

# Chapter 1

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"The King," he paused, pursed his lips, looked across the crowd of eager and fearful citizens of Ki, "is dead!"

Gasps were heard around the crowd, but not as many as the soldier had expected. He always thought there were traitors in the kingdom. The men in the crowd, who were slouching at first, straightened their backs and put on a face of no fear. They knew what he was going to say next.

"We have lost the battles in the south. They are coming. We must abandon our houses, and make for our allies to the north."

"Are you sure they are on their way? Won't the army hold them off for a bit longer?"

"Citizen, have you not heard what I said? The king is dead. Captured and beheaded by the enemy. They have no mercy. If we do not make for the north, immediately, we will face the same fate as our leader."

"But how long do we have?" said another citizen.

"Hours. Now go, I must make way for the temple."

The crowd began to disperse. The mothers held their children close, the men held the women close, and the homeless on the roofs looked towards the sky, as if seeking some divine power to tell them if they should move with the town, or stay.

The Soldier got off the waist-high brick, and began to navigate through the crowds. There was no pushing or shoving. He began to hate this place more and more.

He had been told to leave the infantry down south and bring the news to the city. That had been four days ago. He had no idea how long the city had. It may have been hours, might be days, even weeks. There was no way to estimate how fast they would crush his brothers in arms now that they had no king, and thus, no strategy.

When he arrived, he was excited to see some kind of panic erupt across the crowd, tears, fear, even chaos, after they listened to what he said. He had planned it through his mind. He was to climb on top

of the brick that was meant to be only for the use of the king, and yell across the crowd just like the king used to do, with dramatic effect, and then watch as the crowd runs over themselves as they try to make for their homes to gather their belongings and move north. He, by no means, hated Ki, he just didn't like the citizens. They were two-faced, helpless fucking snakes. All of them. They all had no love for the king, or had faith in their army. Only when things got rough against the Nation down south did they begin to praise the army. They paid no taxes for the upkeep of it, but when it came time for war, they expected them to waltz down there, jump over the army, and burn them. Bastards.

The temple was about 20 meters behind the block, and it did not take him long to get there. He knew that was where the royal family would be. They were always there when the king would go to war. They would not take to the news well. He knew it. He planned this out in his mind as well.

He walked past the 18 pillars leading to the Temple. He came to the entrance of the Temple where the Guard of the Night waited. The Guard of the Night were the soldiers from the Front-Line company that would defend the royal family and accompany them while the King was gone. The Soldier came to a stop in front of them. He gazed into the temple, at the golden statues of the Gods of the Sun, Moon, War, and at the statue of the current king, but then he looked back at the main Guard of the Night.

"Let me in. I have grave news from the War."

"You will not speak to the Queen. What news do you bring, and we will tell her ourselves."

"I was told by the King himself to bring news to Ki and to his family that the King is dead."

"The news that the King is dead? We have heard. How can the King tell do you bring news of his death whilst he is alive? Traitor! Heretic!"

"What is it?" The Queen came to entrance from the left side of the entrance. Apparently, she was sitting in the back.

The Soldier was taken aback. He had never seen the Queen up this close before. She was a brunette with long hair. Her eyes were dark and fierce. However, her eyes were a bit red, not necessarily from crying, perhaps from allergies. She was wearing a long white gown, and she had a small yet noticeable tiara on her head. Her nose was a normal shape, but her eyes were what stood out the most. For what reason, the soldier could not tell.

"This man brings news that your husband, our king, is dead. He says the King himself told him to tell us that."

"The king is dead? Is it true?" She looked at the Soldier, who was angry now at the way the Guards had reacted to his words, which he realized now were chosen carelessly.

"I was sent here by the King's Army. I was told to come here to bring news of the King's death by beheadment. I was told to tell the kingdom to move north for aid and abandon this place."

The Queen put her hand over her mouth, and her eyes started to tear up. The Soldier maintained his composure, but inside he was relishing this moment. Something had finally gone according to the way he thought it.

"How- he said- what- no! No!" The Queen fell down.

"My Queen! Send this man away!" said the main Guard.

"No. Do not leave. How, how long do we have till they breach our defense in the south?"

"For all I know, they may have done it already and are sprinting up here to enslave all of us."

"Then we must leave. We must leave by sundown, and make way for the north by the light of Sphaera. You may leave."

The Soldier bowed, and made way, past the 18 pillars.

As he reached the opening next to the Block of Kings, he could hear rustling and movements, screams, and could feel the anticipation of leaving the kingdom. He touched the block and licked his lips. He now felt no anger for the crowd, and he felt relieved. He had done his job.

He looked up at the tower of the king. A large minaret atop the courthouse where they had sentenced his father to exile. He was too

young at the time to figure out why his father was being sent away, and no ever explained it to him. He didn't even understand what happened even now, but he did not miss nor love his father.

The tower always represented to him the power of the kingdom, of the army, even though the army was made of misfits. But at the same time, it represented the false sense of the security the King had given Ki when he came into power. He had stood atop this block, and told the kingdom that they are the most powerful region in the world. For some reason, they all believed it. The walls had not been breached for a decade, and the skirmishes they had gotten into with the southern Nation had always ended with a peace treaty, and they had this sense of invincibility. After the Peace of Treaty of the Second, the king had erected that minaret and put himself on top. It was in perfect position. The courthouse was next to the open space. The king could've chosen the living quarters, the Hall, or even just the open square to put such a minaret, but he had put it atop the courthouse. The Soldier liked the sight of it, but ever since it was erected, the courthouse had been showing signs of structural stress. The pillars in the front were showing the cracks, the inside of the courthouse even had pieces fall from the roof and land on the seat of the convicted below. This had actually happened. A piece of the roof had fallen atop the shopkeeper who was charged with overpricing his merchandise. The judge told him that god will strike him down, and then the piece of the roof fell atop him. The judge laughed afterward, and adjourned the court. The brick was removed later, but the blood stains next to the Seat of the Convicted were still there.

Lately though, the Courthouse had been closed. Under the spot where the minaret was erected, inside the courthouse, there was this huge spider-web crack. Ever since that appeared, the courthouse had been closed, and the King had built another one on the other side of the kingdom next to the Wall. He said it was perfect so when someone was exiled, they could immediately leave.

The Soldier stared at the Minaret for a while. He eventually left the square and made for the Army Quarters, three blocks west of the square.

