

Chapter 1 – Out of the Frying Pan...

Cole sits in a small, worn armchair in the corner of the room, face illuminated eerily by the light of an oil lamp burning on the desk where Arryn is reading. His face is dark and brooding; contemplating our options.

Joseph enters from the inner sanctum chamber, face buried in more documents from the record library, which, until now has been locked, until the door was ‘persuaded’ to open. He too, looks worried.

Arryn looks up from the parchment and sighs, before returning to the desk drawers and rifling through their contents to find more information.

Recently, Cole let me in on the situation at hand, Marcus’s treachery and the corruption of the entire Syndicate, hell, perhaps the entire city if their fears are well founded.

Now, I’m a part of this too, and I wouldn’t have it any other way, me being Cole’s assistant and all.

I blow a rogue strand of hair from my eyes and return to the leather-bound journal I’m reading through – It’s old, but looks as if it may have been written in recently.

Arryn's brow furrows as she reads, before she curses, crumpling the paper into a ball and hurling it at the wall. "It just confirms everything," she sighs eventually, face buried in her hands, "he has – had – complete control of the entire city, and maybe others in Hathenshire.

"His seedy network infiltrated the council, and started this gods-damned war. Whatever the madman was, he was crafty to say the least."

"Well then," Cole retorted, "we're lucky to be alive still, obviously his connections haven't received word of his, err, 'passing'."

Arryn looks up and glares at him, eyes flickering dangerously, bright and menacing in the dim light of the oil lamp.

"What? You know as well as I do that if they had we'd have a slight lack of head on our shoulders."

She continues to stare at him, before conceding and looking down briefly.

"I suppose you're right, so we have to leave the city. Hell, even the country! And look at this,"

She hands me a worn book, Marcus's most up-to-date journal. "He says he has contacts in Dun Garok, where this stupidity with the rebellion and such is taking place. "If we're going to get to the bottom of this" - she says, indicating to a point in the latest entry - "business about an artifact of some kind, then we had better go to the source of the fighting.

"Unfortunately, this is all looking very, murky, at the moment, and I can't make any sense of any of this, let alone some artifact. But, if my guess means anything, I'd say this is the root of his corruption, and he was simply manipulating the guild to his whims, and indeed the entire council, just to find this thing."

I hand the book to Cole, who looks at it briefly before handing it to Joseph, whose brow furrows when contemplating the information within.

"So, what, you're suggesting that we just board a ship or a train to Dun Garok, just like that? Have you forgotten that we're technically wanted for murder and assassination of a high-ranking political enforcer? Or are you just in one of

those whimsical moods where you go where the winds of chance take you?

“We’ll never make it onto a passenger vessel, and gods help us if we try to sneak onto a military ship. So, how are you planning to get there without having to spend months walking there?” Cole questions her hotly.

“Well,” she says coldly, “we could always, err, *commandeer* a vessel, there are four of us, I’m pretty sure we could manage a small ship of some kind, or hire a merchant vessel.”

“Arryn,” I say nervously, and she snaps her gaze onto me, making me feel as tall as a mouse, “we could always *borrow* my uncle’s ship. He kind of owes me after I got him out of his debt problem with the guild.”

“Well...” Cole begins, “If we are going to do this then we have to use a bit of ‘*grâce des fantôme*’, as they say.”

“Who says that?” Joseph snorts, “anyway, what I think he means is subtlety, so we need to be on top form.

“We’ll leave at dawn tomorrow, you think you can get it done for the Reyven?”

“I should be able to.” He nods slowly.

“Right then, I’m going to go sort some things out, I’ll see you all dim and early.” He says, striding out of the room, leaving us to our thoughts in the gloom of the fading oil lamp.