

The next day I waited. During the morning I looked in on the clockmaker Salation. She was performing wonders with brass and bronze, creating intricate mechanisms of chronometry. I felt guilty for my lies of omission, and sat with her for an hour as she worked, listening to her talk of the city and its people. Bent over a small carving of a bird, she rarely looked up at me. Instead she was assembling piece by piece the mechanism with long tweezers via its mouth, the only orifice into the hollow animal's central cavity. When it was completed, she explained, a tiny bell would ring the hours like the bird was chirping. It should sell well.

I watched her work in by the window where the morning sun fell on her hair as it tumbled down around her head. Her skin was so dark red that the copper pieces were indistinct from her hands. Only the tiny, dexterous motions of her fingers told me of the difference. She was obviously embarrassed by the unconscious gestures that followed her every spoken sentence, and stopped it by focusing that energy on a concrete task. Even while she spoke on unrelated things, her powers of concentration were amazing. No detail of the construction escaped her, or failed to present itself to her mind when she needed it.

In the afternoon I found a criminal and mugged him. He was endeavoring to do the same to someone else when I caught him, which was indeed what gave me the idea. I fleeced him thoroughly and left him bound in the alley behind a police station. From there I joined a dice game and exchanged all of his money for half its value in new coins. That money I passed in various establishments across the city, listening to the rumors of Gens Haid. (Nothing beat the rain of kittens and squid for implausibility, but the plague omnivorous dire-hamsters filled my heart with joy. I made sure to encourage that one.)

The Plaza of Voices Raised in Song is filled during most of the day with choirs, and the perpetual mood of celebration is so infectious that even the citizens frequently find themselves bursting into lyricism. I'd heard of it before, and took the opportunity to investigate it during the day. Finding nothing magical, I was struck by the way the light refracted through carefully placed prisms in the walls, and the soothing sound of water in the fountains. Excellent architecture flowed in conjunction with the area's natural geomancy. Sunlight filled the courtyard. After the sun set, the mood vanished, and the oddly built area generated a feel of incompleteness that the civilians found disquieting. Not long after nightfall it was empty, as rumors had told me it would be.

The night was long and cold. Autumn was passing, and winter waved fondly from the near future. No gods appeared. After the appointed time was gone I retreated to a common house and slept almost until noon.

My next week passed in much the same manner. I took to offering the various criminals their freedom in exchange for an oath of just living, which I sealed with power. This didn't bother my sense of morality at all. There was no magic that actually compelled them to obey their oaths. Instead I wrapped a knot of bad luck in their aura's and tied it to the condition they forsook our covenant. The lack of unnatural mental influence proved manifest in a rash of police arrests, as criminals became entrapped by the oddest string of coincidences. Eventually word began to spread around the underworld, and the hoodlums I apprehended started vowing like they meant it.

Salation completed her cuckoo clock and started to work on a series of smaller, less complex pieces she could turn out several of per day. They were resilient and well suited for life on the road, ideal for soldiers. They went quickly, and she explained that most of her business revolved around such items. In Lookshy, selling to the legions meant success. I started forcing myself to avoid her in the evenings that I would not monopolize her time. She had other things to do than talk to me. During the afternoons I

accompanied her regularly and would walk with her to and from the metal smith who cast her gears. No one bothered us, though I think I recognized a few of the people who watched us from the shadows.

Then one midnight my divinity appeared. I was sitting by the sparkling fountains of the plaza, listening to their chorus. Deprived of the complement of light and people, the sound was terribly lonely and afraid, but within it was still the remnant of the days light. Without warning the foam suddenly parted in the shaped of a breaching face. He rose until his head and shoulders were lifted from the water forming an aqueous body that dribbled around the edges like the back side of a waterfall. His hair and beard were unkempt and scraggly, bespeaking privation. His nose was hooked fiercely. Most disturbing of all were his eyes, dim with despair, and yet within them shone a desperate madness.

“Welcome to Lookshy, divine one,” I greeted him politely, sitting straighter in my chair.

“Do you not do me reverence, mortal?” the god replied. His voice was like his eyes, broken with age, but possessed of a sudden terrible hope.

“It is not for you to be worshiped by me,” I pointed out archly. “But if you are who I think you are, I hope to return to you worshipers in plenty. I am Stark Vision of Inevitability. Thank you for coming.”

The god considered me. He looked torn that I was giving him no obeisance, yet desperate for what I offered. I've seen the same look in the addicts of the east. “Temerity, mortal. But I will accept that if you make good your promises. I am Rush the Falling Water. I was king of the Mer once, and will be so again.”

“First, I'm promising you nothing,” I interjected. One has to be firm with these gods. “I promised a ghost who I think worshiped you in life to help his kin, and if you help me in that it may help you in turn. But I'm undertaking no covenant with you. Secondly, I've not been mortal in a very long time. If you intend to come here mouthing proclamations and commandments and providing no material support as you have done in the past, we will have nothing to discuss.”

The old god looked at me and sighed. His broken form sank down into itself, and he retreated partially into the water. Only his shoulders and head were above it now, and the demarcation between his flowing beard and the equally flowing water was indistinct. “Very well. The Lions told me you were a Sun-Child. A crowned disk. Is that true?”

“It is,” I replied. “Now, do you know this man?” With that I drew my fingers through the air like spreading an invisible cats cradle, but caught threads of essence between them. As I pulled them apart the threads shaped the form of the old ghost, creating a perfect bust of his image. (This isn't the sort of thing one can show an old librarian without sudden accusations of witchcraft. Try it some time if you don't believe me.)

Rush the Falling Water considered him carefully, searching his old, deprived memory for the face. To aid him I also conjured the image of the old ghost's halcyon recollection of his own youth, and held them side by side. The divinity thought briefly.

“He bears the resemblance of my people. He is familiar, and yet I do not recall this one personally.”

“He was a farmer. As he died he allowed a soul entanglement to put him in a medallion that warded his family from a pox,” I supplied.

"I don't recall," the old god admitted quietly. Admitting defeat shamed him. I nodded and let the image vanish. Rush the Falling Water must have thought that meant I was about to leave, for he suddenly said, "But I can find out! We have records of such things, records with names and faces. My stature isn't what it was, but I still have some influence. They will help me search the records if I ask."

"That will be helpful," I agreed.

"Do any of his kin still live?" asked the god, hungrily.

"That's what I want you to find out," I replied.

"You don't know!?" it wailed.

I took a hurried glance around the courtyard. No one was looking.

"Of course not. I don't even know who he is. Didn't any of your people leave Aphor before it fell to the fae?" I hissed at the anguished god.

"None survived!" he lamented. "My people were a close group, and I sheltered them and cared for their every want. Only few ever left, but every single one died in the great Contagion that swept Creation."

That would be a problem. It might end my labors, but not the way I'd hoped. "What about the rescue mission, Operation Reprieve? Did that succeed?"

"I don't know. When the Contagion swept through, I hastened to aid my wayward children. Aphor itself is a small kingdom, with little contact with the outside world, and through seclusion alone I thought it might endure. But the sickness proved greater than my skills, and while I was so distracted, the wyld plunged my home and fiefdom into chaos. Now I have nothing."

"But did anyone survive? Deep in the wyld, but sheltered by the Dragon-Blooded, perhaps?"

"If they do, they did so far beyond the purvey of fate and destiny. I cannot know."

I pondered again. "Go to your people. Find out the old ghost's name, his family, the names of his children, anything you can. Contact me here in this manner when you have that."

"Do you mean to order me about, Sun-Child?" asked the old god, remembering a bit of his pride.

"Yes," I responded easily. "And if you are wise, you'll use your energies helping me instead of being insulted by my hubris. Remember, Rush the Falling Water, you have much to gain if I succeed, and nothing left to lose."

"I am not destitute," he retorted, full of injured pride. "Though I do not have my previous esteem, I still have meaning. I ward irrigation ditches between bean fields now, and the Immaculate Order pays me due respect for my efforts."

I stared at him blankly until the words had permeated my brain. Biting back sarcasm, I asked, "How's that working for you?"

Rush the Falling Water stared at me in just as serious a silence. "I shall go to the records at once," he concluded. With that he vanished, sinking into the fountain, and leaving me alone with the mournful sound of water, lonely for light.

I slept for a while, and then spent the afternoon with Salation. It occurred to me that if no one survived from Aphor, my promise to the ghost had been completed. Then I would have nothing to do, and nowhere to go. That thought stole into my head while I watched the clockmaker meticulously put gears and springs into another small, durable piece for a marching soldier. She soaked up the autumn sun, glowing with the subtle radiance of health. The shop was nice, quiet, and well made. We sat by the spreading bay windows, watching traffic on the streets below, and time rolled softly by.

When the sun began to dip towards the outer walls, I excused myself. Salation looked up from her work a little surprised.

"I had not realized it was this late. Would you like to stay for dinner?" she offered, glancing into the deepening gloom of the early evening.

"No, thank you." I demurred, much as I would have enjoyed it. "There is work to be done."

"There always is," she replied simply. "Will I see you again tomorrow?"

"If you want."

"I would."

"Then you will."

I smiled at her as her fingers twitched over the small lacquered clockface. The spring assembly lay in pieces around it, but the driving gears had been carefully interfaced. She'd probably have the whole thing done by tomorrow at noon. She smiled back, and I bowed to her as I let myself out. Lookshy's streets were never deserted, and the flow of pedestrians bore me away.

South to the halls of the great houses went the road and I with it. The current of people moved swiftly, and the level of worn wealth grew. Soon those who walked around me wore silks with gold and lace, while more rode well bred warhorses, some destriers. As the houses became manses of the rich and powerful, I became invisible as little more than an obstacle to traffic. This suited me fine.

Soon I left the major road and walked up a drive through a manicured yard. To my right was a vast house of Gens Maheka, a family of ancient origin, vast wealth, and renowned for martial arete. They were also recognized for devotion to the Immaculate Faith, and hosted small temples on many of their estates. To the other side of the short lane was one of these, less ornate but larger than many. Mahekan guards watched me, distrusting my common clothes and out of place rags, but said nothing as I walked purposefully into the temple and took a seat in the waiting area. It was empty except for me.

Not much later a middle aged monk appeared. He smiled at me, and I rose to bow in respect.

Regardless of my opinions of his faith, he looked like a good man, humble and charitable as necessary. I will respect that even if I am less than fond of the Immaculate Doctrine.

“Good evening, my son. Welcome to the Temple of Elemental Fire,” he said simply, and then murmured a silent benediction. It seemed reflexive from him, and confirmed my opinion he was a decent man. “I am Maheka Aresta, servant of the third coil.”

“Thank you, reverend father. My name is Crimson Wing,” I replied. He looked about sixty, which would have put me old enough to be his biological parent, but I obeyed the forms. “Thank you for allowing me in.”

“The doors are open to all. What brings you here?”

“I'd like to speak to an exorcist.”

“Oh?” he asked. The request was unusual, for normally the Dragon-Blooded dealt with rogue spirits themselves. Still, it was one of the duties of the faith, and I'd carefully picked this temple for I knew that several monks had retired here from that line of work in their vigorous youth. Retirement breeds boredom, and boredom breeds a willingness to help, even the poor. “Do you require a ghost expelled?” he asked seriously.

“No, I do not. But recently I met one, and have questions about things he said to me. I've come seeking guidance.”

“Tell me about it,” he replied, and sat down near me in the antechamber.

This was the tricky part. My friction with the Immaculates has its basis on their stance towards those with my unnatural youth. They call me Anathema, and regard me as a reincarnation of mad demons of old. While the old god kings who had built the temple of arrogance atop the Obelisk of Triumphant Divinities had certainly plunged into enough madness and cruelty to deserve what happened to them, the Immaculates consider that same end my righteous deserts as well, simply because of my connection to the old ones. My grasp of sorcery, my comparative immortality, and the old bargains that had let me negotiate with the celestial lions were all consequences of my connection. As such, I had to be very careful relating the events that transpired.

“Reverend father, I come from the far threshold, where under the training of an old and wise master, my eyes were opened to the spiritual world. Since my community is small and isolated, it fell to me to deal with the spirits and ghosts that inhabited this place.” Absolutely none of that was true. But hopefully it would conceal the more divisive facts. “Not long ago I found an amulet within which was the spirit of an old man. He was incarcerated to protect the amulet's bearer. I liberated him, but he claimed that his children still lived and he was called to them. Yet as I searched, I believe his family died during the great Contagion. Could he be mistaken?”

Maheka Aresta scowled at me. He'd been scowling disapprovingly since I said I was able to observe the spiritual world. He hadn't interrupted me then, but now readdressed that topic. “The spiritual world is dark and mysterious. Someone without the dictates of the Immaculate Faith should not intervene with it.”

“That is, of course, why I've come to you for guidance,” I replied, placatingly. “My master was a

student in Sijan, and while he learned much the ways of the dead there, he could not transmit to me the lore that you have. Thus I've come here for guidance.”

“You should not be meddling in such things at all,” he chided me. “Concern yourself not with affairs above your station. Let the representatives of the faith handle this.”

“Then you'll send a monk out?” I asked, forcing hopefulness into my voice. “Our village has long hoped for a true religious presence, and I would like to lay down this burden.”

“It can be done. Where is your village?”

“We're only a couple months walk up from Mist Island, where the Rock and Meander Rivers meet,” I supplied helpfully. That had been where I'd lived before. From Lookshy, that would be about a year's travel for a normal man. Of course, there were no roads, the mosquitoes grew slightly larger than hummingbirds, and the last five hundred miles were mostly uphill.

The old monk considered that silently. “We may not be able to get there for a while,” he admitted.

“That's what the monks of Rana told me,” I sympathized. “They said they're waiting for the diphtheria to die down. Is there any way you could come earlier? I much dislike meddling with things beyond my ken.”

“Our numbers are short. Do you desire to learn the ways of the spiritual world? You could take the vows and receive training yourself,” he offered.

I visibly thought about it. “I don't know what my wife would say. Perhaps once the children are grown,” I suggested.

“Oh.” Stymied, he frowned. I hoped that put an end to all of that.

“But until then, do you think the ghost could be wrong, reverend father?”

“No, no, child. If the ghost is bound to his descendants, there is no chance he could be mistaken. Such things transcend death and fate. It may be true.”

“Could he have been lying?” I asked.

“Possible. Was the ghost hostile?”

“No, actually it was very helpful. I've been forced to expel a few angry ghosts, sometimes with words and sometimes with salt and iron. This one had none of their semblance.”

“Then it most likely spoke the truth,” Maheka replied. We shared this in silence.

If Rush the Falling Water was correct about none of his children surviving the Contagion, that meant that some of the denizens of Aphor must have survived, cut off from Creation in the sea of the wyld. Even if they had forsaken their old god and abandoned his worship, that would not have left him deprived and destitute in heaven. Gods are capable in their own right, and guard that power jealously. Only the death of all his purvey within Creation would have accomplished his dire straits. Thus the

remnants of Aphor must still exist, lost in the wyld.

“Tell me, father, is there any way to find them? The ghost had been lost from life so long he no longer remembered his name or kin, and when I revealed I could not find them he fled. Is there anyway to help him?”

“Only the ghost himself might. Otherwise, I know of nothing.”

That was disappointing but expected. The ghost himself had suggested such an outcome. That did not change my stance on working with bound spirits. It was another of those slippery slopes I refused to take the first step down. No good came from relying on the dead to do your will, no matter the motivation, no matter the aim, no matter if the dead were willing or imploring to be used so. It only lead to destruction. At some point in the past the law of death had been broken, and the dead were no longer constrained from affecting the living. The worst problems that beset Creation now had their origin in that rupture.

“I see, reverend father. Thank you for your guidance.”

“Tell me, son, these affairs have not taken you from the just practices of the Doctrines?” he asked, seriously.

“Oh, no, father. I've never been closer to the faith,” I assured him.

“Good. Is there anything else you require?”

Something occurred to me. “One simple, unrelated question. Our farmers have been doing reverence to a few of the gods who aid them, but worry they are paying too much respect to one Rush the Falling Water. Can you tell me what his due feast days are?”

“That is an easy matter. It will be but a moment.”

He rose and left, and I waited patiently. Soon he returned and said, “The fourth Moonsday of the month of Ascending Water is his feast, which he shares with all other minor bean gods. Do not give him more than his due, for it breeds jealousy in the gods. The Immaculate Dragons have ordained it thus.”

I nodded sagaciously and took my leave of him. He watched me with a strict, but kind eye, as he sent me on my way with many stern warnings about meddling in powers I could not understand. Then from the porch he called to the guards of the Gens Maheka estates, and bid them ensure I made my way back to when I'd come with no problems.

He wasn't dismissing me. I believe he honestly worried I could not find my way without help. He was a kind old man, and did what he did because he thought it best for everyone, yet had little respect for those that differed from his opinions.

At its heart, that indeed was the nature of the entire Immaculate Faith. Much has been made of that religion, but many of its detractors forget that the core precepts of the faith are charity, humility, and an encouragement to leave the world a little better than one found it.. Those ideas are well encouraged. Unfortunately that got lost in the mad prosecution of Anathema. Mad indeed is the best term for it, for their persecution had grown to a kind of obsession, that twisted even the best of motivations to the

same evil they sought to repress. Let the Wyld Hunt come after me, and the chips will fall where they may. But children have been Chosen of the Sun, and were found and executed by the assassins of the faith. That is unconscionable. It is the depths of a trough below a slope as treacherous as mental influence or necromancy, and serves as a warning I take careful notice of. Thus I get what good from the monks of the dragons I can, though I trust them little.

It was early evening. The sun was gone, yet some light remained in the sky. I wandered with no purpose northward, forgetting that ultimately the great avenue of the south twisted and turned until it became the small lane that passed before a certain clockmaker's shop. Unconsciously my feet carried me to her door. The hour was late when I arrived, and it was beyond visiting hours. I considered her house quietly. She was probably asleep or tending to her mother. For a long moment I stared at her house, then forced myself to leave. I turned away, and words from the shadows encouraged me along.

“Just keep walking, stranger. Be elsewhere.”

On the porch of another house was a big man. He was looking down at me, frowning dangerously.

“Easy, friend,” I said, trying to pitch my words softly. “I'm just traveling the road.”

“Then travel it. I've watched that other one slink around that house, and now I'm watching you. Just keep moving.”

*That other one?* Without another wasted word I hastened down the street, found a back alley, lit to the rooftops and returned, staying deep in the shadows. The row of houses across the street offered the perfect place to watch Salation's shop, and the shadows of a chimney would conceal me perfectly. I dropped into the blackness and sprawled out. There was a comfortable place to sit and wait.

In fact, there was a remarkably comfortable place to sit. Stray had been pushed aside, and adjusted to form a natural perch. The rest of the rooftop was covered in bird droppings, old as rocks, but here there were none.

The eaves blocked the big man's sight lines to this point. Even if they hadn't, he would never have been able to peer through the gloom. But if someone had been 'slinking around' then whoever had been watching would have been moving. I stared down across the street, and my view was fenced on both sides by chimneys and gables. Yet the view to the broad windows where she liked to work on her clocks was perfect. She had been there, working while she talked with me all afternoon.

I had been entirely too distracted. I'd never looked across the street from her.

In Lookshy fashion followed the military. Here it preferred a simple leather boot with a reinforced sole. Three layers of cured leather gave it rigidity and form, while allowing it to flex with the wearer's natural gait. It's supposed to be quite comfortable on long marches. Yet the foot print of whoever had re-killed Yvores Alson's ghost had been a hard, rigid boot. It was a boot for fighting, not marching, and that meant it was no mean soldier. Marines wear such footwear, for they have the Navy to carry them around. Guards and duelists wear the same thing. Fools do too, but no fool would have been able to kill a spirit. It's not an easy thing to even touch one if it doesn't want to be touched.

I dismissed a marine. While Lookshy had plenty of them, they favored heavy, chopping blades for ship-to-ship combat. That kind of weapon excelled at tearing down masts or shredding rigging, but would be

useless for a thrust. The lunge that had finished Yvores' spirit had been masterful. Guards were usually issued broadswords or spears. The former were cheap, and the latter allowed them to bring overwhelming numbers against their enemies. On the other hand, duelists loved the penache of the rapier. Horse duelists favored sabers which also lent themselves to fencing. Yvores had been silenced with a thrust. That kind of boot wouldn't be perfect for fencing and would hinder complex footwork. Either the nameless killer of Sijan was indeed a fool, or he had been unprepared.

Now I scrounged through the thatch that lead from the alley to this little spider hole. It was hard to see in the dark, but I was looking for smashed bird shit. During the day they would have to crawl to avoid silhouetting themselves, which as distracted as I'd been, I still would have noticed. There were so many that it would be nigh impossible for someone to come here without leaving some trace. Even in the dark I found them soon enough, and traced out where the straw was broken by the hard edges of a rigid-soled boot. Someone had crept along the roof beam, up from a shadowed bend in the wall.

A sudden thought occurred to me. Cavalrymen wear rigid boots to better grip the stirrups and prefer the saber. Mounted on a good horse, it would be easy for one to outdistance me to Sijan, and then from there to here.

I dropped back into the alley and crept around with my face in the dirt, sniffing at dirt. The alley was well swept, but in the cracks between the stones I smelled horse droppings. They were from earlier that day.

I circled around wide, and found the alley that serviced Salation's back door. There was a warhorse tethered there, a huge dappled stallion. It was magnificent, as tall as I at the shoulder with a simple harness of black leather. Beasts like that cost as much as the neighborhood around us. From the darkness I stared at it while a curious emptiness settled into my heart. Then a man emerged from the artificial ravine of the alley. He wore leather pants, riding boots without spurs, and at his side was a whiplike saber. Coming from the darkness where Salation's shop would be behind him, he went to the stallion's reins and unwound them from the post.

Like a nightmare I faded into the darkness and emerged from the shadow of a guttering lamppost behind him. He had swung himself up into the saddle when I stepped to his right boot and ran a yard-long crescent of steel through his kidney. For a moment he froze, and my blade plugged the wound so it couldn't bleed. I told you how Agate, my sword, is barbed. That doesn't make it difficult to thrust, but it complicates the recovery afterwards. Now I took a step forward and yanked down and out. Like a dream I sawed through his ribcage and tore the blade free. Blood fell from his body like a waterfall, and his innards dangled from Agate's hook. I pivoted on my right toe so he could see my face as he fell.

He didn't die. In fact, after the initial profusion, the bleeding stopped on its own. I'd cut him mostly in half, yet the lips of his sucking wound pursed shut. He was bone white in the darkness, but his blade came to his hand like a reflex.

Negligently I flicked his innards from my weapon to the ground. For a moment we stared at each other in the silent night, while the great stallion snorted and pranced backwards, smelling blood. It looked eager for a fight. Other than that there were no sounds.

The horseman stared at between our naked blades. The steel in mine shown blue in the moonlight, while his radiated a strange puissance of its own. Around us the city was still settling into sleep.

Cautiously, he nudged the stallion's side with a foot. It took a step sideways, and then retreated backwards. He backed away until he came to a side street, and then turned and rode away without a word. I watched him go but did nothing.

Once he was gone I stared briefly at my weapon. Whatever power cleaned it had already done so, and I second guessed myself, wondering if I'd even struck home at all. Then I saw the pool of blood on the sidewalk, and stared at the pile of organs in the center of it. My stroke had gone home perfectly. I'd ripped out his lungs, probably lanced his heart, and he hadn't died. There was no explaining it.

There was also no time. I banished my weapon Elsewhere and sprinted into the alley. Her house was easy to find, because she was still awake, sitting with her old mother by a window. I could see her frame lit by candles. That was on the second story, and below her the house was dark.

I felt the windows, searching each one until I found one unlocked. The latch was simple, and a dexterous individual could have opened it with a thin blade or a wire hook. I slid it open and glided through.

Within lay her kitchen. She kept it clean, but mostly it had the unused tidiness of a single woman with more house than she needed. I bent down, put my nose to the floor, and sniffed. There was a trail of horse scent across the floor, very faint, possibly no more than residual spoor left on boots. On fingers and toes I followed it to the pantry.

The house was so silent that the sound of Salation's southern voice, talking quietly to her mother came through the ceiling. The pantry was almost underneath that room. None of the food, and there wasn't much, bore the scent of horse, but one of the wooden planks of the floor did. I played with the nails until the secret of it was clear.

Underneath, resting in a tiny alcove, lay the removed pages of the Haid chronicles of the history of Yvoves Alson. It was all there, every missing page. In addition were coins and silverware. I stared at them curiously. I'd already stolen that silverware once and fenced it in the city. It was hard to gather up so that none of it clinked, but soon I had everything. A gesture sent it Elsewhere, and there it could clink all it wanted. No noise would escape. I replaced the floor board, stole back out the open window, and flicked it closed with a bit of wire.

In the alley behind her house I stared up at the woman's silhouette in the window. She looked tired, but the sound of her voice had been content. She liked to talk about her days with her mother. It must have been relaxing. I didn't want to watch. There was a quiet, flat anger in me that made my skin feel oily. It repelled me to even look at Salation with that feeling. I entered the shadows of the city, and put miles between me and that place.