

ROSES FOR AVALON CH. 3

THE GLORY OF GOLD

by

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(purplebirdman)

"The earth is a bounty, and it shares itself gracefully, and the sage saw this and knew to steward the earth, and its people, for indeed it grew and hungered for knowledge, reaching toward heaven, unbidden and unrestrained by reason, so that the glory of gold shines untarnished, the eternal sunshine of the spotless mind."

Book of the Sacred Mountain, verse 245, Cephus bin Soolaimon

INT. GUESTHOUSE ABOVE THE WATERFALL MORNING

We join Roshim, waking in his bed on the crown of Carcos, immediately after the day he arrived to speak to the Lord. He jolts up, in apparent distress, sweat on his brow... wipes it away, stares around. The serene golden light of the morning mist surrounding the lake house is ethereal. He grows calm quickly, puzzles to himself.

We see a few flashes of his dream: a room full of children, a large woman with a lamp lighter leading them in song, children being led two by two out on the boardwalk of the rice paddies. These are dreams and memories of his childhood, as Roshim will sink deeper into the lessons and drives that his family has given him in this journey.

Roshim gets up unsteadily. He walks to to the edge of the "room", directly out into the sunlight on the lakewater, squinting. He is reminded of the glassy sheen off of the rice paddies as he kneels, scooping water to his face, breaking up his reflection.

He briefly recalls Balthius's bearded face, Cristio, his friends. He is dismayed at the idea of leaving Carcos emptyhanded. He feels a tremendous fear of failure, despite his physical strength, he finds his hands shaking at the idea of going home.

ROSHIM

Oi, Avalon?

The other is nowhere to be seen, though evidence of his passing lays strewn about. Roshim wanders back to the bedroom, smells the crumpled linens, plucks a long red hair out of his own dark curls.

ROSHIM

(to himself)

I must speak to the Lord again... I must...
perhaps I will get through to him...

He looks out over the lake again, and sees a flock of small boards on the water. Avalon's long red hair glitters in the light, and he laughs and poles with a group of young men.

Roshim grumbles and plucks a plum from a bowl of fruit as he dresses in the long flowing clothes given to guests. He spies his travel bag and the golden hammer peeking from it, but leaves these behind to travel to the temple again.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE MORNING

No longer burdened by exhaustion, Roshim takes the time to admire the masonry of the crumbling temple. It is clearly skilled but, he thinks to himself, nothing quite like the work of the stonemasters of Aphaelia.

Roshim walks the long and crumbled path back up the rings of Carcosa, nodding to the men and women who acknowledge him. They stare at his long dark limbs in admiration. Many of them carry offerings, baskets of food and herbs. Some are already

drinking. There are many demimen as well, sprawled on the greenery, relaxing in the carved ruins of stone baths, or enjoying the golden morning sun.

A group of young men and demimen gesture for him to join them in the crystal water of a bath. Roshim shakes his head and continues.

At the peak of the temple path, before the yellow-draped gate of the ruin, he meets the strange white scarred draconic figure who he noticed upon entry to the court. The dragon is smoking a pungent hookah, in the shade of a half-demolished courtyard, with a couple of ill-looking fellows. He starts up, tottering on skinny mangy limbs, eyes wide and glassy as he rushes to meet Roshim.

LADULAI

Ah, you again! I hoped to speak to you, sir.

A moment, please?

Roshim sits with him. Roshim hopes the fellow's legs do not give out, so thin he is! There are scars all over Ladulai's body, and evidence of great distress, yet some of the white and gold of his fur is still beautiful. A piercing blue eye meets Roshim's gaze fixedly; the other is a white blur of cataracts. His breath smells of smoke.

LADULAI

(eagerly)

You are... a man of the great tower to the West? The library city? Yes? Your speech tells me, you are a learned man...?

ROSHIM

(guardedly)

I am a stonemason. I come from Aphaelia, the city of knowledge. Yes, my people are of the library. I am called Roshim. Who are you?

LADULAI

(clasping his hands)

Ahhh, El guides us all, us children of greatness, guides us all together! I am Ladulai, of the East Tower. Brothers we are, of a sort! No doubt, no doubt...

ROSHIM

(uncertainly)

What do you mean? My brothers hail from Aphaelia--

LADULAI

(cackling)

Brothers in spirit, not flesh, O Roshim.
Raised in common purpose, once, now in
conflict, if my Allfather would have his
way...

Ladulai shakes his head, sits up, hands trembling as he reaches out to Roshim.

LADULAI

This is why, this is why, we are fortunate indeed, Roshim of the Western Tower, to have met in such a place, in such a way, under the grace of gold! A kindred who knows not his kin. Have you come to plead to the Golden Lord, to rouse his retribution? I too, I too...

ROSHIM

Ladulai-- I do not understand. Explain this to me.

Ladulai wrings his hands in frustration, impatience, delight. He attempts to compose himself, offers a hookah pipe to Roshim, who declines. Ladulai gulps, speaks more slowly, in earnest:

LADULAI

Forgive me, it has been-- I have been alone, without hope, without kin. Let me ask: what brings you to this dung heap? I saw you in the court, I heard the Lord himself anticipated an audience with someone of the Western Tower... why are you here?

ROSHM

I seek the Lord's gnosis-- his hand in building the foundation of Aphaelia, of the library tower. The foundation has sundered. My people do not know how to repair it. I journeyed here with a companion to seek that knowledge.

Ladulai stares. He licks his lips, and his hands move with a sudden burst of frenzied gestures!

LADULAI

Of what you call Aphaelia, the Western Tower, I have heard much from my Allfather; the Lord of Firmament, Lord of the Stars, blessings to his name. He used to speak of destroying it. If there has been an assault, it must be him! He is powerful and subtle in his strategy, and for years his designs have been frustrated by the monastics.

ROSHI

The monastics?

LADULAI

(impatiently)

Yes, yes, the Kingdom of Silver, the spired fortress on the lake. I fled from the Eastern Tower, the place of my birth, sacred Celia Mons, at last to live among them, tired of my Allfather's warmongering, rejected by my brothers in flesh, my own flesh rejected, and I am here in the court to convince the Lord of Gold to join forces with the monastics, but alas, he has been shorn of ambition, and I fear I shall return soon with naught to show for my efforts.

Roshim is beginning to doubt the reliability of Ladulai. He speaks carefully.

ROSHI

There has been no assault on Aphaelia. The tower was damaged by a terrible storm, but the damage was not severe. Had it been an urgent matter, my people would not have sent me, but an envoy of elders. There is no danger.

Ladulai does not seem to hear, muttering to himself. He grips his scarred shoulders in both hands, squeezing.

LADULAI

(to himself)

The wrath of the Allfather, the wrath of the
Allfather...

ROSHIM

(concerned)

Are you well?

Ladulai does not respond, and after a minute, Roshim rises to go. Ladulai does not seem to notice. Roshim walks back out into the sunlight, troubled. He hesitates, then continues his journey to the peak with one last look at the scarred body of Ladulai.

EXT. ON THE PEAK OF CARCOSA MORNING

At the outer court, Roshim asks for Oidecalla. A large bull man laughs. He tells Roshim to seek Adamus inside the main temple. Small groups of the sick and indolent are gathered about, talking, smoking, eyeing him curiously. It is not unfriendly, but it is not friendly either. The warm golden light and humidity blankets everything; the rich sunlight and scents of fruiting trees make the air feel heavy. One might lay down to sleep in the verdant moss and never rise again.

Roshim wanders about in the beautiful ruins, asking for Adamus, until Roshim finds the latter in a small garden, pulling weeds. Gorgeous large blossoms wrap around crumbling pillars, murals overgrown by rich green moss.

ROSHM

(hesitant but then firm)

Adamus? Might I speak with you?

Adamus sits back ponderously, his knees filthy. His eyes are smiling. His waves of white hair are tied back; a thin gold circlet still gleams on his brow.

ADAMUS

Ah, good day to you, honored guest. I had thought to visit later; however I see that youth is as eager as ever to get on with things. Might you assist me to rise?

Roshim helps Adamus stand, then Adamus drinks water and rests on a nearby pillar. He sighs. Birds sing; the shade is still rich with the warm scent of sunlight and greenery.

Roshim opens his mouth to speak, but Adamus raises a hand, his eyes keen.

ADAMUS

I'm sure you would like to speak to the Lord, but he is still sleeping.

ROSHM

(surprised)

Oh... then when shall I return to speak with him?

ADAMUS

(smiling)

Make no plans. There is naught to do but wait. He may sleep a day, two days... a week at most. Time means little here, and I fear my Lord is somewhat indolent. You shall see him when he emerges again from his chamber.

We see a golden veil, draped over a silhouetted Oidecalla, a vast circular bedchamber and bed in the center, with a split roof and flowered vines trickling through to hang heavy above the sleeping figure.

Roshim stares down, rubbing his eyes. He tries to quell his impatience. The warmth of the light is tiring.

ROSHIM

(reluctantly)

...perhaps it is for the best. The journey here was long. I could do with a rest, myself.

Adamus sees that Roshim does not believe what he is saying, but nods in agreement.

ADAMUS

Indeed. Enjoy the garden. And since you're already here, shall we walk together? The Lord may not be present, but I have curiosity aplenty for the both of us, especially in the company you keep.

ROSHM

(sullenly)

I may know less about him than you do, if you were here when he served the Kingdom of Gold. Still, what I know I will tell you. I do not hold his secrets.

ADAMUS

(laughing)

Yes, I was here. Come, perhaps this old man can be of use to you. Let us walk Carcosa.

They set out from the ruined temple and out into the open air. The top of Carcosa is awash with water, running from a central spring in the mountain, filling up small reservoirs and shining pools that are rife with greenery. The heat from the golden light is offset by the coolness of greenery, and it makes one wish to walk about in as little as possible, which many do. The air is bittersweet, ripe fruit and flowers, a scent of unwashed people, and every so often, a cool breeze over the top of the mountain, sweeping in with the promise of change.

Roshim, forgetting his sullenness, admires the view. There's so much life and profusion that the first impression is disorder; but it is a garden, tended and grown, with minimal direction. Below the ruins of the temple, he can see people tending crops, sitting in the long grass, drinking. It is inviting.

ROSHIM

(to Adamus)

Tell me about this place, if you would. For I know of the Lord, but not Carcosa... and this place is quite different from the library.

ADAMUS

An age ago, this temple was full of produce from many lands; crates of spices and scented woods; gold and silver, bronze by the pallet; the finest, rarest stones, gems of all description... the rarest of all things, gathered together here in the storerooms of the temple. Truly this place was the jewel of the mountain's crown, and great leaders and kings would travel to receive wisdom from the Lord, for the true wealth of Carcosa was not in those storerooms, but in the wisdom of the Lord himself.

Adamus looks at Roshim, his eyes twinkling.

ADAMUS

As my Lord said to you yesterday, he holds rather with wisdom than knowledge. Knowledge, my Lord would say, is the footpath to wisdom, and only so far as knowledge leads to wisdom is it useful. Indeed, knowledge is no guide, but wisdom tells us which way to go.

Roshim nods, seems to restrain himself from commenting. Adamus turns, looking not at Roshim, but over the crest of the mountain, toward the city.

ADAMUS

I myself came to Carcosa as a young prince, the son of a small but wealthy Persian noble. I sailed from there, the northern sea, up this very river, in a mighty boat of blackwood and a fleet of vessels bearing gifts for the Lord. We had heard stories of the wisdom of Carcosa, and the Court of Gold, and I thought in my vanity that it would make an amusing audience. I was young and full of confidence in my life's path, in my own knowledge, my strength... and yet, when I came unto the Lord's presence, I realized I knew nothing, was nothing, in the face of such a magnificent light. Though I was loathe to submit any force on this earth, I was struck down by his radiance before I knew I had fallen!

Adamus turns back to Roshim.

ADAMUS

In his presence I found myself; in his words, I found my own voice; in his life, I found my own life. Three times I sailed from my home to Carcosa; the third time, I knew I would never leave this place. Blessed am I, young Roshim, ever so blessed. Even though the glory has nearly faded, though the temple lies asunder and the storehouses empty, my heart still overflowing with the gifts he has given unto me.

Roshim is silent, unsure of what to say. Adamus gazes at him.

ADAMUS

The love of an immortal is a glorious thing, young Roshim. Before my Lord came to this mountain, he took his hand and laid the foundation of your own home, did he not? I know my Lord well, and he does not easily abandon those he has raised up, for he has a heart full of love for this world, despite what he may say. This, I assure you, is still the case, so do not be discouraged. When he awakens, go to him and speak of your people, and he will recall the works of his hand, and he may give you what you desire, if he is able.

(smiling)

I feel pity for one so young as you, for the pain and passion of such a journey. I am told you came a long way, and to do so on behalf of your people is a beautiful thing. Be patient, a little longer.

ROSHIM

(relieved)

I appreciate your words, thank you. Truly. I will speak to him again when I can. (to himself) Perhaps this has not been for nothing, after all

ADAMUS

Tell me now, if you will, of your companion...
Avalon, you call him?

ROSHM

(rolling his eyes)

Ah, him! What should I tell you?

ADAMUS

(chuckling at the reaction)

I see he has charmed you, as he does everyone.

ROSHM

(shaking his head)

Charmed, infuriated, intrigued, repulsed; I
must say I have run the full range of emotion
with him. You referred to him as 'beloved'.
Were you too ensnared by his wiles? And the
Lord as well? He did not make it a secret
that he was unwelcome here, but I did not
imagine it to be upon pain of death!

ADAMUS

(laughing)

Ensnared? I suppose I am. He did not tell
you why, then?

ROSHIM

(bitterly humorous)

No, he says little about anything, and then only half-truths. I would not hold fast to anything he told me; after a journey together, I have learned to be satisfied enough that he would not have made this journey alone, that somehow I am necessary to him-- ah, are you well?

Adamus stumbles a bit. He is old and so much walking about has tired him. Roshim leads Adamus to a nearby pool in the shade.

ADAMUS

(waving it off)

Oh, I am old, and I have been exerting myself. Let us rest our legs, and run our mouths. What were we saying?

ROSHIM

I was complaining about Avalon.

ADAMUS

Ah, yes. Well, Avalon is my child.

Roshim is stunned speechless. Water drips into the humid pool from the hanging leaves. A bird sings sweetly. Adamus lowers his feet into the water. He glances at Roshim.

ADAMUS

The first and only child of Oidecalla and myself. He was raised here, during the age of the Lords. I brought him up as my son, loved and cherished him, and for a time he was content with that; but he became resentful, of his sire, of the grace of gold, and the fact he could never inherit it, for the sire was immortal. At last, he attempted to take that grace for himself.

Adamus stares out over the pool. His wrinkled face sags, and for a moment he looks weary.

ADAMUS

The wound he left on this kingdom will never heal. The Lord banished him from the garden. That was some time ago.

There is a long silence. Water drips from the leaves.

ADAMUS

(shaking his head gently)

There is a bitter humor about it, isn't there? Immortality means immortal grudges, eternal wounds, eternal pain. Perhaps the reason we humans desire to resolve our conflicts is to greet death without burdens. I pity those with eternal life; an infinite capacity for burdens, regrets, sorrows. It's like a story without an ending. Every parent wants the best for their child, yet I fear I cannot fully understand my child's needs, for he is of heaven, and I am of earth.

They stroll through the grounds, toward the court. The flowers are in glorious bloom, and the sunny heat is stifling. Adamus stumbles slightly again, and Roshim carries him into the shade, concerned.

ADAMUS

...and yet, immortal youth has a certain shine about it, I admit. Alas, pain and weakness treads not far behind me.

ROSHIM

I will fetch servants--

ADAMUS

No, no, just some water, please.

Roshim fetches cool water and they both drink. Adamus recovers.

ADAMUS

I have been walking about too much in the garden today, as if I were a young man. One can only bear so much sunlight.

Adamus points out a group of young people, sitting about in the grass, preparing food. They look like they're having a great time.

ADAMUS

Leave me, and spend some time with your fellow youth. True, the sick and suffering are all around us; but the young thrive in spite of it all. Enjoy your time here as you await my Lord.

EXT. ON THE LOWER RING OF CARCOSA LATE MORNING

Roshim approaches the group of young people. He's huge in comparison to everyone else; a mix of men, women, demimen. They're grinding spices and cutting huge mounds of vegetables, great baskets of dried fruits and spice are arrayed around them, huge leaves laid carefully out on the ground to wrap potato and fruit as if to grill or boil. They look up at him, welcoming.

MIKA

Holla, careful now, you'll blot out the sun
himself!

They laugh in a friendly way. Roshim squats down beside them. Someone offers him a stick of something they're all chewing on, and he takes it.

ROSHIM

(a bit stiffly)
...what's being done here?

Mika, Orak, Dwalanta are grinding spices. Mika, a spry lean teenager with glossy black curls, dark skin, and a faint mustache; Orak, a chunky bull boy with a soft round face, stubby horns, and shy air; Dwalanta, a stoic larger man.

MIKA

Not even a hello first, eh? Right to
business!

DWALA

Grinding spice. Big cook tomorrow. Pilgrims
of the path begin to arrive. Such as
yourself?

ROSHIM

Ah, not a pilgrim...

MIKA

Well, what brings you carrying all THAT
(gestures to Roshim's big body) up our humble
mountain, friend? I'm Mika, and I've been
here since last summer.

DWALA

Dwala. I cook.

Orak says nothing, but waves and looks at Roshim's horns.

ROSHM

Roshim. I'm a stonemason.

He hesitates, wonders how much he should talk about himself.

ROSHM

I want to work. Shall I grind with you?

DWALA

Ah, finally, one who likes to work. Truly,
the mountain blesses us.

MIKA

Welcome, Roshim the stonemason! (to Dwala) At
least I work!

ORAK

...Roshim? I'm Orak. You can use my grinding
wheel. I will fetch another.

He gets up and lumbers off.

DWALA

We feed 200-300 a night here; the pilgrims shall come soon, and that number swells 5 times for a week. We can use all the help you can give. For now, grind; if you want to help, I'll introduce you to the head chef.

They work under the shade, and Roshim's big arms are the subject of much admiration. The baskets of spice fill up, and Roshim sweats. It feels good to be a part of this, a part of something. He is reminded of the vast kitchens of Aphaelia, the communal eating. It is the sort of work that is easy to lose oneself to.

Mika and Orak in particular seem friendly, but they do not ask about Roshim, and mostly banter about with each other. Dwala instructs Roshim how to grind, how to split and clean vegetables. In midafternoon, Mika brings frothy jars of beer, and they all take a break and drink with long reed straws.

Laying about in the grass, Roshim is reminded of time spent with his brothers in the paddies outside Aphaelia: putting up large vertical windmills for water pumps; fishing in the bay of palms in little rafts; moving and breaking up huge blocks of stone, delivered on rolling logs to the wharves from the great merchant ships. It is the type of camaraderie that he has missed lately.

Roshim and the others help carry the baskets of freshly chopped vegetable and ground spices into the temple storehouses. Everyone admires how much he can lift, and he raises his chin proudly. Mika slaps his muscles, and he laughs, to his own surprise.

Dwala introduces Roshim to the head chef, who's in charge of coordinating tonight's dinner and the festival. She's a tall, stark woman with a sharp jaw and tightly curled hair. Roshim sees her inscribing counts of chopped ingredients onto a soft clay tablet with a finely carved stick. He is reminded of how Cristio took notes in the fields.

CHEF

We're short a handful of cooks tonight.
Several sick. Dwala, can some of your men
work the kitchen?

DWALA

(to Roshim and Mika and Orak)
Shall we?

They all agree. Mika fetches some more frothy beers. Roshim is not as able as the other three, but under Mika and Orak's prodding, he helps with a big rice fry on a massive table-sized pan, stokes the roaring cooking fires, all in a preview of the massive festival meal that's to come.

Mika points to a few other huge pans, unlit and unused grilltops.

MIKA

During the festival, we will be using all of these!

ROSHIM

Quite a lot of food.

MIKA

Quite a lot of mouths! Dwala says that when he first came to the mountain, they were all in use every night! Yet now only one is needed for the evening meal.

DWALA

(softly)

True enough.

The meal rush sees large groups in the dining hall, which is another crumbled ruin. At last, Roshim and his new friends serve themselves and eat. Roshim notes the crumbled masonry in dismay. There's a main archway that has disintegrated and keeps people from flowing in and out of the room.

Roshim points to it and speaks with his mouth full:

ROSHIM

...that should be fixed.

ORAK

Yes. It blocks the flow of traffic. But we
can clear the rubble at least.

ROSHM

(swallowing)

No, I mean, I can fix that. Raise the arch
and open the door.

Everyone looks impressed. Dwala points.

DWALA

(skeptical)

That arch?

ROSHM

(confident)

Yes.

DWALA

(nodding)

I'll mention it to chef.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN

Chef agrees the arch should be cleared. She assigns a
handful of men to do it under Roshim. The next morning, he
plans and breaks up the assorted rubble, using his masonry
techniques to split old stones into a new sort of archway, and

support the rest of the structure. We see a montage of the work being done; for a moment, Roshim looks completely happy, open, and comfortable, laughing and emoting in a way that we don't often see.

Even Adamus shows up to observe. He remarks to Roshim: "How curious; I send you to a cook, yet you somehow remain a stonemason."

Avalon makes an appearance. It is outside of the court, where he is forbidden; the mess and entryway is all common area. Roshim stares at him as he waves back cheerfully. He disappears before Roshim can give him any work to do.

INT. GUESTHOUSE ON THE WATERFALL

A week passes. Oidecalla still sleeps.

Roshim dreams of Aphaelia, of Cristio. He masks his impatience with work during the day, can't help but feel guilty spending his time chatting and working with his new friends while his family waits for him. He still has sullen moments where he withdraws. Sometimes Avalon walks with him through the secluded parts of the garden, not speaking.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN MIDMORNING

The pilgrims filter up the Golden Path; visible from the peak, a great makeshift camp appears at the base of the mountain, and boat traffic flows across the river from Miriah.

Ladulai has been trying to get close to Roshim, who tries to help introduce the sickly fellow to the other cooks, to help in food preparation. Ladulai attempts, but his strange manner and rude/pathetic way of speaking alienates them. Ladulai feels like he is being used, but goes along with it resentfully, still wanting to be helpful and close to Roshim, who he clings to in a very unattractive way.

Mika tells Roshim that the pilgrims will ascend the mountain during solstice, to worship at the healing springs of Carcosa, and to give respect to the Lord of Gold. There are many religions and creeds among them, and sick wishing to be healed. Oidecalla has been saving his strength for this pilgrimage.

As the big food preparation for the festival really ramps up, Adamus comes to the kitchen with a special request.

ADAMUS

Ho, Dwala, may I borrow your man Roshim?

DWALA

He's his own man. For a little while.

Roshim shrugs and puts down his carving knife. He stands up and shakes off his apron.

ROSHIM

What is it?

ADAMUS

(a strange smile on his face)

The Lord awakens. He will be hungry. Would you like to bring him a meal?

Roshim starts. The feeling is one of a jolt, reawakening to his purpose. He feels a tension in his jaw. Adamus sees, and pats his arm reassuringly.

ADAMUS

Relax, young man.

ROSHIM

(trying to relax)

Yes, yes. Thank you. What shall I bring him?

Adamus directs the preparation of the Lord's waking meal. It is fruit and vegetables, elegantly carved and peeled, but simply presented.

Roshim follows Adamus through the temple grounds, to the intact wing of the temple, up to the overlook.

INT. LORD'S BEDCHAMBER NOON

The chamber is an airy bedroom space with a great billowing curtain around a circular bedding large enough to suit 5 at once. The curtain hangs from a circle of metal suspended from the vaulted arch that holds the roof, which is broken through in spots. An ornamental folding wooden wall surrounds the bed;

a few small tables, with an assortment of hookah, cups, pitchers. Gold and white lilies are placed in vases around the room.

The space above the bed is open, and the glow of the sun filters verdant through the vines. The room is a perfect blend of nature and manmade elements, neither overpowering, bleeding into each other. There is a thin moat around the bed, flowing down a central channel cut into the steps to the room, coming from a natural stone bath at the far end of the room. The sounds are wind and water and leaves. Incense censurs stand at the median points around the center, wafting sweet smoke.

The long elegant curves of the Lord are silhouetted on the curtain. Adamus instructs Roshim to wait at the entry to the room, and he goes behind the curtain. Adamus and the Lord speak in gentle tones, then Adamus reappears and gestures for Roshim to approach.

Roshim's heart is thundering, and he steps forward, between the curtains.

The Lord is beautiful, wrapped in a thin white cloth that winds and entwines with his gold affects and long black hair. He reclines on the mounds of pillows and blankets, soft and fine red satin, red as his amarantine eyes. There is still an air of tiredness, but restful, a great peace in the way his eyes regard Roshim. Roshim is reminded of the first time he saw Cristio naked in bed.

There is a long moment of silence, and Roshim stammers.

ROS HIM

...good morning!

Another long moment, and the Lord smiles as he sees how nervous Roshim is.

OIDECALLA

(gently)

Good morning, child of the tower. Roshim?

Roshim steps forward, food in his arms.

ROS HIM

Yes, Lord Oidecalla. Are you hungry?

Oidecalla looks at Adamus, then back at Roshim.

OIDECALLA

Indeed... shall we breakfast together?

ADAMUS

(bowing)

Unfortunately, my dear, I must prepare for the festival. Roshim has been working hard; I'm sure he will be suitable company. He has been a good asset for us here; let him tell you.

OIDECALLA

(staring at Adamus)

...ah.

Oidecalla is aware that Adamus wants Oidecalla to speak to Roshim, is gently amused at this manipulation, but allows it to proceed.

Adamus bows again, and leaves.

Roshim's breath catches when Oidecalla's eyes turn towards him again.

OIDECALLA

Well, young Roshim. Come, recline with me.
Wash yourself in that bath first; it looks
like the day's work has left its mark.

Roshim washes himself with a cloth in the bath, aware of Oidecalla's eyes on him, faintly aroused by the attention of someone so beautiful, but still quite nervous. He lays the food out on the bed, and after a hesitation, climbs in himself, lounging with the help of a special pillow.

Oidecalla begins to eat, his long slender fingers plucking the carved fruit in a fascinating way. He speaks after a time.

OIDECALLA

So, Adamus tells me you found a place here in my garden. I am pleased you decided to stay. Has he been guiding you?

ROSHIM

A bit! I've walked the mountain with him. He speaks of the old glory of the place, introduced me to the kitchen.

OIDECALLA

Walked the mountain? Speaking of old glory... he ought not to walk so much. Was he ill?

ROSHIM

He was overcome by the heat, and I bade him rest.

OIDECALLA

The old bastard. I bid him to rest myself this morning.

ROSHIM

Old men are loathe to listen. I have dealt with many of them and not one has made my life much easier.

OIDECALLA

(smiling)

Well, perhaps I shall surprise you, lambkin.

ROSHI

(spreading his arms helplessly)

I did not mean-- you do not appear old--

OIDECALLA

(waving a hand)

I am older than the mountain you walk on,
young man. But never mind that! He tells me
you have done more on your own.

ROSHI

(flustered)

I did take it upon myself, to reconstruct a
fallen arch. I was told there would be great
traffic through the place during the festival,
and it was a simple thing to fix.

OIDECALLA

(ponderously)

It has been a long while since work was done
on the temple.

ROSHI

(without thinking)

Yes, it's quite a mess!

He reddens, and Oidecalla laughs at Roshim's embarrassment
at his own rudeness.

OIDECALLA

Ah, I'm afraid you are right. Do as you will, young man. I shall not stop you; I have not the strength.

(pauses)

Let us talk in earnest. As I rose from sleep, I considered our exchange, and found myself unsatisfied. It has been a long time since I thought of the Library, and to be honest, I had imagined it perished long ago. It has been an age since I left my garden and green Miriah, and yet my thoughts were stirred, and many things emerged from the recesses of my memories. Concerns, questions... I suppose, a fatherly sort of interest in the clan charged with the task of the Library, and having one handsome specimen before me, I cannot resist indulging myself.

(leaning forward)

Tell me, young man. Tell me of the Library, of your people. Has the pursuit of knowledge been fruitful? And what of the one you call Avalon? Has he been assisting you?

(gestures at the food)

Eat. And speak your mind. For you stare at me in a way that few would dare; I see that things are not yet settled between us.

Roshim juts his jaw, and he nods. Nervous but determined, he speaks, meeting the lord's long-lashed eyes with growing

confidence.

ROSHIM

My people are the stewards of the great Library, and the city of Aphaelia that surrounds it. We administer knowledge to those who come for it, and we compile and research day and night to learn how the world works. The Library contains over a thousand years of written knowledge, great halls of books, research, and a community that sustains it all. That is my people, and I left them to seek your wisdom. The foundation of the tower is cracked, and we do not know how to fix it. The letter I brought you, on behalf of my elders and peers, is to beseech your aid.

OIDECALLA

(tilting his head)

Most of this you have said. And how did you come to know where to find me?

ROSHIM

Balthius-- my mentor, my father-- he brought Avalon to me, to guide me to one of the archmasons. Avalon was a boon to our Library, bringing much knowledge over many lifetimes, and he said that he knew the way to the Lord of Gold; thus, we came to you.

OIDECALLA

Avalon... Avalon brought you here?

ROSHIM

He did, my Lord.

OIDECALLA

And did he tell you under what circumstance he was forbidden to return here?

ROSHIM

(slowly)

...no, he did not. But-- Adamus told me, he said--

Roshim pauses, sees movement in Oidecalla's eyes. He stares back, and continues.

ROSHIM

-- he said Avalon, your child, tried to take your glory, and was banished.

There is a moment of silence. Oidecalla's long-lashed eyes hold on Roshim's for a moment, then drop. He considers the food.

OIDECALLA

So... he works for the Library, does he?
What do your people say of him?

ROSHM

(eating)

I had not met him before we set out. Balthius said Avalon had gone out into the world and brought back knowledge, at a price. He said Avalon was born of blood of angels, and had watched over the Library for some time.

OIDECALLA

(thoughtfully)

Interesting.

Oidecalla wonders if Avalon is attempting to amend their relationship from afar by upholding his father's will. Of course, we know nothing of this now.

Roshim watches Oidecalla's face, seeing the Lord thinking. Oidecalla turns his gaze back to Roshim after a moment; his eyes are unreadable.

OIDECALLA

Children are difficult. Are you a father?

ROSHM

No, my Lord. Perhaps one day. I may have sired children, but I do not know them as a father.

Roshim's people consider father to be a role removed from simply having children; Balthius is Roshim's father figure.

OIDECALLA

A father guides his children, does he not?

ROSHIM

Of course.

OIDECALLA

And a father builds a place in the world for his children, does he not?

ROSHIM

(cautiously)

He does.

OIDECALLA

Must a father, in the end, give everything to his children? Even his own life?

ROSHIM

...I should think it depends on the needs of the children, my Lord. And, perhaps, the needs of the father.

Oidecalla laughs. He eyes Roshim in a serpentine way.

OIDECALLA

There is room in this world for many kingdoms,
I believe. Let each have his own way.
Children do not stay children forever; the day
comes when they shall stand shoulder to
shoulder with their parents. Where then is
the obligation?

Oidecalla does not expect an answer. He raises an empty
cup; Roshim climbs out of bed to fetch wine. The platter is
clean of food. They drink together in silence. Finally Roshim
speaks.

ROSHIM

Among my people, to be a father is a desire,
not an obligation. A child has many fathers,
and many mothers. A child does not remember
their sire; but they do remember their
fathers. It is the love they remember.

Oidecalla nods. He stares out to the pool at the end of the
room. He gestures to the food platter.

OIDECALLA

Take this away, please.

Roshim gets up and cleans up the platter. He bows, though
the Lord is not looking at him.

ROSHIM

Thank you for seeing me again. Is there anything else I can do for you?

Oidecalla looks at him, his face still unreadable.

OIDECALLA

Send Adamus to me.

Roshim leaves and does as Oidecalla asks. Adamus clasps Roshim's hands, which are shaking, in silent assurance, before he goes to his Lord.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN DAY

The rest of the day passes in a blur. Roshim cannot shake the feeling that he has failed, that he has had a second chance to convince the Lord and wasted it. His kitchen mates attempt to be jovial with him, but he cannot relax with them.

EXT. GUESTHOUSE OVER THE WATERFALL NIGHT

After a particularly poignant and upsetting dream, where Roshim dreams he has returned in failure, and somehow Cristio doesn't want to see him, he rises in grief and fury, and hurls his hammer off the waterfall in a moment, wanting to be rid of this burden.

Immediately, he regrets it, and we see a flashback of the hammer being presented to him by his father figure Balthus,

and being blessed by Cristio. He has another memory, of being taught by Balthius to use the fallen chips of stone from a larger project.

Roshim goes out at night, to the base of the waterfall, and hunts for the hammer in the dark under the light of a waning moon, but finds nothing. Ladulai joins him, remarks on Roshim's moonlit scars, compares their scarred bodies together. Roshim tells Ladulai of this burden, of his mission. Ladulai sympathizes, insists that they are close. Roshim finds himself fucking Ladulai, sharing a moment with that self-pity, but immediately afterward Roshim feels that it was a mistake to give Ladulai that much intimacy. As he leaves, Ladulai scratches his arm with long claws, trying to hold him back.

The next morning, Roshim awakens with Ladulai curled up next to him. Ladulai offers him smoke from the pipe he has, and Roshim indulges. They have sex, cuddle, drink. Distantly, Roshim knows that he should get back to the kitchen, search for his hammer, but Ladulai holds him back. The day passes in a drug-filled stupor.

Finally, Roshim shouts and throws Ladulai off, gets up, washes his face. He lumbers out of the room, dizzy but determined to get back to the kitchen. Ladulai follows, but is stopped by Avalon, who halts Ladulai with a look of cold menace.

Avalon raises his hand, palm out, towards Ladulai.

AVALON

Do not enter this house again.

LADULAI

(snuffling)

He invited me in!

AVALON

I have spoken.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN EVENING

Roshim is back in the kitchen, working hard, trying to lose himself in his work. Sweat pours from his huge back as he stokes the cooking fires. There are four times the usual number of pilgrims, and the evening meal has become quite a workload.

Roshim's workmates try to get him to slow down, but he plows ahead, driving himself to exhaustion. He will not fail at this! Sweat streams down his brows, gets in his eyes, but he does not stop.

Finally, the evening rush is over. Avalon appears at his side, hair tied back, helping. Roshim blinks stupidly, staring at the fiery mane of hair.

Avalon splashes his face with a mug of water. He grunts, wipes his face, and Avalon guides him to sit down, a bit forcefully.

AVALON

Enough. This temple has fed a multitude
without your help. Sit and rest.

Roshim wants to protest, but he's so fatigued he finds he cannot rise. Avalon works in his place, skillful and elegant. Roshim is silent, staring at the other, seeing the shape of Oidecalla, the long limbs and face, the shape of the eyes.

Dwala, Mika appear with beer. Avalon abstains, Roshim drinks deeply. They rest together as Avalon covers the fires. For the first time, Roshim and Avalon eat together with the kitchen crew.

EXT. HIGH TEMPLE GROUNDS LATE NIGHT

Afterwards, after eating and dispersing for the night, Roshim and Avalon walk back to their house together. It's a quiet night, away from the noise of the kitchen, tent, pilgrims.

ROSHIM

Were you going to tell me?

AVALON

(stretching, showing his muscular midriff)

Tell you what?

ROSHIM

Adamus told me; you are his child.

AVALON

(laughs)

Why would I tell you?

Roshim growls and walks away. Avalon hurries to catch up. He pats Roshim's arm, and holds up a pack of pipe tobacco. Roshim sniffs it.

Avalon has his pipe out, and they sit in a moonlit step in front of their house, watching the lights of the pilgrims below. It's a beautiful night, and though the noise of a multitude is ever-present, peacefully distant.

AVALON

One of the pilgrims gave it to me. Say what you will, times like these make people generous.

Roshim, enjoying the smoke, nods. He insists on his question, though:

ROSHIM

Why did not you not tell me?

Avalon looks out over the torchlights below. He puffs away thoughtfully, smoke curling around his face, as if his hair was smoldering.

AVALON

If I had told you I was a child of Oidecalla, would it not color my every word and action in your eyes? Would it not lend a gravity to my stature, an importance to my person that is unjustified? I do not act on behalf of my father; yet how could I separate myself from him in your eyes, had that been the method of our introduction? I cannot claim his authority.

Roshim is silent, feels Avalon is right. His anger fades, but he feels that Avalon is only telling him some of the reasons.

ROSHIM

Adamus said you already tried to claim that authority. Am I a ruse to get within reach of that grace again? Do you really care at all about Aphaelia, or my people?

Avalon looks into Roshim's eyes. He passes the pipe to Roshim.

AVALON

(softly)

I have no ill will toward the Lord. I have done what I have done, but I will not do it again. It was... a mistake.

Roshim puffs deeply, a bit satisfied that Avalon is admitting failure. They gaze together over the rim of the mountain. Roshim feels a connection in their shared failure.

ROSHM

For the first time, I feel as if we are on the same journey together.

Avalon looks surprised, laughs. Roshim puts an arm around him, a slight smile on his face.

INT. GUESTHOUSE OVER THE WATERFALL NIGHT

They dive into bed together, and Roshim fucks Avalon as only a young brute can. Avalon gasps and sweats, and Roshim feels some satisfaction in how easily he can toss Avalon around. He does think of Oidecalla a little, and the way the thin cloth draped over the other's slender form... then shakes it off and finishes.

Afterward, curled up in Roshim's bed, Avalon sniffs the air.

AVALON

That scarred fellow... he has stunk up your room. Who is he?

Roshim sighs. He wipes his sweaty forehead with a shirt, notices Avalon admiring his body.

ROSHM

He claims to be a child of Astheopithicus. Or a relation, of some sort. I pity him. His body has been broken, beaten, and so has his mind.

Avalon stretches out to get the pipe again.

AVALON

Ah, well, the not all of us children have turned out as beautiful as I.

Roshim grimaces at this, but his eyes trace Avalon's flawless body.

ROSHM

(gruffly)

Enough.

(considers, then speaks slowly)

I suppose the other Lords must still be milling around, doing whatever it is they do. If the Lord of Gold is no help to Aphaelia, perhaps... perhaps another...

AVALON

(smoking the pipe)

I know not where the other Lords may be. But I do know this: the Lord of Gold is by far the kindest of your Archmasons. Indeed, for all my own grievances, if it were not for his compassion, the Hand of the Stranger would have been a terrible force in this world. For good or ill, I do not know, but it would have been terrible.

Roshim is silent for a moment, considering.

ROSHIM

(softly)

But if there is no other way...

AVALON

(alarmed and cross)

Stop! We are hardly finished here. Let the Lord worry about the festival; then he will turn his attention back to you, and your Tower. Be patient, for the Lord is unhurried; you must be too.

EXT. TEMPLE CROWN MORNING

"The Lord is doing miracles"

Pilgrims begin to whisper. The solstice festival is only a

couple days away, but a great fervor is sweeping through the camp.

On his litter, the great Lord is processing through the camp, coming down from his high place on the mountain to see the pilgrims. The sick and suffering come to him, and he places his hands upon them, and whispers to them; and many are cured.

As the morning progresses, grief and pain gives way to celebration, and the pilgrims tell stories, affirmed in their belief. A man, who has not walked for years, kicks his heels giddily and dances with his friends, his face wet with tears. The crowd is a riot of joy, and many bow at the stories of these miracles, and golden lilies are strewed across the path of the Lord's litter, and many walk behind him, and more go in front, to prepare his way.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN NOON

Again, Adamus appears in the kitchen. He beckons Roshim.

ADAMUS

Let us take a meal to the Lord, who is there
among the people.

Roshim loads up a heavy basket with food, and walks with Adamus from the kitchen to the camps; but Adamus's breath is heavy, and he stumbles.

Roshim leads Adamus to a seat, but Adamus waves him on.

ADAMUS

Go; there are many more suffering. I shall
abide here awhile.

Roshim goes on, and sees the celebrations, the weeping mothers and fathers, the children dancing. It is a heady blend of life, the confused and grateful, eagerness and pain shoulder to shoulder, entwining joy and sorrow. Roshim finds the tent of the Lord and enters it; the acolytes of the Lord know him by face now.

INT. OIDECALLA'S PRIVATE TENT

Oidecalla is beautiful and strange as ever, bathed in the soft white glow of the sunlight on the tent. He is resting on a scented mattress, and raises his head as Roshim enters.

OIDECALLA

Ah, where is Adamus? I should like to dine
together.

Roshim places the dishes.

ROSHIM

He stumbled on the way down, and I bade him
rest.

Oidecalla is silent. He gestures for Roshim to sit next to

him. Once seated, Roshim serves the Lord. They eat silently together for a time.

ROSHIM

(cautiously)

...is it much work?

OIDECALLA

(nibbling his food delicately)

What is?

ROSHIM

(cursing himself a bit for being so unclear)

The--the healing, the miracles?

OIDECALLA

(smiling)

What do you know of miracles?

ROSHIM

(uncomfortably)

Oh, nothing, I suppose! I do not want to try your patience. I apologize.

OIDECALLA

(laughing)

Do not be ashamed. A few questions, meant well, do not warrant shame.

He considers at length, then answers.

OIDECALLA

The miracles; I can help, or I cannot. The tender desire for healing, the tears, the suffering; that is where the work lies. Much grief and sorrow lies behind me. Much more lies before me. The wounds of grief and sorrow cannot be cured by miracle. I do what I can.

He bows his long neck, hair trailing. There is silence for a moment. Roshim considers the weary slump of the Lord's shoulders. He sees the burden of community that Oidecalla also experiences, and ponders it.

Oidecalla's long hand reaches out to delicately pick at the peeled fruits.

OIDECALLA

(suddenly)

You wonder, do you not, why I do not cure what ails Adamus, my dear husband and consort? Age is not within my power to heal. It is not a sickness. I can forestall, I can withhold, but I cannot bestow eternal life. Heaven's grace is not mine to give.

Roshim nods as Oidecalla looks at him.

OIDECALLA

As I have said, nothing born mortal lasts forever. Adamus has lived long; I would have him with me longer yet. But this cannot be.

Roshim thinks of Cristio. He wonders what Cristio would look like, grown as old as Adamus. Oidecalla stares down at his food, then rouses himself.

OIDECALLA

He would bade me to dwell on the needy who await us. You see, young man, I have my own burdens to bear.

Roshim's chest swells with the pain of missing Cristio. He looks at the Lord.

ROSHIM

I'm sorry he could not eat with you.

OIDECALLA

(glancing aside)

Ah, but his hand guides and provides, nonetheless. He has a great interest in you, O Roshim. I shall be content to eat with you for a time.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN NOON

On the third day, Roshim prepares the food for Oidecalla.

He no longer needs Adamus's direction, but notices that Adamus does not come to the kitchen.

Dwala notices Roshim glancing about and comes over.

DWALA

What is it?

ROSHM

Adamus has yet to arrive.

Dwala mops his forehead with a rag and looks around.

DWALA

Ah, time already? So it is. Go fetch him, I want to talk about tonight's crowd.

Roshim splashes water on his face and goes to the ruins of the temple, where Oidecalla and Adamus stay in an intact wing. He finds a bit of a rabble and cannot get through. There are many excited voices, and sounds of concern.

Roshim approaches a servant.

ROSHM

What's happening here?

SERVANT

Adamus fell. He's been brought to the Lord's bedchamber.

Roshim reels as if struck. He composes himself, and decides quickly, skirting the rabble and lifting his bulk through a great ruined window. He knows the way to the chamber from his first trip and makes his way.

A chamber guard is preventing the curious from getting anywhere near the chamber, but he recognizes Roshim.

GUARD

Ho, you! Come on through.

(to another)

He attends the Lord.

INT. LORD'S BEDCHAMBER

In the bedchamber, the great curtain is drawn back. Adamus lays propped up. A physician and several attendants flock about. What good is a physician in this place, Roshim wonders briefly. There is a crowd of officials from Miriah; men and women of Oidecalla's service, who have made the pilgrimage.

Adamus gestures to Roshim, and he approaches.

ADAMUS

(smiling but in pain)

I hope I did not interrupt your lunch.

ROSHIM

(concerned)

Never mind that. I heard you fell.

ADAMUS

(softly)

A fall indeed. Is my Lord still attending his flock?

ROSHIM

(straighting up)

I shall fetch him at once--

ADAMUS

(shaking his head)

No, you shall not. That is where he ought to be. I will be here when the day is over. Come here, Roshim.

Roshim leans over Adamus. Adamus's small old hand rests on his own young strong one. Adamus's face works, as if he is experiencing a great deal of emotions he cannot articulate. He licks his lips, his speech slurring slightly, but his eyes are clear.

ADAMUS

The world continues on. Do you understand? But we do not continue with it. A book without an end is a bad book, isn't it? Someone else will continue the story. I do not envy my Lord. I feel relief. Only relief, now.

He rests his hand on his chest, and closes his eyes as if

weary. He speaks again.

ADAMUS

Do not bring the Lord. Let him continue his work. For his people have need of him, and this illness he cannot cure. And you, Roshim-- go back to your kitchen, for his people must eat. I will abide here awhile.

INT. OIDECALLA'S PRIVATE TENT

Roshim tells Oidecalla as he is bringing the meal. Oidecalla stares at him, his expression unreadable, then sighs deeply.

OIDECALLA

As he wishes. Stay beside me.

The day continues. The festival goes on. As twilight falls, Oidecalla returns to his bedchamber, accompanied by his train of followers and litter-bearers.

INT. LORD'S BEDCHAMBER

Roshim helps carry the litter, and helps Oidecalla into his bed, where he kneels beside Adamus. There are a handful of attendants who stay nearby, carrying lanterns and murmuring among themselves.

Roshim kneels too on the carpet beside the bed. Oidecalla

nods and stays bent over Adamus. He lays fingers on the old man's cheeks, forehead, chest, and kisses him. Adamus stirs, and mutters quietly to him.

Long into the night they remain so. The lanterns are relit. The censurs are refilled. The moon rises over the broken lip of the wall.

Suddenly there is a great gust of warm sweet-smelling wind. Adamus speaks to his husband-lord, and Roshim hears something like the following:

Hold me tightly

Unto the love-light

Unto the star-shine

Unto the moon-light

Hold me tightly

Cleave to the best of me

Let go the rest of me

As I will you

Seek kindly, Lord

Not blindly, Lord

Forgive me,

And you shall be forgiven too

Love conquers over all life's illusions

I feel your love alive, yet I know not what
to do

I see no way for this world

Save you

I see no way for our world

But you

So passed Adamus, son of a merchant, consort of a Lord,
gatekeeper of the temple of Carcos. Oidecalla's long hair
spilled across the sheets as he bent over him, and his voice
whispered words in a language Roshim did not know.

Stunned, shaken, Roshim remained beside the bed for a time.
Hours later, Oidecalla lifted his head, blinked amarantine eyes
at him. His gaze was distant.

OIDECALLA

I am thirsty.

Roshim fetches wine and gives it to him with a cautious hand. Oidecalla drinks deeply. Roshim gives him water. He drinks that too, then lays beside the body of his husband.

OIDECALLA

(eyes closing)

Where is my minister, Tomoe? The one who my husband chose?

A swarthy man steps forward, his long dark beard neatly trimmed, robes elegant.

TOMOE

My Lord, I am here.

OIDECALLA

(eyes closed)

We shall not stop the festival. Tomorrow morning, I shall speak at the court in honor of Adamus. Bring scented oils, wrap his hands and feet, and see he is laid to rest in a bed of gold lilies. The people shall see and share my grief; but this is no time to weep.

INT. GUESTHOUSE OVER THE WATERFALL LATE NIGHT

After he is dismissed, Roshim returns to the guest house, and finds Avalon there. He tells Avalon, who nods.

AVALON

(softly)

He was quite old, you know. How lucky I am, to have seen his face, and spoken to him one last time.

Avalon lights his pipe indoors, and his hands tremble. Roshim senses that no more speech is needed or desired. He fetches a little dinner, and they eat together in silence.

That night, Roshim dreams of the garden that he walked with Adamus. He sees, for a moment, the intricate circle-within-a-circle design of the overgrown mass, and has an impression that the garden is somehow inscribed on the crown of the mountain, as if one of the intricate symbols of the First Book at the Library. In the center of the garden, Roshim sees a flower bud, as big as himself, turn and turn towards the sunlight, until finally it blooms, brilliant red and gold-veined petals the size of ship sails, unfurling round a golden center.

A child, wrapped in his silken red-gold hair, sits up, and gazes up at the blue sky.

EXT. OUTER COURT ON THE PEAK NOON

The fourth day of the festival. There is a somberness, yet a curiosity, to the crowds gathered at the crown of the broken temple. The wildness of the first few days has dissolved into something more ordered.

A line of pilgrims walks past the casket of Adamus. Oidecalla sits beside it. The casket is full of white and gold lilies, and blue forget-me-nots, and on the path are set blue glazed bowls of great white water lilies, floating on shining water.

Despite the sick and suffering in the pilgrims, there is overwhelming concern amongst them for their Lord, and they praise him, and do their best to express condolences, which he receives warmly. The shared grief binds them together; many songs are sung, both happy and sad, and the gold light on the mountain seems brighter than before.

Roshim brings Oidecalla his food in the middle of the day, in time to see the viceroy of Miriah arrive, to meet with Oidecalla in his private tent. Roshim is there to serve the food, and sees the change in the viceroy's face upon standing in the Lord's presence.

VICEROY

...I remember you. We met once, when I was a boy. My grandfather still believed. I was suffering from consumptive fever, and so he took me to your mountain, and you laid hands upon me, and I was healed. 'You have been blessed by the Lord of the Mountain, child', he told me. 'He must know you will do great things for your people'.

(ponderously)

My life has been as a dream. Every morning, I have arisen, to do the work for my beloved people... until one morning I arose an old man. The race has been all but run. Do you often recall your youth? I do not. It is fading now, a dream like all the rest, yet you stand here before me, unchanged.

He bows, trembling, to kiss the long hand of Oidecalla. The other raises him to an embrace.

VICEROY

I am glad to see you again.

OIDECALLA

(softly)

You have done well.

The viceroy weeps.

Finally, as the sun recedes, Oidecalla rises to give his tribute to Adamus. The crowd murmurs as he takes to his full height, resting one hand on a gold staff with a bell atop it. The bell chimes faintly as the staff is put down, and Oidecalla raises his hand for silence.

Oidecalla, after a moment, gazing down at the still face of Adamus, speaks.

OIDECALLA

Oh, my beloved. When we met, you were young and brash, a fearless noble who came by ship to my shore with a caravan of rare spices. Yet, you were the more valuable. You were never burdened by glory, nor by desire for glory; you gave freely of what you had to those in need. Together, we raised Miriah and Carcosa, and our city, and our children, have prospered, yet you were ever humble. No better man has crossed my threshold.

He bowed his head, and his gold circlet glinted. The bell-staff chimed sweetly in the wind.

OIDECALLA

(softly)

I will miss you, my beloved Adamus, as I have missed no other.

(projecting to the crowd)

Go, now, and sail one final time, from our holy mountain to the delta of the river that lead you here, where your grave will stand to greet those who enter our land as you once did. You have earned your rest, dear friend.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN

The rest of the festival is somewhat muted at first, but by the end of the week, it has recovered to a new height. Blessings and healing continue, and the revelry grows. Looking at the singing, dancing crowds, Roshim feels that Adamus would be happy.

Dwala and the rest of the kitchen crew lament that the mountaintop will soon be emptied of people again, save the few hundred followers. There is murmuring about whether things will change, now that Adamus is gone; but too little energy to spend on gossip and speculation, and instead much work is spent sorting and filling the storehouses with offerings.

At last, only tens of camps of pilgrims blaze at night on the lower ring of Carcosa, and looking out from the guest house over the waterfall, Roshim feels a relief, that this is now done, and things can move forward. Avalon has made himself

scarce; he's been taking long walks about the lower ring of the mountain, leaving early in the morning and coming back late at night.

Ladulai appears, sullen and nervous, not crossing the threshold, but still brightens up at Roshim's attention. He tells Roshim that he is setting out for the Kingdom of Silver, "the monastics", and urges Roshim to come there. "For the weak are many, and the strong are few, and my Lord is Lord of the weak", he says. "If you should despair, come to the Lord of Silver. There you will find many friends."

INT. LORD'S BEDCHAMBER NIGHT

At long last, Roshim is summoned to Oidecalla's bedroom. He washes before he arrives, not sure what the Lord wants. It is late when he enters the now-familiar chamber. The water in the canal gurgles pleasantly, and the large round curtain glows softly in the light of oil lamps.

Oidecalla is sitting in the bed, wearing a long threaded white silk shirt, his long hair coiled around him. He looks weary; wearier than Roshim has ever seen him. He raises his eyes to acknowledge Roshim, but does not speak.

Roshim fetches wine, and brings it to him, and kneels beside the bed. Oidecalla accepts it and drinks. Roshim waits patiently for the Lord to speak. At last, he does:

OIDECALLA

I am glad you are here, Roshim of Aphaelia.
Truly. I am glad you brought Adamus's child
to him. For many years, his heart has ached,
since--Avalon left us. The child hurt me, but
what he did to his father was a deeper wound.
I feared-- I feared Adamus would die without
seeing his child again. Do you understand?

OIDECALLA

A father guides his children, does he not? I
think Adamus wanted, with all his heart, to
see myself and the child reconciled, and you
brought that hope to him, in his last days. I
must thank you for that, I think.

ROSHIM

(softly)
Thank me?

OIDECALLA

(eyes turning to him)
Indeed. And yet, I have so little to give you
in thanks.

ROSHIM

(hesitantly)
The foundation of the library is cracked...

OIDECALLA

(turning his eyes away)

Tell me. What will you do, if I cannot give you the answer to that?

ROSHI

(stoically)

I will ask the others. The Lords who stood alongside you.

Oidecalla looks at him, surprised.

OIDECALLA

(softly)

Will you, indeed?

ROSHI

(not meeting his eyes)

Yes. I must. I am-- I will leave. There's still a bit to do in the kitchen-- but I will leave soon.

OIDECALLA

(gazing at him)

Would you not stay here, in safety and comfort?

ROSHI

(looking at him eye to eye)

I cannot. I must not. I must return. This garden is pleasant enough, my Lord. But my heart lies in my home... I am awaited.

OIDEALLA

If you must return, then return. Have you not done what your people asked of you?

ROSHI

There is more yet I could do. I cannot return without an honest effort.

Roshim thinks of Cristio's gentle disappointment upon reading his account, and resolves for this to never happen.

OIDEALLA

Your road is dangerous. You do not know what you are doing. It would be best to return to your home.

ROSHI

(shaking his head)

I must do this. I must try. I must be strong enough to try.

Oidecalla holds his gaze. Those deep eyes seem to sharpen, and for an instant, Roshim feels the full regard of this immortal gaze. His breath catches, as if a wildfire has just

brushed past him, as if the sun Himself turned to look at him, and for an instant, fancies himself aflame-- but then it passes.

OIDECALLA

(gently)

So be it.

Oidecalla invites Roshim onto the bed. Roshim cleans himself off and complies, wearing very little. Oidecalla draws the curtain around them both. Roshim does not dare touch Oidecalla, who reaches out and brings a bowl of fruit onto the bed. Wordlessly, Oidecalla eats, and wordlessly, gives fruit to Roshim to eat.

OIDECALLA

(laying out)

Lay beside me. Do not be afraid.

He lays his hand in front of him.

Roshim does so, feeling clumsy next to the graceful creature. He shudders slightly at the warm feeling of Oidecalla's body against his. Oidecalla strokes up and down Roshim's arm, settling against him. He reaches over Roshim's shoulder, picks up pieces of fruit, and lays the fruit out in front of them both in a strange pattern on the bedsheet.

OIDECALLA

Pay attention, child of the tower. Go by the river, south of Miriah, and enter our holy lands; for it is sacred, held by my brethren, by those you call Lords.

Oidecalla places his hand between the array of fruits he has laid out, and Roshim's eyes are drawn to him. He caresses the thin arm over his shoulder, feeling the bony joints, smelling the scent of lavender oil, the feminine softness. Oidecalla moves his hand, pointing to each fruit as he speaks.

OIDECALLA

This apple is my garden, green Carcosa. Of me, there is little to be said, save that I was the first to see the potential in this world, and its people.

(pointing to the peach stone)

This peach stone is Rhodowyn, king of kings, the architect of your tower. His kingdom lies to the far south. He was ever visionary, hopeful, and ambitious; the engine of our rebellion against the tyrant.

(pointing to the pomegranate)

This pomegranate is Laurientus, our emissary. Fearlessly did he gather others to the cause of the stranger, creating alliances among men and angel alike.

(pointing to the bunch of grapes)

These grapes are Sodon, our general. His strength in battle is unmatched, and he fell from the tyrant's army to that god's chagrin. For not even the host of heaven could raze what Sodon braced.

(pointing to a pale apricot)

And then the Pale King, Astheopithicus, Lord of Order, and the wisest of us. He conceived of your tower as a spear, a holy knife thrust into the heavens, where the knowledge to destroy the tyrant may one day ferment. You are his children, most of all.

Oidecalla pauses. Roshim shifts against him, gently kissing his hand.

ROS HIM

Why tell me this?

Oidecalla traces long fingers against Roshim's scarred neck.

OIDECALLA

Because you must know if you are to find them.
I shall give you another gift. Stay with me,
tonight. Tomorrow morn before the sun rises,
I shall row Adamus out to his tomb, and you
shall depart here.

ROS HIM

I shall say good-bye to Avalon, first.

OIDECALLA

(with a smile)

Oh, you needn't worry about that. For he is
the final gift I give to you.

He refuses to elaborate, despite Roshim's surprised expression, but Roshim soon forgets this mystery.

Oidecalla unpicks the tie of his shirt, letting it down around his shoulders, revealing himself, neither man nor woman, but sleek and soft, inviting the touch of Roshim's big, work-hardened hands. As Roshim's thumbs press into those soft

breasts, his breath quickening, Oidecalla arches his back, enjoying the arousal of the demiman, the strength with which he is gripped. Roshim licks his lips, looks up at the Lord, unsure of how far this might go. Oidecalla looks down, bemused, waits for him to speak.

ROSHYM

(hoarsely)

Might I worship you, my beautiful Lord? With my tongue, my hands? Might I take you beneath me, and please you in whatever way you desire?

OIDECALLA

(purring)

Show me your strength, young man. Show me your joy and passion. Let there be no boundary nor border between us. Have me, as you would your childhood lovers; may your youthfulness carry us both far!

Roshim is hesitant, unsure for a bit; but he directs the Lord with his hands, and as the Lord complies, grows more certain, feels the familiar motion, call and response of intimacy. Roshim presses the Lord down, and lays atop carefully, roughly stroking up and down the Lord's lithe body, shedding the white bedclothes, bringing his face down to smell, to lick and kiss, and as he takes a mouthful of breast he hears the Lord's soft, shuddering exhale. The music of that sigh affirms him, guides him, and it is followed by many, many more.

He is surprised, pleased, how pliable, how sensitive, the Lord's body is, how delicious the soft murmurs, the long hands stroking his muscular back, the ebb and flow of rolling hips. He took scented oils, stroked and rubbed til his palms tingled, til all those long arms, legs, neck had been thoroughly explored, til the Lord's erection stood proud against his belly, those eyes glinting at him, that back arching, the Lord's gasp as he came in Roshim's hand, between their bellies, sweat and issue dripping onto the bedsheets.

Roshim holds Oidecalla, stroking until the other was quite finished, kissing up and down that beautiful chest. The Lord raised his head, glassy-eyed, with a surprised satisfaction.

OIDECALLA

...well done. Blessed indeed...

Roshim sits up, oiling his hands again.

ROSHIM

If you would lay stomach-down, I will continue on your back, my Lord. There is so much yet to do.

Oidecalla, rolling over, lifts his brows.

OIDECALLA

The men of Aphaelia... are men indeed.

Roshim straddles him, his own cock hard, but paying it no

mind as he lavishes hard, firm strokes along Oidecalla's long back, pressing him into the bed with his weight, causing the other to moan in surprise.

ROSHI

(growling gently)

Relax.

Oidecalla allows himself to be treated so, and Roshim continues, gripping and rolling the Lord, crushing him to the bed, hands kneading and massaging, sometimes pressing with his body, his erection shameless. Roshim hears Oidecalla's breathy sighs again, and in short order the Lord has ejaculated again, Roshim's own erection pressed between his long legs. Roshim pushes, thrusting insistently, and the Lord's hand grips Roshim's erection, his hips push back--!

A great arc of semen sprays out, slapping the sheets, and the Lord moans as the demiman's seed sprays over his belly, breasts, arm, hand... while Roshim's hands grip him tightly, head pressed to that back, worshipping his Lord.

They remain so, breathless for a time, then Roshim gets up, and fetches wine and water. The Lord's smile tells him all he needs to know, and they sit in silence for awhile, drinking, Roshim's hand on Oidecalla's knee. Finally, Oidecalla speaks.

OIDECALLA

A long time indeed, since there was such fire
in our bed. You are generous, Roshim. I hope
your curiosity has been satisfied, for this
fire burned in your eyes since you first
looked upon me.

Roshim laughs sheepishly.

ROSHIM

I am satisfied and grateful, my Lord. A man
cannot control his heart's desire.

Oidecalla looks towards the spring at the far end of the
bedroom. He heaves a deep sigh, smiling.

OIDECALLA

I am... quite satisfied by this.

We do not know it, but the Lord is speaking of life in
general. He gazes out over the broken wall, towards the rising
moon.

OIDECALLA

(to himself, softly)

Yes... I believe I am satisfied.

Oidecalla is beautiful, his naked chest gleaming, so
recently full of the joy of life, but his eyes grow tired.
Roshim sees this, but does not understand.

He points to the rising moon, peering over the broken lip of masonry. They have been having sex for an hour or two.

ROSHIM

Let me wash you, and get new sheets for you;
it is so late, the moon is already looking in
at us!

Oidecalla allows himself to be washed. Roshim holds Oidecalla and carefully guides him, not understanding the growing quietness in Oidecalla's eyes. At last Oidecalla is laid to bed on fresh sheets, sprinkled with dried thyme, his hair neatly braided.

Roshim is about to leave, but Oidecalla shakes his head.

OIDECALLA

Come; abide with me. Sleep in my bed. I want
for company.

So Roshim sleeps with the Lord, who rests a long hand on Roshim's chest, and the two dream together.

INT. LORD'S BEDCHAMBER EARLY MORNING

The next morning, Roshim wakes suddenly and sits up. The fading memory of a dream tugs at him, a vision of a marble stairway that reaches into a starry sky--

Oidecalla is gone. An attendant notices Roshim awaken, and

hurries to him.

SERVANT

The Lord has already left, but he gave instructions to me; there is a boat made ready for your departure, and one thing more--

He hands Roshim the lost hammer, and recites.

SERVANT

His words: 'Do not cast away what you cannot leave behind.'

Roshim grips his familiar hammer, feels strength of purpose, and thinks about his home. He feels strong for one of few times in his life.

Roshim slips into his clothes, and finds they are a bit small. He wonders, but does not think much of it. He does not realize he has received the blessing of Oidecalla, that the Lord has gifted him the birthright that Avalon attempted to take, and in doing so, the Lord has endowed him with inhuman strength and long life, as grace would give him his heart's desire. This will also earn him Avalon's ire.

INT. GUESTHOUSE OVER THE WATERFALL

Roshim makes his way back to the guesthouse, and is in the middle of packing when Avalon appears, staring at him a bit wild-eyed. His long red hair seems to crackle and stand up a

bit, and his stance a mixture of hostility and fascination. Roshim raises an eyebrow at him.

ROSHIM

(bemused)

Good morning!

Avalon stalks in, examines him. Roshim turns his head, trying to figure out what's going on.

AVALON

Oh, good morning, then! Where are you going?

Roshim turns back to his packing.

ROSHIM

The Lord has prepared a boat for me to go south. He will not help me with the Library; so, I shall consult the other Lords. I do not expect you to travel with me any longer... though I do not understand all he said, he told me you would come along--

AVALON

(crackling)

Oh? Oh, he said I would?

Roshim stops and stares at Avalon, stoic but surprised by this tone.

ROSHI

Like I said; I do not expect you to travel further with me. I shall not hold you to his promise. Perhaps you'd like to go back to Aphaelia, with a message from me for--

Avalon laughs with a maniac edge, interrupting him.

AVALON

OH?? No, I think I shall go with you, after all!

He lunges forward, grips Roshim's arms.

AVALON

I must say, I must say, Roshim, you are an extraordinary man! Tell me; how do you feel, this good morning? Do you feel anything, I wonder?

Roshim is growing irritated, and he wrests his arms easily from Avalon; very easily! He glares at the beautiful face, noticing similarities to Oidecalla's, a face twisted by something-- envy, anger, hatred?

ROSHI

What is wrong with you? Why this excitement? You are even more absurd than usual.

AVALON

Oh, absurd! Absurd, you say!

Avalon sits on the bed, and rests his face in his hands. He looks up at Roshim, mustering a rueful grin. Avalon knows that if he wants the Lord's blessing, he must convince Roshim to give it to him. Roshim knows nothing of this, but Avalon decides that Oidecalla has given the blessing to Roshim as an admonishment and a final test: if you want this grace, to demonstrate your devotion to my will, you shall follow this man until his journey is over.

AVALON

(rueful)

The Lord has a sense of humor, and I never saw it. How we come to know our parents! Come, forgive me, lambkin; help me pack, I shall follow you. Even unto the ends of the earth, I shall follow you.

ROSHIM

(sternly)

No. Tell me what troubles you.

Avalon jumps up and starts throwing things into his bag, ignoring Roshim. Roshim grabs his arm, and holds him. Avalon twists, but cannot get free. He stares at Roshim. Surprise, fear, then anger cross his face, almost too subdued to see.

AVALON

(defiantly)

We have a long journey up the river. I shall tell you on the boat. Does that satisfy you?

Roshim lets him go. He has never seen Avalon look so powerless and does not realize it is his own new strength.

EXT. BASE OF CARCOSA MORNING

A flotilla leaves the foot of Carcos for the north of Miriah, where an islet stands and splits the river in two. The red dawn is barely a glimmer on the horizon as the procession moves, breaking the still water. Oidecalla and Adamus's casket are in the lead boat; Adamus is still wreathed in golden lilies, his serene face untroubled, while the Lord gazes ahead to the islet.

The lead boat grinds up against the shore. The others follow, and men carry Oidecalla's litter and the casket to the mount in the center of the bare islet. A singer laments as the grave is dug; her voice carries far over the still water.

At last, Adamus lies beneath the earth, and a cairn is raised. With help from his servant, Oidecalla stands, kneels at the grave. He gazes at the assemblage, a few tens of his trusted circle, and nods to Tomoe.

No words are spoken. They trickle back onto the boats, leaving Oidecalla and the cairn, and return south. The water

becomes still once more, and the distant cries of circling gulls the only sound.

Oidecalla remains, kneeling, head bowed, long hair flowing upon the rocks. He shakes off his golden array of jewelry, placing it on the cairn. He remains still for almost an hour, until his gold horns glint red in the coming dawn.

A large bird of prey lands on the far end of the island, between Oidecalla and the shore, its back toward the dawn. It turns toward him, shielding its face with its wing. This is an augur of the conqueror god, who is known for hiding his face. Oidecalla ignores it, his amarantine eyes nearly closed.

At last, the dawn is a line of fire breaking over Miriah, and the water seems incandescent. Oidecalla is facing the rising sun, and at last, he tilts his face upward, opening his eyes, and speaks his last.

OIDECALLA

No child is a child forever. That is what you could never grasp. Perhaps, perhaps you too are afraid-- afraid of death. But I admit, I have my doubts. I do not think you have considered it. Indeed, I have oft wondered... do you consider anything at all?

(bends low, over Adamus)

Perhaps, perhaps-- I have done the same for our child. Oh Adamus... would you think me foolish, dear?

(closes his eyes)

I came, in a world of iron, to build a city of gold.

Oidecalla recalls, in brief glimpses, his past defiance-- standing tall with the Hand of the Stranger, the five Lords in their full might, challenging the tyranny of the rising Sun, God the Conqueror, with the Moon behind them, God the Stranger.

Oidecalla recalls young Adamus, the birth of Avalon, the glory of gold at its height in Carcosa-- and is at peace with this all being behind him now. He closes his eyes a final time, and bows his head over his husband. The dawn breaks, and floods the shore with light. The bird flies away.

Some distance south, on a boat, Avalon raises his head, as if hearing a strange sound. Roshim does not notice. Avalon bows his head, acknowledging Oidecalla's passing.

EXT. NORTHERN ISLET NOON

When the boats of Miriah ventured to the northern islet again, there was no Lord, but a great golden tree, wrapped in a white sarong, with its roots entwined around a simple cairn as if in an embrace. It is said the fruit of that tree had no special healing properties, but it had a sweet and clean taste, and brought peace to the troubled mind.

THE END