

# Rihtan, I

by Ashley Poulter

The Felinead king turned in time to see Bastwick raise his hand, the wooden stake so ornately carved was brought into a mocking position just before the chest of Roushnell. With the tip touching the fine silk of his robes, Bastwick lowered his face and whispered his chosen words on the occasion, “We have met our end here, King. Your kind has dwelt long here over the working bodies of those you deem unfit. Cathrine has committed her treason upon Kulowul and your kingdom has been found to be what it truly is — a plague and hotbed for smuggling them into the area.” Roushnell made little movement save for eyes turning in the direction of the incoming guards. A quavering voice found its footing on his lips as attention returned to Bastwick, “Cathine will be hunted down and brutally marked before her murder. Her treason commits her to Afylan.” At the word Bastwick reacted with his intended gift for the Felinead. Hand twisted sharply and brought the king down to his knees, the stake swung from its idle presence into a roaring flash straight into the chest of Roushnell. There was no final word given from the lips of the king save for the last puff of air leaving his lungs and the thud of elbow shattering against the wooden table at his side. Whatever he intended for Cathine, Bastwick knew it mattered little. Whether the girl was found fleeing and abducted into a short life of inexcusable torment or she escaped from the paths of Kulowul, the kingdom would fall in a matter of days. The entire plains were rushing onward to meet their walls and the treason of Cathine was already in action.

Bastwick struggled against the slippery sop of blood oozing from the wound. The king's robes were flayed open by a jagged nail Bastwick had recovered from the forge before entering the hall. Although the guards were upon him, their frazzled fright over the sudden murder had spared him the few extra moments he needed to recover the document he needed. One guard lunged for the rolled sheet of parchment and met the nail in Bastwick's hand with his eye,

staggering back into another charging guard. Bastwick, in turn, pressed the paper against his chest and prayed a quick word or two before it dissolved into his flesh with little more than a sizzle. His moment of luck had passed and those precious seconds needed found their end on the tip of a spear. A solitary guard had recovered enough to impale the Dwinan. With barely a shudder the male was sprawled across the stone floors and the blood spilled in small rivulets across the stone landing, the valleys between each stone tile overflowed, leaking with Bastwick's last stand. As the guards gathered up his body to carry out for the viewing, Bastwick's hand gave a small twitch to signify that across the city something more was being done...

**Felinead:** Feline race. Dummies.

**Dwinan:** Folk with the ability to absorb items and transfer them between other Dwinan.

**Kulowul:** Kingdom. Felinead rule it, took it from humans and other folks. Kind of an assey move.

