

Chapter 9

The First Kingdom

When General U'tar reached the top of the hills separating the Kingdom of Myatees from the Thandlor Forest he gently pulled the reigns of his horse to a stop. From up here he could see the Kingdom with its white brick walls and watch towers. Straining his neck up high enough he could see the tops of the Palace and other high structures that made up King's Row, the city within.

Looking down the other side of the hills he could see the vast Thandlor Forest, stretching as far as the eye could see in all directions. Beyond the west side of the Thandlor Forest was his home region of Thoawyth ally to Myatees. When he was six years old his father conscripted him to serve in the Myatees Army. In exchange his family received land and live stock. He saw them once a year during his allowed time off.

From the beginning of his childhood training he learned combat skills and weapons training. As the years progressed he stood out among other children of his age. He was the top of his class in all weapons and techniques of hand to hand combat. But what stood him out even more was his leadership skills.

General U'tar looked off to the far east side of the Thandlor forest and he could just make out the peaks of Glur Mountain range in the far distant horizon. On the other side of the mountain range was the Erenathiel Region, sworn enemies of Myatees and Thoawyth. The General reached around feeling the large scare and a dead spot on his left shoulder where a Erenathiel barbarian Warlord drove home his blade. U'tar killed the man leading his army to victory driving the invaders out of the village of Jander located on the northeastern side of the Kingdom bordering Erenathiel.

Chapter 10

Asu Norm

Ten men left King's Row in the cover of darkness. Seven on horseback and three controlling the leashes of large horn hounds. They moved quietly unseen by the Palace guards manning the walls. After reaching a secluded spot they stopped.

"Raise the banner," Ranthor said.

The man setting on the horse beside him pulled out a banner flag of "Asu Norm".

"This land is for Norms, all other races must be purged. Asu Norm, Asu Norm." Ranthor chanted the cults name and belief.

In a small cottage on the outskirts of Thandlor Forest, Siri finished setting the table for her family's supper.

She is an Alpha Mayjin who fell in love with a Norm. She has no regrets giving up her counsel position, leaving her home in Wicken to start a family in Myatees.

Her husband Vesbia opened the cottage door stepping inside. After hanging up his coat, he turned and smiled. "Smells good sweetheart. I have surprise for you."

Siri gave him a quick glance. "It can wait, supper is ready. Where are the children."

Vesbia walked over wrapping his arms around her. "You are just as beautiful as the day we met all those years ago."

Siri cuddled back against him. "I almost killed you back then. You have an uncanny way of remembering how we met differently than I do."

Vesbia turned his wife around giving her a long passionate kiss. "You didn't kill me and I returned the favor by saving your life."

The door opened again as Siri's son Breen entered the cottage. The young boy headed straight for the table.

"Huh, huh young man remove your dirty shoes and wash your hands." Siri said with a stern voice. "Where is your sister?"

Siri felt a hand pulling on her house dress, looking down expecting to see her daughter. "Well where is Na'tane, I know your here." She couldn't see her daughter but she knew where she was. "Got cya!"

Na'tane squealed with delight, then dropped her invisibility.

Vesbia reached over touching his daughters back. "That's the surprise, Na'tane has her invisibility."

Siri kissed her daughter on the cheek. "At an age two years before I did. Soon she will gain her other abilities."

Suddenly Lada, their pet horn hound, jumped up from the floor running for the door. They all heard her deep throated growl.

Vesbia walked over petting her on the back. He felt the short hairs on the horn hound's back bristle. "What's wrong girl, something out there bothering you."

Lada butted the door with the horn on her head, scrapping the floor with her paws. Her canines bared as her growls became more intent.

Vesbia reached over donning his coat, turned to his family. "I'll go and find out what's bothering Lada, be back in a few minutes."

"NO STOP!" Siri yelled.

"What is it?" Vesbia said alarmed.

"Something is very wrong, there are people approaching, dangerous people." Siri said.

Siri reached out her viewing ability seeing through the eyes of a night owl. "I can see them, men on horses, and men with horn hounds."

She pulled back her viewing ability. " We don't have much time."

Vesbia nodded to his son, "Breen hand me by bow and quiver!"

Siri pulled back a rug opening a trap door in the floor. "Quick Breen take your sister, hide underneath the floor."

Breen grabbed his sister's hand leading her toward the hatch. He lowered her down inside, then jumped down joining her.

Na'tane looked up at her mother crying, "Momma please go with us. Please Momma, please."

Vesbia walked over grabbing his wife by the side pushing her toward his daughter. "She is going with you, don't argue Siri go! Protect our children!"

He pushed his wife down into the opening in the floor. "Breen take care of your mother and sister."

Breen started to climb back out. "Father, let me help, I can fight."

"No son, your Mother and Sister need you, protect them. Lada and I will cover for you, now go!"

Siri reached over pulling her son down. She then turned her face up toward her husband. "I love you."

Vesbia reached down kissing his wife whispering, "Go now!".

"I will hold them off as long as I can!" He watched as they disappeared into the gloom underneath the cottage floor.

He shut and locked the trap door covering it again with the rug. Vesbia looked at Lada. "Girl we have to hold them as long as we can, you ready."

Lada shook her horned head as she pawed the floor. Her lips curled back over her canines with a deep growl.

Vesbia reached over opening the cottage door, looking over at his horn hound. "Let's go." He moved quickly out the door, leaving it open behind him.

Several Months Later

Chapter 11 Na'tane

The old man known to all as the Royal Doctor, had taken a wrong turn down one of the many alleyways that ran between the buildings and shops that lined King's Row. He started to turn down a narrow alley leading back to Market Street when he hesitated seeing someone else standing in the dark back alley. She was a very young girl maybe around ten years old, and the sight of her brought tears to his eyes. She was wearing dirty tattered pants and tunic. Her hair was dirty and matted and she looked as if she had not eaten in days.

Doc stood still not wanting to frighten her with any sudden movements. The child stood in the ally way, looking out into the streets facing away from him. He started to say something to her when she vanished right before his eyes.

The doctor understood now who she was and the race she belonged too. Mayjin the most misunderstood race in the realm, some called them witches, others monsters. But the old man never bought in to any of

that, to him they were a race of magic. He never understood why her race was hunted almost to extinction, simply because they are different. When not one time in history has one of their kind done anything to deserve such treatment.

The old doctor stood very still watching, although he couldn't see her, he could still hear her. He could see imprints of her small bare feet in the dirt of the back alley.

The young girl moved out on the main street of King's Row where shops and carts set full of fruits, cakes and pies. He followed her staying a short distance behind. He watched her foot prints with amazement as she moved skillfully between the many people walking and shopping on the Row. She was very careful not allowing anyone to come close enough to touch her. She stopped behind a cart built with shelves lined with cakes. He watched one of the cakes swiftly disappear into thin air.

The young girl must have turned to escape when a long whip sang through the air contacting her backside. She screamed dropping the cake and then lost her invisibility, as she fell to her knees in the dirt street. The people walking by saw the pitiful sight of child on her knees screaming pain. But they just ignored her nodding their heads to each other and never stopping or giving her a second thought.

As she cried out in pain, the shop keeper rolled up his whip, walking out with anger in his voice. He reached down violently pulling the child up off her knees, he started shaking her yelling, "You little witch, I got you now." He started yelling for the law keepers that kept the piece in King's Row. The shop keeper raised his hand over her, palm open, preparing to come down hard across her small face.

The old man walked up to the shop keeper saying, "Sir, do you know who I am!"

The shop keeper still holding his hand up, looked up to see the Royal Doctor standing in front of him, "If you strike this child again, when the King's men arrive it will be you they throw in the dungeons." The shop keeper lowered his arm. The doctor said, "Release her now and get back to your pies and cakes."

"Yes sir, but who will pay for the cake she ruined with her filthy hands." The doctor reached inside his cloak pulling out a coin, tossing it to the shop keeper. He then looked down at the dirty skinny child saying, "You don't want his cakes." He looked at that the shop keeper saying, "I know for sure I don't want his cakes, but I will show you better shop full of cakes and pies, there they have the best cakes."

The young girl's sobs softened as she tried to move, the doctor could see the pain in her face from the lash on her back. He knelt down so she wouldn't have to look up at him saying, "But first let me have a look at your back, I can take away most of that pain, then we will have all the cakes you can eat." He reached down gently picking her up into his arms, taking care not to hurt her anymore than she already was. She didn't even have the strength to resist him as the doctor said, "Come, I will take you to my clinic, there I will make you feel much better."

When they entered the doctor's clinic, a short round woman with twinkling eyes met him and saw the battered child in his arms. She ran forward reaching out for the little girl, "You poor child, Doc where did you find her, oh never mind that doesn't matter, give her to me so I can bath her before you start sticking needles in her."

The small girl's eyes went wide open upon hearing this, the woman's eyes twinkled as a smile came to her face, "I was just kidding little one, I have a nice tub in the back ready to be filled with warm water." She looked at the doctor saying, "Don't just stand there, go buy her some cloths, once I have washed her I will tend to her back."

A short time later the young girl stood naked looking at the tub full of water, the older woman put her hands to her hips saying, "Now go on in with ya, there's nothing in there that bites." After the bath, the woman seen pain in her face as she gently pat dried her back. She could see the cut of whip lash, "Don't you worry I am a nurse, I can take care of your sore back and make that pain go away. I will be right back." Two minutes later she returned with a jar of pain easing salve. As gently as she could the nurse rubbed the salve on the little girl's back. Then carefully wrapped her body with clean cloth protecting the open wound on her back.

The nurse heard the door to the shop open and close. The doctor walked in carrying a rapped bundle of children's cloths. The heavy set woman stepped out to greet him taking the bundle saying, "It is about time, the child needs decent cloths, I have bandaged her back and we will meet you in the kitchen, so go on with ya."

Later as the three sit in the kitchen of the house that was also the clinic, the nurse and the doctor watched as the child ravaged a bowl of soup. The nurse squinted her eyes shaking her head back and forth toward the doctor saying, "The child needs real food, not sweets and cakes."

The child had not spoken, when the old man said, "She will remain here and live with you in the house, you could use the company, do you agree sister." The women nodded, "Of course she can, I do need help around here, she can stay or live here as long as she wants." She then reached across the table laying her hand on the child's hand, "You must never use your magic outside this house, people must never know, you will be safe I promise as long as no one knows who you are."

"Yes" the doctor said, "In time I will take you on as my apprentice, I will teach you medicine and alchemy. I will also teach you how to use your magic, but only when we are alone will I allow you to practice." The girl raised her hand up in front of the empty bowl of soup, without touching it, sending it sliding smoothly and safely toward the other end of the table. She lifted her face and for the first time a smile showed there. She softly said, "Thank you sir and me lady, I will behave I promise."

"Good", the old doctor said, "Then it is settled."

"I have a spare room up stars, go on up and get ready for bed, I will be there in a minute." the heavy set woman smiled. "Don't call me "me lady", my name is Ruth, and this crabby old man is my brother, Randolph, but I just call him Doc." The young girl was now smiling uncontrollably with a light beam in her eyes, it had been a long time, since she had felt so happy. The ever present pain of hunger in her belly, was now feeling warm allowing her to feel good again. She stopped at the steps of the stairs, turning saying, "My name is Na'tane."

The old man said, "Glad to meet you Na'tane."

Ruth waved her hand toward the child, "Now go on with ya, after I finish cleaning the kitchen I will be up to see you into bed."

Later Ruth walked into the spare bedroom checking on Na'tane when she found the little girl sitting on the side of the bed crying. Ruth set down beside her, putting an arm around her shoulders saying, "There, there, little one, everything is going to be alright."

Na'tane didn't look up, instead studied her hands laying in her lap with wet tears falling softly on her nightgown. Her small frail body shook remembering the ones she loved. She said, "I miss my family."

Ruth hugged her saying in a understanding voice, "I know you do child, life is not fair, no one as young as you should have to suffer the loss of their family."

Na'tane opened up to Ruth, she was the first person in a long time that had made her feel safe, "My family just wanted to live in piece at the edge of Thandlor Forest, just wanted to be left alone. We were very happy until the night the long riders came. My Father stayed behind sacrificing himself, then later the men on horses caught up to us, my brother held them off to give mother and I a chance to escape into the forest. But they brought horn hounds with them hunting us down, as the hounds closed in mother told me to hide inside a large hollow tree. She then covered it up with broken branches. She kept on running to lead them away from me, but before she left, she cast a spell on the tree giving it an appearance of being solid. One of the dogs stayed at the tree sniffing around it, until a man grabbed it running off to where they found my mother. I stayed in the tree all night and through the morning to scared to move. I knew my family was gone, and all I did was cry. Why didn't I try and help them."

Ruth kissed her lightly on the cheek, "Sweet child, there is nothing you could have done, your family loved you very much, they sacrificed to keep their little girl alive. After losing the ones you love, mere words will never bring you piece. Never forget them, keep them in your heart, and live as best you can. In time you will learn how to fight the ghosts of that horrible night. It want be easy, but it does get better."

Ruth got up saying, "I am going down stairs to the kitchen, I have some special tea that will help you sleep. I keep it made all the time for Doc, it helps him to sleep. My little one you are not alone anymore, in time you will start a new life. I just know one day you will be a great doctor, the best therapy for self healing is by helping others. I know it doesn't mean much now, but please consider us your family. Love sometimes is where you can find it, and not where you wished it could be. Find it in us and in your studies, become someone that your family would be proud of."