

THE ORDER OF THE FOUR SONS
BOOK I

Coyote Kishpaugh
Lauren Scharhag

The Order of the Four Sons, Book I

© Coyote Kishpaugh, Lauren Scharhag, 2008

Cover Art by Erin Kelso

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the authors.

Contents

Acknowledgments.....	5
PROLOGUE	6
PART ONE.....	9
Chapter One	10
Chapter Two.....	11
Chapter Three.....	14
Chapter Four	29
Chapter Five	34
Chapter Six.....	39
Chapter Seven.....	50
Chapter Eight	63
Chapter Nine	70
Chapter Ten.....	78
Chapter Eleven.....	82
Chapter Twelve.....	86
Chapter Thirteen	89
Chapter Fourteen.....	102
Chapter Fifteen.....	114
Chapter Sixteen.....	117
Chapter Seventeen.....	120
Chapter Eighteen.....	124
Chapter Nineteen.....	129
Chapter Twenty.....	132
INTERLUDE	137
PART TWO.....	140
Chapter One	141
Chapter Two.....	156
Chapter Three.....	159
Chapter Four	161
Chapter Five	167
Chapter Six.....	171
Chapter Seven	185
Chapter Eight	188
Chapter Nine	194
Chapter Ten.....	195
Chapter Eleven.....	201
Chapter Twelve.....	205
Chapter Thirteen	207
Chapter Fourteen.....	210
Chapter Fifteen.....	215
Chapter Sixteen.....	224
Chapter Seventeen.....	230
Chapter Eighteen.....	235
Chapter Nineteen.....	236

Chapter Twenty.....	237
Chapter Twenty-One.....	239
Chapter Twenty-Two	240
EPILOGUE	241
Excerpt from Carcosa.....	243
About the Authors	248

Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our extreme thanks to the following people. You all touched our lives and helped inspire this story and its characters:

The City of Excelsior Springs
The Excelsior Springs Historical Society
The Elms Hotel
The Excelsior Springs Police Department
The Hall of Waters
Heidi "Countess" Bacon
Robert Earl Barnhill
Dave "JD" Bears
Dale "Camera Guy" Benson
Alexander Dowell
Doug "Doc" Dowell
Baer "Limb Loss" Kenney
Guin "Living Dead Girl" Kishpaugh
Emily "Cannon Fodder" Lambdin
Lance "Pause" Mallia
William "Quarterback" Morris
Sean "This is My Ninth Life" Murphy
Bethany "Hench Wench" Nash
Lezlie "Kate" Revelle
Patrick "the Dread Pirate" Roberts
Jim and Carolyn Schutte
Tara Watson

And in memoriam:
Rick Urdiales

PROLOGUE

HELIOPOLIS, 3100 BCE

It was early in the lifetime of mankind and all was well in the kingdom of Khem. The sun-disk, guided by the sun god Amun, glided across the sky each day before setting in the blood of slain Apep, to journey through the underworld and be reborn from Nut the following morn. The floods came every year, layering the earth with rich, black soil for fertile crops; the ancient kings ruled wisely and well. All went according to Ma'at, the guiding principle of universal truth and good. (Or, if not all, at least as much as can be expected within human events.)

Then came the Other.

Some said It came from the depths of Nun, and that Its form was that of a serpent; others said It came first as something unclean, cast out from beyond the realm of Ma'at and somehow It learned to walk upright like a man. It is certain that Its journey, whether pilgrim or outcast, took a great toll upon Its power. But regardless of how or why, It came unto the lands of Khem in those days, from beyond the sight of gods, into the realm of Man.

It wandered for an unknowable time in Its weakened state, leaving strange wounds in the earth and in the animals It found, until, at last, It sought out a small group of magicians. It showed them great powers of the mind. It promised to share Its powers and teach many wondrous things to all who wished to learn. It promised them power, knowledge, even immortality itself, if they would but give It worship.

The magicians agreed. Yet they were wise in many things, these men of the gods, and cunning. Once they had availed themselves of Its wisdom, they betrayed and bound the alien Thing from beyond. It was a thing of Isfet, and had no Name. It was from outside, and had no form by which It could be bound. And so, with their own Heka they did Name It, so that It might be bound. They called It the Atum. They did form a priesthood to Osiris, but their true, secret purpose was not merely to worship. To the initiated, they became the Order of the Four Sons of Horus. Like the four canopic jars, their task, with the aid of the gods, was to contain.

Betrayed by Its own would-be worshippers, trapped as a spirit into form and thus bound into the fetters of magic, the Atum could only wait.

And hate.

As the priests of this would-be god continued their careful vigil, year after year, It watched them well, and grew wise in the ways of Man. Rumors inevitably rose, sparked by the dreams of the more sensitive commoners, of a hungry, hermaphroditic Thing of the setting sun that predated the gods themselves. The priests did their best to quell these rumors. Across the generations, Atum was given a place of sorts within their own gods' history. As Its prison became more and more secure, all trace of Its presence was finally contained and the dreams faded from living memory.

Finally, Its patience was rewarded.

Amenhotep IV, a sorcerer-priest of the Atum temple, had become heir to the throne of Kemet. He chafed under the hold the priests of Amun had over the kingdom. His very taking of

the throne depended upon their approval and their declaration that he had passed mystic tests of purity. As a master sorcerer himself, he understood such tests far better than they. Long had he resented his teachers within the Atum priesthood, whose gifts could never hope to equal his own, who unjustly held him back from his rightful power as a sorcerer and as Pharaoh. Eventually, he came to master the lore they guarded, but he found it was not enough. He wanted more.

None shall ever know whether he somehow found a way to reach and bargain with the Atum, or whether, over centuries of patience, It had somehow found Its way to him. Neither does it matter. What is known is that when he broke away from the priesthood of Atum, some members of the priesthood and its inner circle went with him.

Together, the new king and his followers formed a secret order, the Keepers of the Starry Wisdom. They pledged themselves to the quest for power and to the Atum as the means to that power. Publicly, Amenhotep proclaimed the rule of a new god, Aton, and he re-named himself Akhenaton, meaning, "Aton is pleased."

Akhenaton ceremonially dedicated all pain and suffering in his kingdom to Aton who was previously Atum. The people cried out and prayed to him for succor. The royal family of Akhenaton, his wife, Nefertiti, and their children, were all declared to be gods who walked the earth and worshipped accordingly. Aton grew powerful again, and Akhenaton was granted his share of the power.

Aton was indeed pleased, and it seemed the sun had set upon the Two Lands of Khem for good and all.

With the kingdom's temples closed, the poor began to starve. And their new ruler, their king in yellow, so named for his legendary fondness for gold, planned to move the capital city away from its traditional place to a desolate site ill-favored by both the gods and good sense alike. This he named Akhetaton, the Horizon of the Aten.

At first, the priests and the common folk had taken this to be a political coup, the actions of a heretical sect bent on revenge. Deplorable, yes, but well within the scope of human capability. But in time, it became apparent that otherworldly forces were at work, as Akhenaton's skin had begun to darken.

It was scarcely noteworthy at first—after all, skin and hair dyes were as common as wigs among the noble houses. Then it turned black, blacker than the silt from the Nile, and no human color. It lost all luster and absorbed whatever light touched it. His eyes also took on a strange hue, glowing as if all the light taken in through his flesh collected in them and showed out a brilliant shade of lapis. Finally, he began to display signs of womanhood, his waist offsetting his broadening hips and breasts.

So carefully made was the Atum's prison, that only when the inner circle of priests examined the vessel that had held It did they realize what had happened. But now they saw the truth: the king was becoming something other than human.

The Atum had not only escaped, It had found a host.

In destroying and pillaging the temples, Akhenaton had destroyed the Kemetic way of life and brought the world's most civilized nation to the very brink of destruction. Enemy kingdoms had begun to chip away at the ill-defended borders over the years, even as the sick and the starving filled the streets.

So it was that in 1395 BCE, a secret war was declared, to be fought in the shadows of an unsuspecting nation. Acting in secret, the priests of Atum would fight to save their kingdom and their world from Starry Wisdom...and the Thing from beyond that ruled their land.

With the help of the gods, Ma'at would be restored.

PART ONE
THE MIDWEST

Chapter One

The smell of decay was everywhere. He tripped over something in the dark and fell to the floor. The lighting was strange here, as it was everywhere else in this place, like being underwater, dim and wavery and yellow. The shadows seemed to ripple around him as he rose unsteadily to his feet. The rotted wall crumbled slightly under his hand as he pushed against it to rise, mingling new odors of dust and plaster in his nostrils. Motes flew into his eyes and coated the back of his throat. Squinching his eyes shut, he struggled to suppress a cough. He couldn't recall what fresh air smelled like. It occurred to him that he may never smell or taste fresh air again.

He shook his head, trying to clear it. There wasn't much time. If he was lucky, they hadn't missed him yet. If he wasn't, then they were hunting him. Right now.

Despite the humid air of the place, he shivered. Willing his limbs to move, he staggered on. *You're not hurt, dammit! Make contact. Give the report. That's all that matters now. Give the report.*

He'd seen a shape in the gloom before. It was a chance..a chance in hell. Literally. But a chance nonetheless.

There it was: an old telephone hanging from the wall, black, heavy, coated with dust, but intact. It might still work.

He half-expected the call to cost twenty-five cents. Out of long habit, his hand went for his pocket to root for change. A few hours ago, (*Days? Weeks? No way to tell*) that might have been funny. Now he was just trying to hurry without rushing. If he rushed, he might fuck up. And surely they'd noticed by now that he'd gone. Surely they were coming.

He gripped the receiver, terrified it would be silent, dead, as dead as he was. *Don't fuck this up. Can't fuck up. Dial the number. Make the report.* He put it to his ear.

It was there—the dial tone. It worked.

Amazement and disbelief coursed through him, causing him to sway a bit. His right hip and shoulder fell against the wall. Tucking the receiver under his chin, he fumbled with the old rotary dial.

It rang once.

A cool, female voice came on the line. "Good morning, IMSET. How may I direct your call?"

He closed his eyes. Some part of him had finally accepted that this would be his last contact with another human being.

There was the tense exchange of signs and countersigns and, without bothering to wait for the transfer to finish, he began to speak, quickly, intently. The call would be recorded anyway. He started as he'd always been trained: the important details first, then the context, always assuming that he could be interrupted at any time.

He'd just begun to identify his captors when he heard the growls. And then they were upon him.

Chapter Two

O4S Headquarters
Kansas City, MO
April 23, 2005
9:26 a.m.

The Director's assistant was asleep on a cot in her office when the call came through, jolting her awake. She sprang off the cot and crossed quickly to the desk, knowing as soon as she laid her hand on the receiver that they had another emergency. Blinking in the early morning light, she groped for something on which to scribble a few notes. Then stopped short as she heard the voice on the other end.

Her eyes widened briefly then narrowed. She was a serious-looking young woman in her early twenties, but looked much younger. She had let her hair down to nap and the thick dark waves now brushed the desktop as she leaned over, listening. Only the last twenty seconds or so of the call had come through, but it was enough.

Wide awake now, she hung up the phone and went quickly over to the door that connected her office to the Director's and banged on it. "Clayton!" she called. "Clayton, get up! Another one."

The door opened and he stuck his head out. Clearly, he hadn't slept. "Where and when?" he asked resignedly.

"Call just came in from Excelsior Springs." She snatched up her boots and sat down in a chair to pull them on.

He stepped out into her office, a tall, whip-thin man in his mid-sixties, wearing only his shirtsleeves and a pair of rumpled slacks. His once-dark hair was now almost completely gray. His eyes, also gray, usually twinkled with irrepressible good humor. Right now, they were pouched and blood-shot with equal parts worry and sleep deprivation. "Reliable source?"

"Fernando Rios."

The Director paused. It was the exhaustion. If he had been well-rested, he would have known the name immediately. "Rios...Rios... The Rios who disappeared in—what, '85?"

Her expression told him everything he needed to know.

"My God. Is he all right? Where is he?"

"I don't think so." She finished lacing up and rested her elbows on her knees. "There's something else."

"What?"

She frowned. "I don't know. Something."

Balefully, he scratched at his three-day-old-beard. "I don't like it when you don't know."

She said nothing. At the best of times, she wasn't a chatty person and these were distinctly not the best of times.

The Director went over to the coffee maker and removed the pot from its burner. Peering into the stagnant brew, he shook it a little, gauging its drinkability. Grimacing, he turned to the sink and dumped it out. "Who have we got left? Last team was administration, right?"

"Administration, three trainees, and a reserve."

He changed out the coffee filter and added fresh grounds while the pot filled up with water. "Then it's time to hit the rest of the reserves."

"Not quite. Bill Welsh is back from the field."

"Good. Did his cameraman make it back, too?" The wet pot hissed as he set it back down on the hot burner.

"Yes."

"Put them both down. Who else?"

She scribbled a note, then went over to the filing cabinet. "Dr. Grigori?"

"Yes, he's the most qualified we have left."

With their backs to each other, they both shook their heads. She pulled out Grigori's file, then flipped through folders in a second drawer. All the names were in the computer but with conditions being as they were, they couldn't afford to take chances with unexpected energy surges or disappearing data. Plain old paper and manila were a little more impervious. "Okay," she said. "Who else?"

"Murphy."

"Ryan Murphy? The Sicily guy?"

"He's good."

"He's not even a full member."

"He's a cop, which means he can handle field work."

"He's a skeptic."

"Good. Should be one on every team."

"How about Jim Hale?"

"Jim's in Calcutta. I want Murphy."

"All right, all right." She drew the second file slowly, as if it pained her. "Who else? A trainee?"

"I was thinking...Kate West." He braced himself for another argument. When none was forthcoming, he stole a glance over his shoulder. She had drawn the third file and added it to the stack without comment. Apparently, she was reserving judgment on West. Interesting.

At last, the coffee was ready. He poured two cups and offered her one. She accepted it gratefully. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." He took a sip. "So we've got Bill and his guy, Grigori, Murphy and Kate."

She nodded, fanning the files out on the table so he could read their labels. “Team leader—Murphy?”

“No. Garnett.”

She jerked her head up at that.

“He has the experience.”

For a moment, she stared at him, hands still splayed on top of the files, clearly at a loss. Then, all at once, her expression went neutral and she straightened, smoothing her shirt. “Okay.”

To anyone else, it would have looked and sounded like resignation, but Clayton knew better. “He has coolness under fire.”

“Yeah.” She dug in her pocket for something. Not finding it, she frowned and turned the pocket inside-out. Clayton watched sourly. He *hated* it when she did this. It made him feel like he was being put on the defensive.

“Most importantly, he’ll bring them *home*.”

She shrugged and tried the other pocket. Finding what she was looking for -- an elastic band -- she idly raised her arms and smoothed her hair into a low ponytail. “Yeah.”

“Dammit, Alyssa! We don’t have time for this. Just *tell* me if you know something.”

She looked down at the desk, running her gaze over the spread of dossiers. Two geeks, an old man, a burned-out detective and an amnesiac. Have them all walk into a bar together and it sounded like the set-up for a really bad punch line.

And now Garnett. Colonel fucking Garnett. There had been a time when her trust in him had been second only to Clayton, but there was a reason he’d been put on indefinite leave. Now Clayton wanted to bring him back in. Could it really have come to this?

Clayton set his coffee cup down. “Alyssa?”

She’d gone completely still. Occasionally, her eyes would skip back and forth as if she were reading something. She might have been daydreaming, except for the fact that she didn’t blink. Not once.

A minute passed, then two. Clayton waited. He hoped she wouldn’t be long.

Her eyes skipping a little more quickly, scanning. Then she closed them. “You know...”

He leaned forward slightly, but knew better than to expect some big Delphinian pronouncement or hokey rhymed couplets.

“Er...” she looked around at him, still somewhat tranced out. She lifted one shoulder, “You’re right?” The tiniest hint of a question at the end of that sentence was not to indicate doubt, he knew, but to convey that there was a lot more to it than that. But for now, the briefest explanation would have to suffice. The girl just wasn’t a talker. In his experience, the really gifted Oracles weren’t.

He smiled, gratified, and sat back in his chair. “Good,” he patted his shirt pocket for his reading glasses. “Let’s start making calls.”

Chapter Three

Kansas City Site #14
East Bottoms, 10:15 a.m.

“KC,” Bill Welsh spoke into a microphone, “This is quarterback 345-31-8472, commencing pre-mission audio/visual check. Does anybody copy?”

“We copy, 345-31-8472. What unit?”

“Unit 56138, Dispatch 14.”

“Roger that. 14-56138, standby for satellite uplink.”

“Standing by.”

No stranger to early morning calls to the field, Bill had been the first to arrive at dispatch, an old warehouse building on the riverfront. At the moment, he was hunched over the laptop in his “office,” the back of one of the Order’s surveillance vans. A voice spoke again through Bill’s headset. “Uplink completed. Van cam one and two are now recording.”

In his peripheral vision, Bill saw as VC1 came on. He checked over his shoulder for the red light in the rear. When that, too, winked at him, he waved. “Hiya, Ken.”

“Hey, yourself. Unit 14-56138, audio/visual checks and satellite uplink now complete. Commence equipment checks with dispatch and beat surveillance.”

“Roger that.” Bill began adjusting controls and comparing read-outs on the screens in front of him.

“We’ll be in touch.”

“You know it, brotha.” Tilting his head back, Bill downed the last of his coffee, making a mental note to stop by cold storage where he stashed his beans. All quarterbacks customized their own workstations, and Bill was no exception. In his case, non-regulation equipment included not only the coffee maker, but an electric grinder, a steel storage canister, a French press for when he was feeling fancy, and a shaker of sea salt. A placard he had sitting beside his laptop docking station proclaimed, *There is no such thing as strong coffee. There is only weak people.* He had considered getting a small refrigerator to keep the beans cold, but he drank them up too fast to justify the cost.

Bill rolled his head once, slowly, from left to right, stretching out his arms as he did so, wagging his fingers. Then he stretched his arms out in front of him and cracked his knuckles.

At first glance, Bill seemed entirely unremarkable: late thirties, medium build, thinning hair that was neither blond nor brown, and pale eyes the color of stonewashed denim. Yet he had a smooth, pleasing voice. Before he’d joined the Order, he’d worked in radio and while he hadn’t always been a quarterback, he couldn’t deny the position suited him.

Clearing his throat, he leaned into the microphone. “All right, ladies and gentlemen, this is double-oh-four-es, broadcasting live from IMSET studios right here in beautiful KC. The highs today are going to be seventy-two, partly cloudy, with a seventy per cent chance of Armageddon. I’ve got some James Taylor coming up in just a moment, but first we have some

exciting giveaways this morning. Every second caller will have a chance to win a free trip to exotic Excelsior Springs. Let's go to our lines now... Caller number one, you're on the air."

An image flicked onto one of Bill's screens. It was of a conference room on the other side of the building. The voice of an office tech came over the mike, "KC Dispatch Number Fourteen, conference cam test."

"I'm sorry caller number one, you are not a winner. Thanks for listening." The tech grinned and shook his head. Bill's partner, Cecil, was also grinning.

Cecil had arrived at dispatch that morning shortly after Bill. He was in his early thirties, with blond hair that he usually concealed under a ball cap and a sun-reddened, freckled face. He and Bill had begun working together some six years before, when Bill first moved from field investigator to quarterback, and the pair had become fast friends.

Right now, he had five small cameras spread out on the conference table. Known within the Order as beat cams, each one was about the size of a Bluetooth headset, and designed in much the same way to fit over the ear. Cecil slipped the first one on.

"Caller number two, you're on the air," Bill prompted.

Cecil panned the conference room. "Beat cam one, check."

"Congratulations, caller number two! You have just won an all-expenses paid trip to *Excelsior Springs!*" Bill clicked the mouse. In the van, on one of the monitors, BC1's feed came on. In the bottom right corner of the screen, there was a blinking line of dashes: - - - . "BC1, audio/visual confirmed."

Cecil slipped the next camera on. "Beat cam two, check."

"BC2, good to go."

As they tested the rest of the equipment, the Oracle had come into the conference room. Cecil panned the camera up and down her body. "Aaaaand beat cam five, check."

"Careful," Bill said. "Need I remind you, she's an—"

"Hey, Morgan?" the Oracle said without looking up. "Why don't you stop filming my ass and go find something constructive to do?"

Whistling innocently, Cecil hastily turned the camera aside. The Oracle turned away as well, to hide the small smile that touched the corners of her mouth.

"How many times, man?" Bill asked, "How many times have you been caught doing the naughty close-ups on the psychic chicks?"

"I live for the thrill."

"You're a wild man, Cecil B." Bill took another sip of coffee. "And six?"

"There is no BC six."

There was a pause, then Bill chuckled. "Roger. What've we got for seven?"

"No, that wasn't a Monty Python reference. There really isn't a beat cam six. Or seven. There's just five."

Bill put his mug down. A five-man team, for a level five mission? This whole thing was hinky. For one thing, the Oracle had called him in herself. That never happened. For another, he and Cecil had just gotten back from a mission yesterday and here they were, not twenty-four hours later, getting called out again. Typically, field personnel were given at least thirty-six hours to recuperate between missions—*typically*, but he knew that was by no means mandated. And with a level five, you don't quibble about needing time off to get your golf game in. You got your ass up and got down to dispatch. That was why he didn't question it when the Oracle had called him earlier. But what was this about having only five people on the team? And why was the office and the security personnel so short-staffed?

Definitely hinky. More than hinky, in fact, it was downright unnerving. And that mission he and Cecil had just come back from...

Bill shook his head slightly as if to clear it. *Save it for the briefing. You've got an equipment check to run.* Besides, when you'd been with the Order as long as he had, you don't let a little thing like nerves get you. Bad things happen when you lose your cool. He knew from experience.

After the cameras, he and Cecil checked the scanning equipment, which consisted of motion detectors, thermograph sensors, photosensors, pyroelectric sensors, infrared, and a halo scanner-- this latter device had been developed by the Order in the 1840's. It was similar in principle to aura photography, but far more accurate.

In the conference room, the security personnel got into position. Clayton had appeared, and he and the Oracle stood at the head of the table, talking quietly. To look at them, one would never have suspected they had spent the past two nights at the office. Clayton stood, freshly combed and shaven, his suit crisp, his tie impeccably knotted. Next to him, the Oracle was dressed in a fresh T-shirt and fatigue pants, all in black. She was small but not delicate, (she barely came to Clayton's shoulder), curves that belonged on a pin-up girl. Dark glasses glinted on top of her head. A pistol rested in a holster against her hip. She probably would not have been pleased to hear it, but the attire only accentuated her youth. In fact, at a glance, she might've been mistaken for a high school kid trying to look tough with her combat boots and her cigarette pack rolled up in her sleeve.

A buzzer sounded as the outer door was opened. The air in the conference room changed immediately. After a moment, a second buzzer sounded, announcing that the security door had been opened with a keycard.

The briefing was about to start.

* * *

Dr. Doug Grigori had arrived, looking bemused. He was tall and slightly stooped; a gaunt, bespectacled man with white hair and a quiet, dignified air. He was dressed comfortably and well: a tan trench coat covering a fine linen shirt and tailored slacks. He had never been to this dispatch location before, and he was impressed-- the warehouse was much like all the other warehouses in the area: a squat, flat-topped structure with a concrete slab base, with rolling stainless steel doors that opened out into loading docks. On the east end of the building was a

vestibule. In the early spring light, its glass was mirrored, reflecting only the passing traffic. Even the faded sign that hung above the warehouse doors, Information Maintenance Systems Equipment & Technology, Inc., and the navy blue logo of what appeared to be a silhouetted building, failed to make it remarkable in the industrial parks along the river.

Doug paused to study the sign, smiling faintly. Only those familiar with Egyptian symbols would recognize the blue Isis throne. And only those who were supposed to find this particular building, those who already knew what was inside, understood what it truly meant.

He put his hand to his chest, fingering the shape of an old amulet he wore on a black leather cord under his shirt. Then he went quickly up the cement stairs.

Once inside, he was greeted by a security camera, which turned at his approach. Doug had more than a passing familiarity with the Order's security measures, so he slowly removed his keycard from his jacket pocket along with his sign, careful to keep his hands visible at all times. He swiped his ID card and the steel door glided open, surprisingly silent for all its heft.

Doug heard the buzzer announcing his presence as he stepped inside. An armed security guard was seated behind a desk to his right. He looked at Doug expectantly.

The signs and countersigns, which changed frequently, had been lapin-based these days. Doug didn't have the faintest idea why. Sometimes it seemed the people in charge had bizarre senses of humor. *And, Doug thought grimly, in this place, if someone is unable to produce the countersign after an appropriate interval-- the river is less than a hundred yards away, and always hungry.*

He produced his sign, a white rabbit's foot on a keychain, and the guard visibly relaxed. "My heart has joined the thousand."

"For my friend stopped running today," Doug replied promptly.

"All the world will be your enemy."

"Wogdog."

The guard directed Doug down the hall, past some offices. By the looks of things, they were usually occupied by administrators, perhaps a few archivists. There was a stack of old texts on one desk. At the moment though, all of the offices were empty.

Frowning, he went on to the last door, where another security guard stood. Doug put his hands, letting the guard wave a security wand over him. Then the guard opened the door to the conference room.

Doug shook hands with Clayton, nodded politely to the Oracle. "Would you like to tell me what I'm doing here?"

She handed him a case folder. "We're waiting on a few others to arrive. We'll explain everything then."

He looked at it curiously. When had he ever seen a case file so thin? Maybe never. Everything about this briefing seemed off so far—the fact that he'd been summoned at all, coupled with the empty offices outside, brought a hard knot of worry to his stomach. "All right."

"Dr. Grigori," Cecil extended his hand. They shook. "I'm Cecil. We'll be working together."

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

