

MOTLEY LANDS MASSACRE

FIRST CHAPTER

“The tattoo I carried as a order of pride on the island changed into a grievous burden as I treaded on air. I do not recall how long it took to pass the Rising Sea with my Plinkoar. The old Twin touched his neck, “I only recall it was a disgraceful tattoo for a man like me. I bethink, I was thoroughly entranced after drifting on my own for days. When I revived, I found myself on an ironcure, my hands tied.” Wavering for a while, he breathed out and nodded, then spoke again; “I heard them saying I would fly away in a severe howl, observing my body. Besides, my presence on ironcure meant another mouth to feed with little benefit. Some stepped forth at first, telling they should kill me in no time. They obviously found pleasure in killing... As if my fate demanded nothing but being massacred as a means of pleasure for those murderers. For me, what was the difference between staying and dying? Nothing. I was a shame, and hopeless as well. Shading off into nothing in the hands of ugly creatures with catastrophic savagery on their vulgar bodies as a whole would be a sort of redemption; I thought it would mean I got what I deserved. Aye, I believed so. I recall, the idea rejoiced me deep inside. I might not relieve the pain on my own, but, to be my executioner, members of that ravenous group could attempt against each other’s lives. You could feel sorrow flowing in, instead of blood. You could even lose the chance of seeing a single twinkle of day ascending towards air, as if dancing, floating and creating harmony. You could lose the ones you loved, everything you believe to create you, your hope and truest willpower. Breathing in meant pain, and breathing out meant greater pain. I felt so. Killing yourself... Only if I had a trace of belief to do this, I would relieve the pain as soon as I sailed towards the island. But a Twin is never just himself. You know what preach says.”

Thirst closed his lips perhaps for he did not speak long for a while. Then he uttered the words behind a few sips of water. “After all, the time had come; a stinking bulky figure entered the cabin I was held in. Roughly grasping my neck, he carried me near the others, as if dragging a worthless thing. Amongst the gales of laughter calling for savagery, I abided my head on the ground, without knowing whose weapon would kill me. They threw a thing before me, I could not understand. It seemed one-piece, but its two ends were bent inward unlike the tools I saw before. I looked at the tool and them. As they realized I did not understand, they laughed at once, tearing apart their throats. Just then one of them bended down and grasped the strange thing, slowly disjointing by pulling both ends outward, towards opposite directions, and reached it to me. I was a little bewildered, because it reverted before I took it, the ends interlocked. They wanted me to do the same. I disjointed it like he did. As I gazed at them, I was surprised by the astonishment in the eyes of almost everyone. One of them grabbed it and tried to disjoint once more, but he neither did it as wide as I did nor behaved as fast as me. Someone else tried, but he was not faster as well. They reached it to me once again, and I did the same without hesitation. As I would realize afterwards, they used it to test the strength of the workers on ironcure. They were astonished because no one could disjoint as fast as me before. But I did not even tell them it was easy. Then they realized I

would make a good rower. I wandered around two seas and all inland seas on the lumpish ironcure for years. I saw the ones who fed on the flesh of their kinds and the ones who faded the trees' lights. I was with them when they massacred the many, without considering innocence or guilt. I did not attempt against the life of even a person, but the sorrow of even being a part of that crime gradually agonized me. I thought I would embrace it, but I could not. That feeling gradually grew in me, it overflowed. I thought I was suffering for my past sins when witnessing those things; my soul had to be overwhelmed. With this belief, I shut my eyes at many of them. However, I was disenchanted as I saw the flesh of a toddler at the edge of a twohead. To act, I decided to bide until the moment my hands were not tied. Though they knew of my strength, they set me free once in a while, because I did not oppose them. For that moment, I abided. Only that moment..."

Silence prevailed; deep and screaming silence. The old Twin gazed away, as if his eyes were misted, trying to hide the tears in his eyes. Vileryu turned his head to abide by; he did not want to hurt the feelings of his old friend.

One night, when the hands of old Twin were not tied, Vuhsar almost left the Rising Sea. Thereof, last pale springs of Ufasar could scarcely creep over vast blue that night. The light was dim, and there was too much darkness as well. Almost stygian! Night hid him. As he quickly made a move with the first weapon on the deck of ironcure, his presence was as apparent as shadow.

Blood was shed, groans coalesced. He vanquished them in a few minutes. It was all over, he should carry on peacefully, right? But he could not. The vast, irrepressible, unrelieved emptiness appearing at the point you think everything ends; isn't it the most terrifying? Where does this feeling belong to? As it seems, it belongs to apathy. He felt he lost the last spirit in him. Freeing all rowers and consigning the vessel to them, he jumped off ironcure at a bay near Harbor City, there began his journey on land.

SECOND CHAPTER

His black-red hair was blowing in the tempest of Vuhsa. The breath of Enij Elmiris ceased where he was, and spring just awakened. It was a morning when vermilion springs of Hellim Helseris surrounded the sky. Indeed, it was his favorite weather.

His gallant walk and strange patterned break in his hand caught the children's attention as they were approaching. As soon as they neared, the children gazed at his neck instead of his weapon for a moment. With innocent embarrassment arising from being caught while doing something wrong; they averted their gaze, and saluted him through strange gestures expressing exaggerated respect.

He earnestly accepted the salute. He was talented in hearing how they talked behind his back by attending the whispers after they walked away, but he knew it would not differ from the words he had been hearing for years.

He came ashore. Before walking into the water, as always, he observed near and far with his sharp eyes. His nature was rather prudent. Besides, he was secretive. He neither spoke unless needed, nor uttered a single word even during the change of the land guard.

There did not seem to be any problems. He waved to salute the other land guard almost five hundred steps away, and quietly walked into the water; then he changed turns with the other warder standing there since the same hour yesterday. He would stay underwater for a day, holding his breath. Even though attacks and provocations recently decreased, he would await to fire the warning torches ready to flare above water, nearly one hundred steps above him, in case of foreseeing a potential threat of enemy. It was unpredictable, it might be another baleful day coming to join the past curses; a threat would appear and he would free the temporarily held smallteeth within a small cage, hoping they could reach the only source of light they could see in dark; then warning signs would awaken when any creature approached and touched, after an instant journey. It was the secret of their mechanism to prevent them from losing for years, no matter how evil the threat besieging them was.

However, rather than the threat of enemy, Vileryu was thinking of leadership elections, as revealed by the rumors, to be made soon.

Vileryu's father was pretty old and thoroughly weakened. Though he regarded this shameful, the idea of taking his father's place gradually surrounded his mind, for leadership was transferred from father to son, apart from a few exceptions at guild. However, it was not a decision to be taken merely by his father. A Consultancy Assembly would be set up in a closed chamber of state, to which he would join as well; wises would end a long consultation by deciding the new head attendant of the island.

Vileryu could evaluate time's progress by observing the colors of flashes falling above the sea, and as soon as he left behind a quarter of day along with the thoughts surrounding his mind, he felt he was almost out of breath. With bewilderment accompanied by rage, he rose to the surface. Because he knew how shameful it was for a Twin, he observed around to see whether someone saw him before breathing in to dive. There seemed to be no one around. As he dived in to return, he trembled, seeing a huge bigshell proceeding towards the place of duty. Bodies of those huge sea creatures were tremendous enough to carry hundreds of warriors at once.

Vileryu tried to swim towards the place of duty as fast as he could in order to fire warning torches by freeing the smallteeth in the cage. However, he fainted as a huge mass hit him from behind. A bigshell's fin hit his waist and bewildered him. He felt the shame of failing his responsibility, and the fear of the bigshell, as he assumed, going ashore through a division; those feelings even prevailed the fatal pain hurting his whole body. His mind was confused as well, he could not discern between dream and reality. Meanwhile, a small fish with reddish twinkles on its fins began circling around his body, flowing towards the bottom. Though he could not decide whether it was real or a vague vision in his mind, he slightly woke up. With all his power, he arrived at the place of duty, unlocked the cage and freed the smallteeth. Only one smalltooth could follow the route, proceeding towards the mechanism to fire the warning torches, but its fate demanded nothing beyond being eaten by a bigteeth.

Vileryu regarded himself a betrayer. He thought he betrayed his people, for he knew it was not a tolerable mistake. But thoughts might await; the delusion and regret should not cause a possible, greater regret. He was negligent, right, but it did not mean it was too late for everything. Coming to his senses, he swam towards the shore as fast as he could, leaving behind drowsiness.

Even his expression was enough to push back three enemies welcoming him on the shore. He split them into six pieces with his break in a few particles¹.

His fear came true, some vulgar creatures thrust into the village. Two guards waiting on the shore were fighting with them, and a couple of them scampered towards the battlefield. The guard on the shore could fortunately light the warning fire before it was too late. But it was only good for decreasing the number of deaths, for, even if he wanted to, Vileryu could not go towards homes due to the crowd of creatures before him. By means of the torches lit by other guards, all members of the guild began splitting enemies into pieces on the shore with a short delay. The raid was more violent than the previous ones. Though dead bodies were much enough to be carried by five huge bigshells at the battles lasting for nearly one candlehour, enemies increased in number instead of decreasing. Even fighting with dual formations and defeating at least two enemies in each move were not enough. Besides, unlike the previous ones, enemies defeated and killed some Twins this time, including the Twin of Vileryu. Fire was growing. Fierce Streamlet was under big threat.

Vileryu could not recollect himself for a while after seeing twoheads stabbed on his Twin. Any words could not define the wrath he felt for himself. He crestfallenly and wrathfully gazed at the pale body lying in death agony, which belonged to his Twin, with whom he did everything together since childhood. He could not preserve his breath, left the place of duty, could not realize the threat on time and could not fire the warning torches. Erpin breathed no more due to his negligence. This feeling brought forth hatred. As if the last vein of grace in him was gone as well. He was a monster now, motivated merely to kill. He thereof came forward on the battlefield again. He would defeat as much as he could, and if luck permits, he would fall before the battle ended.

However, he could not attain his desire. He was not among the fourteen Twins who fell. Thirty people, four of whom were children, could not escape savagery. That was the greatest number of loss, considering the recent raids.

Glancing down, he sat upon a Fruited's wide root since the dust settled. He looked towards emptiness, without seeking anything. He was so bemused; he did not hear the approaching steps. He sobered up when a pair of boots came into his sight. Reyu, his full brother, was looking wrathful as well as aghast. "How?" he asked. That was all.

¹ In Shaar, time is measured by a mechanism made of what comes out when a Hellim Helseris sparkle and Ufasar spring touch each other, the thing we call "candle;" it is measured by candle clocks. The mechanism has all colors of the spectrum. Here, time is not expressed by numbers but colors. The smallest time is called bitty. Particles are bigger than bitties; candlehours are bigger than particles; days are bigger than candlehours, and days combine to form longdays. Then there comes seasons, and years. Then there comes cycles, then ages. We shall know, here, a day is not equal to another day.

The question he asked to his brother, the greatest warrior of the island, pointed his mistake rather than seeking the reason of the disaster. Though he proved he could stay underwater as a guard for almost a half day, how could he miss the comers?

Vileryu hurriedly turned his head, avoiding the eyes of his brother. The more he thought, the more he was drowned in the darkness he was trapped in. Reyu's question was wrong. He should ask *why* instead of *how*. Because, it was what Vileryu was inwardly saying over and over again. Meanwhile, he slowly gazed at his brother. Lightning flashed in his eyes. He tried to smooth lust since childhood, but lust overtook him when least expected. He wrathfully looked at Reyu. However, he recently believed Reyu would make a better leader than himself; persuading himself that he merely knew fighting. But Reyu, on the other hand, had a wise nature. His mind was disarrayed by the haunting feeling that arose as mischievous delusion, creating a huge forest of visions out of a tiny seed. He said nothing. He stood up and swiftly walked.

He entered the guild chamber where eight people were tranquilly sitting, expressing uneasiness, including his father. He saluted them with honor and kneeled down. He did not endeavor to hide the deep regret flashing in his eyes. He quickly gazed at everyone in there. He wanted to speak and confess, but waited until the permission. He waited... As he waited, his murmuring feelings turned into a serener course. The beastly qualm, inflaming his mind, was still there, and it seemed there was no way to estrange it.

The youngest wise beckoned, met Vileryu's gaze and gesticulated he could speak.

Vileryu gulped, then uttered a single word with intense voice, which he tried to restrain the roars of; "I ask for exile!"

Was it not so? One had to leave at times. To be brave enough to leave everything behind to see what would be with you in the end. But that was not what Vileryu felt. It was himself he wanted to escape, and the least need of someone who wanted to forget himself was to stay among faces that made him remember who he was.

No one asked for exile for years. Especially the son of a noble, a leader! Could it be so? His father stood aghast as an uprooted tree upon what he heard. Pulling around, he suddenly turned to Vileryu. He said nothing. He sought a single answer for the questions in his eyes by gazing at his son's eyes.

Silence overwhelmed the chamber... No one spoke. As wises began bowing their heads, the wise, who gave him the permission to speak, gesticulated that he could leave. Saluting the leader and wises, Vileryu left the chamber.

THIRD CHAPTER

"Why?" asked his father, the question was right, but fault was in the purpose.

Vileryu answered, "Because I shall do it. I cannot stay here anymore. With my hideous body and villainous thoughts, I cannot let the blessed land tarnish anymore."

Retin pondered Vileryu, both as a father and a leader. For him, accepting the fault and aspiring to leave were virtuous attitudes. The last exile left the island before he became the leader. It was so long before; merely a few who were alive then could realize the meaning of exile.

Besides, Retin was an affectionate father who did not want to leave his son. The candlehours he spent in dilemma did not alter the weight of neither. What was expected from him as a leader was to exile him from the island as a result of his negligence, the evident fault for which the price had to be paid; besides, it was himself who asked for exile. Nevertheless, he could not stand to entrust his son to the unknown, without seeing him ever again.

Vileryu thought his father and leader would decide in no time, and it was his last hours on the island. However, he was aware Retin was considerate. He had to wait for a while.

Retin, the leader, was tranquilly sitting at the oldest wise's home. He was staring at Old Olkut since he came, but his mind was with his son. Old wise did not speak unless needed, but his thoughts somehow influenced the heart of the person before him. He was the head of seven. Retin was never estranged from him due to the absence of peace.

After a long silence, old wise vigorously spoke; "I have witnessed so much in my life, and I have been astonished by many. The astonishment has decreased as I grow old. But now I am bewildered to know the Great Retin is afraid."

As Olkut addressed him as "the great," Retin was bewildered, because he knew what it meant. Olkut's leadership and position in supreme assembly was transferred to whomever he addressed as such. Retin glanced down, for this was a great blessing. As the old saying goes, *the time has passed*.

He stood up, saluted and honored the wise. He went there to counsel the decision for Vileryu, but he left with a strange feeling of pride and sorrow. He was sure in his heart that he would not regret the decision.

Vileryu was ready to go. When he was shouldering his break, he gazed at the eyes of Erpin, his Twin. As was the custom, the weapon of deceased Twin was entrusted to survivor. The fire arising from his heart surrounded his body. Apart from memories, the only thing left from his Twin he never spent a day apart was the vacant break.

He unbowed, scampered towards the wall the break was hanging, and kissed it. A teardrop flowed down his face. He was unwilling to put it back; he would set off with it. He could thus carry the trace of his mistake, and he would never forgive himself. So he shouldered Erpin's break on his back as well.

His family and relatives were waiting outside. But it was not only them. Though islanders agreed on the greatness of his mistake, he did not gain hatred of everyone. But a mother was looking at him in disgust, with the lifeless body of her little child in her arms. Hatred prevailed, hitting Vileryu in the face. He had nothing to say. Lifeless body of the child was shaken as mother moved; arms and legs were hanging down. Vileryu realized he came

across with the child while going for guard. Sorrow deepened once more. Instead of hushing, the woman was pushing the limits of her voice as she approached. *Was he the great warrior?* For her, he was the greatest enemy. The crowd pretended her from approaching, trying to soothe her pain. Some felt anger as much as she did, and for some, it was not the right place for it.

After all, Vileryu would leave. Some could hide anger, and some were not glad of his leaving for any reason. Solicitude was written on their faces. But sorrow was not enough to prevent him from leaving, for it was the leader's judgment.

Vileryu embraced his mother and father, then Reyu. They thought they would never meet again. He tenderly saluted everyone looking at him, without exception, presenting deep respect.

He unwaveringly paced towards the shore. A child sacredly gazed at the redness on his neck. Vileryu wished he could wipe away the tattoo, but it was not possible. The trace he aspired to carry with honor for a lifetime was now a trace of shame for him.

He was thinking of Erpin once again; indeed, would he ever leave him? His Twin was before his eyes from the moment he got on Plinkoar until Fortunate Harbor. His last moments, their childhood, the first day of their training after being accepted at the guild, the battles they were together... Each moment respectively echoed in detail in Vileryu's mind.

From Fierce Streamlet, where he left during solstice, he arrived at the land of Night Travelers through five days of journey on the sea, which he passed by rowing in an unexpectedly strong way though he seemed weak and slim.

He left his Plinkoar, and made holes on it. While Plinkoar was flowing down the ground in foamy water, he was ashore.

He tried, but he could not realize where he was. He intently listened to the sounds approaching through ecstatic steps. Three people were approaching with an appearance he never saw. Their horns were bigger than the horns of whitemottles. Their skin was of a different color and they seemed pretty monstrous.

There was no reason to hide, for he set off by accepting everything he might encounter in advance. He was surprised they did not recognize him until a few steps left between them. Were they planning a secret attack? Aye, he was ready for all misfortune at the place he was brought by his fate, but he would not surrender to the first danger he encountered. He guarded himself for a possible attack. The one on the left realized him at first, he stopped. Trying to oppress the influence of devilgamble, he carefully observed despite his shaking body. He neither saw nor heard someone with such a thin body. The others stopped as well, they also seemed bewildered.

The one on the left asked, "What are you?" His words narrated the consternation in his eyes.

Vileryu was bewildered again after what he heard. Who were they, and how could they speak the same language? Though he knew there were dwellers outside, he did not presume they could speak a common language until then. Thoughts in his mind were linked to each other but he did not spoke; the men before him thought he was deaf or he could not understand their language. While they were talking, they gazed at the body that bewildered them.

Vileryu spoke, "I am a traveler. I travel around with my plinkoar." He could not reveal the secret that he was a Twin. Even if he did, they could not understand; but he could not. It had been hundreds of years and cycles since his species left this land. He could not signal the secret island of them. It had been many years since the story of their ancestors retired from children's stories. They were the forgotten species. Seal of their stories was dried out, each turned into a legend with which merely some skilled wises and transcriptionists were familiar. The island had to remain secret, and it was. The way back to the island was hidden through secret signs; he might not even find the way back. Besides, because he was trained with guild's discipline, it was impossible to wangle words out of him through various tortures. However, there were some spells on those lands, as he heard; they might make people utter all they knew without them realizing.

The respondent spoke, "You have travelled pretty much. Look at your waist, as thin as my leg." Laughter followed his words.

Vileryu realized they were harmless. He tried to fathom who they were, "Who are you?"

"Who are we?" asked one of them, pointing the bottle in his hand. Laughter continued. "We... We are the ones who want to swim in this."

Laughter was regarded as flaw in Fierce Streamlet. Thereof, Vileryu never saw someone laughing as such, so he did not know what to say. Laughter wavered after a while. When the dust settled, the one in the forefront asked, "Where are you headed now?"

"I haven't decided yet," answered Vileryu. But he knew where he was going. He would let himself to the bosom of the first Ilerj Elmis he saw. He would beg for forgiveness, and seek a sign for this. But deep inside, he felt time had not come to encounter a Hegira Tree.

The respondent answered, "A traveler without a road... Hah hah ha!" Then they walked away as they came.

Vileryu smiled and watched drunken men wavering. He looked around. As he was trying to decide what to do, he heard furious voice approaching him. He turned there. Squeaking and running, a creature he never saw before was approaching him. Unaware and bewildered, he gazed at the gigantic creature for a while; then collected himself and thought, "Let's see what else will welcome me!" Meanwhile, the creature accelerated. As a familiar feeling surrounded the body of Vileryu, he prepared his break. When there were a few steps between the animal and himself, a sharp whistle echoed. The creature instantly stopped.

As Vileryu was attentively listening to the whistle, he saw someone flabbily and slowly approaching. The gruesome creature walked away from Vileryu, and embraced the legs of that person. Indeed, he did not expect this attitude from such a scary creature.

The approaching person impatiently spoke before nearing Vileryu; “You are not from here!”

The Twin nodded to confirm, “I am not.”

“It is obvious you are not. Anyone who sees a roaring horror hides somewhere. And you, bag of bones, even thought of attacking! This is a sign of madness!” said the respondent, closing his mouth and laughing in bewilderment.

Vileryu felt out of place. People smiled too much and even defiantly guffawed; these attitudes did not have a place in his imagination.

“Who are you, what do you do?”

“I am a traveler.” Vileryu was embracing the term.

“Where did you come, where are you going?”

Vileryu hesitated, because he never thought of this. He did not know the name of any place besides Fierce Streamlet and the lands of South Forest. He recalled an old name, and said “Stone Square.”

“Are you going or coming?” asked the respondent. “I went there many years ago. Does nemis still tease the fountain near Big Rock?”

Man’s chattering served the purpose of Vileryu. He was collecting details to strengthen his story. “I don’t know; I am just going.”

“What will you do there? Are you a southern? Unless the cruel Shadowed began filing their horns, you are not one of them.” The stranger smiled, and hesitated. He began observing Vileryu, and suspiciously spoke, “It is obvious you are not one of us. Now tell me, who are you?”

Vileryu did not answer. He did not want to let a secret out. The chattering of the stranger continued, “My name is Rifiel, I’m a merchant. I’ve come to Dark Cove to get goods. You are weak, but apparently, you are courageous. Your courage bewildered me. Join my caravan if you want, and accompany me till Narrow Cape. I don’t know the name of the strange thing on your back; I see that weapon for the first time. But you seem like an expert in using them. If you help me protect my goods, I’ll be pretty generous.”

Vileryu kept silent. The stranger caressed the animal’s head, and spoke; “I don’t know what I would do without this. I took it from an animal tamer in return for his debt many years ago. It was small, just for a few days old. I fed it with what I ate and drank. It revived, flourished. It never left me alone since then. We survived lots of crisis together.”

The stranger grieved with a strange expression as he recalled the past memories. But it did not last long, he was joyful again. He kept mumbling. In fact, unless Vileryu stopped him, he could speak by himself till dawn. "I accept," said the Twin. Deep inside he felt that he would regret, but he accepted anyway. What was the worst thing that could happen? Death? Everyone expected him to be as a still lake throughout his life; but tranquility, safety, existing without advancing or regressing, weren't they nothing but betrayal to his nature? He could not do it. He had to be full of life, he would play around, overflow and vandalize. He was like a raging river of Fierce Streamlet. He could cease only when he found his land, if it was possible. Even deservedly dying on his island turned into something he could not do with honor. There or somewhere else. That day or the next cycle. What was the difference?

FOURTH CHAPTER

It had been a few candlehours since journey began. In comparison with someone who did not travel on an animal throughout his life, he got used to move along on a whitemottle in no time. He was thinking of what he lived through for a few days on the road near and in line with the merchant.

"Are you always bemused like that?" asked the merchant.

Vileryu heard, but could not comprehend. He looked at him, and did not speak again.

"You are so bemused for a traveler I say, you've come to this age well," said the merchant. Then he strangely laughed once again, even Vileryu got used to his laughter.

They moved along for a while with the goods loaded on whitemottles. It was not long before since they left Dark Cove. They often encountered other caravans and people who walked alone, in pairs or in groups of three. Vileryu realized he did not remember the name of the man, and asked, "What was your name?"

Rifiel perpetuated his strange look with laughter, "You are courageous, but I tell you, you are a halfwit."

Halfwit. The merchant laughed again. But Vileryu was raged this time. Yarely grabbing the break on his back, he approached it to his neck, "Laugh once again and I will split you."

Perhaps just a few bitties after what he said, the Twin realized the presence of a mass approaching, and veered away from it. His mount was shattered with a single move of the roaringhorror, it was drenched in blood. The roaringhorror hurriedly made a second move which Vileryu hardly evaded. Meanwhile, the animal was about to pounce on him, but whistle stopped him. It looked at the red haired weak warrior, then at its owner. Expressing displeasure, it neared to its owner. Rifiel was sitting on a whitemottle, but the predator was tall up to his waist.

Rifiel spoke, "I don't know who you are. However, what just happened was a sign that you are a ball of fire brave-man. But I'm afraid, if you ever attempt the same, you'll see your hand in the mouth of my animal."

Vileryu did not shy away and raged, "And if you keep laughing like that, you'll see your big mouth and tongue in its mouth."

Perhaps because he did not expect spurt, Rifiel's expression returned to the familiar state. He smiled as if nothing happened, and called him, "jump up!" The other four whitemottles were loaded with goods, thereof it would be good to move along as such not to lose time.

Thus, they went along for a few candlehours. However, Rifiel's silence accompanied the cagey nature of Vileryu. They did not talk for a long time.

After the days in silence, the caravan was about to arrive at Great Post. Nothing went wrong until that moment, they moved on as they expected.

"We will visit my friend I haven't seen for a long time here," said Rifiel. "We will stay here for the night. Do whatever you want."

Vileryu did not pay attention, and shrugged his shoulders. Rifiel's distrust grew, because he never met someone who did not even afraid of an adult roaringhorror, he was agile as he never saw before, he resembled neither Protectors, Frees nor Heirs, and expressed his power with his stance even though he was as scraggy as the dwarfs of West Shallow. His distrust deepened because, even though he said he could freely wander around in a city like Great Post, his dull expression did not change. Even so, as if it was someone else who received death threat a few days ago, he deeply trusted this man in a way he could not depict.

They were welcomed by the city's uproar. Amidst the chaos of Great Post, what attracted the attention of Vileryu were the various creatures passengers used as mounts, which were different from whitemottles and kes. He neither heard nor saw the large and small creatures, some of which had two, four or six legs. He did not pretend to have a deep knowledge of outer world, but even if he strived, he could not imagine such a colorful and vivid world before.

Once more he was lost in thought, listening to the quarrel and watching the staggering scene. He realized Rifiel's call in the second. The home of the merchant's friend was not far away, but mounts had to be delivered to grooms to be fed and rest. Thereof, two companions, who did not resemble each other at all, set off amidst the turmoil of the city. After a while, Rifiel gazed at Vileryu and smiled sincerely, "You are not a traveler or so." Making his presence felt with his tone, he continued, "I don't know what you are, but it's obvious you are not a traveler. I'm not interested in who you are or where you go. But still, it won't be good for you if you let me down."

Vileryu looked at Rifiel once again. Smile was like a permanent part of his face, it was always there, either when he threatened or said something nice. Vileryu grumbled, "I guess I revealed myself." He was not aware of saying it aloud. "Aye," said Rifiel, "you did."

Vileryu spoke, "I cannot tell you who I am. But you can be sure I will keep my word. I will complete my journey with you, no matter what prevents us."

Rifiel's smile deepened, he was thoroughly pleasant now. He began talking to his companion about the friend he was going to visit. "Urash," he said, "we worked together once. We were not merely land merchants like now; we were merchants on the sea as well. Hiring the rider of a huge akuna, or with gigantic ironcures, we carried many things around for years. Feathersugars, honeyemeralds, kenails, bones and yellowdomes, various mines you can think of; local biscuits, reddish, yellowish, fireshells, summerbrooms, winterbrooms, home seeds; kes, whitemottles, beetles, beauties; even slaves... Then one day, in Harbor City, Urash saw a girl at Fat Kakuka's place. I cannot even tell how beautiful she was. She would awaken desire springs of every man, whether a Protector or garugi! The lady was obviously half-blood. Her hair was as bright as the Heirs, and yellow as the blossoms of sun spread throughout my village! Her face was round and flesh silky; like noble Ketri coquettes of Narrow Cape! You have to see her eyes; they are like the first springs of Ufasar; vivid, blue, deep blue and brilliant! She was a beautiful woman... She was really beautiful..."

Urash... He was struck the moment he saw her! He approached her without looking for anything. He spoke with her. But when he came back... He was not like himself, but someone else. He did not resemble the familiar Urash. Aye, he was not tough before, but he smiled in a different way, he had twinkles in his eyes. I realized he fell in love with the lady. We stayed there one more day than we needed to. But this served the purpose of the crew as well... Harbor City... It was beautiful and rich. Free Easterners, the ones from Howlbottom, Charmers or Old Charmers... You don't know Maaris. They are a tough and noble tribe. And Ketris! I've never seen a community more committed to their modesty than them... Anyway, the city was alive. Merriments were organized without gentlemen and soldiers noticing, you don't know... Then time had come. It was the day to leave. Urash came near me. Behold! Guess what! He said it was his last voyage and he would bring the lady with him. He would settle in Gunpowder Castle, his homeland, and he would never leave Iltis, the name of the lady. Can you imagine a Protector and a Free-Heir half blood? Hah ha hah! But you know what is stranger? Urash... He did what he said. Hah ha hah!"

Vileryu curiously interrupted, "But this is not Gunpowder Castle."

"Right, it is not. I sailed alone after Urash, but it was neither enjoyable nor on track. After enduring a few years, I left the seas, I carried on land. I did smaller businesses and I was alone. One day, I came by the city of Urash, and wanted to see him right away. But when I arrived at his home, I was terrified. Urash... I saw one of his arms was cut in half. Aye, Iltis was there, but he did not smile. I asked what happened, and she began telling. Urash couldn't stand and set sail again after our separation, to trade in shorter distances. He sustained for a while. But one day, he was surrounded by Shadowed pirates with three ironcures, they invaded his goods and cut the left arm of each. They did not kill anyone, because they knew,

leaving them so increased their glory. At least they were close to his city, Gunpowder Castle, and they landed them at the harbor with laughter. They seized their demirkürlü as well. Besides, it was just a few days before I arrived at there. Though I tried to talk with him, there was not a trace of his former self. It was like the flippy shadow left, replaced by debris. I stayed there for a while. If you ask what we talked, nothing... He grumbled something as I was leaving. It was vague, I couldn't hear anything. I wanted him to repeat, but he uttered the same words in the same way. I approached to clearly hear what he said. *I will leave here, I cannot stand anymore*, he said. He repeated this. I asked him where he would go, but he didn't know. Before leaving, I wrote my address on a small hairparchment I carried, and gave it to Iltis. I wanted her to inform me wherever they went, either through a messenger or a harbinger yalichur. She kindly accepted. Either one or more year passed. As I was about to lose hope to hear from them, a messenger knocked my door, bringing an inscription. It was from Iltis, saying they moved here, to Great Post. It was written that, because there were neither sea nor ironcures with pirate flags to make him remember the unhappy days, Urash recovered himself in short time and he was as joyful as before. I came by here a few times before. She was right, Urash was undoubtedly joyful. So I came by again, shouldn't I visit my old friend?"

Urash welcomed them in a way which seemed theatrical to Vileryu. Vileryu discreetly gazed at his arm. Urash realized, but he did not pay attention for he got used to such glances. Each drank a cup of witchshell wine. Vileryu liked the drink he tasted for the first time; he did refuse the second and even third cup they offered. Old friends talked a long time. Their words always pointed to the past. They either moved to laughter or tears. For a moment, the tattoo on Vileryu's neck attracted attention of Urash. When the old merchant began talking about an old man with the same tattoo, Vileryu was all ears. He asked where he was now. Urash called his servant standing behind the fences surrounding his home. Though Rifiel wanted to enjoin him not to be late, Vileryu already wandered away from home with the servant.

Vileryu found the Twin he sought at the cove of a Fountain of Solitude. Before they approached, the old Twin opened his eyes at once, and carefully eyed Vileryu. Vileryu stopped a few steps away. Pointing to the servant, he sent him away. Only two were there now.

"Lamusa lamula," said Vileryu.

"Lamusa lamuv," answered the old man.

FIFTH CHAPTER

The caravan slowly moved forward. Rifiel was pleased, for he was charmed by the strength and youth of three new whitemottles, the gift of Urash. He either laughed and whistled, or mentioned an issue to converse with two silent fellow travelers. He cheered up, "They are young but strong, hah ha hah! They might live for two cycles; they might even see the twelfth of us. Hah ha hah!" Vileryu almost got used to the situation. But the old Twin was still disturbed by noise, especially if someone excessively talked about tons of pointless things

he didn't need to know, though he spent many days on the continent. Thereof, he couldn't help but rage.

Always finding a way to enhance his joy, Rifiel sat backwards on his mount this time. All his life, he was pleased with crowds, carnivals and merriments. His most usual attitude might be sincerely attaching obtrusive smile on his face. He did this while calling Ulpar, who joined them later. "Oldster, I don't like silent people, but my curiosity arouses before the ones who never talk. I think they have great secrets."

Whether a Maari, an Heir or a foulmouthed northerner; each native living on the continent was a detail to curve the end of his lips for Ulpar, from the exile to that moment. But he could see Rifiel had a veiled, hidden mind and sensitive conscience beyond dimwitted behaviors. He felt Rifiel was innocuous, benign and good. However, seriousness was like a skin, coalesced with him, as if he would never learn how to take off. "Tell me what you want to hear, garrulous merchant, and I will give you the answer."

Rifiel liked what he heard. "So you are a traveler too, uh ho!" Pointing Vileryu, "Like him, or a real one?" he asked, attaching laughter to his question.

Vileryu raged at him. He touched his seal and closed his eyes. They knew rage kept a warrior alive and awake, but it was a feeling which should arise only when there was an enemy. Their rage, which was unrestricted enough to overshadow their tender but deep conscience, was a reflection of which the source was the essential nature of being Twins. When they need to control, they did this; they touched the four clawed seals engraved on their neck with the hot light made of boiled essences of the trees of life, before the tree of life which was appointed as their guide on the day of covenant, and closing their eyes, Charmer Twins spoke, "You are the holy guard of us. We ask for hatred and fiery twinkle during wars, compassion and tranquility during peace."

Ulpar was a Charmer Twin like Vileryu. He waited for the young Twin to calm to speak. "There is no land I haven't been for years. I walked in Shadow City and Narrow Cape. I traded everywhere from Stone Square to Motley Lands, and I hunted escapees." He gazed at Vileryu. Vileryu thought of the accuracy of the things he said. Because hesitation was a feeling forbidden to be present among Twins, they were embarrassed. They both averted their eyes from each other. Because not telling lie was one of the great vows of each Twin's first day of covenant. However, their exile and fugitive life in those lands obliged them to the forbidden way, even if the purpose was to cover their past to hide their land.

Rifiel allusively gazed at Vileryu when he heard "Stone Square." Vileryu did not pay attention. The merchant asked a few more questions. Ulpar answered all to the letter.

"I've just liked you because of your silence, now I like you because you speak, hah ha hah! So you speak, at least you speak!" said Rifiel.

They moved along in silence for a while. Rifiel's rooted smile was still the same, but he preferred jolly by himself, talking and fooling around with his whitemottle instead of taunting others. Vileryu warmed up to his spirit. In fact, his lips opened, he almost smiled.

The strange person, who did not resemble anyone he saw before, gave rise to relief in Vileryu's world of feelings in a short time.

As if Rifiel felt Vileryu's relief, he turned towards him. Feeling he was about to smile, Rifiel approached his hands to his face to make strange gestures, "Do I look so funny!"

As Vileryu opened his mouth to smile, the merchant, being terrified of the presence of a great threat approaching him, shouted, "Vileryu!" before he could be surprised at the first echo of his joy in him.

Vileryu turned back, called Rifiel, "Get behind me now!" Grabbing Rifiel's arm, he threw him down from his mount.

Rifiel was protecting himself behind an elevation he used as a shield. As if they were trained for this before, Vileryu and Ulpár easily got into fighting position, combining their breaks into one, to surround themselves thoroughly. That moment, two breaks looked like a single and mutual weapon.

The situation made gaggas pause and vulgarly laugh, though they were sure of triumph as much as a mob of redfur in pursuit of some little nemis, estimating the share of the prey in advance. One of them shouted, "Fooolish dirtydinky weak treemen. Hungeeer treemen. Freesh blood and hot flesh. Kummuggg gummuggg squirting blood!"

Ulpár spoke in a trustworthy tone, "Let's see if they still train soldiers as before!"

Vileryu smiled. He was surprised, because they took shape as quick as they did with Erpin. Ulpár was not his Twin, but he was a Twin after all. He trusted him.

Despite his age, Ulpár fought in the same league with Vileryu with hearty and agile moves. They preserved their shape, besides; the arms directed towards defenseless Rifiel were split in half before reaching him. As the Twins succeeded destroying threats, a few gaggas of the mob scampered, hoping to find a place to hide. Meanwhile, the hurtful sound of a northsavage pipe made of the hooves of evilhowl echoed. Scampering Cannibals quickly gathered, suddenly rose throughout the darkness, and lunged at the Twins once again as a more crowded group with newly joined kinds. However, as their attack grew violent, strikes of Vileryu and Ulpár grew tougher. Challenge grew hard, and their endurance decreased. They were losing their shape, the shield was weaker.

Ulpár shouted in the midst of the battle, "Is Retin alive?"

Vileryu staggered, and he was slightly injured from the back as he was trying to evade the strike of a forkhead strongly reaching out to his neck. He stumbled, completely losing his shape.

Once he had the chance, Vileryu turned towards Ulpár with a short but determined look, "You are the Twin of my father!" He was bewildered, "You are the last exile!"

"Not anymore!" said Ulpár.

They almost lost their power. Ulpar exhausted, he could not stand reuniting and taking shape. They began fighting side by side. But shield was not as impassable as before. Passing through a hole, an evil northsavage neared Rifiel, and attacked his neck with his teeth as spiky as a small hammer, without weakening him with his weapon. Rifiel could not even shout, for he was petrified! As if a big piece of flesh was torn apart from his neck with a single move. He could say, "You are a good companion Vileryu," after which his wheezy sound would completely trail off. When the young Twin heard the barely uttered words with his sharp ears, the last thing he saw was the faded gaze of his companion.

The Cannibal who killed Rifiel was split into pieces by Vileryu within a few particles. But Vileryu was shattered once again with the strike from his back. The forkhead, which was directed to him, tore off a piece of flesh from his back. The young Twin gathered strength in no time. He did not even feel pain. He beat four creatures that surrounded and attacked him. However, Ulpar's situation was underwhelming. Though Vileryu approached him in pursuit of taking shape again, ever growing crowd of enemies between them was the obstacle. Meanwhile, the pipe echoed once again.

Sound brought hope to the Twins, and it was not in vain, because a dozen of Protector cavalries on lakehorses was approaching, ripping apart the Cannibals ahead of them.

The leader warrior of cavalries shouted, "My name is thrice-sealed Kikukuna! *My kope* is jingling now! Whuhohuha!"

As the strange-looking reinforcing unit, of which members had horns like animals and uttered strange words, came to the help of the Twins, they had the chance to breathe. Besides, Kikukuna was a skilled warrior almost as the Twins, and the chivalries under him were combating with great pleasure and yeast, as if they were at a wedding.

Vileryu and Ulpar strengthened enough to take shape again with the support of Protectors' force. They reunited in such a tremendous way; everyone at the square was fascinated at least for a moment. At the point where their breaks met, dense whiteness appeared, resembling the beam orchards of Rays. The whiteness was so sharp, the dense bundle of beams burnt the skins of gaggas, split and scattered them before sharp edges of heroic weapons touched them, though the weapons were made of the inks of kenails, feathersugars and ironleaves and able to cause deep damage in enemies in case of a little contact. Vileryu was bewildered, because he could not create such a harmonious unity even with Erpin. The astonishment of Kikukuna and the others were inexpressible as well.

After the slaughter which took a long period of particles, the Twins and Protectors could finally devastate all enemies. After the fight ended, Vileryu scampered towards Rifiel. The joyous merchant, oh, he was not alive! Seven horned warriors also fell in the battle. But Kikukuna was pretty happy. Slowly wandering around fallen bodies, he either smiled or laughed, looking at them, and said something in his own language. Pointing a dead body on the ground, he turned to Vileryu, "Pal, his name is Moko. I am the second, and Moko is the seventh baby of my mother. That bumpkin was a swaggerer. I got pissed off thinking he would muck up. What do you say, aha, I counted him in my clan, piling bucks in his

saddlebag, to prevent him from sleeping with Shadowed bastards. I was not sure he could do. But you see how he pierced through bald heads! His kope is sparkling now, huhuhoaha!”

Kikukuna walked around the dead bodies of his kind on Rutasar, and honored their souls through strange words and signs. Then he turned towards Ulpar, “What a fortune! All sparkle, all sealed their names with themselves and left. Old chap, my kope sparkled three times, my name is thrice-sealed. You cannot find someone who sealed name at least once among them, huhohahaha! Let Rutasar oil them with its skin!”

Meanwhile, all survivor Protectors shouted in great yeast as him, “Let Rutasar oil them with its skin!”

Kikukuna continued, “According to the calendar which is the spindle of Ketri mothers, I am in my fortieth. According to the laws of Travelers, my kope is thrice sparkling, twelve times jingling!”

Meanwhile, his clan shouted in yeast once again, “Thrice-sealed Kikukuna!”

Kikukuna stopped them through the gestures to which the Twins were not familiar. Silence replaced sounds. The Protector got serious, and spoke through deep voice, which was not flabby, “What I’m telling is, I’ve seen seasons and heard stories. I’ve been in, perhaps, all lands in both sides of Rising Sea. But I haven’t seen anyone fighting that good. What was it when you joined your weapons! You look like whitemottle carrions, and also Maaris, and Heirs as well. But you neither look like the thin and dark men with big noses nor the cocky and blonde fools. Who are you?”

Ulpar hesitated, then pointing Rifiel, lain there within faded color of dry blood on his neck, he spoke, “We are two travelers headed to Narrow Cape with this poor man. We were attacked and pillaged at once.” He did not continue, for everything was clear enough.

Kikukuna gazed at Rifiel, and allusively looked at them again. “Old chap!” he shouted, “What you said was not the answer. What are you, where is your land?”

Vileryu got used to be questioned since stepped on those lands. He slightly smiled and whispered to the old Twin, “He is as gabby as him; Rifiel’s soul might still be among us!”

Ulpar rather seemed hesitant. Incisively glancing, he spoke in a more determined tone, expressing rage, “We are two travelers on our way. My name is Ulpar, and the young man is Vileryu. That’s all you need to know!”

Kikukuna hesitated, and said nothing. Feeling their leader was belittled, Protectors put their hands on their weapons to threaten the Twins, they grumbled. Each knew they had a little chance of defeating the two warriors who harmoniously fought; nevertheless, they would not abstain from fighting at the risk of their lives with a sign of their leader. But Kikukuna’s laughter pierced through silence. “If you don’t tell, Kikukuna will not ask anymore,” he said. Then he asked, expressing sarcasm, “So what are you going to do now, will you go to Narrow Cape?”

Ulpar looked around and saw all mounts carrying the caravan were riddled. Pointing all worthless goods scattered around, “You see, we don’t need to go anymore.”

SIXTH CHAPTER

Unlike many Protectors, Kikukuna was Shadowed, whose soul was surrendered to free deities. The first oiler of him was Oldhalberd, an old Ketri, who was also his last lord. He gifted seven blessed graphtures treated to Kuna from Ketri runes, and taught him his own prayers. With the seven graphtures, Kuna relentlessly honored him in the bosom of the Star of Shaar for seven long days. He was in pursuit of knowing the purpose of life, nothing else. When divine inspiration eventually brought him a gleam, Ilerj Elmis bestowed him its voice, and asked for his firstbirth cob, all orders and signs he rightly possessed. As Kuna determinedly offered the rewards, he had the second sparkling in him, which was as unique as the previous. His kope was jingling and sparkling that much for the first time.

Kope; this word did not have a meaning neither in Ketri language, the common language nor any forgotten archaic languages. They might call themselves Shadowed, Traveler, Protector or Harbore; but this word was nothing but a hallowed secret Buba trusted to Protectors. The secret, the seed was eternally alive in the heart of each Protector as a seedling as big as a bud. It seemed like another heart in their hearts, during unique or dreary climaxes, each Protector experienced a gleam that could not be realized or defined by someone else, and they felt it in their kopes, as the explosion and aerial spread of a wholly filled, overflowing secretsyrup. Each Shadowed experienced this. After seven long days, on the fast day, Oldhalberd should have felt the flame of Kuna’s kope, he suggested presenting a new name to him in the presence of the Star of Shaar. Kuna would be thereof accepted as a Ketri through the charm of belonging where the breaths of eleven blessed elders met the essences of eleven blessed trees.

Kuna was filled with tears, hearing the remarkable offer. He bowed respectfully before the elder. But a Shadowed could never change name according to the customs of his people. He proudly responded, “Who’s born as a Traveler dies as a Traveler!”

Oldhalberd regretted and nodded. But Kuna still felt great power in his will. He returned towards the Hegira Tree. The archaic tree realized his faith and devotion. In the depths of its bosom, it showed him the firstbirth cob, orders and signs beyond the elegant beam layer. However, Kuna did not fancy any price he resigned. Oldhalbert was the witness of the moment and Kuna’s feeling. Thereof, he was not merely the first oiler, but also the first name sealer of him. He did not offer a name in his language, but he sealed his name with the first mime. Kuna had the rights of his name now, and he could augment it.

He did so. He regularly blessed the Hegira Trees and the Altars of Contemplation then, and whenever he was about to set off on a journey or take a decision, he consulted on them along with his kope. After a vision he fell at the Altar of Contemplation, a course was identified in his spirit and thereof, a few seasons after his name was sealed, he saved Oldhalberd from the kidnappers with his clan, when he was captured in North Cape Battle. In

fact, his kope inflamed again, and this time he sealed his name for the first time. Now he was the twice sealed Kukuna.

He sojourned at the inn of Oldhalberd with his clan. During captivity, the old Ketri weakened. One night, Oldhalberd called Kukuna, and gave a share of his property by blowing his breath into Kukuna's breath before resigning his last *ki*. A cube of scratch, a cube of fadedgnarl and some lightgnarls. Kukuna did not even see a thousandth of this prize throughout his life.

Besides, the old man entrusted his ironcure, along with its crew, on condition that he would appreciate their lives. Kukuna thus set sail. They were almost thirty with his clan. They traded with sea caravans, and often fought with gaggas who drove akunas, of which souls were subdued. But the small green seals on their flags were enough to antagonize even their kinds. During the last sail, their ironcures were pillaged through a sudden attack by a crew of Shadowed pirates. Kukuna and some of his brothers could hardly save their lives.

They could not return to their homeland. After a few longdays of losing their ways, Kukuna braced himself to an Altar of Contemplation, hoping his spirit would light up. So it was; a route appeared in his spirit, now he knew where he had to go.

They immigrated to Sun Vision Island off the coast of Sand Spiritcellar along with the survivors of the group. Along with a few prizes he could take, he resigned his order of freedom to Toyras, the leader of Free Easterners who were the relatives of Bah Batura as well, and he was not after any benefits but to peacefully keep the members of his clan alive. Toyras was influenced by Kukuna's heart and generosity. He did not touch his property and the order of freedom. After he was tested by another challenge, he rather granted him the island's west wing and eighty Travelers, of whom the orders of freedom he had, on condition that he would improve the land.

Each Shadowed let a drop of their blood in the presence of the archaic Hegira Tree on the island, accepted Kukuna as the leader of their clan, and bound their fate to his fate by obeying him. Kukuna oiled them, and sealed their names when their kopes sparkled. Together they worked on the island for more than ten years. Land grew fertile, products increased. Besides, they defended the island and islanders against the abuses of North Cannibals, and gave no chance to the raids of Shadowed pirates and pillagers. Thereof, two orders were hung on Kukuna's breast, and the first gospel was whispered in his ear by a Zone Saint.

Hearing the gospel, Kukuna found himself braced to the nearest Altar of Contemplation, and he saw a gap in North Jest's and countless evil creatures under a terrible lord, creeping into the secluded continent, pillaging the protected lands and spreading ember to homes. Huge smoke in strongest black was rising above Motley Lands. Mist surrounded, an earsplitting vulgar sound echoed from within the dark veil. Maaris, ke riders, a few Shadowed and Heir groups, disorganized enough to form a steady union, were scampering around, and trembling in inexpressible terror experienced by their souls. In his vision, Kukuna's kope was sparkling as never before and his name was thrice sealed. For the sake of the life of almighty leader Bah Batura, he was battling with a few survivors of his clan and two warriors as weak

as the Dwarf-heirs of Rattling Garden; though he could not clearly see, they were unlike any other mortals with pale skin and strange appearance. Each of them, as it seemed, was amidst of a hopeless battle from which they would not come out alive. They were besieged, and in each particle, their bodies were wounded by the violent touches of smoked devilhooves. As Kukuna was about to die due to the force of weapon thrown by a Northern Cannibal that bit his neck in pursuit of savaging, the elder strange warrior saved him by jumping on the enemy.

When the lord Protector woke up from the vision, he was stiffened, cold, and staring. His body almost forgot breathing. Besides, his kope was intensely sparkling. It was sparkling enough to seal his name! But it was neither usual nor heard of. When the kope of a Protector sparkled, his body, organs and his whole existence would be alive and hearty as never before. But Kukuna's body was rather faded, and his existence was trapped in deep gloom.

Apart from sparkling, his kope never jingled or even rattled in any of his visions. Beside the rumors from afar, he was unfamiliar with the presence of this truth. What he lived and felt in his spirit did not even resemble an essential climax which altered his fate and illuminated his soul.

Kukuna ghastly recovered himself, and straightened. He touched the tree's skin. He oiled himself with the sap of Epemet Murpas, sealed his name for the third time, and thereof began his journey towards Motley Lands with his clan.

A moment of appearance of the vision was enough for Kikukuna to identify. When the last misty doubt disappeared, he realized the two odd strangers in his presentiment were Vileryu and Ulpar, his contact with them would turn into a journey, and this journey would bring them to inescapable fate. He rejoiced. In his swallow, he felt the relief of sunsyrops his mother boiled. He began singing the childhood song, with its words carrying the dialect of Seven Scraps, they sang with Kabu and Moko in their father's garden.

“Asat sunazaş asig Asat Mirepiriq esestel
Asat sunazaş asig Asat Mirepiriq esestel

Sun giliris, ver ipadiris yu hapafit jisir
Sun giliris, ver ipadiris yu hapafit jisir

Ke tiliris kipistel Ekayi Atsa
Ke tiliris kipistel Ekayi Atsa

Meragiher, valasit rimir, lessemiguma leşi
Meragiher, valasit rimir, lessemiguma leşi

Benisim Hellim Helseris yu Ufasarta yig
Benisim Hellim Helseris yu Ufasarta yig

Ufag, helig
Ufag, helig

Tesbeyonikopesimer”
Tes beyoni kopesimer

“In the bosom of Asat Mirepir, fire glows scarlet,

*Blossoms of sun, clay reeds and collared bustards
Howling River behind ke paths
Harborers, dark children, we are tireless!
Towards Hellim Helseris and Ufasar we turn,
Sparkling in dark and light
Eternally awake kopes of us!"*

SEVENTH CHAPTER

Warders' Troop at the east end of the military camp was thoroughly massacred with more than two thousand loses during the sudden dawn raid of Night Division. Merely a few members of the troop and a handful of Maaris including Warder Arp could survive. The shattering of the most important and precious troop following the leader's troop by the unexpected raid brought frustration and despair to all elements which formed the helm before the great battle.

However, they did not have time to relieve and ease the pain of the helm. When the last twinkles of Ufasar colored Rutasar, tens of thousands of irregular soldiers at the command of their Motley lord under the wing of Qharos took action from North to the meadows of Burntmeadow. Nightservants, Expatriates, North Cannibals, Southernoffsprings and cruel Shadowed... The darkness they brought was dense enough to absorb and overshadow the intense gleam of first flashes left by Hellim Helseris.

Before a battle, Maari men were expected to do the ice and fire dance as the local ceremony before their leaders as a representation of their loyalty, belief and bravery. But the sudden raid of Night Division caused the rise of lament and unexpected clamor in the helm. Clamor and mutter among surviving Warders led to the rise of rebellious yells, finding response among large and small groups of Protectors. How painful it was for a well educated army to fall apart, but the course of tension's emblazing fire was so great, that disorder was partly replaced by uproars. Irregular Protector troops unfamiliarly yelled, shook fists to express disobedience, and shouted they would not accept a Ketri as a leader with deep voice in their throats.

Bah Batura gesticulated to assign Kikukuna to soothe the rising unrest. Kikukuna climbed to Emeraldgrip Hill. Strongly shouting, he enthralled, "Some of you might know, my name is thrice sealed Kikukuna, shriveledstones. I'm calling who act out, huho ho! Who mess with guvnor messes with Kikukuna and his clan! If there's a brave fellow among you, step forth! And I will pinch his penniless kope from his heart and mount on his arse!"

Turmoil was almost soothed after Kikukuna's call.

Then Bah Batura invited old Arp to get information about condition of both armies.

"They are probably eight or ten times bigger than us, and as moments pass, we are more trapped by the mist above us and the Vagrants leaking in from the gap. Leader, our soldiers go mad by the whispers wallowing in breasts coming from the mist. We don't know what they are. We don't know what they can do, apart from maddening. The troop is worried.

Warders, I cannot soothe them; it seems they are going to destroy whole army! Nightservants, Vagrants; everyone call them different, but during the morning raid... During the morning raid, leader, familiar faces were seen. Ilerj Elmiris, dear blessed mothers, save us! They say their bodies suppurate, stinking like the sewers of Thread Horn, and instead of eyes, their eyeholes are filled with pitch dark hollow, nailing the beholder to the ground like black spells. Leader, they are terrible. They are probably four thousand or five. If you ask whether they fight well, nay, they don't. They are disorganized. Like pillagers, they fight with whatever they find, and they are not really experts in it. But they bite like animals, they are terrible!"

"So, did you see anything?"

Arp hesitated. Distress deepened, surrounding his face. "Leader, my lost brother. Unless mischief fell into my mind by the whispers beyond the mist, I'm sure I saw Tukan among them. But it was something else in his body. An evil soul; an absorbing, terrible darkness; the darkness of terror, a black death!"

Bah Batura was calm. "Meadows are filled with destruction and terror. Crimson, silver and gray! Smoke, ash and cinder rise above the crimson land, which harmoniously moved the flowers once. Hell has fallen down on this land!" He pointed Arp to keep on.

Arp continued, "Leader, Vagrants are not highly skilled in battling. But, do you remember the feeling I told you about when we were offended at Northcape pincer? I don't know how, but what we felt there was not even a trace of the fear we felt when we saw the Vagrants. I don't know how we would deal with this. I'm not sure whether this is good news, but the backbone of division is not them. As if all Cannibals united, each fallen stands against us! Kong-meï carries their flag. They are at the center of the army. Twenty, perhaps twenty five thousand baldheads. A great number of Flesheaters, women and men Expatriates of Tongue Horn and a few dozens of Shadowed traitors. If you ask the number of whole army, leader, we counted eighteen or perhaps twenty endwalls. And the mist... I don't know how we shall count them!"²

Bah Batura was worried. He asked about the condition of his army.

"Flag Union comprises of a plenteousblood of one hundred fifty under the command of Funj Fej. Apart from this, there are the clan of Kikukuna and the pale skinned weaklings who resemble each other. We are placing three hundred Heir shooters on Emeraldgrip, they will protect the hill. Because two hundred Ketris left in Warders, we reorganized the troop with Nailers and Nemioffsprings. With six plenteousblood and almost nine hundred Ketris, we will be at the far end. The center is three thousand Maaris. One thousand Maaris on both right and left wings. Three hundred Protector cavalries will keep the front of both wings."

"Ten to one, almost... The army is disorganized, hope is weak!"

² Maaris use a number sequence of twelve in daily life and military system. The smallest unit of their army is called tenright, and their head is tenright sergeant. The union of twelve tenright forms the intermediate troop called plenteousblood, and their head is plenteousblood sergeant. The union of twelve plenteousblood forms the advanced troop called endwall. The head of this troop is the commander, whose title is endwall sergeant.

Warder Arp buckled up. “It seems so, leader. Beside Heir settlements of Infinite Gratitude, neither Western Guardians nor Easterners responded. I do not even count Islanders, leader, they are bastards! Harborers are limited as you see. Sand Spiritcellar cavalries could not catch up, or they might either be ambushed on the road. But it has not been even a longday since the messengers were flown, leader. The news might not arrive at many regions yet, or just arrived. You know what... I don’t want to cross the line, leader, but what about bringing along these wastes and proceeding to Marcher Horn. If we resist a longday, at least six or seven days, we would equalize our number with them.”

“So, how many territories would be pillaged, how many trees’ souls would be teased in six or seven days?” asked Bah Batura, then continued, “Is there any zone wises?”

“Just Lime Pesafit.”

Bah Batura sent Arp back to the troop. Slowly riding his ke, he moved towards the summit of Emeraldgrip. He was holding the flag of the homeland, comprising of a roaring ke symbol on turquoise surface. In his other hand, there was the common flag comprising of the arms of Maaris, Protectors, Heirs, a northern community called as Mutes, and the tribe of a few Southernoffsprings and Flesheaters who voluntarily preferred battling with their kinds on the opposite side in the form of ink on a green surface representing the helm.

After honoring the seven contemplations on the summit, he raised both flags at once, and saluted the people. An endearing Vuhsa rose above him as he began his speech, and cooled the helm with an amethyst colored, warm and sweet rain from Mirelim Lakusar. The turmoil, first soothed by Kikukuna, gave way to yeast sprouted by the recovered hope after the leader’s speech.

“Charmers, the ones from Howlbottom, Ketris and Free Easterners, I salute you. Companions of Buba, Night Travelers, Harborers, I salute you. Southern and Northern People and honorable Heirs of Infinite Gratitude, I salute you before the seven sacred altars. May Epemet Murparis purify our souls, so that we can save others! Almighty altars, we hope scribing the first journal of an eternal epic that would rise above the silvery sand throughout the history with your grace! Our archaic mothers, I yearn for your sap smells coming from Clay Horn, help us! May our ironleaves, fireleaves, iceleaves quench their thirst with the pouring blood of enemies! We have strived for living worthy of you, if this is the day for our souls to leave our bodies, remediate us, so that our deaths would be worthy of you!”

As Bah Batura was giving his speech, he saw a ripple in the Night Division deployed in opposite direction. After sticking the flags on the bosom of Rutasar, he commanded the shooters to line up on the hill. Then, grabbing the mane of his ke, he glided towards the meadows as fast as mistwhirligigs rising from stemhives.

Motley Lands was an archaic town built amidst of bumpy hills comprising of trade routes built by Maaris who migrated to west after the Long March. Fierysalt boiling on the crimson land of Rutasar painted meadows with its own color, as today, and this is what made Motley Lands unique. Before the Cannibals’ invasion, many Heir sculptors came from afar to

enrich the Great Aya Pellar Library by depicting the beauty of this land. In old times, Motley Lands was regarded as a common town where many communities friendly embraced. However, when small settlements on the lands that became barren by fierysalts were shattered, the town became desolate and turned into a resting place of wises and travelers.

The charms of triumph engraved on the ironleafy of Ketri lord were dazzling like the night springs shining in dark nights. He raised his weapon and moved on by touching the weapons of the soldiers on the frontline of the army. Meanwhile, he shouted for the last time, “For Rutasar, purer than the tear of Aya Pellar! For the whiteness of Teriser’s eye! For Ilerj Elmiris, Epemet Murparis, Genlim Sasar! For all blessings of the blessed mothers, as the remembrance of Nûr! To live, to die and to kill! The pipes will thunder, weapons will flutter! For a day whiter than white, tally ho!”

Shaar’s Helm enthused. Each individual in the army was entranced, and so began the effusive attack towards the enemy with fluttering weapons.

Warders, Nailers and Nemioffsprings broke the defense line of Night Division, like a winter’s howl in which the glacier breath of Enij Elmiris grew, and ceaselessly marched on for hundreds of kelengths.

But the enemy was crowded. For they distanced from the reinforcements, cavalries were besieged in no time. As northern magicians sang their black spells, evil delusions rising from mist and growing in breasts dragged them into unbearable pain. Still, they heroically resisted, none of them abstained from fighting till the last strength of their lives. But they were captured by the evil nation, they could not breathe. Apart from a handful of Ketris and Arp, whose body was pierced and wounded by forkheads and yellow dome triangles; all braves in the circle fell. But Old Arp had one last thing to do. Just before he sank on his knees and his head would be ripped from his body by gaggas, he grabbed his ironleafy with his last power, and threw it to Tou-Tong, one of the great northern leaders, standing eighty kelengths away. Ripped him apart!

After Warders, Gonchokers and Westdwarves were besieged by Nightservants. Their condition resembled summerbrooms growing in the blackish. They resembled colorful trees shining in a pitch dark, but they were drowning. That moment, Lime Pesafit appeared in sight as a savior. He raised his hand, whiteness rising from his palm plucked the soldiers’ fear. He agilely moved his wand, tearing off the tongues of each northern magician. Then, controlling the amethyst howl, nobly shining as a luminous bust in the abysmal darkness blowing above the helm, he waved it over the enemy as an efficient weapon. Thereof, Ketris escaped the pincer they fell in.

Ketris lined up around the flag union were successfully protected by Twins, and they lined up again to form a new endwall. Foggy Orpa filled his whole breath into the pipe of storm, and blew it three times. Giving ear to the call, the Protector cavalries from lakehorse backed up from both wings, and Shaar Helm attacked once again with all their power.

During the battle, Kung-Ta tried nearing Bah Batura, but Vileryu destroyed the northern commander by ripping the naked part of left breast with his break. The course of the battle thus changed. A bunch of Cannibals, ebbing and flowing above as a whirlwind and losing belief under the influence of the howl that threw and scatter them, began leaving the battlefield by stampeding like desert souls, whistling and running away under threat, when they saw their leader fall. Kong-mei blew the battle pipe many times to stop them, but neither responded the call.

There left numerically equal powers. Lime Pesafit was singing the light charms in the language of First Children; Ketriz sang battle charms and ripped the enemy with pleasure. Meanwhile, a horrific sound echoed, resembling a great explosion.

Qhoras raised his devil hoof with a yellow-green vulgar fire over it, and laughed. As the terrifying uproar echoed in the battlefield, all mist cycling in air coalesced and besieging the howl, protecting the helm as a luminous defender, they absorbed it in no time. The howl was absorbed; the mass of mist grew bigger, yet uglier. Then mist broke into pieces, and all layers descended on the ground as lightnings. Each layer attacked a helm soldier who was weak, wounded or about to die, or lost the power of protecting himself, and ripped apart their spirits. They disguised as the bodies they haunted, possessed them, and began rising from the ground as dead bodies collectively rising from graves. Most elements of the helm, witnessing the dreadful scene, stood aghast, and many were petrified by losing their minds.

When Kong-mei blew his pipe again, Qhoras inspired the news of a promise and a terrifying threat into the hearts of stampeding members of Night Division in black language. The troops hurriedly gathered and began besieging Bah Batura. It was hard to avert threats coming from far and wide. As the helm was losing the power to resist, Lime Pesafit raised his wand, spread glazed words, and thus created an elegant protection circle around them. The elegant shield protected and rested them. However, before they could recover, the fire rising from the devil hoof of another shapeless Motley lord near Qhoras headed towards the circle and broke the line of protection.

As the circle vanished, Kong-mei pointed Bah Batura and commanded the troop of Cannibals, "Burrn him down!"

The flag union was sharply declining; Twins, devotees of Kikukuna and the plenteousblood under the command of Togan Beleg mobilized to protect their leader. But dealing with the enemy, which was twenty for one, was not possible.

As the battle violently continued, the flame, growing in the mouth of a fireblower that arose from cruel Motley's hand, burnt the whole body of Bah Batura. When Ketri lord fell on the ground in pain, evil laughter echoed once again. Seeing him in flames, Lime Pesafit scampered towards him, and commanded the fire, "Be the coolness for him!" Flame's effect vanished. But Ketri lord completely lost his power.

Meanwhile, the weapon thrown by a huge baldhead who pierced through the protection of Twins hit Bah Batura, stripping him from the neck to the waist. Bah Batura did

not seem well. Kikukuna, his devotees and a handful of Maaris formed a cycle of protection around their leader once again. Saving them at the risk of his own life, Lime Pesafit sang a charm in the language of Aya Pellar again. There appeared a green light on his wand. Old wise used the strong, blinding light to scatter around the enemy, and formed a gap which would bring them to the summit of Emeraldgrip.

A handful of surviving soldiers of the helm passed their leader through this gap, and brought him to the hill. Meanwhile, an evilhowl's voice, which would even terrify the bravest, echoed in the field. No one ever saw such a huge monster, apart from Lime Pesafit. The creature, led by Qhoras, blew poisonous breath over wounded and weakened soldiers suffering on Rutasar. Then it blew poisonous breath over seven sacred trees on the hill, and ripped apart their spirits.

The green light on the wand of Lime Pesafit was enough to keep them away, but other elements of the helm was alone before the obstacle.

Twins took shape against the monster. A splendid light rose from the coalesced breaks. But even this light could neither horrify the shapeless body of Qhoras nor pierce through the giant creature's body, thicker than the most efficient shield ever seen.

Twins were terrified. Deep inside, they felt there was nothing left to save them. That moment, Kikukuna's kope violently jingled. The Protector shouted, effacing hopelessness, "My kope is jingling again pals! By the way, if tomorrow never comes I tell you now, I saw you and the happenings in my dream, huho woo-ha!"

"Do dreams come true?" asked Vileryu.

"Some of my dreams come true," Kikukuna laughed. He raised his hook aiming at the head of the creature.

Ulpar shouted, "You cannot kill it, Kikukuna, even our breaks cannot pierce through!"

The Protector confidently laughed. He felt the spirit of a glazed power in his blood. His kope did not only jingle, but also flamed. Thereof, he could seal his name again. "Not Kikukuna! Kuna, only Kuna! My kope is sparkling and my name is glazed in it. Your farts might be knotted pals, but behold the skillful hands of Kuna now. I will pierce the thingamabobs of this clunkhead!"

Surviving devotees were astonished as they witnessed the sparkling of Kuna's kope. Because, even a Protector living on earth did not witness someone glazing his name while alive. "Kuna, Kuna, Kuna!" they shouted in yeast, and attacked the creature from everywhere at once as one body.

Though the effect of the attacking Protectors' weapons on the creature's body as rigid as steelrumpus was like the tickling of dustbeetles on the skin during winter nights, it prevented him from staying focused on Kuna.

With his eyes flashing daring flames that could be encountered merely in the rumors in archaic inscriptions; Kuna agilely neared the creature by benefiting from the faults in its defense. He channeled all vital power, which was called *ki* by harborers, to his hand carrying the weapon. Flawlessly grabbing the weapon, he raised it, and aimed at the eyes of the monster. He shouted, “Feel the taste of my holy whack inside! Now I’m paying off your last fart debt to the devils of death!”

The spear Kuna ragingly threw flowed into the whiteness of its eyes, which were surrounded with an unprotected and transparent layer unlike the creature’s rough shell, reached the border of its skull like a flash, and knocked him down. Squealing in a deafening gurgle of death, the creature began wallowing by sweeping the soil beneath like an avalanche, from the hill towards the Night Division.

Seeing his mount fall, Qhoras left the body he disguised as, without waiting for the threat to come, and ascended to the sky as a dark mountain of mist. The body he attacked lost shape so much that it was not possible to identify. What he left behind was a bare, tight layer of rotten flesh with a dark line. It seemed like a black sheet without a mass.

The fallen body of the creature was so big that it thoroughly covered the hill, creating a natural barrier between the Night Division and the surviving elements of the helm, which could be merely passed by climbing on the corpse. Then Lime Pesafit removed the effect of previous charm, and blew his breath behind the fallen body of the monster. His breath would daze the enemy and make them misperceive the objects they see. Thus, they hid themselves behind a kind of a wall of invisibility.

The group glided over the ke paths behind the hill towards Ironhooflet Shadow. Hope revived. They believed they could create a line of defense under the flag raised by Bah Batura and resist again. Realizing his blood created a puddle beneath the saddle, Ketri lord knew he could not go on anymore. He stopped his ke, gazed at Funj Fej, the brother of his wife, and gesticulated to call him near. He took off Aya Helse from his neck, and reached it to him, “When ice drops fall from Teriser, the youngest sibling will awaken the long day with a new rise!”

Then Ketri lord wearily gazed at Lime Pesafit, “I never thought it would end like this, wise.”

“End?” Lime Pesafit allusively asked. “Nay, dear lord. Death is not the end of this journey.”

“What happens now?”

“Darkness... The last darkness of an everlasting morning that will brightly rise.”

“Not bad,” said Bah Batura, peacefully breathing in for the last time. He stopped in the middle of his breath. He stiffened, and slowly closed his eyes.

Ketris were crestfallen for the death of their lord. Before his body decayed, they bound him to the bosom of a Hegira Tree near the wall of Ironhooflet Shadow.

Funj Fej wore the temporary trust on his neck, waved the homeland's flag before his ke, and headed to the capital.

Kuna and Twins thus trotted off to the first part of a new adventure under Lime Pesafit's leadership with a handful of Protectors behind.