

## I S H R A H A

...your father dancing the ways of combat upon the great savannah, the wind rustling through the grasslands distant for miles around save the north where mountains of metal left long in water reign, and the great tents of the clan, other warriors beside your father watching and practicing... you swaying with them trying to copy their moves even though you stumble on new legs... the heat tiring, the wind dry...

Ishraha's father, Selam was a leading Mataru of the Tarn of the Flurayan (Safron) clan of the Nuyan-Khôm. Sent to explore strange sightings near the sea coast with a contingent of Mataru and their families.

...still the great savannah, broken in brilliant and strange trees where the flowers grow under the shade of twisted roots... sapphire dawns and scarlet sunsets, the sky so wide, so expansive... a blanket under which you are familiar to as your mother and father's arms...

...the happiness, peaceful joy of clansmen who whisper words to you under the bright canopy... tents moved, horses carry... the grasses continue and the horizon tucks in the warm sky... huge fires blazing with warmth while above twinkling of the stars as clansmen sing and weave stories that drift you to sleep...

...the grasses yellowing, the trees shrinking and the sky blistering in hazes of yellow and still the horses carry, tents move, but the people remain happy... father twists and spins, kicks and pushes, and the men they follow with you beside him, a happy smile upon his face as you mimic with them... no longer the mountains of bad metal can be seen, lost to the sun at its height...

...stronger the heat, the horses droop until the water wells... the tents move less and the people stay smiling under the bright roof protecting you above... racing among the canvas and skins, through the feet of elders and doors between, breaking to watch the men dance and weave, their braids spinning about them so gently while...

...now the land cracks and splinters and the people smile less, but are happy together, but something is wrong, it seeps into the food, into the practice, into the play, and the sky is unhappy... and then it awakens in screams, shrieking searing light and crimson smears across its sucked dry covering...

...the sky frowns grey and dusty, from behind bars of blood, a cage inscribed with black pictures of monsters that chase you in sleep and not even mother or father can stop them... the sky parts grey to black, harsh black and the white embers are gone, only now red streams of fire... clansmen screaming, passed chained through a crowd, one by one, up a blood red stone pyramid, burning blood down its steps... roaring of people, roaring of sky which opens its mouth as the blood spurts up and it screams... father nowhere... mother nowhere... just clansmen... then strange robed men from behind the red sky walking on the air, sweep through the crowd and the sky parts...

Lankan priests pressing on the doors of the Nuyani took them by surprise by overwhelming numbers and channeling. Taken to a Lankan Temple Oasis and one by one dragged to the temple of Klysus and all brutally murdered... well, not all. As the sacrifices began a rogue group of Xiosians arrived and slaughtered the Lankan, Ishraha was lost in the confusion as were several Mataru who also escaped (but would soon become Notanu for fleeing the battle - these few men now wander Emer, exiled)

...among trees, shade and cool, the sky darting between the branches and leaves, water gurgling upon stones, chilled and refreshing, soft to touch... someone not your mother, holding, caressing, speaking, feeding... moving always with horses pulling houses... the sky glazed in an aftermath of red, gold - tired... mountains, not of the dying metal colour, but these like the angry sky, capped in clouds join the horses with the setting sun and with them you rise upward, the sky grows cold...

Ishraha was picked up by traders returning to Danarchis from Reandor trading gold with the Lankanok along the way. They found the child outside the burnt ruin of the Oasis strewn with bodies and decided to take him with them back to Danarchis.

...then a magnificent building built into the mountains, overlooking blue river swollen in hard water with deepest green forests luxurious in foliage... the building sculpted as if it were part of the mountains themselves... the horses leading to this place...

The Danarchan traders when they stopped off at the Changramai Monastery to deliver supplies were approached by the monks who asked about the boy and they told the monks of how they found him. The monks asked he stay.

...not dark halls of stone, but filtered pools of the sky... many rooms in the house removed and white robed men taking the rooms inside their halls... men taking interest in you, speaking soft words... then you see them moving, pushing, dancing the way of the air in the hallways but different than father... you practice beside them... and the men talk more with you, soft words... woman-not-your-mother leaves and you are with the robed men...

...you awake up to smiling sky in trees from stones...