

Books One to Three  
of the  
Sons  
of  
**ODIN**

Collector's Edition



L.A. Hammer

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To my Father, for always reading my stories.

Book Two is for all my friends, who have ever shared the dream.

I dedicate Book Three to my good friend, Nathan.

He showed me that faith can be a virtue to be respected.

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# Book One of the Sons

of

# Odin

*Odin's Awakening*

## Collector's Edition

### *Prologue*

Lady Gwyndel climbed the dark stone at the foot of the tower that loomed above her like the Dark One's Spear. Her Guardian, Lord Farrigan led the climb, though the rest of their party had remained at the mountain pass between the Free Lands and the barren wastelands that were home to the Resting Point of the Dark One, known as Kerak'Otozi.

The tower was only several hours ride from the Green Border however. A long distance from the dreaded mountain where the Lord of Chaos resided and built his strength, drawing from the Elemental Magic of the Great Angels to fuel his preparation for the day of the Return.

Gwyndel was not without hope however, as the day of the First Arrival was nearing—when the Sons of Odin and the Daughter of Thor would come to the rescue of Kismeria—according to words spoken by the immortal kings to both her and Farrigan. The two kings had appointed the Blademaiden and Guardian Lord for a special mission to gain intelligence from the enemy at their lair, here in the Eastlands at the Tower of Orgroth Koehar.

Orgroth Koehar was obsidian rising as a shaft of defiance against the light of the moon that shone occasionally amidst dark thunderclouds, forked lighting of crimson evil pulsing and flaring in sideward bursts throughout the darkness. Other bolts blasted the earth below where hot magma flowed through deep caverns and cracked soil.

Despite the foul heat of these lands during daylight hours, the nights were near to freezing temperatures, cooling much of the lava that flowed from a number of volcanoes in this region, including Kerak'Otozi. That was the main source, however much of the burning rivers still glowed bright hot in the darkness below.

Gwyndel's hands were cut a number of times during the climb, though the presence of her Battle Angel brought a fast healing to her flesh; it was painful and gruelling to endure none the less. Despite being immortal blood, her bones were weary and her muscles ached during the climb, as it took over two hours of climbing to reach the foot of the tower.

She wished for nothing more than to be home in a warm blanket listening to the wind through the trees of her nest, high in the branches of the Great Trees of the Kingarin Forest, the Silver Twins, the Crimson Leaf, Iron Oaks, Golden Towers, Faun-Hoof Leaf, Starlight Elms, Moon-Branch and other enchanted trees of the forest that glowed with the ancient light of the Great Angels that created the first seeds of their kind during the Dawn of Ages.

It was a burden and a curse to be enlisted in the Wood Kin Clans at times like these, when she was forced to forsake her own safety and risk life and limb to gather intelligence for the immortal kings. She *tsked* to herself in irritation when she thought over the countless missions just like this one she had taken part in during her hundred and thirty four years as a full grown, after taking the oaths before the Dremelden King and Queen. Her fealty was sworn to her people, but also to the realm.

Their *altherin* horses had taken them to the stone cliffs that formed the base of the tower; and the climb had been steep and deadly as the winds howled like and thunder roared through the heavens. But the immortal blood of the ancients flowed through the veins of Gwyndel and Farrigan, and they were both swift and sure as they clung to crevices and craggy paths to heave their bodies to higher perches. Their keen eyes and ears ever alert for the sight of any threat, some Shadowspawn spy; demon or perhaps even the Dark Generals they sought to spy upon.

Gwyndel was fair of hair with large emerald eyes, of the Dremelden Wood Kin Clans, as was Lord Farrigan—a tall handsome figure, dark of hair with eyes that often stared at her in ways that was unnerving, but it also often brought emotions of excitement, though he had never spoken the words that declared such feelings for her in return—and they both wore the *torin'sidhe* of greys, greens and browns on their coats and boots, with matching cuirass and breastplates under cloaks of the Guardian, that blended with the night and the dark stone itself to hide them from the view of sharp-eyed enemies.

Each was equipped with a bow and blade, though the enemy they sought out would destroy them with little effort, if not for the Battle Angel, Druantia—Wife to the Green Man, Queen of Forests and Mother of the Children of the Woods—that resided in her emerald bow as Resting Point, for Druantia would give these Shadow Men and their second in command a swift hiding if it became necessary.

They reached the highest window of the tower—their immortal sight could see even in the shadows that it was unguarded—by each one of them being lifted over one hundred feet up through the air, carried by the wings of Druantia. After the Battle Angel was summoned—and appeared as a slender young looking woman with hair and eyes of burning shadows; flesh and rune marked dress glowing aqua, emerald and crimson—wings of jade light fanned from her shoulders, and she lifted first Farrigan, placing him sitting on the windowsill high upon the tower's flat facing side, then returned to scoop up Gwyndel and carry her to the same place. They slipped into the darkness within—as Druantia returned to the enchanted bow—neither of them wielding the Power to light their way in fear of being

discovered, moving with stealth up the winding stairway with elven eyes searching for signs of an ambush.

They had not wasted Druantia's strength at the beginning of the climb as the Angel relied on precious stores of demon souls to aid her Elemental Magic, and even that small amount of assistance would have depleted some of those stores. The presence of a Battle Angel released from their Resting Point was also a risk of being detected by these high ranking Darksouled, and then, even with Druantia to beat the enemy into submission, Gwyndel and Farrigan would have to flee. Even then it was not a guarantee that they would survive.

During their ascension Farrigan waved a fist to halt her in her tracks. He drew his blade and moved on ahead without her, his cloak blending with the stone walls and the darkness to hide him. The glowing sword concealed beneath the folds.

A fierce grunt was heard as the light of the blade flared in the distance—the sound of a demon dying in shock—as a dark ram's skull thudded as it fell down the staircase in plain sight, lit by the pale blue of Farrigan's blade. Dark blood flowed from the fat dark corpse that lay sprawled upon the steps further ahead—the magic of the blade melting away its shadow flesh as cracks of blue spread like tiny crackling lightning bolts; even disintegrating the network of bones—after Farrigan returned to signal her to follow.

That had been a Jacoulra guard, a foul demon of dark magic, though fortunately it had been alone—and Farrigan was also a formidable warrior—so the pair continued on their mission to seek out the precious information required by the immortal kings. *'What plotting and scheming do our enemies have in store, in preparation for the First Arrival?'*

It was for an answer to that very question; that Gwyndel and Farrigan were marching into the Lion's den. She felt part fool for her willingness to follow orders without question, especially when it concerned her own neck, yet the fate of the world hung in the balance, and according to ancient prophecies, only the Sons and Daughter could ever hope to save them.

*There is a rooftop entrance where you will be able to overlook the Meeting Hall, Druantia explained to Gwyndel's mind in chiming tones. I sense a large gathering, perhaps even all of the Accursed and most of the Anointed are present.*

Gwyndel signalled this information to Farrigan with hand gestures, a complex system created by the immortal kin over the span of Ages. Farrigan nodded, and continued on with greater caution, creeping like a panther on the hunt. His expression revealed the fear they both felt to be so close to a gathering of men and women that could extinguish their lives as easily as two wet fingers closing about a burning wick. *It must mean they have something very important to discuss, Gwyndel replied to Druantia. Why else would they all be gathered in one place?*

*That is plain truth, Gwyndel. The Accursed generally do not like to work together, let alone communicate with their second in command. The rooftop entrance is a small trapdoor located in the ceiling outside the entrance to the Meeting Hall. I have disabled its locks and magic wards, though you must hurry. I will try to disguise the trapdoor after you enter, to make it appear that it has not been tampered with. You must be quiet as a mouse, Lady Gwyndel, your footfalls must not make a sound, and your breathing must be as calm as still waters.*

It was all well and good for her Battle Angel to give such instructions on calm silence, but the trembling that was taking over Gwyndel was near impossible to control.

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Calliestra, known by her enemies as Shadowheart, stood in the meeting hall of the highest chamber of Orgroth Koehar, surrounded by the assembled Generals of the Shadow.

Nodomi kept her distance from Calliestra, the snooty nosed beauty running a delicate hand across her golden locks that fell past her shoulders every so often. A sure sign of her discomfort at being so close to so many of the higher ranking Generals, known as the Appointed by Darksouled, but their enemies referred to them as Dark Angels or the Shadow Men. Perhaps it was because they were a unit of twelve formed only of males, all immortal blood. Men who had betrayed the Light to serve the Dark One in hope of an immortality that would allow them to escape even Death himself, if they were to ever meet their doom at the hands of a courageous Blademaster—though the warrior would require a fine blade and perhaps a few Battle Angels to achieve the task. Orion and Tobin were perhaps the only warriors left in Kismeria who stood any such chance. Those two were the greatest threat.

Tairark Vampireking seemed the most confident from his stance and the radiance of evil that permeated from his dark cloak that seemed to merge with the shadows of the room. Shockingly, all twelve of the Appointed had removed their rune marked masks to reveal their rarely seen faces, skin that had the texture and colour of ashes and rot, each one glaring about the chamber with eyes that burned like hot magma. This was a fusion of the Power and the Dark One's Glory, known commonly as the Dark Trail. Those caverns of golden flames were unnerving when being caught by their gaze, but Calliestra would not let her fear show to men she would one day supplant, to take her rightful place as the Right Fist of the Shadow.

The other Appointed hovered inches above the floor about the room—that a blending of space and time, as well as the chamber itself, as a physical location was required, but the room itself was an illusion of the Dark Trail, hiding them from the eyes and ears of spies. Unless that spy had an artefact of magic or a Battle Angel to unravel the weaves—and every one of them was radiating that ominous force of the Trail to dominate over the Anointed, the lower ranking twelve generals of which Calliestra was a member, though it irked her painfully to admit even to herself.

There was a level of unity between the abilities gifted to both the Appointed and Anointed via the Trail, though that particular ability to radiate an evil force was applicable only to Shadow Men, Souljhin and lesser demons, at least to any degree of creating fear in your enemies. This was also a point of great displeasure for her.

The other Anointed were all showing signs of feeling oppressed in the presence of the entire host of Appointed, as they sat or paced about the room waiting for the meeting to commence. Why Tairark had not already started was perplexing for her, as it made her begin to worry that perhaps another had been given an even higher station of command.

She glanced across at Fearen, dark haired with large blue eyes that so often shifted from a clear focus to that of a madwoman. She was mad before she betrayed the Light, and the Dark One had never cleansed that illness entirely. For which reason Calliestra had always treated her as the closest ally, though always believing she was the last of their kind that

should be trusted or given command. ‘Why is it *always* such a *long* wait?’ The fool woman asked with a focused gaze, before she began picking at her face with dark fingernails—a habit that had left her grossly scarred—before she began to whine with that look of madness returning.

‘I certainly have better things to be doing than standing around with my arms crossed,’ Nodomi chimed in, and as the woman brushed a hand over her locks once again. Calliestra almost bit her tongue to avoid blurting out that the slut was probably referring to the three slaver men she had waiting back in her bedchamber, in a bed that was large enough to fit a half dozen more. Nodomi’s use of mind control was a deplorable past time, though the woman had an insatiable appetite for passion—even if it was with men so stoned by the Power they probably wouldn’t know if they were giving it to a goat.

She held her tongue more for the fact that it would reveal to Nodomi that Calliestra knew such things about her—as Calliestra had worked long and hard for centuries to retrace the Old Lore of the ancients and the Old Ways Magic, to discover precious knowledge of the Power and how to use these abilities to both spy upon and manipulate her peers—as this would spark intrigue in every other figure gathered that Calliestra knew such intimate secrets about another of their kind—much more so than for the fact that it may embarrass the poor girl.

Nodomi cringed moments after as her tender pale bosom—exposed by the low cut neckline of her golden lace gown—rose and fell in anxious breaths, perhaps more so for the waiting than her desperation to return to her shameless acts of debauchery.

Calliestra returned her focus to the hall, it was lit by a translucent glow of crimson and amber, with shadows cast off each figure that flickered and morphed into shapes suggestive of Nymloc and Jacoulra. The light was a working of the Shadow, rather than some metaphorical reflection of the nature of the souls of each man and woman. The walls of the chamber were glossy black panels that shone like silk shadows, lined with hard crimson timbers against the obsidian walls.

Apparitions of pale skulls danced across the surface of the shadowy panels, the tortured souls of Servants of the Shadow who had not received the blessing of reincarnation. It was either for failure of the Great Lord, or simply because the Dark One saw no greater use for them after their demise. Darksouled served their purposes in the name of evil in the hope of immortality, but not all were so fortunate. Calliestra often wondered if the Great Lord chose such surrounds as a warning against failure of those he placed highest in command, and the more often the thought came to mind, the more likely it seemed. She resisted the urge to shiver, again hiding her growing discomfort as time seemed to slide into puddles at her feet.

Her fears up until that moment could not have matched the moment a flare of crimson and golden fires blossomed in a shadowed corner of the chamber, to reveal the shadow cloaked form of a Souljhin standing taller than seven feet. An impossible tower of pure sin bleeding its corruptive forces through the air as its form slid towards Tairark, the Vampireking actually giving way for the creature as it glanced about the room. Large black eyes shaped like burning seeds of pure malevolence on a puckered pasty white face revealed beneath the heavy drooping cowl.

‘What madness is this?’ Another of the Anointed asked as if scandalized by the presence of one of the Swordsmen of the Shadow arriving without summons, but again

Calliestra held her tongue, as did the rest of the gathering. They all knew well enough not to question any man that held sway over Tairark. It was Baidel who had asked the question, though his fear and doubt of his own words became readily apparent as he gave a slight tilt of his head with a cautious gaze directed at the Souljhin.

When the creature spoke, it seemed a shrill scream tore the air with every hissed phrase, though its deep crushing tones reminded her of bones being crushed under foot, blood flowing through endless chasms, rotting corpses and the Flames of Hell.

‘The Great Lord has appointed me as Right Fist of the Shadow.’ Those words brought immediate shock and revulsion from all who stood glaring in disbelief. It was abhorrent for any of them to be forced to even consider accepting such a decision, though a raging torrent of fierce wickedness permeated Calliestra’s soul as the Souljhin released the full force of his might against them. Each man who might think to oppose this being suddenly relented like tame wolves receiving a slap on the nose by their new master.

‘You will soon learn that I will not accept insolence any more than failure from my subjects.’ Calliestra began to fear she may faint in pure shock of the level of corruption that battered against her senses; the Souljhin was a raging volcano of pure sin. ‘I am named Baegelmeer; you will address me as so. I demand absolute respect and subservience.

‘As you all know, the Great Lord is plotting to ambush the Sons and Daughter on the day of the First Arrival.’ Baegelmeer pointed a dark nailed finger at Baidel and Torkhan as he said, ‘You will receive further orders on when and where we shall strike. The Dark Lord will gain new control over the elements soon after the Sons have delivered the promised curse to the Power of *teron*. Although the Great Lord and his servants have never discovered the exact location of the Arrival, we know the hour is nigh. We must be vigilant in our preparations to annihilate them, or to drive them into submission. Ultimately we must form their alliance with the Great Lord, whether as living men, or cursed wraiths.’

Baegelmeer then pointed at Calliestra as he spoke, ‘You, Shadowheart, will have a short introduction with one of the Sons, this very night. You shall visit him in his dreams, travelling to the Earth realm in spirit to tell him of his fate to serve the Shadow in life or death.’

‘How will I achieve this?’ Calliestra asked with tremendous fear crushing her chest.

‘Do you take me for a fool?’ The Souljhin asked. ‘You have the ability to do so, and so, you shall do exactly as I command.’ The creature then turned to move back to the shadowed corner from which it had emerged, and as Baegelmeer began to vanish in substance Calliestra called to him, asking, ‘What else does the Dark One command of us?’

The voice of Baegelmeer carried in the air even after his form had vanished, ‘The Great Lord has endless plans for you all, though those that disappoint me, shall suffer due punishments from him directly.’

Moments later Calliestra felt all eyes upon her, before Nodomi asked with scorn, ‘What did he mean by that, saying you have the ability to enter dreams in the Earth Realm? What other secrets have you kept from us all this time?’

‘It was a recent discovery,’ Calliestra lied quickly to avoid further suspicion, and she hoped she succeeded. ‘I have never tested the theory, though I will try, of course. I will do as Baegelmeer commands me. I would like some time alone to attempt it however.’

‘I would very much like to see you make the attempt,’ Nodomi almost cried.

‘Silence!’ roared Tairark. ‘I will remain here to monitor Shadowheart while she works the spell, the rest of you can leave.’

‘Do we still take orders from you?’ Baidel asked uncertainly.

‘I am still second in command,’ Tairark replied in irritated rage, expelling a degree of corruption with enough force to make his point. ‘Leave, all of you, now. That is *my* command.’

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Calliestra waited until the gathering had departed, before creating the weaves to enter the dreams of the Son of Odin. Tairark stood watching with keen interest as his eyes detected even the female weaves that were made using a combination of *terael* and the Trail. He would instruct her to provide further instructions on how to use this ability, to track and also appear before any of the three Sons of Odin, when she returned. For now he waited silently, until her form began to shimmer and burn into a translucent quality. Her figure was surrounded by light and shadows that coursed through the air in a tunnel like a school of brightly coloured fish, until she faded from view entirely. Golden light flared before she vanished in a weave that appeared similar to creating portals through space.

Entering dreams was a part of the Old Ways Magic. It was still known by all of the Appointed and Anointed, and was known by many Alit’aren and Ael Trael throughout the Ages. However none except the Great Angels had ever been known to have the ability to travel to and from the alternate dimension known as Earth. This ability to even enter the dreams of someone from that realm was a precious gem. One that Calliestra had obviously kept secret for her own purposes.

The meeting had not been a complete shock however. He had been well informed by the Great Lord that Baegelmeer was appointed Right Fist, well before the time he arrived here. He had kept the others waiting—rather than admit to such damned humiliation openly—until the Souljhin appeared to make his claim.

There was nothing more to be done about it. Even Tairark knew he did not have the ability to destroy the creature. Baegelmeer was given sources of the Great Lord’s Glory that surpassed any other. Even with an alliance of his Brothers, defeating such an opponent would take more than just good luck.

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Gwyndel was near to sweating in fear of the presence of the last Shadow Man in the Meeting Chamber, the room viewable via the abilities gifted to her by Druantia. She saw the meeting take place through a warp in space. It allowed her to see straight through the roof of the Tower, through wrappings of Air and Fire that would keep the meeting from the prying eyes of lesser spies in the same location.

Farrigan remained silent at her side, until he gave the signal that it was time to attempt a retreat. They both began to shift across the stone paved ceiling of the Chamber with the

skill of Elven Guardians. The gift attributed from earth and sky gave them heightened senses, but also expert abilities at Wood Lore and remaining silent when hunting or spying.

They were exiting the trapdoor and making their way down the ladder swiftly, but cautiously to avoid sound. Gwyndel saw a blade ever so close to being pressed against her throat, a beam of hot corrosion glowing crimson below her vision told her it was the blade of a Souljhin or Shadow Man. The level of evil force that was being generated suggested it was the latter. If the blade gave her the slightest cut, she would die a horrible death in a very short time. Druantia would not be able to cure the dark magic curse that would infect her flesh and blood. The fact that the blade had not cut her yet, meant the assassin wanted answers from her first.

She breathed the name of her Battle Angel, 'Druantia,' and a moment later noticed an emerald light added to the crimson bar held close to her throat. Druantia's hand grasped the blade hilt to carefully force the weapon forwards, and then drag it away from Gwyndel's throat, while obviously holding the Shadow Man in a powerful grip with her other hand.

Gwyndel touched ground a moment later, to look back and see Tairark struggling against Druantia's grasp, before the Battle Angel hurled the Shadow Man flying back through the door of the Meeting Chamber—that remained closed—as Tairark's form simply melted through the solid stone to vanish from sight. The door to the Meeting Chamber burst open, and there again stood Tairark Vampireking, wearing his mask of gold worked with dark runes—a human skull mask with long blood soaked canines—his golden eyes glaring within the eye sockets as his evil force radiated in the air like a beacon of lost hope.

Druantia appeared before him, in an emerald gown—holding up a shield of green light to deflect a blast of Elemental Magic hurled by Tairark—the two forces colliding in a flare of brilliance. Farrigan also leapt to the solid stone flooring, drawing his blade with fluid movements as the two then began to race down the staircase with the fleet footed swiftness only attributed to Aelfin.

They were nearing the highest window when Druantia appeared again at Gwyndel's side. Farrigan turned to face a Jacoulra lurching up the stairway—thick bulging body like black tar reflecting the light of the blue blade, its seed shaped eyes glowing bright amber—as it raised a scimitar that glowed like dark blood. A spattering of hot magma flying towards the Guardian as both he and Druantia formed shields to deflect the demon's magic.

Druantia appeared a moment later behind the demon, driving a spear of emerald light through the back of its torso. The shaft burning like cold fusion as it protruded from the front of its chest, as Farrigan stepped in to lop off the demon's ram shaped skull. The body collapsing as Gwyndel and Farrigan leapt over the fallen beast to make their way to the window.

Farrigan turned to Druantia to say, 'Catch her.' Then he pushed Gwyndel straight out the window—just as Gwyndel spotted more Nymloc demons charging up the staircase—and she was hurtling to her death before she was swept up on Angel's wings and carried over the bleeding dark landscape, landing next to her horse as Druantia said, 'I will rescue Farrigan, you must ride and not look back.'

'I will wait for him,' replied Gwyndel, before the Battle Angel groaned in avid frustration and then conceded by saying, 'Very well, but be ready to ride when I return.'

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Farrigan switched to his Lukrorian Bow in a swift sheathing of the blade. Drawing the bow in fluid motion he unleashed three powerful arrows of burning emerald. Each hit a target with adequate force, blasting the three charging Nymloc in the skulls; tumbling back down the staircase in pillars of flame.

He had focused enough of *teron* to flow into each arrow before unleashing, though he did not have the necessary time to create arrows powerful enough to destroy any of the three demons. So he drew again, this time pouring a greater source of the Power into a single shaft of light; aimed at the three burning demons. The impact was a blast of magic that caused the stone walls to shudder. The Nymloc screamed while being blasted into burning pieces.

A Souljhin was next to appear, sliding up the staircase in its cloak of darkness, wielding a wicked crimson blade burning with inner shadows. The corrupt taint forged at Kerak'Otozi would turn his flesh to congealed blackness at the slightest cut. He switched to the blade again, and began a slow retreat back up the staircase, knowing that Tairark was waiting up there. But he was not skilled enough to best even one of the Swordsmen of the Shadow, as Souljhin were infamous for their skill with the blade. Even though Farrigan was a Blademaster, he knew his training was lacking what was required to take on this demon on his own.

His one hope lay in the chance that Druantia would return to protect him. So he delayed the Souljhin's approach by using his left hand to send blasts of blue energy flying at its skull and chest. Each sphere of light striking the creature to slightly irritate it and send it off balance, but Farrigan was not particularly strong in the Power either. He was no Alit'aren, although he was considered strong for a Guardian, and the gift gave him a slight advantage. The Power was less draining for him than it would be for most Alit'aren, even immortals, as the gift provided extra stores of endurance and stamina, spiking even more when he should be close to exhaustion. For now he used all he could muster to distract the Souljhin before he was forced into close combat.

The creature was closing the gap between them; each sliding step gained forced greater fear into Farrigan's soul. His Guardian senses searched the staircase above to try to detect whether more Souljhin were waiting there. His blood froze when he realised it was Tairark he could sense making a swift descent. Farrigan roared as he leapt at the Souljhin with his blade raised for a strike.

A blast of energies filled his vision when he was inches from clashing blades with the Souljhin—that had raised its sword to easily deflect that attack—as Druantia appeared between them in an emerald haze. The light pushed Farrigan backwards but he managed to land on his feet in a defensive stance. The Battle Angel placed both hands around the Souljhin's hooded skull, its crimson blade swiped uselessly through Druantia's form. Electric energies burst from her fingertips, emerald flames surrounded the dark cloaked figure like a small bonfire; its skull exploded in a dark spray.

Druantia turned to him to shout, 'Get to the window and jump!'

Farrigan did as he was commanded, fleeing just as Tairark began to float into view at the top of the staircase. He looked back once at a sound like the fabric of space being torn. Druantia and the Shadow Man facing off in a cataclysm of sparkling emerald and crimson energies, the two bolts entwined between them, making the walls reverberate with the Power and the Trail. He leapt from the window just as a massive *boom* filled the Tower above, and he watched the dark cliff face below as he hurtled towards his death.

*Better catch me, pretty Lady.*

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Tairark hovered outside the Tower walls, after recovering from that near fatal blast of energies unleashed by the Queen of Forests. His vision was still blurry, but he still made out the winged Angel carrying the young Wood Kin male off into the distance.

His rage was surging now, but he would not follow. Instead he summoned the Demonwolf pack that were patrolling nearby, his mind connecting with the pack leader to set them on the hunt. He grinned as he heard their deathly howls fill the night sky. His immortal vision made out a number of the enormous dark bodies lumbering after their prey with speed that would outpace even the *altherin* in short order.

He would prefer to have his questions answered by the two spying elves, but Demonwolves did not take prisoners. They would devour their prey in a few savage gulps, so at least that way; the spies would not live to deliver their intelligence to their commanders. The Wolves were the last remaining pack in Kismeria, and if they were somehow defeated, he would pay a hefty price under the wrath of the Great Lord. But that was unlikely; however, he was rather impressed at the skill of these two Wood Kin to have evaded the pack on their ascent of the Tower. Demonwolves were extremely adept at detecting sound and scent.

*No matter, he thought, the hounds will have their trail by now; there will be no chance of escape.*

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Gwyndel heard the howls of the Demonwolf pack before Druantia returned, to set Farrigan down beside his mount. When both were in their saddles, Druantia returned to Gwyndel's bow. Farrigan drew his short dagger to cut a slice from his palm that dripped fresh blood onto the dark soil. 'They will follow my trail,' he said, while roughly bandaging the wound with a torn strip of his shirt cut from beneath his coat sleeve, 'you must get to the Nordic King and report what you have discovered.' The man spoke as if he were stating that he preferred freshly baked bread to burnt toast, Guardians rarely showed their fear.

Gwyndel did not waste time arguing, setting off at a great pace to try to gain some distance from the approaching Wolves. She rode in a blur of darkness and red cracked soil,

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