

D. K. HANSEN



QUADRANT  
OF BALANCE  
LORE

THE WRAITH CRYSTAL

**The Wraith Crystal**  
—  
**QUADRANT OF BALANCE**  
**LORE**

**D.K. Hansen**

Nirwood Publishing • Copenhagen, Denmark

2022 Nirwood Publishing

Copyright © 2022 by D.K. Hansen  
All rights reserved

First edition

Cover design by: Elementi.Studio  
Map maker: Jackson O. (Instagram: artist\_jacone)

Author web page: <http://dkhansen.com>

Quadrant of Balance – The Wraith Crystal is a work of fiction.  
Names, characters and places stem from the imagination of the  
author and are used fictitiously.

# Contents

Chapter 1 – The Ultimate Sacrifice

Chapter 2 – Evacuation

Chapter 3 – Hope is not Lost

Chapter 4 – The Crime of Ambition

Chapter 5 – Unforgivable

Chapter 6 – The Price of Power

Chapter 7 – A New Home

Epilogue

Jarren Heartwood - Prologue

# ELONIA





## Chapter 1 – The Ultimate Sacrifice

“Do you understand what must happen?” Kasparian asked in a severe tone.

Before him, on a large stone slab, lay a man. His blue shirt had once been an expensive piece of clothing, but it was torn and dirtied now. Sweat ran from his forehead, dripping onto the stone. His hands and feet were bound, and his eyes ran nervously around the room. “Y-yes. My sacrifice will give you the power to cure my daughter. P-please, help her. I have given everything.”

Kasparian looked at his ten disciples standing around the altar at the heart of the cave. A set of large white wings decorated the chest of their robes, and their faces were lit only by the crackling torches that hung along the cave’s crude walls.

Kasparian took a deep breath and placed his hand on the man’s moist forehead. “I will save your daughter and give her what my family never got – the gift of life.”

The man swallowed hard. “T-thank you, my lord bishop. Bless the gods and the followers of Gjandir.”

Kasparian summoned a smile, but a hollow one. He couldn’t afford to fail again. The look in the eyes of the poor souls turning to him for salvation haunted him every night. It would never have come to this if the gods would help everyone, not only true believers.

He brought out two items from a deep pocket in his robe – a purple crystal and a pitch-black onyx that he clenched in his hand. From the stone slab, he picked up a small knife and looked around at the men and women standing in a circle around him. Like the man who was about to sacrifice himself,

his disciples looked to him for guidance and meaning. He had picked each of them from the streets and taken them into his house. They had all suffered terrible losses, and studying their gazes, he understood how far they would go to follow him. Their loyalty was undeniable.

“My friends, my family. We are here tonight to take matters into our own hands. For centuries we have prayed to the gods, hoping they would come to our aid. But where has that taken us?”

“To poverty and desperation!” one of the men shouted.

“I was forced to work in brothels when my husband died. Why didn’t they hear my prayers?” asked a small woman, scars covering her forehead and one cheek.

Kasparian nodded. “We have all suffered because of the so-called gods. Imagine what we could do with powers like theirs!” He raised the knife up high, and the man on the stone slab started shaking, the robe cutting into his flesh as he squirmed in anguish at the blade pointing down at his chest.

“The deepest desire of this man is to save his daughter from certain death. Like so many others, he is willing to sacrifice his own life for hers.” Kasparian looked down into the man’s eyes. “Pray to the gods. Pray that they will gift me all the energy your life force can provide. With that energy, I will be able to help your daughter.”

The man’s eyes widened, and he started praying, first as a whisper but then louder and louder. “Adalyn, the loved one – the most glorious of all the gods. Help me! I give my life to save my daughter. Hear my plea. My life for hers.”

The knife plunged into his chest, and he gasped for air, staring at the bloodied blade stabbing into his torso, again and again. His lifeblood streamed down the stone and dripped onto the floor. His head fell back, and he breathed out one last time.

Kasparian plunged his hand into the gore without hesitation, cutting out the man’s heart. He held it in both his hands

together with the crystal and the onyx as he started whispering, “Gods, hear our prayers. This man gave the ultimate sacrifice, like Gjandir many centuries ago. Grant us your power. Show us the extent of your divinity, and we will perform miracles in your name.” He squeezed the three items in his hands, chanting, “E’hir nunor Adalyn, omira tasina.” He paused for a second before continuing with a flare incantation. “Mentiro illu av’ror.” Squeezing the heart further, blood ran through his fingers. He could feel the shadow energy of the black gem rushing up his arm as he activated the onyx and summoned a dark shroud that engulfed them all. He had performed this trick many times, but the utter darkness this illusion of the assassins created still made him shudder.

An eerie silence fell over the cave. The howling wind and the flickering flames of the torches were the only sounds heard.

When darkness slowly crept back into the onyx, the disciples all stared at him, but none dared to speak. Kasparian opened his hands slowly. The heart, the crystal and the onyx were still there. Nothing had changed.

He roared out as he threw the heart onto the floor, the last of the blood spraying on his boot. “False gods!” he shouted at the ceiling of the cave. “When will you listen? How many lives will it take?”

A woman sunk to her knees, and two others sat down further back in the cave – everyone with disappointment painted on their faces.

Kasparian was furious. He had failed them again. How many people had he sacrificed in his attempts to acquire just a fraction of the gods’ powers? Twenty? Twenty-five? He had lost count along the way. With anger rushing through his veins, he stuffed the two gems into his pocket and paced out of the cave into the chilly night.





An hour later, racing east on his mare across the plains to Kanthos, Kasparian's blood had cooled slightly. Hatred had replaced anger – hatred against the so-called gods.

Far ahead, hundreds of large braziers burned atop the great walls of Kanthos. Kasparian growled as he looked over the city. The bishops probably slept safe and warm in their extravagant homes at this hour. The patriarchs of the followers of Gjandir were not lacking. Were they really worth more than the man in the cave who sacrificed himself for his daughter? Why had he less right to the divine power of those pompous birds in the sky than anyone else? Everyone worshipped them as gods, but Kasparian knew the truth. They were only wisaris, a foreign race living in the Realm of Light. Still, he couldn't deny their rejuvenating powers.

Kasparian forced his heels into the mare, pushing it even harder. He had given his youth to the followers to save his family. His father was the first to die from the strange disease that took all four, slowly turning them into empty, mindless shells.

He had prayed day and night when his mother fell ill. The gods even took several years of his life when he offered it. In the beginning, it seemed to work, and she got better. But then the disease came back, and she started fading away once again. Why had they accepted his sacrifice only to let her die anyway? How could the gods be so cruel?

Years later, when his sisters fell ill, he was Bishop of Khur Cathedral. As a bishop, he understood the ways of the gods better and made his first human sacrifice. The woman was homeless and had come into his cathedral to pray. He'd offered food and wine in his private chambers and prayed for his sisters as he choked the woman, hoping one life could restore another. But even in his elevated position, it didn't work. The gods didn't accept a sacrifice not given willingly. Since that day, even simple

prayers had stopped working for him. He could no longer use the prayer of intensified sight or heal injuries by drawing on his life force.

Galloping across the plain, Kasparian was deep into his own thoughts when a large, winged shadow cut through the air above his head. He pulled the reins back so hard that the horse's rear hooves dug into the dirt, desperately trying to obey its rider's command.

A cloud of dust rose as the horse finally came to a halt. Its heavy breathing was so loud and the dust so dense that both rider and mare were caught off guard once more when the winged creature landed less than five metres away. The mare kicked out several times and threw Kasparian from its back before racing off.

Kasparian hit the grass shoulder first, and a sharp pain stung him as he rolled over several times. But he forgot all about the pain as soon as he laid eyes on the creature standing before him. It was one of them – one of the gods.

The great feathery wings and the large eagle talons vanished as it moved closer, leaving a perfectly normal set of arms and legs. The man seemed young. He was slender and moved gracefully, his long white hair blowing in the wind and his bright yellow eyes almost glowing in the night. "Corrupted by heart. Betrayer of your own kind. You no longer deserve your title, bishop." His voice was light, but his tone severe.

Kasparian stood and brushed the dirt off his trousers and shirt. His eyes narrowed at the wisari before him. "Are you... real? Have you come?"

The wisari frowned. "We know what you have done. We have seen how you treat those you claim to serve. If your cause were true, you would sacrifice only yourself."

Kasparian shook his head, unable to take his eyes off the wisari. "B-but if you have seen everything, why didn't you listen?"

Please, give me what I'm asking for – a chance to help everyone.”

“NO! Justice is the only thing you will find. You deserve to live the rest of your life in pain and misery for your sins. Yet, your fate is not up to us.”

Kasparian moved closer and reached for the wisari's shoulders, wanting to shake some sense into the thing, but he never managed to touch it. It shoved Kasparian back to the ground with blinding speed and went into a defensive stance.

Kasparian got on his knees and shook his head. “Who are you to decide our worth? You rule the sky and might believe yourselves to be gods, but you're nothing but imposters!”

The wisari's wings and eagle talons reappeared, and it turned around, about to take off. The young man looked over his shoulder and said, “We did what we could to help, but your family was beyond saving, even for us. You went too far, and we had to make sure you would never hurt anyone again.”

Kasparian frowned. “What have you done?”

“We no longer involve ourselves in the affairs of Elonia. However, we will always aid those who believe in us, those willing to sacrifice themselves for others.” The wisari paused for a moment, his eyes narrowing. “When someone claiming to serve the light falls as far as you have, we have to act. You have broken your vow, and the bishops will judge you.”

The massive pair of wings whirled up dust as the wisari took off, rising fast into the air.

Kasparian's lip curled as he eyeballed the wisari until he could no longer see it in the night sky. Back on his feet, he sprinted towards the eastern gate of Kanthos. He had to make it back before the bishops arrived. He had to save the rest of his disciples, those who had not joined them in the cave.



## Chapter 2 – Evacuation

Heart pounding and entirely out of breath, Kasparian rushed into the open square of the Khur District. It was still dark, but on the opposite side of the open, paved area, the outline of his simple villa stood right next to Khur Cathedral. This was his domain. He was the authority – or had been. If that self-righteous winged bastard were right, soon the bishops would come with their holy warriors to take it all from him.

His gaze moved up to the four imperial palace towers, reaching taller than any other building in the grand city of Kanthos. The palace grounds took up more space than the Khur District, which housed almost two-thousand souls. A tower stood at each corner, and large blue crystals decorated the top, reflecting the little light from the stars.

As a child, the large shiny crystals had always enchanted him. He'd spent hours imagining how he would one day look out at the glory of Kanthos from one of the upper windows. He shook the foolish thought from his mind and pressed on.

When Kasparian reached his villa, he burst inside and slammed the main door behind him, his palms still on the timber as he tried to catch his breath.

Two women dressed in grey robes came into the hall. “Bishop Tellis? What’s going on?”

Kasparian moved to the heavy oak cabinet in the hall, attempting to push it towards the door. “The bishops are on their way. We have to get to the cave.”

The two women looked at each other before moving to Kasparian’s side, helping him with the cabinet. It made a terrible screeching sound as they forced it across the tiles.

With the front door blocked, he looked at his two loyal disciples with a satisfied smile. “Find the others. Tell them to pack quickly. We leave in five minutes.”

The two women rushed off. One ran up the squeaking staircase and the other into the adjoining rooms, rousing the people sleeping there.

Kasparian moved through the thick black door leading into his chambers. It was a simple place but still the best-furnished room in the house. A large mahogany desk stood in the centre, several bookcases spanned the breadth of the left wall, and further back was his bed. Only one painting hung on the wall, and Kasparian moved straight to it. He kissed his fingertips and placed them first on the woman, then the man and lastly on the two young girls. “I’m sorry, my dear sisters,” he whispered. “I’m afraid I still need more time.”

From the main desk, he took several books, his journal, ink and a handful of crystals and threw them all into a leather bag. He pulled off his shirt with a grimace and studied his shoulder in a round mirror. Purple marks had already appeared.

A noise from behind startled him, but he quickly calmed down, seeing a woman dressed in grey like the others. Her long red hair was bound behind her neck, and her white cheeks had dozens of freckles. “You startled me, Mura. I will be ready soon. I just need another shirt.”

Mura swallowed. “T-they are coming, my lord. I saw them from my window upstairs.”

Kasparian’s eyes widened. He pulled on the same dirtied shirt and moved to the window, carefully peeking out from behind the curtain.

Rows of holy warriors marched from the main road into Khur Square. Every step echoed off the stone walls, and the rattling sound of their shiny armour got louder and louder as more entered. He looked at them in frustration. Four, eight,

twelve, sixteen fully armed warriors, tailed by two men on tall black horses. They expected a fight.

The robes of the bishops of Kanthos, embroidered with golden wings across their chests, gave the two men on the horses away. Rongart and Orenka were bishops of the two largest districts of Kanthos: Siruna District, named after the brightest star, and Ahil District, named after the founder of Kanthos.

“So, this is what it took for them to visit the Khur District,” Kasparian mumbled. “We need to get out of here before it’s too late. Get the horses ready. I will stall them,” he commanded Mura and handed her his bag.

The young woman gave him a brief but intense embrace that stunned him before she ran from the room.

It took him a few seconds to regain his posture. He pulled the curtains to the side and opened the window. “My lords. What a pleasant surprise. I never thought you would set foot in these whiffy parts of our fine city!” he said, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

Bishop Orenka was not a tall man, but from atop his horse, he looked very intimidating. His dark skin was almost a match to the beast he sat on, and his voice was deep when proclaiming, “Kasparian, your crimes have been revealed to us. How could you fall this far? How can you believe yourself above the gods?”

The esteem he felt seeing his old mentor took Kasparian by surprise. Then again, he never hated the bishops. Most of them were trying to do good. But he did hate the fact that they believed in the false gods. The wisaris were holding them back. How could they not see? He flashed his teeth, shouting, “The gods are fake! Real gods would never allow the terrible things in these districts. You would know if you stopped smoking herbs and spending all your coin on fancy aromas.”

“The gods are the light – the only reason darkness didn’t triumph more than eight hundred years ago,” Orenka retorted.

“They don’t deserve our faith. Helping only those who offer their life in return is not god-like,” responded Kasparian.

Bishop Rongart had stayed in the background but now steered his horse forward. He was a big man, so big that he looked almost ridiculous in his robe. He would be a better match for the ranks of the holy warriors. “Keep your blasphemy to yourself! The gods aid the true believers, and you have lost their favour. Come out and receive your punishment,” he shouted.

“I’m the authority here! Khur District is my responsibility, and I have helped so many,” Kasparian retorted.

“You have murdered people, and your evil deeds end now. Break down the door!” Rongart commanded.

The first two rows of warriors drew swords in almost perfect synchronisation and moved towards the villa.

Kasparian knew he needed to buy more time for his disciples. He pulled a simple iron rod from his belt – a red crystal sat at its top. Pointing the rod out the window, he screamed, “Proiecto masa!”

Dozens of small fiery projectiles burst from the crystal and flew towards the group of warriors who had to throw themselves onto the sandstone tiles of the square to dodge the spell.

Darting out of his room, Kasparian heard Orenka shouting, “He’s one of them! A duality. Burn the house down!”

Running through the hall, he passed through the door further back, ending up in the kitchen. Pots and pans were neatly placed on shelves, and everything was cleaned after last night’s supper. Rushing through the room, he banged his hip into the long table. A large stable of plates toppled and broke into hundreds of pieces as they hit the floor.

He staggered onwards as a loud banging sounded from the front of the house, followed by plates and cups breaking when

the large cabinet crashed into the hall floor. Their attempt to block the main door had only delayed the warriors a few seconds.

Kasparian ripped the backdoor open and found his disciples packing up their five remaining mares. “Go to the others in the cave. The warriors are coming,” he warned and watched them jump onto the horses two and two.

Kasparian gripped Mura’s hand, and she pulled him up. As she kicked the horse into motion, he grabbed the red-haired woman’s waist tightly to avoid falling off.

The five fully loaded horses raced off just as one of the holy warriors came out the back door, sword ready. He swung the large blade, missing the rear of their horse only by a few centimetres. “They are escaping!” sounded his cry.

The stone buildings flew by in a blur, and the sound of hooves rang out as they rushed through the Khur District. The streets were lit up only by the occasional torch or lantern on the houses that could afford such.

The eastern gate wasn’t far away, but as soon as it came into sight, the horses up front suddenly slowed down and stopped.

Mura urged her horse on and rode past the others, joining the first rider. “Why are you stopping? We need to get out of here!”

A man with a grey beard sat on the front horse, nodding at the road ahead. Three guards were closing the big wooden gates, preventing their escape. Above the gateway, huge braziers lit up the area, and two more guards stood there, arrows nocked in their bows.

“Turn back! Go to the gate at the docks,” Kasparian shouted.

Having turned their horses around, they found themselves blocked by Bishop Orenka, his big black stallion breathing heavily. “Kasparian, stop this madness. *Your* life is over, but do not let these people suffer the same fate.”

Kasparian looked around at the faces of his trusted disciples, all of them nodding their allegiance to him.



“You saved us all, Lord Tellis. Without you, I would be dead. You gave us hope that it is possible to prevent others from experiencing the same loss we did,” said the grey-bearded man.

Kasparian smiled. He was lucky to have these people by his side now that he no longer had his family. “Go,” he whispered to Mura.

The young woman rushed the horse forward, prompting Orenka to pull his longsword from the gold scabbard. The bishop raised his sword at the sky while whispering a prayer. A dim white light appeared around the blade, and the bishop accelerated right at them.

Kasparian pointed his simple iron sceptre at his former mentor when less than ten metres were between them. “Conratu spinura.”

The bishop moved to throw the sword, but instead, he froze up, forced into a painful paralysis triggered by Kasparian’s curse.

They all rode right past the bishop, and Kasparian looked back, seeing Orenka fall from his horse. As soon as he hit the ground, Kasparian raised the curse.

The guards from the gate came rushing to Orenka’s aid. The bishop scrambled to get back up.

Mura turned left, down the wide street leading to the docks. Kanthos’ twenty-three districts of different sizes and layouts made it difficult even for the inhabitants to find their way around. Still, Kasparian knew the way, having sneaked out many times. The docks were the largest district, holding massive warehouses, ships from all of Elonia and several inns for visitors from the sea. It was always busy, which made it easier to blend in.

As they closed in on the gate between the Khur District and the docks, Mura pointed to the wall. “Archers!”

Four guards with bows ran on the wall towards the gate.

“Dammit. I should have seen this coming. We should have left long ago,” said Kasparian.

## 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

