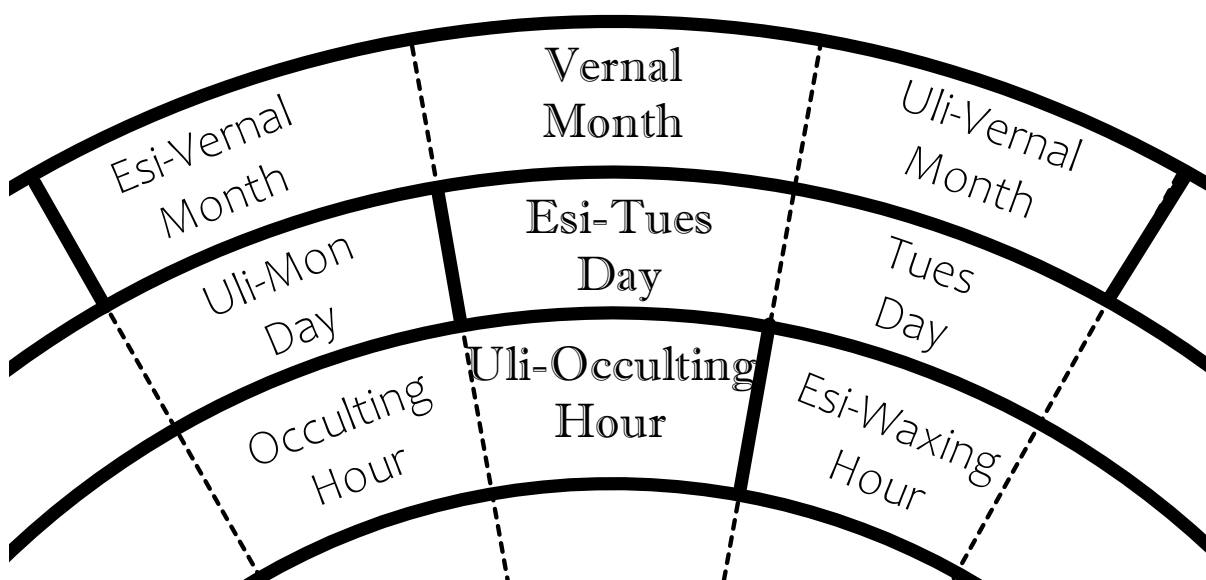


Prologue: Receiving the Anti-Seer

YEAR 628



KING TAPPANEN of House Dravon, King of Yaarom and all Lands West of the River Sydon, slept deeper and easier now that the Kingdom was finally his.

Vibrant dreams of battle and victory, with heroic details that were often forgotten by Morning, would always make the King feel refreshed and alert the following Day. On this fourth Night since his Coronation as the new King, a gentle prodding on his shoulder interrupted the flow of memories and visions that danced in Tappanen's head.

Thinking the disturbance to be a part of his reverie, King Tappanen allowed it to continue and even tried to incorporate it into his dream—a Crossbow Bolt in the shoulder, perhaps—but it soon became an annoyance.

A voice, distant and deep by his ear, accompanied the prodding: “Sire... Sire, you need to wake up...”

Begrudgingly, the King allowed himself to let the dream go. Eyes, heavy-laden with sleep, opened a crack and King Tappanen realized that such a rude awakening was highly unorthodox, especially for someone in his position. With a rush of apprehension, the King reached out for his Queen who lay beside him on the bed.

Something strong snatched his hand before the King could feel for her. “Shh... don’t wake her, your Majesty.”

Eyes blinking wildly, as it was too dark to see, King Tappanen turned on his bed with a rush of anxiety whelming in his bosom so he could face the would-be intruder. Fearful of his safety, Tappanen wondered about the Guards he had positioned outside his new private Bed Chambers last Night.

A finger touched Tappanen’s lips before he could call out for them. “Hush now,” the voice whispered. “It is I, Kuollut. Can you recognize me?”

The King blinked again and, by the faint light of the Stars through the open windows, Kuollut’s darkened silhouette faded into view. Long dark hair, often pulled back into a long Cumomtail, flowed freely about his broad shoulders. A full dark beard hid a thick neck with light Armour covering his wide persona. One muscled arm was still holding Tappanen’s wrist while Kuollut’s other arm had a robe wrapped over it.

“Come, your Majesty,” Kuollut whispered, “out of bed... quiet now.” He then released the King’s wrist and stepped back to allow the King to get up.

Tappanen remembered.

Kuollut was standing in as Chief of his personal Guard these past few Days. The King’s usual protectors, the infamous Elite Guard, were almost all killed in the Coup Tappanen had orchestrated that ended his father’s ruthless rule of the Kingdom.

The Elite Guard were formidable Soldiers that covenanted with strong Oaths to protect the reigning King of Yaarom. The moment his father died at Prince Tappanen’s own hands, the surviving Elite immediately bent the knee, recognizing Tappanen as the new Heir of House Dravon and their new King. Those surviving Elite Soldiers were

still picking out replacements for their fallen Comrades at the Elite Training Grounds here in the Capital.

If Kuollut was waking him up in the middle of the Night, then something must be wrong.

Peeling back the covers, Tappanen swivelled his legs over the bed. He glanced back to see that his wife, the beautiful Queen Rado, was turned away from him and sleeping soundly under a mound of blankets. She also slept better these Days.

“What is it, Chief?” the King whispered.

Kuollut took the King under the arm and lifted him up out of bed with the ease and agility of a man caring for his own child. “Here Sire, put this on... let’s go. There’s not much time.”

Barefoot, the King ignored the cold wood floor as he slipped on his robe. Before he could again ask what the trouble was, Kuollut led the King to his closed Bed Chamber door. King Tappanen knew that only he, his wife, and Kuollut would have a key for this door.

With a small *click* of the handle, Kuollut opened the door allowing a tiny burst of Llectric light in from the hall. The King squinted and hurried out. Kuollut followed, closing and locking the door behind him with his key.

In the hall, as the King’s eyes adjusted to the steady glow from a few open and humming lights on the stone walls, he saw two other Guards standing by the door waiting. Like Kuollut, these two were not Tappanen’s usual protectors, but he knew them by name: dSanca Di Burloq and dQuan Di Tandall.

Kuollut had about a niner of subjects working under him, and most were Endemic, like these two. Endemic were an indigenous Race of People that had lived on this Continent since the Dawn of Time.

Typically yellow-haired, fairer-skinned, taller, and wider, the Endemic were also notably stronger than most men. Endemic vehemently stayed loyal to their Oaths, as breaking those Oaths would put great shame on their families. As a result, they made excellent members of the King’s Elite Guard.

Leaning in close and up to the much taller Burloq, Kuollut whispered, “Stay alert and guard the Queen.” Burloq had to bend down a bit to hear him.

“With our lives, m’Chief,” came Burloq’s guttural reply in his thick Endemic accent. Kuollut’s right hand and muscled forearm then grabbed Burloq’s much larger right forearm in a powerful embrace, as was customary when relieving command.

Kuollut then turned toward the King and announced, “Come, Sire, we must hurry. I’ll explain as we go.” With that, he sped past the King and down the hall, leaving the two Endemic Guards by his Bed Chamber. The King hurried to keep up.

Having lived here in the King’s Castle in the heart of the Capital City of Demanter throughout most of his childhood, King Tappanen was familiar with the many halls and staircases that they rushed past. Now that he was King, and had access to the restricted areas, Tappanen was eager to explore this old stone Castle and learn of the many secrets hidden within.

With most of the Lectric lights closed, Kuollut never wavered in his direction as they both scuttled through the dark. Deeper and deeper into the Castle they went: down these stairs, through that door, along this hall.

The Castle was eerily quiet this time of Night with only the two of them out and about. There weren’t even any signs of the Servants. Tappanen was getting anxious and Chief Kuollut wasn’t talking.

Kuollut finally stopped near one of the Kitchen Rooms and pulled out his key ring before an old door that the King was unfamiliar with. Kuollut’s key fit, and the door creaked open to reveal a spiralling stair that descended into a deeper dark.

“Where are we going? Tell me!” the King demanded, trying to hide the fear in his voice. Tappanen also tried not to reveal any emotion towards the eerie open door as he gazed at it.

“My Master,” Kuollut replied, “demands your presence... down here in the lower Dungeon.”

“Down there? Why?”

“It is something that you must see for yourself. Trust me, my King, it is secure downstairs. There is no threat to you or the Castle. It is urgent, however, that we hurry. I am following my Master’s orders. Come.”

With that, Kuollut stepped through the door and into the dark stairwell. As the door closed, King Tappanen grabbed it to keep it open.

Could this be a trap? Tappanen did not want to show fear, and Kuollut *was* a man he trusted, so, with just a *slight* pause, King Tappanen followed the Chief down the dark stairs. Tappanen had to feel the damp, cold stone wall with his fingers as a guide. The door closed on its own behind him with an audible, echoing *clack*.

At the base of the staircase was another door, even older than the first. It was unlocked and Kuollut held it open for him. More Llectric light streamed in from the other side. King Tappanen passed through the door and into a long stone hall deep under the Castle. The Air was cool, moist, and stale smelling down here. The King could even see his breath in the flickering Llectric light.

Not skipping a beat, Kuollut hastened down the hall in one direction. The old door creaked behind them and again, the King’s heart fluttered when it shut. The King’s bare feet padded on the cold stone floor as he flew down the hall, keeping up a steady pace with Kuollut. The long hall ended at another door, just as old as the last one they had entered through.

“This is the Dungeon,” Kuollut said. “This hall is a seldom used back entrance into them... it was quicker to go this way. No one can hear us down here. These walls are thick.” Kuollut tapped the stone wall with his hand and opened the door with ease. They both entered a large, well-lit room.

There were more open Llectric lights on the walls of this area of the Dungeon, and Tappanen marvelled at the use of so much precious Vasker wiring that was installed down here. Many doors lay along both sides of the room. One large pair of them had small windows on them, with panels that could slide open and closed.

This place looked ancient and unused—and smelled likewise. The room was an obvious staging area where Prisoners would be processed before entering the actual Dungeon Cells which were probably on the

other side of those double doors that had the slotted windows. An old table with some chairs sat beside those doors.

Tappanen could not recollect if his father ever used this Dungeon under the Castle during Tappanen's Lifetime. The former King and his Advisor regularly kept Prisoners in the Guardhouse outside, which was beside the Castle.

Kuollut used another key to unlock and open one of the large double doors and they both entered a dark Prison Block which was lined with various empty Dungeon Cells as far as Tappanen could see.

Eyes wide and roaming, Tappanen saw chains, mouldy straw, and rusted chamber pots in most of the unused Cells as they rushed past. At the end of the first Block, another stone hall bent to the left. Kuollut stopped and waited for the King to catch up.

Instead of continuing straight where darker Dungeon Cells existed, Kuollut went down this new hall that led to a dead end. There was nothing on either side of this unlit hall, but there was a larger, thicker door at the very end of it. Light seeped out from the cracks that surrounded this last door.

Kuollut turned to the King. "We are here. My Master awaits you inside." The large, unlocked door opened outward, straining Tappanen's eyes with the sudden rush of light.

Kuollut stepped in. The King, keeping his composure cool like the Air, followed.

This room was spacious and lit by many open Electric lights that sizzled and hummed on various tables and cabinets, all wired together. The King squinted and looked around.

It was a Torture Chamber.

Hanging from nails on the walls and on many of the shelves were various diabolical instruments. There were flasks of coloured liquids on another table; all labelled. In a corner, there was a table where a victim could lie. It had leather restraints for arms, legs, and even a head. It was empty, but the bloody stains showed that someone had recently been victimized on it.

In the centre of the room was a wooden chair, and tied to it was a man, ragged and beaten. His head hung low and his long, matted, dark

hair was covering his face. The poor man's Serf-like clothes were torn, dirty, and bloody. He made no sound, or movement, when Kuollut and the King entered.

At first, the King thought the man in the chair was alone, but then Kuollut, after shutting the door, approached a shadowy figure in another corner.

Kuollut leaned in and whispered to a tall, black-caped figure that was barely visible even in this light. The man's dark hair was slicked back, and he wore a dark apron covered in splatters of fresh blood. He wore gloves, likewise stained. The only thing clean on him were his boots. They were tall, black, and reflected the light of the room.

King Tappanen, with just his robe on, looked straight at the caped figure. "Why did you bring me here, Mahan? What is so important that I need to be jostled out of my Bed Chamber at this gnashing Hour?"

Tappanen spoke with no emotion and with power, trying to hide his deep fear of the man whom his father had kept as his own Advisor.

Even though this man was mysterious and highly devoted to his Faith, Tappanen still trusted him; for it was Mahan who had helped him topple his father's Government and secure Tappanen's own Crown. The new King had no reservations for not trusting Advisor Mahan now, so soon after victory.

Mahan answered as he always did: softly, slowly, and methodically, "Forgive me, your Majesty, but my time was running out and I had no other options. I need you to hear what this man has to say before he expires." Mahan then gestured, with his arm, towards the poor individual in the chair, his black cape swishing in the stale Air.

Again, the King looked at the Victim slouched forward in the chair. The man did not move or even appear to breathe. "He's not dead then?"

"No. Not yet."

During the past several Weeks, the King had seen his fair share of bloodshed. To secure his position and win the Crown, sacrifices had to be made, information needed to be gathered, and Spies and disloyal Subjects had to be humbled, or killed, if they refused.

These casualties of war included Tappanen's own older siblings and father. There was nothing left of House Dravon now, or of the old

Governance, so Tappanen wondered what more could be learned by the torture of this wretched man.

“I say it again, Mahan. What is so important about this man’s dying words? Why do I need to hear them for myself? Is he another Spy from Loumaan?”

Across the vast Liorn Sea that separated Tappanen’s Kingdom of Yaarom from the rival Kingdom of Loumaan, the corpulent King Razur of House Ronar and his wife, Queen Marta, ruled. Theirs was the only other Kingdom of significance on this Continent. Taking Luomaan by force would be difficult because of its remote distance, great defenses, and zealous, but loyal, Army.

It would be something to consider for another Day.

Mahan glided towards the King, his cape unmoving. His face, aged and weathered, was thinly bearded, and pockmarked with old pubescent scars. Advisor Mahan’s facial expression showed no emotion. Dark eyes stared directly at the King as if probing him.

“Your Majesty,” Mahan smoothly said, “I am certain that this man, though young and frail, is an *Anti-Seer*, and he can only be compelled to speak with you present.”

Though stifling emotions was what Tappanen was good at, he could not help but let in a small gasp. “An *Anti-Seer*? They are characters from Founder fables... myths from long ago. Heroes from your Holy Writings, am I not correct?”

“Only in the more popular accounts are Anti-Seers regarded as Heroes. It all depends on your point of view. They have been deemed Adversaries as well.”

“I do not hold to Faith like you do, Mahan. Convince me. Are you saying that this man can see the Future?”

“*See* the Future? No. In the Faith, that is what a regular *Seer* can do. Seers are especially chosen Elders of the Church of the First... Occasionally the Almighty Father allows his chosen Adherents a small glimpse at a Future that *must* be, regardless of our choices. What we call His Plan. Nothing can change His Plan. On rare occasions, these Seers reveal the Almighty’s Plan as warnings to the wicked or to give hope to the righteous.”

King Tappanen knew of the Church of the First, the predominant Faith in other Kingdom of Luomaan, on the other side of the Continent. It was a hand-me-down Faith from the first Founders that originally settled here almost two Ages ago. There were also a few Adherents to that Faith in this Kingdom scattered around, but most of them met in seclusion.

A Lifetime ago, King Tappanen's father had tried to repress all religious freedom in Yaarom as those types of Sects just fed lies to the People and started Uprisings.

That was one Philosophy Tappanen agreed on when compared to his late father's tyrannical rule. Tappanen, like most People in his Kingdom, was Agnostic when it came to Faith. Why waste valuable time and resources into something one could not see or prove?

As far as Tappanen was concerned, the Faith was just fiction; a Scapebilgoat to explain strange happenstances and to give hope to People who wanted to believe that there was more to life than this mortal one.

Cumomwash was what it was. When you were dead, you're dead. Nothing more. No one had ever come back from death to explain that there really *was* an Afterlife.

Advisor Mahan, apparently, believed in it, and King Tappanen did not care if he did or not. If Mahan wanted to waste his time and energy on it, then so be it. What annoyed Tappanen the most was that he had just been awoken in the middle of the Night for some of this foolishness.

"I am *not* impressed, Mahan," Tappanen retorted, revealing his annoyance. "Our victory is secured. Our Future is settled. This man's gibberish would not be important to me. You needn't have woken me up for it."

"My apologies, my King, but this fellow," Advisor Mahan replied, pointing at the haggard man, "is quite the *opposite* of a Seer: he is an *Anti-Seer*. His Mind will yet exist in *our* Future. His Mind is here, in this body now, to glimpse what will be, to him, the Past. Later, his Mind will be born into another body. To someone else in our Future."

Tappanen did not care. He only showed more anger.

"I can prove it," Mahan continued. "We just need to persuade him to tell us something of his own Mind's Future. Something that is yet to happen which his Mind will one Day witness, regardless of all our

choices. A small piece to the Plan. That is why you are here... to watch and listen.”

Mahan pulled a small vial from a pocket under his cape and pulled off a stopper. Even from his current location, Tappanen could smell the retching odour from the vial.

Mahan moved towards the man in the chair, pulled his hair up to raise his head, and then swept the vial under the poor man’s nose. The Prisoner jerked and his head rolled a little. Mahan stepped back, stopping his vial, and made it disappear under his cape.

The man in the chair appeared much younger than what the King had originally thought. His eyes, cheeks, and chin were swollen and bloody. It was not a face anyone would recognize in its current condition.

The wounded man opened an eye and, through long and tussled dark hair, looked at the King. Even though the man was unfamiliar to Tappanen, there was a sense of recognition in that man’s gaze. It was as if the man in the chair knew exactly who King Tappanen was. There was a lasting hatred in that look.

It was a look that Tappanen knew well.

After a moment of silence, the man smiled, chuckled deep in his throat, and then looked over at Mahan. “I can’t believe you actually brought him here. This doesn’t change a thing.” He then turned to face the King and, with a bow of his head, spoke clearly: “It is an honour to meet you, your Majesty. I must say that you are a lot thinner in person than I expected.”

Impatience flared in Tappanen: “This is absurd! A joke! What is this? Come now Future-boy, speak! If that is what you are. What do you have to tell me? It’s late, and I want to get back to bed!”

The young man in the chair pulled forward and put tension on his restraints, but the chair did not move. His mouth did: “To you? Nothing! I have finished my purpose for being here. I just need to die! Kill me... now!”

Mahan spoke next, calm and serene: “Now, now, my young man. You *will* die. But not before you tell the King what he needs to hear. You know he must hear it. From you.”

“Hear *what?*” the King asked, fuming. “Tell me! Mahan, how do you know that he even *has* something to tell me? What is so important?”

“Nothing!” the man in the chair screamed. “Kill me now! Torture me more if you must, but I will tell none of you, anything. Especially to *him!*” Blood sprayed out of the man’s swollen mouth and towards the King as he howled.

Mahan interrupted, “Now that the King is here, it is just a matter of time. You *will* tell us, and you will tell us *freely.*”

“Never! I say not! I will not...” the bloody man continued, but was interrupted when a loud knock came from the door.

Kuollut, who had been standing in the corner as quiet as a Mulchratt, moved towards the sound. His hair, now pulled back into his regular Cumontail, swished back and forth as he walked.

Tappanen also turned to face the door and as he wondered who *else* could be here, quick as lightning, Kuollut sidestepped towards the King and grabbed Tappanen under both shoulders. With strong Treelike limbs, Kuollut held the King in a lock that totally immobilized him.

The King shrieked, “Kuollut! What is this! How dare you! Mahan! What’s going on?”

The door swung open and in came the large Endemic Guards, Burloq and Tandall, dragging a squirming and gagged woman with them.

It was Rado, Tappanen’s wife and Queen whom Tappanen had just left sleeping in their bed.

Queen Rado’s swollen, pregnant belly showed through a tear in her Nightgown. She must have put up a fight.

The King could only stare. Shock permeated through his whole being. Never in his life had Tappanen felt so scared. Tears welled in his eye-sockets. The Queen, his beautiful Queen, stared at Tappanen with a look that he was also familiar with.

Fear.

With difficulty, the taller Burloq handed a key over to Mahan while still gripping the squirming Queen and said, “As’you commanded, Master.”

“Very good,” Mahan stated, hiding the key in one of his many pockets. “You shall all be rewarded. Now hold her firmly.”

It took both massive Endemic to do it.

The King found his voice: “No! No! NO! RADO! Oh, please! Let her go! What does *she* have to do with this? You Traitor! I trusted you! Mahan, I command you to let us go!”

The King looked towards his wife, who was struggling and trying to scream. He then turned to look at Mahan, who was staring squarely at the young man in the chair.

King Tappanen followed Mahan’s gaze and saw that the ruined man was glaring at Queen Rado with his one eye open wide. He now wore a very pale face, as if drained of the rest of his blood.

It was a look of despair.

There was no questioning that look.

“Good! Good!” Mahan’s words were full of elation as he clapped and rubbed his gloved hands together. “Now that everyone is here, we can begin!”

“Talk to me, Mahan!” the King roared. “Why bring her here? That’s my wife! My child! You’re hurting them!”

“Yes, yes, my young King,” Mahan answered, “I understand what you must feel... but you see, our friend here is refusing to talk, even under my most influential tortures. It appears that, to loosen his tongue, I must take something from him he truly, deeply, cares about...”

“What does *HE* have to do with my *WIFE*?” Tappanen roared.

“For some time,” Mahan answered, “I have been watching this young man’s movements, ever since I became suspicious of what I knew he was... always turning up in places he shouldn’t know about at *exactly* the right times.” He turned to face the Prisoner. There were tears welling in the young man’s one good eye.

“Oh, he *was* clever,” Mahan continued. “Hiding in shadows and observing, never interfering. I don’t believe he even knew that I was watching him... until the end.”

Turning to Queen Rado, her eyes bulging with fear and enmity, Mahan spoke methodically, “As it turns out, his interest always focused on *you*, my Queen. He would follow you, watch you with a passion. There was something he needed to see for himself. I do not know if he ever got

to see it or what it was he wanted, but I do know that he *cares* for you... a lot.”

From behind his cape, Mahan pulled out a shiny, curved Dagger that was made from a translucent green, glassy, material. It glinted in the Electric lights. Even the handle was crafted and cut from the same crystalline Mineral. There were strange markings, like Ancient Glyphs, on both Blade and handle. Mahan raised the sharp Weapon towards the Queen’s neck.

She shrieked in her gag and tried to jerk away.

The King exploded. Kuollut grunted but did not budge his firm hold on the King. “Stop! *STOP!* Wait! Listen! Listen, I say! I don’t care what this man says. I wouldn’t believe it, anyway! Don’t hurt her! Please, Mahan! Don’t hurt her!”

Mahan turned to the Prisoner who hadn’t removed his stare. “Is *this* what you want? You want her to *DIE* for your secret? Is this supposed to happen?” A red mark appeared along the line of the Knife against her skin.

Queen Rado stopped squirming.

The man in the chair refused to move or say anything. The King, however, continued to plead: “Mahan! It’s not worth it! Let her go! Just kill him and be done with it!”

“Quiet!” Mahan shouted and peered into the eye of his Captive.

A silent Breath passed, and the King could tell that Mahan was deep in thought, he was just staring at the sad expression on the young man’s misshapen face—trying to read something from it.

For once, the King could not tell what Mahan was looking for from that face.

Finally, a grin washed over Mahan, and he spoke: “I see that you are unmovable. Perhaps it is *not* the Queen that you care for so dearly, perhaps it is...” and he lowered the Dagger toward the protruding belly of the Queen.

With renewed vigour, the Queen screamed again, and it took both Burloq and Tandall all their might to hold her still.

Again, the King, free to speak, spoke: “The *BABY?* What does he know of the baby? Unless...”

Tappanen then turned his head to speak to the young man in the chair whose head was now lowered again, his hair falling back in front of his face. “*YOU!* Do you know my child, Future-boy? What happens to it? Tell me! Or maybe... *YOU! YOU* are my unborn child!”

The young man slowly raised his head, and with disdain in his one good eye, stared at King Tappanen.

The sound of his voice seemed different. It reverberated when he spoke and echoed in the room: “**I am not your son, you hideous, wretched Monster. Thank the Heavens, I am not!** I will speak this, however, so listen closely: **At the Waning Hour on the Eve of your son’s nineteenth birthday, the son of King Razur of Luomaan will drive *THAT DAGGER* through your heart and you will *DIE* an ignominious death!**”

The wretched young man jerked his head towards Mahan and Queen Rado on the word “Dagger.”

Even as the words sank in, a change took place about the Prisoner in the chair. Smoke, accompanied by a rotten smell, emanated from where he sat.

The man convulsed, raising his head high and exposing the pulsing veins in his neck. A crackling sound was heard and everyone, even Mahan, raising his black cape in front of his face, stepped back. All eyes but Mahan’s were on the man in the chair.

It smelled as if the man’s insides were burning, even from his very bones. The man shook uncontrollably. Not from his own movements, but from whatever was happening to him.

The smoke and crackling continued to worsen until a large thunderclap pierced the Air, accompanied by a bright light from where the Prisoner sat.

The King’s ears popped as a small gush of wind blew past him and towards the chair.

Tappanen blinked, trying to remove the flash of light still emblazoned on his retinas. When the smoke cleared, the King saw only an empty chair, with the restraints dangling. The charred, smoking clothes of the Prisoner hung on the chair and floor.

There was no other sign of him. Not even blood. The room smelled rank from just the charred clothes.

It was Mahan who recovered first: “Well, that was harder than I thought. You may release them now.”

The three Guards did as commanded and loosened their grips. The Queen came running into the King’s arms, crying and shaking. Tappanen removed her gag and kissed her sweaty forehead.

Before the King could speak, Mahan grovelled, kneeling and bowing to the ground: “My King, I am so sorry to have deceived you like that. I would *not* have harmed you, your wife, or your child. But I *had* to be convincing. He *had* to see your fear, and he had to believe that I would actually go through with it.”

“You are *NOT* forgiven!” Tappanen screamed back at him, cuddling his whimpering wife. “That was madness! Whatever he said, I don’t believe it! Where did he go?”

“I believe... he ceased to exist,” Mahan answered, still grovelling and kneeling before the King. “Once he told you what would truly happen, what the Almighty’s Plan *WILL* be, he... he was taken. It was what I expected would happen, although I have never witnessed it before.”

“But why do it? Why torture us like you did? I’m still not convinced! I can’t believe what that man said about the son of that fat King Razur and that Dagger of yours.” The Queen continued to weep in his arms.

“The evidence is right in front of you!” Mahan answered, triumphantly, “Or at least the remnants of it are. It was no trick. The Almighty took him away because he revealed a part of His Plan no one should know yet! Don’t you see? Few People ever find out what we have learned Tonight. We know, with certainty, your Fate, my King, right down to the very Day and Hour! We know you *WILL* have a *SON*, and that you will reign and live as King until his nineteenth Nameday! My King, You... You are *IMMORTAL* until then! You will have *nothing* to fear!”

King Tappanen was still not convinced. “That is preposterous! He just blurted out what anyone could have said! That rubbish about King Razur’s son! Everyone knows that Queen Marta in Luomaan is *also* with child. That’s no secret. No big reveal there!”

Still holding his weeping wife, Tappanen turned to look at the empty chair, pointed at it, and continued with his ranting: “But that *SQUIT* just said that *their* Future son would kill me with your *GNASHING* Dagger in nineteen Years! Born alive! Now that I know, can’t I just stop it from happening?”

Kneeling and grovelling, with his face down, Mahan answered: “I am sure you will try.”