

“It was a trap!” Deanic said. “Rubin lured us into the capital, only to trap us inside its walls. He played us for fools.” Deanic began making his way to Wayland’s house. Bask grabbed Deanic’s arm and turned him around.

“You mean the entire army that you, Wayland, and the other Remakers led was defeated?!” Bask asked. “How could that happen?” Deanic broke Bask’s grip and shoved him to the side.

“A sky armada!” Deanic said. “Rubin had a bloody armada that covered the sky. He bombarded his own capital!” Deanic glared at Bask and the town guards who followed. Among the guards were two men named Collins and Fletcher. Both couldn’t be more than eighteen years old. Both had fathers who’d died in battle at the capital, and both now had widows as mothers. Bask’s Reptilian eyes widened in shock over the news about the sky armada. Deanic let Bask absorb that bit of information before continuing.

“I’m going to have the forces that remain go underground or disperse,” said Deanic, as he made his way to Aira’s house. “The surviving Remakers will have to go their separate ways. The Techan Empire will be hunting us down. We need to spread ourselves out in order to buy each of us a little more time to go into hiding, recover our losses, and hope another chance arises. The six I have with me are going to help get Wayland’s wife and children out of Techa.”

Deanic arrived at the front door of Aira’s house. He banged on it with his armored hand. Bask hadn’t noticed earlier, but Deanic’s armor was marred with dents and gashes. Deanic hadn’t bothered to repair it, even though he could have done so just by touching it. Before Bask could ask Deanic why he hadn’t bothered, the door opened.

“Deanic?” asked Aira. “What are you doing here? Is my husband with you?” Deanic didn’t even blink as Aira spoke.

“Wayland is dead, Aira,” Deanic said. “I have to get you out of Techa.” Aira’s eyes glazed over as if her mind were suddenly elsewhere. Deanic let Bask handle her while he entered the house and looked for Wayland’s two children—an eight-year-old girl named Aika and an infant boy named Hugo. Deanic walked through the kitchen and straight to the children’s room, where he slowly opened the door to peek in. Aika

was asleep in her bed on the left, while Hugo was in his crib to the right.

Deanic prepared to wake Aika. As he reached out to her with his hand, Aika rolled over in her sleep, revealing the birthmark on her back.

“No . . . how is that possible?” Deanic’s eyes widened. He quickly moved to Hugo’s crib and pulled the covers from him. Sure enough, Deanic’s fears were confirmed: Hugo had the mark of a Remaker, too, except his was on his chest. This changed everything Deanic had planned. He heard two sets of footsteps approaching him.

“When . . . ?” Deanic started, without even turning to face Aira and Bask. “When were you going to tell me that both your children had these marks on their bodies?!”