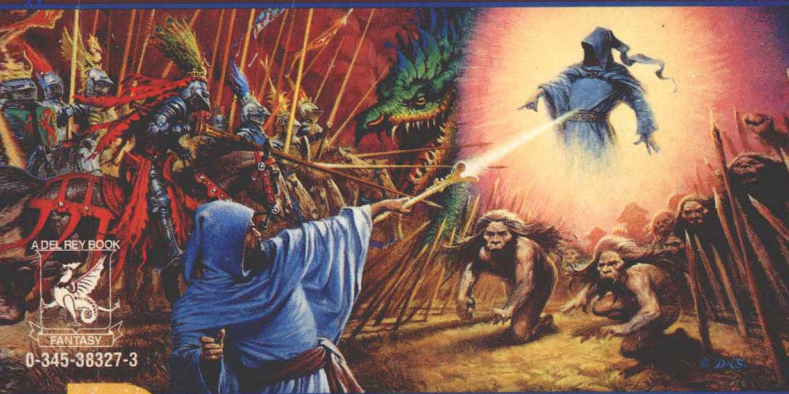


THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER!

# DAVID EDDINGS



# DOMES OF FIRE

BOOK ONE OF THE TAMULI

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# DOMES



David Eddings



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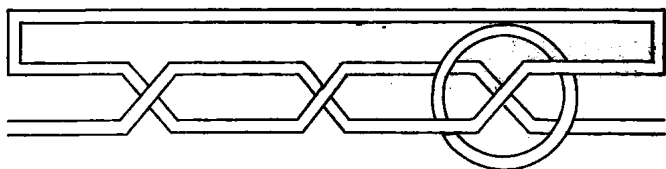
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## TO SPEAK NO EVIL

"You won't get anything from me, Sparhawk," Belton blustered.

"Care to wager on that?" Kalten asked.

"Just talk, Belton," Sparhawk insisted implacably.

"I—I can't!" Belton's sneering bravado crumbled. "Sparhawk, I beg of you. It means my life if I say anything. You don't know what you're asking!"

"I'm not *asking*." Sparhawk's face was bleak.

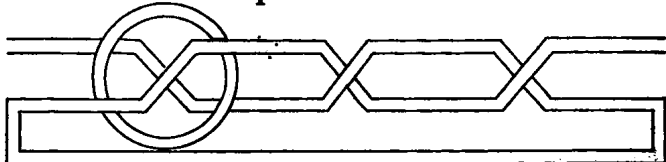
Then, without warning, a deathly chill enveloped the woods, and the midafternoon sun darkened.

Belton screamed.

An inky cloud seemed to spring from the surrounding trees, coalescing around the shrieking prisoner. Sparhawk jumped back with a startled oath, his hand going to his sword hilt.

Belton's voice rose in a screech, and horrible sounds came from the now-impenetrable darkness surrounding him—sounds of breaking bones and tearing flesh. The shrieking broke off suddenly, but the sounds continued for several eternal-seeming minutes. Then, as quickly as it had come, the cloud vanished.

Sparhawk recoiled in revulsion. His prisoner had been torn to pieces.



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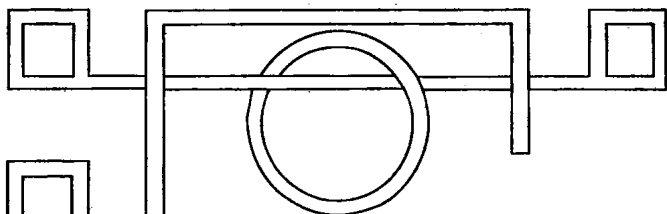
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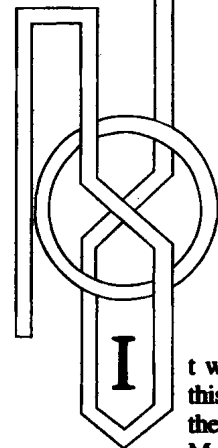
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**\*Forthcoming**



## PROLOGUE

*—Excerpted from Chapter Two of The  
Cyrga Affair: An Examination of  
the Recent Crisis. Compiled by the  
Contemporary History Department of  
the University of Matherion.*



**I**t was quite obvious to the Imperial Council at this point that the empire was facing a threat of the gravest nature—a threat that his Imperial Majesty's government was ill-prepared to confront. The empire had long relied upon the armies of Atan to defend her interests during the periodic outbreaks of incidental civic disorder that are normal and to be expected in a disparate population ruled by a strong central authority. The situation facing his Majesty's government this time, however, did not appear to arise from spontaneous demonstrations by a few malcontented hotheads spilling out into the streets from various university campuses during the traditional recess that follows final examinations. Those particular demonstrations can be taken in stride, and order is usually restored with a minimum of bloodshed.

The government soon realized that this time, however, things were different. The demonstrators were not high-spirited schoolboys, for one thing, and domestic tranquility did not return when classes at the universities resumed. The authorities might still have maintained order had the various disruptions been the result of ordinary revolutionary fervor. The mere presence of Atan warriors can dampen the spirits of even the most enthusiastic under normal circumstances. This time, the customary acts of vandalism accompanying the demonstrations were quite obvi-

ously of paranormal origin. Inevitably, the imperial government cast a questioning eye at the Styrics in Sarsos. An investigation by Styric members of the Imperial Council whose loyalty to the throne could not be questioned, however, quite clearly indicated that Styricum had had no part in the disturbances. The paranormal incidents were obviously coming from some as-yet-to-be-determined sources and were so widespread that they could not have emanated from the activities of a few Styric renegades. The Styrics themselves were unable to identify the source of this activity, and even the legendary Zalasta, preeminent magician in all of Styricum though he might be, ruefully confessed to total bafflement.

It was Zalasta, however, who suggested the course ultimately taken by his Majesty's government. He advised that the empire might seek assistance from the Eosian continent, and he specifically directed the government's attention to a man named Sparhawk.

All imperial representatives on the Eosian continent were immediately commanded to drop everything else and to concentrate their full attention upon this man. It was imperative that his Majesty's government have information about this Sparhawk person. As the reports from Eosia began to filter in, the Imperial Council began to develop a composite picture of Sparhawk: his appearance, his personality, and his history.

Sir Sparhawk, they discovered, was a member of one of the quasi-religious orders of the Elene Church. His particular order is referred to as the "Pandion Knights." He is a tall, lean man of early middle years with a battered face, a keen intelligence, and an abrupt, even abrasive manner. The Knights of the Elene Church are fearsome warriors, and Sir Sparhawk is in the forefront of their ranks of champions. At the time in the history of the Eosian continent when the four orders of the Church Knights were founded, the circumstances were so desperate that the Elenes set aside their customary prejudices and permitted the Militant Orders to receive instruction in the arcane practices of Styricum, and it was the proficiency of the Church Knights in those arts that helped them to prevail during the First Zemoch War some five centuries ago.

Sir Sparhawk held a position for which there is no equivalent in our empire. He was the hereditary "Champion" of the royal house of the kingdom of Elenia. Western Elenes have a chivalric

culture replete with many archaisms. The "Challenge" (essentially an offer to engage in single combat) is the customary response of members of the nobility who feel that their honor has been somehow sullied. It is amazing to note that not even ruling monarchs are exempt from the necessity of answering these Challenges. In order to avoid the inconvenience of responding to the impertinences of assorted hotheads, the monarchs of Eosia customarily designate some highly skilled (and usually widely feared) warrior as a surrogate. Sir Sparhawk's nature and reputation are such that even the most quarrelsome nobles of the kingdom of Elenia find after careful consideration that they have not *really* been insulted. It is a credit to Sir Sparhawk's skill and cool judgment that he has seldom even been obliged to kill anyone during these affairs, since, by ancient custom, a severely incapacitated combatant may save his life by surrendering and withdrawing his Challenge.

After his father's death, Sir Sparhawk presented himself to King Aldreas, the father of the present queen, to take up his duties. King Aldreas, however, was a weak monarch, and he was dominated by his sister, Arissa, and by Annias, the Primate of Cimmura, who was also Princess Arissa's surreptitious lover and the father of her bastard son, Lycheas. The Primate of Cimmura, who was the *de facto* ruler of Elenia, had hopes of ascending the throne of the Archprelacy of the Elene Church in the Holy City of Chyrellos, and the presence of the stern and moralistic Church Knight at the court inconvenienced him. And so it was that he persuaded King Aldreas to send Sir Sparhawk into exile in the Kingdom of Rendor.

In time, King Aldreas also became inconvenient, and Primate Annias and the princess poisoned him, thus elevating Princess Ehlana, Aldreas' daughter, to the throne. Though she was young, Queen Ehlana had received some training from Sir Sparhawk as a child and she was a far stronger monarch than her father had been. She soon became more than a mere inconvenience to the primate. He poisoned her as well, but Sir Sparhawk's fellow Pandions, aided by their tutor in the arcane arts, a Styric woman named Sephrenia, cast an enchantment that sealed the queen up in crystal and sustained her life.

Thus it stood when Sir Sparhawk returned from exile. Since the Militant Orders had no wish to see the Primate of Cimmura on the Archprelate's throne, certain of the champions of the



other three orders were sent to assist Sir Sparhawk in finding an antidote or a cure that could restore Queen Ehlana to health. Since the queen had denied Annias access to her treasury in the past, the Church Knights reasoned that should she be restored, she would once again deny Annias the funds he needed to pursue his candidacy.

Annias allied himself with a renegade Pandion named Martel, and this Martel person was, like all Pandions, skilled in the use of Styric magic. He cast obstacles, both physical and supernatural, in Sparhawk's path, but Sir Sparhawk and his companions were ultimately successful in discovering that Queen Ehlana could only be restored by a magical object known as the "Bhelliom."

Western Elenes are a peculiar people. They have a level of sophistication in worldly matters that sometimes surpasses our own, but at the same time, they have an almost childlike belief in the more lurid forms of magic. This "Bhelliom," we are told, is a very large sapphire that was laboriously carved into the shape of a rose at some time in the distant past. The Elenes here insist that the artisan who carved it was a *Troll*. We will not dwell on that absurdity.

At any rate, Sir Sparhawk and his friends overcame many obstacles and were ultimately able to obtain the peculiar talisman, and (they claim) it was successful in restoring Queen Ehlana—although one strongly suspects that their tutor, Sephrenia, accomplished the task unaided, and that the apparent use of the Bhelliom was little more than a subterfuge she used to protect her from the virulent bigotry of western Elenes.

When Archprelate Cluvonus died, the Hierocracy of the Elene Church journeyed to Chyrellos to participate in the "election" of his successor. (Election is a peculiar practice that involves the stating of preference. That candidate who receives the approval of a majority of his fellows is elevated to the office in question. This, of course, is an unnatural procedure, but since the Elene clergy is ostensibly celibate, there is no nonscandalous way the Archprelacy can be made hereditary.) The Primate of Cimmura had bribed a goodly number of high churchmen to state a preference for him during the deliberations of the Hierocracy, but he still fell short of the needed majority. It was at this point that his underling, the aforementioned Martel, led an assault on the Holy City, hoping thereby to stampede the Hierocracy into electing

Primate Annias. Sir Sparhawk and a limited number of Church Knights were able to keep Martel away from the Basilica where the Hierocracy was deliberating. Most of the city of Chyrellos, however, was severely damaged or destroyed during the fighting.

As the situation reached crisis proportions, help arrived for the beleaguered defenders in the form of the armies of the western Elene kingdoms. (Elene politics, one notes, are quite robust.) The connection between the Primate of Cimmura and the renegade Martel came to light as well as the fact that the pair had a subterranean arrangement with Otha of Zemoch. Outraged by the perfidy of the man, the Hierocracy rejected his candidacy and elected instead one Dolmant, the Patriarch of Demos. This Dolmant appears to be competent, though it may be too early to say for certain.

Queen Ehlana of the Kingdom of Elenia was scarcely more than a child, but she appeared to be a strong-willed and spirited young woman. She had long had a secret preference for Sir Sparhawk, though he was more than twenty years her senior, and upon her recovery it had been announced that the two were betrothed. Following the election of Dolmant to the Archprelacy, they were wed. Peculiarly enough, the queen retained her authority, although we must suspect that Sir Sparhawk exerts considerable influence upon her in state as well as domestic matters.

The involvement of the Emperor of Zemoch in the internal affairs of the Elene Church was, of course, a *casus belli*, and the armies of western Eosia, led by the Church Knights, marched eastward across Lamorkand to meet the Zemoch hordes poised on the border. The long-dreaded Second Zemoch War had begun.

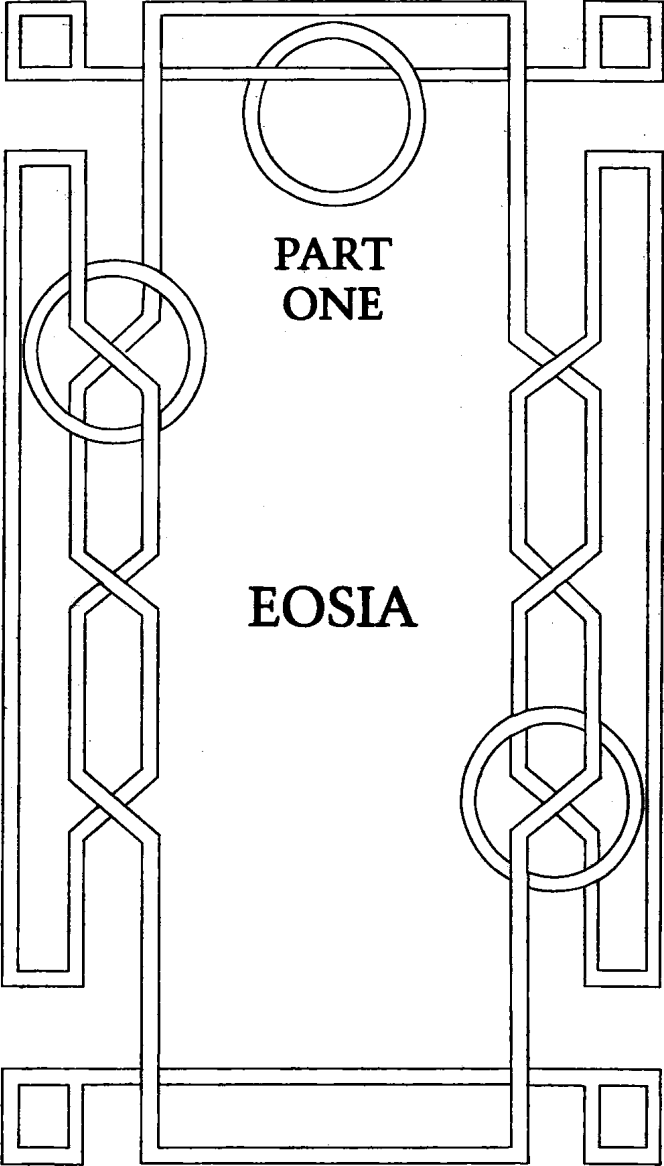
Sir Sparhawk and his companions, however, rode north to avoid the turmoil of the battlefield and then turned eastward, crossed the mountains of northern Zemoch, and surreptitiously made their way to Otha's capital at the city of Zemoch, evidently in pursuit of Annias and Martel.

The best efforts of the empire's agents in the west have failed to reveal precisely what took place at Zemoch. It is quite certain that Annias, Martel, and even Otha himself perished there, but they are of little note in the pageant of history. What is far more relevant is the incontrovertible fact that Azash, Elder God of Styricum and the driving force behind Otha and his Zemochs,

*also* perished, and it is undeniably true that Sir Sparhawk was responsible. We must concede that the levels of magic unleashed at Zemoch were beyond our comprehension and that Sir Sparhawk has powers at his command such as no mortal has ever possessed. As evidence of the levels of violence unleashed in the confrontation, we need only point to the fact that the city of Zemoch was utterly destroyed during the discussions.

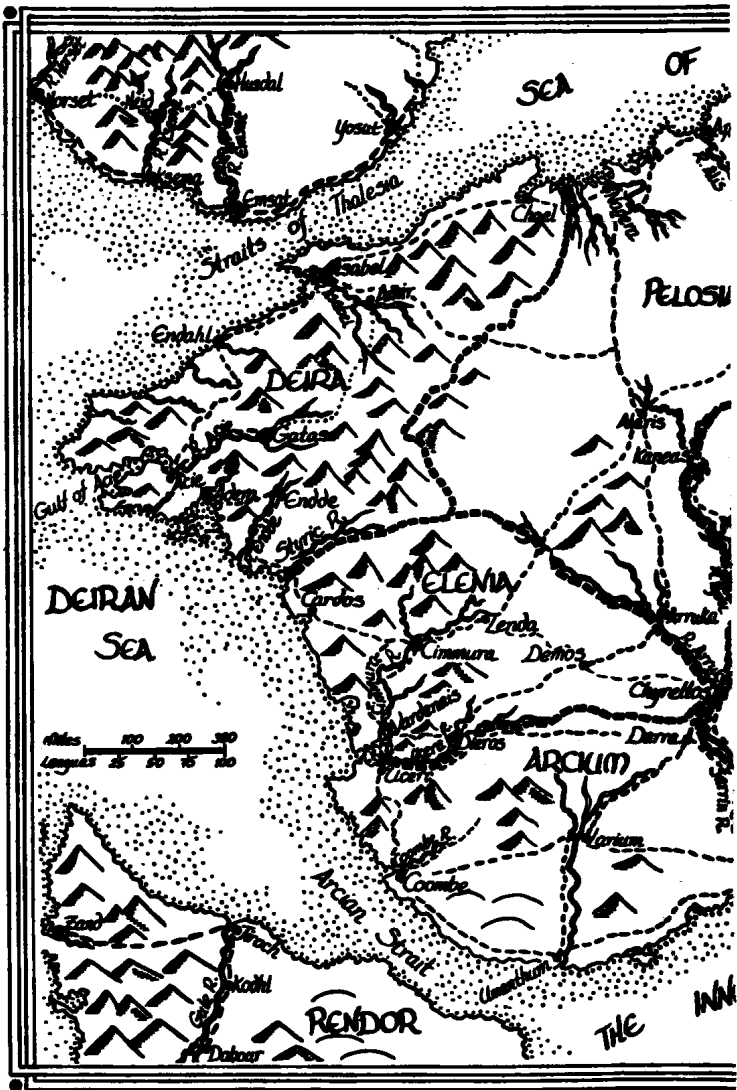
Clearly, Zalasta the Styric had been right. Sir Sparhawk, the Prince Consort of Queen Ehlana, was the one man in all the world capable of dealing with the crisis in Tamuli. Unfortunately, Sir Sparhawk was not a citizen of the Tamul Empire, and thus could not be summoned to the imperial capital at Matherion by the emperor. His Majesty's government was in a quandary. The emperor had no authority over this Sparhawk, and to have been obliged to appeal to a man who was essentially a private citizen would have been an unthinkable humiliation.

The situation in the empire was daily worsening, and our need for the intervention of Sir Sparhawk was growing more and more urgent. Of equal urgency was the absolute necessity of maintaining the empire's dignity. It was ultimately the Foreign Office's most brilliant diplomat, First Secretary Oscagne, who devised a solution to the dilemma. We will discuss his Excellency's brilliant diplomatic ploy at greater length in the following chapter.



**PART  
ONE**

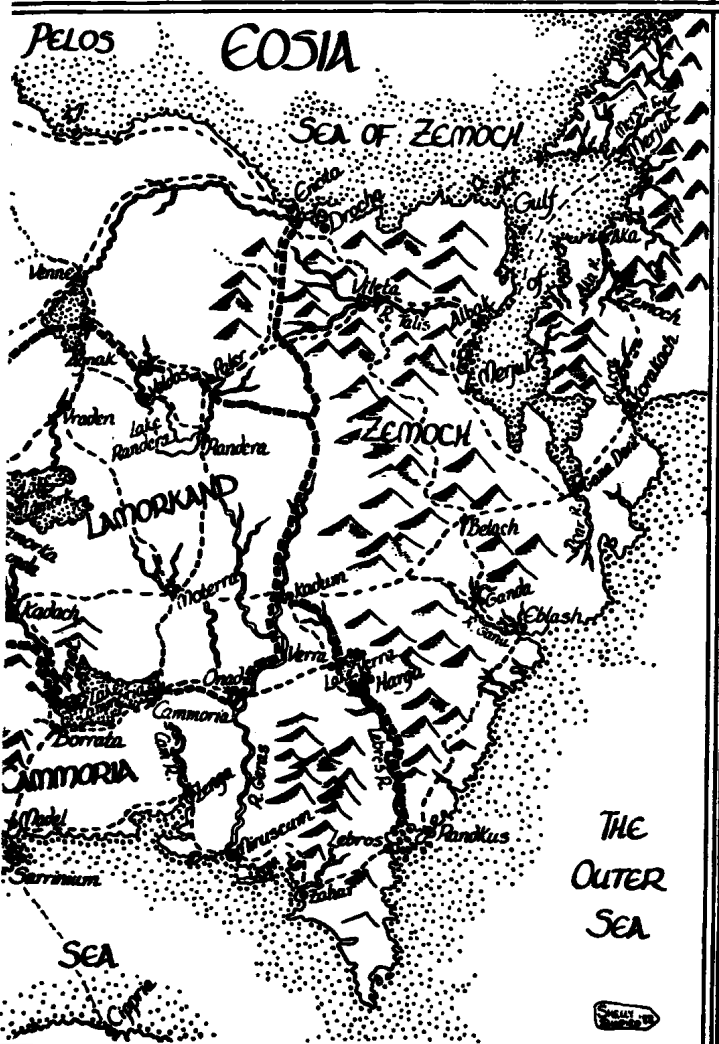
**EOSIA**



PELOS

EOSIA

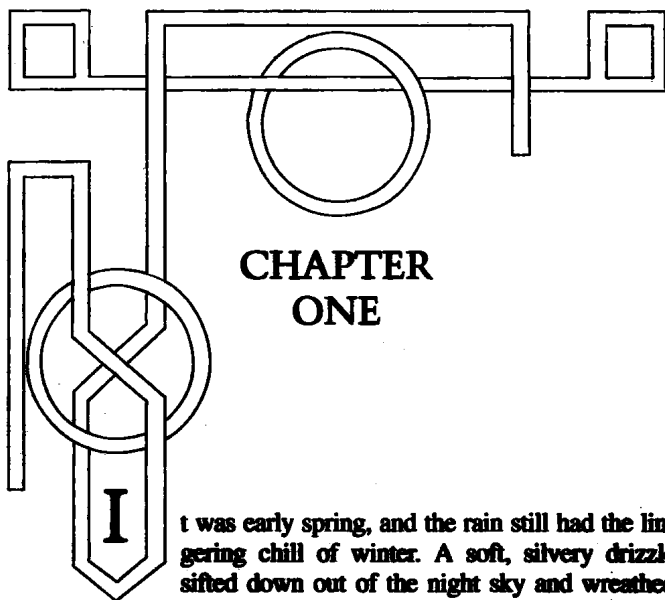
SEA OF ZEMOCH



THE  
OUTER  
SEA







## CHAPTER ONE

**I**t was early spring, and the rain still had the lingering chill of winter. A soft, silvery drizzle sifted down out of the night sky and wreathed around the blocky watchtowers of Cimmura, hissing in the torches on each side of the broad gate and making the stones of the road leading up to the gate shiny and black. A lone rider approached the city. He was wrapped in a heavy traveller's cloak and rode a tall, shaggy roan horse with a long nose and flat, vicious eyes. The traveller was a big man, a bigness of large, heavy bone and ropy tendon rather than of flesh. His hair was coarse and black, and at some time his nose had been broken. He rode easily but with the peculiar alertness of the trained warrior.

The big roan shuddered absently, shaking the rain out of his shaggy coat as they approached the east gate of the city and stopped in the ruddy circle of torchlight just outside the wall.

An unshaven gate guard in a rust-splotched breastplate and helmet, his patched green cloak hanging negligently from one shoulder, came out of the gate house to look inquiringly at the traveller. He was swaying slightly on his feet.

"Just passing through, neighbor," the big man said in a quiet voice. He pushed back the hood of his cloak.



"Oh," the guard said, "it's you, Prince Sparhawk. I didn't recognize you. Welcome home."

"Thank you," Sparhawk replied. He could smell the cheap wine on the man's breath.

"Would you like to have me send word to the palace that you've arrived, your Highness?"

"No. Don't bother them. I can unsaddle my own horse." Sparhawk privately disliked ceremonies—particularly late at night. He leaned over and handed the guard a small coin. "Go back inside, neighbor. You'll catch cold if you stand out here in the rain." He nudged his horse and rode on through the gate.

The district near the city wall was poor, with shabby, run-down houses standing tightly packed beside each other, their second stories projecting out over the wet, littered streets. Sparhawk rode up a narrow, cobbled lane with the slow clatter of the big roan's steel-shod hooves echoing back from the buildings. The night breeze had come up, and the crude signs identifying this or that tightly shuttered shop swung creaking on rusty hooks.

A dog with nothing better to do came out of an alley to bark at them with brainless self-importance. Sparhawk's horse turned his head slightly to give the wet cur a long, level stare that spoke eloquently of death. The empty-headed dog's barking trailed off and he cringed back, his ratlike tail between his legs. The horse bore down on him purposefully. The dog whined, then yelped, turned, and fled. Sparhawk's horse snorted derisively.

"That makes you feel better, Faran?" Sparhawk asked the roan.

Faran flicked his ears.

"Shall we proceed then?"

A torch burned fitfully at an intersection, and a buxom young whore in a cheap dress stood, wet and bedraggled, in its ruddy, flaring light. Her dark hair was plastered to her head, the rouge on her cheeks was streaked, and she had a resigned expression on her face.

"What are you doing out here in the rain, Naween?" Sparhawk asked her, reining in his horse.

"I've been waiting for you, Sparhawk." Her tone was arch, and her dark eyes wicked.

"Or for anyone else?"