

# ELEMENTS OF FATE

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# INITIAL NOTES

THE SETTING FOR this story is based in a world I invented, that could loosely be sorted into the fantasy genre. Like in most fantasy worlds, there are happenings and artefacts that are unexplainable by science and could change the flow of reality. In contrast to usual fantasy settings, there are no obvious magic users and no medieval setting. The people living in this world appear human but are not like humans who you might meet on the street. I tried to have no typical fantasy creatures like dwarves and elves. There are dragons but they are either mythical creatures or degenerated critters.

The world was thought up by myself and an inspiration was my frustration with afore mentioned typical fantasy worlds. The world is called Larh Draakh, Larh for land and Draakh for dragon, so land of dragons. Dragons were always intriguing creatures for me and they are the original inhabitants of the whole world. Humans and nature spirits began to settle in many parts and there was a conflict with the dragons that had devastating results for the land. The continent was twisted, reformed and new countries were formed.

One of these countries is called Larh Thoran, the land of Thoran, the ruler who unified the different factions an age before the plot of the following story takes place.

An important point about the world is that it is not a spherical world rotating around a sun, it is an unlimited plane illuminated by magical means.

There are two giant creatures flying over the continent which light up the land during the day with their fires. There is no moon but there is a glowing ball of magical water which lights up the night hours.

Because Larh Thoran is ringed by huge mountains on most sides, the only reliable contact with other countries is in the south on the coast to a huge ocean and there is not much cultural diversity as a result.

In the appendix on page II there is a bit more information given about the world and its inhabitants which might be interesting as more background but might be more than is needed for the story.



SOME NAMES FOR persons and locations are in a language I invented as part of the world generation. There is a dictionary in the appendix on page XVIII.



NUMERIC VALUES ARE used in the octal system. More information on that you can find in the appendix as well (*chapter II* on page *VIII*). Those numbers are printed in italics but there are footnotes on calculations. Dates are in the same numeric system, more on that is also explained in the appendix on page *XV*.



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FIRE

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PART I.

**FIRE**

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FIRE

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# THE ARRIVAL

## *Aisbrukh 2465.7.7.4 - Inn*

HEAVY RAIN WHIPPED against the windows of the inn in Aisbrukh as lightning tinted the small farming town in ghostly twilight. Arol Granders peered out as another flash of lightning broke thundering through the darkness - the village square resembled a lake, the roof creaked and groaned under the water masses and every clap of thunder made the water in the puddles on the tap room balcony dance.

It was common for Aissnae<sup>1</sup> that it was raining but such amounts were unusual, Arol thought when he heard shallow footsteps behind him. Moira came shuffling from the direction of Arjila's room, approached her husband and embraced him tenderly. She was visibly exhausted.

"Jila is asleep at last. But I should stay with her because I think she could wake up at any time during this thunder..." yawned Moira.

Arol returned the hug, wiped some of her black green hair from her face and kissed her on the forehead.

"I will have to have an eye on our guests. Werkar is still here and that merchant Feedraene who wants to set up his shop opposite the village square. I'll join you later, hope so that the rain stops soon." Arol replied.

After a hug Moira went down the hall and up the stairs to their chambers. Arol went back into the tap room, where the old Werkar Draenekiin and the merchant were still engrossed in their conversation. On the table before them lay the blueprint of a house and the title deed of the land on the other side of the village square. A few more documents piled up on two chairs. A glance pointed them out as invoices. Arol did not like thinking about something like that, because after the death of his parents he discovered so much debt that he probably would assign them and pull the inn.

"Ah, Master Grander, be so good as to bring me another jug of feerbeer<sup>2</sup>. Would you like anything else, Master Feedraene?" He denied and rubbed his forehead, visibly exhausted and tired.

"Well, one more but after that I will close up. My daughter sleeps finally and I could use some rest."

"Thanks, as the rain is still too strong to go home, I will have to stay here, please give me the key to the chamber in the hallway," Werkar kindly replied.

Arol went behind the counter and just wanted to reach for the key, as the door swung

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<sup>1</sup>Aissnae corresponds approximately to the winter season. Usual for warm regions, the winter is considered the rainy season. Even if this is true only at the beginning and end of the season and snow and frozen lakes in the middle of the season are not uncommon.

<sup>2</sup>Feerbeer = fire beer, it is a reddish golden beer with spicy hot taste.



open and a figure entered the tavern. There was not much to see, so wrapped up was the person. But even this protection had only worked partially as a surge of water ran out of every fold.

"A room please," Said the man while shaking and put a staarnmindt<sup>3</sup> on the counter.

Arol ran to the door and pushed it close again, as it had not fallen completely into the lock. Then he pointed the stranger to follow him. He climbed the stairs and unlocked a room. The stranger followed him, swaying slightly, still dripping wet and carrying something heavy under his cape.

Without another word, the stranger closed the door behind him and turned the key in the lock.

Arol shook his head slightly, but then thought about the weather outside and pushed the rudeness to the desire for a change of clothes and a warm bed.

Back in the bar Werkar waited for him with a questioning look.

"What was his problem?!"

"No problem, he made a very soggy and tired impression. Will ask him tomorrow."

"It's late and I do not want you hold up longer. Master Draenekiin, it seems so far everything is in order, I just hope the rain does not inflict too much damage to the foundation," he turned to Arol, "Master Granders, thanks again for the place to stay and I hope that the work at the house will not last for too much longer. . . " Feerdraene said, snatching his papers and going in the direction of his quarters.

"At farhfeer<sup>4</sup>, we should look at the site and then go through the construction plans. But you're right, it's late and I'm not young any more, be well and a good night," Werkar said, after he had received the chamber key from Arol.



## ***Aisbrukh 2465.7.7.4 - Inn***

AT DARAKNELH<sup>5</sup>, just before dawn, Arol was torn from his sleep by a cry. A cry like that of a child. He ran to Arjila's bed but she was fast asleep. Once again, a cry, a little more alert Arol noted that the cry came from one of the guest rooms. He threw on a coat and rushed with a flanollh<sup>6</sup> lamp to the rooms.

In front of the room he had rented to the soaked stranger earlier, Werkar stood and

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<sup>3</sup>An octagonal coin measuring two thumbs in diameter made out of Staarnmaetlh, a steel-like Metal. The shape is due to the number of gods and on one side is the imperial coat of arms engraved.

<sup>4</sup>This is a time of day, equivalent to our morning

<sup>5</sup>This is also a kind of time of day. It is a period of total darkness. Very much afflicted with superstition. Darakhnelh is a time late at night where no natural light shines and living shadows roam the land.

<sup>6</sup>Flanollh means flame oil. This flame oil is extracted from a local species of palm.

knocked on the door. No response. The cry was clearly that of an infant, a cry that Arol kept up night after night a few cycles ago.

"There is a small child in it and no one opens the door," said Werkar excited.

Arol tried to grab his keys but found that they were still behind the counter, where he always stores them before going to sleep. He ran down the stairs, grabbed the keys and rushed back up. There he unlocked the door.

The room was dark, the window was wide open. Someone had put up a crystal wind chime in the window frame. On the table lay a few items and on the chair a cloth bundle. In bed, the blanket was pushed together and in the middle was an infant, only a few yaenelhn<sup>7</sup> old. It screamed lustily. There was no trace of the stranger from last night.

Outside the window the shadows consolidated themselves and seemed to want to enter the room. The first light of a new day fell through the loosening clouds and one of them hit the wind chime. Reddish golden light flickered over the walls and covered the room in warm light.

Behind Arol Moira had appeared, still in her nightgown, she walked to the child, picked it up with maternal feelings and cradled it in her arms. It calmed down and fell asleep again.

"Oh, that's better, I thought cries of babies we had behind us..." Moira said, after she had put the child back in the bed.

"I thought so too. Where is the guest?!" answered Arol.

"Um, look at this here," Werkar said, pointing to the table.

There were a couple of small bags, tied together clothing and an envelope. Everything folded neatly. Arol scanned the items only briefly and then went to the window to close it. On the handle he found a leather strap hanging outside.

"It looks as if he is trying to close the window from the outside after he climbed out," Werkar noticed looking over his shoulder. "Will let my son know he will surely find the stranger."

"Thanks for doing that. I'll have a look around here a bit." answered Arol locking the window.



## *Aisbrukh 2465.7.7.4 - Inn*

THE ENVELOPE ON the table contained a letter:

In bed lies my son, Davim Erloran.

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<sup>7</sup>Yaenelhn means day. With an 'n' at the end words in this language are plural forms. Yaenelhn means days as a result.

He is about three yaenelhn old, his mother died in childbirth and I gave her to the flames<sup>8</sup>.

There is a bag with enough money to bring him up properly.  
If the finder of this letter will not be able to bring up my son, so he'll please give him to someone who can. I will not be able to offer him the home that he needs...

Believing in Bel Hom Dhal<sup>10</sup>,  
Eremus Erloran

Arol read the letter several times.

"What are we doing now?" he asked, after he received the news of Werkar that the boy's father could be traced to the Aiswaatr and then any trace broke off.

"Someone has to care for the boy. Kardima is already quite busy with Nicora, Jarah is pregnant and I do not think Silia could and wants to raise someone else's son," Moira replied cradling the little boy in her arms.

Arol looked at the objects on the table, especially the coins that were in one of the bags. Golden rings with red and white gemstones in them, coins from a distant land and worth a fortune.

"Are you trying to imply that we should take care of him?!"

"Yes, that's what I'm saying. Jila is old enough that she no longer needs the full attention and I know of no one in the village who could take care of him otherwise. And to send him to Derhferth I think is too risky. In addition, this money could help us out of our current situation..." replied Moira coyly.

"I am aware of our monetary situation, but are we really up to it?" answered Arol. "We have no idea why his father left him here and whether he ever comes back..."



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<sup>8</sup>The dead are not buried, but burnt and the ashes poured into the Derh or a river joining it. The remains will be taken up to Derh<sup>9</sup> and with the Derh tear brought back to Ura.

<sup>10</sup>Bel Hom Dhal is the God of the family.

## GROWING UP

### *Southwest of Aisbrukh 2465.7.7.4 - Wildernis*

WHEN HE HAD left the village behind Eremus was soaked to the bone. He knew no one there and did not know the name of the village, but the hospitality of this country had convinced him that his son would be well taken care of there.

He was not aware of how long he had been on the road, but the rain had let up and it began to dawn, when he allowed himself a break. Certainly they had followed him across the mountains and would continue to look for him, but they knew nothing of his son and his wife was dead.

A Kathan<sup>11</sup> as he was attracts a lot of attention, as the population of Larh Thorans is mainly Thorakh<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, he had to live in hiding.

The first rays of light tore him from his thoughts and he pulled his meagre belongings, put a false track, which ended in a nearby river and ran towards Draakhon<sup>13</sup>.



### *Aisbrukh 2501.5.3.7 - Inn*

YAE BY YAE went by, the pharmacy was built and opened, a craftsman opened his workshop on the river Aiswaatr and the village children were growing up. Among them, the little Davim who is noticed by his bright hair colour and his dark eyes and thus always had something foreign and mysterious about him. The other kids gave him the nickname Erlo, because of his surname Erloran. The adults, however, mistrusted this different kind of boy and he had to work harder to achieve the same success as his playmates.

Moira Grander and her husband were loving parents and there was harmony in the family. Out of lack of space and when he was old enough, Davim moved to the chamber on the ground floor, which was reserved for emergencies before. There he had his own room and he enjoyed it very much.

More Yae passed and a disease infested Moira. The apothecary send forth many calls for help, but no one knew of a remedy for the disease.

So it was one day in Freeyae<sup>14</sup> that she was weak in bed and decided to tell Davim about the letter and the abandonment by his father.

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<sup>11</sup>This is a human race mostly living beyond the mountains to the north and west.

<sup>12</sup>Another human race, this one only living in Larh Thoran.

<sup>13</sup>Draakhon is the equivalent of south in this world.

<sup>14</sup>Freeyae is the equivalent to Spring.



# YOUTHFUL ADVENTURES

## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.3 - Inn*

THE REDDISH LIGHT of the early day fell through the high windows of the hall. In the hall there were four rows of eight small tables and accompanying chairs. At the one narrow side of the room a blackboard was installed, on which a coordinate system and a curve was painted.. In front of the blackboard was a stocky but small woman with dark red hair and clear gray streaks labelling axes with a piece of chalk. The coordinate system consisted of X and Y axes and the curve was a parabola. To the right of the coordinate system the woman wrote  $c(x) = x^2$  and then turned to face the class.

"The curve c of x is equal to x to the power of tway." She pointed to a spot on the x-axis.

"much is the value of y at x equal foorch<sup>15</sup>?" Then over the rim of her glasses her green eyes looked expectantly in the room.

On 17 of the tables, the young people of the village and the surrounding farms sat, who were between the age of 14 to 19 Yae. The silence in the room was briefly interrupted by the rustle of paper and the scratching of pens and then some raised their hands. The old woman waited a moment longer, until all had put down their coal pens and then walked over to a table.

"Claudius?"

A boy on the edge of the second row nearly jumped out of his skin. He was one of the few who had not raised their hands. He nervously pushed his shaggy black hair, which had a slight blue tint, out of his face. He slipped a little further under the table, pushed his chair back here, lost his footing and fell to the ground. Laughter went through the room as he sits down back into his chair with no more copper but a bright red face. The teacher's disgruntled look let the laughter die down quickly.

"And, Master Tremme, we do not have time until darakhnelh?!"

The boy to the right of Claudius handed him a paper with the solution because his own paper was empty.

"T-t-tway e-e n-nel, M-miss Aisdr-draene?" Claudius was stammering.

"Yes, tway e nelh<sup>16</sup> is the right answer, Claudius. Master Erloran will not always be there to help you?!" she replied with a sideways glance to Davim who purposely avoided eye contact.

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<sup>15</sup>foorch is four in the language of Larh Thoran.

<sup>16</sup>Tway e nelh = 2 and 0. In Larh Thoran the octal number system is in use and as a result the numbers 8 and 9 are not used. In this case 4 by 4 is 16 which in the octal system would be 20 (2 x 8 and 0 x 1).

"Doing calculus and dealing with large numbers is important in every area of ??life. No matter whether you're selling goods or managing taxes." spoke Miss Aisdraene in a loud voice. "Since the time is up again, read the next chapter in your books until tomorrow and do the exercises."

Above the blackboard a clock set into the wall. A chime sounded.

The young people rose from their chairs and left the room in small groups. Davim encouragingly knocked on Claudius' shoulder.

"Come on, the old woman only tries to muddy your water. Do not let her get you down. If you want I can help you in calculus."

"And what do you want in return?!" murmured Claudius.

With a broad grin on his face Davim replied: "Well, you know your way around all the old scriptures and the", he yawned playful, "dusty history stuff."

They walked down the stairs to the council chamber.

"Erlo, history is important and interesting, and the scriptures are there for the benefit of all!"

"Sure and numbers are not needed?!" Davim laughed and ran when they reached the bottom of the stairs.

Claudius Tremme was the son of the mayor and was often teased for his reserved and shy manners. Davim had always been an outsider by his unknown origin, so the two had found each other at an early age and have since been the best of friends. Claudius was almost a year younger than Davim, but often had to help his father with administrative work because he should take over the Office of the Mayor after his father retires. Mathematics had always been his weakness, for Davim it seemed to be quite easy so he helped Claudius learning and in return he tried to teach Davim about the history of the country and the laws. Since Davim was an outsider in many ways, he thought, these laws apply only to real citizen of the country which he himself not considered to be. But for reason and respect he had broken none of the laws and has no plans to do so any time soon.

Davim worked in his ward's inn and helped out where he could. Arol Grander let him live in the chamber opposite the wash room, but after the death of his wife he saw Davim no more as a son but as a servant, who grew up at his house.



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.3 - Inn*

IN THE MIDDLE of Feer<sup>17</sup>, a few days before Feernelhn<sup>18</sup> Frerre Tzarall and Wiitfeer<sup>19</sup> had just united in their eternal struggle and the heat was burning on the barn roof.

A bead of sweat ran down Drina's right cheek, while Erlo piled up the last straw bales. Whitish yellow light came through the small window and the occasional cracks in the barn roof, otherwise they were safe from the other and adult eyes.

Her green-gray eyes wandered over his tanned torso as he walked over to her. As always, she stopped at his dark blue eyes, a color that no one else had in the village.

He had not a very big interest in their eyes, but was rather busy to release the strap of her blouse. After several failed attempts of his, she pulled on one end and the blouse slid down her body. After a short head movement, her green black hair fell in silky waves over her bronze coloured shoulders. She pressed herself against his body, warm waves swelled over him. She kissed him and the sweat flowed stronger as he felt her tongue in his mouth.

When she was leaning with her back to him, he began traversing her body with his hands for the belly up. As he drove along the curve of her breasts with his fingertips, she sighed pleasurably into his ear. He felt her heavy breathing and her kiss on his neck, his hands trying in vain to enclose her breasts. The surging emotions within him and her moans convinced him that he was doing everything right. The feel of her velvet skin was increasingly displaced by the rising sweat between them. The heat was unbearable, but there was no other place and no other time...

Her breasts were raised in excitement, and he took the opportunity to try to feel their full size. She pulled somewhat out of his embrace to turn around in his arms and was now starting to move down his upper body. This he saw as a signal to do the same. His way was slowed only by a brooch on the left side of her skirt, he open it. The brooch was reflecting the golden light falling down to the floor, followed by the heavy fabric skirt, slightly kicking up spicy dust. Erlo touched her smooth velvety skin until he almost reached her crotch. Drina groaned again, this time a little louder, but then she took his hand and turned to look at him. With deft fingers she undid the clasp of his pants and pulled them down. Without further warning, she began to kiss him there and to massage him with her tongue. He gave himself to her, everything around him seemed unimportant, the dusty spicy smell of straw, the hot beam of light that burned through the roof right on his sandy hair, the joyous cries of children, probably because a stranger had arrived in the village...

In the middle of this ecstasy she suddenly stepped away from him and sat down on a

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<sup>17</sup>Feer means fire and in this instance stands for the season summer.

<sup>18</sup>Feernelhn = days of fire, the hottest days of the year and as a result siesta days or celebrations outside.

<sup>19</sup>Frerre Tzarall is a dragon with glowing red scales and Wiitfeer is a white griffon whose fur and feathers are surrounded by white fire. Both are the natural day light sources for most of the continent



bale of straw.

"Let's see if you can also put me in this condition..." she whispered.

She opened her petticoat and legs and he groped with his fingers and then with his tongue her crotch. Her movements and her moans suggested to him that he was doing well, not quite so awkward for his first time. Her taste and heat excited him even more. She moaned loudly several times and then went through his wavy hair, only to push him away again. She even went so far as to push him to the floor and sit on him, like they had done a few cycles ago while playing as kids. But the childish play times were over with her, since she had gone through these changes of her body.

First, she put her breasts in his face so that he could caress them with his tongue, then she slowly slid down his body. She opened her legs a little further and let him penetrate her. Sensing his awkwardness she slowly but determinedly began to move her pelvis. He took the opportunity again to massage her breasts. Again, everything was blurred in pure pleasure, the separation of the sky beings, the villagers, who partially resumed their work, partly eyeing the stranger refreshing himself at the village well, the cries of his ward, that he should come to the inn as a guest had arrived...

After both had the pinnacle of pleasure in common, they were lying still a moment arm in arm on the blanket Erlo had borrowed from the inn. But then they heard someone open the barn door and saw that as a reason to dress as soon as possible. As he helped Drina getting dressed, he noticed how you had to tie the blouse band, maybe he could use that knowledge later...

Throwing over his own shirt, he began to break down the straw barrier that had kept them hidden.

When he had pushed open the heavy barn door far enough to squeeze through Arol just wanted to again call for Erlo as he saw him with dishevelled hair and accompanied by Sandrina Krandor, the daughter of the blacksmith.

"There you are. I yelled through the whole village for you. We have a guest! You should remove the straw out of your hair and clothes before you go out of here. And Sandrina, your father asked for you..."

Saying that he turned with a smile on his face back through the door and back out into the red and yellow light of the advanced stages of the day. More reddish to Draakhon and more whitish to Griifhon<sup>20</sup>.



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<sup>20</sup>Griifhon is the equivalent of north.

# THE STRANGER

## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Inn*

AS AROL ARRIVED at the inn, the guest was sitting at a table near the window with his back to the wall. On a chair beside him stood a large travel bag with many pockets and elongated, tightly bound bundles. Over the back of a chair a long cloak was thrown made from the same fabric as the stranger's robe. A large walking stick was leaning against the wall with the window. Everything within reach and unpacked.

He looked up as Arol entered the room through a door behind the counter. The stranger had to be at least three steps<sup>21</sup> tall. A kind of robe of gray and black, velvet-like fabric was hanging over his lean body. He had a crown of long blond and white hair. The bald part of the head was decorated with silver and golden lines, some of which also covered the face. His piercing yellow eyes made his pale, almost haggard face look very strict.

He cleared his throat.

"Master Granders? As much is lojierun?" he asked gently with a peculiar accent and partly reading from a small leather bound book.

"Lojierun?? Um..." Arol thought for a moment. *Lodging? That is probably what the stranger said*, he thought.

"Well, the room costs 5 staarnmindt if you meant that..." He showed all five fingers of his right hand and mumbled the last part of the sentence.

"Wit eating?"

"Yes, meals are included, one for the first Daraknelh and the other at Farfeer. If you do not want any meals, then it is only 3 for the room." Arol tried to speak slowly and clearly.

After some digging around in his backpack the stranger pulled out a bag and took out five coins and gave them to Arol. He curiously eyed the coins on the way back to the bar.

A thick silver ring with strange symbols framing a bluish crystal, five times. Since the silver was about as much as the common coins here, he did not object to them, but do not put them in the box to the other instead he put them in a bag on his belt. Maybe they were worth more, he would have to ask the old Grarn, who supposedly came out of the city and was a stone shaper once. At least he always tells it this way.

So deep in thought, he had not noticed Erlo entering the common room. The boy had managed not only to take the straw out of your hair, but had even taken the time to freshen up.

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<sup>21</sup>steps: measurement in Larh Thoran, 80 centimetres or about 3 feet (imperial system). More info on measurements are in the appendix

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"What do you have there, Master Arol?"

"Nothing, see whether the great room is clean and put fresh sheets on. Go, go..."

With his head still not quite back from his adventure with the daughter of the blacksmith, the boy went up the stairs.

Arol shook his head and went again to the guest who drew attention to himself with a wave.

"What can I get you?"

After a short pause of trying to understand the question, the stranger answered: "Me would become a corn brew."

Arol had great difficulty to hold back a laugh, then said, "You want a beer? Right away."

When he reached the counter and just took a jar off the shelf, the door opened and three old men entered the tavern. Grarn, Fredol Tremme, the old mayor; and Werkar Draenekiin, the former village constable. The three frequently came here to drink and play cards. Seeing their regular table occupied by the stranger, they took place near the fireplace, suspiciously eyeing the stranger.

In his long fingers with a lot of rings he held the book with which he had been trying to quote fragments of the local language. The purse seemed to have been stowed away, at least it was no longer visible.

Grarn came to the bar to order drinks and also to pay as loser from the last time they played.

"Three times tea without shots for the moment. Here's a staarnmindt, should be enough for the evening. And what is it with that fellow over there?"

"I do not know, but our language he is not speaking well enough. Always uses his book and even then it is gibberish. Is difficult... When the boy comes back, he will bring you the tea." Arol remembered the coins.

"Wait, Grarn. You know your way around stones and crystals, right?"

"Jo, have indeed spend ages with grinding and shaping them and ruined my back in the process. What do you want to know?"

Arol took one of the stranger's coins out of the bag and held it out to Grarn.

"Well, you're funny, haha. Do need my eyes, be right back..."

As Grarn walked back in the direction of the table, Erlo came down the stairs.

"Is now clean, was a bit dusty, because is has not been used so long. Fresh linen is also on it, at least Jila is doing it right now."

"Good to know that she is still here. Go get three jugs of tea from the kitchen."

"With or without a shot?"

"Without for the moment... "

Grarn had just shuffled back to the bar.

"Well, my boy. Got my glasses misplaced somewhere. Describe the stone to me."

Arol reached into the breast pocket of Grarn's vest and pulled out his glasses and handed them to him.

"Oh thank you. And I was searching for them the whole Feernelh... Well then show them to me."

Arol handed him one of the coins and waited for the verdict of the old man. Erlo peered curiously over his shoulder after he had brought the three jugs of steaming drink on the table for the elderly.

"Well, so if my eyes don't deceive me, they do sometimes lately, then this could be an Aisstoy<sup>22</sup>. Are rare here, valuable. Where did you get them from, if I may ask?"

Somewhat hesitantly replied Arol: "The stranger has paid the room with them."

"Oh, will he stay long? If he sits elsewhere next time, it is fine with me..."

With that Grarn shuffled back to the table by the fireplace and the elderly began their first game.

Arol wondered briefly if he should return the other four coins to the stranger, but was interrupted by the arrival of the evening clientèle and a travelling merchant. The merchant was Bredor Flanaarh from Derhferth, a sneaky rascal, but a good storyteller.

"Ah, Master Arol Granders, how nice to see you alive and well. I have the two barrels of wine that you ordered. Let the boys unload them..." He greeted him with a friendly voice and almost impish smile.

"What are we going to hear from you tonight? «The saga of Derh», «Ailvenmaid» or again the «Legend of the rising star»?"

"Well, that should as always be decided by your guests... The barrels cost 10 staarnmindt and two huidmindt<sup>23</sup> and bring me some roasts and bread please."

Arol took out one of the foreign coins and handed it to the dealer. He eyed them suspiciously.

"Do you want to insult me?" But then he looked at the coin in more detail for a moment.

"Oh, now that should be enough. Since you are so generous, you can take a roll of fabric from my cart. For curtains, dresses for your daughter or what ever..."

He went to a table on the other side of the fireplace, opposite the village elders.

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<sup>22</sup>Aisstoy<sup>n</sup> means ice stone. It is a clear blue white crystal which could be found in mines in the northern half of the continent. It is a commonly or uncommonly found stone, that could sometimes be mistaken for the crystallized magical ice which is really rare.

<sup>23</sup>One huidmindt is a coin made out of bronze. Eight huidmindt<sup>n</sup> are equal to one staarnmindt.



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Inn*

OUTSIDE ERLO AND GERDT, the son of the merchant, were lifting two heavy barrels «draenewiin» off the wagon. Reddish yellow light lit up the horizon. The shadows lengthened. The sign on the heavy wooden door at the front of the half-timbered inn was only barely readable any more.

«koom maen koom fraa a bredt e wiin ad feer e draene.»<sup>24</sup>

The two boys had brought the barrels into the kitchen, housed the oxen in the barn and the wagon parked in the yard, as the light came almost exclusively from the flanolh lamps on the inn's outer walls. In the bar almost the whole village had assembled to spend daraknelh in joyful company. Arjila Grander and Nicora Draenekiin helped the take orders and brought food and drinks to the tables, while Bredor played a tune on his fiddle. Kardima Draenekiin had spend her time since farfeer in the kitchen preparing the roast and fresh flanbredt. Her husband probably will not come today, because he again had caught Terdor Waatrkiin stealing and wanted to keep him under observation until the next midtfeer. About two dozen guests had gathered together in the common room. There was the mayor Camas Tremme and his family, the smith's family, the pharmacist Feerdraene with his ailvenfraa who was expected to give birth soon, and some farmers from the region. If someone wanted to arrive, he should hurry, because Arol already turned the latch on the door. Those who would now go out, were definitely up to no good and would thus not attend such a cheerful gathering. Erlo cleaned himself up in a wash bowl, then went to the common room and bumped halfway into Jila, who had just brought some towels from the basement. As usual, he did not notice the look she gave him for about a Yae, a look not unlike the look of Drina in the hayloft...

While he helped on the bar, Erlo tried to watch the stranger but that one only seemed to listen to the voices and occasionally looking in his book. The strangers' beer looked nearly untouched because it was still almost full.

"Davim, go into the kitchen and help Kardima. The girls can manage here without your help," said Arol noticing Erlo just standing around.

So he spent the time with meat turning, cutting vegetables and cooking tea...



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<sup>24</sup>This means «Come man come woman for bread and wine at day and night», a sign of the local hospitality

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## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Guard Station***

AT DRAENENRIITH<sup>25</sup> THE COOK sent him to the guard station to supply her husband and his prisoner with bread, roast and beer. His way led him past the old village fountain, on the octagonal village square to the guard station next to the ballroom. The guard house was a heavy one-story house with studded doors and reinforced windows. A flanolh lamp hung next to the door and its orange light fought with the greenish blue light of the moon for lighting of the square. Nirdor sat on a stool under the lamp and smoked his pipe, blowing blue-gray smoke rings into the night sky.

"Ah, Davim. What do you bring to me there? That smells so delicious."

"Some roast, flambredt and a large pitcher of beer for you and your guest. And your wife wants to know when they can expect you, Master Nirdor."

"Will need to ensure that Tredor doesn't do anything again, so I'll have to be content with one of the beds inside for the night. Please put the food and the pitcher on the large table and give Tredor a pot of beer, I just want to finish my pipe..."

Erlo put the heavy tray on the table and took a clay cup from a nearby shelf, which he filled with beer and carried it over to the bars.

"What arrre you brrringing meee therrrrre?" asked the creature cowering in a corner on a stool. Its blue-violet eyes examined Erlo from head to toe.

Erlo was standing at about two steps and four hands<sup>26</sup> tall and tanned all over. His sandy hair was falling in irregular waves over the shoulders. The face was rather plump as striking and was dominated by the unusually deep blue eyes that are foreign in this area. His body was stout to muscular, which was not surprising in view of the heavy work he has to do in the inn. He was dressed in a plain shirt, leather trousers and light boots. With practiced hands he handed the pot through the narrow bars.

"Some beer from the inn to moisten the throat. How are you, Master Tredor?" In one smooth motion, the creature rose from his seat and arrived at the bars in time to receive the beer. Previously, the fast and flowing movements and the peculiar appearance of the Eesh<sup>27</sup> had frightened Erlo, but after such a long time he had become accustomed to it. The long, pointed fingers covered the pot and Tredor took a big swig.

"Thissss rrrred brrrrrew fasssscinatessss meeee, how do you make it?" he hissed happily. As always, if he liked something he drummed his broad tail on the ground and blew up some sand and dust, which then slid down his black scales.

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<sup>25</sup>Draenenriith is the time when the Derh Tear (a glowing magical ball of water that floats from the resting place of Derh up into the clouds until it is swept away by dragons and carried to the realm above the clouds) is just starting to rise above the mountains in the north east.

<sup>26</sup>another local measurement, 10 cm

<sup>27</sup>An Eesh is a lizard like creature that resembles more of a scaled beaver than typical amphibious lizards we might know of. It is the size of a short man but weights a lot less than his body suggests. The Eeshn are living in swamps in the west of Larh Thoran. Their society is tribal at best and the local laws are somewhat strange to them.

"Well unfortunately, I cannot tell you anything about that. What did you do this time, if I may ask?"

"You humanssss have ssssstrrrrrange customssss. I apparrrrrently sssstole because I wassss hungrrrry and I just took some fissssh..." Tredor hissed from his elongated mouth.

"If you're not paying for the food, then this is theft according to the law. But you have coins and crystals, why not give some of them to the merchants as payment?"

"No one herrrrre acceptssss my coinssssss. And crrrystalsss I only have becausssse I like them." Tredor took a deep breath, his nostrils quivered slightly.

"Yourrrr ssscent issss differrrrent, I sssmell woman on you..."

Erlo was slightly red in the face from embarrassment. Tredor took a fist-sized cloth bag from his pocket and handed it to Erlo with a slight bow.

"My congrrrratulationssss on yourrrr assccension in manhood!"

Confused Erlo peered inside and a reddish golden glow came from the opening of the bag. He did not know what kind of crystal it was, but it was big and warm.

"Thank you, but I can not accept such an expensive gift."

"Thissss issss only a crrrrryssstal... Take it, I do not need it!"

"Well, you two, what are you whispering about over there?" Nirdor asked as he came in and cut himself a slice of meat.

"Erm... Nothing important. I will go back to the inn now." Erlo tucked the bag into his belt pouch.

"Well, guard your secrets, as long as you do not break the law..."

"No, Tredor has just given me a gift... Good night, Master Tredor, Master Nirdor," with that Erlo walked out into the bluish greenish light of the night.

Nirdor took a key from the wall and opened the cell door.

"Come, eat something before it gets cold."

Tredor stepped out of the cell, took place at the table and began to eat.

"And, will you tell me what you two were whispering about?"

"I gave Davim a crrrrryssstal to hisss assccensssion in manhood, as isss the cusstom among my people. Isss therrrrre no fissssh? The brread isss delicioussss, tell yourrrr wife."

"Ascension in manhood? Davim? He did tell you something like that?"

"No, I sssssmelled it..."



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Inn***

BACK AT THE INN Erlo ate a slice of roast with bread sitting in the kitchen. Then he went into the common room, where all anxiously listened to the stories Bredor told. He told of his trip to Derh'adev and the modern street lighting there, which will probably run without flanolh. Master Arol seemed to have no objection to Erlo going to his room to stow the crystal away. He sat on his narrow bed and pulled the black cloth bag from his belt pouch and took the crystal out to look at it more closely. Only faint light fell into the room, but that should be enough, thought Erlo. As he held the crystal in his hand, he saw a flame-like cut and the crystal was warm and weighed almost nothing. The sparkle inside lit up the palm of his hand, but lit up slowly until the room was wrapped in golden red flickering light. Something like this Erlo had never seen. Suddenly the crystal lifted from his hand and grew even warmer. For a split second the crystal transformed into a flame, then it was a crystal again and was laying in Erlo's hand, as if nothing had happened.

Erlo did not know how long he sat there and had stared at the crystal as someone knocked on his door.

"Davim, you need to help Arol clean up."

"On my way." He put the crystal under his pillow and went to the door. Cora stood outside and looked at him quizzically.

"Did you fell asleep, or what? There are already almost all gone and I want to go home. Help Arol clean up... Then you can go to sleep."

"How long was I gone?" He tried to look in Cora's face and not at her cleavage.

"It is midtdraene<sup>28</sup>. My mother is already in bed, Jila should be there and I'm going now. See you tomorrow..." She went out through the kitchen.

"Davim, where have you been?! Put up the chairs and wake Grarn."

Master Arol was busy cleaning dishes and apart from Grarn no one in the room. Even the stranger was already in bed. Erlo woke Grarn, then wiped the tables, put the chairs on them and swept up the sand and dirt that had been carried in from outside and carried it out. Grarn staggered towards his house on the edge of the village. He seemed to have won.

"So, tomorrow I'll wake you a little earlier. Because of the guest and I need you over the day... And before you ask, yes, at the hour of fire you are free, but not for too long."

Then Arol put the bolt on the door and headed up the stairs. Erlo went into the kitchen, grabbed the jug of cold tea, which he had previously left and went to his room.



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<sup>28</sup>Midtdraene is the time when the Derh Tear is at its brightest and about the middle of its way up into the clouds.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Inn***

HE HAD JUST UNDRESSED himself and was about to get into his bed, as someone knocked on his door. He rose and opened the door a crack. In front of his door, Jila stood in her nightgown and with a candle that was only spreading a little bit of light.

"May I come inside?"

"I just wanted to go to sleep, what is it?"

"Wanted to ask you something, but not out here in the hallway..."

"If that can not wait until tomorrow, then wait a moment..."

Erlo closed the door, put his pants back on again and was about to open the door when he remembered the crystal. He grabbed it from under the pillow, put it into its bag and put that in a drawer. Then he opened the door for Jila. Jila came in and sat down on the bed and looked at Erlo as if expecting something. Erlo closed the door and turned to her.

"What do you want?"

"Do you think I am pretty?" asked Jila.

Erlo was a little bit confused.

"Yes, why?" he answered after a small pause. *What is it with this question?*

"Do you *really* think I'm pretty?"

"Yes, I told you already."

She stood up, walked over to him and pressed her lips on his. Erlo pushed her away as she started to open his pants.

"Jila, stop it, you're my sister!"

"No I'm not!! My father has taken you in and you live here, but I'm not your sister!!!"

"I think you better go now!"

He pushed her out the door, closed and bolted it. When girls turn into women, they suddenly become completely different people. With that thought, he lay down and fell asleep. His dreams took him back to the hour of the fire and into the barn with Drina...



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.4 - Inn***

OUTSIDE IN THE HALLWAY, Jila broke down sobbing. If she were to knock on Erlo's door any louder, her father might wake up and she did not want that for sure.

The man of her dreams does not see her and finds her ugly just because he thinks she's his sister. He was not even born in this village. His mother supposedly died at his birth, at least that was what his father told or something like that.

Jila did not even knew his father, she had only been 2 yaen old at that time. At that time her mother was still alive and took the child in because he was abandoned by his father who later jumped into the river and did not turn up again. All he left behind was a letter, a ring and a few feermindt. And of course the screaming hungry baby in his room. In the letter the name of the boy was written, Davim Erloran, and that someone should take care of him, his mother had probably wanted it that way. No one in the village had even close resemblance to the boy or his father, and the name Erloran was not known to anyone. Nevertheless Jilas mother took in the boy and brought him up as her own son. When she became seriously ill and was dying, she insisted that the boy should know the truth. But he still seems to not believe it after four yaen...

Jila lay down on her bed, crying, angry, sad. She was rolling back and forth, trying to fall asleep. Only when she saw his draenestoy<sup>29</sup> colored eyes and his muscular upper body in her mind, she calmed down a bit and even found some satisfaction.



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<sup>29</sup>Draenestoy is the a crystal with a deep blue color. It is called after the Derh Tear that has this color in the middle.

# SHADOWS

## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

LOUD KNOCKING ON his door ripped Erlo from his dreams. When he opened his eyes and looked out the window, he saw only blackness, darkness. It was still Daraknelh, but Master Arol had said that he would wake him earlier. He got up and dressed himself. In the bathroom, he freshened up and then went to the kitchen to get something to eat. In the laundry room, he freshened up and then went to the kitchen to get something to eat. There were a couple slices of bread, some butter and a glass of fruit puree. In the oven were two loafs of flanbredt that Kardima had prepared the day before. In the common room Arol took the chairs from the tables and sitting at one of the table Gerdt ate some breakfast.

"Hey, Erlo. Sleep good?"

"Yes, you want to continue on? Thought you would stay a little longer. . ."

"Yo, continue on."

Outside scattered white sun rays broke through the darkness. Like fog the dark pull away from the sun and started to free the world from its grip. The silver glitter of the stars came back but was immediately hidden by white sun rays.

"Davim, please get some water from the well."

When he stepped out of the inn, not all shadows had disappeared, between the houses the blackness was still roaming freely. Erlo went quickly to the well in the middle of the village square and tied the bucket to the pulley to lower it into the darkness of the well shaft. The air was freezing cold, tiny ice needles stabbed into his skin and got caught in his coat. The stones of the village square were still warm, nonetheless ice had formed in the cracks and every step made a crunching sound. The bucket was held up for a second but gave way at once, then there was a splash of water. A shadow detached itself from the alley between town hall and ballroom and came towards Erlo, nearly two step high and one step wide. Erlo could not tell if it was a person or just a shadow.

"Who goes there?"

The shadow continued coming toward Erlo, not yet having a fixed shape. Erlo drew stronger on the rope and the bucket became visible, filled to the brim and completely frozen over. The shadow creatures sprang forward and grabbed Erlo. He stumbled a few steps backward, tearing the bucket from the well. Icy cold crept into Erlo's clothes from all sides and let him shiver. *What is that?* The shadow had almost human form and bent over Erlo. . .

Suddenly a beam of white light hit the transparent crystal on the top of the well and split it up into eight smaller rays that hit the corners of the square. A wave of pleasant warmth spread quickly and the impenetrable darkness was blown away leaving only

normal shadows behind. The shadow creature dissolved in the air and the ice melted in the square. Erlo snatched up the bucket, ripped it from the rope and ran to the inn. Once there, he slammed the door shut behind him, bolted it and then peered out the window overlooking the village square. The square was empty, no one in sight and no shade at all, but also the light rays between the crystal and the corners of the square were gone. *Had he just imagined it all?* Still trembling, he brought the bucket in the bathroom and filled the contents into a bowl. At the bottom of the bucket, he found a black stone not much larger than a thumb and almost perfectly round. Erlo was sure that the stone had not previously been in the bucket.

"Please bring up a dish of water to the guest room."

Erlo was startled and jumped, let the bucket fall and stumbled away from the voice. Arol did not manage to catch the bucket before it came down crashing loudly to the floor.

"Are you trying to wake the whole village?!"

"Ff... forgive me, mmaster Arol, you scared me. I did not want to make a racket like that."

Still trembling all over, black streaks were moving back and fro before Erlo's eyes. Coming one step closer, Arol took a good look at the boy and said, "Davim, please sit by the stove in the kitchen and Jila will prepare you a tea. I'll take the water to the guest..."

Arol helped Erlo up and pushed him into the kitchen, where Erlo fell on a stool and Arol went back into the common room.

"Gerdt, please go out and get your oxen ready, your father wanted to go as early as possible."

Dutifully, as always, Gerdt went out to the courtyard.

"Arjila, please cook some draenetea, about one or two cups should be enough."

Arjila rose from her breakfast and went to the kitchen door.

"And do not say anything to Davim about his appearance!" Arol said softly before she could open the door.

In the kitchen, she went to the herb shelf and started searching for the tea. In the mirror hanging next to the herbs she saw Erlo sitting slumped over on a stool next to the door to the washroom, he clenched one of his fists and absently stared at the floor. With horror, she saw some white streaks in his hair and his face was twisted into a grimace of horrors. He did not seem to notice anything around himself. She had already heard of the shadow touched, but she had never seen one herself. *Why him, her dream man, why?*

"Do not allow the tea to sit there for too long." Her father carried Erlo straight to his room. A slightly difficult task, because the boy was almost a step bigger than Arol.

With the steaming cup of tea, Jila went after him.

"Keep him well covered and give him the whole cup to drink, keep him warm. I'll have to wake my sister and persuade her and her daughter to help out."



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

JILA WAS ALONE with Erlo in his chamber. She pulled the covers around him, while she noticed that his clothes were damp. *With damp clothing you cannot rest well...*

So she began to undress him which he did not notice at all. Jila had stripped him down to his underpants and noticed the cold that held him captive. His whole body was drenched in sweat, cold unpleasant sweat. *The tea*, she had nearly forgotten about the tea.

She put Erlo back on his bed, covered him up, took the steaming cup and put it to his lips. Hot blue tea ran down his throat. Jilas fingers hurt because the cup had warmed up, but only hot the tea would be effective. The spicy scent invaded her nostrils and she had to be careful to not succumb to the increasing fatigue. She put the empty cup on his small closet next to the bed as he began to heavily shake again. Jila pushed the blanket closer to his body, he moved his eyes furiously under his closed eyelids. *What was wrong with him, something was not right.*

Erlo trembled violently, and his right hand hit the wall, making a fist. Jila remembered that he had clenched a fist in the kitchen holding something in it. She leaned over him and carefully opened his fist She leaned over him and carefully opened his fist. He was holding a black throbbing stone roughly a thumb big. She did not dare to touch the stone, took Erlo's shirt from the floor and wrapped the stone in it. As hard as Erlo was moved under the blanket he would throw it off in no time. Somehow she had to be able to keep him down and not moving so violently. There was a knock at the door.

Her father asked: "How is he doing?"

"He had a strange stone in his hand which I wrapped in his shirt. I've given him a cup of tea, he sleeps, but unfortunately too restless, I would like to keep an eye on him."

"Well, do that, I'll bring you your breakfast, Kardima and Nicora are here to help. I'm going to Feerdraene and ask him what else we can do for Davim."

Arol walked down the corridor again.

Jila was about to close the door when Nicora arrived with a tray which handed to Arjila.

"Morning, here's your breakfast and another cup of tea for Erlo. What's wrong with him?"

"I do not know exactly, but he needs rest, I'll stay with him..."

"Well, you do nurse your beloved back to health. . ." Nicora said with a wink and walked back to the kitchen. Jila closed the door and bolted it.

Erlo still moved wildly in his sleep. Jila felt his forehead and he was cold as ice. She tried again to wrap the blanket around him, but he was moving too much. *«He is cold and is constantly moving. What shall I do?»*

It occurred to her that to survive in the wilderness at night in Aisnae the chances are higher when you are exchanging body heat. She closed the curtains, undressed and joined him in his bed, a dream for a long time. But he was asleep and really sick. . .

She clung to him tightly to keep him warm, and wrapped the blanket around the both of them. So closely pressed against his body, warm desire welled up in her, which was only partially hampered by its freezing cold. She did not dare to move, as that could move the blanket and he could freeze. She laid her head on his chest and she could hear his heart beating slowly, too slowly. It struck twice while hers made ten strokes. She was excited, but his heart beat was very slow. . .



## REMEDY

### *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Apothecary*

AROL KNOCKED ON the door of the pharmacist Feerstraene. The house was fairly new and was standing next to the guard room, central and easily accessible. Weak shuffling steps rang from the inside and the door was unlocked.

"Who's there so early? Ah, Master Granders, what can I do for you?"

"Well, you could let me in and open your shop..."

Arol pushed through the door.

"Take it easy, what's going on?"

"Davim has been attacked by a shadow! We have given him draene tea and my daughter has put him in his bed. That was all we knew how to help..."

"Hmm, I can not help much more with that, because only the power of fire can really drive away the shadows. I am not in possession of a feerstoyne, which should help heal him. Something like this has not happened for a long time, I'm sorry, but I can not help you much further. A priest from the city might be able to but that's just a guess, because directing the power of fire is supposed to be very difficult. I'll send a dove to Derhferth and request help. All I can do unfortunately. He will need heat and rest, a lot of both."

"Thank you, I will look after him..."

Let me know if you get a reply."

"I will, Ura may preserve him and grant him a speedy recovery..."



### *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

IN THE COMMON ROOM Bredor was sitting at a table near the back entrance and ate his breakfast.

"Ah, Master Granders, there you are. What kind of ruckus was that earlier? Is everything alright?"

"Yes, only a fallen bucket, nothing of consequence. I took the liberty of sending out your son to fetch the oxen because you have a long journey ahead of you..."

"You seem eager to get rid of me, but to be honest, we have to be at the fort before Daraknelh. The oxen would love to have more peace and quiet but we have to be on

schedule... "

"If you need anything else ask Kardima. She is in the kitchen, I have to tend to my other guest."

"Strange fellow, was only sitting there and listened... "'

Arol was already on his way upstairs.



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

NICORA WAS SITTING in the kitchen and ate her breakfast as her mother was kneading more bread dough.

"So, what is the boy's illness?"

"Jila doesn't know for sure but she wants to help him."

"Well, let us hope that she does not catch it as well."

"As long as she is with Erlo, she does not care much, I think. Can I help you with anything?"

"Maybe I should make Arol aware of it..."

Helping me? Yes, see if our dear merchant needs anything and then get me some flour out of the pantry."

"Mother, you do not have to meddle with every relationship in town and it would not wise to inform your brother about his daughter's inclinations..."

"Well, fine, I will leave her be but she should show better taste in men..."

Why are you still here, go!"

Nicora walked into the common room and there the merchant was still eating his breakfast as his son came in from the courtyard.

"Mornin, Miss Draenekiin."

"Morning, Gerdt."

"Oh, Miss Draenekiin, did not know that you were here as well. Master Granders said, I should address your mother with any requests. Give her my thanks for the meal and if there is some bread I could take with me for the journey."

"Will ask her about it, Master Flanaarh. Do you need anything else?"

"No, that would be all. Gerdt? Gerdt, is the wagon ready?"

Gerdt stared at Nicora as if he wanted to jump her.



"Erm, yo, wagon ready..."

"Please excuse my son's behaviour, Miss Draenekiin. And Gerdt, go to the wagon and wait there!"

Back in the kitchen Nicora took one loaf of Flanbredt, wrapped it in a piece of cloth and walked back into the common room.

"Here you go, Master Flanaarh. May Jolberus grant you a pleasant journey and please visit our village again soon."

"Will do but most likely at Naayaen at the earliest if Arvosh looks upon us kindly." After finishing his breakfast Bredor left the inn and mounted his wagon which Gerdt had driven up. With a crack of the whip he ran the oxen and the wagon rumbled out of the village towards Rodhmoin<sup>30</sup>. Nicora cleaned the table and went to the pantry to get the flour her mother wanted.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

AROL ARRIVED IN the kitchen and planed out the meals for the day with Kardima.

"I think we need maybe a big pot of vegetable stew and a bit of grilled meat, nothing fancy."

"Yeah, that should not be a problem judging by your pantry. So, Arol, what is wrong with your boy?"

"As if I knew, dear sister. Feerdraene told me, he just needs a bit of warmth and rest."

"All well and good but what happened, there is something you are not telling me. Do not try to keep it from me, you know I will get it out of you anyway at some time..."

"Please try to keep it to yourself and you as well, Nicora, come in and you do not have to eavesdrop anymore."

Nicora came in and handed a small sack of flour to her mother.

"Please forgive me, Master Arol. Mother, here is the flour."

"We can keep a secret, so, what is going on?" Kardima said.

"I might not be able to keep it a secret for long..."

Davim was attacked by a shadow and shows strong signs of being shadow touched. There is nothing we can do. It is a miracle he is still alive at the moment. Where is Jila?"

"She is still with Davim, she said she will look after him. What is the mysterious guest doing?"

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<sup>30</sup>It is a direction. It would be west in our world.

"Must be still asleep. Will have a look in on Davim."

"Forget about that, Cora can do that and you sit down and eat something. You will need to keep up your strength."

Kardima winked to her daughter, pushed her brother on a stool and put some reheated roasted meat and a pot of Feertea on the table in front of him. Knowing to not start a fight with his sister and needing them today more than ever, he sat down and ate his breakfast.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

JILA PRESSED HERSELF to Erlo, embraced him and tried to keep the blanket in place. Someone knocked at the door.

"How are you guys doing in there?"

"Oh, Nicora, it is fine, he just need some rest..."

"Jila, your father told us what is going on."

"He is so cold and his heart is pounding so slowly. What did the apothecary say?"

"As far as I understood there is nothing to help him. Warmth and rest, the common thing everyone knows. Jila, do nothing stupid in there. Your father is in the kitchen but he could come here any moment..."

"So?! Erlo is ill and nobody can help him anyway, I'll stay here and will not be moved!" Arjila cried with tears in her eyes.

"Have it your way. I will be back later at some time."

The steps outside grew more quiet.

"I will stay with you, Erlo, and I will do anything to keep you at my side..."

She was cold and the room was cold as well. Her stomach growled as she had not eaten anything yet. The breakfast was cold, even the cup of tea had cooled down. There was something hot in one of the drawers as the air was glimmering and the piece of bread that was lying on top of it, was still warm. Jila opened the drawer and peered inside. Redish golden light streamed out of something in the back of drawer. She completely pulled out the drawer and she discovered a black cloth bag. The light came from inside it. Carefully she touched the bag, it was warm not too hot. Warmth passed throughout her body. Slightly shocked she recoiled and the warmth disappeared again but she did not shiver anymore. *What did just happen?*

"Erlo, what do you have lying around in your drawers?"

Sadly she did not get an answer. Jila took heart and grabbed the bag, warmth passed

throughout her body again. She looked into the bag, on the inside there was a crystal the size of a fist in red and golden colors. Really careful she took the crystal out of the bag to have a closer look. She leaned over to Erlo.

"This is a really big crystal, where did you get it from?"

The crystal hovered out of her hand and floated in the air. The warmth intensified and the crystal began to shine and flicker as if it was a real flame. Struck by fear Jila stumbled backwards and fell over the the drawer she had put on the floor earlier. Even as she landed on her clothes, the sound must have been audible outside. As fast as it turned into a flame the crystal reverted back into a solid form and fell down, directly on Erlo's chest. It flickered again and turned into flame which sank into him.

Erlo's twitching suddenly stopped and he lay on the bed without any movement. The blanket was fallen to the ground long before that. The crystal had disappeared and a red mark was visible on the spot the flame touched Erlo's skin. Jila got up and tried to listen to Erlo's heart but there was nothing, no heart beat at all...

"Erlo! No! Erlo!"

In tears and out of desperation Jila pounded on his chest. Someone tried to open the door but the door was bolted shut.

"Jila, open the door! Jila!" Arol sounded shocked and also slightly angry.

"Arjila, child, please say something." Kardima said worriedly.

Out of desperation, Jila was unable to hear either of them. She continued pounding Erlo's chest and cried until she could not see anymore. Arol tried to break down the door but it only creaked and held steadfast.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

SOMETHING GRABBED FOR Jila's hand.

"Ouch, you are hurting me. What is going on?"

"Erlo!"

Sie hugged him forcefully.

"Jila? What is going on in there, say something?" Arol's voice came from outside in the hall.

Erlo looked around and saw his room, Jila's and his clothes on the floor next to his underwear drawer and an empty black cloth bag on top of it. He noticed that he was naked and saw that Jila was as well which hugging him. She started to kiss him, first on the neck, then on the chest and after that she looked him into the eyes.

"What h.!?"

He did not get any further because Jila pressed her lips on his. His whole body was unnaturally heavy and there was a burning sensation in his chest.

With difficulty he pushed Jila away a bit. He caught sight of her smallish round breasts which wavered up and down with her accelerated breathing. Her face was wet from all her tears and her eyes red from crying.

"Jila, what happened?"

"You were attacked by a shadow and then you collapsed and I put you in your bed and gave you draeneteta and your heart was beating really slowly and then I found that crystal in your drawer and it turned into a flame and then then your heart stopped beating and and..."

Still crying, Jila's tongue nearly twisted as she recounted the happenings of the day.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

WITH A LOUD CRACK the lock broke and the door swung open. Armed with a crowbar, Arol stepped into the room followed by Kardima. For a few moments everybody stared at each other then Jila grabbed the blanket to cover herself up.

"What?!" was the only thing Arol could say before he was grabbed by his sister and shoved back into the hallway.

During that she sharply remarked: "Arjila, you should put on some some clothes and go to your room!"

In a swift move Kardima took the crowbar out of her brother's hand and put it down in the hallway. In the kitchen she sat him down on a stool and gave him a cup of tea, draeneteta. Still under shock he collapsed and fell asleep. Kardima went back to Erlo's room and looked inside, Jila did not move from his side at all.

"So, my sweets, tell your aunt Kardima what is going on here."

At the door Nicora stood and glanced at Erlo. His face seemed to look as usual, he had a few new golden strands of hair and some kind of burn on his chest.

"Nicora, please tend to the kitchen and the guest if he is awake already!"

Nicora slowly went in the direction of the kitchen trying to eavesdrop more as she heard footsteps from the stairs. Kardima looked at Jila and Erlo expecting an answer.

"Well, I remember something dark and shadowy that nearly touched me as I was at the well outside but it disappeared as it was hit by a ray of sunlight. After that I poured water into a large bowl and found a small black stone on the bottom of the bucket. The

next thing I remember is waking up here in my room with Jila leaning over me naked pounding on my chest."

"And what is your side in this, Arjila?"

Jila had wrapped herself in the blanket and sat crouched on the bed.

"After my father carried him here, I gave him draenetea and he was trembling and shivering like crazy the whole time. I only wanted to keep him warm and calm."

"And why is he not shivering anymore and he looks quite healthy?"

"I don't know, he had this crystal that turned into a flame and then disappeared there."

She pointed at the burn on Erlo's chest. The burn was formed like three parted flame. Kardima examined the burn and then looked back at Jila.

"You two should freshen up, you slightly smell and we should let some air in here."

She walked over to the window, moved the curtains to the side and opened the window. Moving the curtains back she turned around to face them.

"Now, go on! I will get a bath going after I put Arol into his bed."

Sensing Jila's questioning look, she added: "Needed to dose him with draenetea before he smashes Davim's head in and chases you away, young lady. Which would be kinda understandable but really rash if you found your children naked in bed together... But for not, he will not remember anything when he wakes up at freedraene."

"Thank you, aunt Kadima, what did he tell the apothecary?"

"Oh, nothing. But I will go over to the old guy and tell him that this all was a misunderstanding. Davim seems to be fine at the moment."



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

THE GUEST WAS awoken by the clamor in Erlo's room and just came down the stairs. Nicora put on an apron and waited for him to sit down on a table.

"Good morning, what can I get you?"

"Gud mornin, me have some bread and spreding."

"Spread." Nicora correcting him and went to fulfill the order.

"Have thank, it called spread? Not spreding?"

"Yes, spread, there is cheese, cold meat, vegetables and eggs."

"Cold meat I do not have so much and no eggs. With a bit of beer."

Nicora took the cold meat and the eggs away again and tapped a mug of beer.

"Here is your beer. Where do you came from, if I may ask?"

"Hmm, i come from Sendarr, land behind big mountains."

"Oh, never heard of it before. Is it far away?"

"Far behind mountains, no nice land. No land like yours. May madel more listen? Can I ask questions?"

"Sure, what do you want to know?"

"Be everything in order in this house? I listen loud shout and crash."

"Oh, I am sorry if you woke up because of that. Nothing bad happened, there were only a few pieces of furniture falling down."

"Was awake already. No need to sorry when things were destroyed. Can repair good, need help?"

"No need, we will call for the smith later."

"Smith? Man working with metal?"

"Erm, yes, that is a smith."

"Excuse, I learn your language."

Nicora smiled and went back to the kitchen.

"I will have a look at what the others are doing. Be right back."

"Do that, madel. I do not need more."



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Apothecary*

KARDIMA KNOCKED ON the door of the apothecary whereupon he came shuffling and opened the door.

"Oh, family visit today, how can I help you, Misses Draenekiin?"

"My brother was here earlier and mumbled some stupid stuff about shadow touches or the like and I just wanted to tell you everything is in order. Well, not everything. Arol is adamant that his boy is shadow touched and was about to die. Do you have anything to calm him down and let him forget this morning?"

"As a sedative you can use draenetea which you should have but I have some here if you need it. How much is he to forget?"

"He has to think he overslept, so everything since getting up."

"What did happen that he has to forget?" asked Feerdraene as he rummaged through his shelves.

"That is the exact problem we are having, nothing happened, he is only imagining the whole thing."

"If it concerns his daughter and his boy, I usually do not want to know but if it prevents bloodshed, here you go!"

He gave her a small bottle filled with a yellow liquid.

"Not more then five drops because it could be harmful beyond that. And do not let your husband see it, he does not like this kind of thing. . . "

"How much do you want for it?"

"As I said. To prevent bloodshed, let us say *17 staarmindt*." Kardima looked at him shocked.

"So much for so little? Let us settle at *10*."

"Sadly, I cannot go down with the price as the ingredients are very rare and rare ingredients are expensive. . . "

"Good, I will give you one of these coins here and that will be enough for you."

She gave him one of the coins from Arol's belt pocket which Arol used to pay the trader earlier.

Feerdraene examined the coin for a moment, thought about it and said:

"Well, this is worth a bit more, here is a bag of draenetea to even it out a bit."

He handed her a big bag of tea and stored the coin in his metal safe which he locked afterwards.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

JILA GOT UP from the bed and starred at Erlo.

"What did really happen?"

"I already told you that I do not know! From one moment to the next you are back to normal apart from strange hair."

"After the crystal disappeared?"

"Yes, after it turned into a flame and disappeared in your chest."

She pressed against the strange burn mark.

"Hey, stop that. I am going to dress myself and take a bath. You should get dressed as well and look after your father."

"Oh, now it is my father not yours?! Did you just realize that I am not your sister?!"

"I know that you are not my real sister but you should get dressed nonetheless." He got up as well, put on his pants and threw on his shirt which was still lying on the floor. As he picked it up, the stone that Jila had wrapped in there fell out.

Erlo grabbed it.

"No, stop, you were holding that when you collapsed. Do not touch that!"

Erlo picked it up and held it in his open hand. Without warning a jet of flame shot out of his hand and the black stone dissolved in it. When the stone was completely gone, the flame disappeared as well.

"Ah. How did you do that?"

"I do not know... "

With that he left the room.

"Stop! Wait! Erlo!"

Jila jumped up and was about to run after him just as Nicora came out of the kitchen. "Jila, where do you want to go being naked? You have a guest and as far as I know having clothes on in public is required."

"Oh!"

Jila realized that she was naked and ran back into Erlo's room to put on some clothes. Nicora was leaning on the door frame and waited.

"Where is your mother at the moment?" Arjila asked while picking up her clothes.

"Should be back by now, maybe she went in through the back entrance and directly to your father."

"What did he say?"

"Not much as mother dosed him with draenetea."

"Yes, she mentioned that but he will remember for sure."

"No, he will not. He is sleeping and will not remember anything that happened this morning. Nicora, get a big bath ready. And Arjila, we really need to talk..."

Kardima did come down from the hallway leading up to the back staircase and cut into the conversation. She pointed Nicora towards the wash room and Jila towards Erlo's room.

"By the way where is Davim?" she asked as she entered the room.

"Wanted to clean himself up."

"Good, wanted to talk to you anyway."

"Talk about what, aunt Kardima?"

"You know well enough about what?! About you and Davim!"



"Yes, I know, he is no one to be associated with, he will jump into a river at some time as his father did... All that does not change the feelings I have for him!"

"Well, I think your mother, may she have returned to Ura safely, brought him up well enough. And Arol thought him the rest, so he will not jump into any rivers anytime soon. Yes, I do not like him that much but if you hear Navasha's whisper then my feeling are irrelevant. Your father is down until freedraene, so make it really clear to the dummy how you feel about him. Go on!"

With these words she left the room and went towards the kitchen. Slightly baffled Jila looked after her, continued dressing as she remembered that Erlo wanted to take a bath. She took off her underdress and only put on her dress, buttoned it up only halfway and walked to the washing room.



# CHANGES

## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

NICORA WALKED INTO the kitchen from the washing room.

"Mother, what did you give the poor Arol that he will not remember anything?"

"Some awful smelling brew from the poison pusher that will make Arol forget all that happened this morning. And what about the guest?"

"A moment ago, he was eating his breakfast. Talked a bit strange, told me that he is learning our language, without a teacher."

"There are people who are able to learn foreign languages just by listening over a long period of time. Supposedly, the old Grarn had learned Darish that way but no one speaks that around here so it was kinda a waste of time."

"Do you know what «madel» means?"

"Never heard that before, maybe something like girl or lady but it could mean anything..."

"I will go look if he needs anything more."

She went to the door to the common room and peered inside. The guest was sitting at his table, ate his breakfast and looked out of the window at the awakening village. He noticed the look and faced her, gave her a sign that he needed something. She walked out of the kitchen and stepped up to his table.

"What can I get you?"

"I search guide to village tour. I want to know more about people here."

"There is no guide to this village. You could try the mayor, he could answer many questions about the village, apart from that just ask the people directly. I think you will get a lot of information that way as well."

"Where is smith? I have questions to metals."

"The smith is over there between the guard house and the apothecary's shop."

Nicora pointed out of the window past the old village tree at the heavy stone building where master Krador opened up the doors so that his wife and daughter can sell their wares.

"What is the apothecary's shop?"

"In an apothecary's shop you can buy herbs, tinctures and salves. Master Feerdraene is up already and he will be more able to tell you what he is doing."

"Have thank, I will ask."



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

ERLO SAT DOWN in one of the big tubs in the washing room, warm steam bubbled up from the water. He closed his eyes and just breathed in the scent of the bath salts. A sound alerted him of something.

Arjila had entered the room, she had undressed herself and had joined him in the bathtub.

"Jila, what are..." He did not get further because she pressed her lips and her body against his.

Erlo could not control his body to react to the arousal building up in him. Jila's heart pounded in her chest. Erlo closed his eyes and stopped resisting. Jila noticed it but his obvious rejection as well.

"Erlo, I love you! As long as I know you, I love you and since you turned in to a man I wanted more than just live with you!"

Erlo opened his eyes and looked directly at Jila's wavering bronze breasts. He forced his eyes up her neck, over her wet lips, the small pointy nose up to her glittering silver gray eyes. Her hair had a slight greenish tinge. Erlo did not know if the tinge was caused by the light streaming through the milked window or if it was caused by the glowing Derh stones in the tub.

"Please understand that I like you like a sister and I grew up with you but I love Drina and she gave herself to me."

"Yes, to you and every other man in the village!!" Jila snapped.

Erlo was shocked and pushed Jila away from himself.

"What are you talking about? This is not true!"

"Arg! Men! Ask her yourself, she does not even hide it! She does not love you! You are only another notch on her bed!"

Arjila shook her head...

Erlo started to climb out of the tub but Arjila blocked his way.

"Erlo, I love you and that you should get into your thick head."

She looked him deep into his blue eyes, kissed him again and pushed him back into the tub. He did not resist as he noticed the glimmer in Arjila's eyes that put him under her spell. She was smaller and more delicate than Sandrina and the glimmer confused him so much that he surrendered to her completely...

Arjila kissed him and pressed his hands against her breasts. She shivered in sexual desire

and her vision swam slightly. As Erlo entered her, she grimaced and tears ran down her cheeks. Arousal quickly chased away the initial pain and explosions of pure lust raced throughout her body...



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

ERLO OPENED HIS EYES and looked around. Jila was laying in the tub with him, the water glittered and shimmered in different shades of green and the world was changed.

*What happened to us?* He thought to himself and examined Jila as if he saw her for the first time. He noticed red drops swimming in the water and they seem to come from Jila's crouch area.

"Jila, what happened? You are bleeding!"

She looked up and noticed the blood in the water as well, examined her body but could not find any wound. She remembered the sudden pain and saw the shimmer in the water. The water was no pure Derh water, there were Derh stones added to normal water but they still healed something.

"I am not in pain. It has to be something else, are you all right?"

"Yes, I am unhurt, it comes from you, from down there..."

Arjila moved to the other side of the tub, the blood did not follow her. She remembered something she heard from other women.

"I think it really came from me but I am not hurt. This happens the first time as far as I heard..."

Erlo had never heard anything like this but he did not know much about the female body. The water continued to glitter for a few more moments and the blood was gone completely.

Arjila looked around and noticed puffs of steam rising from the water even though no new warm water was filled in.

"Did you refill the warm water?"

"No, when did I have a chance to do that?! But you are right, it is still warm even though we have been in here for a long time..."

A thought struck her like an arrow, *for a long time*.

"How long have we been in here and what will happen if someone finds us in here?!"



### *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Village Green*

ON THE VILLAGE GREEN a few market stalls were erected where farmers from the area could sell their wares. There was meat, different vegetables and fruits. About a dozen people were doing their shopping as the stranger stepped out of the inn. Some villagers had seen the stranger the evening before or heard about him but everybody looked at him, partially with curiosity but with mistrust as well...

He looked around interested and he walked along the stalls but he did not seem to be interested in a purchase or much into the wares until he reached the smith.

"A good morning to you, good sir. What can I help you with?" The smith's wife greeted him.

"Search for smith?" the stranger asked.

"My husband is the smith here in town, he is back in the smithy at the moment. What is going on?"

"Have questions about metals and using, if possible?"

"He is quite busy at the moment but I will ask him if..."

The rest of the sentence was cut off by loud hammering from the smithy.

"Come back later when light moved," the stranger said before walking off.



### *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

ERLO CLIMBED OUT of the tub and grabbed the cloth that Jila hold out to him to dry himself off. Before he could grab it, the water on his body evaporated and he was dry including his hair which moments earlier had been soaking wet.

The golden strands glowed.

The cloth fell to the ground because Erlo could not grab hold of it in time. Still wet to the bone Jila stared at him open mouthed.

"How did you...?" she asked perplexed.

"No idea, did not do anything, it just happened..." Erlo answered shakily.

"Something like this does not just happen..." Arjila answered but remembered what happened earlier.

She touched Erlo at the spot where the red crystal had disappeared in his chest. As her wet skin touched the burn mark, the water evaporated and she burned her finger. The mark was hotter than a hearth fire.

"Ouch, it is burning hot?!"

Erlo touched the mark but could not notice any difference in temperature.

"I do not burn my fingers there."

Arjila moved her hand closer the mark but it was only slightly warmer than usual.



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Village Green*

THE STRANGER STROLLED over the market for a while...

He continued walking along the stalls and only stopped briefly to have a look at the wares and then at his book before moving on. He seemed uninterested in any of the displays or in any conversation. His long robes barely moving in the slight breeze and his walking stick was ticking on the ground with every second step. The villagers were still watching him when he sat down on one of the benches near the well where he rummages through his book even more.

After a few minutes he stashed the book in his pouches again and got up. He waved at the nearest villager who happened to be Claudius Tremme, the Mayor's son.

"Where to find house of records?" he asked in his strange accent.

Claudius pointed to the bigger building with the tower in the north of the town centre.

"That is our town hall over there, maybe I can help you with anything? I work there..."

"Oh, do have record for visitors from long time?" "Not really, visitors to the town are not recorded here. If they want to settle here, there will be a record of land purchase. There might be older records at the inn if someone stayed there but not sure how Arol, the inn keeper, keeps his records."

Seeing the disappointment in the stranger's face, Claudius asked: "Are you looking for someone specific, maybe I can still help you?"

"Too young, too long ago, long time a couple came from north through here?!" the stranger mumbled and shaking his head, he added something a bit quieter that Claudius could not understand, partially because of the volume and because of a different language.

"There are no records that I can think of that old but you can just ask the older folk around here, maybe they remember something useful to your search. Are those friends of you, you are looking for?" "No friends, criminals on run, wanted by Sendarr council" the stranger said and pulled out a roll of parchment from his robes that he handed to Claudius.

The parchment was filled with unfamiliar script but Claudius could see a sigil he knew as

the official sigil of Sendarr<sup>31</sup>. As he looked through the parchment a bit more, he found some text on the lower end he could read and it said, that the bearer of this document is on official business of the Sendarr Council and any help in his investigation would be greatly appreciated.

*So the stranger was an official Sendarrian investigator?* Claudius thought.

"Oh, how long ago since the couple came through here?"

"14 to 16 Yae in time. Couple is Kathan."

The only Kathan Claudius knew was Erlo. As Erlo was his best friend, he kept that information to himself.

"As far as I know there are mainly Thorakh and a few Rhongar living here in Aisbrukh but no Kathan."

"Have thanks, will ask people..."

With that said, the stranger looked around and walked towards an older woman standing next to a market stall. Claudius had to do a few more errands to run for his father but he walked toward the inn to talk to Erlo.

The old woman did not live in the village but came from one of the outlying farms, so she could not help the stranger on his investigation. He grumbled something to himself and walked to the next market stall where he asked the merchant if he lived in town and if he knew the villagers. Unfortunately, the merchant negated both questions but told the stranger that most market stalls were run by farmers or artisans from the outlying areas. The stranger listened to the sounds of the market square and realized that the smith was still hammering on. He decided to walk towards the town hall.



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

CLAUDIUS REACHED THE INN and saw Kardima and Nicora working in the kitchen.

"Hello, is Erlo here?" he asked Nicora who came out to of the kitchen to the common room.

"Oh, he is taking a bath..." she said and added, "Halt, I will tell him you are here," as Claudius started walking in the direction of the wash room. She blocked his path and as she was roughly a head taller as himself, he took a step back.

"It is better you wait here..." said Nicora pointing to the nearest chair in the common room... Claudius was slight confused but did not object because he thought the new information was important enough to wait a bit.

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<sup>31</sup>Sendarr is the country far to the north of Larh Thoran, beyond the mountains

Er just sat down and Nicora had not reached the door to the wash room yet as it opened and Erlo came out, only dressed in a towel. Claudius was about to get up again but then Arjila came out behind him, similarly dressed as Erlo...

"Ah, you two are done. Erlo, Claudi is here for you." Nicora greeted them with a wink and pointed to the common room.

Turning deep red, the two of them accelerated their steps and disappeared into Erlo's room. A few moments, Arjila came out again laden with a bundle of clothing and briskly walked down the corridor towards the stairs to the apartment which she shared with her father.

Nicora walked back to the common room but found it deserted. She shrugged and while shaking her head, returned to the kitchen where her mother was writing the meals of the day on a blackboard.

"What was that about?" Kardima asked her daughter.

"The love birds left the wash room and Claudius wanted to talk to Erlo but he is gone now." Nicora grinned.

"Oh, damn, did he see them both together?!"

"Could be but I think he will not gossip it around, so I did not follow him. No idea where he went."

"I heard the door to the latrines, maybe he just had to go and will be back soon"



## ***Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn***

ERLO GRABBED A FEW fresh clothes and dressed himself quickly. Still pondering the events of the previous hours, he strolled to the common room. It was still empty, so he entered the kitchen.

"Hm, you said Claudi was here, Cora?" he asked Nicora who was sitting down cutting vegetables.

"Yes, he might be on the latrine, he seemed in a hurry, might be important." Nicora replied.

"So, young man, let me have a look at you..." Kardima demanded blocking his path and eyed him thoroughly.

"We need to have a longer conversation later but for now look for your friend."

"Where did he go?"

"Not sure but I heard the door to the latrines."



Erlo crossed the common room to the door leading the latrines and peeked into the corridor beyond. No one was in there but one of the stall doors was standing open slightly and Erlo could hear a sound resembling sobbing or crying.

As he opened the door a bit more, he noticed Claudius slumped down in front of the latrine and sobbing to himself.

"What happened. . ." he could not say more because Claudius recognized him and yelled at him.

"Get lost. . ."

Completely confused and startled Erlo stumbled back into the corridor and opened his mouth to talk to Claudius as his friend ran out of the stall and down the corridor towards the other exit.

Erlo considered following him but decided not to and returned to his room.

*What a crazy day. . .* he mused as he made his bed out of sheer routine. He could not remember all the events but something definitely changed. The spot on his chest looked harmless enough even with the strange shape. The small flames combining to a bigger one.



# FLAMES

## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

CLAUDIUS SAW ERLO walking out of the wash room and he was only wearing a towel around his hips. Claudius' gaze wandered over the sun tanned body and his friend's muscles and the feelings in himself boiled up again, that lingering feeling he did not want to acknowledge.

He had noticed that Erlo was with Sandrina in the barn but he knew that Erlo would be there for him if needed. Maybe he could talk to him about his feelings and will get them returned.

Then Arjila stepped out of the wash room, wrapped only in a towel as well...

«*Had Erlo been in the bath with his sister, together in a bath?*»

His unasked question was answered as both of them turned red and disappeared into Erlo's room...

His stomach turned and he had to run to the latrine...

After throwing up, the feelings took hold of him again and he started sobbing and broke down on the ground.

While in deep thoughts torn between his desires towards Erlo's feelings towards him and the idea of Erlo and Arjila in an intimate embrace he heard the door opening. Erlo was standing there...

«*Dammit, he should not see me like this...*» thought Claudius.

With sudden anger he spat at Erlo: "Get lost..."

he did not want to talk to him in this state, ran to the door to the backyard and he only stopped as he ran out of air.

Taking a deep breath, he looked around. He was standing at the exit of town near the bridge over the Aiswaatr and was drenched in sweat and was shivering all over. Luckily no one had seen him in this state yet, so he slunk back to the town hall avoiding any contact with any other person.



## *Aisbrukh 2505.3.6.5 - Inn*

TO GET HIS mind off the events, Erlo helped out in the kitchen and there Kardima told him that his warden lay knocked out in his bed and is suppose to not remember anything that happened this morning. Any one should act like Arol was just ill and slept in.

Arjila avoided the lower inn for a bit but joined in helping out while trying to not get involved in a conversation with her aunt or Erlo. She liked to spend more time with Erlo but that was unthinkable with her father in the house.

Kardima returned to the apothecary to get more information about the memory loss concoction and she went to the smith afterwards to get the door repaired. The smith was busy with contracts during the day but could be there in the evening to repair the door. Because of that Kardima and Erlo thought up a reason why the door was damaged and hoped that Arol did really not remember anything that happened in the morning.

By late afternoon, just before the evening crowd arrived, Arol sleepingly scuffed into the kitchen.

"What is going on today, I slept in for some reason." Arol yawned as he saw Kardima.

"You seemed ill and wanted to sleep in, so we all took part and managed without you throughout the day. You just need some sleep and quiet. Do not overwork yourself so much." Kardima greeted him and put a plate with roast in front of him.

His stomach grumbled but he had a strange bitter taste in his mouth that sadly did not go away with tasty roast. Every time he tried to concentrate and remember what happened earlier the day, the headache worsened and he had a slight fit of dizziness. He remembered a strange guest and something about Erlo.

"Everything in order with the guest? And did anything happen with Davim?"

PART II.

**APPENDIX**

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

## MAIN CHARACTERS

**Davim "‘Erlo’’ Erloran**

2465.7.7.0

Kathan

Help in the town inn

**Arak Nebuur Flarrun**

2426.6.5.6

Kia’Tan

the stranger



VILLAGERS OF AISBRUKH

FAMILY GRANDERS

Family  
Granders

**Arol Granders**

2433.4.3.5

Thorakh

Barkeep / Erlo's Guardian

**Moirra Granders**

2435.2.1.7

Thorakh

Arol's wife / died 2501.5.3.7

**Arjila Granders**

2464.3.5.2

Thorakh

bar maid / Arol's daughter

FAMILY DRAENEKIIN

Family  
Draenekiin

**Kardima Draenekiin**

2426.7.0.1

Thorakh

Arol's sister / cook in the inn

**Nicora Draenekiin**

2462.1.6.7

Thorakh

bar maid / Kardima's daughter

**Nirdor Draenekiin**

2422.5.1.0

Thorakh  
Town Guard

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**Werkar Draenekiin**

2362.4.6.5  
Thorakh  
Retired Town Guard / Nirdor's father

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FAMILY TREMME

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Family  
Tremme

**Fredol Tremme**

2371.3.2.5  
Thorakh  
Former Mayor

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**Camas Tremme**

2440.4.6.6  
Thorakh  
Twin brother of Jarah / Mayor

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**Silia Tremme**

2441.1.6.1  
Thorakh  
Wife of the Mayor

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**Claudius Tremme**

2466.1.1.2  
Thorakh  
good friend of Erlo

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FAMILY KRANDOR

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Family  
Krandor

**Marcus Krador**

2436.2.3.3  
Thorakh  
Smith

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<i>Dramatis Personae</i>	APPENDIX
<b>Jarah Krandor</b> 2440.4.6.6 Thorakh Smith's Wife / Saleswoman	
<b>Sandrina Krandor</b> 2465.6.1.1 Thorakh Smith's daughter	
	FAMILY FEERDRAENE
<b>Curius Salim Feerdraene</b> 2420.4.4.6 Rhongar Apothecary	
<b>Iiloraa Feerdraene</b> 2445.5.5.6 Ailve Apothecary's Wife	
	FAMILY AISDRAENE
<b>Larisa Aisdraene</b> 2417.2.5.6 Rhongar Shopkeeper	
<b>Berdha Kemorh</b> 2416.0.7.7 Rhongar Shopkeeper	
	ADDITIONAL PERSONS
<b>Vadelenius Grarn</b> 2360.2.5.2	
	APPENDIX



Rhongar  
Former Stonecutter



OTHERS

FAMILY FLANAARH

Family  
Flanaarh

**Bredor Flanaarh**

2441.4.0.1  
Rhongar  
Traveling Salesman from Derhferth

**Gerdth Flanaarh**

2464.5.6.6  
Rhongar  
Salesman's son / "simple"

OTHERS

**Tredor Waatrkiin**

2445.6.3.3  
Eesh  
Wanderer

**Eremus Erloran**

2436.1.2.6  
Kathan  
Erlo's Father / Refugee



# NUMERIC SYSTEM

## *In Larh Thoran*

The octal numeric system is used for religious reasons. The number 8 is the number of the gods and holy as a result.

### USAGE

The octal numeric system works like this:

There are only the numbers 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and to show higher numbers an additional place needs to be used.

The places are  $8^0 = 1$ ,  $8^1 = 8$ ,  $8^2 = 64$ ,  $8^3 = 512$ ,  $8^4 = 4096$  and so on.

### DISPLAY

The decimal number 4 is octal  $4*1 = 4$  but the  $9_{decimal}$  is  $11_{octal}$  because  $1*8 + 1*1 = 9$ .

Another example is  $55_{decimal}$  as  $67_{octal}$ ,  $6*8 + 7*1 = 55$ .

$2008_{decimal}$  is  $3730_{octal}$  because  $3*512 + 7*64 + 3*8 + 0*1 = 2008$ .



# CULTURES OF THE CONTINENT

## *The continent's population*

Is mainly humans but there are other creatures in this world.

## HUMANS

### THORAKH

Hair colors range from dark red brown to blue, green or pitch black. The eyes colors are lighter ranging from gray to yellow to light brown. Skin colors range from bronze to copper tones. They are of stouter statue and rarely reach up to two and a half steps.

### RHONGAR

Rhongar are tall humans with light skin color and dark hair with colors ranging from red to black. The skin color is the color of the sand they were formed from. The eyes have the color of the water of Ura and the hair color is similar to the color of the dragons that rule over the winds. They are 2 and half steps in average.

### KATHAN

Kathan have light skin and their hair color range from blond to brown. The eyes are blue, green, brown with variations. Their height ranges from 2 to 2 1/2 steps in Thoran measurements.

### KIA'TAN

Kia'Tan have yellowish skin, hair colors ranging from brown to black and the slanted eyes are mostly brown. They are usually shorter, around 2 steps in Thoran measurements.



## NATURE SPIRITS

### AIS AILVE

They have white skin, lightly colored hair ranging from gray to silver and eye colors ranging from blue to purple. The eyes are bigger than humans, slanted and unlike human eyes colored in one color and glowing. Their ears are pointed with slight fur and are able to notice a wider range of sounds as humans do. They are of slim build and grow 2 1/2 steps tall. The whole body is covered in fine fur. The culture of the Ais Ailves is brutal and completely different from human cultures. Because of these differences Ais Ailves are not liked in human settlements and in some areas they are even outlawed... This will not change until the ailve takes a daylong bath in the holy water of the Derh and after that survived the time of fire in full sunlight without any clothes and shelter. The Derh water and the fire of the dragons changes the body of the ailve. The skin seems to burn and turns dark gray or black and the fur disappears. After this procedure, which is called Derh baptism, the ailve is considered walking in the light and can be integrated into society...

### AILVE

Ais Ailves walking in the light have skin colors ranging from dark gray to black and light colored hair. During the Derh baptism they lose the body hair and only the hair on their head regrows. The eyes stay the same with color ranging from blue to reddish purple. Their stature is slim or slender.

### OTHER SPIRITS

There are more races of spirits inhabiting the world but they are not normally reported in Larh Thoran.



## OTHER CULTURES

### GNAARKH

Their stout body is covered in thick fur in mostly brown colors. There is a short hooked beak in their face, above that there are two small deep orange eyes. Two small furred ears are able to rotate in different directions and enable the Gnaarkh to listen for a wide range of sounds.

### EESH

They have no hair, black scales and purple eyes, long fingers, a long snout and a wide tail of about a step length. They walk slightly hunched. They reach a height of about 2 steps. They are liked for their high finger dexterity and weather resistance but as there is no sense of property in Eesh society, there are regular problems with human laws. High family friendly, big clan like structure, they are fascinated by glittering and glowing objects.

Clothing:

- cloth in many layers
- silk from spiders in caves
- Leather from mounts



# CURRENCIES

## *The coins used*

In Larh Thoran are octagonal and have an engraving of the empire's crest.

**huidmindt:**

bronze coin

**staarmindt:**

silver coin

**flanmindt:**

gold coin





# UNITS AND MEASUREMENTS

Length Specification	equal to	
One scale		1,25 cm
One hand	8 scales	10 cm
one step	8 hands	80 cm
one ox	8 steps	6,40 m
one tower	8 oxen	51,20 m
one field	8 towers	409,60 m
one land	8 fields	3276,80 m
one tree	4 steps	3,20 m
one boat	4 trees	12,80 m
one mountain	20 towers	1 km
one march	30 mountains	30 km
one ride	50 mountains	50 km
one lance	3 steps	2,4 m
one sword	10 hands	1 m
one eesh	2 steps	1,6 m
one man	20 hands	2 m
one Skarzh	3 steps	2,4 m

For area measurements the prefix "two-" will be used which means so much as squared.

Volumes are prefixed with "three-".

Radius = "half round -"

Diameter = "Round-"



# CALENDER

64 moments per minute,  
64 minutes per hour,  
32 hours per day,  
8 days per week,  
8 weeks per cycle,  
8 cycles per year.

Dates are recorded in the form yyyy.c.w.d.hh.mi.mo

yyyy is for year,  
c for cycle,  
w for week,  
d for day,  
hh for hour,  
mi for minutes,  
mo for moments. (seconds)

This form is similar to parts of a decimal number.

In calenders only the first four parts are shown, from year to day.

Example:

2135.2.1.4

This means 4. day of the 1. week of the 2. cycle in year 2135.



## SEASONS

### *The year starts*

With the *Freeyea*, a temperate cycle without big differences in temperature.

After that the land heats up for the *Feeryean*, a cycle which could be compared to our summer but with warmer days and nights. The color of the Derhdraene during this cycle is warmer and nearly reaches yellowish green and also emits heat.

The next cycle is *Midtyea*, a temperate cycle like Freeyea without big temperature differences. This is the time of harvest.

After that the temperatures are dropping and *Aisnae* starts which is similar to our winter with ice cold nights and cold days in blue green cold light. At this time most lakes and river apart from the Derh freeze over.



## HOLIDAYS

**River Festival:**

In the middle of each moderate cycle there is a festival that lasts two days  
at the 12. and 13. of the second month  
Derh offering: Fruit / Flowers / crafted products

**Flame Festival:**

In the middle of Feeryean there is there is another festival that lasts two days  
at the 12. and 13. of the second month  
hottest days of the year  
siesta and bath days

**Ice Festival:**

In the middle of Aisnae there is another festival that lasts two days  
at the 12. and 13. of the second month  
coldest days of the year  
parades with warm drinks

**Thorandays:**

five days from the fourth to the eighth of the 7. month  
Balls and festivities in the capital in remembrance of the founding of the empire  
by the first emperor Thoran

**Harvest Festival:**

all over Midtyea there are festivals just after harvests



# DICTIONARY

Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
<b>Numbers</b>		
Neelh	Nehl	0
Een	ehn	1
Tway	twei	2
Dray	drei	3
Foorh	fohr	4
Fayve	feif	5
Saeks	säx	6
Sebnh	sebn	7

<b>A</b>		
a	a	for
â <u>r</u>	ahr	hair
adev	adef	harbor
a <u>d</u>	ad	to (zeitlich)
ailve	eilwe	elf
ais	eis	ice
aisnae	eisnä	winter / cold
alên	alehn	alone
ay	ei	eye

<b>B</b>		
Bâ <u>k</u>	bahg	Bach
Bâ <u>r</u>	bahr	Bart
Bay	bei	nah
Bê <u>r</u>	behr	Bier
Berg	berg	Gebirge
Bide	bide	Bitte
Blût	bluhd	Blut
Brae <u>s</u> t	bräst	Brust / Brüste
Bred <u>t</u>	brett	Brot
Bri <u>k</u>	brik	Brücke
Bûb	buhb	Junge

<b>C</b>		
<b>D</b>		
⇒		

Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
Da	da	du
Dang	dang	Danke
Darak	darag	Schatten / Dunkelheit / Düsternis
Deer	dehr	Dir
Den	denn	tschüss
Derf	derf	Dorf
Din	din	Dein
Dol	doll	viel
Doo	doh	dort
Door	dohr	Tor
Draak	drahk	Drache
Draene	dräne	Regen, Tränen
<b>E</b>		
e	e	und
ed	ed	es
eeg	ehg	euch
eerd	ehrt	Erde / Land
eer	ehr	euer
ees	ehsch	Echse
en	enn	ihnen
er	er	er
<b>F</b>		
Fal	fal	Fall / Sturz
Far	far	Vor (zeitlich)
Fayr	feir	Feier / Fest
Feer	fehr	Feuer / Hitze
Fend	fend	finden
Fel	fel	Fell / Pelz
Fenstr	fenstr	Fenster
Fert	fert	Furt
Festeen	festehn	verstehen
Fiint	fiht	Feind
Fiz	fis	Fisch
Flan	flann	Flammen
Fork	fork	Gabel
Fraa	frah	Frau
Free	freh	Früh
Frent	frent	Freund
⇒		

Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
Fu <u>d</u>	fud	Fuß
<b>G</b>		
Geboymh	gebeum	Wald / Forst
Geesth	gehst	Gast / Besucher
Geesthuush	gehsthuhs	Gasthaus
Genh	gen	gegen
Glaadh	glahd	Glas
Griif	grihf	Greif
Groot	grohd	groß
Grootkengh		Kaiser
<b>H</b>		
Haendh	händ	Hand
Hay	hei	hallo
Help	help	helfen
Hii	hih	hier
Hoolth	holt	Holz
Huid	huid	Haut
Huush	huhs	Haus
<b>I</b>		
i <u>r</u>	ihr	ihr
ik <u>u</u>	ik	ich
<b>K</b>		
Kaern	kärn	Korn
Keesth	kehst	kosten
Kengh	keng	König
Kiin	kihn	Kind
Kleen	klehn	klein
Klengh	kleng	Messer
Koom	kohm	kommen
Koph	kop	Kopf
<b>L</b>		
Laevlh	läwl	Löffel
Larh	lar	Land / Reich
Leebe	lehbe	Liebe
Leebnh	lehbn	lieben
Lefth	left	Luft
⇒		

Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
Likth	likt	Licht
Linkh	link	links
M		
Maagay	mahgei	Magie
Maarkh	mahrk	Markt
Maen	män	Mann
Maethl	mätl	Metall
Maid	meid	Mädchen
Meegnh	mehgn	mögen
Meerh	mehr	mir
Meth	met	mit
Methnaas	metnahs	geradeaus
Midt	mitt	Mitte / Mittel / zwischen (zeitlich)
Mindt	mintt	Münze
Minh	min	mein
N		
Naa	nah	Spät / nach (zeitlich)
Naas	nahs	Nase
Naenh	nän	nein
Nelh	nel	Moment / Zeitabschnitt
Noom	nohm	Name
O		
Olh	ol	Öl
Oorh	ohr	Ohr
P		
Potth	pott	Krug
R		
Rekhz	reks	rechts
Riith	riht	Aufstieg / Aufgang / Erhebung
Rithrh	ritr	Reiter
S		
Se	se	sie
Shaen	schän	schön
Shiph	ship	Schiff
Shoop	schohp	Schuppe
⇒		



Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
Shpaakh	spahk	sprechen
Shpiiz	spihs	Speise
Sikht	sikd	Gesicht
Sinh	sin	sein
Snae	snä	Schnee
Staar	stahr	Stern
Staarnfalh	stahrnfal	Sternenfall / Jahresübergang
Staedt	stätt	Stadt
Stoyn	steun	Stein
Sweerth	swehrt	Schwert
Sykl	sikl	Sichel

**T**

Telrh	telr	Teller
Than	tan	dann
Tho	to	zu
Tillh	till	Bis
Timmr	timr	Zimmer
Tiz	tis	Tisch
Tree	treh	Baum
Trunkh	trunk	Getränk

**U**

Undh	und	uns
Unerh	uner	unser

**V**

Voonh	fohn	von
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**W**

Waart	wahrd	Wache
Waatr	wahtr	Wasser
Wath	wat	was
We	we	wie
Weer	wehr	wir
Wiikh	wihk	Wiege
Wiin	wihn	Wein
Wiit	wiht	weit
Wo	wo	wo

**X**

⇒

Old Language	Pronunciation	Meaning
Y		
Yae	jä	Jahr
Yaen	jän	Zyklus / Jahresabschnitt
Yaenelh	jänel	Tag
Yo	jo	ja
Z		

## RULES

Plural: - n

Adjective: - d

A h after a consonant makes it sharper / more pronounced.

dt ⇒ tt

t ⇒ d

th ⇒ t

ae ⇒ ä

ks ⇒ x

ay ⇒ ei

z ⇒ s

sp ⇒ schp

sh ⇒ sch

