliciously prepared food was assailing his nostrils so he sat up slowly and felt a lot better than before. The pain was mostly gone and he could move his limbs again.

"Do not get penetrated again" a voice said in his head. Kane just laughed slightly and shook his head.

"Damn monster can talk directly to my mind now" he said under his breath. "As if Alpha wasn't already annoying enough to have around in his head, now a second voice. If i didn't know better, i would think i lost my sanity, tho i am not far from it, i guess" he muttered to himself.

Alpha turned his head towards Kane and laughed, reading Kane's thoughts.

"You are awake, finally. I was thinking about starting to eat by myself already" he said and roared out in laughter, or, howling sounded more like it, combined with a snorting noise. The sound made Kane laugh out loud, hurting all over. The whole group joined in on the merry laughter and the other women and girls came over to their fire, to hear what was going on.

"Hey big guy. Janine, Thanis, ladies, Hawk, Tiger... Sorry for worrying you guys. I can't help it but get into trouble" Kane said and laughed out, then gripping his chest, the pain still present. He bit through the pain and got up slowly, Janine, standing up hurriedly, rushing his side. She took some of his weight on her shoulders and helped him over to the fire. Thanis rushed towards them already and put some cushions on the ground. Kane sent him a gentle smile and a nod, his face lit up like the sun itself.

"How are you feeling, master?" Thanis asked, helping Kane sit down. "We were worried as hell. Never again do that to us!"

"Im fine, dont worry. I'm pretty hard to kill now, trust me" Kane said and felt the confidence he was showing the others. Kane knew he was hard to kill, especially now that his heart was gone. He was basically dead. What a turn of events.

The group ate more or less in silence, the sound of the fire crackling was like music. Kane loved it, or at least thought he did, or was it the other him. After they were done eating, Kane stood up, deciding to go for a walk.

"Alpha, accompany me" he said and started moving. Alpha stood up and walked after Kane. Some minute later they stopped at a big tree, Kane turning his back to it and leaned on it for support. He still felt weak and he was feeling like it. He needed more rest for sure.

"You know, we are not alone anymore" Kane said as Alpha sat next to him. He just nodded his head and slumped to the ground.

"I will be honest" Kane said and stopped, looking for words.

"I know everything you think, everything you feel, everything that is on your mind, every doubt, every moment of love, pain. I am you, just in a different form. Stop thinking of me as a dog or a wolf, or an animal for that matter" Alpha said angrily. He was right to be angry, Kane had thought of him as just an animal, a pet. But, he was a part of him, a part which he missed now, a part which he needed to fight his inner demon.

"I know. I am sorry. I have just realised that you are more to me than just a pet. U are me, in a different way. You know, if i do what i planned to, and i kill the king, how many people do you think will die? How many people will lose their loved ones if a revolt sparks up" Kane asked, not knowing where all the emotions came from. He had never cared about others, but now, something just flipped inside of him. Kane did not know why, but, he loved Janine, and even her little brother in a different way. Maybe he had a chance at redemption. Maybe he had been given a second chance in life to be part of a family. He had to keep it alive at all cost. Nothing and no one would do them any harm. He would kill anyone and anything that would seek to harm them.

"I feel the same way" Alpha said and turned his head up, to gaze at the stars. Kane loved to do that as well. Shit, again he was thinking of him as just a pet. He had to stop doing that or he would lose him, or rather, himself.

"Say, Alpha, do you think i am a good person?" Kane asked abruptly. The question caught Alpha off guard, he could see that much.

"A... good person?" he replied. "Can you define what a good person is?" Kane couldn't really. Never had he done anything good in his life, except this one time, trying to save Thanis and the other prisoners. It.. felt good, to be honest. To do something, not purely for yourself, but genuinely just because it was the right thing to do. He rather liked it.

"Don't let that smile go any wider, or your face might tear" Alpha said laughingly.

"Let us go back, you big oaf" Kane said as he turned to go back. Alpha followed him silently. Upon their arrival at the fire, Tiger and Hawk met them, doing a perimeter search it seemed. Kane stopped a moment to talk to them.

"You two were marvelous today. I am very glad to have been able to fight beside you two" Kane said, meaning it. The two of them looked at each other, not expecting this, then looked back at him and lowered their heads.

"So are we" they said in unison.

"I am glad to hear so. By the way, how about you two get real names, like I named Alpha" Kane said.

"How would you name us?" they again replied in unison. Kane thought hard for a moment and then replied.

"How about Beta and Gamma?" Kane asked.

"What do the names mean?" they asked.

"Nothing much. Just something I read somewhere a long time ago. We could make it mean second and third, coming in with strength just behind Alpha" he said and laughed.

Janine walked up to Kane and took his hand just then.

"I see you like my familiars" she said.

"I sure do. They are good to have around. They might have been the factor that let us survive today's silvaren" Kane said. "We just gave them names" he added and smiled.

"So I have heard" she replied. "But they were never like today. Something must have happened for them to have transformed like they did" she added.

"That might have been me" Alpha said. "I shared some of my power with them" he laughed sheepishly, which sounded like a snort, again. They all laughed at him and shook their heads.

"Anyway, you are coming with me, kind sir" Janine said, leading Kane towards the big tent which they had set up for the two of them. Morning couldn't be far enough away, Kane thought to himself. Alpha sent him a laugh, mentally.

Chapter 7 - Return Home

The next morning breakfast was already waiting so we joined Thanis, Alpha, Beta and Gamma. The three had become inseparable. Gamma was usually standing on top of Alpha or Beta. It was a rather funny sight, but they didn't seem to mind..

"Good morning, master" Thanis said and bowed.

"O quit it already you little turd. Stop calling me master already. Instead, call me brother. I am marrying your sister after all. Well, one day that is" Kane replied. Janine's head shot up and her eyes found mine. Kane cringed away in fear. Fire was burning in her eyes, flames engulfing everything around him. "Scary" Kane murmured to himself.

"You're telling me that, big bro. I've had to live with that every day. She's scary as hell".

"Who are you calling scary!" she yelled at both of them. Thanis and Kane just looked at each other and burst out laughing. So did the three familiars.

"Let's just enjoy the food and start moving already. We're behind on my non-existent schedule, but I still like to get there as soon as possible" Kane said.

Breakfast ended pretty fast, in easy chatter. They packed all of their stuff into the wagon along with the women and children and Alpha and Beta offered themselves to pull the wagon. They were as strong as a herd of oxen, so Kane generously took them up on their offer. Before the group left, Kane walked over to the corpse of the silvaren. Something looked off, now that he had a better look at it. The inside looked still fresh and seemed to pulsate slightly. Kane summoned his blades and started cutting away at the flesh to get deeper towards the pulsing area. It was as if something kept drawing him in, calling for him to come get it. After some rending and tearing, bloodstains on his freshly washed clothes, Kane crawled into the opening he had made and pried towards the pulsing. It became stronger and stronger and he pried towards the source. Suddenly, something bit his hand and he tried to pull it away, not succeeding. The pain was becoming worse by the second and every time Kane tried to pull out his arm, he felt more of his arm and hand getting cut up. Finally, after a few more tries he succeeded pulling out his hand. It was covered in a black ooze which pulsated constantly. His hand felt like it was being crushed from the inside and it forced him to his knees. Kane tried to pry the ooze away with his right hand.. Alpha was running towards him when he felt that something was wrong and was there within a few moments, trying to help Kane, but the ooze wasn't getting off. As suddenly as it clawed itself onto Kane's hand, it just dropped off and fell to the ground, evaporating into thin air within a second. In its stead, a small stone was embedded into Kane's hand. It was glowing slightly and pulsating violently. Kane tried ripping it off but as soon as his hand started bleeding, it regenerated almost instantly. Both Alpha and Kane were dumbstruck and just gazed at each other, mouth wide open, trying to speak but clearly not succeeding. Janine ran up to them and gasped at seeing the stone.

"Oh my goodness!" she yelled. "That is a gnostrum stone!" she yelled out this time. "Do you have any idea what that is?!"

"Umm, no i do not. What is so special about them? Beside the thing we just saw happening here" Kane said confusedly.

"Gnostrum stones are more or less artifacts. That one in particular is a Belial, i think. It is a defensive slash regenerative stone. There is information only about a few of them. Each is rumored to give amazing powers to its wielder!" she said excitedly.

"No wonder this silvaren grew so huge. The stone probably had an impact on him. Oh well, i'm really sick of this. Lets just get the hell moving. Lets go" Kane said and started moving towards the cart. Janine and Alpha followed, whilst staring at the stone. Kane pretended not to notice and just put his hand in his pocket.

"Everything ready, Thanis?" Kane asked as they approached the cart, filled with women and children.

"Yes it is, Kane. We are ready to go" the kid said and smiled at Kane. "Ever the cheerfull one" Kane thought.

The ride was very non eventful and pretty boring. The same trees, grass, river, pebbles, sky. Honestly, after all what had been happening lately, they preferred it that way.

"Want to snuggle and ruggle with me?" Janine leaned up to Kane, pressing herself onto him..

"Not with all these people around. I'm not that eccentric" Kane said sorrowfully.

"Hmm, how about you let me cut off your hand, pry loose the stone and study it. How does that sound?" she mused.

"How about i spank that big ass of yours so you can't sit anymore" Kane said and winked back at her.

"Big!?" she yelled, fire in her eyes. "You, mister, are not getting any tonight!" she said loud enough to be heard by anyone present. Alpha shot us a look backwards, so did Beta and Gamma who were next to him and went back to their usual talk.

"Say" i said to change the topic, "what the hell are those three talking about every day" Kane asked, motioning towards Alpha, Beta and Gamma..

"Hmm, no idea" Janine said cheerfully and planted a kiss on Kane's cheek. "What i do know, is that the kiss i just gave you is all you're getting today" she said excitedly, like a twelve year old. Kane was at a loss for words at the moment, but decided to stay quiet. Maybe he could do something during the day to make her

change her mind. He grinned and stayed like that for a while. She just sent him a questioning look which he didn't answer.

"Look!" Thanis yelled and dropped his head down towards us. He was on the lookout atop of the carts roof "I see the town from up here!" he said excitedly.

"We are almost there it seems. I wonder what the future will bring these women and children" Kane said under his breath. Janine gripped his arm and moved closer to him and whispered.

"Does that future include me being somewhere beside you?" she said with a soft voice. Kane looked at her and smiled, then planted a huge kiss on her lips.

"Of Course it does. You are going to give birth to a lot of kids for me. You got the hips for it" he said and laughed. She fisted him on his arm and laughed.

"Sure i will. You better do me good then loverboy, these hips are very lonely tonight" Kane's mouth dropped open, as did Thanis's and the other women's. Everyone burst out in laughter and merry talk.

"You two get a room. You are disgusting. O and for the information, i want a separate floor for myself. I do NOT want to see you people walk around naked all evening, doing whatever you do where you feel like it. I am your damn brother. Grrrr" he growled and howled and withdrew up to the roof. Janine and Kane just looked at each other and laughed out loud.

"Don't worry your highness, you will have a whole floor to yourself. That is, if we manage to find a fitting place for ourselves" Janine said.

"How are we going to go about it anyway" Janine asked. Kane thought about it for a moment and couldn't come up with an answer really.

"Hmm, no idea. We will think about it when we arrive. I hate straining the little brain cells i have left" he said and laughed.

Some time later they arrived at the gates and the same guards were stationed there as last time. The guards were even more frightened than last time, not even approaching them. The guards captain just motioned for them to pass, his legs shaking like a leaf in the wind.

"So funny" Alpha said. Last time he sure looked like he owned the whole town.

"Yea, i guess we left quite the impression on him" Kane replied. "Anyway, you know where our house is, Alpha. Keep going there until we arrive. Alpha nodded and pulled the cart a little faster, eager to arrive home. Some minutes later, navigating the narrow alleyways and roads in between buildings and houses, they arrived at Kane's house.

"Here we are, good people" Kane said, standing up. "Get off the cart, get yourself into the house and get cleaned up. There is a big bathing room on the ground floor where a few of you can fit in at the same time. I will be going to the guild master to have a talk. Thanis can cook something for all of you. I will be back later. Alpha, join me" Kane said as he finished talking and jumped off the cart.

"What about me?" Janine said as she walked up to Kane, obviously frustrated. He had forgotten what to do with her so he just shrugged.

"Come with me, i will introduce you to the guild master" he said to get out of the mess he just created. She leered at him but nodded and took his hand. "That was close" he thought to himself.

The women and children unloaded themselves from the pulling cart and took their meager belongings with them.

"Poor souls" Janine whispered. "They have nothing left beside what you gave them" she said and snuggled into Kane's arms.

"We will take care of that, don't worry. Let's go meet the guild master, together we will figure out what is the best course of action to take with them" Kane said and pulled Janine after him, waltzing off into the night.

Between buildings there were no lanterns, but the lanterns from further away made enough light not to stumble anywhere. The buildings all looked alike, brick upon brick, layer of stone upon layer. The buildings looked like little castles while the houses looked like cottages in comparison. The night had just set in, but there were still quite some pedestrians roaming around, probably without any purpose. The streets were tiled with slabs of stone, probably imported from other kingdoms as the colours didn't match many of the queries that were located around Homitage.

Janine was enjoying her as she and Kane were walking down the street, holding hands. Alpha and Beta were walking a ways behind them, whilst Gamma was soaring the sky above them, loving the feeling of strong wind against his feathers. Janine kept giggling as she saw interesting things. Vendors, acrobats and all sorts of people were doing their own thing on the main street leading up to the guild house.

"So much life, so much joy spread around this town, isn't there?" Janine asked, looking up at Kane as they were walking up the busy road.

"This is nothing. This is just the everyday life. Wait until you see some of the festivals or guild festivities. That is truly something to look out for. Unfortunately, we are leaving this place soon. Do not get too close to it" Kane replied. She gave him a blank stare.

"That doesn't mean i can't enjoy the time i DO have there, can't i?" she replied. He shook his head in disbelief. She HAD to contradict him, always and in everything.

"You are such a pain, you know that?" Kane said and chuckled. "We are there" he added as they walked up to the guild house. It was as big and gorgeous as he remembered seeing it last time, just a few days ago, before his whole world had changed. They walked into the guild house which was packed full at this time of day, and just like last time, the room went immediately quiet. Whispers upon seeing him and then when the three familiars had walked in, it was deathly quiet.

"Wait at the guild master's door" Kane said, walking up to them. The three familiars placed them at the door as Kane and Janine walked in. Gamma was sitting on Alpha's broad shoulders and scanning the crowd from his favourite sitting place.

"Hello guild master" Kane said as they entered the room. The old man looked up at the two people who just entered his room and his face went into a smile.

"Kane, my dear boy. Are you already back?" he asked, standing up and motioning for them to sit down.

"Hello, guild master. I am finally back from my trip, which you heard of, i assume?" Kane asked.

"Yes, i have heard about it. Please, tell me that it is not true what we heard from that poor man. Actually, a small stream of those people has been coming in. Survivors or people who were away and came back to find their homes taken from them. These wretched times" the guild master said and sighed. His face older at least by twenty years than a moment before. The fight in him, no longer present.

"I have taken care of them in a fitting manner. This young lady here was one of the prisoners. She is now my wife to be and her name is Janine. Also, she is a witch" Kane said with an accent to the witch. The guild master looked up in genuine surprise.

"Are... you sure about that?" he managed to reply.

"If the two familiars standing guard at your door aren't proof enough, i do not know what is" Kane mused.

"Oh, so that is why the room went silent. I should have guessed you are back. They never go silent unless it is you or one of the other high ranking hunters" the guild master replied.

"Now, master, i have a favour to ask of you. It is a big one, but, i do not know who else to ask".

"Speak, man, don't keep me in the dark. What is it?" the master replied angrily.

"Right. I have seventeen survivors currently holed up at my home. I would like for you to take care of them, one way or another. I will leave you a hundred gold pieces, please use them to expand the house, using our guild members. When they hear what it is about, they will probably want to help either way, but, i want everyone

to be payed. Another fifty gold pieces for food and another twenty for clothing. I think that will be enough for a long time, but, as i saved them, i want them to be taken care off when we are gone” Kane finally finished.

“Gone? Gone where?” the master asked in bewilderment.

“That, master, is something i can not tell you. I have a new road to take”

“Does that new road have anything to do with the rumours of an army gathering at our border?”

“What?!” both Kane and Janine said in unison. “Are they true?” Kane added.

“I do not know, and i honestly hope they are not, but, people talk. People who flee the south western area’s have been mentioning stuff like that. We will have to wait and see” he said. Kane and Janine looked at each other and understood what they had to do.

“Master, can i count on you to do this for me?” Kane asked. The old man sighed and nodded.

“Of course my boy, i am in your debt until i die. Whatever you wish, i will do so. Go with God, my son. You will need his help” the man said. Kane snorted at the words.

“Master, God has long since abandoned me, trust me when i say that. Look at this here” Kane said as he lifted his shirt. The man fell to his chair and started breathing heavily.

“What... happened, my son” he asked.

“God happened, master. A huge silvaren died at my hands. This is the gift he left me, Kane said showing his chest and then his hand.

“A gnostrum stone?” he said, almost accusingly. “Where did you get that?”

“It was inside of the silvaren” Kane replied.

“Someone must have put it inside of the poor beast, as monsters have a natural affinity to avoid gnostrum stones. Someone wanted that thing to attack you” the master said. Kane’s eyes opened wide. He looked over at Janine, then at the master again.

“How would they have known i would be there at that time?” Kane asked.

“Silvaren’s travel with tremendous speed, my boy. They can traverse hundreds of kilometres within an hour. Someone must have set Ithice up for some reason and to get you there. Why or how, i do not know, but that is my best guess, and you know that i am almost never wrong” the master said. “Kane, please take care. Take care of this fine woman you have now with you and watch your back, my

boy. If they could add a gnostrum to a monster, they must be fearsome. Also, now that this has happened, I have something to give you. I had promised to my late mother, God bless her soul, to never let go of this unless someone deserved it, but I see no better person to give it to” he said as he stood up, walked towards a cabinet and unlocked it with a small key. He took out a leather bound book and walked back to Kane and Janine and put it right in front of her. “Take this, my child. It was my mother’s Grimoire” the old man said. She looked up at him, not quite understanding.

“What... is a grimoire, master?’ she asked.

“A grimoire is a diary and a spell book. My mother has written all her life inside of the book together with any spell or magic she uncovered. This book will help you on your way, my child. I beg of you, keep it safe. Now, the two of you, go. I have no more heart to talk tonight. Leave me with my sorrow” the master said as he turned his chair around. Kane and Janine just stood up and walked towards the door, where Kane stopped and said

“I will send the money tomorrow. There will be more. Please have the guild prepare a carriage by tomorrow noon. It must have room for the three of us, be spacy and comfortable. The cost is not an issue. Thank you, master. Fare thee well” Kane said and they walked out of the room. Outside, the room was still quiet and almost no one was talking. Everyone kept staring at the trio and now at the two people who came out of the master’s room. Kane looked the room over and walked towards a lone figure, who was drinking wine in the corner of the room. The crowd parted for Kane as he walked over to the man.

“Guido. Go see the master, he has some work for the guild. You will get paid in gold coins as well as anyone you choose to help you. Time is of the essence, so don’t drink all night” Kane said and put two gold coins in front of the man. The old man looked up at him and snorted. He took the gold coins and stood up, called a few names and walked towards the master’s room. Kane chuckled and shook his head. The man was ever the same, give him some money and he provides miracles.

Some time later, Kane, Janine and the trio returned home. The women and the children had eaten, washed themselves and were sleeping in the attic on mattresses some neighbours had provided. Thanis was asleep in the kitchen, sitting next to the stove where he had been cooking for the last hour. Only one candle had been lit, in the corner opposite him. Kane and Janine sat down and ate the food Thanis had left them. They mostly ate in silence until they were done. Kane walked over to the large sofa and unfolded it onto the ground, making it into a bed for him and Janine. Thanis was still asleep so Kane took him and carried him to the fireplace, laying him near it on a blanket. Alpha and Beta lay down around Thanis, near the fire to sleep and Gamma took his place on top of the fireplace marble slab. Janine got over to the makeshift bed and undressed herself until she was naked, laid down on the bed and waited for Kane to do the same, so he did. They still weren’t talking, for some reason or the other until they were tucked under the warm blankets.

“Is everything all right? Kane?” Janine asked when she couldn’t stand the silence no longer. He just kept staring at the ceiling for a while.

“My whole life i had been wanting to kill the king for taking away my parents, when actually the trust couldn’t be more off than i would have want to believe. They left me to pursue their own ambitions and did some things to me that no parent should. Now i do not know what to pursue anymore. There is an army gathering to attack the kingdom, which is weaker than in any of its previous historic moments. The only ones who can do something are us, yet we won’t be let by anyone who matters, so we will see the kingdom burn, the people enslaved. I would love to enjoy these moments alone with you, but, i have too many things on my mind, Janine, please bare with me for a while as we take care of them one by one.

“Sure thing, loverboy. I got the grimoire to study as well, so, no worries here” she said and kissed him on the cheek. “Let us go to sleep, we have a long way in front of us tomorrow” she added and lay down beside Kane and fell asleep immediately. Kane just smiled, looked at her and kissed her back, then fell asleep as well.

Chapter 8 - Kingdom Come

"Wake up, we have visitors" Alpha tried mentally waking Kane up as he was still sleeping. It took him a few times as Kane was vast asleep. He resorted to nudging him with his snout and finally got Kane up. There was a loud banging on the door, persistent in tone. Kane's head seemed like it would explode from all the noise.

"Stop the banging, i'm coming" Kane yelled and stood up, groggily. Janine just woke as well and she looked at him questioningly. He just shrugged and stood up, still naked, walked over to the door and unlocked it. Just outside stood a young lady, scantily clad. She was just as tall as Kane was, slim and had a nice figure. Her fiery red hair stood up in a plume and her strong make up added quite the touch.

"What... is... your... problem..." she said, prodding Kane with her finger each time she said something. "What is this i hear about you having found a wife?" she yelled. Kane's guts turned inside out at the sight of her. His previous few night stander and she thought she had the right to berate him. Not waiting for Kane to do anything, Janine stood up, still naked, her breasts bouncing up and down as she ran toward the woman and got into her face.

"You have a problem with me being his wife?" she said menacingly. Kane just stepped back, not wanting to get into the middle of it when the two women started beating each other.

"The breasts. The waist. The face. The body, the poor girl started counting, looking Janine over. She looked down and lost all her flare. "Can i come in?" she asked.

"If you had asked so, nicely from the start, we just might have" Janine replied, still angry. "Go home, we do not have any time for this" Janine added and slam the door into the woman's face, then stomped over to Kane who had moved a meter away. She narrowed her eyes at him and looked him straight in the eyes. "You got anything going with someone beside me?" she demanded.

"No!" he blurted out, almost yelling. "No" he said again, this time gentler. "She is just a girl i used to do it with when i was lonely, nothing else. You can hardly blame me for that, can u?" Kane said. Janine just waved it off and went over to the bed, taking her clothes off the floor, sniffing them and throwing them away again.

"U got any female clothing laying around?" she asked. He in fact had, and was glad to give them to her.

"Yes i do, that closet over there" he said, pointing at a closet near the window.

"I won't even ask why" she said, rolling her eyes. She walked over to the closet and opened it. Her eyes went wide open as she saw all the beautiful dresses hanging there. A certain dress caught her eye. A scarlet red, short sleeveless dress, cut just above the knees, with a big cleavage, showing off her perfect breasts. As she put the dress on, Kane was at a loss for words. It was as if the dress was made for her personally. She looked like a flaming goddess.

"I like!" she said, excitedly. "Finally a man with taste!"

"Are you going to walk around like that without anything under it?" Kane asked.

"You wish, lecher!" she said and stuck her tongue out. He just shook his head. "I am way in over my head with this one" he thought.

Thanis just came over at that moment and greeted them.

"The women upstairs are all awake, when should i tell them to come down?"

"Right now. It will be a bit cramped in here, but i have something to tell every one of them" Kane said and sat down on the sofa. Janine sat next to him, her legs wide apart, teasing him to take a look. "You shouldn't test me, or you might find yourself in quite the predicament, young lady" Kane said, giving her a comical stare. She just burst out in laughter, enjoying it.

One by one, the women and children started coming down the stairs and sit around Kane and Janine, some on chairs, others on the floor. All of them had plain dresses on, anything that was clothing basically. They did look a bit better after the bathing they had last night and the food, but there was still work that needed to be done on them before they could start living again. They might have a roof over their head now, but the trauma's and nightmares would stay for quite a while. When all of them were seated and quiet Kane coughed and started talking.

"I won't give you a long boring talk. Just the basics. Janine and myself have made arrangements for you to stay here. I have given a large sum of money to the guild master who will take care of you for now. This house will be expanded manyfold, but it will take some time, so bare with it for now. You will have food brought to you and some new clothing, furniture and so on. We are giving our house to you to live in, not to demolish it or to try and usurp it. In the end, everything is ours, so keep it in mind. But, as far as we care, you can use it until you get remarried, move out to a boyfriend, die here. Anything. No one will force you out, nor will be able to take this away from you as long as you live. After a while, you will have to start working and provide for yourself, our budget is limited, but we have made sure that you will have a comfortable life for the next year at least" he said and waited for a response. One of the women stood up and came over to him, took his hands in hers and kissed them.

"God bless you, mister Kane. None of us here will ever forget you nor your loved ones who took good care of us. Most of us know Janine ever since she was born, so we know that you have chosen yourself a fiery angel. She will take good care of you, have no doubt. As for us, you gave us more than anyone by saving our lives, now even this. We have no idea how to ever repay you. Also, we have been talking last night, and decided that, if you would like, choose one of us present to be your wife's servant and one for yourself. No matter who you chose, they will obey as we agreed on it, all of us" the woman said in a long breath. Kane and Janine just looked at her, not knowing what to reply.

"Your offer is very generous, but, we do not want any servants. Feel free to live your lives as you see fit" Kane said. The woman shook her head.

"That won't do. Please make your choice, mister Kane. If there is a need, we can undress ourselves so you can choose by the body, if you would like" she said, lowering her gaze to the floor.

"This is getting out of hand, kind of" Kane said. "No taking off clothes or my darling would probably carve my eyes out. As for the serving, if Janine wants one of you as a servant, maid or something, i will let her choose. But i do not need one, i have her" he said and kissed his woman. She looked back at Kane, not sure how she should take his words.

"Arlana" Janine said, as she looked at one of the girls just under her age, sitting behind the woman in front of Kane. "Would you like to come with me?" Janine said and smiled, as gentle as she could. The girl, younger by maybe two years, stood up and walked over to Janine, taking her hands and kissing them.

"God bless you, sister. I thought you would chose someone else, but didn't dare raise a protest" the girl said as she sat down in front of Janine.

"Alright, ladies" Kane said as he stood up. "We will be off by day's end. You should all be more comfortable then. I am off to the guild house to see the progress of our new mobile home" Kane added and walked out the door, Alpha on his trail.

"We really didn't need another someone to protect during our travels" Alpha said.

"I know, but, it was hard to say no. They seemed to have thought about it all night so, who was i to say no" Kane replied. "Anyway, lets run over to the guild. I am curious as to what they came up with" Kane said, getting into a run.

Kane and Alpha entered the guilds massive workshop to the right of the guild house and stopped dead in their tracks. Seven people were adding what looked like some finishing touches to a cart. It looked more like a mobile house than a cart. It was five meters in height, six in length. The cart was being kept up by no less than twelve dual wheels made from a metal alloy and rubber sewn around them. The cart itself looked exquisite, carvings around small windows on both floors and even a small balcony for some flower pots? Janine was going to die when she saw this.

"Kane, come ere" a voice yelled. When Kane turned around to see who it was, he spotted Guido, the man from last night. Kane walked over to him and shook his hand.

"A fine job you did, Guido. Maybe your finest yet" Kane said. Guido nodded in appreciation.

"When you have an unlimited budget, you can basically make anything. Though, you will need a lot of horsepower to pull this" he added.

“No worries there, Guido” Kane replied. Even without saying it, Alpha knew what Kane wanted and Alpha grew in size and strength, manyfold. Guido’s eyes seemed like they were about to pop out of his eye sockets. “Make a harness according to his size and specifications. Make sure it is strong enough to pull the mobile home. He has enough power to, so do not worry about that. Guido just shook his head and threw his arms up.

“All right, i think i have seen it all now. Wolves, giant wolves, wolves that grow to a whim, change shape, obey people. Blergh. Whatever, come back in an hour and you can take this thing with you” Guido said.

“Alright, thanks. Also, make sure it is stocked with guild paper and utensils. I have a feeling there will be a lot of writing done during our trip” Kane replied and walked back out. Him and Alpha went on a stroll to greet some old acquaintances and get groceries and some other stuff prepared. An hour later, a big cart pulled items they bought up to the guild workshop and unloaded them next to the mobile home. Kane loaded them along with the cart boy’s help into the unit and gave him a gold coin as a tip, which the boy hid away in his trousers, immediately, bowing deeply in thanks to Kane. The workers harnessed Alpha up and they slowly left the workshop to pick up the rest of their party.

“What... is... that!?” Janine asked, exhilarated as she was looking at the mobile home. She was at a loss for words. So were Thanis and Arlana. As Kane helped them load over their little things they had in the house, which they were bringing with them, he noticed Gamma sitting atop the unit. He climbed up and saw that there was a watch post, spacious enough for one person to sit for a while in comfort. Atop of the watch post there was another watchpost, but this one for a bird. Hawk had gone down a bit on his size and fit in, perfectly. He was trampling around on the beams that were connecting the parts of the cage, excitedly. Kane shook his head and smiled. Guido really thought of everything. That man deserves even more than Kane payed him.

“Arlana, go say goodbye to your friends. Janine, you as well. We are leaving immediately” Kane said as he had climbed back down. Alpha was annoyed and growled constantly, being strapped up in the harness. “Easy there brother” Kane said as he tapped the now giant wolf on his back. Alpha just snorted and kept on growling. Just in time Thanis, Janine and Arlana had come out, the whole group spilling out of the house behind them. They in turn came up to Kane, bowed and thanked him. It was a nice gesture of them and Kane smiled, genuinely, wishing them luck in their new life.

Within a few more minutes the group had finally started moving, Beta keeping Alpha company, while Gamma was snoring loudly inside of his little home. Kane was sitting up front, on the makeshift balcony, Janine beside her, and Arlana just inside of the doorway, keeping them company, getting acquainted with them for a while. Thanis was enjoying himself in the outpost. It was done out of wood, the flooring, beams, the walls, window frames. Only the windows, which made out about fifty percent of the walls were made out of a composite glass mixture, imported from a far away kingdom. It was very resilient and didn’t shatter easily. Thanis was at a height

of about six meter and had a great view. He had a little book in his hand, a pen in the other, scribbling some kind of notes, or drawing. Kane couldn't distinguish what, but he seemed to enjoy himself.

The road out of Homitage was again the same as they had taken the last few times in and out. The same guard captain, seeing Alpha and Beta, didn't even bother coming out of the guards house, just waved them good luck and farewell. Kane laughed and shook his head. The foolish guard captain. He would be the first to die if someone attacked the city. It barely had any soldiers, maybe some hundred maximum, the guards making up sixty of them, forty patrolling the streets of Homitage. Now, a good hour out, instead of going on west from Homitage, they had to take the road leading south, which they did. Their destination was Kravnja. They didn't plan to set themselves up inside of the castle, but somewhere just outside of it, at the outskirts, an hour ride to be close enough, but far enough to spot danger.

A few days passed and nothing noteworthy happened, to their luck. They weren't feeling up for any fighting at the moment, just relaxation and traveling. Arlana and Janine were laying up on the roof sunbathing. Janine was stark naked, as usual, but Arlana had on some makeshift panties, but was topless. Kane hadn't seen her naked, and Janine felt like keeping it, but from what Kane had seen, she was as endowed as Janine, maybe even more. Some naughty thoughts went through his mind when Alpha yelled

"Janine, Kane is having naughty thoughts!" and snorted, which was an equivalent to laughing for him.

"What?!" Kane yelled back. "I am not! Liar!"

"Sure is!" Alpha yelled again.

"Alpha! Stop saying such things!" Kane added. The two women on top of the roof were chuckling.

"Honey?" Janine yelled then. Kane looked up instinctively and both Janine and Arlana appeared, bending over the railing. Kane coughed and almost choked, dropping his face as to not see any more of what was up.

"Babe? Are you and Arlana trying to kill me?" he said, still coughing.

"No. Come on, look up. I am alright with it" she said. Kane hesitated and as she yelled again he looked up.

"Are you into kinky stuff, babe?" Kane asked.

"You wish, lecher" Arlana yelled. "No touch, only watch" she said and laughed together with Janine.

"Anyway, honey, what do you think who has the better breasts of us two?" Janine asked. Alpha fell to his knees and was laughing hard, Beta doing the same.

They basically knew what he had to respond, but also knew as they had looked up, who the bigger breasts had, and all knew Kane loved size more than anything.

"Babe, can i kill myself instead of answering?" Kane asked, looking up again, seeing past Arlana's cloth wrapped over her womanhood. Blood dripped out of his nose and suddenly it was as if a dam had burst open and he fainted. Some minutes later, and some laughter later Kane came to himself, lying in a puddle of his own blood, Janine sitting atop of him, still naked, her breasts an inch away from Kane's face. "You trying to kill me?" he said, narrowing his eyes on her breasts, instead of her eyes.

"Sorry honey" Janine said. "I was trying out a spell. If you thought anything more of her breasts than mine, or if you watched at her you know what, you would have a nosebleed. I think i overdid it a bit, you losing this much wasn't planned" she said and laughed. At that moment, Arlana walked up to them, also still naked, but for her cloth, which at this angle didn't hide much, or, rather nothing at all. "It's fine, honey. You can watch as much as you want, as she said, but u just can't touch. She and me, ever since we were teenagers, liked to bathe together, walk around naked, shared some intimate moments. If you don't mind her walking around like i am, i would be thankful. She would as well. Thanis, well, he would have to get used to it" she said and laughed again.

"Can i touch? Maybe later?" Kane asked, a wide smile on his face.

"I wouldn't mind, Arlana said" looking over at Janine.

"Hoe!" Janine said, in a sarcastic way. "You think i would share this with you?" she asked and replied "Maybe, one day if i have enough of him" she added and laughed again.

"Food is ready!" Thanis yelled and came out of the kitchen onto the balcony, gasped and turned around. "Will you two put on some clothes, please!" he added. "Have you no respect for the young?!" They all laughed and helped Kane up and walked into the kitchen, still naked.

Two more days went by without before the first issues rose up. Kane and Janine were sitting in the observatory, a bit cramped up, reading from the guild masters grimoire. One a page were written some warnings that a witch had to bond to someone before she became twenty five of age or she would lose all her powers. Janine was luckily a few years off, but the bonding ceremony was a bit hardcore. Bleed in a cup, mix it with blood of your loved one and drink half, each. Afterwards a life must be taken, the same night as the ceremony, in a ritual. Both would have to have a part in the killing, and the sacrifice must be a virgin, boy or girl, between eighteen and twenty years of age. The were disgusted and stopped reading for a while, not wanting to do it, but subconsciously knowing they had to. That night ended with the reading session and the next morning already, the castle of Kravnja was in sight, or rather, city of Kravnja, depending on how you called it.

Some kilometre ahead, Gamma saw an inn at a crossroad, south leading towards the castle, maybe an hour ride on horse, a few minutes ride to the west the inn.

"Seems we found our perfect spot" Janine said, as she heard Gamma's thoughts.

"Huh?" Kane asked. "What do you mean?"

"Up ahead is what looks like an abandoned inn, next to a crossroad that leads to castle Kravnja, which is about an hour ride on horseback, Gamma just reported" Janine replied. Kane nodded his head and jumped out of the cart, ordering Alpha to stop just ahead the bend, a hundred meters away from the inn.

Chapter 9 - Settling in

"Stay here, i will be back in a moment" Kane said to no one in particular. He got off the carriage and walked over to the men who were sitting on the porch, greeting them. They all looked over at him and then stood up, hands on their sheathed weapons, some low quality swords.

"Now now, is that a way to greet a weary traveler" Kane said and tried to act as innocently as he could act, which in all honesty wasn't anything to brag about. "Do you people know of anyone selling some property around here? Or at the castle?" Kane asked.

"You got the cash, boy?" one of them said, dropping his hand from his weapon whilst smiling. He probably held Kane for an innocent fool who he could rob off his property. Well, if so, he was badly mistaken.

"Yes i do. Also enough to reward you for any help you give me finding it"

"How much do you have?" he asked with a smirk on his face.

"Enough to buy a few houses. Just point me at the right direction" Kane replied.

"Would you mind showing us the money first?" he asked again, greed in his voice betraying his motive.

"Sure why not. Its over there in the cart" Kane pointed and moved for them to follow him. A few moments after they arrived at the cart, they stopped dead in their tracks. Alpha was looming over them as he came up from the other side.

"Now, what did you little boys have in mind?" Kane mused as he was holding his already summoned blades in his hands. The lead thug just stuttered and was speechless, as were the others, caught in between a three meter high wolf and someone who looked wicked and was holding two nasty looking blades.. "Now would be a good time to answer, unless you want to die".

"Th... this... inn is... for sale" he replied. "I.. its mine" he managed to stutter, his legs shaking uncontrollably. One of the two goons fainted and hit the floor, his head making an audible thunk.

"How much for the inn" Kane asked patiently.

"A thou... no, umm, five hundred silver?" he stuttered. The price was decent. For five hundred you couldn't buy much, but here, a bit secluded, and a pretty big building at that. We could live out here whilst getting work in the castle or whatever we will do, Kane thought to himself.

"How is the interior?" Kane asked. The man flinched at his voice. Alpha growled just to add some more insult to the injury.

"The inside is all yours!" he said hurriedly. "It is pretty decent, nothing special though. Some old furniture, a fireplace, some wine in the cellar, horses in the back. Whatever is there is yours!" he said, almost yelling. Kane turned towards the cart, took a sack of coins out of it and threw it down at the thugs feet. The coins spilled out and they hungrily started gathering the coins in their greedy hands, scooping up dirt with the coins.

"There is about a thousand coins in the sack, four hundred for you and three hundred each for your goons. Do whatever you will with them and leave here, fast. If i ever see you here again, i will kill you. Then i will feed you to my wolf" Kane said as Alpha growled at them to emphasize the point. They stood up after getting the last coin and ran towards the woods, screaming all the way. "Now that was funny" Kane said and laughed at Alpha. He just stared at Kane with a lunatic stare, as if saying, you are crazy. "Now, let us go inspect our new home" Kane said and whistled a tune. Janine, Thanis and Arlana joined him as they got out of the cart.

"Let us go see what i just bought from a bunch of bandits" he said and walked towards the inn. They just looked at each other and made a strange noise, then followed him.

The inn itself was a part of a huge tree, possibly ten meters in diameter, giving off a fantastic look. At the entrance to the Inn, there was a big sign with "welcome to cutthroat island" carved into it. That would have to go, as soon as possible, Kane thought to himself. The inn itself was pretty big, and stretched a good twenty meters wide and three floors high. Each floor had four windows, probably four rooms on each floor. They would have to change that a bit, break down the walls and make one big room out of it for himself and Janine. They walked inside and to their amazement, it was pretty decent. There was a big reception desk, made out of big logs, a few benches and tables strewn everywhere on the first floor.

A nice smell was lingering in the air and the women and Thanis followed it to what looked like a kitchen. From outside they could hear a small, female voice sob. They rushed inside to see what was happening, only to find a little girl, maybe the age like Thanis, sobbing at the stove. She turned around and screamed, not expecting anyone to be there, or expecting someone else.

"Who are you? What do you want from me?" she cried out loud, holding a big kitchen knife, clutched between her hands, pointing towards Janine. She slowly walked towards her, assuring her she wasn't going to hurt her, nor anyone of her companions.

"Calm down baby, no one will do you any harm. Why don't you put that knife down so we can talk" she said, trying to calm her. The little girl was visibly shaken, terrified of them. "We will do you no harm. You can trust me, we just want to talk to you. All right?" Janine tried again. The girl put her knife down slowly and backed away, up to the wall.

"Who are you and what are you doing here?" she tried again, this time in a calm demeanor.

"My name is Janine. We just bought this dump. And you with it?" she said questioningly. The girl's eyes grew wide and a smile formed on her pretty face.

"You mean those drunken idiots won't be around anymore?" the little girl asked.

"Yes. That is what I mean. They were convinced it wouldn't be good for their health if they stayed here for any longer" Janine said, smiling sheepishly. Her big blue eyes went wide open, tears rolling down her red cheeks. She started sobbing uncontrollably, shaking like a leaf in the wind. Janine took her in her arms and kissed her on her forehead. The little girl burst into tears and groveled her face into Janine's chest. All the while Janine was patting her on her head and whispering in her ear. At that moment Kane walked up on them, startling them. The little girl screamed again, afraid of Kane.

"Don't worry" Janine said. "He is the one who bought this inn. He is my husband to be" she added. The girl's tension disappeared again and she started crying again.

"Thanis, let us go explore more of the building. Maybe we find even more girls in need of comforting" Kane said and led him outside of the room. All the while his head was turned towards the girl, his face blushing a scarlet red. "Like her?" Kane asked teasingly, winking at him.

"You are very mean, Kane" Thanis replied.

"Of course I am" Kane said. "I am evil incarnate, boy" He said again and punched Thanis's arm slightly and Thanis grabbed the spot where Kane hit him.

"That hurt!" he yelled with his soft voice. It just made Kane want to do it again. He decided against it. Instead, Kane put his arm around him and hugged him for a moment. Both of them were silent and didn't breathe for a long while. "Thank you" he whispered. "Thank you for saving me and my sister, and for making us part of your family. It is the best thing that ever happened to us. Finally we have a home and someone to take care of us. Please make her happy, I beg of you!" he said with a much more masculine voice.

"I will kiddo, I will. And that little girl will take care of you, and we will all be a happy family" Kane said and pushed him away gently. "Let us go look around a bit more" Kane said and turned away. A lonely tear streaked down Kane's cheek as he walked up the stairs. A long lost feeling, returning in the worst possible way. Why the hell did he even care. He is strong, he is almost a God amongst men, yet he still felt for people when he shouldn't. People will be his downfall and in the end, he will end up sacrificing himself to keep them safe. No, he mustn't think like that. What is he living for if not for someone he cares about, someone he loves. He will keep them safe, no matter the cost.

They reached the middle floor and were greeted by a nice collection of stuffed animals. Wolves, bears, owls and a lot more, even some smaller monsters. It was fascinating. At that moment Kane knew how their new home would be re-arranged.

The ground floor would have a big kitchen and a big sitting room, the middle floor would be their business room and resting room, the upper floor would be their sleeping quarters, Janine's big closet and some other things.. Lost in his thoughts, he didn't notice Janine and the girl coming over until the last moment. She startled him and he yelped like a little girl. They all started laughing at Kane, so did he. Life could still be fun and great, even like this. Kane did not need the constant boasting, bragging, risking his life to prove his point. He could start living like he should have from the start.

"Are you feeling better, little girl?" he asked as pleasantly as he could. She just nodded her head and whispered softly.

"My name is Anya. I am the only child of the previous owners of this inn, dear sir. I hope what this woman said to me earlier is the truth. If it is, i would be more than happy to join you and let you stay here" she said all in a rush.

"Let us stay here? I just bought this inn for a thousand silver pieces with the horses" Kane said annoyingly.

"Bought? From who?" she asked genuinely startled.

"From the three guys out front" She turned pale at Kane's words. Her knees started to buckle and she fell to the floor, taking her face in her hands and crying like a little baby

"What is wrong?" Janine asked surprised.

"Those... three monsters... killed my... parents!" she said in a few gasps. "You payed a thousand silver.. to murderers!" she cried out in agony. Kane was shocked. They did seem a bit strange to him, but he hadn't given them much thought.

"Alright, Anya, i will bring you their heads, and pay you the thousand silver. Would that do, little lady?" Kane asked as friendly and politely as he could. She looked up at him again with those big eyes and just nodded her head two times. An instant later Kane was jumping through the window, calling for Alpha midair.

"Pick up the scent of those three and take me there as fast as you can!" Kane thought to him. He was there to catch Kane on his back and off they were. A mere few minutes later they were already in sight, Alpha gaining ground five times faster than the bandits were running. The trees were flashing by almost instantaneously, the wind chilling to the bone. As Kane was about to say to Alpha to slow down, he crashed into the group, sending Kane sprawling as well.

"Damn mut. I am not the target! Next time let me get off first!" Kane yelled at him. He got up and just threw a glance at Kane, a " i dont give a fuck" one, which went totally on Kane's nerves.

"Eat two of them, Egeryon. The ones beside the one who i was negotiating with earlier" Kane whispered. Two nasty looking blades appeared in front of Kane, floating. The shape was different than last time, the blade more narrow, sharp on

both edges with nasty rents near the hilt. Kane tried to take the swords in his hands, but the swords flew away. He tried to stop them, thinking about it, and they stopped. Mind control over summoned weapons? "Is this you? Egeryon?" Kane thought.

"Why yes. Do you like my latest gift?" he said and laughed like a madman. Damn, what did Kane do in his previous life to deserve to have an ancient monster put inside him. Sigh.

"Yes i do, but, next time, please let me know beforehand. I hate humiliating myself, even in front of dead men" Kane said. As way of affirming the order, the swords nodded slightly forward and then flew straight at the two goons. The blades embedded themselves into their victims body, shredded and cut them apart within a mere few moment. The blood was evaporating and floating upwards into the blades, which in turn glowed slightly reddish. "Man this frightened me every time i saw it" Kane thought. No way could he ever get used to it, it was just plain creepy. The third goon, the negotiator at the inn, was whimpering on the ground, sitting in a pool of his own urine. He pissed himself witnessing the carnage in front of him.

"Why did we do this? You probably ask yourself that" Kane said calmly, as if nothing happened. Not waiting for an answer, he went on. "The little girl in the kitchen told us a short story, about how you killed her parents. Now, i hate it when bullies prey on people weaker than themselves, but what i hate even more is, bullies killing little girls parents just because they can. Now, i will tell you what will happen. You are going to die a horrific death. A death so horrible, you can not even imagine it" Kane said and stopped. Thinking about how to kill him off, he could feel the darkness creeping up on him, stalking him, sending him thoughts he would never have usually. Planting things inside his head, which he never would have dreamed about doing to others, now, he was going to do them. "Alpha, i have an idea. Are you hungry?"

"I can see where this is going, and the answer is, no, i will not." he said and turned around, walking back the same way we came here.

"I order you to stop and obey me!" Kane said angrily. He snapped his head around and leaped towards Kane, the blades blocking his approach a mere meter away from him.

"You, order me? Don't make me laugh, boy! I am you, i am a part of you. Who are you to order yourself around?!" he yelled furiously. "I will not obey you and just pretend nothing is going on. You are evil, and you have an evil aura emanating from your body. If only you could see yourself, what is becoming of you. I despise the mere thought, you and i are two halves of a whole" he hissed at Kane. It hurt, more than it should. He was right, Kane was giving in, more and more each time he used his blades, each time he wanted more power.

"Egeryon!" Kane yelled. "What the hell are you up to? What the hell are you trying to do to me!?"

"Who, me? Why nothing in particular. All i want is to take hold of your body, and to plunge the world into darkness. Would you like to know something?" he mused.

"What?!" Kane snapped angrily.

"Would you like to know how many people died, when your parents left you, to hunt the big monster they were called to kill?" For a moment Kane found it strange Egeryon knew about that, but then realisation snapped in.

"No, don't tell me that! Do not tell me you are that monster!" Kane almost whispered.

"You are a bright lad. Why yes, that is me!" he said and laughed maniacally again. The sound echoing in his mind, almost splitting his skull in two with the sheer volume of power. Kane grabbed his head with both hands, pushing from both sides, hoping for the pain to go away.

"Stop... please..." Kane begged. He could feel his life being forcefully taken. For all he was worth, a mere soul of an ancient demon was overpowering him like he overpowered these goons. How pathetic he was. And there he was thinking that he could just stroll up to the king and kill him. No, he has a new goal now. Get rid of this pest inside of him. Of course, he could read Kane's mind so he just let him know he did, by turning on the pain a bit more. Blood was trickling down Kane's nose and he was coughing it up. Then it abruptly went away as it had come in the first place.

"Now, do you see? I could kill you as easily if i wished to. You are alive only because of me" he hissed angrily, venom in his voice. Kane could feel he hated it as much as he did, their mutual symbiosis. He was just an onlooker, one that had the power to interfere, but not take over. "If you keep resisting me, i will kill us both. I need blood, i need violence, i need chaos, i need death!" he spit out. What a sick freak he was.

"Just imagine what would happen to the world if he got hold of me" Kane thought. It would be the end of the world as most knew it.

"What do you want from me?" Kane said as he gasped for air.

"What do i want?" he asked and laughed sinisterly. "What all great minds want. I want to rule the world. I want to bring destruction to those who oppose me. It is quite simple to be frank."

"Right. I would rather kill myself than let you take over and do what you want" Kane hissed at him, with as much malice as he could muster. He just laughed at Kane, as if to a little child.

"How about i kill Janine for you?" he said. It was as if a knife had stabbed Kane in his guts and twisted around a few times for the effect. His legs felt weak and he stumbled to the ground, throwing up. He just kept on laughing at Kane all the while. Suddenly, Kane was sent flying through the air, crashing to the ground a good

dozen meters away. He stood up and looked around, confused. One moment he was choking in his own blood and vomit and the other one he was flying through the air. Alpha approached him carefully, as if studying him. What the hell was going on?

"What the hell happened?" Kane said and moved towards him.

"You were convulsing on the floor, then stood up and attacked me. I just hit you once with my paw. Sorry, i didn't mean to send you THAT far. Maybe a meter less" he said and chuckled.

"Do you see now? Do you really want me to hurt someone you love?" Egeryon said, appearing in front of Alph and him. Alpha jumped back soul forged.

"He's not real" Kane said, somehow not trusting the image himself.

"Sure looks real to me, midget" Alpha replied.

"Midget?!" Kane yelled. "Who are you calling a... midget?" he said and looked up at Alphas soul forge, which was towering over him, a good twenty meters above him. "Right. I got your point big guy, chill the fuck out okay?" Kane said, a bit flustered.

"You kids done with your showing off who has the bigger one?" Egeryon said, obviously annoyed. "Anyway, we have an issue. I want your body, and you want it as well. I want chaos, you do not. Now, how do we solve this problem?" All three of them were quiet for a long while. "Now, here is what i propose. I will cast a ritual, and with that ritual, i will bind all three of us. Why? Simple. That way none of us can harm the other, or, in my case, myself. But, this spell will need a lot of life force" he said, pausing for the effect, a sly, little smile on his face.

"Life force?" Alpha and Kane both said at the same time.

"Yes, life force" he replied. "To sustain it, we need blood, souls, whatever is fine".

"So you propose we go and kill innocent people?" Kane said angrily.

"No. I have a better idea." he mused. "Let us wage war. As far as we know, there is one being prepared just now"

"War?" Kane burst out in laughter. "Wage war with whom?!"

"Ooh, the other kingdoms? There's people enough to feed our pact for a while. I assume, with a small sized skirmish, hmm, for a year?"

"And if we do not?" Alpha asked before Kane could.

"Then someone is going to get hurt, pretty badly" Egeryon replied. "Starting with Janine and Thanis" he added. Anger came over Kane and he took a physical blade he always had in his back pocket, unsheathed it and stabbed himself.

“Yes... someone is... going to get...hurt. You!” Kane yelled as he dropped to the ground, going into shock, losing consciousness.

“What the hell was that for, you imbecile!” Egeryon yelled at him inside of his head.

“I wanted this private chat, where we were on equal terms” Kane said. “I will kill us both, if you try anything. Stop putting up the terms, and work with me, instead of against me. You big brutish monster, there will be no chaos for you as long as i am still in control” Kane said. They were both quiet, neither of us breaking the silence.

“You have a valid point, i g uess. What do you suggest?” he said slyly. Obviously seeing he wasn’t as much of in control as he thought he was. Kane would be damned rather than give in to a monster. Damn his father and mother for doing this to him. He wished Egeryon had killed his parents, slowly instead!

“What do you want, that i can give, for you to let me lead my own life. You are ancient, let me live out my life in peace and when i am about to die, i will pass you the control over my body to yourself. Then you can regenerate and do what you want. How does that sound?” Kane asked.

“Young Kane, you are a better barter than many and your offer is quite the deal. But, how do i know that you will not turn on me at the last moment, boy, as you did just now?” he asked .

“You don’t. But, as you have noticed, ever since you were inside of me, i have always kept my word. I think that will have to suffice for now. Help me grow stronger, and whenever possible, i will give you your tribute. I will wage war if necessary, to satisfy your own hunger. But try anything ever again, especially on Janine, and we both die” Kane said angrily. Even thinking about it, that she could die at his own hands, even if he wasn’t the one who was in control of it, rocked him to his core every single time.

“All right, boy” he said, with a volume of sheer malice Kane had never felt before. He really hated him this much, even more then Kane hated the fact he was inside of him. “We will do it your way. For now at least” he said and then woke up, his presence gone. Kane went for the place his blade was inside of his stomach, but it was gone, and a little scar remained. Good, that way they both would never forget their mutual agreement. Alpha was standing next to him, like a loyal guardian. When Kane looked up, he saw the pain in Alpha’s eyes.

“What the hell were you thinking, you imbecile! If you die, i die as well!” he barked at Kane.

“O,h that was news to me” Kane said and smiled.

“I am sorry you dirty mutt, but i had to take the gamble. As you can see, all worked out fine” Kane said and took Alphas paw to stand up. Sometimes Alpha felt almost human. “Thanks, Al” he added.

"What happened? Did you talk to that thing?" he asked.

"Yeah. We came to an arrangement. But i also agreed to tribute. He wants blood, so he shall have it."

"Do i want to know what you agreed on?" he asked nervously.

"Probably not, but it is better that you do" They were both silent for a long while, just looking at each other. "I promised him my body, after i had a full life. I promised i would let him take over after i lived it out and had gotten old" Kane said. Alpha didn't respond, he just slumped to the ground, placing his head on his forepaws.

"Right. If that is so, then so be it. We are still a ways off, so, no use getting too worried over it. I just sincerely hope he doesn't try what he did today. If i have to, i will kill us both, you do know that, right?" he said.

"Yes Al, i do. And i couldn't hope for a better butcher if it came to it. Damn! Speaking of which, where is that piece of filth that killed Anya's parents?"

"Over there" Alpha said pointing to the side with his tail. "What do you plan to do with him?"

"Show Egeryon that i meant what i said. His luck that he is unconscious, otherwise this would hurt a lot" A thousand little blades appeared all around Kane, and were floating in mid air. Tiny replicas of his two own big blades. They started spinning in the air and came closer together, creating a vacuum, drawing everything inside in its radius. The body was shredded into little pieces, blood and gore was strewn about everywhere. Slowly the blades stopped spinning and floated in midair again, as if waiting for something.

"You can have him" Kane said and instantly the blades started glowing, spinning again, drawing everything in and absorbing it. He could swear he could hear the blades laughing and then they disappeared.

"Shit, this was creepy as hell, Kane" Alpha said. "And speaking of creepy, how the hell did you summon that amount of blades?"

"No idea big guy, no idea. All i know is, that there is far more to me then one would say by just looking at me. My bond with Egeryon is playing a big role in this, and he is slowly giving me more and more rule over his powers. Only natural, he wants to survive as well. Let's go back to the girls, i am worried about leaving them alone for so long" Kane said and stood up, waiting for Alpha to stand up as well. Kane mounted him and dropped his head into Alpha's fur. Why did they have to do this to him. Why did they have to put him in such a position where he would have to butcher people just to stay in control over his body, let stand his life! Slowly Alpha started walking and then got into a full sprint, taking them home. Home, what a lovely word.

"He has awakened, love. Our beloved son has finally awakened!" the woman said to a man crouching next to her. They both stood up.

"Yes he has, darling. My son. How strong he has become. He will be a fine successor to our previous experiment, and already so strong, subduing Egeryon like a little baby" he said as the boy was riding off on a giant wolf. "Soon it will be time to put our plans in motion. The armies gather and will attack within a month" the woman said.

"I will personally lead the army. When he feels the draw of power, he will come get it, or try and stop it. In any case, he will be ours" the man said, chuckling to himself. They both laughed and then disappeared from the scene of a triple murder, and a major milestone in their plan.

Chapter 10 - The Summons

"Say" Janine said curiously, "I haven't seen this scar here before" she said as she traced her finger over the scar Kane had gotten stabbing himself. He was silent, not wanting to worry her about that days happenings.

"Nothing for you to worry about, baby" He said, assuring her as much as he could. Ever since that day, he could sense people's moods and thoughts. Not read them, but sense in the way of feelings, and hers were distrustful at the moment.

A week had passed since then, but the pain was still there, just that little scar, it hurt like the moment the blade stabbed his stomach. She saw his uneasiness so she withdrew her hand and turned her head slightly.

"I don't know what happened, but, i want you to know, that you can talk to me. You know that right?" she said and smiled gently, cupping Kane's face with her hands. "You know that i love you over everything else, right? Please give me the trust i deserve. Until you can talk about it, i will be waiting for you to tell me" she said and kissed Kane on his lips and leaned on him.

"How are the restaurations going?" he asked to change the topic. She sat up next to him and the covers fell off her breasts, revealing something he worshipped as much as her character. He grinned and she punched him in his chest.

"Not now, u maniac" she said and then uncovered everything. He started feeling uneasy for some reason. Well, the reason probably being because Arlana was laying next to them in bed, naked as well.

"How the hell did it come to be like this" he muttered to himself. She just looked up at him and then dismissed his ramblings.

"Thanis went to the castle with Anya and found some carpenters. They have been working almost around the clock. The upper floor will be done within a day at most, our haven. Thanis any Anya have claimed the mobile home for themselves until their new wing has been done. They each didn't want much, just half a floor for themselves, so we are expanding towards the stables. The ground floor will be done tomorrow, then we move there and into the third floor once that is done, so they can redo the middle floor. Tomorrow they will finish the stairway and the corridor. Then they will have to start doing the exterior we talked about, from start to finish. And yes, it will be as we discussed, regarding the ground floor. A corridor that leads to a big dayroom, a massive table on the middle, benches around three sides and the fireplace opposite the table. That room will lead to the kitchen which will be as massive, with a higher table and a u-turn bench around it etc etc etc yes, yes, i remember. Do not worry so much. I want it to be as good as possible as well, you know" she said and smiled that gentle smile at Kane. It made him smelt every time he looked at her. Somehow, he couldn't get enough of her. No matter how many times he took her, no matter how many times he saw her, he just kept wanting her more and more. Maybe it was because she's a witch, and she had something natural about her appeal, but still, it felt somehow unnatural to him. The power that kept

drawing him in bit by bit, until all he could do was worship her. He snapped out of it momentarily and went back to the topic.

"Right, of course you do. Anyway, how did Anya take everything?" Kane asked.

"Hmm, well, she is fine now i guess. All she does is spend time with Thanis, mostly behind closed doors."

"Doing what you and me do every night" Kane added and laughed.

"Hush. I dont think so, well, not all time time, at least. Anyway, when you and Alpha came back, and told her the guys were dead, and went out with a lot of pain, she first cried for a while, then she laughed and said that was the best thing that happened to her in her whole life. I guess she's getting over it. She's probably one of those types that keeps everything inside, and then bursts when it's too much to carry".

"All right, i'm glad to hear. Say, would you like to go out tomorrow with me?" Kane said. She blushed and looked away shyly.

"Are you serious?" she asked, still looking away.

"Of course i am baby. All that has been going on the last weeks is death and escaping death and what not. We haven't really taken any time for ourselves. Go out, have food at a local tavern, see the castle. Maybe see what kind of job i could take on. See if we could find any more old tomes?" Kane said intriguingly. "Speaking of which, how are your studies going?"

"Sure thing love" she said and pushed him down on the bed, laying atop of him. "Regarding the studies, i am making a lot of progress. I can even summon fireballs now, add some interesting things on top of Beta and Gamma, summon them some armour and stuff. It is really interesting. Arlana is taking most of the chores on her so i can do what i am doing" she said.

"Speaking of which, when will i be able to do some nasty things to her" he asked, in a whisper.

"I heard that" she said, sitting up straight next to Janine, Caressing her neck and long arms with the tip of her fingers. Kane stirred a little and tried to look away. The girls burst out in laughter, enjoying the teasing act they pulled on him constantly.

"One of these days i will just take you both by force if i snap. Don't say i didn't warn you" he said and went to sleep.

They woke up the next morning pretty early, a beautiful dawn. The sound of birds chirping was filling Kane's ears, horses nickering and a dog barking. The sound of home, the sound of family, the sound of a place where you belong. Janine was laying next to him, her head on his arm, snoring softly, barely noticeable. He caressed her from her neck down, slowly tracing her curves. She started moving

around in reflex and opened her eyes when he got to the goal. She smiled at Kane and jumped right on top of him, just for a tease.

Suddenly the door crashed open revealing an Anya and Thanis who were out of breath. As they rushed into the room, seeing their bare bodies, Janine moving on top of Kane, Thanis closed his eyes and turned around, Anya staring at them, mouth wide open. Then she turned around as well and ran out of the room.

"There are some knights downstairs waiting on you, Kane. Also, please, the next time when you are doing things with my sister, please have a cover, somewhere, so i don't have to carve out my own eyes when i see her still moving on top of you, in front of us. Damn it, you two are disgusting, how can you still go at it every damn moment of the day!" he yelled out in one breath and rushed down as well.

"Wonder why knights would be visiting here. We did nothing to attract attention, did we?" Kane asked, pushed Janine off and planted her on the bed, next to him. "We will go at it again after i'm done down stairs, all right?"

"You going downstairs facing a group of knights with your thing pointing up at the sky? What, you plan to sword fight them with it?" she laughed and stroked herself, whilst laying on the bed.

"No, i plan to take you with me, so theres two naked people down stairs, not just one" Kane said and turned towards her again, moving to her and picking her up, still naked, in his arms and running towards the door again before she could protest. They were down in a few quick strides, passing a heavy breathing Anya and a comforting Thanis. Seeing them run around naked, Anya finally fainted and Thanis yelled something after then, not bothering to listen at it. A few more strides and they were at the ground floor, still holding Janine in his arms. Kane put her down next to him and walked towards the door and opened it. There was a group of approximately two dozen knights on horseback, armed to the teeth and a heavily decorated one in front of them, standing beside his own horse.

"Turn around!" the big male next to the horse barked at the group. As in unison, the group turned their horses around and so their gaze, taking it away from a naked Kane and Janine, standing next to each other at the doorway. The man was very tall, about seven feet, almost a giant, in comparison to Kane. Wide shouldered and bulky, two big swords connected to his black gleaming armor on either side of him. The helmets visor was up, revealing two big eyes, staring directly at Kane, a big nose and a coal black mustache. A crimson red cape was adorning his back and a big red plume of feathers on top of his helmet. He sure looked important compared to the others, who had just jet black armors on, no capes and no plumes. Long spears in their hands and a sword each on their backs. Their horses were a bit smaller and brown, compared to the big black mare of the leader, probably a captain. Kane walked out of the house with Janine just behind him, she stopped behind Kane's back putting her arms around his chest, her head only visible to one side.

"Good day to you sir" the man said. "I am captain Walfrid of the kingsguard" he said and bowed his head slightly, the plume dangling from his helmet. "The king

personally ordered me here to give you this invitation” he said and walked over towards Kane, an envelope in his hand. He stopped right in front of him, his eyes never leaving Kane. He gave him the envelope and took two steps back. Janine looked at him and said loudly ‘boo’ taking the man aback, he looked at her. “Why in God’s name, what kind of infidels are you lot? You are naked, have no courtesy towards the position i occupy, and then even fool around!” he yelled, going towards his sword.

Instantly, a thousand small blades appeared all around him and in front of the two naked people, positioning a wall of swirling blades between the captain and them. He stepped back immediately, drawing his swords. The other soldiers immediately dropped to the ground coming to their captains aid.

“I wouldn’t recommend you do anything you will regret later on. Especially try something stupid as attacking me, or my beloved here” Kane said as he looked up after reading the letter. Walfrid was furious, his face red.

“No one told me you were a forger!” he snapped at Kane under his breath.

“O, does that frighten you?” Kane said and smiled. To demonstrate his power, he put out his hand, palm facing walfrid, closing my hand into a fist, slowly. The blades were moving ever closer towards him, until he was cocooned into an impenetrable wall of blades. One of the soldiers was foolish enough to think he could do something and tried to rush Kane. He just snapped his hand towards him and half of the cocoon enveloped him, shredding his armor into tiny pieces, many of the blades drawing blood. The wounds were just superficial though, nothing life threatening. Walfrid just put up his hand and the soldiers lowered their weapons and moved back two paces. Walfrid did the same, so Kane unsummoned the blades. They disappeared as fast as they had appeared.

“You should think twice before you insult my man here” Janine said loudly and winked at Walfrid.

“Hush woman. Let us see what is written on the paper” Kane said as he was taking out the piece of paper from the envelope.

“Sir Kane,

Hereby you are invited to a royal audience with his Majesty at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Sir August”

“This is it? An invitation to see his royal majesty? Why the hell would i even bother going?” The whole group was dumbfounded, mouths wide open, staring at Kane in disbelief. “Captain walfrid? Are you al right?”

"Yes sir, i am. Thank you for asking" he said hurriedly, gathering his composure.

"Tell your king i will be there once i fuck my woman until she is unconscious" Kane said and laughed as hard as he could, earning himself a slap from behind. "Just joking, we will be there sometimes during the day. My woman and i already planned to visit the castle sometimes today. How long do we need on horseback?" Kane asked, feigning ignorance.

"You will need about thirty minutes by horse via the main road. Just cross that bridge" he said pointing towards a bridge we passed earlier that week,"and keep following the main road. We will take our leave now, sir Kane" he said, bowed and turned around. His men followed his action and did the same. Janine and Kane turned around towards the inn and started walking, when a strange sound could be heard. It sounded like the flapping of wings, huge wings.

"You have got to be shitting me" Kane said and dropped his head in disbelief, knowing what had just arrived. A huge, no, a humongous Avirus had found them. He looked up slowly towards the sky and it was there, staring down at him with its hundreds of eyes. "Janine, run towards the inn!" Kane said as he ran towards the clearing opposite their new home. He did not want it to get ruined by a damn Avirus. Luckily for him, he was fast, especially in the nude. Nothing to hinder his movements. The soldiers just stood there, looking up at the monster, not knowing what to do, so Kane decided for them.

"Protect my woman at all cost! Even if it costs you your life! If she dies, and you survive, i will kill you personally!" he yelled at them as he was running away from them, drawing the Avirus away towards the clearing up ahead. "Al, where are you?" Kane called for him telepathically.

"Coming back from lunch with Gamma and Beta. Why, do you need something?" he said calmly.

"Yes no shit big guy. Theres a huge avirus flying above my head!" Kane yelled.

"On our way, we will be there in a few minutes".

"Alright, i will make do" Kane replied as he arrived at the small clearing. The avirus just kept hovering above them, following him with its gaze. Kane didn't really know how to fight one, as it was a flying type, which were pretty rare, and exceptionally deadly.

"Egeryon? Are you here?".

"Of course i am. What do you want?" he said angrily, as if being interrupted.

"I don't know if you have noticed, but, there is a huge avirus floating above our head"Kane said sarcastically..

"Oh, that. Yes i did. Why?" he said casually, as if it were the most normal thing in the world, to have a huge avirus floating above you. "It was for me. I was a God among monsters. Until those wicked beings called your parents did this to me" Egeryon added, reading Kane's thought

"To us. I don't really like you that much either. Anyway, do you have any suggestion?"

"Hmm. Not really. I just used to bite them in half" he said and stopped, as if thinking. "Well, there is something though. That is if you do not mind some risky maneuvers" he said and laughed.

"Whatever. Just tell me what as it is getting ready to attack!"

It unfurled its wings, getting ready to dive. "Any time now, E!" Kane yelled angrily. Suddenly a huge blade appeared in front of him, at least three meter long. One of its edges was blunt as pavement, but the other one was as sharp as a razor. It was love on first sight, as he lifted the sword in his hands. It was as light as paper, to his relief. He tensed his muscles, planted feet firmly to the grovel and jumped off as hard as he could, launching himself through the air like an arrow, an arrow with a pretty big blade. Only a short second later and they clashed already, Kane slashed at its head while he was passing, the avirus deflecting his blows with its sharp metal tail, which consisted of three separate long blades. The moment of their clash lasted very short and Kane shot past him, the avirus stopping just a few meters under him and spun around in the air, lifting up towards him again. Unfortunately for Kane, he had pushed off to hard, he flew up into the air higher than he had wanted. Still, this was the first time he used the new trick which Egeryon had provided him, so he was satisfied. He began slowing down and at the upper highest spot he turned around towards the ground, just as the avirus was coming up for him, he summoned his tiny blades, a few hundred of them, instantly and separating them into groups of ten, he made a wall out of the tiny blades in front of him.. The few moments of preparations passed and he started dropping again to clash with the avirus an instant later.

It's tail blades kept deflecting Kane's blade, trying to pry past his defenses for a piercing blow, but the small blades were wreaking havoc all around the avirus, rending at its flesh, pieces of skin, meat and blood pouring everywhere. The blades were too weak to do any major damage, but it gave Kane the opening he needed. He slashed down as the avirus had withdrawn its tail and hit it square on its beak, cleaving part of its head right off. His preservation instinct and the will to survive was even stronger than Kane's it seemed, as at the moment of cleaving, it whirled around and went past Kane. As he was falling, he saw a familiar battlegroup waiting for him. At the last moment Alpha caught Kane on his back and threw him off immediately. He felt like a nuisance at that moment, but it didn't matter as much as killing the avirus. He would have to talk to Alpha about it later, when they were alone.

"Stay back" Alpha barked. "This one is ours" he said. Kane could hear the lust in his voice, the lust for battle, the lust to prove himself. Alpha soul forged immediately, so Kane withdrew towards the inn to get some clothes on. Beta and Gamma immediately went into battle form as well as Kane passed them and they ran towards the avirus. Beta had become like a warbeast, after transformation he had

metal armor on, spikes at the shoulders and a long horn atop of his head, metal claws a meter in diameter with thick, sharp edges. Gamma had also drastically changed, his whole body turning to metal, razorsharp wings and big talons, only smaller by twenty centimeters than Beta's. His head was protected by armour what looked like a war helmet. It was rather funny to see them, so sharply changed in comparison to Alpha, who had just become bigger and stronger, though his soulforge looked similar to Beta. He looked like a war-wolf, which the northern tribes used a long time ago. Metal armor on his back, stomach and shoulders, neck and head. His paws were exactly the same like Beta's, just a magnitude bigger. He looked like a wolf from hell, and he seemed to enjoy every bit of it. His soulforge towered over the inn and tensed, bracing for the avirus impact, which was just a few meters away from him. The avirus crashed into alpha within a second, which alpha used to drag the avirus to the ground, taking away its advantage in the air. He jumped on top of the avirus and pressed him down with his weight.

Beta just jumped on top of the avirus's head, biting and clawing at it, trying to decapitate the monster, when a second one appeared out of nowhere, same size as the first one. Gamma crashed into the second avirus, bringing it to the ground as well. Beta jumped over, deciding Alpha had everything under control with his avirus. Beta's much smaller body than Alphas soulforge had a hard time trying to keep the monster down, so it shook Beta off, who had been ripping into his neck and clinging onto him. Gamma had finished his circle around them after hitting the avirus out of the sky and came swooping down on it again, crashing into its back, almost piercing it. Gamma's head looked like an arrow, and he embedded himself inside of the monster, spreading his wings under pressure, ripping the meat apart. Gamma took the opportunity and again jumped on top of the neck, biting into it. Chunks of meat were flying again and an unsuspecting Beta got slammed by the other avirus's tail, cutting deep into his skin. A slightly different angle and he might have been cut in two, leaving Gamma to fend for himself alone.

Alpha, seeing his avirus hit Beta, pushed himself off the avirus with his front legs, slamming into it a moment later, his front claws extended. He dug deep into the monster, going straight through it and getting stuck inside of the dirt below. As he was trying to rip out his claws from within the monster, its tail, with a much weaker force, slammed home into his soulforge, digging in deep. Alpha howled and shuddered, falling on top of the monster. Alphas corporeal body started bleeding, not as heavily as the soulforge, but something was obviously different than last time. He had taken physical damage as well as mental. He pushed himself up again and roared into the sky, a deafening thunder in everyone's ears. His teeth sank into the avirus's neck and a few movements later, he ripped off its head, throwing it aside,

The other avirus, seeing its mate lying dead at Alpha's feet, screeched a high pitched voice, announcing its rage. It managed to shrug off Beta and Gamma from its body, by turning around on the ground and it jumped into the air, flying away quickly. Suddenly, it turned around to attack and it dropped towards Alpha, full speed. Alpha jumped upwards, grabbing the avirus with his two massive paws, ripping at the avirus's wings, tearing away feathers, meat and bone. The avirus beak, snapped at Alpha's head, missing the head but connecting to the neck, biting a chunk out of it. Alpha howled and headbutted the avirus as they were descending rapidly towards the ground, crashing momentarily to the ground. Alpha luckily managed to get on top

of the avirus a split second before connecting to the ground, the avirus taking on the brunt of the crash. Bones could be heard breaking throughout its body, as alpha was massive and heavy, this time in an even more physical state than not. Alpha relentlessly renewed his attack and cut away at the avirus body with his massive claws, chunks of meat and skin flying everywhere, one almost hitting the group of soldiers as it landed a meter beside them.

"Watch where you throw chunks to, u idiot! You could have hit Janine!" Kane yelled angrily. Just as he yelled at Alpha, another piece flew his way, missing Kane narrowly. He was at the point of boiling, but, still there was no need for me to intervene, as Al had the upper hand and Beta and Gamma were watching over him. Just as Alpha seemed to have won, the avirus's tail swooped up and went for Alpha, who in all the rage wasn't paying attention. Beta noticed and propelled Gamma towards the Avirus, who was a mere ten meter away, and Gamma cut through the whole tail and part of the lower body with his sharp wings, the tail falling just behind Alpha who was then sitting on top of the avirus, eating his meat. "Hey!" Kane yelled as he was approaching. "That corpse is Egeryon's!"

"Bite me" Alpha said with an angry look. "I did the killing, well, major part of it, but still its mostly my kill. I decide"

"No you do not! I made an agreement with Egeryon. Leave the biggest part for him! At least one of the birds" Kane hissed at him. He honestly wouldn't mind Alpha eating the whole damn thing, but they made a deal. Egeryon gets all the corpses and he stays quiet for now. Alpha returned to his normal self, releasing his soul forge after eating a bit more. He brushed past Kane and went towards the inn, not sparing him a glance. The duo who had transformed back to their normal states followed him, quietly. Kane would have to talk to him, rather sooner than later about it.

"Egeryon, how long will these corpses last?" Kane asked mentally.

"A while. Maybe a few months. Last or not, they are all mine, so, whatever you ladies kill is mine. Do not forget it" he said and disappeared again. Did Kane hate that monster. It was arrogant, annoying, demanding, and lastly did he mention annoying? The whole corpse disappeared in a fine red mist, a few small stones laying where the corpse was a moment ago. Kane walked over and took them with him, as with the last monsters they had killed, each left something in their wake. He walked over towards the group, still naked, his weapons unsummoned, and to all honesty, looking very silly.

"Captain, do you see now why it wouldn't be so smart to attack me?" Kane asked. The man just nodded and looked towards the ground, not able to look Kane in the eyes. He could feel hurt, pain and envy. Kane rather had him as an ally than an enemy, even though he wasn't of any danger to him, so he decided a different approach.

"Would you wait for a while longer, while we get dressed. I would like to talk to you for a while". The captain looked up, startled. His eyes went wide and a smile graced his dark face.

“Why yes, yes of course. I would be honored to be your guest, dear sir” he said with as much politeness as he could muster.

Upstairs in their room, Janine took some water and a cloth and cleaned Kane up as fast as she could, helped him dress and stayed behind, doing the same. When Kane got down, the captain was sitting in the common room, waiting on him. The man jerked up clumsily when he saw Kane approach, the armor encumbering him, making his motions look very sluggish.

“Please sit. Would you like to drink something?” Kane asked politely.

“Yes, i would. Anything is fine, sir” he replied.

Chapter 11 - The Alley

"Thanis, Anya?" Kane called for the two young ones. They appeared hastily. "Bring us something to drink, a good wine if there is any and, Thanis, for the soldiers, bring them up a crate of beer. Let them freshen up a bit while me and the captain are talking"

"Captain, i will be plain. I am a man of great strength, as you have witnessed yourself. I was fighting a huge avirus head on and was holding my ground, by myself. Alpha took over, yes, but he is also a part of me. He obeys what i say without question. What do you think, someone with my power, and, a reasonable wealth, could do here at the capitol?". The captain was taken aback by the question and he rearranged himself on the big chair, trying to hide his discomfort.

"Well, that is not up to me to decide, sir Kane" the captain replied.

"How about this. There is an army approaching Kingdom Kravnje and you need help. Am i getting close? The man narrowed his eyes on Kane, studying, then let out a heavy sigh and slumped into his chair, all fight going out of him.

"Yes, you are right. The guild master of Homitage and the current king are old friends. He sent message by fast courier to let him know about you. After a long time, some life returned to the king. He had given up everything until two days ago, when the message arrived. After learning about you, and uncovering some things you and the king have in common, life returned to him. He is trying to fight the forces behind the curtain the best way he can, but, he is an old and tired man. You have to meet with him, as soon as possible. I beg you, sir Kane. Save the king, save the kingdom!" the captain yelled out in passion. Kane could feel that the man was speaking truthfully, honestly. He smiled gently and nodded his head. Just then, Anya arrived with some drinks, she put them down and left as fast as she had arrived. The two men took the drinks, sipped a bit and put the glasses down again.

"I will visit the King, today still. Let him know i will be there within a few hours. I will settle things for him, if i like him and the way he is ruling the kingdom. I have to be honest though, i don't like him very much at the moment. Especially how bandits are doing what they want around here" Kane replied. They talked for a while longer when the captain stood up and left.

"We will see each other later then, sir" he said at the door, turning around once more to bow to Kane.

"Captain?" Kane said. The captain barely managed to catch the piece of gold Kane threw him. His eyes went wide from shock, as if seeing a monster in the little piece. "That was just a way of saying thanks". The turned around and left. A few moments later a sound of feet scuffling on the pavement could be heard and then horses riding off. Kane dropped down into the chair he had been sitting in as Janine walked up to him, sitting on his lap.

"Everything all right, baby?" she asked. Kane smiled back gently, seeing her beautiful face.

"It now is" he said, caressing her face, then pulling her in for a short kiss. "Anyway" he said as the kiss ended, "i assume you have heard our conversation, right?". She just nodded. "So, then you know that the state of the kingdom is even worse than i could have imagined. A group is plotting behind the king, using him for their own benefit, most likely. That much i could put together after hearing the captain's words. Now comes the hundred golden coin question, what are we going to do about it?"

"Dispose of the conspirators and take over the kingdom" she smiled sinisterly. "Speaking of which, i found something interesting in the grimoire. You will have to go alone to meet him, i want to study the spells. They seem... good for our general benefit" she said in such a strange way Kane narrowed his eyes, staring at her.

"Interesting. Would you care to elaborate?" he asked curiously.

"I think one is an elemental spell. It has a few chapters named inferno, blizzard and tempest. Another one says raising a familiar. The rest is unreadable to me so i don't know" she said angrily.

"Do me a favour and study them. I do not want you to be unable to defend yourself. The things you know now are useful, but not enough to defend yourself if the duo isn't present. I will not be there every time something happens, and, i do not know why these big monsters with the strange stones are appearing near us constantly. Speaking of which, look at this" Kane said as he took the stone out of his pocket, handing it to her. Her eyes went wide again, holding the stone in her hand.

"Why are these gnostrum stones appearing so frequently around us?" she said as she narrowed her eyes. One of Kane's eyebrows shot up as he made a pose. She burst out in laughter, kissing him when she had stopped choking.

"Interesting. Let me think. Hmm... i think this one is the Molochite. A spellcaster's dream." she said as she looked Kane in the eyes, lustfully.

"It's yours love, no worries" he said, slapping her butt. "But don't think i wont make you pay for it"

"Want me to pay you up front?" she asked and smiled.

"Hmm, nah. I'll have to pass up this time. You stay at home and help yourself to new knowledge while me and Alpha go see the king". He picked her up and moved her off him, kissed her and went outside in search of Alpha. "Meet me at the bridge in a few hours" Kane said telepathically.

"I will be right there" he said and closed the connection. "He feels strange somehow" Kane thought to himself. "He is more aggressive and his soul forge was more physical than not. I'll have to bring it up later"

As Kane arrived at the bridge, he saw Al laying on the grass, getting a tan, he thought. "U tanning your belly?" Kane said as he laughed. He just looked up and snorted back. "Anyway, we gotta go. I assume you heard everything the captain and me were talking about?"

"Yes, i did." Alpha answered coldly.

"Then, let us not keep the king waiting any longer than we should. Or, rather, the people behind him" Kane said seriously. "We can't let our guard down. We do not know yet if they are normal humans or if they are something like me, and, well, you"

"I know. Get on." he said as he stood up, muscles tensing. Kane got on and they rode off, slowly at first, gaining speed by the moment. The road was made from chiseled stone, making it good ground to run on and especially accelerate at tremendous speeds. Trees were flashing by, green leaves falling to the ground as we raced past them, the wind ripping them off the branches, the clouds looking like they were floating through the sky, as fast as they were. Wild herds of animals were roaming the pastures, grazing, running. Predators were hunting lone animals which had strayed too far from the herds. Peaceful monsters were mixed in together with some of the other peaceful animals, making for a strange sight.

The scenery was amazing, especially the way they were traveling. They passed the time chatting lightly, no heavy topics until they were getting close to the capitol. They stopped a few miles away from capitol Kravnja at a well, to rest up and refresh. Alpha was breathing pretty heavily and slumped next to the well.

"Everything all right, Al?" Kane asked worriedly.

"Meh, you are heavy. Heavier than i thought, and we were running quite fast for a long while. Of course i am tired" he replied angrily.

"Right, let's rest up and then we will go to the castle, it's just ahead" Kane sat down beside Alpha, leaning on him. "You know, i am really glad you are here. It's crazy to have half of yourself as a wolf, who talks and thinks like you, feels like you, breathes, eats, drinks, sleeps. I know i haven't been too good to you, but i guess you understand, that life has become quite hectic after you came to this world. One monster after the other, Janine, Thanis, Arlana and Anya, the stone in my left hand, the captain, the second stone which Janine is studying, the affairs of the kingdom, a war brewing. Everything is spinning out of my control. It seems like we are getting drawn into something we do not wish to be a part of. Especially if they are as powerful as we are, or what's worse, if they're stronger than us".

"I know. Things seem to spin out of control, without us even following the path that is laid out in front of us. It's as if someone is controlling and orchestrating our every move" Alpha said as he narrowed his eyes into the distance. "Someone approaches" he said after a few moments. "A single horseman is approaching fast. He doesn't seem to be wearing armour, nor a weapon" he said as he squinted his eyes, to see better. They looked at each other and stood up then walked towards him, not talking anymore, listening to their surroundings if it were some kind of trap.

Minutes passed by and nothing happened as the horseman came ever closer. He halted his horse a dozen meters away and got off it, elegantly.

"You must be quite the horseman" Kane said as he walked up to the man, Alpha in toe. The man bowed slightly and then walked up towards them. He was short and slim, was the first expression Kane had of him. As he came closer, he noticed the fine clothes he was wearing. Intricate embroidery on black silk. It didn't fit him at all, but, it probably was more of a status symbol than anything else. His skin was pale and smooth, obviously well taken care off. Not a man who has worked for a living, probably a leech. What stood out most though, was his long, pointy nose and his stare.

"Why thank you, kind sir, for the very kind words. My name is Elrond, sir Elrond." he said as he stuck out his hand towards Kane to shake it, which he did.

"The name is Kane, and this is Alpha" he said as he took the man's hand and shook it, a bit harder than he should have. The poor man's teeth chattered as he withdrew his hurting hand. Other than that, he didn't really show it. Kane and Alpha laughed inwardly.

"I am so glad to see you, sir Kane. I am a close advisor to the king. I have to say, i have been awaiting your presence very eagerly. Please, if you would follow me to the castle, we could chat along the way. How would that suit you?" he said with a sneaky tone. At that moment, Kane knew that this person could not be trusted. The way he talked, the way his face expressed emotions and words. He was as slick as a snake, and probably as deadly as one, at least when it comes to normal human terms.

"Say, Elrond, what does the king want with me?" Kane asked, feigning ignorance.

"Why i have no idea, sir Kane. All i know is that you are expected, and the reason being why i was there waiting for you, is that the king ordered all of the officials to be on the lookout for you" he mused. Kane just laughed inside. Of course he knew why and he must have been sweating his seat for quite a while, waiting for Kane to arrive. The last stretch went by quite fast and they arrived at the castle after a short ten minutes. There was a big moat surrounding the castle walls, at least five meters deep. You would need an army concentrated on one spot, to fill out the moat this size during a siege, and then you would still lose most of your army filling it up. It was just brilliant. The wall itself was some ten meters in height, archer towers every twenty meters in separation, covering their positions perfectly. The gate itself was massive and it seemed that it was layer upon layer of steel, a total of maybe six layers so the gate could not be burned or crushed down. The engineer of this outer part had Kane's admiration.

"I see you can appreciate some fine architecture when you see it" the snake said with a sly smile. Everything about him felt venomous and had underlying meaning. This fellow would have to be done in one way or the other.

"Why yes. I might be young, but i have quite some battles behind me" Kane said proudly. The man murmured something to himself and then just moved onwards, galloping over the bridge though the massive iron gate hanging high over the bridge. Kane just followed him inside, on Alpha, of course. After entering the inner part of the castle walls he almost puked in his own mouth. The stench was horrible. People laying dead in heaps, probably waiting to be burned.

"I don't like this" Alpha sent mentally.

"Neither do i. No one told us about this. Is there a plague hitting the capitol?"

"I doubt it. If you observe the bodies carefully, you see stab wounds, cuts and bruises, even though they have tried to mask it, they can not fool my eyes"

"What the hell is going on here, Al? I don't like this one bit" Suddenly Alpha stopped, almost throwing Kane off his back.

"Get down, now!" he yelled. Kane got off without asking questions and summoned his two big blades and a thousand small ones all around them, generating an almost impenetrable wall. A group of hidden archers, maybe even three dozen strong appeared on the rooftops, in front and behind them, infantry appeared with barricades, spears out. The snake had already passed the barricade and was sitting on top of his horse, smiling, full of himself.

"I get to eat him" Alpha growled.

"Sure thing. Tactic?" he asked.

"You kill the archers with your little blades and keep my back safe, i kill the infantry in front and eat the snake" he growled again. He sure knew how to scare Kane sometimes.

"As you can see, you have been caught in a trap. I am very sorry but you will have to die now" he said and laughed as a mad man. After he stopped Kane and Alpha started laughing in response. After a few moments, the snakes face twisted about and he screamed.

"Why the hell are you laughing? You are going to die now!" he yelled angrily.

"Why, you ask? Well i will tell you why. If you had taken your time to actually inquire around about me, you would have known that in order to take me down, you would have to come at me with an entire army, and still lose" Kane snapped his fingers for the effect and the tiny blades became bigger, visible to the humans eye. Gasps and chatter could be heard amongst his men, their bows, shields, swords going down slightly. Kane had them then and there, but, suddenly decided on a different approach.

"Push the little snake forward and i will spare you ordinary men. You have no quarrel with me and there is no need for you to die this day" Nothing happened

except a few words being thrown from one side to the other and a few heads turning around.

"Alpha, soulforge a double version of yourself, as in double in your size, physical form" Kane sent him mentally. He didn't say anything in return, just did what Kane told him to. Metal was clattering to the ground as the soldiers dropped what they were holding in their hands, most even falling through their knees. One a little braver ran up to the snake and punched him in the side, sending the poor snake crashing to the ground. He hit the ground so hard that one of his arms broke, twisted under his body. Then the soldiers unilaterally just pulled him up and threw him towards Kane. Alpha stepped forward slowly, as to emphasize that he was the one who was holding the power and that he was the one who was going to kill, not them. Kane lowered their tiny blades and unsummoned them, to show they weren't afraid, then nodded. Alpha jumped forwards biting off the snake's legs and gulping them down. Sir Elrond, as he named himself, started yelling and crying even harder, almost fainting. Blood was gushing out of his legs where Alpha severed them. Then he proceeded to rip off his arms one by one, juggling him in the air like a doll. A few moments later, all that remained was a head on a torso, blood everywhere, the man barely alive and conscious. Alpha let him suffer a bit longer and then bit him in two and the poor man finally died after a lot of pain. His men were too stunned to move, nor did they dare to. Most of them just looked away and some even puked. Kane got almost sick himself, of all the blood and gore, but it had to be done. Rather kill one snake than half a score of men. Maybe bad men, but, some of them might turn out good.

"You see what happens when you try to attack us" Kane said with an amplified voice, looking around the crowd victoriously. "I have now seen each of your faces, and trust me, i do not forget so easily"

Maybe that was a bit overboard, Kane's mind wasn't what it used to be, but they didn't know that. "I offer you a deal, one far better than what the snake had offered you. He offered you death, i offer you life" He accented the life and let the words sink in. It was a joy how they looked at Kane who knew he had them. "I do not offer you just your life, i offer you copper and silver coin. I am in need of volunteers for a private army i am creating. Join it and earn money to support your family. If you do not have a family, spend the coin on booze, women, food, clothing, anything you desire" Kane said with a smile on his face. To show he had the coin, he took out a little sack with gold coins out of his pocket and poured the coins out on his hand. The looks the men made were priceless. He was beginning to like the idea himself, even as it was forming in his mind. Some soldiers started talking amongst themselves, and the one who had punched the snake earlier came up to Kane and kneeled, head bowed in submission, sword in front of them laying on the ground.

"How do i sign up, my lord" one of them said. There was no sign of malice or ill will in his voice. It seems he hated the snake with all his heart, and that Kane must look like a saviour to him.

"Stand, boy" Kane said. "I am no lord. I am merely a monster hunter. A monster hunter who is going to rule the world, one day" he said and laughed out. He couldn't help it, but it turned out better than he hoped it would, after he had already

said it. "Everyone who is considering about joining me, come stand in front of me. The ones who do not want to, you can leave. But remember, i have seen your faces, do not forget that, ever"

A few minutes passed and over forty men were standing in four neat rows in front of him. Every single one of them decided to join him, for whatever reason they chose to. Alpha was just groaning and moaning all the time. To him it seemed to be a waste of time. Conscripting humans, but, Kane had an idea.

"The rules are as follows. You follow or you die. You train until you can stand no more or until you die. I will not have slackers, i will not have soldiers who can not fight. I need an elite army of soldiers who know how to fight, who know how to handle monsters. Yes, you heard it right. The test that will decide if you will get on my payroll will include monster hunting. If any of you want to leave, do it now. After you start, only death can set you free"

Kane waited another minute and he could see a few gaps. The ones who remained knew what to do, without him even saying. The young man took the lead.

"Atteeeeeeeention! Fill ranks!" he said and the ranks filled up again. Thirty men stood in front of him. A good number he thought at the time.

"I have been summoned by the king. Until i am done with the audience, you have time to get what you want from your homes. Do not carry too much, as you will be running for half a day straight. Bring your weapons, armour and normal clothing. Money as well, all of it. After you have prepared, wait at the gate in formation. If need be, you will stand in formation for hours until i get back. I want discipline!" Kane's voice thundered. "I will make real men out of you! I may be younger than most of you, but hear this. I am a two man army. Or in my case, a one man and one wolf army"

"Sir, yes sir!" echoed throughout the street.

"You are dismissed!" Kane yelled. The group fell apart within moments. Everyone going to their own homes, which were scattered all around the capitol. And the capitol wasn't just capitol in name. There were close to a hundred thousand people living there. Kane just hoped they would be on time and turn out at that number. The one young soldier approached Kane again.

"Sir. Permission to speak, sir!" he yelled.

"Speak your mind, soldier" Kane replied.

"Please let me escort you to the king's court, sir!" he said. Kane felt very happy and very proud. He already found the person to lead his merry band of ragtag soldiers.

"All right. Permission granted. What is your name, soldier"

"My name is Gabriel, sir!"

"All right Gabriel. You will address me as Kane whenever we are alone together and speak as if you would with any other person. No pulling rank nor fear. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Kane. Shall we go?" he said politely. Kane nodded and they started walking.

"Gabe, tell me about the current state of the capitol. Why are there dead laying around everywhere?"

"Well, it is hard to say. The capital is divided into districts and those districts are ruled by nobles. The district we are in now was held by the snake, as you had called him. It was a fairly small and poor district. We should make this district our home for now, by the way. It is called the alley and you are easiest to gain influence in such a poor district. Lay down a claim on it. There are enough small nobles who we could use for our cause and who would be better towards the people who live and work here"

"Tell me more about this district. Numbers, production, income, facilities and so on" Kane asked curiously. He stopped for a moment and looked around, as if searching for something.

"Do you see that big building?" he asked, pointing at a building further down the road.

"Yes i do. What is special about it?" Kane asked in return.

"That is the district building. It is basically just a manor for the district owner. He is usually supported by the king but the snake was out of favour for a while. He had been taking too much and giving too little. The king doesn't care much about his subjects, but, he doesn't like rich nobles at least. Though, i have heard the king was supposed to lay down new laws soon"

"Interesting" Kane mused, wheels already spinning in his mind, already grinding for a way to use it for their own cause.

"About numbers, it's rather hard to say. I could estimate roughly fifteen thousand people living in our district. The snake ran it notoriously, and the dead people you have seen earlier, well, those are the poor souls who couldn't pay the required amounts. Kane, i have been praying for years to... anything willing to listen to me, to rid this district of the snake. Then you came along. A God amongst men. Please help us, please give us peace and prosperity" he said sincerely. The weight of his words ran Kane down and he really felt sorry for the poor souls living here. Something would have to change, and he would make sure it did, immediately.

"Anyway, regarding production and income, the district is pretty poor at the moment, but we have highly skilled tailors, blacksmiths and what's most important, physicians. If used properly, the district could flourish within a short time and the people would worship you"

"I do not need worship, but what i do want is the district becoming stronger. It will be a heavy task, but, we will do it. Trust me. I have funds, not limitless, but enough to get some projects going. What about facilities? Do we have any public kitchens, baths, hospitals?"

"A few, but without the funds to run them, they are shut down most of the time" Gabe replied angrily. He has a good heart. The pain he felt for the people was real and his feelings could be felt from his words.

"That is the first thing that will have to change. Tell me, do you know anyone who could run the public for us? Is there anyone, or a group who could work for us, who we could trust?" Kane asked, playing for a different approach.

"Of course there is. The opposition who has been fighting the snake for a while. Most have been executed, but, the daughter of the late leader has been running around all day trying to fix things where possible. The people love her and they trust her. If we could use her as a figurehead, i think things might go very smoothly for us" he said excitedly.

"All right. Gabe, i will put my trust in you. The first thing to do is to show me where to go and then find this woman. After i am done with the king, i will come to the district building and we will have a meeting. For now, just invite her and no one else. Have someone prepare some light food and drink. I hate a lot of talk without the necessary things to ease the process" Kane said and smiled sheepishly.

"All right. Do you see the walls surrounding the district?" he asked pointing to the walls around the area. Kane nodded. "Well, those walls divide each district and huge massive gates are located between each district and the main castle. Now, at the center of the city, is the royal palace. It is basically impossible to miss the building. Just follow the big pillar at its center and you should get there within an hour i guess if you walk slowly. If you run, or, in your case, ride, you can get there within minutes."

"Very well. Also, after you find that lady, go get the soldiers and arrange them in front of the manor. I do not know when i will be there, but, i want you to take care of everything. Don't disappoint me Gabe" Kane said, trying to sound more serious than he actually was. "All right. I am off now, i will talk to you later" He bowed and turned around, running off somewhere. Kane got up on Alpha who was standing guard next to him, watchful. "Alpha, why so silent?"

"We are being watched. Someone very skilled, smart and strong. They stay just beyond my reach, but definitely observing. Friend or foe, i can not tell" he said.

"No use worrying about it. Let us go visit the king for now, we will worry about the spy later" Kane said and got up on him. They didn't hurry too much, strolling about, looking around at the district. The buildings were mostly row houses, narrow things on two or three floors, mostly run down. Narrow streets, barely enough for a cart to pass through, filth, garbage and dead people everywhere. Kane made a mental note that this will be one of the main priorities, getting the streets back in

order again. One of the many main things. As they walked through the streets, they noticed that the streets were pretty empty, a pedestrian every now and then. The same picture from the entrance up to the gate to the capitals palace. Poverty, death and filth.

"Halt" someone yelled to get our attention. The guards at the gatehouse had their weapons out and were obviously nervous, seeing Kane ride on a wolf, bigger than a horse. He stopped, took out the invitation letter and showed it to the guard. He read it, nodded to back to Kane and showed him in. The king's palace was just that, a palace. A high wall made out of marble slabs with a gate that was almost shining in the sunlight. The flooring was white and black marble, a big fountain in the courtyard, depicting three naked women bathing each other. Very detailed to say the least. The building itself was, it seemed, carved out of a huge granite stone. It was dirty white, with many windows carved out, for the many floors. A big wooden door gracing the entrance. Two palace guards were at each side of the door, halberds in hands, fully armoured with metal breastplate, helmets with plumes, metal greaves and boots, shin guards, studded leather gloves. They looked dangerous, but that is probably all what they were supposed to do. They crossed their weapons in front of Kane and one of them put out their hand, as if waiting for something. Kane gave him the same letter he had to the guard earlier. The guard read it and nodded to the other guard. They went back in position and waved Kane to get along. Strangely, the courtyard was pretty empty. A couple dozen of soldiers, all dressed in metal armour, holding long swords or halberds were practicing, what seemed decorative standing. Everything about this just stank to the heavens. Kane looked at Alpha and nodded. He followed Kane inside, tagging along just behind him, scanning the area. The inside was even more lavish than the outside. Statues out of marble were adorning the sides of the hallway, soldiers in full battle gear and at the end two soldiers on horseback. Kane almost threw up, cursing at such a waste of money and resources. A short, burly man approached Kane as he walked into the main hall. A thick mustache graced his old, wrinkled face. Silken clothes intricately embroidered, black and white was showing his standing. Probably a minister or something important. Kane could care less what he was. He bowed slowly, a sly smile on his face. What was it with these snakes in this kingdom.

"Sir Kane, welcome, welcome. Please come in, the king is awaiting you" he said as he stiffened up again, waving them in

"I am so very sorry, but your, umm, pet, will have to stay outside"

"No he won't" Kane said and walked past him. "Alpha is part of me, so he goes where i go. He is no danger to anyone unless they represent a danger to me" The man nodded understandingly, or, at least thats' how he acted and led us towards the throne room.

Chapter 12 - Siblings

An old, thin man was sitting in a throne far too big for his old, crumpled body. The throne was made out of gold and precious stones, shining outwardly as bright as the sun. It made it impossible to stare at for a long time, hence not letting anyone look at the king for too long. The king stood up and walked towards Kane. The clothes were hanging off his body, the silk freckled and bent. A long cape was flowing behind him as he walked, and the crown was too big for his small head. The long white beard was unkempt and uncared for. The small black hollow eyes were staring intently at Kane when he suddenly bowed and crashed to the ground. Kane ran towards him, helping him up, when the guards advanced towards him, weapons out. One growl from Alpha made them rethink their action and they froze for a moment. The king put up his hand and waved them off, tension lessening in the room. Beside us, there were about twenty guards, fully armoured, ten on each side of the walkway. At the foot of the throne were seated four people, richly clothed, all looking like they would rather kill him than having his presence. The king bent towards Kane and whispered Kane's my ear.

"Help me, my grandson. Help me or this will be my last day alive" Kane looked at him, shocked, his eyes and mouth wide open. Grandson? What the hell was the man saying? And why would it be his last day? Obviously, the others had noticed something was off, and a man Kane hadn't noticed, at the corner of the room, standing next to a pillar, put his hand up and snapped his fingers. Suddenly a group of men clothed all in black stormed into the room through the door Kane came through a few minutes ago, crashing through the windows from the outside and dropping from the balcony. There were a score of them at least. The otherwise large, empty room was filled with men holding weapons, intent on doing them harm.

"Walfrid, make a circle around the king, protect him with your life!" Kane yelled at him, after assessing the situation, then summoning his blades into a barrier. Kane moved the barrier around the soldiers protecting the king, who were shocked, obviously, but none of them tried anything, since they had already heard about it, from walfrid Kane assumed. "Alpha, take the exit i will take the rest"

"Right, to give you more people to kill? No way in hell, boy!" he barked back. He soulforged and split apart from it. The soulforge went left and he went right, ripping into the horde of assassins. Their sword slashes and thrusts just deflected off of Alpha's armoured skin, whilst he raked in their blood, cutting them open with his claws on both fronts. Kane ran towards the opposite side to protect the flank, when he noticed none of the rich people had moved. They must be in on this most likely as well, or they would try and see aid from the king's men, or the king himself. Egeryon was stirring inside of Kane, trying to take control of his body.

"Boy, let me do this. I feel a strong presence somewhere near us. It is probably too strong for you in this state" Egeryon said.

"If you try anything, i will take you out from the inside" Kane said untrustingly.

"My self preservation instinct is too strong for our petty rivalry over this body to matter a damn thing this moment. If your body dies, we both die"

Kane relinquished control over his body and Egeryon took over. The body's skin turned a darker tinge of black, rough and little horns grew on top of his head.

"Horny, you are looking good like that" Alpha sent him mentally, making fun of him, to which Kane didn't feel like responding.

"Sanguinum es, et non declinetis neque ad sanguinem" Egeryon chanted loudly and held his arms up, blood flowing from his veins into the air. Suddenly the blood turned into a fine red mist which spread all across the room, creeping up on everyone, except over the king and the soldiers. Every little particle of mist was infused with magic. No one was moving, waiting what would happen next. Suddenly, the blood particles started searching out the assassins actively, exploding on impact, leaving gaping holes in their victims. Limbs were scattered all over the room as well as bodies with holes in them. Anyone who tried to block the particles with a hand or a weapon, got blown into even smaller pieces, their limbs being torn out, their weapons cutting themselves up. It was a gruesome sight and Kane felt sick upon seeing what Egeryon was doing. The four who were sitting at the foot of the throne, now afraid, were backing up in fear. Egeryon smiled and slowly walked towards them.

"Any last wishes?" he asked sarcastically. Surprisingly, two of them fell on their knees begging for their life. Egeryon cut them in half without even thinking about it their upper bodies falling next to their feet, eyes in shock. Kane let him have his moment so he did not interrupt. One of the remaining two took a sword in his hand and the other stood behind him, trembling in fear, hiding from Egeryon. Egeryon leapt towards them and pushed the one with sword in hand aside, ripping right through the one behind him, tearing out his heart and squishing it. The whole room was silent and no one dared to move. The one with sword in hand tried to get up, but he had hit the wall pretty hard, so he was still unsteady, shaking. The sound of clapping could be heard from where the lone hooded person was standing. Mixed with the clapping, footsteps could be heard coming toward them.

"Bravo, bravo. My dear boy has become so strong. Far stronger than anything beyond our wildest dreams" the voice said. Slowly the person came towards them and stopped a few meters in front of Kane. "Afraid what you will see when the hood is down?" the voice mused.

"Not really. It is you who should be afraid of what i can do, to people who threaten me or people i know" Kane said menacingly. "You should rethink what you plan to do now, really hard. If you do not, this could end up really messy for you as well"

"Do not threaten me, boy!" the person yelled. It was a female, the voice had lost all of its bravado and facade. "It is I who holds everything in my palm. Just think what will happen to that girl of yours and her brother and the other two women if you defy me!" she yelled, frustratingly. Egeryon moved again and in an instant he was upon the woman, her hood torn off and his hand around her neck, crushing it slowly. Kane's mind couldn't believe what his eyes saw, or, didn't want to believe.

"Mother?" he asked stunned. "What the hell is going on?!" he yelled now, angrily. The person who had just tried to assassinate him and the king and even dared to threaten Janine was his own mother. She was struggling with his hand around her throat, trying to pry his fingers loose, obviously not succeeding.

"Stop... it" she said under her breath.

"Egeryon stop it, or give me hold of my body again!" Kane yelled at him. So he did, within an instant. He dropped her and looked at her, not knowing if he should help her up or kill her.

"What do you have to say for yourself? Mother?" Kane asked her, full of resentment.

"Nothing much, beside that you are our greatest accomplishment. We had hoped your sister would become stronger, as she was easier to control, but, either way, we are happy with the outcome" she said and laughed.

"What the hell? Experiment? Sister? Make some sense already! Why did you abandon me as a kid and not come back for me!" Kane yelled angrily, fuming with rage.

"All in due time, my boy. All in due time. Now, there is a matter we have to settle immediately. Come with me and join me and your father. You can meet your sister as well, if you behave" she said full of herself, as if that was the right thing to do.

"You must have a screw loose in your head, mother. No, you are not my mother. A mother wouldn't behave like you do. You and father left me to fend for myself, now you threaten my woman and tried to kill me. Why the hell would i come with you? Give me one good reason!"

"I am your mother" she said and stood up, moving her hand up towards his face. He slapped it away with malice. She could see the look in his eyes, but nothing moved her. It was as if nothing he said got through to her thick head, or, she really was like he feared. A soulless monster herself, only caring about power.

"Where is my father?" Kane asked, changing tactic.

"Well, i think he went to visit your girl. Of course, if a message from me arrives telling him all is fine, nothing will happen to them. It is all up to you."

"When is the message due to arrive?" Kane asked again.

"Hmm, i think about three hours from now. There is no way you can arrive on time, if that is what you are thinking. The ride there takes a few hours, and besides, i can easily keep you here for that long" she mused.

"Not if you're me. I can get there within an hour if i leave now. And you, well, you have made a big mistake" Kane said and laughed.

“What mistake?” she asked playfully.

“My mother had a birthmark right under her right ear, a specific one. Shaped like a thunderbolt. Yet you, do not have one” he said pointing at the spot with his finger. Suddenly a bright flash lit up the room and the woman had transformed into another, much younger woman. Maybe barely in her twenties. She was beautiful. Long blonde hair ending in curls, big green eyes and a pretty face. She was almost as tall as Kane was, slender with big hips. Her chest stuck out like two little mountains and her skin was as pale as the dawn. All she had on was a cloth wrapped around her chest and another one wrapped around her thigh, ending a bit above her knees.

“Like what you see?” she asked provocatively, winking at Kane. He hadn’t noticed he was staring at her body, but then again, he stared at every woman that has even the slightest of a good shape.

“Yes i do. How about you come home with me, give birth to a few babies for me” Kane said sheepishly.

“Oh my, is that the way you should talk to your sister? To your own blood?” she said and winked again. Somehow that statement had shocked him enough to forget about her being a danger and his body showed it. She took that chance and took a knife out of her skirt and threw it at Kane. He managed to dodge, but just as the knife missed him, a big tear appeared on my chest. The knife was imbued with soul power it seems and it was much wider than he had even thought possible for a physical, steel weapon.

“You shouldn’t underestimate me, just because i am a girl, or just because i look to die for, big brother” she said. The tone in her voice had changed to something darker, even an angry tone.

“You are my sister?” Kane asked still stunned by the revelation. The blood flowed steadily out of his wound, but he didn’t care about it. “Are you really my little sister?” She just nodded and stared at him with spite. “Then why so much hate? What have i ever done to you to deserve you hating me at our first meeting? Why try and kill me?” he asked in disbelief.

“Because you were always their number one child!” she spit out. “It was always Kane this and Kane that. You have no idea how it was to live with them for twenty years and be treated like a little child, all the torture and torment i have went through. With the age of ten i had already received two hundred lashes. I had already over a hundred hours of torture, to toughen up, as they called it! Only because of you!” she spit out.

“It was not because of me!” Kane yelled back. “I didn’t even know they were still alive. They had abandoned me when i was a little kid. I Barely stayed alive that year, and had to resort to all kinds of things i am not proud of. I didn’t have love, parents, a home, nothing! I was all alone, so dont come hating me just because you knew about me and i didn’t know about you!”

The pain in Kane's chest had lessened, the stone humming and vibrating in his hand, probably had healed the wound. At least one thing to worry about less than a moment before. Kane found her eyes again, but found nothing inside of them beside anger and hatred. He couldn't understand it, no, he wouldn't understand it. How can you hate someone who has done nothing to you. It made him angry and he could feel the anger rising, slowly, to the point he had trouble breathing. Kane lunged at her and slammed her with his fist into her gut. She toppled over to the ground and gasped for air, clutching her stomach with her hands.

"That is for slicing me up just now, and for a lot of other things. Now, i have an idea about what to do with you. Let me explain" he said as he kneeled next to her. "Since i am far more powerful than you are, i will capture you. I will take you back with me to my home. There you will stay until i have all the information i need, and until i knock some sense into you. If you really are my sister, you will live with me, far from the ones who hurt you. I will protect you and cherish you. I will love you with all my heart. If i do not, if i kill you now instead, i doubt my soul would ever find redemption. As you can probably feel, there is a lot of anger and hatred and despair inside of me. Keeping it just beneath the surface is all i can do. If i give in, even for a moment, i am afraid i will lose all of the humanity i have left. Do not make me. If you do, and i become something i fear most, death will be preferable to life under Egeryon's rule" he whispered into her ear. She flinched at the mere mention of Egeryon's name, and Kane could feel him stir inside of him, full of joy.

"Shut up and be calm, Egeryon" Kane told him.

"You are about to find out something really interesting, my boy. O how wonderful. Two siblings find each other after twenty years of pain. Then they find out they are housing the number one and two in power ancient demons. O how wonderful!" he shouted in joy.

"Why did you flinch" Kane asked her after hearing Egeryon's words.

"I didn't, but the one inside of me did. Uheryon" she said, smiling.

"So you also have an ancient inside of you?"

"Yes i do. But of course, she is nothing like Egeryon. She has her talents, but they mostly are limited to deception, illusions and the like. Nothing like the Ancient of Destruction, Egeryon" Kane could feel him stir inside of him, he was happy, content, joyfull.

"So i am not the only monster here, there are two of us" Kane said, more to himself than anyone else" Tell me your name, sister"

"Why would you care? You're a monster, and you will kill me the moment i let my guard down"

"Not true. However, i will convert you. I will not kill my own flesh and blood, even though i haven't known about you at all. If you really are my sister, i will protect

you and love you. You have my word on that” Kane really did want to have her around if she was his sister. After all, he has been without family forever. Only recently Alpha and Janine had joined him and killed his loneliness.

“My name is Rasiela” she murmured under her breath. Kane could barely make it out. He sent her a gentle smile and patted her head.

Alpha sent him a mental note to survey the room and take everything in and see how to proceed further, so Kane did. The king was still closed in inside of the group of soldiers who were staring at him intently. Walfrid was next to him, sword unsheathed. Not that they could do much, but still, he liked the sight of them and their dedication to their king.

“She will not harm you. She will be my responsibility from now on and i will take her with me. Walfrid opened his mouth to protest, but Kane cut him off with raising his hand. “I am the only reason the king and all of you are still alive. If i wanted to, i could get rid of you within seconds, so do not tempt your luck”

The king nodded towards the bladed wall and Kane dismissed it. He removed himself from the soldiers standing around him and turned towards Kane and Alpha and bowed deeply.

“You have my thanks, young man. I might be old, but i am not senile. As long as i live, you will have my thanks and my favour. In fact, let us have a celebration in a ten days time. What do you say?” he asked earnestly.

“I would be glad to be your guest, my king. I will bring my future wife with me as well. I think you will be happy about meeting her. My sister will return as well then, and one more male my size. We will be a total of four people”

“All right” he said loudly, straining his vocals. “In ten days at noon the feast will start. Now clean up this mess, i beg of you. Get people to clean this up, Walfrid” he said almost pleadingly. One really needed a stomach to get over the carnage Egeryon had caused.

“Aren’t you people forgetting about someone!?” Rasiela barked, standing up, dagger in hand.

“Don’t” Kane said calmly. “You will get hurt if you try anything. Do not say i didn’t warn you”

Her eyes narrowed on Kane’s and she sent him a venomous stare. If looks could kill, he would be dead by now. Still, women never listen to men, so neither did she. She thrust the dagger towards him, missing by a longshot. He hit her wrist and sent the dagger flying. She grabbed her hand with the other, applying some pressure to ease the pain and groaning.

“I told you not to, Rasiela. Yet you think you still hold the upper hand. You do not so be silent and don’t move until i am done here, understand?” She just glared back, shooting daggers with her eyes and sticking her tongue out. She sure caught

him by surprise, but it just showed there's still some humanity inside of her. He would need to use it to his advantage, if any way possible.

"My king" Kane said, nodding "If there is nothing else, i would take my leave for this time"

The king nodded and then turned towards the throne, walked over and fell into it. Then all of them noticed the fourth man who had survived earlier, when Egeryon had pushed him aside. The king called for Walfrid.

"Walfrid, kill that man!" Walfrid rushed the man with a swiftness that surprised Kane and slashed the man in two, his corpse still shuddering before it hit the ground, dead. The king's face lit up as he finally understood what had happened. All of his enemies at court had been dealt with, finally. It must have been quite the ordeal for him, all this time fighting these bandits, Kane thought as he turned towards Walfrid.

"My friend, do you have a moment for me?" Kane asked as he approached Walfrid

"Yes, sir Kane. What can i do for you, besides thanking for what you did earlier. We all would have been dead if it wasn't for you"

"A few things. One of them being information and the second a favour. Firstly, is there anyone left you think was working behind the curtains to bring ruin to this kingdom?"

"No. I do not think there is anyone left. They were quite open lately, not fearing reprisal. But you sure showed them, sir Kane" he replied cheerfully, as if nothing had happened just now.

"Al right, that is good. Now, the second thing. I am taking charge of the alley. Let the king know about it, and whisper some suggestions, like giving me a rank or something so i can take hold of it legally as well. I killed the snake less than an hour ago. He tried to kill me, so i killed him, rather brutally"

Walfrid flinched at the last part, but just nodded and bowed slightly, running off towards the king. Kane walked over to Rasiela and took her by her hand, pulling her up and dragging her out of the room, more by force than not. At the door he stopped and turned around, only to find Alpha walking slowly behind him. A smile appeared on Kane's face.

"Thanks, Alpha. Everything was just so hectic, i hope you can forgive me for forgetting you for a moment" Kane said. Alpha just smiled back and nodded.

"Let us go meet Gabriel. He is probably waiting for us" Alpha said and walked past them. Kane pulled Rasiela again by her hand, dragging her behind him basically. She was resisting as much as possible, holding him back, tugging at his arm, kicking, screaming. Nothing really helped.

"If you do not follow me quietly, i will punch you until you are unconscious" Kane said, right up in her face. "Be quiet and follow me, or you will be hogtied and carried like that" She gave Kane an incredulous and evil stare, as if daring him to. After the threat, she was more cooperative, probably knowing she couldn't escape, unharmed that is"Al, can we ride on your back?" Kane asked looking over at Alpha.

Chapter 13 - Plans

Time couldn't pass fast enough for them to get to the district building to rest and wash themselves. They had to set up things at the alley and then could they go home, rest for the next ten days and see what has been done by then. As soon as they had set out they already arrived at the alley manor. Gabriel was patiently waiting outside, and two rows of ten soldiers each were waiting behind him, in formation, in battle gear. A smile appeared on Kane's face and he felt proud and happy at the same time.

"At ease" Kane said loudly. The group's tension faded slightly and they started chatting.

"My lord, what happened?" Gabriel said as he saw both Kane and Alpha, clotted in blood from head to toe and the fair maiden he was dragging behind him. Gabriel's eyes narrowed on Kane, as if demanding an explanation. Kane had felt it and stared the man down, which wasn't as hard to do. Gabriel dropped his gaze to the ground and awaited for a response.

"Men, I am glad that you chose to come here. Stand at ease. You will be brought something to drink and eat as soon as possible. Gabriel, follow me inside" Kane said and walked towards the door, dragging Rasiela behind him.

"What is with the lady, sir?" he asked.

"Long story. We will talk about it later. All you need to know is, she is dangerous, so keep your distance" Kane said and walked into the manor. From the outside it was just a large brick building, no decoration whatsoever. But from the inside, it was another story. Golden chandeliers, golden picture frames, golden pots and what not were all over the main room. A large table with a lot of seats around it, on the other side a big fireplace and chimney, made out of marble. The room was separated with half a wall and at the other side there was some kind of kitchen. Kane walked over and saw food being prepared, probably for them. What the hell was it with these royals and showing off wealth. Kane got sick to his stomach. All of this had to go, the gold and the luxuries will be distributed to the poor people.

"Is the woman there already?" Kane asked Gabriel, who was standing behind him.

"Yes sir, she is. Please just go through that door" he said pointing to the far end of the room. Above the room was a head of a monster, a small greptodont. How ugly, Kane thought as he proceeded into the room. The room was lavishly furnished. A big, oval polished cherry table was in the middle of the room, ending in a square at the far end where an expensive looking chair was standing. Around the round part there were six other chairs, similarly in design. Large gold framed paintings adorned the walls and expensive looking curtains the far window. This had to go, as soon as possible as well, except the big table, which would be useful. The other things he noticed beside all of the riches, was a young woman, sitting near the far end of the table. She stood up hurriedly and walked towards them.

"Sir, this is Kayla" Gabriel said as he introduced her to Kane. "Kayla, this is sir Kane. The man i told you about" She held her hand out which Kane took and kissed it, getting a groan from Rasiela and a chuckle from Alpha. Kayla bowed deep, showing off her immense cleavage.

"Nice to meet you, Kayla" It must have startled her as her mouth was open for a few moments, no a sound coming out of it.

"Why yes, sir Kane. The pleasure is all mine" she said with a pleasant smile. The young woman was absolutely stunning. Kane had a hard time focusing on her eyes, or generally the last days. Janine at home, his sister behind him or this dark skinned beauty. She had dark, long and curly hair, just beneath her shoulders. Heavy mascara traces were all over her face, intricate patterns on her right cheek. The oriental look she gave off was just loveable. The necklace she wore had a large gem in its middle, which ended just above her breasts. She noticed he was looking at them so she squeezed them a little with her arms, making them bounce slightly. It was all Kane could do to hold himself together. If he did something to this poor woman, Janine would fry him and then feed him to a monster. She had a long dark red dress on, which hid more than it revealed so he took comfort in the fact that all he could see was just a small part of her, telling himself it wasn't enough to get him aroused. Somehow he managed himself to look at her face again, and at her dark brown eyes. It was as if they were soaking him in, a pure gaze of lust.

"Sir?" Gabriel said as he broke the silence and the awkward moment.

"Gabriel, please take a seat next to miss Kayla. Rasiela, you come sit with me, please" Kane said as he turned around and walked towards the other side of the table. They all sat down and just at that moment the servants came in, bringing food and drinks. The group waited until the servants were outside to continue the conversation.

"So, Kayla, i will cut right to the point. I am rich, i am strong beyond measure and i just saved the king's life half an hour ago. My plan is to take over the kingdom, peacefully, as to opposed to other factions" at which moment Kane's eyes traced over Rasiela. She flinched at his gaze and dropped her gaze to the table. Gabriel and Kayla didn't seem to notice, which was just fine as well. "What i want to do, firstly, is restore the alley to a resemblance of a healthy environment. I want to see to it that the people can earn for a living, that they have enough food, shelter, health care, clothes on their back. All i have seen so far in here is death, corruption and poverty. It has to change, and it has to change rapidly" Kane said firmly. "I am willing to invest my personal gold, as well as whatever the district manor has available to get the district up on its feet in the fastest way possible"

Kane waited for a response, and he had to wait quite a while. She was staring at him, mouth wide open, looking confused.

"Are you serious?" she blurted out. "Why in the seven hells would you do that? The people of the alley are nothing more than mere ants compared to you. You stand to gain nothing by helping us?" she said bewildered. "Please, tell me why? What motives have you, for helping us?"

“What motives you say?” Kane asked earnestly. “None other than the following. It is all i can do but to fall into despair and darkness. I have lost a part of my soul, to probably never get it back. The bad part was left inside of me, whilst the good was torn out of me. I need this, if for nothing else, then for myself. Redemption often comes at a high price, and i think this is mine. At least for now, as for later, who knows what the future will bring”

“Death and nothing else” Rasiela murmured.

“Hush, sister dear. Dont scare the pretty lady by saying unwanted things” Again, if looks could kill. Women sure knew how to stare men to submission. Luckily for Kane, he was beyond normal, so he withstood it to a certain degree. Kayla just gave her a strange, wondering look.

“Anyway, Kayla. First organize yourself. Get a group of trusted people to work with you, but not too many. Move into the manor. The left wing will be used to house your guards, the men outside. They are under my payroll, so do not get any strange ideas. If everything goes well, within a few weeks this should be thriving. Sell all the expensive things from the manor to help fund our project. Donate to the public kitchens, to doctors to take care of patients for free who can’t pay and so on. I do not have to explain everything, as i heard you were doing a lot of these things by yourself. But now, you have someone standing behind your actions. I will be back within ten days to check on the progress. I will take Gabriel with me and the rest of the guards will protect you and the manor” Suddenly Alpha yawned and groaned, drawing everyone’s attention.

“What?” he said with a i don’t give a damn attitude. It provoked a chuckle in Kane and he had to laugh, the rest of the group laughing with him.

“Nothing my brother, nothing at all. You hungry? Here, dig in” Kane said as he took the largest steak from the big plate in front of them and threw it his way. He caught it in mid air, chewing it violently. “You want more?”

“No thanks. I don’t need much food, this was enough for now” he said and laid down on the floor, dozing off.

“What is up with that dog of yours?” Rasiela asked. Kane gave her an angry look.

“Thad dog, as you phrased, is my brother. You should do well not to insult him. And drop that attitude of yours Rasiela, or i will send your head back to our parents!” Kane yelled. Her mouth dropped wide open, her expression that of real fear.

“Nice move loverboy” Egeryon said. “You put the fear of God into Uheryon. Of course, my mental image i projected into their mind helped a bit, as well” he said and laughed.

"Sometimes you are actually useful" Kane said and winked at him, leaving his presence behind.

"Now, go outside with Gabriel and stay there until i am outside as well" Kane said. They both stood up and left the room. Alpha got the meaning as well and joined them. Kayla didnt seem to understand and she shot him questioning look. "Something the matter, Kayla?" Kane asked and smiled very eerily.

"Why are we alone if the meeting has finished, my lord?" she asked, almost afraid, as if knowing what is coming. Kane looked her over slowly until she figured out what he wanted. Slowly she took the top of her dress and pulled it up to her neck, as if hiding herself.

"Please do not do this. You just said yourself that you seek redemption, please do not cause me pain" she said almost crying. Kane was in turmoil. He wanted her so badly but he did not know how to proceed. If Janine found out, she would kick his ass, but, if he didn't have this woman, he would cut himself until he died, or something like that.

"Would you give yourself to me willingly?" Kane asked calmly, even though he was in a turmoil. He didn't know what was happening inside of him. Something was jerking and twisting and rending at his gut, as if needing her touch to heal him. He looked into her eyes, they were trembling. It looked more like anticipation than fear to him, but what did he know.

"If... i have to. If not... please spare me. I am barely twenty two. And still a virgin!" she yelled out suddenly.

"What would you do for the alley to become a nice place to live again?" She looked up at Kane, angrily, but with a fierce determination in her eyes. She stood up and walked towards him, taking her dress off as she walked, slowly. The dress fell down her ankles and she got out of it, with intent. At that moment, Kane knew he would regret this day. Unless Janine forgave him, if she found out, which seemed highly unlikely. Kane tried shaking her out of his thoughts at that moment and succeeded, somehow. The last bit of undergarments were dropping to the floor as Kayla reached him and went through her knees.

A good hour later they were laying on the table, naked, exhausted, sweaty. She layed on her side, her head on his chest, breathing heavily. She aroused him as much as Janine did, and he was afraid how this was going to work out. She must have felt his thoughts, or his emotions, somehow and turned away from him. Suddenly the door burst open and Gabriel came barging in.

"Sir, the wolf and the lady are going at it. I am afraid something will happen unless you do something quick!" he almost yelled out. Kane just gave in at that moment, lost his patience and ran out naked, without even putting anything on. he ran up to them and stopped a meter in front of them.

"This better had have a good reason, as i was having the time of my life in there" he barked, angrily. "Who started this and why!"

"I can clearly see you were enjoying yourself, idiot. Janine will gut you when she finds out" Alpha said.

"Al, i am not in the mood. Why are you two going at it" Kane said with clenched teeth. Al looked at him and sighed.

"This woman said that she will grill me like a pig and make you watch as she violates Anya and Janine, sitting on Thanis's gutted corpse" he said, angrily. Kane didn't even bother asking if it was true, as he knew she was perfectly capable of doing it, given the chance. He just glared at her furiously, summoning a storm of blades, even bigger as usual. There were thousands, floating all around them, every one glowing with a violent red colour. Her eyes went big and her mouth dropped open, fear apparent in her face. Kane made the blades float even closer to her, spinning. The thousands of blades almost drew her in like a vacuum, but not quite, just grazing her skin, drawing blood. He could feel Uheryon trying to neutralize the force the blades exerted over her, but it seemed he was a lot weaker and she had far less control over his power.

Kane just smirked and dispelled the blades. She fell through her knees to the ground and a small puddle formed under her. She just looked away, hiding her face in her hands, sobbing uncontrollably. At that moment Kayla came running out, barely clothed. She clung to Kane's arm and looked at him, afraid and confused at the same time.

"What... happened?" she asked softly.

"I taught my sister a lesson she won't forget so easily. Please, do me a favour and take her inside. You can wash up with her together and give her some clothes, please. I will pay for the expenses"

She looked at him as if he just insulted her, glared at him and turned around towards Rasiela, walked over, helped her stand up and escorted her inside. Kane walked over to Alpha and patted him on his back, getting a growl back.

"Men" Kane yelled, turning towards the two dozen men. "Showing mercy to one weaker than yourself is a noble gesture. Showing mercy to someone stronger than yourself is a stupid gesture. They will return the favour by gutting you like a pig, or sometimes, eating you. Do not show mercy to a monster, it will show you none. Show mercy to those who you are to protect. All of you here, excluding Gabriel, will be guarding the alley manor and miss Kayla, with your lives of course. You will train every day to exhaustion, you will build strength, stamina, endurance. In ten days we will be back and i will test you as a group. Learn to work together, and be disciplined. Choose someone amongst yourself who you respect the most, and who ever it turns out to be, they will be leading you from then on. You will be sleeping in the west wing. Kayla will organise some carpenters to rearrange the west wing to a living space suited for you" Kane said and turned around, walking towards the manor entrance. He stopped, turning around again.

"Any questions?"

“Sir, no sir!” the group said in unison. Kane smiled inwardly. Somehow he knew this bunch would turn out alright. He turned towards the door again and went in, asked a maid where the bathing room was and let her lead him inside. Unknown to her, to their surprise, both Kayla and Rasiela were inside, naked, their front turned towards Kane as he had entered. They both turned red within a mere second, Kayla probably of embarrassment and Rasiela out of anger. Kane acted like it was the most normal thing to do and just entered, naked as well. The room was well lit and spacious, giving enough room for half a dozen of people to clean themselves at once. It was all done in marble slabs with a drain at the middle of the room, which was only available to the richest of people. Six big basins were arrayed at the sides of the walls, full of steaming water and a bigger pool in the middle, enough for multiple people to sit in. Kane walked over to a basin and sat in it, imagining all kinds of scenes in his head after seeing the two of them just now. He sensed them turning around and going back to their business, as if nothing happened. The only difference was, the chatter died out.

“We leave in twenty minutes, be sure to finish by then and get dressed” Kane said to no one in particular, whilst pouring hot water over his body. He sighed deeply, he just couldn’t help it.

“It doesn’t have to be this way, sister. I can really protect you. There is no equal to me in this whole kingdom. Not that it is big in particular, but, you know what i mean. I have managed to master my demons powers, to a certain degree, and there is no one who can even come close to me. With you by my side, sister, we could move mountains. I will help you get control over Uheryon and teach you how to draw on his power. We will own the whole world one day together. Not like our parents wanted, through fear and death, but through respect and love”.

“That is the problem. I do not wish to rule anything. I just want to be left in peace and live my own life!” she yelled and turned to Kane, storming over. “Look me in the eyes, brother, and tell me you can give me that!” she yelled again. The pain in her voice obvious. Maybe he had misinterpreted her.

“I can” he said calmly. “If you let me and you stay by my side, i will give you what you desire. I have longed for nothing more in this wretched existence, than for family. I found a woman who loves me and now i have a sister i didn’t know existed. Let me make it work, please” Kane said, looking her into her eyes. She just burst out in tears, embracing Kane and putting her head in his neck, sobbing.

“And what about me?” Kayla asked, standing with her arms crossed, facing us. “Am i just an in between your wife?” she asked angrily.

“Umm, can we talk about that another time? Pretty please?” Kane begged her.

“So you are going to leave me like this, do me and drop me until i am needed?” she asked viciously. A few long moments passed and then she burst out laughing. “Just kidding, loverboy. I will be here when you return. You will take me as

your second wife and we all will be happy, right?" she said staring holes in Kane's eyes. Women, they are worse than any demon or monster. They can kill with words.

"Umm, if Janine doesn't kill me, i will see what we can do, all right?" he said sheepishly. "Now let us finish and get dressed. We are needed elsewhere" Rasiela moved off him and walked over to Kayla, sitting down where she had been sitting earlier. Kayla walked over to her and helped her finish so Kane did the same.

Half an hour later they were on the road again, this time riding two fine horses from the manor stables and Alpha running beside them. Not much was said, except some light talk. Rasiela was still afraid of Kane he guessed and he didn't want to push it, not yet at least. They rode slower than he did whilst alone on Alpha, but it was more pleasant. The landscape was magnificent. Grassland all around them, trees planted along the chiseled road, plants and flowers growing all around them. Birds chirping, wild animals roaming around, even monster herds. Well, herds of non dangerous monsters. They were more aching to cattle, hunted for meat and their hides which made good winter clothing.

"So pretty" she said. "I have never seen such beauty and had the time to appreciate. Kane just looked at her, amazed how calm she seemed to be. The scenes that played out earlier must have helped. The red dress that Kayla had picked out for her was gracing her in particular and he saw her in a whole new light. What bathing and new clothes can do for a woman.

"Yes it is, and i have found countless opportunities to appreciate it. The good and the bad. I prefer the bad but, the good is also nice" Kane said and laughed out. A smile appeared on her face, a small one, but bigger than anything until now. The rest of the trip proceeded with light chatter and groans and moans from Alpha, who was annoyed with the slow pace, so he kept running in circles around them. In about two hours ride, they arrived at the inn only to be shocked. As they pulled up closer, they could make out that Janine was facing off a monster, with the help of... something. A pitch black golem was fighting a regnolak, and Janine was hurling fireballs from her palms. Too stunned Kane could just stare and do nothing. The regnolak was just a few meters in height, standing on four feet. It had a long spiked tail and a head near its back. The frontal legs were covered in what it looked like armour and stumps at the end, used to crush opponents. The back part was just covered in dense fur, and was aflame after all of the fireballs.

Alpha didn't find it as amusing and rushed into the fray to help Janine out. In mid air he summoned his soul forge which crashed down on the regnolak, sending it sprawling to the ground. He ripped at the meaty parts, neglecting the flames and the stench. At that moment Beta and Gamma came rushing in, but the regnolak was like a mountain, and it was hard to do anything to it, beside hit it and be damaged in return. Janine yelled for them to let her be and do it her own way, so the trio backed off.

The black golem propelled itself off the ground, jumping up a few meters into the air, but just enough to land on the regnolak, bringing it down with its massive weight. The golem kept punching the regnolak into the soil, with every hit of its massive, black stone fists, the regnolak's body was bashed in, organs crushed inside

of him and as the golem had landed on top of it, it got off and sat on it, grabbing its head with its massive hands. Three times twisting and prodding and he ripped off the regnolak's head, throwing it towards where Kane was standing.

On mere instinct, Kane's thousand blades summoned around him, flew into the head, shredding it to pieces. Every single drop was absorbed by egeryon, not even a drop spilling. Gabriel's and Rasiela's mouths were open wide, eyes big. Stunned at what just happened here, they were still not accustomed to their brutality and power. Neither were they sometimes.

Kane jumped off his horse and walked over towards Janine, on his guard against the golem. Alpha had returned to his normal state and was doing the same, but the golem didn't move. He was standing motionless in front of Janine.

"Hey there, loverboy" she said as she walked up to Kane and jumped right on top of him, sending him down to the ground.

"You gained some weight, my love, me down so easily" Kane said and laughed. In return she graced him with narrowed eyes and a slap.

"You have slept with another woman?!" she yelled.

"What the hell? How do you know?" he asked, flustered.

"I am a witch you imbecile. I cast a spell on you and if the spell was broken, you were unfaithful to me!" she yelled, punching him on his chest. He grabbed her arms and pulled her towards him.

"Stop it, you're making a scene out of nothing. It was an accident, i tell you."

"So you accidentally fell down on top of a woman, naked and penetrated her, by accident?" she asked, sarcastically.

"You could say something like that, yes" Kane replied. Suddenly she noticed Gabriel and Rasiela and she looked straight at her, then down at Kane.

"Was it her?" she asked with an evil smile.

"No?" was all Kane could reply before Janine spat out instructions to the golem.

"Golem! Kill her!" she yelled and the golem moved toward Rasiela.

"It wasn't her" Kane said and pushed her off of him. "Call him off!"

"I don't believe you! Liar! Cheater! Scum!" she kept yelling at Kane.

"She is my sister!" Kane yelled. After hearing him yell, Gabriel and Rasiela seemed to understand what was going on and panicked. Luckily his quick thinking saved them both. Gabriel grabbed her horse's reins and pulled her after him,

galloping away. The golem didn't seem to mind as he took a big rock off the ground and wanted to hurl it towards them, but there again was Alpha, who had soulforged, hitting him with his body, sending him toppling to the ground in a loud thunk.

"Call him off, i mean it!" Kane said, now angrily, grabbing her wrists forcefully.

"Stop it, you are hurting me" she yelled.

"Good, now call him off!" he ordered again.

"Al right already!" she said and snapped her fingers, the golem disappearing instantly. She pulled her wrists away from his hands, turned around and ran towards the inn, crying.

"Women" was all Kane could say and think. "Now how the hell do i get out of this mess?" he said to himself.

Chapter 14 - Bonds

Later that day everyone was sitting together in the main room on the ground floor, around the fireplace. After the whole story was told, the mood was pretty low and no one was really in the mood for anything but watching the fire burn.

"Anya, could you please bring some of the stronger stuff your father was keeping in the cellar?" Kane asked politely. She nodded, stood up and left, Thanis went after her. The two must have been getting closer the last few days.

"Is anyone of you bunch related?" Rasiela asked suddenly.

"Janine and Thanis are siblings, Anya is the previous owners daughter, also part of us now and well, you and me are also siblings, Gabe is an apprentice of me and Alpha is my other half. Arlana is a childhood friend of Janine and she shares our bed. I count us as a family though, all together. We promised each other to look after one another, so that is what we will do"

"And cheat on another" Janine murmured.

"Oh come on already, i said i was sorry and that it won't happen again. It was all just means to a purpose. I need her in that place to take care of things for me, and for her to truly trust me and be loyal, i had to do something drastic. Just plain fear isn't enough" Kane said, almost pleadingly.

"I want to see her. I want to see who you did it with"

"You will, in ten days. We are invited to the kings banquet"

"We are?" she asked, her eyebrows shooting up.

"Yes love, we are. We will dine with the king, who is supposedly my grandfather or something. I have no real idea nor do i care much A lot of things happened that day that i couldn't think of anything else but go back home, to you" Kane said, pausing for effect. "We will see what he has to say then. I didn't have much time to waste as i needed to arrange things in the alley"

As soon as he said it, he regretted it as Janine's eyes narrowed on him and almost stared him to death. Women, will he ever understand them. "How about you forget about what happened for a bit and we have some fun tonight" Kane said mischievously.

"Right. Forget about it. Nothing for you here for a while, if ever. She better be prettier than me, if not, i will crush her. Actually, either way my golem will eat her. Your own fault. Arlana will sleep on my side of the bed, just so you know"

"Janine, please. She has to take care of the alley for us. It was my fault anyway, i made her" and again, he regretted it as he said it. His mouth was faster than his brain sometimes. Especially when talking to Janine. He couldn't help it. She

just narrowed her eyes again and murmured something and a little flame sprang to life on her palm. She set her palm to facing him and the flame flew his way. Luckily for him, his reflexes were good and he managed to summon his blade within a mere second to deflect it.

"Janine!" he yelled. "Stop acting like a goddamn kid!"

"Sorry for being one! I am only twenty two!" she replied angrily. Kane couldn't help it but sit down again and calm himself.

"I am sorry, please forgive me. It meant nothing to me and it wont happen, ever again"

"Only because i feel that you are honest about it. I will for this time, but do not expect it again" Kane smiled at her warmly, honestly happy about it. He didn't even know what he had was so real and fragile. All he thought about was how strong and powerful he was, that he could make anyone do anything. He could, but he couldn't make someone love him as he was.

"Say, tell me about your progress. I see you managed quite the feat with the black giant and the fireball. How did u learn it so fast? We were only gone for a day" She seemed to be thinking for a long moment.

"Well, the fireball i practiced all day and burned most of the trees out back" she said pointing towards the back side of the inn with her hand "and the golem was more a mistake than not. I accidentally summoned him, but was i glad i did. The damn regnolak appeared out of nowhere in front of me and i misspelled a spell. I was meant to summon a stone giant, not an abyss golem. That thing drains to much of my power" she said.

"That is a stone giant." Rasiela added. "It's just a much more complex version of it. Normal stone giants are weak against magic, but the abyss golem, as it is called, is strong against anything. It can basically withstand any type of punishment as long as the caster has stamina and magic power left. It isn't so strong in offensive capabilities, but then again, it is mostly used as a decoy, as a shield."

"Mostly?" Janine and Kane said at the same time, then looked at each other and smiled. She stood up and walked over, sat on his lap and hugged him.

"I missed you so much. Never ever go off without me, not even for a single day" she whispered. Kane smiled warmly, happy about what she told him. Damn it, he almost messed up, big time.

"Ahem" Rasiela coughed to get their attention. "As i was saying, mostly as in, most of the time. The abyss golem can be used as a battering ram when sieging castles, as a shield, as well, anything basically. Then again, in the books i read, there was only one person capable of summoning one, and he got devoured by it. He kept a journal and therein he wrote that each passing day was worse. The golem didn't want to dispel and kept draining the summoner's life force. After a few weeks the summoner died. That summoner was Melrot. The greatest of all times. He managed

to summon anything from a small animal to the abyss golem. What went wrong? I have no idea. Luckily for you he dispelled. Do not summon him unless you really need it” she finished and went back to staring at the fire.

“Thanks, sister. Your knowledge will be of great use to us i reckon. Speaking of which, how do you know all this?” Kane asked.

“Father and mother have quite the extensive library on all things monster, occult, summon and so on. I have read everything that was useful at all. I will help you as much as i can”

There was obvious pain in her eyes, as if recollecting old memories about her parents and the tortures she must have gone through.

“They made you?” Kane asked.

“Huh? What do you mean?” she replied, trying to act as if not knowing what he meant.

“Never mind the facade, sister. You are here amongst friends. I will do everything i can to protect you, even if it costs me my life. I already told you once, please do not make me say it a third time. She just nodded and smiled gently, then her gaze went to the fireplace again.

“Anyway, Gabe, tomorrow morning come dawn, we start your training. After we are done in ten days, you will be thanking me. Until then, try not to die. I would really hate to see you fail”

“Yes, Kane. I will do my best. If someone would show me to my room, i would be happy to go and rest for tomorrow, if that is alright with you”

“Sure thing Gabe. Thanis, please prepare the bed in your room for Gabriel, and Anya, please prepare another in your room for Rasiela. I think we all should have a good nights rest. We have a hard week in front of us. All of us” Kane said as he stood up, holding Janine in his hands. “As for me and my love here, well, the night can’t be long enough” Kane said with a smirk and went up to their room.

The dawn came earlier than he would like to, but he was more than happy it did. As Kane walked outside of the inn to enjoy the cool dawn, Anya was setting the table. Rasiela was helping her, carrying plates and food. Gabriel was already dressed as well and was chatting politely with the two girls. Thanis almost bumped into Kane, carrying jugs of water and what seemed orange juice.

“How healthy” Kane murmured, hoping for something stronger than juice. He just looked at Kane, sternly, as a stern parent would with their child.

“From now on, only healthy food, Kane” he said and smiled an innocent smile. Kane couldn’t help but tap him on his head and smile..

“Where is Janine? She was already up by the time i awoke”

"She is at the river, practicing some spells" Anya said. "She said you should get her when you woke up"

"Ugh. And here i was hoping for an easy morning" Kane mumbled and walked off. A few minutes later he was surprised to see Alpha sitting next to Janine and Arlana, laughing.

"What's so funny?" Kane asked annoyed. He surprised himself, feeling jealousy over Janine.

"Good morning love. We were just talking about the snake thing. How you turned his men on him and then Alpha ate him." she said.

"O yea, the round guy, what was his name again? Round or something like that. Not that it matters" he laughed with them, still feeling the pang of jealousy. Why would he be jealous of his wolf counterpart?

"Because he is you" Egeryon whispered in his ear. "He will be your downfall. It is he who will take you with him, who will cost you your life. I have seen this in a vision"

"Like hell he will. You have no idea what you are talking about, demon. Leave me be until it is your time" Kane snapped back mentally.

"Remember my words, human. You will ask me to save you, i will, but for a price. A loved one. Until we chat again" he whispered again and disappeared. "Damn him. Did he have to say things like that? Trying to feed Kane doubt He would never turn on himself, but, would Alpha?" he thought to himself.

"What is wrong?" Alpha asked.

"Nothing, just a run in with Egeryon, as usual. Feeding me lies and misinformation" All went quiet and the mood dropped instantly. They knew how much he was battling to keep hold over himself and they respected it, if nothing else. Sleepless nights, pain, mood swings, they were all a part of his struggle.

"Let's go back. Breakfast is ready and we shouldn't make the cooks wait" Kane said cheerfully, standing up and dragging Janine up by her hand.

The week passed without anything special happening. Gabe wasn't the same man he used to be anymore. He learned soulforge within the first two days and blood the next. He was a natural talent and had reached soul level two by day four and by day seven, they were almost sparring like equals. His hearing, sight, agility, stamina, strength, instinct. Everything was magnified at least tenfold. To his surprise, he even learned something from him. Soul burn. They stumbled upon it by pure accident during day six. Soul burn was a technique they created to amplify their power in magnitudes, but at the cost of lifepower. They dared use only at a small level, fearing of damage to their soul and body. The technique was basically one for last use, in a win or die battle.

“Keep it up Janine!” Kane yelled, as he rushed Gabriel. She kept launching small fireballs his way and he dodged or deflected every single one with ease. During the last two, he launched a sneak attack with two swords which he deflected, but instead of being hit by the two last flames, he started burning himself. A beautiful colour purple, like an aura. It absorbed the two flames and got thicker. Speechless, they stopped. A few moments later he crashed to the ground, breathing heavily, all energy spent up.

“What... was that?” Gabriel asked bewildered. “What did i do?”

“I have no idea my friend, but i like it, whatever it was. If it can absorb magic as it did, you need to teach me” Kane chuckled as he tapped the man on the shoulder and pulled him up.

“Carry me to the inn?” he smiled sheepishly.

“No way, do it yourself, weakling” Kane laughed waving him off. But then again, he took pity on the man and helped him to the inn. They all sat outside, enjoying the cool evening breeze. Anya and Thanis had prepared dinner and cooled drinks for them. As they sat down, Rasiela, Arlana and Janine walked towards them, the familiar trio behind them.

“You done for the day?” Kane asked, standing up and walking towards Janine, taking her in his arms, kissing her.

“Yes we are done for the day. Rasiela is a natural. She learned to summon a stone golem within a few days and now we are practicing battle between hers and mine, whilst casting spells and other things. It’s basically multi tasking. We love it” she said and smiled. Rasiela walked by, smiling with genuine affection. Kane was the happiest man alive at that moment. He finally had a family, one who loved him and wasn’t afraid of him, or what he was capable of.

They ate during light chatter, discussing the next day. Anya and Thanis left early, to prepare things for tomorrow, the day of the kings banquet. After they were done, everyone went to the bathing house that was constructed outside and they got in one by one. Janine, Arlana and Kane went in first, as everyone knew by then they had no shame nor did they care if anyone saw them doing things, walk around naked and so on. Gabriel and Rasiela joined a few minutes later, towels draped around them.

“Oh come on already, you two are so annoying. Take those towels off already!” They both went beet red immediately, .

“See” Janine whispered in his ear. “I told you that they noticed each other. There must be some feelings involved by now”

They looked at each other and nodded, understandingly. The two dropped when Arlana tugged at them and were standing stark naked in front of them. Rasiela screamed in embarrassment, but Gabriel just dipped into the water with great haste.

If it was anyone else than his sister, he might have thrown a compliment or two, but he wasn't into incest. Even though she looked mighty fine, almost identical to Janine. Gabriel was also a sight to behold, muscular and endowed, a perfect body in every way. Physically they made a great match, mentally, more or less. They were like ice and fire..

"Please, now that the uncomfortables are out of the way, join us. We would like to have a word with you two"

They got into the water and joined us, Gabe sitting to Kane's right and Rasiela sitting to Janine's left. Suddenly, Kane had to give Janine a questioning look. She was playing with him under the water. Luckily it was pretty dark so they didn't seem to notice. "My girl, was she a bad one. But i loved it, every single moment, every single thing about her" he thought to himself.

"Gabe, my friend, i have come to see you as my brother. You proved to me within the last ten days that my instinct wasn't wrong. You have made such progress, which is unheard of. Of course, you had the best teacher" Kane said with a smirk, gaining him few boo's from the crowd of four.

"Anyway, what i am trying to say is, i love you man. I am happy to have you, along with Alpha here" pointing at a little puppy laying behind him, "and i am sure i can rely on you when i need something to be done, and, to keep my back" Everyone jumped in surprise, not having noticed Alpha, being there inside with them.

"How... do you fit in here?" Gabe asked.

"One of the things i taught myself was morphing" he replied with a strong voice, sounding comical, coming from such a small creature.

"Ohh... " Gabe replied. Kane burst out in laughter, finding it amusing, but there he was alone. They stared at him like he was some kind of lunatic, and in some way he was. He was glad to have Alpha there though, as he was neglecting him again. He hated it, but, he was an animal in shape.

"Now, to finish it off. Rasiela, my dearest sister. You have no idea how happy i am today to have you here with us. I am so happy that you chose to love me in return. At least some part of my life had restored itself after twenty long years, living alone thinking that my family was dead" he said, smiling at her. She just looked at Kane, with narrowed eyes.

"What are you getting at, brother?" she asked suspiciously.

"Oh me? Nothing really. Just a small thing to be honest. I couldn't help but notice how you and my man here look at each other during meals and rest time"

They both went red again and looked away from each other, having stared at the other for a long while.

"Now now, no need to be ashamed. We got through the naked part, now just admit it and we're set." He said and laughed again. At least he found it funny, if no one else laughed with him.

"I... have been watching you" Gabe admitted, not looking her in the eyes. Her smile widened and she looked up at him.

"So have i" she said happily.

"That settles it" Kane said, standing up. "Al, please hand me the items" Alpha stood up, revealing two little boxes, decorated with gold lacing. Kane took both and handed the smaller one to Gabe.

"There you go Gabe, open it and see what i got you two" Kane said, smirking. He did and his eyes and mouth went wide open when he took the two rings out of the little box, one with a big gem on top and one a bit more massive than the other, carved. Not understanding, they both looked back at Kane.

Kane did the same, but in his box the two rings were even larger. One was a whole finger ring, with a large gem on top and the other was a whole finger ring without a gem, but also carved along its length. The rings were made out of some type of black gleaming metal, cold to the touch. After taking the one out with the gem, Kane kneeled partially into the water and looked at Janine. Her eyes were wide and shimmering.

"Janine, my love. I have loved you since the moment i laid eyes on you, somehow. Every passing day, i love you more and more, treasure you more and more. Nothing would make me Happier than to have children one day with you and get old together. Would you do me the honour and make me your husband?" He asked in one fluent motion. Her eyes started tearing and she stood up and jumped on top of him, repeatedly saying "yes, yes, yes".

"You damn idiot, i thought you would never ask me" she said and took the ring out of his hand, putting it on her finger.

"It has just been some month since we met. That is not never " he said, one eyebrow raised.

"Whatever!" she yelled back. She took out the second ring and put it on his ring finger. Suddenly, a sensation went through them and they started shaking. A faint black glow appeared around them, like a black fog, but not as thick. They could feel each others feelings, thoughts, pain and pleasure. It was as if they mentally linked with each other. "What the hell did he get me into now" Kane thought as Egeryon laughed inside of his head.

"Permanently linked. If the one dies, the other dies. If one gets hurt, the other gets hurt. But, there is also one benefit. Your souls are combined now, and your power is magnified by a number i can not comprehend yet. I think she is able to summon a dozen of those abyss golems now and still able to control them, or you summoning half a million of your assassin blades, or her throwing multiple fireballs at

the same time. Now do tell me how much you love me. O and i expect a hefty tribute for this. Also from the other loving couple. Uheryon helped me do this, so half of the compliments go to her. The other couple will also get a lot stronger, ofcourse, not as strong as you two. Me myself, well, i play an important role here so, well, you get the point i guess.” he said and popped off again.

“Did you know about this?” Janine said and startled me.

“Huh? Did i know what?” Kane replied.

“About the linking!” she yelled.

“How the hell do you know about it, i just learned about it myself”

“I could hear you two talk with each other. How else?”

“Oh, damn. Didn’t see that one coming. And no, i didn’t. I thought it was just a gift from the demon, but, i didn’t expect it to be as big as a gift as it is. Anyway, now you two. Go ahead, nothing bad will happen. At least nothing worse than happened to us here” Kane said and smiled.

“Go ahead with what?” Rasiela and Gabe said in unison.

“The proposal, you idiots. What else?” he said annoyed. “I want a double wedding tomorrow at the banquet. You better come to terms you love each other deeply within the next few moments, or i will beat you both”he said raising his hand into the air like a mad man. All he got in return were four sets of eyes looking at him, pityingly.

“Oh come on you people, can you just imagine how popular you will become! You will have a double wedding with the saviour of the kingdom, the next king in line, the one and only Kane!” he said, imagining greatness.

“Right. Anyway, you shouldn’t force them love” Janine said. “If they are not ready or if they do not feel towards each other like we do, why make them?”

“It’s not just feel. The rings will make them many times stronger, they will share each other on a whole different plane. You know what we felt just now? Don’t you love the feeling? You sense where i am, my feelings towards you, if i am all right. Would you change that for anything in the world after feeling the way you do now?” he replied. She lowered her gaze, looking at the water, thoughtful.

“No i wouldn’t. It’s like i have been reborn. It’s unlike anything i have felt before. How do you two feel about it?” she asked them. They just looked at each other, not knowing how to respond or what to expect.

“It’s just going so fast. I wouldn’t have ever thought about marriage, and now you are thrusting us headfirst into it. What if we don’t like each other as much as we thought we did?” Rasiela tried to reason with Kane.

"Well, i know i like you, at least" Gabe murmured. Kane sighed and dropped into the hot water again, letting the heat warm him. Janine sat up on his lap and funneled with her hand under her butt, positioning herself for some love making. Kane almost yelled in surprise, not expecting her to be as bold as she was with their love. But every touch and every move was magnified. She began going up and down a few centimeters at a time, barely noticeable. Kane came almost instantly, the pressure and pleasure peaking within mere moments. Then Gabe and Rasiela looked at them, at each other and made surprised faces.

"Really, brother? In front of me and Gabriel?" Rasiela yelled.

"Hey, its Janine's fault, not mine. She sat on top of me, you know" Kane said smiling. Gabe just looked away, as if embarrassed.

"Rasiela. Try it after you put the rings on. Its impossible to describe the sensation we are feeling. It is better than anything else before this moment. Nothing in this world can be compared even a single percent" Janine said through heavy breathing. Gabe turned to look at them again, then to Rasiela and shrugged his shoulders, standing up and taking the box again.

"Would you do me the honour, my lady?" he said as he kneeled as Kane did a few minutes ago. Flustered, she pulled her hand back, not expecting for Gabriel to go through with Kane's little game. Kane jumped into the air, squeeling, launching Janine off of him.

"That's the spirit, brother!" Kane yelled.

"Are you doing this because of your new master, or because you want me?" Rasiela said, narrowing her eyes on Gabriel.

"Only because of you, my lady. Ever since i saw you ten days ago, my heart started racing at every thought of you. I almost attacked my master at the sight of him pulling you around behind him. Your beauty has no equal and you opened your heart to all of us. You are very kind and every moment spent with you was very pleasant. If you would do this, i swear with my life and my honour, i would do anything to keep you safe, my lady" he finished, still holding the ring in his hand, waiting for a response.

"Oh well, why not" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "Let's see how you will treat me. If you misbehave, i will put a golem on you!" she said teasingly. Rasiela put out her ring finger and Gabe put the ring on her finger and she did the same to him. As with Kane and Janine, they began glowing with a strange misty aura, only it was green for them. A poisonous green, a wicked colour. A strange sensation came over all four of them at the same moment, sickening. Both Rasiela and Gabe began breathing heavily, sweating and lost consciousness within seconds after putting the ring on. A mere second passed and they came to again, both jumped to their feet, snapping out of it. They looked at Kane and Janine with a strange expression and again a few seconds passed and they were on top of each other, going at it roughly in front them. So this was how Rasiela felt watching Janine and Kane doing things. It just felt wrong, but he didn't care much as he jumped on Janine and they did some

crazy things in the water, including Arlana who felt left out. Alpha walked out, embarrassed by them doing what they were doing and slammed the door shut behind him.

The next morning at dawn, they all got up. It was almost as if they all were linked telepathically after last night's events. They met up at the main room and ate, all together. Anya and Thanis had prepared food for the trip which would last some two to three hours and they left for the castle, once again. The trip itself was very uneventful. Mainly light conversation and talk about last night. Gabriel and Kane sat at the front, the ladies in the back, relaxing in the shadows of the carriage. They were listening to women's conversation mainly.

"How did you and Kane meet?" Rasiela asked.

"Hmm, it is kind of an embarrassing situation. Let's just say he freed me and Thanis from a horde of beasts in human form. We instantly fell in love with each other and are together since then" Janine replied. A smile appeared on Kane's face. He could still imagine the scene that happened that day. Her sprawled on the floor, bandits in the trees. Seems like ages have passed since then. They were quiet for a while and went on again.

"He stole my heart after we bought the inn though. He is so gentle with me, caring, understanding. That is why I did my best in the time he was at the capitol, trying to learn some magics to defend myself, or help him if needed. But I had never imagined that I would be able to do what I can now. It just came to me naturally. Ever since he gave me the molochite, I have been able to learn new spells and master them a lot faster" she went on.

"Molochite? You mean one of the gnostrum stones? You actually have one?" she asked in amazement.

"One? We have two. Kane has the belial. He's basically immortal."

"You two still manage to surprise me, day after day" Rasiela said and laughed gently. "Say, I remember a spell from my studies. It uses the spellcasters life force to summon an abyss lord. Interested to hear more?" Rasiela said, intriguingly. Kane perked up on his seat, interested as well. Gabriel got the gist of it and did the same.

"What is an abyssal lord?" Janine asked.

"Well, the easiest way to describe it would be Kane's Egeryon in physical form." Some kind of strange sensation came over Kane and he felt sick to his core. "Another Egeryon? One was more than he could handle already" he thought.

"Wouldn't that be dangerous?" Janine asked in return.

"I don't know. It says that if multiple summoners are included, then the spell only drains their combined magical power. Now, when you add our magical pools together with my brothers and Gabe's, I think we shouldn't have any problems

controlling it. Do you want to try it when we take a break?" she said and winked innocently.

"Like hell you will, psycho!" Kane barked, interrupting the two women. "I am not in the mood to fight an abyssal lord, morons!"

"Who are you calling a moron, moron? No one said we would! O and why are you even listening in, huh?" Janine barked back. Kane sighed and closed the curtains behind them. Women, u can't live with them and you can't live without them.

A few hours passed and the castle walls were visible in the distance. The time couldn't pass by fast enough. All he wanted to do for now was check on Kayla and the guys. Kane was interested how the progress went on the alley's transformation.

"Be careful what you think about, loverboy" Janine whispered in his ear.

"All i think about is you, my love. You should know that by now"

"O, and you thought about me at the time you were doing that woman from behind?" she teased back.

"That is not fair, and you know it"

"What is not fair, is that while i have been practicing magic to help you, you were doing it with a skank!" she yelled. Rasiela looked at Janine and Gabriel at Kane. Kane just shrugged.

"I thought we were done with this, Janine. You said you got over it and forgave me, didn't you?"

"I lied. Women do that when another woman is the topic. You are still very green when it comes to women, my love" she said.

"I can see the castle walls" Alpha sent Kane.

"Let us take a rest for a while and eat" Kane said to take the topic somewhere else. They stopped at a well, with benches, a table and a great view. Everyone got out and helped set up for lunch. Alpha was in his puppy mode, laying on the table, enjoying the sun and the heat. After the lunch they had a talk about how to proceed further.

"Basically, our plan for the rest of the day is the King's banquet. I have no idea what to expect there. You look different in comparison to when they saw you last time Rasiela, so you should remain mostly unnoticed. After the banquet, we visit the alley and will sleep there and stay for a day or two, depending on what has happened so far. Afterwards, we go back to the inn and train for another period. I have some new things i have thought of, and i would like to teach you as well, Gabe. And our prettier halves can practice their witch brewing together"

"Witch brewing?" both Janine and Rasiela said in unison. "You call summoning kick ass monsters witch brew? Dont make us summon an Abyssal lord".

"Right. Anyway, lets get back to the road. Were still half an hour away and it's noon already" Kane said as he stood up.

Chapter 15 - The banquet

As the group entered the outer walls, they saw people roaming the streets, which were more or less decorated and tidied. Not too much but it was way more pleasant than the corpses at the alley their first time around. The people even looked happy, as much as one can be in their situation. After a good few minutes inside of the alley, a small group of soldiers walked over to them. There Kane recognized Walfrid who stood at attention after approaching him.

"Sir Kane, it is good to see you. I shall keep the pleasantries for later, please follow us towards the palace" he said and turned around, to escort them towards the palace. The alley looked far better than it had. There was colour on the houses, works in progress, carpenters on the roofs, masons, architects, normal labour force. The works were proceeding nicely. Soon they passed next to one of the doctors clinics, and it was painted in a clean white, a big cross nailed at the outside saying "free for all". Next to it was a big public kitchen. Last time it was closed, and now it was painted a nice green colour, benches outside, people eating and chatting. "She did a wonderful job" Kane thought to himself.

"Not just yourself, but for us both, darling" Janine said, bending over outside of the carriage.

"Right, darling. For us both, i forgot you can read my thoughts now" Kane answered. She tapped him on his shoulder and sat next to him. The people all around them were starting to notice their approach and the noise dropped to low murmurs and bewildered glances and shouts.

"Long live sir Kane!" one lone man shouted, standing in front of the public kitchen, holding two babies in two of his arms. It brought a smile on his face, knowing he was responsible for this man's happiness, even though it was just recent. More and more people started shouting compliments and soon a crowd appeared around their small carriage, a score of residents of the alley. Walfrid was just about to try and disperse the crowd, but luckily for him he looked at Kane first before doing anything. He just motioned for him to be silent and wait, then stood up and addressed the growing crowd.

"Citizens of Kravnja, citizens of the Alley, i greet you. My name is Kane, and i am the one who you think i am. I am the one who killed the snake and took over this district, called 'the alley'."

"No you are not, i am the one who killed him" Alpha barked and got up beside him, growing almost to his full size, but went on two feet and towered over Kane, menacingly. The crowd got nervous, but didn't move.

"Right, my companion here is the one who ate him, to be specific, but lets not dwell over details. The thing is, from that day onwards, your lives were destined to become better than they were. The alley will become a place where all of you will enjoy to live, work and die when you get old. Me, my wife and my companions will make sure of that.. Also, i came bearing gifts. Every person who has less than a gold piece to his name, come to the manor within a five days of time. Miss kayla will be

giving you something to get you started. Also, within the same five days of time, an office will be set up where you can register any profession you may have, and we will try and get you a job. For now, this is it. I have a meeting with the king, so me and my companions have to leave you for now. Until we meet again” Kane said and waved, then sat down and started the carriage again.

“Oh my, you could pass for a snake, or a lesser politician, my love” Janine teased. “But beside the point, you really did sound... convincing. I would almost believe you myself if i was one of them” she said and chuckled. The sound of her chuckle was mesmerizing. Kane turned around and hit her butt with his palm for her comment, then kissed her.

“Don’t make me get back inside again, woman, or i will eat you” he dared her.

“What if i want to be eaten?” she replied, lustfully.

“O stop it already, you make me sick, the both of you!” Rasiela barked from behind them. Can you think of anything else than making out, doing something nasty or whatever for a damn second?”

“Not really. You should try it more yourself, you might change opinions very easily” Kane threw back.

Her face went beet red and she looked away, Gabriel did the same. Were they a nice couple, Kane thought to himself. Half an hour later they arrived at the king’s palace. There were colourful decorations displayed everywhere and there was loud music playing from the courtyard. They stopped and got out of the carriage and were taken away by a group of attendants to get freshened up and changed into clothing arranged by the king. Everyone bathed in separate baths, male and female. Alpha was bathing with Kane and Gabriel, in a big pool. He was in his puppy form and was enjoying the bathing more than anyone.

“What kind of person is the king?” Gabe asked.

“Hmm, i wouldn’t really know. I’ve talked to him only for a few moments. All i could think about back then was how to get Rasiela out of the situation alive. Lucky for me i am pretty strong, so i can intimidate people easily, beside my other half here soaking his fur in the pool” kane said and pointed towards Alpha who just shrugged.

“Do you think we will be given a private audience?”

“Sure, why not. I saved his life and his kingdom. More or less anything i say would probably be accepted, or anything i asked for. We will see later, when the banquet and formalities are over with”

Afterwards Kane and Gabe got dressed in fine clothes. There was something prepared for Alpha as well. Gabriel and Kane were dressed in black linen pants and a loose black shirt adorned with white embroidery of a phoenix and black leather shoes and a red hat. They were given decorative weapons to accent the look they were adorned with. Alpha had some kind of battle armour made out of a strange

alloy of metal, which was too light to have any practical use. It was purely decorative, and he looked like a knight on four legs. He kept nagging how he was uncomfortable with it on his back.

Over at the women's bathroom, Janine and Rasiela were fooling around and talking for a while longer than the men. Finally, when they had finished, they got their dresses. Janine had a red silken gown on, almost glued to her body, which fell down to the ground, flowing behind her and a white laced scarf. Rasiela had the same combination but the dress was blue and the scarf black. They were absolutely stunning. Their bodies seemed to be born to fit into the dresses and it showed just enough to entice anyone, but not to reveal too much. After getting clothed they were escorted towards the courtyard where the music stopped upon their arrival. Everyone present stood up, and that was quite the number of people. The courtyard was square and large. Everywhere around the walls were tables, shaped in a letter U adorned with food, drinks and decorations. Men and women clothed in expensive clothing were standing from both sides, awaiting the king's speech upon the guest's arrival. In the middle of the large area was a group of musicians, now resting and a second group of women scantily clad, probably dancers. At the end where the U had no wall, there was a big table where the king and queen were seated, along with Kayla on the opposite far side of the table. Four seats were empty just across the king and queen, where their group was escorted to and left standing. King Crimson raised a glass filled with a dark red liquid, probably wine and addressed the crowd.

"Ten days ago, this man singlehandedly rescued me from a group of assassins brought here to end my life, and that of many people here present today. What all of you do not know, is that there was a group working behind the curtains to control this kingdom.

After hearing his words, there was a large number of gasps and murmurs. The crowd present must have been deaf and blind not to notice it sooner.

"I, being old and foolish, let them to close, i let them control me to easily and too late was it that i found out what was going on. Once i did, it was already far too late to do anything about it. The only reason why we are holding this dinner of celebration today is to celebrate this kingdom anew and this young man and his companions". His gaze was intent and he stared at Rasiela for some time before moving on.

"Therefore, i have decided to make this man a Duke, here, today, in front of everyone present. From this day onward, sir Kane will be known as Duke Kane of house Crimson"

The crowd burst out as an angry mob and started yelling all kinds of things ranging from how can a kid be named your successor to treachery. Alpha sensed what Kane wanted and walked towards the middle of the area summoning his soul forge and an instant later, there was a five meter tall wolf looming above everyone present. The crowd got silent instantly, as if someone had muted them all.

"Please, my dear friends, let me finish. I do not wish for anyone to get hurt here today. Let me finish to the end and you will understand why i am doing this"

The old king took a sip of of his dark red liquid, his throat dry of the shouting and went on.

“This young man is our only hope. The only hope to save this kingdom. Two days ago, we got a message from our scouts that castle Krafne had fallen. An army of combined Kefir and Verba soldiers has taken the castle after a week of siege. They are reinforcing it as we speak. Our army of roughly thirty thousand soldiers can not withstand theirs. The first scout reports say that the combined troop amount that had besieged them was near to fifty thousand each. That number doesn’t include the reinforcements that is coming in every day, and has every day since then. One of the scouts even swears he has seen a row of monsters walking next to the soldiers. We would be swept away within a day by this army”

The king stopped for effect, letting the news sink in. The crowd started talking amongst themselves, but not too loudly as to not miss a single word the king had to say.

“Now, one of the requirements i am putting upon the new Duke of house Crimson is this. Save the kingdom. Defeat the enemy army or route them and retake castle Krafne. If you succeed, the naming will be put in paper and no one will be able to argue that the kingdom owes its existence to you, my dear boy” he said and finished, finally drinking the wine from the cup in one gulp. The crowd roared in approval and cheers were reverberating all around the courtyard. Long live the king, long live the duke. A sly smile appeared on Kane’s face and he raised his glass and drank it as well. The music started up again and the pretty ladies started dancing. King Crimson sat down and motioned for the rest to join him, so they did.

“Quite the task you have put on me, King Crimson” Kane said laughing. The king just nodded and raised his glass again. Kane just smiled and shook his head. “Anyway, my king, please let me introduce my companions. To my right is my unwed wife to be Janine. She is a sorcerer and is almost on par with me. To my left are my Sister Rasiela, which you already know and Gabriel, my most trusted friend. As for behind me, you already had the pleasure of meeting my other half”

“Quite the rowdy bunch it seems. I trust there will be no more attempts on my life, from anyone present at least, Kane?” the king asked seriously.

“Of course not, my king. What has happened can not be changed, but what will happen can. She will lay down her life if need be for this kingdom, and so will any of us present here” Kane added. “But let’s be honest. We are not doing it for you or for the leeches you have invited today to this banquet” Kane said. The king didn’t seem taken aback by the words, as if expecting them.

“I know, and i do not care honestly. My life was over the moment the assassins tried to kill me. Everything since then is a gift, and will be until i die. I can never repay you for what you have done, but for what you will do, you will be rewarded a kingdom you are defending. If you succeed, everything is yours, and i think that is motivation enough” the king replied.

"Neither am i doing it for the reward. All i care about is doing good, i think. I need to keep my humanity, good king. If i lose, not only will this kingdom fall, but the whole world. I am trying to keep the power i possess in check, but if i were to die or to lose the little of goodness i have in me, my second wouldn't mind unleashing it onto this world" Kane replied.

"I know all about it, Kane. Remember when i called you my grandson?"

"Yes i do" Kane replied. "What of it?"

"You really are my grandson. Your mother was my daughter, but she ran away when she was a teen. She was obsessed with the occult and death. I tried to force her to stop practicing, but when she met your father, everything took a turn for the worse. I tried to have him thrown out of Kravnje, but he waited for her outside, in hiding. They took off and were lost until a few years back, when your sister arrived at the castle, playing me like the old fool i was. Within a month of her arrival she bent everyone to her will. I tried to do something about it, but she showed me what she would do to me and everyone else if i tried something again by killing the previous guard captain. I lost faith until i heard of a rumour. A young man had taken over an inn just outside of Kravnje and was renovating it. I sent Walfrid to check it out and it really turned out to be you. You have your mother's face, and i knew the moment you had stepped in that it was you. It was a gamble but i was willing to go for it. I thank the Gods every night that they sent you back to your roots" the old king said and burst out into tears, taking Kane's hands and kissing them. Kane was taken aback and didn't move, not wanting to ruin the moment.

"Let us retreat to the strategy room, my King" Kane said softly. "We can talk more there"

"We will, my grandson, but first, you need to meet some people" he said and stood up, motioning Kane to stand as well. They walked over to a table where a group of men were seating. Three places were emptied as the king, Kane and Gabriel walked over.

"From left to right are Kralbi, Kreiger, Lefnar, Heklin and Ralfon. Kralbi is the magistrate to Districts one through five, Kreiger six through eight, Lefnar nine and ten, Heklin eleven and Ralfon for twelve. You are the magistrate of thirteen, but, if you manage to do what you have been tasked with, you will be their lord" the king said as he introduced the men to him. Kane nodded at all the men and greeted them.

"Nice to meet you all. This here is Gabriel, my trusted friend and ally. He will be going with me to subdue the attackers and is my brother in law as well" Kane said, introducing Gabriel to the group. They sat and drank some wine that was already put in front of them.

"I have one thing to say to all of you, before you speak up. As i have heard, the alley is a byproduct of nobody caring about the people there. That will change, in fact, it already has. I have personally invested a fortune to bring the alley up to a decent standard. I expect every single one of you, from tomorrow morning dawn, to send food, medicine, building supplies, clothing and so on to the alley. Miss Kayla

will be the person you will address it to, she will be staying at the district manor” Kane said in one fluent motion. The group of men looked at each other and started laughing.

“We will what?” Kreiger asked. “Surely, you must be joking. We are the wealthiest and most influential men in the kingdom. You think we will bow to you just because you are a Crimson now?” the man said. Kane just laughed hard, drawing attention.

“Eclipse” he yelled, putting one hand up, palm extended towards the sky. A countless number of small assassin's blades appeared above him, infinitely multiplying themselves above his hand. Within mere moments, the sky grew dark and they were dining in shade. The whole courtyard grew silent, people frightened and panicking.

“I... Am... God!” Kane yelled, his voice amplified multifold. The five men shivered and stuttered. Kreiger was trying to speak, but it was as if he had lost the ability to. Kane withdrew his fingers into a fist, only one finger out which he pointed at Kreiger. Momentarily thousands of blades stabbed into the poor man, shredding him into thousands of little pieces. Luckily for him, his agony was short lived.

“Is there anyone else present today, here, at this banquet, that puts themselves above the needs of the kingdom, above the people who are suffering, above the people who are hungry, sick, homeless!” Kane yelled, angrily.

The faces of everyone present were a grimace of disgust and displeasure. They had forgotten already what happened a moment before the proclamation. When their wealth and wellbeing was on the line, rich people can get over anything.

“If anyone here doesn't agree with me, you have until i return to pack your belongings and leave. After i return, if anyone here present has a wealth larger than fifty gold pieces, they will lose their heads. I am of house Crimson, and i lay down the law. If you don't like it, get the hell out of my kingdom” Kane yelled as he stood up, knocking his chair over. The thud of the chair hitting the floor brought everyone back to the present, it seemed. “Gentlemen, we will be expecting those supplies by tomorrow noon. You can share mister Kreiger's districts amongst yourselves. I do not care how you split them up, just do so and follow my advice. Can i count on you?” Kane asked, with a hint of sarcasm. The four men nodded their heads over and over again.

“Very well, i would hate to kill more people tonight” Kane said as he sat down again. “King, i think we are done here. Should we retreat to the strategy room to discuss the issues at hand?”

Walfrid helped the king get up and escorted him into the palace. Kane and his group followed them inside and a while later everyone was seated in the strategy room. A number of attendants followed in hurriedly, bringing drinks and food, even a roast pig for Alpha. Upon seeing it, he licked his face in a strange motion, getting a chuckle from the whole group in return.

"What? I'm allowed to enjoy a meal, am i not?" he said and dug right in with his fangs and went to the corner of the room, sitting behind Kane. The room was square but large. A big round table was in the middle of the room with twelve chairs all around it. Two sides of the table had indents and Kane and the King were sitting on the opposite sides, facing each other. Walfrid sat to the king's left and queen Crimson sat to his right, more a moral support than anything else. To Kane's right sat Janine and to his left Rasiela and Gabriel.

"My Duke, how are we going to save our kingdom?" Walfrid asked Kane.

"It's quite easy. Us five will march to castle Krafne and retake it, one way or the other. I would prefer to just ask someone to duel me for the castle, but i doubt they have anyone that dumb. But we will see" Kane replied and went silent, as if waiting for someone to ask another question.

"Do you need our soldiers to march with you, my duke?" Walfrid asked again.

"Not really. I myself am more than enough. With Janine, Gabriel and Rasiela with me, i can't imagine of someone being able to stand up to us. What i do want from you, get your soldiers drilling. I want a disciplined force, not a ragtag group of ruffians. Get them to practice strategy and teamwork. When i am back, a lot of things are going to change, my friend"

"Can i at least come with you, my lord" walfrid asked again, almost pleadingly this time.

"If you insist. Hmm, i got an idea just now. You will handpick a score of your most trusted and best trained soldiers. They will accompany us and see what we are capable of. After we retake the castle, twenty five thousand soldiers will march to castle Krafne and set up camp. They will start building a miniature city just for soldiers on our side of castle Krafne. They will be trained by someone i will designate. Only adept soldiers will be kept in the army, the rest will be sent home or wherever they want to go. I hope the army will be brought down to five thousand or so, the rest can go be farmers or whatever. I guess too much money goes to army expenses anyway"

Everyone in the room nodded and the king had a satisfying smile on his face. The meeting lasted for a little while longer and then the group separated into three little groups, chatting. Janine was talking to queen Crimson, Kane with king Crimson, while Rasiela and Gabriel were talking with Walfrid.

"Madam queen, please tell me more about Kane's parents" Janine asked the queen.

"My dear, what a fine little lady his mother used to be. She was loving, caring and gentle, until one day when one of her pets died, a wolf, very similar to the one traveling with you. She started practicing the occult without our knowledge until she met a young man, Kane's father who taught her how to resurrect the dead or at least, their souls. Afterwards everything started going downhill. She became bitter, angry, spiteful. Then one day, she ran away while we were visiting family. Ever since i have

known one day she would come to take our lives. She tried through our granddaughter, and i have no idea how Kane managed to change her so rapidly. That young woman is the spitting image of her mother. Manipulative, egocentric and what not. I only hope she doesn't do anything to harm Kane or yourself. You two seem like a wonderful couple and wonderful rulers, one day of course" the old queen said and smiled warmly.

"How horrible. Kane hasn't talked much about his parents, but that is because he hasn't known them really. I feel so bad for him. I know my parents used to be kind, warm and loving. I was very sad when they were killed, but, i met Kane because of it, and i am very happy. I love him with all of my heart and hope that one day he will let me give birth to a child for him" Janine said and smiled, lost in thoughts.

"My dear, it is your job and duty to take care of your husband. Especially in a situation as this. You two are the future rulers of this kingdom. Tend to his needs, lend an ear, do things you rather wouldn't, comfort him, share his burden. I can see you are a strong woman, i have no doubt you will succeed. In any case, we will be around in case you need some assistance" the old queen said and laughed gently. Janine hugged her and stayed like that for a while.

A few meters further Gabriel and Walfrid were talking about how many people would accompany them and what preparations to make for the next day, while Kane was talking with the king.

"What do you know about their whereabouts and plans?" asked Kane.

"Nothing much, i fear. All i have heard are rumours, and rumours, well, they usually tend to be nothing more. They are said to be operating somewhere from the Kefir territory. How they go in between and how their members cross borders is unknown to me. Probably more bribed officials or their own agents in key positions. Another thing we will have to take care of, my boy. You have a lot of work before you, but i think you will be able to take care of it. If you can only take care of the crisis now at hand" the old king said and sighed, shaking his head. "I am growing old and weary. My brain doesn't even function anymore properly as it should. I am just so glad that you have appeared, my dear, dear boy".

"You have nothing to fear. I will send a squad of my own soldiers to protect you while i am gone. They are far superior to any soldiers you might have, even far above walfrid. Another squad will remain to protect Kayla, the person leading the alley for me. Again, do not worry about it as i will take care of it as soon as i visit the alley" Kane said while standing up, making clear they were done for the day. "Thank you for having us over today, my king. Next time we meet, there will be two things to celebrate. The one is our retaking of castle Krafne and the other will be a double wedding. Be so kind to prepare everything. Exactly a moon from now. Have grandmother help you, she seems to have the eye for detail" Kane said, pointing towards Janine and queen Crimson.

"All right, Kane. Be safe and protect your kingdom" king Crimson said, standing up and shaking Kane's hand. The whole group took it as a sign to leave and followed Kane outside.

The mood was light as well as the chatter on the way to the Alley. Lanterns lighting their way from the palace to the district walls. There were big barrels which seemed aflame on both sides from the gate. Soldiers were huddled around them, roasting some meat on the dancing flames. The group strolled through the gate, the soldiers bowing slightly towards the new duke. It seemed the word had spread rapidly through the capital.

The stroll through the alley was pleasant. A slight breeze cooling the pedestrians on this warm night. Even though it was late and the torches were all that lit the streets up, the streets were very crowded. They must have been waiting for Kane to come back and as soon as he passed next to a group of people, a crowd gathered behind them, talking very quietly. Some half an hour later, the group arrived at the manor and the crowd stopped as they did. As Kane didn't see an easy way out, he decided to address the crowd after greeting the soldiers who made a protective curtain in front of Kane's group the moment they noticed him. Kane approached the one soldier who had a different type of armor on, assuming he was their newly chosen leader and told him to disperse the crowd and gather at the barracks after the speech was given.. The soldiers had to await Kane and have a short meeting within the hour. Then Kane turned towards the crowd and gave his speech.

"Good evening citizens of the Alley. I greet you on this warm night and tell you not to worry about anything. You might have heard some things and they are most likely true. But fear not. I personally will lead our soldiers to battle, and we will repel the threat that is facing us. Now please go to your homes and sleep. Tomorrow will be another rough day. I expect everyone to be vigilant and to work as hard as they can to bring the Alley up to a standard where there are no more hungry or sick people who can not afford treatment and nourishment. Do not let your neighbours starve while you throw away food because you have too much. Share and help each other. If you do, I will help you and protect you. If you do not, you will end up on a pike. I am not doing this for the rich people to feel safe in their riches, I am doing this for all of the people, so everyone can live equally. One more last thing before we retire for the night. Every noble and every person who has more than ten gold to their name will get to keep their title or land if they use their money to help the ones in need. Soon I will be going around checking each and every home and living conditions. So says the duke of house Crimson" Kane Said and turned around to leave, then turned around again

"I almost forgot. Tomorrow should arrive a shipment of food, clothing, medicine and other necessities from the other districts. Volunteers are needed to unload everything at the warehouse and categorize all the stuff. Do not think of stealing, everyone will be getting the same amount of items, so do not worry about anything. Have a good night's sleep, Alley, and God bless you"

Kayla was already sitting in the main room, five glasses on the table. As the group walked in, Janine pushed herself to the front and stood eye to eye with Kayla, who just stood up.

"Is this her?" she asked. Kane's head drooped and he sighed.

“Yes that is her, but you promised me you wouldn’t do anything to her” Kane replied, at which Kayla stepped a few steps back. Rasiela was giggling and Gabriel was shying away from the scene that was about to happen. Alpha brushed past them and lay next to the fire, drawing their attention away for the moment.

“Why... would you want to hurt me?” Kayla said, obviously scared.

“Because you had sex with my man, witch” Janine barked. “At least you were worth it, though” she then murmured, more to herself. Kayla’s mouth dropped wide open at the last part.

“Of course i am worth it, who do you think you are to try and put me down” Kayla snapped back.

“Chill it, both of you” Kane said with a strong voice. There was a lot of evil and malice intent in it, and Janine more than anyone felt it and stepped back hurriedly.

“I... am sorry” she said and sat down on the far side from Kayla. After a few moments of silence, the rest got down and Kayla poured them all a drink and sat down again as well.

“How was the banquet, my lord” Kayla said, not looking Kane in the eyes.

“It was fine, thank you, Kayla” Kane replied. “Though i heard a few things i didn’t like but, they will be dealt with within a few days”.

“Like the castle Krafne incident?” she asked.

“Yes, like that. We will march off within a day or two. When we are back we will stay longer at the manor, but not this time. Anyway, beside the point, Janine is my wife to be” he said as he pointed towards Janine, who was facing away, looking through the window into the starry sky. “You know Rasiela already and Gabriel, as well as Alpha. Please have someone prepare two double rooms for us, as well as something cozy for Alpha here. he prefers to sleep next to the fire” Kane said and took a large sip of the red liquid. “How are things proceeding here in the alley? Is everything going smoothly?”

“Yes, my lord. Everyone is so excited. There was even an influx of people coming over from the tenth and eleventh districts. We had to turn back most of them as we don’t have the space for them. The erecting of new buildings is coming along nicely, beyond anything i would thought possible, but it will still take some time. The public kitchens are stocked with food and the ones working there are receiving double salary, same with the public doctors. A lot of richer people are keeping to themselves, but that will change soon enough i guess, especially after your speech earlier. Regarding the general situation as a whole, i think we already have progressed up to seventeen percent or something like it. It’s amazing what people can do when they put themselves at our disposal. Regarding the soldiers you left behind. they have been doing some weird stuff. Every day a lot of blood and they are

practicing in the backyard where no one sees them. They give off a strange vibe, somehow. Scary” Kayla replied.

“Very good. That means they understood their obligation and are performing. I have to go check on them soon. I have called a meeting to give them their new job. Half of them will be staying with you to guard the manor and half will guard the king while i am gone to castle Krafne. Speaking of which, if you get the time, go and help the queen with the preparations for our dual wedding. It is planned for when we return from Krafne” Kane said. Kayla’s eyes went open wide and her mouth dropped open. She collected herself quickly and just nodded, as if nothing had happened. “Anyway, please show everyone to their rooms. I am off to the barracks for a while. I will be back soon and then you can show me the way as well”

“Would you like me with you?” Gabriel asked. Kane looked as if he was thinking about it and then nodded his head.

“Sure, why not. Let’s go” he said as he stood up, giving Janine a glance to stay out of trouble. She looked away under his gaze. ‘i will have to apologise later’ he thought to himself as he walked out of the main room.

“Atteeeention!” one of the men said as Gabriel and Kane entered the soldiers living space. The room graced a long table with room for sixteen to sit at. Seven wide and one at each end. The soldiers were seated on the far side, leaving four spots open on the nearer side to Kane and Gabriel. The soldiers were still standing at attention since Kane had entered the room.

“At ease, men. Please, sit down” he said and motioned for Gabriel to take a seat next to him. After a long moment, everyone was sitting still, in silence. “I will get to the point. Me and my group are going to castle Krafne to take it back. Half of you will guard the manor and half of you will go to the king’s palace and guard the king and queen. We will be having reforms after we are back, and all of you here will be playing a vital role in them. Make two groups and tomorrow at dawn, you head for the palace. Now, to a more pleasant topic, how is your training progressing? I can feel pressure inside of the room, so i know some of you have learned some interesting things” Kane said, smilingly.

“Sir, or rather, my lord duke. Yes we have. Gabriel there had sent us a scroll during our second day of training with a hawk. He described how to get our soul forge summoned. At the end of day five, all of us present had already learned how to and could maintain it for a period of ten minutes” the man said. Kane was smiling, happy at Gabriel’s cunning thinking.

“What is your name, soldier?” Kane asked.

“My lord, my name is Barren” the bald man said and bowed his head slightly. All twelve of them actually were, but he was giving off the most pressure and power. Kane could feel that with ease.

“From this day onward, you will be known by numbers and you will represent the twelve divisions which will be stationed in each district. I will let you in on what i

plan to do. After we come back from Krafne, the main group will head up to Krafne and start building a permanent camp. The soldiers there will be trained and everyone who manages to do what you guys did within a tenday will get to stay a soldier. Anyone who doesn't, will get discarded. I do not want a big drain on our treasury to have soldiers lazy about. You will train the rest that stays here and will get a group of a thousand soldiers each. The strongest will get the number one and the weakest number twelve. Once a moon, you can duel the number above you. If you win, you get promoted by a number, if you lose, you get demoted a number. The lower the number, the better the pay and the better the district. Gabriel is number zero and he is directly under me, the rest of you will be under him. Like my little game of reforms?" Kane asked.

"Yes, my lord!" the group said all together.

"Good, now hit the sack. We have to go sleep as well. We fight an army of over a hundred thousand tomorrow or the day after" Kane replied. Their eyes went wide and mouth dropped open, shocked at the number of enemy troops.

"Will you be all right, my lord?" Barren asked. "Shall we go with you? Each of us is worth at least a hundred soldiers after our training"

"Do not fear" Kane said as he stood up. "I can take them all on at once, no fear. You do your part and i will do mine. Dismissed!" Kane barked and he walked out of the barracks, Gabriel close behind him.

"When did you come up with the reforms?" Gabriel asked when they were out of the barracks.

"Just now" Kane said and laughed. "I have these moments of clarity. I just decide things then and there, they usually are right". Gabriel just shrugged and followed Kane into the manor.

Chapter 16 - Preparation

"Are you awake still awake?" Kane asked as he entered the room he and Janine were given by Kayla to rest for the night. She scuffled and turned around to face him. "Why are you crying?"

"Because i am afraid of you! I have the feeling you could take care of me as easy as of an enemy sometimes. You scared and humiliated me in front of everyone. Never do that again or i will kill us both!" she yelled.

"Don't even think about things that you are saying now. If you ever thought about laying a hand on yourself to hurt me, i will hurt you first, understood?" Kane said menacingly and then shrugged his head as if waking up from a dream.

"Egeryon!? Don't you even dare speak instead of me, let stand do something. I have warned you already!" Kane yelled .

"As you say, my lord" he said mockingly and disappeared again.

"I am sorry. It was Egeryon speaking. You know i would never hurt you, my love" Kane said quickly.

"I know, but it seems he is getting more and more hold over you, Kane. Do not let him!" she pleaded, tears running down her cheeks. "I would rather die than lose you or see something happen to you" Kane took her in his arms and hugged her, kissing her on top of her head, cradling her gently.

"I know, Janine. I am trying as hard as i can, and i will keep fighting him for as long as i can. Then, it is up to you if he does get loose one day, to stop him" She started sobbing even more after hearing his words, and the tone in which he said them. A sudden loud knock interrupted them and she tore away from his embrace. "Who is it" Kane said loudly.

"Gabriel. Is everything alright, sir?" he asked. "Rasiela felt something and she told me to check up on you"

"Yes, Gabriel. Everything is al right. Return to my sister and tell her Janine is fine. So am i. Now go sleep"

"All right. Good night, sir" Gabriel said as he strode off, his loud footsteps echoing in the hall.

"You know i love you, Janine? More than anything in the world, right?" Kane asked.

"I love you too, you damn moron. Don't you see that?" she almost yelled at him.

"Don't worry, i am here. Just be there for me and i will take care of the rest, alright?" Kane said gently. A gentle smile appeared on her face and she nodded,

putting her head on his chest. "I love you" he said softly, blowing into her ear. She looked up into his eyes, still crying, laying her head on his chest and fell asleep in his arms.

"Did you sleep well?" Kane asked Janine as she opened her eyes, looking at his.

"Not really. I don't want to go. A lot of people will die today, and i don't think i will be able to take it" she responded.

"Don't worry. We will stay for a day or two longer. Last night i was thinking and i would like for us four to practice for a day, rest in the evening and then ride out the next dawn. I have already sent word to Walfrid and everyone else who has a stake in it" Kane replied. Her smile widened.

"One more day is more than none, my love" she said as she leaned in to kiss him.

After lunch, Kane and Gabriel were standing outside of the manor, shirtless and barefeet. There was a crowd of onlookers gathered to the sides, leaning against the walls as not to be in the way. Rasiela and Janine weren't shirtless, but they weren't clothed much more than their partners. To one side Janine and Kane and on the opposite Gabriel and Rasiela. The sparring would begin when the church bell sounded for the eighth time.

Suddenly, Kane rushed forwards, leaping with great speed towards his opponents, three fire balls flashing past him into the enemy. Rasiela deflected the fireballs with a water barrier and Gabriel leaped as well towards Kane. Each of the two men had two blades summoned, Kane's looking more wicked, having the form of hell itself. They clashed and slashed at each other with their blades, Kane slashing one time from the left towards Gabriel's head then with the other towards his neck, from different sides. Gabriel deflected them both and stabbed for Kane's torso which deflected Gabriel's blades to the left, spinning and roundhouse kicking Gabriel into his side, sending him flying into a near wall. A storm of ice bolts flew Kane's way and a flame wall appeared just to Kane's side which melted the ice bolts, only water drops hitting Kane's body.

As gabriel got up, a small golem came out of the ground, grabbing for his foot, another golem jumped on the one who was attacking him. The small golem shattered and from it grew two larger golems, pitch black in colour. The other golem morphed into two black golem's as well, which were a slighter dark black and more translucent, which meant weaker in power. Gabriel ran past them, avoiding a crushing blow narrowly from one of the two pitch black golems, slashing at its massive fist which was cleaved off neatly by his summoned blades. As he turned towards Kane, a mass of assassin's blades was flying his way, and it was all he could do to narrowly deflect all of them, though a few slicing up his right arm and left cheek. Gabriel went into soul burn mode and summoned his own assassin's blades, which were emerald green, opposed to Kane's pitch black and whirled them towards Kane, who already had another salvo ready. The two men were standing perfectly still, lunging small blades at each other in enormous quantities. Finally, one of Kane's

blades broke through and stopped right at Gabriel's neck, cutting into it by a millimeter, just enough to draw blood. Gabriel put his hands up, disbanding his blades and giving up in defeat. Beside them, the four golems were wreaking havoc upon each other, none gaining the upper hand for more than a minute. Suddenly, three familiars rushed into the fray, attacking the four golems. All three were in battle mode, though not enlarged, more their standard dimensions.

All three of them had battle armour on and were ready to rumble. Alpha took on the two Janine's golems while Gamma and Beta took on one each of Rasiela's golems. Beta crashed head first into his golem, trying to crush his opponents head with his massive, metal claws. The golem hit him and sent him flying towards Alpha, who narrowly avoided Beta hitting him, in return jumpin on one of his opponents. His large body and metal armour brought the golem down and he started violating him with his own claws, ripping out chunks of black stone. The other closed in and brought both his fists up to crush Alpha under his blows but Alpha sidestepped and the golem crushed the other who was pinned down under Alpha just a moment before, debris flying everywhere, some of the onlookers running for cover not to be hit. Gamma had less problems with his opponent as he could fly so he flew around the big golem and went straight up into the sky, turned and flew into the golem, spiraling around himself creating a vacuum which shredded the golem into pieces as he connected with it. Beta had gotten up and jumped at his golem again, knocking it down to the ground the second time. He crushed the golems right fist, then the left within mere moments and lastly he ripped its head off with its great claws. Alpha's last golem was standing to his right and Alpha crushed into him with his armoured tail, a big spike at its end, hitting the golem straight on in its chest, crushing it into pieces.

The onlookers went wild, screaming, cheering, calling their names. Never before had anyone seen such a spectacle of power and control. The four of them walked over to the center, congratulating each other for a good practice round. The three familiars returned to their smaller forms and walked over to the group, yawning as if bored.

"The golem's aren't strong enough for you trio?" Kane asked.

"Not really" Alpha replied, sounding bored.

"How about you and me go at each other, full power. Want to take it outside of the walls so no one gets hurt?" Alpha squealed in joy and nodded enthusiastically. Kane got an irritating look from Janine but he didn't care. They ran for a few minutes until they had reached the outer gate and another minute to a clear patch of grass. Most of the onlookers had followed them and were standing on top of the outer walls, with even more people joining them by the moment. Within a few minutes the walls were crowded to the point people were in danger of falling down. Kane smiled inwardly to be able to show off his power in front of so many people. A new legend would be born today, here, in front of these people.

"Stop thinking about stupid things, human. Come at me!" Alpha sneered. So Kane did just that.

Kane summoned a five meter long blade which he held in two hands, firmly. It looked totally different than his normal blades, mostly looking like a hunting knife. It had a long, curved edge and a thin blade, maybe thirty centimeters in width. It looked like a blade the warriors of Nepon wielded in battle. Alpha had soulforged as well, towering far over Kane, by a good fifteen meters, as Alpha was about eighteen in height. Alpha decided he would use just his soulforge so he could utilize its power to its full extent and backtracked a good dozen meter away from his translucent, giant copy. Kane smiled as he knew he didn't have to hold off anything, as even if he would destroy the soul forge, Alpha wouldn't be harmed too badly.

Alpha pushed himself off with his back legs, propelling himself towards Kane, coming in at an odd angle, one paw raised into the air as if to hit Kane with it. Kane jumped backwards, avoiding Alpha's slash with his claw and slashed down at his body, which had a thick metal armour glued to it. The slashes just dinged off harmlessly and Alpha roundhoused Kane with his tail, swiping him out of the air, Kane crashing into a big rock some twenty meters away. Alpha ran towards him, not wanting to give him any chance to recover but had underestimated Kane who jumped up just about at the right moment, slashing at his left claw, cutting off three toes with armour in all. Alpha shrieked and slashed at Kane again, with his other claw, which deflected a second blow. Kane seeing he couldn't do much except land a lucky strike occasionally, he summoned his storm of blades, called Eclipse. The sky darkened above Alpha, who just had time to say 'shit' before thousands of blades crashed into him, cutting him up badly and crushing most of his back, neck and head armour. Most blades were deflected, but the sheer amount of hits had damaged the armour and cracks had appeared, which then in return by more hits cracked wide open and fell off his body. His damaged paw also got hit badly a few times and Alpha was limping. Then, as Kane had surprised Alpha, he did the same, morphing into a semi liquid state, maybe better described as a ghost. His body formed a dense mass, which shot at Kane, who sliced the mass with his big blade, but didn't do any damage, instead, getting hurt badly by Alpha, who at the last moment formed a head at the near end of the blob that had flowed into him, biting Kane and ripping part of his torso up, shredding his left shoulder and a part of his chest. Then ten meters behind him as Alpha morphed back to his ethereal form, Kane turned around, put up his mangled arm, palm facing Alpha. More blood was flowing out of his critical wound which turned into a thick mist embracing Alpha who didn't have the time to dodge as he was morphing back, Kane just whispered one word, Abyss. Alpha's soul forge exploded into thousands of little pieces and flew in every direction for dozens of meters. Alpha's corporeal body crashed to the ground and he lost consciousness, Kane following him a moment later because of blood loss. As he fell to the ground, he saw Alpha laying on the ground, unconscious and thought how idiotic they were.

"Is he going to be alright? It has been two days already and he still isn't awake!" a voice seemed to be yelling inside of Kane's head. "Say something already!"

"Stop... yelling" Kane managed with a weak voice. A loud squeal sounded off in his head and he flinched. "Stop... yelling!" he managed, this time with a stronger voice.

"I am sorry, please forgive me, my love" a female voice said, almost at a whisper. "How are you feeling?" the voice asked again.

"Everything hurts. Especially my head of the constant yelling and screaming" Kane replied. The voice was quiet for a long moment. Kane opened his eyes, searching for the origin of the voice. Beside him Janine was sitting on a wooden chair, naked. "Why are... you naked?" he managed again.

"I have been sleeping beside you for the last couple of days. You were out cold for the last few days, not giving any signs of life beside breathing. Your temperature wouldn't go up the first night, so I laid beside you, sharing my warmth with you" she said with a low, sad voice. "I thought you were gone for good when you didn't wake up by day three"

"I am harder to kill... than that... love. How is the big guy doing?" Kane asked.

"He woke up this morning. You must have been wounded far worse than he was. Beta and Gamma have been sleeping beside him as well, for the last couple of days. It was rather cute to see, all three of them sleeping beside each other"

"Where is he?" Kane asked, trying to get up, as if hoping he was somewhere in the room as well.

"The three of them went out for a run after he came and checked up on you. They will probably be back soon, as they left a few hours ago"

"Did he say anything? Or did he ask anything? About our battle? Or did he sound angry at me?"

"No he didn't. He was worried about you, even felt guilty about going too far. He got carried away by the moment, he said. The thrill was something he has never felt before, were his words" Kane chuckled at Janine's words. A burden seemed to fall off his shoulders and he slumped down to the bed again, falling asleep immediately.

Sometimes later he awoke again to a wet snout prodding his forehead. When he opened his eyes and saw Alpha licking him, he burst out in tears of joy. The sight of his other half was something he welcomed very gladly.

"Hey big guy. How are you doing?" Kane asked, as he sat up a bit straighter, wiping Alpha's liquids off his face, chuckling.

"Good. I gotta give you that. You are a damn idiot. You almost killed me" Alpha said.

"Me? You almost bit me in half, damn mut" Kane replied as if angry.

"Bite me, weakling. As if you would die from such a minor wound" Alpha said again looking away. Kane stood up and hurled himself at Alpha, hugging and kissing him.

“Hey! What the hell is this? Get off of me you damn human!” Alpha cried. “But to be honest, i enjoyed our battle so much, it can’t be put into a feeling or a sensation. It was something... out of this world. I felt alive, and battling for my life, i finally could do my best and show what i have learned, how strong i have become. How strong the both of us have become” Kane just nodded and smiled.

“I have enjoyed it as well, but, i gotta ask. Did you really have to bite my shoulder and part of my chest off? I mean, i am dead already, as in my heart isn’t beating, but still”

“I... had lost control for a moment there. I even think i aimed for your head to be honest” Alpha said and chuckled somewhat manically. Kane just looked at him, one eyebrow raised in question.

“Anyway, let us go see what the others are up to” They both stood and left the med room in search for the others. They didn’t have to search far, as the others were just on the other side of the door, listening in.

“Ahem” Kane coughed as he opened the door, seeing them listen in. “You guys lost anything?”

They basically crashed into the room and lay sprawled on the floor, looking up at Kane and Alpha.

“Let us go to the meeting room. We need to talk” Kane said as he stepped over the three laying on the floor, Alpha following him.

A few minutes later everyone sat in the meeting room, waiting for Kane to start.

“What happened in the last few days i was away?”

“A lot. Do you want the short or long version” Janine asked.

“Up to you. Whatever you think is better” Kane replied dryly.

“All right. After your duel we carried you to the infirmary as soon as we could. Beta and Gamma helped a lot there, since either of you were too heavy to carry by us ordinary mortals. They tended to your wounds but there wasn’t really any need. The belial you have in your hand had placed some kind of cocoon over where the wound was which fell off during the second day, your wounds healed. You sleeping for so long was probably due to exhaustion. We do not know exactly” she said as she looked down at the table. “Rasiela was sure you would wake up, but i had my doubts. I was ready to kill Alpha for doing that to you” she said, embarrassed.

“Kill him? Why? Because we had a bout?” Kane asked, surprised.

“You call that a bout?!” she yelled out angrily. “He almost bit you in half and you blew him apart into atoms!”

“Well, if you look at it that way...” Kane said and smiled sheepishly. “Anyway, what else?”

“During the first day, late afternoon, a caravan of goods came here from the other districts. There wasn’t much to it, just some basic necessities, but i guess it’s better than nothing. They probably had heard about your accident and sent just enough to appease you if you would survive, but withheld a lot more than they should have. There were about seven carts of food, nine of all kinds of clothing, one cart full of medical herbs and stuff needed in medical practice. Then there was one cart full of nails and things needed for carpenters, some tools and stuff. About forty cows and some twenty horses. I think that was about it. Kayla there has the exact number, but i don't think the number matters much. It is a lot less than we expected. Still, it is a lot more than we had before that. Also, we had agreed to donate the animals to the families that most needed them and had some land to work the horses on or breed the cows at. Clothing has been already stored at the local warehouse and sorted between child, man and woman. Every family that is poor had the chance to grab a few pieces they liked, or, that were left” she said and took one of the glasses in front of them, poured some wine inside and drank it all down.

“Sorry, dry throat” she laughed. “Anyway, every single person we helped praised your name and swore eternal loyalty”

“Speaking of loyalty” Gabriel interrupted. He drew all eyes on himself and went on. “Yesterday evening there was an attempt on your life. A group of bandits had moved in under pretense of being beggars, but Brannon had seen through them before they could have done anything to anyone. He interrogated some of them personally, and so did i. All we could get out of them was that one of the other district leaders sent them. We will have to get into more detail after we return” Gabriel added.

“I will not deal with idiots. I will kill them all personally when we are back” Kane said, angrily. “There is too much work and there are too many problems for us to have domestic issues. We have big plans and we need all the time and attention we can spare for that purpose. Let them know, while we are gone that there will be a reckoning after returning. Let everyone do what they want, but after we are back, we will be judge and jury” Kane finished. He stared at the table for a long time, shaking his head in disgust. Humans were so very pitiful.

“Yes they are. Do you want me to help you get rid off humanity?” Egeryon asked.

“Bring it” Kane replied without even realizing it. “Wait, no. What the hell are you talking about, fiend?”

“Nothing special. I’ll help you get rid of humanity if you would like”

“And you really think i would do that? Even ask your help? Dont make me laugh, demon”

“You will see in the end, my dear boy. You will see” he whispered and disappeared. Perverted creature, always making trouble for everyone around them. He won’t stop until he has the upper hand. Kane won’t make it so easy for him, he would rather kill himself than lose to a demon.

Chapter 17 - Herald

The next morning came faster than asked for. Outside the sun had pierced the clouds that were hanging above the capital, sending rays of sun down onto the manor, as if sending a divine sign. The birds were chirping and the horses were trampling the gravel road. Dogs were barking and the kids were already out, playing at the first sign of dawn.

There was a loud noise and knocks on the door.

"Who is it?"

"Gabriel. Everything is ready and we are waiting for you two. I will be outside with Rasiela, waiting" Gabriel said and walked off, his footsteps getting weaker until the sound disappeared.

"Let's get ready, i don't want for them to wait on us" Janine said and started putting her clothes on. Even though the red dress she wore last night was laying on the floor and she had tight pants and a tight shirt on, she was still as beautiful as last night, Kane thought to himself.

"I love you so much, Janine. So much that it actually hurts" Kane said gently. She turned around and started crying.

"I love you too. Promise me that you will never leave me, not even when we die. I will find a way for us to bind our souls after death. I never want to be apart from you again. I'm aching all over whenever you are more than a few meters away from me" Janine said. Kane stood up and walked over to her, taking her in his arms again, kissing her gently on the forehead and pressing her tight against himself, a tear dropping down his own face. Strange, he didn't know he was still able to mourn or feel sorrow, he thought to himself, wiping the lone tear away.

About half an hour later the group was on their way to castle Krafne, galloping as fast as the horses would carry them. An escort of about hundred horsemen along with the trio, as usual, who were running slightly in front of Kane and Janine, constantly on the lookout for danger. Janine was riding to Kane's right and behind them on opposite sides were Gabriel and Rasiela. Kane and Gabriel had half metal plated armor and pants, greaves and gloves. A plate helmet adorned with long, red feathers. Gabriel was only different in helmet, as his had half the size yellow feathers, which were still at least thirty centimeters in length. Walfrid was riding behind them and was in full mail armour, wearing the same helmet as Gabriel. Rasiela and Janine had matching studded leather, tight pants and a thin shirt, covered with a studded leather short coat. Matching hats out of leather, with short red and short yellow feathers. The outfits were more suited for sorcerers and witches, as they relied on swiftness and on magic to help them. Armour would just be in the way of casting spells and controlling familiars. Kane was sitting atop a large black darkmare, easily able to carry one more adult in armour, while gabriel was riding a brown darkmare and Rasiela and Janine white darkmares. The darkmare's were roughly the same as normal horses but different in two major aspects, namely endurance and strength. In raw speed, they were a little faster than normal horses, but they could gallop on for

hours straight without rest and could carry far more weight than normal horses, making them ideal for scouting or for warfare in general.

The general direction of Krafne was to the opposite side of the alley, so the group had passed the alley, the palace and was now exiting district three through the outer gates. Four guards were posted at the outer gates and they bowed low as a sign of respect for the duke and his companions. Kane put a hand up and waved at them, passing them a moment later and storming through the gates, onto hell.

No one was talking, partially because they wouldn't even hear each other over all the noise the horses were making, partially because everyone was nervous about the upcoming battle and was thinking about how everything would turn out.

"Just ahead of that slope is a small town" Gabriel yelled after a few hours, to be heard over the noise the mares hooves were making, touching the stone. "We should rest there for a little bit, our horses that is"

"Sure, lets do that" Kane said and galloped on. A little while later they arrived at the little town, on the main road going towards castle Krafne, located about halfway through. The group rode towards the inn and got off their mares, binding them to pillars just to the right of the entrance.

"Boy" Kane yelled and a young lad came running. "Take care of the horses, will you?" he said as he threw a silver coin towards the lad and got in, followed by Janine, Gabriel, Rasiela and Walfrid. The bartender flinched at seeing the trio, as did the guests, but no one moved even an eyelid, afraid of provoking the strangers.

"S...Sir" the bartender stuttered. "W... what can i get you?"

"Calm down. No one is going to get hurt here. I am the duke and i'm on official business. Please serve us some wine and some meat if you have any ready. We will be off again within ten minutes." Kane said.

"The d...d... duke? You are the new duke? Why my lord, why didn't you say so earlier" the man said with a crooked smile and ran around the counter, bowin low. Most of the people at the inn, stood up as well and bowed.

"Don't mind me. Get up and get back to your own business" Kane said, a bit more sharply than intended. The group went back to what they were doing, but obviously talking about the duke and his companions. The group got their drinks and drank hurriedly, and ate. The mood was generally low, not because they thought they would die, but death and war generally made people feel somber. A bit later, they were on their way again, riding off towards castle Krafne in a long column. There was almost no talk from then on. Everyone was getting mentally prepared for the battle and the carnage that was going to happen soon. Their faces were dark and absent, their moods somber, as if getting ready to get slaughtered, the group rode on.

A few hours distance from castle Krafne, the group noticed smoke coming from where a little village should have been. They dismounted their mares and silently approached the woods and blended in with the nature around them. Alpha

shifted to a smaller, less noticeable form and walked ahead, slowly, scouting for any threat. Kane was walking just behind him a few meters with Janine and Rasiela walking in between him and Gabriel, who brought up the rear. Gabriel and Kane both had their soul forges out and were awaiting an attack every moment. Some fifty meters into the forest, Alpha heard some voices and stopped.

“Wait here. I am going to scout ahead, alone. I hear voices and ruckus. If I send you an affirmative telepathically, you can come after me.” he said and strode off, like a little puppy. Kane just shrugged, thinking how looks could be deceiving.

Alpha was crawling towards the clearing where the village was located, silently, using the bushes to his advantage. The ruckus was loud and there was the crackling of burning wood. He peeked his head through the bush, just enough to see what was going on and was stunned, unable to move his gaze from the scene that was unfolding in front of him. A group of soldiers were having their way with girls, not much older than Anya, in front of a crowd of dead villagers. Most of them were stuck to big stakes, with slit throats or wrists, bleeding into the dry soil. The girls were screaming, trying to defend themselves but no effort was enough to defend themselves against the stronger soldiers. Alpha’s vision blurred and rage fell over his eyes.

He charged headlong out of the bush, reverting back to his usual height of about two meters and ran towards the group of soldiers, jumping into their midst, cutting up the group with his sharpened tail, cutting through their armors like through butter. After the first moment of shock was over, the soldiers backed off and drew their weapons. Alpha growled low and jumped on one of the soldiers, pinning him to the ground, ripping off his head with his mouth. The other five soldiers that were left from that particular group charged Alpha who just cut into them with his massive claws, cutting through their armor and breaking their weapons, tearing off limbs and gutting them. A few seconds passed and they were laying on the ground, strewn about, dead.

Everything seemed to stand still and for a long moment it did. The main force of about a score of soldiers had noticed Alpha and were mobilizing, getting up on their horses or donning their armor and weapons, getting ready for battle. Alpha stood silently at the spot he firstly appeared, assessing the situation. Slowly but steadily, the group of soldiers approached Alpha, encircling him, but keeping their distance.

“It is just one wild beast, men. Encircle it and pierce it with spears and arrows. Approach!” he yelled at his men. Alpha smiled and summoned his soul forge, towering higher than the tallest building around him. The soldiers were stunned, unable to move out of fear and awe. What a magnificent creature, yet so frightening and dangerous. Alpha didn’t let their gawking bother him and he positioned himself at the outer edge of their formation, went back on two feet and propelled himself forward, right into the oncoming crowd of soldiers. The enemy line got shattered upon his soul forge’s crashing into the soldiers. Any soldiers within a diameter of about ten meters wide from the place of impact was either crushed, gutted or just gone. The soldiers threw spears, shot arrows, but everything just bounced off Alpha’s armor which he had on in battle mode. The soldiers started panicking and were

throwing down their weapons and running in all directions. At that moment two groups of fifty soldiers each on horseback approached from both entrances to the village square where everything was going on. One smaller group of about twenty soldiers tried to rush past the newcomers, but Walfrid had proven himself by choosing his best soldiers. None of the fifty soldiers was even harmed, after cutting down all twenty enemy soldiers.

The rest tried to flee but Kane and the rest had herded the soldiers in, roughly a few dozen left. The lone man who had talked was still on his horse, unmoving, mouth wide open. A moment later he lay on the ground, his head split into two. Kane had summoned his infinite blades and hurled them at the enemy, felling them until only a handful of enemy soldiers were left. Their armour was dripping with urine and the stench was almost unbearable. How the hell did they manage to wet themselves within a few moments of battle.

“Cowards” Kane said to his group. “They prey on the weak and on those who cannot defend themselves, but show some teeth and they piss themselves of fear. Capture the last few alive, they're far more worth to us alive than dead. Information and plans, that is what we are after.

The soldiers hurdled them together, binding their legs and hands with a wrapping, holding them in place. Meanwhile Kane and Alpha were scouting on opposite sides for more possible enemies in the vicinity, but it seemed to be clear for now. When they got back, the survivors were grouped to one side and being taken care of by Rasiela and Janine. The surviving group was only a few underage girls and a few women, barely above the age of twenty five. Kane's face changed colours over and over again, looking in between the few prisoners and the surviving girls.

“Would you like to see them suffer the way you did?” Kane asked abruptly, looking over to the girls. They just stayed quiet, probably afraid of him.

“You have nothing to fear of” Janine said, kneeling down beside the girls. “He is the new duke of Kravnje. We are on our way to castle Krafne, to take it back.

“Take it back? With the hundred four of you? You idiots, we have more than a hundred thousand soldiers, and a full company of soul forgers. To add to that, we even have a squad of monsters! Yes, adult monsters! And you want to stop them?” Kane let him finish talking before walking over. He motioned for the man to stand up, who in defiance complied. Kane's infinite blades summoned around him and the man's eyes went very wide, the moment he saw what was going to happen. The blades swarmed the poor man and shred him into thousands of pieces, blood and gore splattering the few remaining enemy soldiers who started crying and screaming out of sheer terror. One jumped up and started begging for his life.

“Please, i beg of you! Spare my life and i will tell you anything you want to know!” he yelled in despair. Kane seemed to think it through, then asked him a question.

“Did you touch any of these ladies here behind me? Or any others in the village?” The man didn't seem to know how it mattered, but shook his head lightly.

"No sir, i did not. I am too much of a loner to care about women, and i detest blood and violence, so i didn't do anything to anyone here, i swear on my newborn" the man cried out. Kane turned around and walked towards the girls and kneeled beside Janine.

"Please, tell me if you have noticed him doing anything to any of you. I just need one prisoner, and i rather have one i can treat decently if he deserved it" The girls were quiet for a long moment, then two of them looked at each other and nodded.

"My lord, we noticed him earlier getting a beating from the man who was on horseback earlier. Why, we do not know. I know the other man was yelling at him for being an inbred moron who loved peace more than his king" one of the older girls said. Kane gave her a warm smile and nodded his head in appreciation, then walked over to the crying man again.

"Why did he beat you up?" Kane asked him.

"Huh? Who? My commander?"

"Yes, your commander".

"Well, umm, i was asking for them to spare the women, or at least the underage girls. It's a crime against humanity to treat them like they were" he answered and lowered his head, all colour and hope draining from his face. "I... am sorry, mister, for not being able to do anything to help them. I wish i was stronger so i could have prevented it. You see, i have a little daughter at home. I never would have wanted what happened here to happen to anyone. All i could do was think about what i would do to someone if they did that to my little girl when she grew up, or my wife. I wish i could have stopped them, i really do!" he cried out, bursting into tears and sobbing. He fell over to his knees and screamed as if someone was cutting him in pieces. Kane put his hand on the man's head and patted him.

"It is never too late to repent. Tell me all you know and help me prevent them from doing this to anyone else in the kingdom. Will you help me? Do you wish for salvation?" Kane asked the man, gently. The man looked up, his eyes red and face a mess. The man nodded his head and stopped crying, almost instantly.

"Yes, please. I will do whatever you want me to, just let me repent!"

"All right. First off, look behind you and tell me if any of the men are like you, worth sparing?" Kane said to the man. The man looked behind him and then back to Kane.

"No. They are demons. Each of those three has killed and raped more than i can remember. Not just here, but also in Krafne and other villages along the line we took" Kane stood up and called for Egeryon.

"What do you want, human?" he replied

"If i let you take over for a few moments. What is the worst you can do to cause as much pain as possible and still let someone suffer for as long as possible?" Egeryon thought for a moment and then replied.

"Hmm, i think that you would not like the answer, but, i would probably cut off their limbs and gut them, leaving them to die. If done properly, they should be in excruciating pain for a long time, which for them would seem an eternity. Or i could let them rot for a long time, their limbs being consumed slowly, falling apart.

"All right, do it. Go ahead with those three there" Kane approved and let Egeryon take over.

"At last, some fun!" Egeryon yelled out, using Kane's voice. Immediately everyone present from Kane's group knew who had control. Alpha came a little closer, standing between the group and him, in a protective posture.

"You three, for today, you are my playground, and you have been bad, real real bad" he cried out in joy, laughing and screaming for a few long moments. By mere thoughts alone, he lifted the three men who were watching him with terror and pain in their eyes and started rotating them in the air. summoned a fiery blade and positioned it next to them and slowly cut their limbs apart, piece by piece, while instantly closing most of the wound due to the heat the blade was emitting, then their bodies and what was left of their limbs started rotting, with great speed at first, but after the rot had set in good, he dropped them to the ground, the stench already setting in. Their screams were silenced but their pain was ever alive. They would have a long time to think about all they did and then they would go to meet their maker. Egeryon was still in control, relishing the agony of the dying, never feeling so much pain and agony in his long life before. Then he relinquished control and disappeared.

"What is your name" Kane asked the lone soldier.

"Herald" the man answered, stuttering. His face a mask of anguish and fear, his whole body trembling. Never in his life did he witness something like what happened here, now, in front of him. That was good, since that meant he would cooperate fully, honestly, knowing what awaits him if he doesn't.

"Follow me, Herald" Kane said and turned away from the man, walking towards a little house on the far edge of the town. Kane sensed Alpha stalking behind them and smiled, with affection for the wolf, no, his other half.

"What would you like to know, my lord" the man said stuttering as he sat in front of Kane. The man was a bit older than Kane, his late twenties, bald and slim. He looked far older than he was, ageing pretty badly. He had a stubby beard, probably from not shaving for a few days, since they came to castle Krafne, which added again a few more years to his appearance. A long pointy nose and brown eyes, thin arms and legs. He looked more like a prisoner than a soldier.

"Tell me about the leaders, who leads the army and how did it come to be?" Kane finally asked after a few long moments of observing the young man.

“Well, i am not so sure. The overall commander is the king of Kefir’s only son, Dalterion. The sub commanders are generals Brice and Abdel. They lead each of the kingdoms side of the troops. Of course, general Abdel is the closest advisor to Treblis’s king, as the man didn’t have any sons of his own, he took a personal interest in Abdel. That much is common knowledge. Nothing is strange in these terms, but what is strange, is that an older man is leading the monster squad as well as the forger squad. It is said that the man can summon monsters and the like. Before meeting you, i wouldn’t have believed it, but after meeting you, my lord, i am able to believe in everything” Herald said, coming to breath. He proceeded to take a sip of the wine Kane had poured him and went on with his story.

“Regarding the how it came to be, i think that the kingdom of Treblis had a lot of money in the treasury of the kingdom of Kefir. Instead of paying them back, they offered them you. In fact, the sum of money involved is so outrageous, i don’t think enough money in this world exists to pay Treblis back. The older man hails from Kefir. You know, the one with the monsters. It doesn’t make much sense though, as we hadn’t heard of him before this campaign” Herald said and stopped again to sip some more wine. He looked into Kane’s eyes and looked away after a few moments, scared of what he found there. Utter darkness and hatred, violence and malice. Sweat began trickling down his forehead and face, slowly. Images of death, destruction and a world in despair ran before his eyes and then he crashed to the floor from his chair, screaming, in agony. Kane stood up and ran towards him, to see what was happening, but he kept shoving Kane away, not letting Kane touch him. A few long moments later everything stood still again, no more images, no more pain, no more despair. Only himself laying on the floor in a pool of his own sweat and urine with Kane standing next to him.

“What... happened?” Kane asked, not knowing how to approach the man.

“I do not know” Herald said softly, as if afraid of someone other than Kane hearing him. “I saw you and utter chaos. You were killing indiscriminately, burning people, towns, commanding monsters. It was so real” he said with a whisper.

“Has this ever happened before, Herald?” Kane asked, interested in what just happened.

“Yes, my lord. One time, when i was a kid. It was about a future event that happened ten years down the road. Back then i saw a group of soldiers pillaging a town, raping the women and killing the men and elderly. A big wolf appeared and a hooded person, as dark as the night. Almost as if surrounded by a thick fog. I think that person was you, now that i think about it. You see, my name used to be Harold, but after that event, the priests renamed me into Herald. They must have known something i still do not. Maybe i am clairvoyant?” Herald said and burst out in laughter, fainting a moment later. Kane’s mind raced. How was this possible? Okay, there were monsters, magic and all kinds of things happening, but clairvoyance? That was a whole new level, and atop of everything, he had seen Alpha and himself. How and why, that would stay a mystery for a while longer, he guessed, as the man was out stone cold. Kane walked out and called Janine over, telling her everything he

found out and what just happened. She walked back towards the group of girls and her companions, while Kane walked back inside, trying to wake Herald up.

Half an hour later, everyone was sitting or standing inside the town hall, drinking or eating, except Alpha, who was on guard duty, roaming the outskirts of the town for the time being together with the duo.

"Again, i am deeply sorry for what happened here" Kane was speaking to the women, "and we are going to make them all pay with their life for what these men did to you. What i can do is take you with us and keep you safe until the battle is fought. You would have to keep up with us for a few days i guess. A day's ride and then depending on what happens a few days more. A hundred thousand people to kill is a lot, even for us. Afterwards, i would hire you as personal aides for my wife and sister. All six of you would have a place to stay and protection. That is the least i can offer you, as the current duke and future king" Kane offered, maybe a bit too political, but still, all of this was new for him as well and it was hard to adapt to. Especially after being a nobody for his whole life, and now becoming the king of Kravnje. No, the future king of the whole world of Kokan, a voice in his head said.

"You will have a lot of feasting to do, Egeryon" Kane said to himself, mentally. All he got back was a mental ecstasy. An anticipation of the things to come, and come they would soon.

"Kane?" a voice repeated itself multiple times, bringing him to senses again. "Are you alright?" the voice said.

"Oh, Janine. Sorry, i was lost in my thoughts for a moment. What is it?" he replied.

"As i was saying, the girls will all come with us. What are we going to do with Herald?" Janine asked.

"Hmm, good question" Kane replied, looking over at Herald, sitting in a far corner, looking away from everyone else. "What are you good for, beside seeing the future" Kane mocked.

"I am good with herbs and with medicine. I can serve you as a personal physician. I have devoted my life to saving other people's lives, not taking them. If you will have me, i will serve you until i die, my lord" he said and looked away again, biting on a piece of bread.

"Sure, i would be glad to have you on board. You haven't participated in any of the things that happened here, so you got nothing to fear from anyone here present, nor from the soldiers outside. Even the women here do not blame you. First thing i will ask you though, is to examine them and treat them before we move out in that case. Are you familiar with that type of medicine?"

"Yes sir. I have studied medicine for over ten years now" he replied.

In that case, be gentle and don't force them. They have been through a lot today" Kane said and took a piece of bread himself and a jug of wine with the other hand. "Ladies, i will give you the following names. Ruby, Amber, Sapphire, Amethyst, Garnet and Opal. Reason being, because of your hair. You remember me of precious gems, so those will be your names" Kane said and drank a long gulp of wine.

"As you say, my lord" all six of them said in unison. It brought a little smile to his face, hearing them talk. Until now, only two had talked, but it seemed the other four were doing a little better now that the shock had passed.

"Very well, my precious gems. Go get washed and examined by our doctor. Then dress and pack some stuff for the trip" Kane said, almost dismissively. The girls stood up and walked upstairs, one after the other. Herald stood up a moment later and followed them, walking towards the stairs and stopping.

"My precious gems?" Janine asked Kane, narrowing her eyes on his.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Don't play stupid with me, mister!" Janine yelled. "Though you are lucky i didn't feel any underlying meaning to your words. Don't forget i can read your mind and feelings now" Kane just smiled sheepishly as he gulped down more wine.

"Call me when you are done, please, my ladies" Herald called upstairs.

"You don't have to wait downstairs, you can come up and wait for us. We won't take long" one of the girls called. Kane and Janine just looked each other in the eyes and chuckled. Rasiela and Gabriel looked at them strangely and went back to eating. Another two hours passed and the women came down the stairs, followed by Herald, who had new clothes on as well. The group proceeded outside and gathered their mares. Each mare got another rider and Alpha took two on his back as well. Herald approached Kane, a strange look on his face.

"What is it, Herald?" Kane asked, wondering what he wanted now that they had to move out.

"Only one thing, my lord. Is there any way possible, that after we take back Krafne, that somehow possible, you would let me get my family?" Kane smiled gently and tapped the man on his shoulder, squeezing to get his attention.

"Of course my friend. I personally will go look for them, together with you" Kane replied. Herald's face lit up and he nodded ecstatically and rode over to the column.

"Nothing in the vicinity?" Kane asked Alpha as he strode over to him.

"No, nothing i could sense nor feel. Beta and Gamma also came back saying the same. No soldiers around here at the moment. Though i have a strong sensation coming from that direction" he pointed with his head towards the south. Something strong approaches, something very strong, Kane. It almost frightens me" Alpha said

and drooped his head slightly. Something really strong must be there, for it to have such an effect on him, Kane thought to himself.

“Any idea what it is?”

“No. Maybe a monster, maybe a forger. It can be anything. By now i am used to your power and the pressure you exert over your surroundings, but that is on a whole new level. We will have to wait and see what it is” he said and started walking slowly. His words unnerved Kane and gave him an uneasy feeling of impending doom. He decided not to tell anyone else about it, though he knew Janine would feel it, one way or the other. The rest of the ride was pretty uneventful, the lone group of soldiers earlier being just a scouting party, most likely. At the end of the day they finally arrived at their destination, castle Krafne, which could be seen in the distance, enemy flags flying high in the wind, on the top of each tower. Kane and his group were standing on top of a little hill, overlooking the valley in front of castle Krafne. It looked like every inch was covered in black and yellow, as tens of thousands enemy soldiers were roaming about, big tents erected and fires blazing all around the valley. Kane looked towards the castle gate and there he saw a group of adult monsters passing the bridge, a lone figure walking in their midst. He looked up and stared at Kane’s direction, as if sensing his presence.

“Now this will prove to be very amusing” Kane said to himself, smiling.

Chapter 18 - First Blood

"When will they be here already?! Nemesis!" Dalterion said menacingly, not intimidated by the older man, hooded from head to toe in darkness. Not even his face was visible, even though it wasn't covered.

"Soon, Dalterion. Have patience. Your father promised me your obedience and cooperation, so please, do not anger me nor waste my time with trivial matters"

Dalterion stood up from the chair and glared at the man, his eyes never wavering.

"Yes he did, you do not have to rub it into my face, old man. My own men are losing respect for me, their commander, because of you! Yet you haven't done anything to prove your value, except leading the monsters which are already tied up in collars!" Dalterion shot at him again.

"Boy!" the man yelled angrily. "Do not test my patience!" Dalterion cringed slightly, almost unnoticeable. "I myself have the power to wipe out your whole army, so you better think about how you act towards me. Is that clear?" he said, but was greeted by an eerie silence. "Is that clear?!" he yelled again, Dalterion flinching at the power of his voice. Lucky for him, there was no one there to see his torture. He wasn't used to be treated like that, no matter whom. He would make sure to let the old man suffer before he died, longing for the moment more than life. Dalterion stormed out of the tent, crossing a hundred meters in mere seconds what it seemed to his own, surrounded by a host of guards, loyal to him directly. Upon entering, he noticed his general was already there, drinking wine by the bottles, a few scattered on the table already empty. Dalterion stomped towards his seat and sat down, heavily, wearily, angrily.

"I can not stand the sight of that man!" he snapped in a hushed voice. "I want him dead before all of this is over, but make sure of it, first we will torture the life out of him, and then kill him".

"What did you have in mind?" general Brice asked, a sly smile painted on his dark face. He was already drunk, but it didn't seem he intended to stop drinking any time soon. "Anything specific?"

"Nothing yet, but i will think of something already, be sure of that Brice. Speaking of which, why do you torture yourself with that cheap horse piss. It tastes Godawful" Dalterion exclaimed with obvious disgust written all over his face.

"Because it beats water. No other reason, my lord" Brice answered. Dalterion waved off his comment as he hadn't even spoken.

"Whatever. What do you propose for our course of action against Nemesis?" Dalterion asked. Brice seemed to ponder over the question for a long time, and some twenty seconds later he replied.

"How about we get the enemy to do our work for us? If they are as strong as our briefing suggested, which I heavily doubt, but still, if they are, and somehow manage to wound him badly, but he still survives, we then take advantage over the wounding and abduct him somewhere private. Sounds good?" Brice said hopefully.

"Hmm. It does, but it leaves a bad taste in my mouth. I'm not used to other people doing my work. I do what I need to do myself, or, well, I pay people to do it for me. Not have the enemy do it. You know, general?" Dalterion asked confusedly.

"No matter, my lord. The main thing is that he will die. How, is rather not so important. You want him dead, so, he will die." Brice said, slamming the cup of wine on the table, breaking it into many shards. The two chuckled and spoke on for a while longer, not aware they were being listened to.

The little spider crawled down the tent and through the sand, turning into a sand scorpion, scurrying away towards his master. A few minutes later he arrived at the Nemesis's feet, running up his leg and onto the table. After a few moments and nods from Nemesis, it turned to sand and then disappeared wholly.

"So you will try something, after all. Foolish boy" Nemesis said as he smirked at his own deviousness. Nothing happened if he didn't will it. He was a God among men, after all. He controlled monsters, magic, wielded a great amount of power. Even better, he had developed his own personal favourite skill, absolute zero. A barrier that held everything it touched back. Any force something exerted upon it reflected backwards at the wielder many times over. The greater the power exerted upon the barrier, the bigger the recoil. Satisfied everything was in place for tomorrow, he went to sleep. A little army of tiny beings were scattered all around him, keeping watch over him, making sure no one or nothing would harm him whilst asleep. Tomorrow, tomorrow would be a good day. He would finally see what had become of his son, his own half God in the making.

The allied army was taking up position the day after Kane's group arrived. The soldiers went in formation and the ranks were swelled to the fullest in anticipation of the upcoming battle. The day would prove to be very fit for battle, as the weather was perfect. Clouds every now and then painting the sky grey, a soft wind cooling down anyone caught in its breeze, the sun shone its rays gently down to the earth. Kane and his group were sitting around a makeshift campfire, discussing the upcoming battle once more, whilst observing the enemy formations getting ready for battle. Walfrid was sitting also with them, even though he wouldn't be joining into the battle with them. His hundred soldiers had made camp just about twenty meters to their side, tents erected, small fires lit up, groups of soldiers roasting meat and drinking.

"The number we are facing is quite big. In fact, it is huge. Do you think we can actually win?" Gabriel stressed. Kane, obviously annoyed answered him.

"You think anything on this planet can stop me, or even better, the four of us? No, don't answer that question. Obviously, there isn't anything that can" Kane replied. Gabriel frowned as annoyed at Kane's rebuke, but remained silent.

"You are taking this too lightly, my lord. Just look at those numbers. Look at the monster group. There's a dozen of fully grown monsters, big ones! And what is up with that sketchy group at the rear, cloaked in black. Are they sorcerers? Or forgers as the scout had reported? One lucky hit and the battle is over for us!" Gabriel almost yelled back. Kane sighed and put up a hand on Gabriel's shoulder and sighed again.

"I know. I am not almighty. But if you think i will not risk my life to save the kingdom and the countless of other possible victims that would be raped, pillaged, killed or tortured, you are thinking wrong"

"No one said that. I am here with you to stop them, am i not?" Gabriel replied back. The six women that joined them earlier gasped at the way Gabriel was talking to Kane, a duke and the future king. Herald was taken aback as well, not thinking that Kane would let it slip.

"Anyway, to get back to the topic at hand" Kane said taking his hand off Gabriels shoulder, "The way i thought how to do this, myself and Gabriel will charge in head on, together with the trio and the soldiers will protect the ladies here, including Herald" Kane chuckled. All he got back from the group was a cold stare. "Oh come on, we aint here to die. We are here to win! Anyway, you will be protecting the ladies here who will summon a bunch of Abyss golems to battle the monsters" Kane said, looking over at Walfrid.

"I think that they aren't as stupid enough to throw away their lives for nothing. When they see they are outmatched i hope they will retreat" Kane said, sighing again. A lot of burden was falling on his shoulders. They were just about to offer Egeryon a lot of sacrifices. And a lot of power. What would happen afterwards, they would have to wait and see. "Can you do that? Janine? Rasiela?" Kane asked.

"Of course we can" they said in unison, chuckling afterwards. Alpha growled once and stood up, walking to and standing behind Kane in a protective posture. A lone rider was approaching their camping spot, waving a white flag. They all stood up and walked over towards the man. He got off of his horse a dozen meters away and walked towards Kane, holding out a scroll in front of him.

"I have a message from his majesty, to whomever it may concern" the man said as he stopped a meter in front of them, speaking with a heavy accent.

"Kane, hereby i offer you to start working for me, instead of against me. Your parents have been very useful already, and i imagine with you and sister dearest at our side we would be able to rule the whole world. Everything and everyone would bow to our rule. I would make you the commander of all the armies and no one would even think of resisting us. More than anything, your parents are ready to welcome you into their embrace. You have proven to be very worthy of their trust which they have put in you. Now show them the proper respect and help them with returning to where you belong. Awaiting you at our camp at your soonest notion"

"Is that it?" Kane asked after the man finished.

"Yes sir, it is. What is your reply?" he asked almost sarcastically, obviously oblivious to Kane and his group. Kane frowned in annoyance and looked over at Alpha, who sneezed at the moment.

"So... awkward, this situation" Kane said and put up his arm, palm facing the man. A number of blades appeared all around them and one of them pierced the man's head, flying him almost all the way over down the hill towards the enemy's front lines. Alpha bowed next to Kane, letting him on, knowing what he was planning. Kane got on and they rode downhill towards the enemy line. Within seconds of the man touching the ground, Kane and Alpha were standing a hundred meters in front of the enemy lines, which were scuddling around, getting into formation, assuming Kane was attacking head on. Kane then got off and walked a few more steps towards the enemy front line and stood still, motionless, looking at the sky.

"There is no wind, and i count a thousand wide. I will drop ten of their lines. Look and be amazed, my other half" Kane said, putting up his hands. The soldiers looked at each other, started laughing in amazement. Had the man given up without a fight? Then, they noticed shadows looming down on them, as more and more blades appeared, small groups morphing into bigger, sharper blades. The air around them was vibrating violently and the earth was shaking from the vacuum the blades were making, tearing out pieces of grass and ground beneath them, drawing them into the air. A tree close by, a brute a few meters in diameter and about hundred in height got ripped out of the grounds, roots a few meters deep, hanging beneath it. The blades shredded the tree into pieces, whirling the sharp splinters and stakes unintentionally created by the vacuum. Suddenly the wood was getting lined up behind the blades and Kane looked back, seeing Janine walking down the hill, one hand raised and her eyes focused on the wood. He smiled proudly, seeing how good she had become in such a short while. The blades stopped rotating in mid-air, ground and debris falling all around Kane, the blades lining into a formation about fifty meters above his head. Kane Raised both of his hands straight up, looking towards the blades and then towards the lines. The next moment was a blur of motions, the blades flashing in front of him towards the enemy lines. Not knowing what was happening, a group of the soldiers front lines were instantly decimated, dropping like flies. The blades shredding throats, legs, arms, hands, heads. Bodies were littered all over the front lines, a good five rows deep into the formation. Instant death upon almost five thousand soldiers. The carnage was spectacular, rows of dead soldiers scattered at the front lines, missing limbs, gutted, beheaded or if lucky, just stabbed. Unlucky for the soldiers that were in the next row, the wooden shredders that came next were as deadly as the blades, pieces of wood embedding themselves into soldiers heads, eyes, necks, torsos. A horrible show of force, Kane knew, but one necessary. Kane looked over at Janine and nodded, satisfied. He hoped they would be discouraged by everything that just happened, but no, they stood still, as if drugged. The ones who weren't hit stood straight up, not moving, waiting for orders. Instead of orders, the figure hoarding the monsters came forward and put up a sort of translucent shield in front of them.

Kane, interested in what he was doing, summoned a bigger blade and flung it again at the troops, but the blade fell harmlessly to the ground, a meter in front of the lone figure who was keeping both of his hands out in front of him.

"Scary" Alpha mused, getting a nasty look from Kane.

"On whose side are you anyway?" Kane barked angrily. Alpha growled in response.

"Did your pride get hurt, boy?" He snarled at Kane who just looked away annoyingly.

"That man might prove to be a problem, one that could put a twist to our easy plan. Do you think he is the pressure you were feeling?" Kane asked.

"Most likely. His power just spiked and dwindled down again after your blade hit his barrier"

"All right. Let us go back to our camp and see what they will do next. Let them bury or burn their dead" Kane said as he, Alpha and Janine walked up the slope towards their little camp. Alpha and Janine walked up behind him. They looked at each other once and shook their heads, reading each others thoughts easily. They all sat around the makeshift table and chairs, in silence for a long time. There was a dark mood setting, Kane's feelings projecting onto the others as well and his hunger for more, which was emanating from within him, from Egeryon. After what seemed an eternity, Kane stood up and looked over the battlefield, as the soldiers were carrying off their dead and hurling onto a big heap. Carts were carrying the limbs and the other parts that were scattered around the cold ground. It was a sad sight, Kane thought to himself. It's not like he started this war, the fools did. But no matter who did, he was the one who would finish it, painting the ground red with their blood.

"Trio, are you guys up for some probing?" Kane asked suddenly. All three of them stood up and walked over to Kane. "Good, go wreak some havoc, not too much, just to keep up the pressure. If something proves to be too much for you, come back. Also, Gamma, try and get rid of the black hooded squad at the rear, as you can fly. No matter what they can do, i don't want any nasty surprises.

"All right" the three of them said and rushed off. All three of them went into battle mode, draining massive power reserves from his and Janine's magic pool.

"One run in only" Alpha sent telepathically to Beta and Gamma. "Don't do anything foolish, or our masters will have their reserves depleted if we die" he added. As they were nearing the enemy line, which had densed up and a wall had been erected in meanwhile. A row of large towering shields were put up next to each other, spears out between the little holes that were left in the chaining process, another row of shields were standing on top of the spears, pressure keeping everything ringed in together. If that tactic was used against a normal enemy, another regular army, things might have been different. Alpha and Beta crashed into the wall of shields and spears, ripping through with relative ease, but being prodded at with, what to them seemed toothpicks, but still, toothpicks could damage as well. To prevent from damage piling up, they kept jumping on top of small groups of soldiers, ripping into their armour with their massive claws. In the meanwhile, Gamma had flown across the enemy lines, avoiding arrows and other projectiles and spread his wings, as wide as seven meters in his new form, every feather being a blade. He dipped down and

flew straight into the hooded line of unknown entities and cut right through them, disemboweling them or ripping straight through them, their bodies falling in parts next to their feet. As he passed through them, a jolt of pain went through him and he barely managed to pull up again, feeling pain in every inch of his body. When he managed to look himself over, he saw that a chunk of his chest was missing and half of his left wing, which explained the problem that flying proved to be.

Janine, feeling that something was wrong with Gamma, called him back and he disappeared. Better save half of his life power and lose only a small part of their reserves than most of it. Alpha and Beta seeing what happened, went into a frenzy and into spectre mode, which they had learned to control the night before. They turned into a ghostly mist slash liquid form which kept spreading itself out around them among the soldiers, ever further as time passed. Some ten seconds later they had covered an area of about a square mile, together and suddenly, what seemed like a giant snout came out of the ground. It opened and rows upon rows and fangs appeared. It looked like an illusion, but when the mouth closed, another thousand soldiers disappeared into the void, and in their place a giant Alpha and Beta appeared, fur's covered in blood, as if someone had poured buckets over them.

"That is enough for now, return" Kane motioned to Alpha mentally who just responded affirmatively back and they rushed outside of the carnage they had created, running back towards their own line. The soldiers that were lined up behind Walfrid were staring at the battle being fought in awe, praying that the trio wouldn't be harmed. When Gamma had been struck by something, they cringed, as if almost feeling the pain. Kane and Janine looked at each other, smiling in appreciation. When Alpha and Beta came up towards them, they cheered and yelled all kinds of encouraging things, appreciating what they had done for their kingdom. One of the men walked over to Walfrid and whispered into his ear.

"Sir, excuse me. We are wondering why we are even here when the duke's group is doing just fine by themselves" Walfrid turned around and whispered back.

"Kane wanted for my most loyal men to see what they could become, at least partially that is. He said that the hundred of you will be trained specially" The soldier just nodded, his face lit up.

As the duo stopped in front of Kane they turned to their normal sizes and laid down, exhausted.

"Neat little trick you got there you bad, bad couple" Kane said and laughed. "Not only that, but you copied my skill partially, but it looked amazing in execution!" Kane yelled excitedly, jumping Alpha and Beta, hugging them, then withdrew as he saw he made a mistake, as he was also now covered in blood, head to toe.

"Idiot" Alpha sneezed. Beta coughed as if laughing. The two of them were ever the same.

"What the hell is going on there? My soldiers are being slaughtered by the thousands in mere instants! You said that you had everything under control, Nemesis!" Dalterion asked, fuming. All he got back was a cold stare. "Explain

yourself!" Dalterion roared inside of his tent, staring Nemesis down in a fight of wills. Nemesis sighed and shook his head.

"All right, boy. I will tell you what you can know. Your father and me have a deal, and part of that deal is a big sacrifice. That sacrifice is this army, or, at least most of it anyway" Dalterion's eyes went wide at the words coming out of Nemesis's mouth, as if mishearing.

"You are joking, right?" Dalterion asked, still trying to grasp the situation.

"No i am not. You see, that man who killed five thousand soldiers has something inside of him, and i want it for myself. To get it, a lot of people have to die. You shouldn't think about it any more, as it is too big of a math for you, my boy" Nemesis replied mockingly.

"I will not let you kill all of my men" Dalterion said through clenched teeth. "I have spent my life training my armies and getting them ready for this moment. You will not take that away from me"

"Stupid boy. I guess i will have no other way than to keep you here, busy in the meantime while i do what is necessary. Your father prohibited me from killing you, and i will keep my word. To a certain extent" he said and roared in laughter. Suddenly, Dalterion wasn't able to move his hands, feet, tongue, eyes. It was as if he had become a living statue. He tried to move, nothing happened, over and over again. Panic came over him and he began sweating, hyperventilating. "Do not worry. You will be fine. I will hide you here with a spell so no one can help you until everything is over. I will return you alive to your father" Nemesis said and left the tent to make arrangements for the next battle, which would be the last one.

"Generals, it is time. Get your soldiers in gear. We move out in two hours. Form two flanks with half of the remaining armies on each side, the monster squad at the front. Be ready" The two generals looked at each other, shrugged and nodded, walking off towards their respective armies. A lustful smile graced his face, longing for what he would be getting soon. Soon, Egeryon would be his and the whole world would tremble in fear. Finally, his wish would become reality. Dead to the world.

Chapter 19 - Nemesis

Kane was standing on top of the ridge, looking down on the soldiers and what they had next in mind to do, as he saw the formation being split up into two formations, a wing on each side. The monster group was being ushered to the front line and remained there. What the hell were they up to now? Did they really think about attacking? It didn't matter, they had to prepare so he returned to the camp fire.

Kane looked over them, staring at each of them for a long moment in turn. "I will rush the shield summoner and kill him, hopefully. Alpha, you just jump around the battlefield along with your helpers, killing people at your will, Gabriel, you will take one wing as well. Our ladies, Janine and Rasiela, summon a pair of abyss golems each and send them into the monster group" Kane said and paused for the directions to sink in. "Please, keep an eye on the whole battlefield. If you see someone is in trouble, help them. Most of all, help our ladies stay safe" Kane said as he looked over at Walfrid. Form a wall around them and be vigilant, do not get lost in awe as you see us fighting, understood? Theirr golems will play a big role in this battle because if either of us had to deal with them, one or the other thing could get past the golems and get up here"

Janine pulled up her sleeves, showing off the molochite which was glowing violently with a swirling purple haze. Kane's Belial started glowing as well, a green poisonous colour. His skin started feeling strange, as anticipating battle, hardening it slightly. The rush of magic went through them both, as they were mentally connected, the sensation was even stronger and felt more alive than not. Rasiela and Gabriel looked over at them, questioningly, not understanding what they were going through at that moment, but soon gave up and turned around, embarrassed by the groping and moaning they were showing off without any sense of shame, like usual. A few long moments later, Kane and Janine came to their senses and kissed each other violently once, then separated and nodded at each other.

"Let's go" Alpha yelled, running down the slope, gaining speed by the second, Beta and Gamma on his heels. Kane shook his head in amusement and nodded towards Gabriel, wishing him luck and they ran off behind Alpha, hoping all would go well this day, so they could return home and take some time for themselves. Rasiela and Janine started chanting, holding their hands over their breasts, pressing their nails in hard, almost drawing blood over the dresses they had on. The ground started shaking violently, rumbling and shredding all around them. The soldiers who had formed a protective wall were stumbling over each other in their heavy armours, trying to get up again. Rasiela and Janine didn't seem to feel or notice what was happening all around them and they went on with their chants. The rest of their group was far off behind them, the six women and Herald, who went into some kind of trance, so they weren't in any danger, yet. Suddenly, in front of them, the ground erupted, spewing out rock which was sent flying towards the enemy lines, dropping just ahead of Alpha, who was almost upon the enemy already. Out of the ground came eight pairs of thick and long hands, black as tar, glistening in the sunlight, as if oiled up. Four mighty abyss golems were rising out of the holes created moments before. Sharp edges on all of the joints and massive fists. The bodies roughly looked

like a human's, but carved into stone, and much larger. As the golems drew themselves out of the ground and were standing up slowly, one of them was standing taller than the other three. Almost doubling the others in size, glowing with a purple hue, as if the air around him was blurred out of existence, he roared as he got onto his feet. The sound was primordial, guttural, violent. At that moment, Janine knew he would be hard to control, and that something was off, as he was trying to twist control from her and it was all she could do to keep him under control, straining the magic pool of her and Kane, massively. She saw Kane stopped running down the hill, clutching his chest and convulsing violently onto the ground. A few moments later he coughed up some blood and stood up, shakily, still clutching at his chest, but not moving. Alpha felt something was wrong, but still pressed on, soul forging together with Beta and Gamma until there was an army of them, smaller versions of themselves, as lethal as their bigger counterparts. Moments before they reached the left wing, there were hundreds of Alphas, Betas and Gammas and they swept into the wall of shields as a tidal wave, knocking the soldiers down and ripping at their throats and bodies.

"Damn mut" Kane muttered to himself. "He didn't tell me he learned something new, again" he laughed and started walking again, getting his breath back and the pain subsiding. The belial started vibrating and pulsating, compensating for the damage done earlier by the sudden magic spike caused by the golem. At the same moment Gabriel had reached the right wing which had stopped in front of him, as if not knowing how to proceed. Gabriel decided for them as he activated his own soul forge. Two long blades, thin as an ordinary knife some two meters in length, razorsharp. As he rushed into the right wing of soldiers, he activated his soul burn, a burning flame of purple appearing around him, it looked as if he was on fire. As he made contact with the line of soldiers, he propelled himself off the front rank, stepping on the first few shields and landing in their midst, spinning his blades in circles, cutting down soldier after soldier. After he finished his spin he started slashing indiscriminately at soldiers, one by one, cutting them apart or just cutting them open. Within the first minute of his contact a hundred dead soldiers lay around him. He was trying to preserve strength in case something out of the ordinary happened. Suddenly, a spear pierced his side. How did he miss the spear? It must have been thrown from afar. As he ripped the spear out of his side it turned into a snake, growing constantly in size until it had reach an enormous length, perhaps twenty meters in length, a good meter thick. It had a sharp outer layer, as if it was made out of razor blades all over it's whole body. Gabriel backed off, afraid of the sudden appearance of the snake. The soldiers backed off as well at its sight and the snake swirled into itself, bringing its head towards Gabriel, its long tongue hissing at his face.

"Ussssse me. I kill for u" the snake hissed. An enormous smile appeared on Gabriel's face as he looked over towards the hill, where Rasiela was waving at him. 'Damn woman, you scared me to death' he sent her telepathically. She winked and went back to control over her golems. As on cue, the snake started spinning around in circles, shredding up soldiers in its wake, some biting in half with its huge mouth and swallowing even more of them. The real carnage on the right wing had just started.

The golems were rushing down the hill, the earth trembling under their weight and force as they lifted stones off the ground as they ran, hurling them into the group of monsters. Two were killed by huge boulders the massive golem had thrown in their direction, penetrating a greptodont and a silvaren. The remaining eleven monsters started running, gliding and sliding towards the golems and were on top of them within seconds. The bulk of the enemy monster group was made out of fomordil's, large monsters looking like a bull on two legs. They had a massive torso and iron like fists which they used to pummel their enemies to death. Huge two horns on top of their head which were sharp from both sides and could be used to slash and slice, in total seven of them. The remaining four were two more greptodont's and two silvaren's. As the groups clashed, the huge golem just jumped on top of the nearest four fomordil's, pinning them to the ground, crushing two in an instant, as it's twenty ton heavy body fell on top of its enemies. The remaining two tried to get out from under him, but the second golem crushed its head with a massive hit of its fist, at which moment the other three remaining fomordil's pummeled into the golem, pieces of its body flying in every direction with each punch that connected. It tried to block the carnage with its massive arms, but as one hit connected, it severed the golem's arm and it fell to the ground. The other two golem's were busy with the greptodont's and silvaren's. Obviously, they were no match for the two golems, so one of the greptodont's lunged at one golem, bringing it down and the other three ganged up on the other golem, bringing it to the ground in a carnage of stone and debris. They couldn't do much damage, but somehow they managed to rip off its head and the golem disappeared. The other golem had stood up and pummeled the greptodont's head in and launched himself at the silvaren standing atop of the dead golem, flattening it with a loud shriek.

The trio left a torrent of blood and carnage behind them, swirling around the battlefield, their large numbers decimating the soldiers. For every copy of the trio that died, another reappeared and the carnage kept going on, until the magic was being drained, slowly and the lost copies weren't replaced anymore. By that time, the tidal wave had killed over ten thousand soldiers and forced them to retreat, routing the left wing. Just in time since their magic was all but there, depleted to the point they could just sustain their own bodies. The right wing having seen the route of the left and the death toll the snake and the lone man were taking on them, did basically the same after a few thousand more had died, without even a single more scratch on the man or the snake. Seeing that the monster group was having the upper hand, the snake and Gabriel rushed to help the golems, which were being beaten to death. The one remaining golem was facing off the three fomordil's, the greptodont and the silvaren. Gabriel jumped on top of the silvaren, slashing at it and cutting it up within moments, his soul burn helping with the penetration and slashing of the meat and hide. He ran up its back and finally slashed at its head, cutting it neatly off. The snake had come up behind him and had rushed into the greptodont, entangling herself around it and shredding it up with its razor sharp skin. The silvaren was dead even before the snake had crushed him. All that was left was the three fomordil's which were backing off from the golem. He took one of the dead fomordil's bodies and rushed at the three left standing and clubbed them before they could run, sending them flying and falling to the ground. The golem then stepped up towards the three fomordil's and kept beating at their heads until there was nothing left beside a puddle of gore and blood. The golem raised his fists in the air, as if acknowledging its own victory, a strange, hoarse and guttural sound coming from its mouth, the sound of victory.

There was still a large group of soldiers left at the center, standing in front of the man with the barrier. Panic was written on the face of the enemy and some even tried to turn around and run towards their castle, but were picked off by the casters in their midst. The lone figure from earlier who had summoned the shield started walking towards the front line. A barrier could be seen forming around the man as he walked towards Kane, who started chanting his own spell out loud, summoning two huge blades, light as feathers, sharp as razor blades. The blades were two meters long each, and almost shadowed Kane as he held them up in his hands. An evil smile painted itself on his face, a dark expression and then his eyes went black, Egeryon had taken over. Kane charged into the defensive line and slashed at the group of soldiers that had stood with the hooded man, wildly, cutting through armour, shield and blades alike, decapitating men and horse in a bloody frenzy. Within a few seconds of slashing around, a black mist appeared around Kane, suddenly getting thicker and covering more and more area around him as he was cutting the soldiers apart. As the blood mixed with the fog, it seemed to pulsate with life and in an instant, it grew more than tenfold around him, and again tenfold. Roughly hundred meters across to each side was covered in darkness. A vacuum appeared drawing in anything above and inside the fog. Time seemed to stop and everything stood still. The sky grew dark, almost pitch black, all the light draining instantaneously from the area around the castle, a dozen kilometres across. Kane floated up to the air, raising his hands up, still clutching at the blades which disappeared a moment later. The fog drew within itself shrinking by the moment leaving nothing behind. Red bloody earth, metal parts from armour and blades, bones and wasteland. Across the whole area affected by the thick, pulsating fog, everything died a horrible death, leaving only a presence of agony and fear in the air. Time seemed to move again and the soldiers closest to the fog which were spared, fell to their knees and wept, mostly grateful to have kept their lives, but losing part of their sanity in the process. They had seen what happened within the fog, the horrors it had harboured and the agony their comrades had gone through. As Kane dropped to the sticky ground, the lines withdrew into themselves, leaving an even larger empty area around the man. Kane put up one of his hands again and the blood started rising into the air, amassing into a large, drifting pool above his head. As soon as it had gathered, the blood evaporated into Kane's hand. A strong light red glow surrounded him, marking him amidst the darkness that had befallen the whole battlefield. Kane twitched a bit as he felt the magic pool draining ever faster. He looked over towards the hill and sent a mental note to Janine, who was sweating and breathing hard, barely keeping control of the golem to unsummon him or just release it, no way he could fight being drained by the golem at this pace..

"You wouldn't mind if he wreaked havoc upon the humans, would you, darling. O how i wish that Egeryon was never a part of you. You hunger for death, for destruction. Where will it end?" Janine sent him as a mental note back. .

"Where i want it to end, wench!" Egeryon sent his own message towards her. He had listened in, of course, since he was in control of Kane, gathering his tribute for the day.

"Do not insult my wife, you demon, or i will carve you out!" Kane yelled back at him. Grasping for control, not succeeding quite, his magic reserves mostly depleted.

Egeryon could feel it and he didn't waste any time. He pushed Kane away, locking him inside, putting up a barrier between themselves. At that moment, they all knew what had happened, and felt it. Gabriel, the trio and the snake all ran, glided or slid back towards where Janine and Rasiela were standing and stepped up between the two women and Kane, even though a few hundred meters was separating them, not taking any chances.

"Do not panic, my loved ones" Egeryon shouted, his voice amplified by a strange magic "You will not be harmed today. I will let you leave in peace. However!" he shouted even louder, "The same could not be said for the rest of the men present here. They will serve as a sacrifice for my own glorification. What better way for them to use their life, then to die for me!"

"You filthy liar!" Kane screamed at Egeryon. "We had a deal. You would retain control over this body when i was at my journey's end! Not before!"

"Well, i lied. I am an ancient demon, after all. Am i not?" he smirked, his image floating beyond the barrier, inside of Kane's mind. As suddenly as he had appeared, he was gone again. All Kane could do was hope that he would not harm his loved ones and stare through a looking glass, a world beyond his own eyes, without any chance of doing something about his own actions. He had lost his freedom, and if something would happen to Janine, he would lose his will to live on. He would be as good as dead.

"What happened?" Gabriel asked as Alpha walked up towards them. "Anyone has a damn idea?" he almost yelled, as they were all staring out towards the battlefield and Kane, who was walking towards the shielded man.

"He... lost" Janine said as she started sobbing uncontrollably, hysterically. "Egeryon put a barrier between himself and Kane! He has lost control of his body!" she yelled out again. Rasiela stepped over towards her, taking Janine into her arms, tears rolling down her cheeks as well. "I have lost him!" she yelled again, now screaming atop of her lungs, pulling her hair and hitting herself with her clenched fists, clawing at her own face. Gabriel stepped up as well, holding her arms down as Rasiela held her chest and head down.

"We will find a way, sister!" Rasiela yelled. "We will get him back, i promise! Please do not do this to yourself!"

"You do not understand" Janine replied. "He is my life. Without him i want to die! Kill me, please, kill me now! Spare me a life without him!" A loud slap could be heard amongst her screaming. Rasiela had slapped her face with all her power, rocking her head to the side. It became red instantly, swelling up to the damage done. It had the desired effect though, as she stopped crying and screaming.

"Listen to me, you idiot!" Rasiela yelled at her. "If you kill yourself, his body will die as well. As long as the both of you are alive, there is a chance for you to get him back. Do not lose hope yet!" Janine's eyes went wide, realising how she forgot something as basic as that. They were bound for life, and if Egeryon didn't want to

give him back, she would make him, or the three of them would die together at her own hands.

In the meantime, Alpha was observing what was happening down the hill on the battlefield. Egeryon was on a rampage again. He had somehow changed the shape of Kane's soul forge. It was a huge scythe at the moment, which he was using to slice through the masses as if they were nothing more than mere air. Egeryon looked frightening, even worse than the worst nightmare someone could dream up and he was chasing down anyone who was running, larger clusters dieing first. The longer you looked at him, the more he looked like death incarnate. He was engulfed in a black flame that licked the air around him, never straying too far from him and, he himself was pitch black, with a tinge of red shadow here and there. The forms of his armour was clearly visible though, the spikes on the edge of his shoulderplates, the horns atop his helmet, the curves and lines of his breastplate and greaves. A dark knight, no even better, a death knight, Alpha thought to himself. How the hell am i supposed to stop that? Each time he brandished his scythe, a score died. It was truly a crowd controlling weapon, keeping the soldiers at bay, but killing masses with each flourish. Alpha counted to twenty inside of his mind, and at the twentieth second there lay another thousand dead. Suddenly, Egeryon looked over towards the shielded man, who seemed to figure that something had happened, but still didn't back down, rather he was pressing on, even though all of the monsters were dead. He rose one hand in the air and chanted something, what Alpha couldn't read on his lips as they were too far apart. A second barrier appeared around him, but instead of staying there, it floated over to Egeryon. Too late did he figure out what it was as the barrier surrounded him, pressing him down to the ground with the weight of a mountain. Egeryon first fell down on one knee then on both knees and his arms, pressing into the ground, sinking into it slowly.

"What... did you... do" Egeryon muttered, looking at the shielded man. He flashed a smile.

"I knew you would come out, fiend. Too much temptation for you not to, my old friend" a familiar voice said to Egeryon, who snapped his head up, questioningly, staring at the man. Kane was looking through his own eyes as well, noting a faint familiarness in the other man's face. Kanes eyes went wide open, as well as Egeryon's. "Father!" Kane said at the same moment Egeryon muttered "Nemesis, you have come"

Chapter 20 - Sacrifice

"Hello, my children" Nemesis said, looking at Kane and then staring up the hill, over towards Rasiela, a wicked smile painted all over his face. "O, and fiend. It would not do to forget you, would it? Egeryon" he said again, but this time almost as if in delight.

"What... did... you do... to me... Nemesis" Egeryon muttered, barely audible. He was blocked in every possible way, movement, speech, breathing. Nemesis allowed him barely enough for sustained survival. More than enough, he thought to himself. Nemesis's smile faded as he looked at Egeryon, seriously this time.

"You didn't think i would just put you into a human body without a way to control you, now did you?" he said as a smile appeared on his face again. "I put a spell on you, and if chanted by anyone who knew it, you would obey and go still the moment it was spoken. Now, what i am interested in is the following. My son, would you join your father in world conquest?" he said as he sat down on the ground beside him. A long moment later, he slapped himself on the forehead, sarcastically. "I forgot you are not in control anymore, my son. How foolish of me. Let me help you out" he said as he said a few words under his breath and Kane regained vocal control for the time being.

"If you get this monster out of me, i will." Kane said without even realizing what he was saying. Nemesis was taken aback by the blunt response and was at a loss for words for a few long moments, slowly regaining his composure before speaking.

"You would, my son? You really would?" he asked, wanting to believe it, earnestly.

"Yes, if you undo what you did to me all those years ago. I would even help you get rid of it, dad" Kane said. Nemesis heart pounded in his ears, as loud as the beat of drums. He had called him dad, or did he just imagine it?

"What... did you call me?" he asked in disbelief.

"I called you dad, father" Kane replied calmly. The joy was obvious on Nemesis's face. His voice was even warmer, a gentleness about it that wasn't there before a moment ago. Kane smiled inside, noting how easy it was to manipulate his father. Egeryon felt it and tried to do something about it, but Kane was still in control of his own body, at least, the talking that is.

"If i separate you from Egeryon, do you promise to stay by your parents side from then on? I will make you regret it if you go back on your word, my son" Nemesis said again, a serious tone to his statement.

"Yes, father, i will, if my friends can be with me and my wife. Is that alright with you?" Kane replied.

"I guess so. As long as they can stand their ground. We do not have any use for weaklings. Enough of them out there."

"Thank you, father. Please do so." Kane replied. Nemesis walked over to him and took a black stone out of his backpack. The stone was swirling in the air, black as the night, floating just above his hand.

"Fiend, by your name, the name you respond to. The name you were created by, Aeonirad. I release you from the vessel and bind you to this prison. This prison i bind you to is eternal and we will be bound by it. You are mine now, for all eternity" nemesis chanted, almost singing the words. Kane's stiff body crashed to the ground and went limp. He felt the control coming back to him, slowly, drop by drop. First the fingers, the hands and then the rest. Half a minute later Kane was back on his feet and was walking backwards slowly while Nemesis was busy with sealing Aeonirad, as he called him. Kane was hopeful that he could escape to his group and then run, but he had his doubts. Removing souls and sealing them, releasing control over someones body. It smelled like ancient magic and very dirty. As Aeonirad was finally sealed within the stone and the whirlwind of blackness faded from around Nemesis and the stone he was holding, Kane turned around and sprinted back towards his group. Nemesis noticed it too late to stop him instantly, but he didn't seem to care very much about the fact. He turned around, nonchalantly and strode towards the back, whistling, holding the big black stone in his hand. The soldiers all around him were stunned, not knowing what happened just now. One moment the enemy soldier was thinning out their lines and the other he was running, their own ace retreating towards the back of the formations.

Kane was running up the hill as fast as his legs would carry him, eager to bring Janine the good news. As he ran up, they backed up from him, defensive in stance. Then he remembered that Egeryon was holding sway over his body just moments before, and backed off slightly himself.

"Its me, Kane" he said enthusiastically. "The fiend is gone! My father has taken him away, finally i am free of his curse!" Kane cried out in joy. Janine lowered her guard and ran over to him, jumping in his arms, crying tears of joy.

"Is it really true? And what was that about your father?" Janine asked. Rasiela barged in and talked instead.

"Was it really our father? If so, and he has taken Egeryon from you, we are in bigger trouble than you can imagine, brother. He will probably try to infuse himself with it! What do you think he will use it for, then?" she said accusingly, as if Kane had a choice in the matter.

"Well, in that case, we will stop him. I planned to all along, but this way we have even more reason to" Kane replied hastily. "Speaking of which, i think we might have a problem" he added.

"What problem?!" Janine and Rasiela yelled in unison, then looked at each other and chuckled.

"Well, i kind of promised him we will join him if he rid me of that fiend" Kane said slowly.

"You did what?!" they yelled at him again, Gabriel just staring at him, confusedly, Alpha doing the same.

"What do you mean, join him?" Rasiela asked, waving her fist in front of his face, threateningly.

"Hold your horses, woman. He said if i would forgive him and join him, you all would be free to as well and would be spared. Now that i think of it, when in control i am the strongest person in the world. Why fear him. Ill just go down myself now and kill him, be done with it" Kane said and started walking down the slope. He tried summoning up the countless swords, but nothing happened. He stopped walking, concentrated and tried again. Nothing happened again. Frustrated he drew on the power that was coursing between him and Janine. A few daggers appeared around him, spinning wildly in all directions. He drew a bit more of their shared magic and some more daggers appeared. A few tries later, the daggers were up to a score, but draining their magic pool as fast as the abyss golems were, roughly about a few percent per tenth-hour he felt. What the hell is happening? Janine strode up at that moment and took his hand in hers.

"What is happening?" she asked questioningly.

"I... do not know. I can't even summon a fraction of the blades i used to this morning, even with drawing from our combined magical pool. Speaking of which, hasn't it become smaller? Or is it just me?" Kane replied. She looked up at him, worriedly.

"Now that you say it, it sure seems like it. Does it have anything to do with Egeryon?" she asked.

"Yes it has" Rasiela said as the rest of them walked up to Kane and Janine. "Egeryon was the sole reason why you could do all of those things. Sure, you have some stones and a magnificent soul power, but it was actually him who gave you all the destructive force. At least, that's what my demon is saying. I doubt she is lying though" Rasiela said.

"What?" Kane yelled with a high pitched tone, drawing some strange glances from his group. "Then how the hell can i kill my father? He was already on par with me with Egeryon around, but now, how the hell am i supposed to fight him?!" he yelled, almost hysterically. No one answered for a moment.

"Drain me" Alpha said. "I have gathered a lot of power and a lot of sacrifices today. Just today, my power went up tenfold after devouring all the dead soldiers and monsters" Alpha added.

"Huh?" Kane said. "Explain what you mean, Alpha" Alpha sat down and stared at him, right into his eyes and spoke again.

"You can absorb me any time now, if you wish. I do not mind. My purpose was gathering power for when this day came. Your father made sure of it" Alpha said calmly. Kane was staring at him, mouth wide open, not believing what he was hearing.

"So basically you were summoned by Nemesis to be used as a power bank?" Kane asked in return.

"Yes. Though, i think he was planning to use me for himself, not for you. Now that Egeryon is gone, there are no barriers preventing me to tell you what i know. Do you want to absorb me or just listen to what i have to say?" Alpha asked.

"Listen of course!" Kane yelled at him. "Idiot, i couldn't stand losing you"

"You wouldn't lose me. I will always be there. I am part of you, you couldn't get rid of me even if you would want to. Idiot. You think i'll just go away and that's it? Hah! You're sorely mistaken if you think so!" Alpha laughed out as he made fun of Kane, trying to get his mood up, failing miserably in the process. "Look, Kane. Your father, our father put me up as a failsafe with a time limiter of a year to gather as much power and sacrifices as possible and then separate from you, going back to him, killing you in the process. You and me can not be separated for longer than 24 hours. You didn't just drag me anywhere you want to because you wanted me around, instinctively you knew i had to be near you. Not to protect you, well, not only, but our lifeline is very thin and short. A mere day and night and you would die, me following you within a moon, maybe faster, depending on how much power i had stored. The power i have stored today, killing the people i did and the monsters, i have stored about a year's worth. That was your father's intention, bringing this war here, the soldiers as sacrifices for him, either through me or through that demon that betrayed us" Alpha splayed himself onto the ground and laid on his back, kicking up air with his paws. The group looked at him, first strangely and then burst out in laughter.

"What the hell are you doing, idiot?" Kane barked at him. "Kicking up the air?"

"No" Alpha replied, almost smiling. "I'm scratching my back, idiot." he said in return to Kane. Kane slapped himself in the face and shook his head in disbelief. Below was an army, still maybe thirty thousand strong, regrouping and forming lines again under cracking whips and a caster battle group keeping them in check from the sides and back line. Beside the massive amount of forces still present, his father, Nemesis was there, even stronger than before, now in possession of Egeryon. No one could imagine the power he now wielded.

"Look" Gabriel said, breaking the moment of silence. Everyone turned towards where his finger was pointing, holding one of their binocular sets. They all looked and focused on the lone figure standing there. A black fog was rising up from the ground, all around him. The air currents crackled with electricity, vibrating. Then everything disappeared into a blinding light. A lone figure rising into the air. He was demonic by look, and if they didn't know better, they wouldn't have guessed who it was. Unfortunately, they knew who it was. Nemesis was floating up to the sky, slowly, in his new form. He looked half demon like, half human. Maybe the word human didn't

apply anymore, as all that remained was a human shape of the body, nothing else. His face was misshapen, contorted into a black mess with a big eye above his nose and long teeth protruding from the small slit that used to be his mouth. Two horns were facing to the sides of his head, one going slightly up and the other pointing down. One of his arms was seemingly human, still, yet the other was a monstrosity, longer than a meter and thick as a tree trunk, sharp talons instead of his fingers. His legs were unusually thin, tho one of his feet was warped again, as was his arm, thick and massive. He looked like a being from hell, bred from a demon and a human. Suddenly he flew straight towards them. They barely had time to get into battle stances, and for Alpha to get up from his scratching. Kane launched himself at the monster summoning two blades, swinging them from the sides towards the middle, going for a decapitation. Instead of landing two hits, Nemesis hit Kane squarely in the face, sending him flying backwards, landing on top of Alpha, splaying him onto the ground.

"U went back... on your... word... son. I... have to punish... you my boy..." he stuttered. His speech was mangled as was his whole body. It sounded like a stone was trying to talk and failed, miserably. Everyone was stunned into submission by the sheer power exerting from Nemesis, shaking, teeth chattering. "Who.. do you choose... to die in... your stead... my boy" he said again. The sudden statement sent Kane's thoughts racing, thinking of what to do. Nothing came to his mind, as he wasn't even able to move, let stand fight back. Suddenly, a calm overflowed Kane and the strain disappeared from his body. Janine's thoughts sinking into his. She was pouring all of her magic reserves into his body, letting him tap into her recently acquired magic stone. Suddenly, he could stand again and he summoned his dual sword, but this time they were glowing, a purple flaming colour, as if on fire.

"I see... you have made... your choice... boy" Nemesis said again, looking over at Janine, a wicked smile appeared on his face, gory teeth showing. Panic struck Kane again, afraid for her life.

"I will not let you bring any harm to her, nor anyone i love, father. You got what you wanted, that damn demon. Leave us be! You have done nothing for me or my sister except bringing us pain. Do something for us, at least once in your life. Leave in peace, father!" Kane yelled. A frown appeared on Nemesis face, as if insulted by Kane's words.

"I let... you decide who... dies. Isn't that... something?" he said and smiled again. Kane had enough and he rushed his father, lunging straight forward, slashing wildly, without any plan. A glancing blow to his right horn, left big arm, then a deflecting blow by his human arm, which was hard as steel. Kane was momentarily stunned by seeing the arm deflect his blow, imbued by magic power. Nemesis leaned backward and sent Kane flying with a thrust of his normal leg, the hit breaking Kanes left arm, as he brought it up in time to protect his chest. A dozen meter away Kane landed into a slab of marble, an audible crack could be heard, of his spine breaking.

"Shit. Is this it? Am i going to die here?" he murmured to himself, blood gushing down his face and from his broken arm. Nemesis appeared right in front of him instantly, as if teleporting. He brought his left, metal arm down and cut a part off

of Kane's already broken hand. Kane screamed in agony as blood spewed from his wound. All he could think of was, if only my spine wasn't broken. Suddenly, another crack sounded off and his spine readjusted itself, depleting all of his and Janine's magic reserves. The stone started growing threads which were enveloping the end of his cut off arm, slowly at the start but soon the blood was stemmed. Nemesis looked down at his son and shook his head, grinning all the while.

"What a shame... that you turned out like... you did, my son. Now, i will... punish you for... your insolence. Good bye... my son" Nemesis said as his arm raised up, turning into a sharp blade. An instant later it struck Kanes raised up arm and cleaved it off about a dozen centimeters beneath the shoulder. The only reason Nemesis hadn't cut Kane in half was Alpha, who used his full body weight to hit Nemesis, making him miss by centimeters and just wounding Kane grievously. Blood kept on spewing out of his shoulder, muscles, tendons and skin were hanging loose, making for a gory spectacle. Everyone present was unable to even draw a single breath, let stand help Kane. Tears were streaking down Janine's cheeks, her sobs unheard.

"Am i going to witness it again? Losing my loved ones? Losing my soul reason for being? If there is a higher deity, please help me. Help Kane, i beg of you!" Janine said to herself, still no sound coming out of her mouth. Kanes lips twitched a bit and a small, weak smile set itself upon his face.

"Janine, my love. I am sorry that it had to be this way" Kane sent her a mental message. "If you somehow make it through this, don't try to avenge me, just run and live your life out as you can. The only regret i have, is that i didn't leave you with child, but, maybe it's better that way. I'd hate to see it grow up without a father"

Kane paused for a few moments, the pain unbearable. Nemesis looked over towards Janine in the meanwhile, figuring out they were talking mentally but not knowing what about, which angered him. He turned his body towards her and started moving, slowly, wanting the dread to set in. When he saw her face grow in shock, even more than it already was and her struggle to get free, he shuddered in pleasure.

"Do not even think, i will allow you to hurt her" Kane said, figuring out what Nemesis was up to.

"When i clash with him, i will use all of my force to break all of you free. Take that moment and run. Promise me that you will leave, no matter what and i won't take no for an answer. You must live, for my sake, Janine" Kane sent her mentally again. A few tears streaked down his cheek as he tried to stand up. At that moment Alpha managed to get up and helped Kane stand.

"Let us do this, brother" Alpha said.

"Brother, huh?" Kane said. "Sounds better than calling you my second self, haha" Kane stood up slowly with Alpha's help and leaned on him with his one hand. The pain could be seen in his eyes as he fought to stand. Nemesis turned back towards them and gave them a questioning look, as if asking, are you serious? Kane and Alpha just looked at each other, understanding what they were going to do. A

few long moments nothing happened and then power started flowing from Alpha into Kane. Another few moments later Kane stood on his own feet and was, to their amazement feeling better. At least he seemed to as he was hopping around .

“Did you tell them?” Kane asked Janine. She nodded, still sobbing like mad.

“But i don’t want to!” she yelled at him. A smile appeared on his face, as gentle as he could muster it.

“I rather have you remember me as i stood my ground one last time, giving my everything for you, than to see you die here with me. Promise me that you will do what i asked of you” Kane said again. She looked down to the ground and nodded, not connecting with his eyes.

“She will” a voice broke in. It was Rasiela who spoke to them, mentally, joining in on the conversation. “We will make her if she tries to refuse” she said again, sorrow in her tone. Kane lastly looked over to Gabriel and nodded his head. Gabriel was holding off his tears and pain at his friend’s demise, but he could not hold it any longer. He burst out in tears and yelled at the top of his lungs, but there was no sound coming out of his mouth. Just a sadness that could be felt everywhere around him.

“I will protect her with my life, even if i die here beside you, i will give my life for her, my friend, my mentor, my brother. I am honored to have known you” Gabriel said, moving his lips. Kane understood and nodded at him, in thanks. Nothing left was there to be said as Kane closed his eyes and a sudden mental surge freed them from their prison, the air rippling and cracking all around him. Nemesis was stunned momentarily, not expecting such a strong surge to come out of his son, when moments ago he was dying. Gabriel ran immediately towards Janine, hit her in her guts, sending her world spinning, she lost all sense of sight and hearing. The last thing she saw was Kane’s smile and his gentle expression, looking into her eyes, saying “I love you”. Tears kept going down her face as she knew that was the last time she would see him, her only love, her husband, her lover, her saviour. Why did that man want to take everything away from her as if it was nothing? Then, she lost conscious.

Nemesis turned around a few times, looking at what was happening, though not moving, awaiting Kane’s next move. In the meantime Gabriel was carrying Janine over her shoulder and Rasiela was running after him.

“Come on people, move it” Gabriel yelled, arriving a minute later at the base camp. The girls were already packed and ready to run, whilst herald was sitting on the ground, his back leaning on a big tree. “Herald, move it!” Gabriel yelled. Herald just shook his head slightly and replied.

“The vision told me to stay behind. You all will make it, but i need to stay here. There is something i must do after Kane is dead” he said, not a shred of emotion in his voice.

"Are we leaving sir Kane behind, Gabriel?" Ruby asked, barging in, standing in front of her little group of women.

"Yes, we are. It was his last wish to see us safe. We will honor his last request and run for it. I do not know how much time he can buy us" Gabriel responded.

"Whatever" Rasiela yelled, pulling Gabriel to start moving again. "Move it, girls, or you will all die here if you stay any longer"

"God speed, my friends" Herald said and stood up, slowly, climbing up on the tree. The group ran for whatever they were worth, never looking back, the hundred soldiers and Walfrid running behind them in a column, half organised.

Down the hill, Nemesis was staring up at where the group was and shook his head. Silly humans, did they think they could run from him? He would make short work of his son and his failed experiment, then he would chase them down and kill them, devouring their magic as well. Yes, that sounded like a good plan, he thought to himself.

Opposite him Kane and Alpha were still channeling energy between themselves, and when the power was equally shared, they charged. Alpha took the left side, the side that was more monster than human and Kane took the right one, the steel side. He had managed to summon a nasty looking blade, something he envisioned and his soul forge created. It was now or never. Kane cut at the steely arm whilst Alpha went at the big lumpy form, trying to bite it. He had summoned a soulforged version of him as well, or, rather, he became one with it. He was translucent and almost metaphysical. Nemesis deflected Kane's slash with ease and hit Alpha with his other hand, sending him flying. Kane slashed on at the steely arm, trying to pry it away long enough to go for his opponent's body. A slash from the side, deflected, a crushing blow from overhead after stepping aside, dodging Nemesis own thrust, bringing down his arm far enough to show some meat. Kane used the moment and pierced the area where Nemesis heart must have been. He just smiled and grabbed Kane's blade, applying all the pressure he could on the soulforged blade, shattering it into thousands of little pieces. Alpha used that moment of distraction and went at Nemesis's exposed neck, biting into it, tearing with tremendous force, but not succeeding at biting through, only biting a little chunk of meat out of his neck. Nemesis snapped his head backwards, rotating it into a strange angle and laughed, bringing about his steely arm and cutting into Alpha's chest, instantly dealing an almost fatal blow. The light in Kane's eyes was slowly fading as Alpha hit the ground, wounded. He was breathing heavily as well, bleeding out of his arm and wounds from the shattered pieces which flew in every direction, embedding themselves in his body, face and the one arm he had left.

"It can't end like this" Kane muttered to himself. "I need to buy them enough time to escape"

Something snapped inside of him and power burst out of him, as if the floodgates of a dam were opened up wide. A black aura enveloped him, his skin burning up slowly, centimeter by centimeter, evaporating into the black flaming aura. Right, the fourth stage of soul forge. Igniting your soul in exchange for tremendous

power for a limited time, after which there was no turning back. He was prepared for it, but hadn't known how to do it, though he was happy it happened.

"Father, i will take us both down with this final move. If only you had left us alone, maybe we would have ended up as friends, not enemies" Kane yelled with what seemed was his last breath. Nemesis just looked up and smiled, not caring about his words it seemed. Kane raised his hands up in a familiar way by now. Blades began appearing one by one all around him, and within a few breaths taken, there was a score of them. All wickedly shaped and burning black flames, evaporating the air around them, generating vacuums with strong currents. Kane smiled wickedly and motioned for the blades to shred Nemesis. How funny, at the same time, his father was his own Nemesis as well. What a fitting name, Kane thought.

Nemesis was standing and observing Kane as he started burning black flames, his skin peeling off and disappearing. He thought nothing about it, just another parlor trick his failure of a son would try to buy some time. It ain't happening, he thought to himself. He planted his feet solidly into the ground, lifting his arms up in defense and awaiting what would happen. When he saw what Kane was doing he laughed hoarsely and put down his guard, already having seen the same trick a few times. Obviously he wasn't impressed as all worries disappeared from his face. Then he figured it out what Kane was doing and lunged at him, swinging his bladed arm into Kane, cutting him almost in half. He tore the blade out again and took a chunk of Kane's abdomen with him. Kane stumbled to his knees and released the blades. The blades came Nemesis's way and he felt being pulled in by a strong force. Shit, was the last thing he could think before the blades sucked him in, shredding his deformed body into tiny bits, guts, gore, blood and bone were flying everywhere. Suddenly a burst of energy dropped Kane to his feet. A familiar voice spoke into his mind.

"Because you rid me of that weakling that had imprisoned me within you, i will let your friends live, th

is time. Take it as a thank you gift. I won't even pursue them. I got more important things to do. You can die knowing they are safe. For now anyway" Egeryon laughed and disappeared. Kane's vision started to blur as all of his skin was finally burned away, leaving a meaty apparition in its stead. All of the skin was gone but the flames had luckily disappeared and he dropped to the ground. Alpha was crawling towards him, blood still gushing out of his chest wound, but slower now, since he had lost most of his blood already. Kane tried crawling towards Alpha as well, but he couldn't move his fingers, nor his head, nor feet. Life was draining out of him, slowly but steadily. It was time to pay the piper. Shuffling could be heard and out of the corner of his eyes he saw Herald of all people running towards him, shouting. He helped Alpha crawl towards Kane who was barely conscious at the moment Alpha dropped beside him. Kane and Alpha just looked each other in the eyes, managing a weak smile.

"I am sorry... Herald. I won't... be able to get... you your family... after all" Kane said and then both him and Alpha died, embraced in each others arms.

"No!" Herald screamed in agony. "My vision showed it differently! Was i too late?" He dropped beside Kane and Alpha's motionless bodies, crying. The one

person who had given him a new life, a new goal, a new future, died because he was too late. The coward he was, he should just kill himself atop of them, to show them how sorry he was. No, he was still going to try it. His vision didn't say what would happen, just what he did. Herald stood up and scurried around the scene searching for something. "Ahh, there you are" he said, taking Kane's severed arm from the ground and took a knife. Gently he pried at the stone embedded in Kane's hand. The stone came loose with a plump and fell to the ground. Herald was unsure if he should proceed, again, since Kane was already dead, but thought the better of himself and went on. He took the stone in one hand and with the other pried open Kane's closed mouth. The stone didn't want to go inside, but then again, his vision showed the stone in the position it was in now. For a few long minutes, he was kneeling beside Kane and Alpha in their own blood and gore. Tears started falling Herald's already wet cheeks as he finally understood that nothing would happen. They were dead and nothing he did would bring them to life. All he could do was make them a burial site and watch over their bodies for a while, praying for their souls to an entity that abandoned them ages ago, even in a moment of great need, a moment of need for the whole world.

Footsteps could be heard behind Herald as he stood up and turned around. A group of armed soldiers was walking up to him, swords and crossbows already drawn. He took out his own sword, said a prayer and walked out to meet them.

"I will not allow you to desecrate my masters burial site. Please go back to where you came from!" he yelled out, more bravely than he felt. Then as he figured out that he was dead anyway, all the fear drained from him and he stood tall, chest pushed out, sword held in both hands to his right.

"Halt!" a voice yelled and the group came to a halt. Two men approached him. To his surprise it were prince Dalterion and general Brice in person. His courage wavered for a moment and then he stood tall again.

"Soldier, what is your name?" prince Dalterion said as he approached to a mere meter in front of him.

"Herald, prince Dalterion, sir!" he yelled back at him with a cold, steely tone. The prince narrowed his eyes on him, but shook his head and went on.

"Herald, i am thankful that you are here. We were coming here to retrieve this man's body, but i assume you are his servant?" he said questioningly.

"Yes sir, i am. I will be taking care of his burial, please leave in peace" Herald said, with a softer tone now. Dalterion nodded his head.

"I will provide you with soldiers and materials. We will make him a shrine until the morning. We do not know the whole story, but from what we could have figured out, your master saved all of us here, maybe even the whole world with his sacrifice. The least we can do for him is pay our respect. For you, we will provide fresh clothes and beverage. Accept my condolences, Herald" Dalterion said and turned around, speaking to general Brice before heading out towards their formations again. Herald

slumped to the ground, started crying again, but this time more from joy of living. He already had seen his life flash in front of his eyes.

As Dalterion had promised, the shrine was built within a day and upon the next evening, the full moon was out, as if paying his own respect to Kane and Alpha's sacrifices, as it shone upon the bodies of the deceased. The soldiers had helped him put them on the big altar that was at the far end of the small shrine, the stone still sticking out of Kane's mouth. Herald thought about if he should take the stone with him, but thought the better of it and left it there. It was Kane's in life, it should be his in death as well. He said his last prayers and turned around, leaving the shrine behind him. One last time he glanced back, reading the inscription on the entrance.

"Here lie Kane and Alpha, mankind's saviours of this Era" Herald chuckled and thought how Kane would have liked the words for sure.

A monstrous bird flew down onto the shrine, moving its head around strangely, looking down at the body of Alpha, drawn to the glowing stone sticking out of Kane's mouth. He flew down and landed atop of Kane's head. He pecked at the stone for a few times and shrieked, as tendrils had grown from the stone, trapping the bird. One moment he was there, and was gone the next. The stone started glowing faintly and embedded itself deeper into Kane's throat, removing itself mostly from view.