

Prelude - The Nomad King

Supaklu opened his eyes. He didn't remember closing them, but nonetheless, here he was. He glanced around at the familiar palace and smiled. Yes, he was the king of this prosperous land, and he ruled fairly and justly. As his eyes scanned across the grand hall again, there was a woman in a rich red ball gown standing in front of him. She shook her head sadly.

"You know this is not the truth m'lord, and it hasn't been for centuries."

Supaklu felt a sharp pain in his chest, and looked down to see a blade shoved between his ribs, blood running down the front of his robes. His vision went black.

Supaklu opened his eyes. He didn't remember closing them, but nonetheless, here he was. He glanced around at the familiar palace and smiled. Yes, he had lived his good life, and this was his reward. It was not an opulent afterlife of golden roads and harmonic angels, but rather of a simple contentedness. He lived in a modest house with his family, raised cattle and grew crops. They were happy.

He looked around at his family, his two sons and his wife beaming at him as they ate, but then his eye caught a glimpse of red in the corner of the room. A woman in a rich ball gown stood there, shaking her head.

Supaklu felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end, as a wailing filled the room. He stood up, clutching his head between his hands in pain. He watched, frozen in agony as spirits came through the walls, the windows, the doors, and dragged his family away into darkness. His vision went black.

Supaklu opened his eyes. He remembered everything and grimaced. They were refugees from the Undying King, wandering the land eternally, always one step ahead but losing ground. He glanced around at the familiar large tent, and his eyes rested on a woman in a red ball gown.

"M'lord" She intoned with a bow.

"I haven't been a lord in many lifetimes." He retorted dryly, his eyes narrowing "Now witch, why are you here?"

At the word "witch" the edge of her mouth curled up in a wry grin, and she laughed. As she did, it was as if the very fabric of reality laughed with her. He shook his head, and reality re-asserted itself.

"Your people have been wandering Shyish for so long, my lord. I come offering an end to that

wandering." She paused for a moment. "A home."

Supaklu scoffed "There is no where that is safe for us, there is no where that the Undying King won't find us in time."

She paused again. Longer this time, as if considering the weight of what she was about to say. "There are places where even in a thousand eternities He cannot find you."

"And what is your price for this promised land?"

"I ask for your swords in a coming battle for the very fate of the realms themselves."

Supaklu nodded solemnly, sighing with the weight of countless years of pain and sacrifice. "Yes, it would be something like that, wouldn't it?"

The woman spoke up before he had a chance to respond further "It is said that we should keep our allies close, but our enemies closer, no?" Supaklu's eyebrow arched. "There is something you should know before you accept."

The next morning, Sheltar the Wandering City packed their canvas towers, and began their trek toward Lake Bykaal.