

## Written by Krandon of House Ledaal Air Aspect Elemental Dragon-Blooded

*I've never met my cousin. I don't even know what she looks like. Yet the word of her demise struck a cord in me. It was as if I have been lying dormant all these years, just waiting for some pretext, some excuse to rush out to the threshold and take my place amongst the epic heroes of the First Age.*

*I try not to kid myself. My dreams seem childlike, so I try to keep them to myself. Who am I to think that I am some hero let alone someone special? I am just the youngest member of the house Ledaal; the last amongst my brothers to become Dragon-blooded. Perhaps this is why I took an immediate liking to my newfound friends. They, like me, have dreams that are marred by the burden of family responsibility. Perhaps that is the reason they came with me upon this quest? If not to experience the thrill of adventure, then surely to escape.*

*My companions may seem like a motley bunch, but our differences make the whole. Most of all, they are my friends. Like I already told them, they are like brothers and sisters I did not have (well I do have brothers, but I hold them in disdain for the cruel punishments they put me through in my youth). I should allow a few brief words to describe my companions. Riyanne, exhibits much of the traits of her house. Beautiful and passionate, but dangerous and quick tempered. I feel for her, namely in the sense that she is often not given proper respect. Perhaps Aratus would get luckier with her if he was to realize that. Ah...Aratus. Now there's a character! He is quite impressive looking, and one could get very far with him if one were to feed his already inflated ego. I apologize if that paints a dour image of the celebrity gladiator. He does mean well...I think. I couldn't say the same for his family though. The House Cynis is ripe with treachery. I do hope the apple DOES fall far from the tree (and I am sure this pun is not lost on Aratus). Laric is quite the opposite of Aratus. He doesn't take himself so seriously and is much more responsible and mindful of the well being of others. If our group is to be considered a wheel, Laric would definitely be the hub. Since the day we boarded his ship, the Pillar of Autumn, Laric has worked non-stop to see us safely to Greatforks (but I will get to that in a moment). Like the others, Laric possesses the traits of his house as well. He is hardly ever still, but when he is, he is thoughtful and reflective. He is certainly wise beyond his years. It was quite impressive to see him, a mere passenger on this journey, bark orders to other shipmates and to see those sailors obey him as if he were their captain.*

*Then there's Feylin. What started as an attempt to keep up an appearance for appeasing our parents has...grown into something more. I am of course referring to our relationship. Both she and I are introspective. My dealings with my family have made me so. I can only guess that she suffers from the same affliction (if it can be called that). Love is not in the equation of preserving the Dynasty. Still, I cannot help but think.....Nay, some other time perhaps. Too many confusing emotions is already taking this missive on a tangent, so why don't I begin at, the beginning.*

### day 1

*I cannot really explain how it is we have come to be together, save that we are like-minded Dragon Blooded of the same generation, eager to see the world and groomed to take rightful stations of power yet at the same time playful and mischievous like naughty children. I met them at a party hosted by my own House. Upon seeing their parents greet mine like long lost brothers, I took it upon myself to act as host for the young ones. I don't think my charms lured them to follow me as much as a need for them to get away from their parents. Together we explored the Imperial palace. We cracked a few jokes, drank and made some other pleasant conversation. All the while we were followed by my father's advisor, ????. After we decided to confront him, telling him that we did not appreciate his eaves dropping he became quite coy with us, more or less daring us to walk into an ambush of thieves should we dare test our fates. Perhaps it is because we were bored or perhaps we felt like Brothers-in-arms we willfully and knowingly walked into that ambush. We dispatched the brigands like a choreographed dance. None of us got even a scratch. When we returned to the party that is when we first heard news of my cousin's demise. Without thinking, I volunteered to lead an expedition to rescue her. You wouldn't believe my surprise when the others were quick to offer their help and to follow me.*

## day 2

*Let's get one thing straight. I am no leader. Our house prides itself on staying neutral in all things. Plus I was told that to assume the mantle of leadership oftentimes invite envy. So when I met the others the following morning I tried to defer as much responsibility from myself as possible. I have nothing to offer them for helping me save my cousin, save for the promise of adventure. The others still wished to go, convinced that this would be a journey of epic proportions. Laric took us to port to inspect his ship. The Pillar of Autumn is a mighty Galleon. After meeting with the Captain and informing him of our plans we returned to the palace to gather up our things. I had a devil of a time scrambling around for books, scrolls and maps of the regions we were to travel to. The others were also made busy gathering up their belongings. After seeing what we had packed, one would think that we were headed to a country resort. The distant clouds in the eastern horizon however, gave evidence to the contrary.*

## day 3

*We set sail finally. To commemorate the occasion we had a small party in Aratus's quarters. We each gave a toast, wishing for a safe journey and should we meet any challenges, that we meet them head on like heroes. There was plenty to drink and I confess that I think I had a bit too much. I believe Riyanne was a bit excessive in the celebration department as well. Poor girl was sick as a dog the next day. I myself don't remember much of the evening save for having a dream of my mother. She tucked me in and whispered sweet words to me like I remember she used to do. Laric, acting like a professional sea-dog, didn't stay in Aratus's room for long. Aratus was quite the generous host but should he offer me that drink again, I am afraid I must respectfully decline.*

## day 4

*How embarrassing. I think I must have mistaken the omen of my dreams for Feylin's tender loving care. I can't believe I don't remember anything from last night. Apparently it was she who saw me to bed. I am never getting drunk EVER AGAIN! According to Feylin though, nothing happened. I do hope that is the truth and not just her saving me from embarrassment...not that I wouldn't mind if she and I....Oh never mind that. Where was I? Ah yes, I walked into the mess hall the next morning with the sole intention of getting some tea and then re-retiring to my quarters. I had crossed Riyanne earlier and she seemed sick...sick and distraught...for some reason. I heard a commotion later in Aratus's chamber. Laric seemed angry at Aratus over something. I wanted to ask what that was all about but my physical condition and weakness made me quickly forget. Later that afternoon our ship had entered in a full fledged storm. I climbed up on deck hoping to be of some assistance but it would seem that Aratus's wine was not quite finished working its way through my stomach. Hanging over the rail I contemplated going back home, but I imagined my brothers pointing at me, laughing and calling me names. I went back down and shut myself into my quarters.*

## day 5

*Things were a little easier on my stomach today. The sea was still kind of rough so I took the time to start up my research. I hardly saw the others. Even Feylin didn't come to visit me. I was thinking of visiting her, but I wouldn't know what to say considering I still felt a little awkward. When the air cleared I took advantage of perching myself in the crow's nest. Laric seemed a little apprehensive of letting me do so, but he allowed it. The breeze up here was exhilarating. One would still feel the salty mist sun-bake upon your skin from this height. I didn't stay up there for too long, but it felt like yesterday didn't happen. Thank Mela, I was myself again.*

## day 6

*Today was an eventful day. We saw a river dragon! I know it sounds exciting but in truth it was quite dangerous. It's head was as big as a small house. I managed to help Laric dump all of our food stores into the water in the hopes of distracting the beast. It worked, but we were now without food. Fortunately,*

*Nexus was only 2 days away. We had discussed the possibility of bypassing Nexus but with no supplies on board, getting to Nexus was now necessary before venturing forward.*

### *day 7*

*I spent much of the day continuing my research. Despite my poor/rushed selection of books, I managed to learn quite a bit of information on the locations we were headed to. I learned that Feylin also spent much of her time in her quarters to, working on some "project". Aratus and Laric spent some time in the sparring room "bonding" with each other.*

### *day 8*

*We arrive in Nexus! What a sight that city is! It's buildings are remnants of the First age. Some even spiral over twelve stories. Since we had some time to kill we decided to venture inside. Feylin and Aratus wanted to check out the marketplace. Rianne, Laric and I decided to stick together and explore this fine city. We came upon a house that attracted our attention. Not for the beautiful women who were cat-calling us to sample their "wares" but because of the sheer height and location of this building. The view on top must surely be spectacular. We tried to get past the guard but he wouldn't hear of it. He even threatened us should we press the matter. Using my powers I jumped to the first balcony. I started to tease the guard, hoping he would give chase but he remained emotionless and didn't budge from his post. Another guard accosted me. I thought I was going to be in for a fight but he obliged me in taking him to see his superior. The superior happened to be a woman named Usa. She possessed a strong business sense and I fortunately managed to pick up on it right away. I managed to get her to allow us access to the top floor of this building for a modest fee. She warned us though to stay away from others in the upper floors who might not take too kindly to our presence. Like children sneaking away to spots not allowed for us, we ventured to the top, pausing now and then to avoid detection. The view from this high up was well worth it! The city has much history to it. Laric and I promised ourselves to do some more exploring on our return. Although Usa's mention of the Fairfolk still lurking in the city is cause for some concern. Perhaps this is another adventure for another time? We set sail again at around noon time. The rest of the day was not so eventful*

### *day 9*

*Laric was cautious enough to consult with several local fishermen to make certain that a ship of our size can safely navigate through the river. The river was indeed wide enough. It was peaceful and the land on either side was covered with gently rolling hills and cedar trees. Not much in terms of wildlife could be seen as these waters are civilized for the most part.*

### *day 10*

*I honestly don't have much else to say of our river passing. Traversing through this watery corridor is much like crossing through your own living room. The scenery is picturesque to be sure but there were no dangers or events worth noting. The others kept themselves busy. Oh we would meet now and then to share stories but this was mostly during meal times. We all seemed to be preoccupied with our own little diversions.*

### *day 20*

*We arrive at Great Forks. Our Galleon practically casts a shadow over this small town. You can imagine the stares and gawking when we prideful paraded off the ship. At the first inn we found we rented an entire floor for ourselves. The elderly couple that ran the place immediately got to work to accommodate us but at the rate they moved, we could travel back to the imperial city by the time they cooked all of us a meal. In Laric's room we held another one of our meetings. Now that our water voyage was over we began to outline our new plans. I learned in my research that the three temples of Tenesherna, Aellyon & Freya. I'll get the names for you later) were run by the head priestess Lura. So I had every intention of sending a message to her in the hopes that we could arrange a meeting. Perhaps she would have some clue as to my*

*cousin's whereabouts. Our meeting was interrupted by the sound of much celebration coming from without. Going outside we were surprised to see the entire town to be enraptured into some kind of celebration. Even the elderly innkeepers were dancing about like spring chickens. I asked what was going on and I was told that this is a festival of Fertility. I approached a priestess who seemed to be lording over the affair and I asked if it was possible to speak to Lura. She replied that she would only be available tomorrow afternoon. "In the meantime" she suggested, "why not partake in our festival?" I didn't see the harm in it so I accepted. Of course when the priestess told me of the details of their festival my eyes widened. I motioned for Aratus to come over. I told him that if he partook in this event so would I. Aratus declined but then someone made a suggestion that Riyanne would be a huntress. That changed his mind. I also managed to twist the words coming out of Laric's mouth so that he too would seem like a willing participant. When the chase was on I didn't get very far. Perhaps it was because I was not familiar with the territory and perhaps it was because I was more interested in seeing what would happen when I got caught. My huntress caught me with my back turned. I raised my arms in surrender and when I turned around she revealed herself to me by lifting off her mask for a moment. It was Feylin! I was in shock. To describe what happened next would not be proper. All I will say is that hunter and stag met heaven amongst those bed of pines.*

*I collapsed in Feylin's arms afterwards. I do hope she does not think of me weak in constitution. That night I dreamed. I dreamed of my mother. It wasn't a drunken apparition this time. I saw her just as I last remembered her. She was in her bedroom and combing her hair. She looked at me and she smiled. I felt myself walking to her and kissing her on the lips. I don't ever remember doing so, but I was close to my mother. I then felt myself reach for a thin blade in an upper-dresser drawer. I walked behind her and plunged it into her back! I then ran out of the house. I ran out into blackness.*