

Serian Winter

Your great-great grandfather was the king of Hound's Teeth before the empire came in and took over. In order to quell rebellion they gave his family the land on which the ancestral palace lies and a permanent place on the city council. Since then, your family has used its considerable influence in the city to support the empire, for fear of losing what you have left.

To be perfectly honest, you have nightmares about the empire falling and having to be king. The council is nice: if they screw something up, you're not personally responsible. Besides, this way you have plenty of time to do more entertaining things, like fence with the other young nobles of the city, or take attractive adventurers or townsgirls for drinks. Eventually you'll have to find a wife from a noble family and produce an heir, but you have a few more years of youth that you have every intention of squandering pleasantly. You also have a younger sister who will soon come of age, so the pressure on you is less than it might be.

Even though the kingship is definitely not at all for you, you rather enjoy being on the council. Leadership runs in your blood, and you can't imagine not having a hand in politics. In addition, you sometimes feel that certain other council members would entirely take away the prestige and power of the noble class, which would be a terrible suffering. If a class managed to hold onto power for hundreds of years, there must be something special about it. You have nothing against the lower classes, and do what you can to help them, but you shudder to think of them entirely ruling the city. Having guards and merchants on the council is strange enough.

You joined the council three years ago when your father died of a strange infection that the priests' magic couldn't cure. There was quite a rumpus about it as he was the first in your line in many years to not die naturally, of old age in his bed. The last one was your great-great-great grandfather who died in a battle with the empire before the priests could get to him. You assume that some magic was at work in this case, and something very devious.

Assuming the position so young was quite a shock to you. You had been of age for a few years, but did not expect to be called to duty for another 30 years or so, when your father retired. Your father hadn't had time to train you properly, and the first year was a fairly drastic crash course in the affairs of state.

Most of the affairs of state seem to be hour after hour of tedious bureaucracy. It really makes you wonder how one king managed to sort through half of it. Of course, you suppose there was probably less paperwork before them empire. If a king wanted something done, it happened. He didn't have to go through twelve officials in three city states.

Sometimes you almost understand the people like Koric who pine for the simple days before the empire. You might almost sympathize with them, except for the fact that you would be the obvious choice for king. Of course, you've heard rumors that there is another group in town being lead by a minor noble, Sir Jack or something that is trying to throw out the council for an elected council. It seems like such a silly system. How can people who spend their days haggling over the price of a loaf of bread have the time or ability to understand the workings of politics. It often seems like most of the nobles in the city don't even know what's going on, especially the ones who come to you all the time asking you to do favors for them in council.

While the common folk can be a hassle, sometimes the nobles are far worse. Many of them seem to think that you are on the council for their personal benefit. Now, you certainly are happy to help your friends when you can, the ones who have a new request every month get old quick. Then there are those who claim to be concerned about you. Ever since your father died, both your servants and some of your friends have been practically hovering. They're convinced that whoever killed him will come after you, too. You've heard people whispering that it might have been your sister, but you can't imagine that she would do it. She loved him far too much. She always has been better at politics than you. If someone were looking for a monarch, she would be the right one. She's involved in so many interesting causes that you barely understand.

Today should be fun though. These open meetings are always such a relief from the tedium

and bureaucracy. You know that some of the council members think it's a waste of time, but it gives you pleasure to help the common folk. Plus, it's a good chance to try and get a date with some cute adventuress.

People You Know:

The Council:

Lerin Lopel: Lerin is the mayor, and, well, he's not the sharpest knife in the drawer. Back when your father was still on the council, the old mayor died. No one could agree on who would be the next mayor. Somehow, they came across Lerin. He wasn't very bright, but he didn't disagree with anyone in particular. Everyone objected less to him than to some of the proposed candidates, so he wound up mayor. No one is exactly happy with having a fool as mayor, but at least no one's trying to kill him. Every once in a while, he will stumble into some good but crazy idea that no one else would ever have thought of.

Koric Maltin: Koric the Guildmage is a stodgy old stick in the mud. He rants about how much better things were in the old days before the coming of the empire. He absolutely despises you because you are the only person he could easily suggest putting forth as a king, and you have no interest. Even if you did want to be king, you somehow doubt that you would get to make many decisions if you followed his plans.

Stani Bowin: Stani Bowin is the high priest of Poral, the prime god of the empire. High Priest Bowin is an exemplary individual, whom you have never seen hurt anyone. He truly is a good person, you only wish he wouldn't tell everyone about it so often, and would leave your own flaws alone for a while.

Mortak Vonis: The head of the guards. He does his job well. His family has worked under your family for as long as your family has ruled. He used to help guard the palace grounds when you were a kid, and you remember his father coming over for dinner. You trust your life in his hands, which is part of the reason you are a little concerned about your father's mysterious death. Mortak has said very little on the subject, but you know he is concerned about you, and feels that he let your father down. You've heard some nasty rumors about him drinking and gambling, but what man doesn't have a few vices? Well, what man besides Stani Bowin, that is.

Tofen Sarish: The head of the merchants' guild. Tofen is the richest person in town, far wealthier than your family, despite its noble title. She is very attractive and intelligent, but you often feel like her only interest in anyone is what she can get from them. She wouldn't be on the council if she didn't think it would bring her more business and help her fix laws to be better for her.