

## *Rakah L'Sterah*

Rakah stood and stared out over the city of Eranos, the last of the faint lights fading as the people gave in to the night. He studied the last outlines as the moons high in the sky disappeared behind clouds, sinking the area into a deeper darkness. He turned, walked over to a bare table, and dragged a chair across the timber floor. The sound echoed through the almost empty chamber and a thin smile spread across his lips as he stepped around and slid into it. An uneasy chill filled the room, and the young man sitting opposite him had clearly lost his nerve. He shifted uneasily in his seat, not daring to take his eyes away from the man before him.

"So you wish to know my story?" Rakah wisped, his mouth barely moving as the sound escaped his lips. The room grew cold as the noise faded away. The young man dared not make a sound, and slowly nodded. Rakah allowed a brief laugh and smiled at him. "There is no reason to fear me. I am now old and frail, a fragment of what I once was."

Rakah stretched his bony fingers from within his robes and held them before him as if to study them. The smile on his face was replaced with sadness. "Alas, I can barely keep myself alive now," he said airily. He sighed and allowed his hands to be hidden amongst his robes once more.

"So I expect you shall want to know my entire story. But where shall I begin? Should I start with when I took up my position in council?" He frowned. "No, that is clearly forgetting much of what I have been through. No, I feel I must start at the beginning." The young man flinched, coming out of a daze, and quickly drew his quill and parchment close, eager to take notes. Rakah watched curiously as the man carefully etched the introduction of his story.

"It is now the year 2631, and it pains me to say this, almost three hundred years after my birth. I was raised in this very city, Eranos, to a young couple in their early twenties. Rolaeis was my mother. She was a simple woman, a loving wife and a caring mother. My father, Tahres, was the image of a man. He worked on the docks, managing his own fishery business. Finally, my elder brother, Theuris. I did not know him well in my youth, as he had left the city at a young age, travelling the lands to, as he would say, find himself."

"There is really very little to be said of my younger years. I was a typical boy, and at a young age I had decided that I wanted to follow in my father's footsteps, as most boys do. Many days were spent working the docks with him, even accompanying him on fishing trips into the harbour and beyond. The smells, the sights, the sounds, they accompany me to this day."

"When I returned to this once magnificent city not long ago, my memories flooded back. The salty air of the ocean, the caws of the birds high above, everything brought back memories of my youth." He spent a period in silence, smiling to himself, gazing into the past. After a moment, his face changed, and the scratching sounds of quill to parchment ceased. Rakah's voice changed. It became deeper, more serious.

"But of course, as with all stories, my life was not without conflict. There were what I shall call bandits that would regularly attack the city. For much of my youth, until I was well into my teens, the assaults had been few and far between. They would occasionally raid some of the bordering houses,

stealing from the poorest and least prepared, and would disappear before they were discovered. The only indication of their presence was the distinct lack of belongings."

"This cycle of relatively harmless theft changed, however. They started becoming more and more intrusive, brave if you will. By my sixteenth birthday, they were finding their way deeper and deeper into the city, robbing from the wealthy, and even murdering those that would attempt to stay them. On several occasions, I remember that they would take a hostage in order to ensure their safe getaway. I am unsure whether these hostages lived, though I never heard of any returning."

The young man seemed to find himself and was now enthralled with Rakah's story, so much so that he had stopped writing and was watching him with a mixed look of fear and awe. Rakah smiled and tapped the table lightly. The man, dazed, quickly got back to taking his notes. After a moment, he stopped and looked back up, eager to continue with the story. "I am yet to know your name, or indeed anything about you," Rakah said.

He hesitated for a moment. "My name is Pheras," he stammered. Rakah smiled to him. "Pheras, and what is it that you do?"

"I... I have been charged with seeking those who remain from the great war and to learn from them their story. The historical library in Me'Thora wishes to have all accounts of the period, both for..." Rakah cut him off. "Yes, yes, the library wants to be able to point fingers and place blame, as they have always wanted." Pheras blushed and seemed somewhat withdrawn once more. Rakah smiled as warmly as he could.

"I am sorry. They have been seeking me for some time, and it is not fair for me to place my frustration with you. They have finally caught up with me, and I feel that they deserve their reward." Pheras relaxed a little and managed a slight smile. "And please, if you have any questions, I would rather you ask them now. I don't quite feel like having them track me again." Pheras laughed nervously and gave a weak smile.

"So where was I?" He frowned for a moment, and started again with a flash of realisation. "Ah! The bandits. Yes, they did prove quite an issue as time grew on. As their numbers increased, so did their courage, and soon they were staging attacks on the city rather than the occasional occupant. There were several times that I can remember that resulted in many deaths. Thankfully, with my father working on the docks, me and my family were well away from the trouble, as they were mainly attacking from inland."

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