

It had taken the rest of the morning before they reached the outskirts of the long-abandoned village of Du-Rinell. A single twisted lellowtere tree stood by the side of the road, not more than a league away from the twin towers that marked the entrance gate to the town. They could see the first visible signs of the destroyed city. It had been hard to see from a distance but, as they neared, they could see that Du-Ranell was in a flat area next to a small lake, long since dry. Not many buildings remained standing since it had been mostly leveled by the forces of destruction long before they were born.

They came to a stop where the squat towers, joined by an entry arch, still stood as two dark sentries. Made from the dark blue-gray rocks of the mountain cliffs nearby, they held steady, showing little decay. However, the wooden walls that stretched around the town had long since crumbled. Rock mounds and remnants of walls covered the area where the buildings and shops had once stood. As the ossanes approached the gate, they grew nervous, recoiling their long necks in a growing panic.

“It looks like we enter without the mounts,” observed Caestia, his face showing the concern he felt. “This is the closest I’ve ever gotten. One of the inhabitants of Turqew I met at the Citadel told me a story of this place. He said they never come to this place out of fear that the Gods of the Void will reach out to grab them and drag them into their world.”

“Every place gets a reputation. I think it’s more likely that a pack of kuons will catch them while they sleep,” said Urith dismissively.

“Perhaps, but I seem to recall you didn’t believe much in hakras at one point.” Fedelm reminded him.

“Well, even a grown man can learn if faced with evidence,” he told her. “Right now, I see no proof that the gods of the Great Void have the power to reach us.” His face held a grin. “We need to focus on our biggest problem. Have you figured out the meaning of your visions?”

“Just this, you remember when Dughorm told us that you are needed to find the Skool?” She asked.

“Well, my visions from Mivraa confirmed that you will find it.”

“How could you know that?” he asked.

“In my vision, I saw you alone with a shield,” she said hesitating, then looking to her father for support. “Your shield looked different.”

“That makes no sense,” Urith responded. “Dughorm said we three must act like one.”

“Fedelm and I spoke about this,” Caestia interjected. “I believe he was protecting you. The Sacred Overlord has no idea you are the one. He was trying to destroy anyone who might be involved.”

Urith tried to dismiss the idea. Dughorm kept repeating the need for others who would travel with him. “Tell me what you know about the Skool. What should we look for?” Urith asked warily.

“I don’t know,” she confessed. “My uncertainty is made worse by things my father told me regarding items he heard from the skalds.”

Urith eyed Caestia. “I’m not sure I follow. What stories?”

Caestia looked over his mount at him, stroking the ossanes neck.

“Please understand that I wasn’t invited into discussions that Satres had with various skalds who traveled through Ynyover.” He told them. “But from those that I did overhear, I’m pretty sure you cannot be searching for it, at least not as you might think. Before he died, Heptarc stated a hero would find the gods weapon, but no human could find the Skool while looking for it.”

“Curse the gods,” Urith grew visibly upset at the riddle. “Have we wasted everything by coming to know this is impossible?”

“Perhaps not,” Fedelm told him while she thought over the riddle. “Right or wrong, the stories handed down seem to be true, just like our visions. So we just have to figure out the puzzle. If the rest of us fan out looking around for signs, perhaps you will just come across it.”

“What do you mean?” He looked at her skeptically. “I don’t understand. Don’t look for it and somehow it will find me?”

“Something like that.” Fedelm slid off her mount. “Look, you stated the gods like to manipulate us, right? This seems to be another way for them to work their will,” she said. “So, then you don’t look for it. Just look around the area without trying to find something. I know this sounds crazy, but it’s not any crazier than all the other things that happened to us so far.”