

# **Children of the Trinity**

## **Part 1 – Viktor**

It was very late, and I was feeling particularly old. I sat at a desk that was almost as old as I was, its dark finish reflecting a little of the soft light coming from the brass lamp sitting to one side of my desk. I sat staring at the blank pages before me. I did not want to write this book, have no desire to share my story, and although I am an avid reader, I have never been inspired to put pen to paper. Somehow, I let myself get bullied into telling my story. If you somehow acquired this book and are reading it know this, I write this as a personal letter of sorts, we have forgotten so much over time, is really the nature of things. People and places are born, live and then die, and then fade in our memories as time goes by. If they are somehow remembered, it is usually as a myth or legend, and those stories rarely get the facts correct. There are somethings that should never be forgotten, they are just too important to lose. So, here I sit thinking about where I should start. I hope that the information I write will never be needed again, but that is unlikely. So, if you are reading this, and you are the one who, like me, was born with a responsibility that you did not ask for, I hope this helps. If you are not that person and you somehow happened to find yourself reading this, let me say this. You would be better to just put it down now and walk away. This is not a bedtime story. You may read this and think it is the writings of a mad man, or just a fantastical tale. Well, keep your comments and thoughts to yourself. They are unwanted, nor do they make the slightest bit of difference to me. You are not supposed to be reading this anyway.

## Chapter 1 – Awakening

I am Viktor, I am not going to bore you with all the details of my childhood. All my relationships, friends, and family, memories of holidays or festivals or the time I feel from a tree. Most of these things I have forgotten or buried away in some dark corner of my mind. They are memories that have no special value or meaning to me anymore. People are born, grow old and die. Villages, Towns, Cities and even Empires do the same. Sometimes we remember little things, like a picture in our mind, just a brief glimpse of something that happened long ago, and sometimes the memory is forgotten and gone forever. There are some things from my youth that might be relevant and some that are not. I will try to keep things on point, but as I have never written a story, I may stray. Depending on when you read this it could be helpful, or a complete waste of your time. I will say a few words, in case you are somehow reading this when you are still young. If you are like me, you will feel different from others, you will have trouble connecting. What other people think is interesting or fun, you probably will have no interest in. Yes, you will have friends and family, but when you hear them talk about relationships, friendship, and love, you know it does not feel the same for you. You might feel isolated or alone. You might feel sad or sorry for yourself, I understand, and the best advice I can give you is to get used to it and get over it. Nothing you say or do is going to change anything, so the sooner you understand that and accept it, the better you will be. I fought it for years and in the end, nothing changed. What I will tell you is how I started to learn about myself, What the world was really like and how people treated each other. We all have a view on life, when you are young, you feel like to know everything and what is best for everyone. As you get older your thoughts change and the reality of life sets in. I came to understand that later in life.

I had two instructors you could say, trying to think of a good description of what they really were. We have a love-hate relationship. They need me, and I need them. In many ways our relationship

is symbiotic. They wanted something from me and were willing to assist me to achieve that goal. At times I thought they were family, that they cared, and would be there when I needed them. It is possible they felt the same. Our relationship has changed many times over the years, but that is to be expected. When you have something important to do, everything and everyone else becomes secondary. It is good to remember that sometimes you must make a very hard choice, at the time you may feel like a monster, but you have a task, and it would be much worse for you and others if you fail. I was not born this cold hearted; it was something that happened over time. So, I would advise you to hold on to any warm and fuzzy feelings you have for as long as possible, it is difficult to get them back once you let go.

If I told you in detail about my youth, we would be here all day, and do not think it would have any meaning to you. I am trying to decide how much I should share and how much to leave out. Everything I could tell you about my home and the people would be nothing but a ghost story to you, they have all been lost in time. I really need to say enough to give you some understanding. In the end I am sure whatever I write will be too much or not enough for you. I can only hope it is helpful in some way.

I was born in a small country village, in a kingdom that no longer exists. At this time in history a village was just a group of people that banded together for support and safety. Villages were just a collection of small homes and farms, places that were built to provide shelter and warmth. Villages were not built to be fancy; they were built because you were safer in numbers. They people would work together, eat together, live together, and die together. It would start the same, just a few farms, then a tradesman or two would build a home, that would bring more farmers and so on. Soon you would have a village, as it grew it became a town or even a city. No matter how large it grew the basic concept was the same, support and survival. My Village was like any other village at the time, it was a collection of small homes, workshops, and farms. At this time in history, the entire world, or what most people

considered the world, was just the surrounding area of the village and any other nearby village or town that you might trade with. Yes, everyone knew there were other villages and towns and even cities that were much further away, but they would never leave the village to visit such a place, so what happened in these faraway places had little bearing on the day-to-day life of my village. What mattered in my village was the harvest, the weather, births and deaths, food supplies and following the teaching of the church so you would be protected in this life and next. The Village had a group of the eldest and wisest, they were the Elders, and they made the law, decided who would marry, what crops should be planted, who received what share of the village supplies, they were judge and jury in all things. The Elders in my village were kind and looked after everyone and the needs of the entire community. They made sure everyone did their fair share of work and gave according to the church.

I had a family; it was a good family and they treated me well. I had brothers and sisters, all older. I always had the thought in my head that my parents had not planned for me, as it was several years gap between myself and my closest sibling, I also looked different. My parents never talked about it; my family just accepted me. I was taller than my family, even from a young age, was thin with blond hair and blue eyes. I did not have big muscles, but I was strong from working on the farm. I had a narrow face, with thin cheeks and straight nose. My family was the opposite, all dark haired with dark eyes and short, not short compared to the other people of the village, just short compared to me. Their faces were rounder, and my brothers and sisters all had my dad's flat nose. My skin was fair almost pale, theirs was not, it wasn't very dark, but darker than mine, the kind of skin you have when you work outside every day. Even though I worked in the same fields as them, I was always looking pale. As you might have already guessed, my family were farmers. We grew mostly root vegetables as well as some wheat. We had a few chickens and a couple of goats. I had good times and happy memories with them, I just never felt that close. It is nothing they did that made me feel this way, they just shared memories of a time when I was not around. Things that happened, people that had passed, all memories for them

but meant nothing to me. I always felt like I was missing something, not part of their lives because of that gap. Did I love them? Did they love me? Well people often throw the word love around, I am not sure they really know what it means, they just say it. I know I did not know what it meant when I was young. I would say it just like everyone else, but I did not feel it, at least not the way I would imagine it to be. But remember I was young and did not really know everything like I thought I did. Let's just say that I had a good family and was happy and leave it at that. I am not really in the mood to have some deep thoughts on the nature of love and family.

I was a curious child, always watching and sometimes getting in the way. I was respectful of people but was often more of a problem than a help because I was curious. As I grew, I spent more time wandering the hills, woods, streams, and valleys that surrounded the village, whenever I had free time from farm work. I enjoyed exploring unfamiliar places, looking. I was one of those kids that always wanted to know what was just over the hill or around the corner. As I said before, I never really felt much of a connection with people, especially the ones in the village around the same age. They were nice enough to me; we just did not share common interests. I preferred to explore the woods and fields that surrounded the village, lost in my mind that was stimulated by my surroundings. I was and still am fascinated by the natural world.

All the kids of the village went to school, well not really a school, we just gathered each day in one of the villagers' homes and were given lessons that would help us be a good member of the village. They were very practical lessons. We would learn about crops, livestock, working with wood and stone, and about the area where we lived. This lasted until we were seven. I found the experience rather boring. At first, I was interested, and I learned from the lessons being taught, but let's be honest, it is not overly complicated, and I learned quickly and then was bored waiting for the others to fully understand what was being taught. I discovered that I enjoyed learning more and more about anything. I would

explore endlessly during the warm summer months and observe the tradesmen of the village as they used their hands to build and shape wood, metal and even cloth. I was fascinated watching ants march along, wondering what they were doing, what they were thinking, did they understand how small they were and if they really understood the size of the world around them. They always seemed to be in a hurry. I would watch them go from their ant hill to some nearby flower, collect a small piece of leaf and then return. I could do the same task, almost without moving, it made me wonder about the size of the world and how we move around it, making maps based on a human understanding of distance. The Ants would move fast, but the distance I could travel in a few minutes would take them all day. Birds were smaller than I was, but because they could fly, they could travel ten times the distance I could in a day, especially uphill. I was different from my family and other kids in the village because I always had questions, no matter what explanation was given to me, it did not seem enough, and I would pester whomever was teaching us with thousands of questions, because of this I could often wander and no one seemed to care or even miss me, they would just let me go off on my own adventures, thankful I think that I was not around asking more questions they did not know the answer to.

It was on one of these adventures that I had my first experience of what I later would refer to as my skill. At the time I really did not really understand or connected what happened with my skill, I think of myself as intelligent and quick to learn, occasionally I can be a little slow. Do not ever tell me that in person, as I do not take criticism well. I spent the morning walking through the farms and fields. It was a typical morning for me, if the weather was good, I would spend my time exploring my little corner of the world. Someday, if you want, I can tell you all about the birds, insects, the plants, and flowers and all the other things I discovered in my wanderings, just be sure you have a few days to sit and listen. Anyway, that morning I was walking through a small field, the type of field you can find in almost any part of the world. Tall grass, blowing in the breeze, flowers. insects and animals going about their business. I am sure you know a place just like that. I was walking, just enjoying the day, and looking all around. I am

sure there was plenty of work to do at the farm, but I was not really that helpful, as I was distracted easily. My father would often let me go when my brothers and sisters stayed behind to work. I do not think I was born to be a farmer, and I think my father knew that. I had a different path, I just needed to find it. This field was not so large but was full of tiny purple flowers that seemed to appear overnight, or at least from the last time I was here. I stopped to pick one of these flowers and held it in my fingers as I was closely examining the colors and shape of the pedals, when the flower wilted and drooped sideways and died. I did not really think much of this at the time, I just assumed the flower had died because I picked it, yes it died faster than normal, but I did not have another explanation other than the flower was probably about to die anyway, my picking it just speed the process along. I mean what else could it be? I was not the only one out that morning, another person from the village was also enjoying the morning. It was a young woman, who was busy picking the little flowers and placing them in a basket. She saw me, smiled, and waved. I waved back. I was not really paying attention to her, I was looking at the flower she had picked, her baskets were almost full of flowers. Unlike mine that had died almost instantly, her basket of flowers was still bright purple and fresh, they had not died. I picked another flower and held it, nothing happened, it stayed bright and healthy. I must have been right the first time, that flower must have been almost dead or something else was wrong with it, I just somehow picked the one flower in a field full of them, that happened to have something wrong with it.

‘Good morning, Viktor’ she called when she saw me. My concentration was broken, I said ‘morning’ She went back to picking flowers. I looked back down at the second flower I had picked, and it was now dead like the first. I thought it was odd, but I am sure there was a reason. I admit I am not an expert on flowers. I considered staying and picking more flowers to see what would happen. However, I was not alone, and it would look strange if I kept picking flowers and throwing them away. The Idea that the flower had something wrong or was almost dead or now maybe even the patch of flowers where I was, had some infection or insects that was causing them to die so quickly, was a reasonable



explanation, I should just forget about it, but I could not. I felt like something else was going on, flowers do not die like that, at least the flowers I had picked for our home before. I did not like unusual events without a proper expiation, it was the nature of my mind to find an answer and I would find the answer to this. I would just have to think more about it, maybe come back another time and see if it happened again. Whatever I did, it would need to wait until I was alone.

Let me explain a little more. I am not trying to be offensive, but at this time, and in my village the people are simpletons. I do not mean that they are dumb, they just like life simple, the sun rises and the sun sets. You plant crops at one certain time and harvest at another. If you suggest anything else, they get very uncomfortable. They also have many superstitions. They follow the teachings of the church, but also have old beliefs mixed in with the new. Many people avoided black cats. I had seen the wood tradesmen stop and walk around a ladder, never walking under it. I have even knocked on wood for luck. It is true the church has changed much of the old superstitions, but some remain. I became aware of how people looked at me and treated me, so I stopped asking so many questions, keeping my thoughts to myself. The Villagers treated me differently when I disagreed with what they were teaching, it was easier if I just accepted what the villagers said. Most of the time they did not have answers to my questions anyway, they would just answer 'It's God's will.' All the good, all the bad, why things grew, or the weather was bad. All was Gods will. It was the most frustrating answer I had ever heard and each time someone said it, I grew more frustrated. My relationship with other people in my village was not the best. I could have done more, been more involved in other people's lives and been more friendly. I was friendly enough, always polite, and respectful, I just did not make bonds with other villagers. So many of the people looked at me as a little strange, I did not want to reinforce that belief, by standing in a field picking flowers. I would return or go somewhere else alone, to find an explanation for what had happened, when I could be alone.

Everyone in the village had a job, one that helped support the entire community. Most villages children learned from their parents and did whatever they did. That is a very practical system and works well most of the time. I was actually surprised by my village in this regard. At some point in history one of the elders decided that a person's skill would be used to help the village regardless of what the parents did. The children were watched and judged as they were taught. Then the elders would determine where they could be the most benefit to the village. Most of the time the decision was that the child would stay and learn their trade from their parents. Every so often, however, one of the kids was taught another trade, this was normally a skilled trade like wood working or the black smith. Thinking back on it, this was a very progressive system that benefited the village more than just letting a child's talent go to waste. It was very progressive indeed considering the village also blamed evil spirits when the crops were bad.

Like I said, most kids were sent back with their parents to work in the fields. It took little skill or knowledge. A few were good with their hands; and might work with the blacksmith, or carpenters. Even fewer were taught how to be a leader of the village, manage the people and resources effectively, one day becoming an Elder. Only the smartest children were taught the skills to be an Elder, and it was normally only one every few years. I had assumed that might be the path for me. I had a knack for learning quickly. I could read and write and knew my numbers. I understood more about crops, livestock, weather, and trade than most. That was not the case, I think the way I asked to many questions, thought of different ways to do things, or that I looked different from my parents and the people of the village were all part of the decision that I would never be an Elder.

Instead, I was to continue my education with two other people in the village, villagers that I knew of but did not know well. Conroy and Daana. Conroy was old, he had long grey hair and did not wash very often. He could barely see anymore and was hard of hearing. Conroy could be a little

temperamental, always complaining about something. Even with these faults Conroy taught me more about letters and words, how to properly put them together to write. That was a major problem when your job was to read and write all the communications with the outside world and document the daily logs of the village. Conroy was the scribe of the Village, and his job was to write and report and log the daily status of the village. Because Conroy could not see well it was becoming difficult for him to do his job. Daana was my second teacher; she had taken over most of the duties from Conroy and I spent every day with her reading or writing in the logs. I had really thought I would be an Elder someday, but it seems life had another plan for me, one that was rather boring. I understood the importance of the logs and reports, we needed to know how much the farms produced, how many sheep and cattle were born each year, how much grain we had or apples that were harvested. You see our village and every other village and town had to pay tribute to the crown for its protection. Four times a year our village would load a wagon or more with the crowns portion of our labor, the logs were the way it was tracked and calculated each season. It was a rather dull job, but it did have its perks. I had access to the few books in the Village and I was able to read all the dispatches that we received for neighboring villages, as well as from the capital, so I was more current on the world than most. Most of the dispatches that arrived were notices of new laws or warnings of evil doings in the world. This affected my thinking greatly, but also taught me even more how important it was to keep my thoughts to myself. You would be amazed at the things people say are evil. One dispatch that arrived from the capitol, gave an order that any chicken that matched the appearance and description of the enclosed drawing, that had not laid eggs for a week was possessed by evil spirits and needed to be killed. The drawing that was included was a picture of a rooster. Daana had let me read this, before she crumpled it up and threw it in the fire. It was obvious the person who wrote this had never been to a farm, roosters do not lay eggs. It was part of the scribe's job to read and post notices and laws, but we also used our own judgment, some things were just plain dumb, and they ended up just like the evil rooster notice, being burnt in the fire.

My days were always the same. In the early morning I would walk in the countryside, make notes of anything new or different, I would report on the crops and the animals. Sometimes I would hear from a local farmer on the far outreach of the village, of wolves, bears or other animals that might cause a problem for the village, or something that could be hunted. I would return and make notes of the day. I would report to Conroy everything I had learned, and he would meet with the Elders to decide what the village would do. I would read any dispatches that had arrived or write a dispatch that Conroy would dictate to me. Daana would review my work and I would be free to read the history of the village or make corrections to my writing if something was wrong or not clear. I was getting better each day, trust me, that was a good thing. If you are writing a report and made a mistake, your only way to correct it was to start all over again. I was learning to be very careful with my words. It was mostly routine and not a great challenge, but it gave me more knowledge than most, so I guess it was better than planting potatoes, or cleaning up after livestock.

Today would have been same as every other day, except I kept thinking about the flower. It should not have died so quickly, the more I thought about it the more I was sure something had happened. I left the village that afternoon and headed to another field I knew of, one that I was unlikely to encounter anyone. There were flowers growing here as well. I looked around to make sure I was alone, then bent and picked one. I held it up and watched, nothing happened. The flower looked fine. I felt a sense of relief. I was even more positive now that there was something already wrong with the flowers before. I was finally ready to accept that somehow, I had just picked a couple of flowers by coincidence. It was time to forget about flowers and head home. I looked down at the flower again as I was about to drop it, and it had changed, it died, just like before but not as quickly. I was a little shocked, why had it taken longer? What was happening? I picked another and watched as it died and then a third and fourth. Each flower died, but the time it took changed. Sometimes it was faster, and sometimes slower. But the result was always the same. The sun was beginning to go down, I watched as

the shadows of night spread across the field. My stomach was making noise and reminded me I had not eaten all day. I needed to go home. Even though the village and my family let me wonder alone, staying out too late would be a problem, I was distracted by the events that were taking place I did not want to go yet, but I knew I must. I picked one more flower and before I could even rise, it was dead. I started to walk home, standing there repeating the process was not giving me any answers. I needed to think, but that was getting difficult to do now that my stomach was talking to me loudly. I continued to think about the flowers as I walked home.

For several days I tried this experiment when I could get away without someone watching me. The results over the next few days did not seem to answer anything, sometimes the flower would die and sometimes it would not, I was trying to understand why. I thought it might be the time of day, but that did not seem to matter. I thought it was my emotions, was I happy, sad, or angry. None of these seemed to make the slightest difference. This was something I had to figure out, and I had to do it on my own. If anyone in the Village knew what I was doing, I would be banished or worse. I have said that many things were explained as the will of God, well that was good things. The villagers accepted that and went about their lives. If it was something bad, that was a different matter. The reaction of the villagers to things like that was never good. I told you about some of the superstitions, one of the villagers had a small black cat, it belonged to their youngest girl. That girl loved that cat, and they were always seen together. One of the wood tradesmen was fixing a roof and fell from the ladder, as he lay on the ground in a great deal of pain, he saw that cat walking from underneath the ladder. Blame for the accident was quickly put on that cat, the Elders moved swiftly, I will not go into details on what they did, let's just say the cat would never again cause a problem for the village. The girl was heartbroken, and I don't think she was ever the same again. What seemed to be happening with me and the flowers would not be viewed as the will of God, but the act of evil. Unnatural death was always seen as a bad omen. I still felt like the same person, but I knew terrible things would happen if someone found out.

I still had my job to do, so I could not spend all my time trying to figure this out. However, it was because of my job that the answer finally revealed itself to me. On this day I was headed for a farm on the very edge of what you would call our village community. It was a half a day's walk. I was going to see what the farmer could tell me; this farm often would see animals that were in the area first. Some of them had even come from the White Mountains. The farmer would let the village know of potential threats or when they spotted game that was near to hunt. Because it was going to take the whole day, and maybe longer depending on what information the farmer had, I had packed a bag with a change of clothes, paper and ink, and some food. I had walked most of the morning and decided to stop at a small stream that was close to the farm. I thought this would be a good place to stop and eat. I had fresh water and could enjoy a little more solitude before I arrived.

One thing I enjoy doing when I have a chance is to fish. The stream offered a perfect opportunity to relax and enjoy one of my favorite past times. I had selected a stick that was flexible but strong enough that it would not break if I happened to catch anything. I tied a string to the stick and a hook to the string. I baited it with a fresh worm that I had dug up nearby. It did not take long to get a bite; I could see that it was a good size fish for such a small stream. I was thinking that I would share my catch with the farmer, or maybe just make a quick fire and eat it for lunch. I was hungry after all. I pulled the fish from the water and grabbed it. As soon as my fingers closed around the fish, it died. There was more, it wasn't just dead, but seemed to dry up and shrink. Soon it was almost nothing and fell from my hand. I looked at the dead fish, or what was left of it lying on the ground. A little shocked by what had just happened. I realized that I had been hungry when the flower died. I felt a little overwhelmed by my sudden revelation. Was that the answer? Was hunger the key to what had happened to the flowers and now the fish? I was not sure if that was the answer, I had a small problem with this. I am young and growing, so really, I am always hungry. I felt like there was a connection maybe. Something in the way I was feeling, I was not totally convinced in my thinking, but it felt right. I had learned to trust my

instincts, that this was the answer but needed to know more, mostly why and how I was able to do this. I felt a little relieved that I had finally discovered what caused these strange occurrences, or at least something to think more about. I had not even had a place to start figuring this out, but now I felt like I could focus on how I was feeling. I sat for a moment thinking about what just happened, when I noticed one more thing, I wasn't hungry anymore.

I could have sat there for the rest of the day, but I had a job to do, besides, I needed time to think about what I discovered, and I did not think I would find all my answers in the next few hours no matter where I was. I collected my things and proceeded to the farm as quickly as I could. The farmer was waiting for me. He proceeded to talk about everything and anything, most of it was meaningless, but the farmer wanted to talk. Living on the edge of the community he did not get to go to the village often, so any company was welcome. The information was of little importance, but I noted all the Farmer had to report. Normally I would have stayed the night and left in the early morning. It was already late in the afternoon, but I wanted to get back. I made an excuse to the farmer, that I needed to return and could not stay. The Farmer accepted it and thought it would be safe, he had not seen any dangerous animals in the area. I know you are thinking that was a mistake, and something was going to happen. Well guess what, nothing did.

I arrived home after dark, safe and sound. The walk did me good. I did a lot of thinking as I walked, was I absorbing something from the flowers or the fish? It was strange that I was not hungry after what happened to the fish. I was not convinced that I was absorbing anything, it had not felt that way, it was more like a change. I would need more time, I really needed to be careful no one could ever find out what I was capable of, I do not think banishment would have been an option. I think I would have been killed; I was already viewed as odd in the village. If they found out about this, they would immediately assume the worst, they would not just let me go. They would probably kill me not just from

fear, but pity as well. The only other choice was to lock me up and report me to the authorities. They would take me to Apainar, a fate that would be worse than death. I needed to hide this, and if I thought for a minute I could not, I would have to run. I wondered why I could do this; I felt the same as I always have. I was never one to really believe in sprits, demons, monsters, or any of the other things that supposedly roamed the night, things that our elders would tell us every chance they could. I know I am not very old, but nothing I have seen or read leads me to believe in such things. Most of the reports could be explained if you just looked at it rationally. The Demon eyes people saw were nothing more than a torch light reflecting off an animal's eyes. The bad crops were usually due to a lazy farmer who had not properly prepared the soil. For most people it was easier to blame some myth or monster to explain these problems, easier than admitting they were scared, lazy or just plain stupid. Yet here I was, doing something that I would have never believed, something that I would have said was just another story made up by the elders to keep the village in line with their rules. You see, even with my young age, I learned the best way to keep people safe and docile was to keep them scared and stupid.

So now I knew I had a special skill, but I could not control it, and did not know what good it would do me. That was what I was determined to find out. I needed time to experiment and discover more about this, and I needed to do it alone. The risk would be too great if anyone else in the village discovered what I could do. This was a problem, I needed to go well away from the village and farms, farther away than I had been before to keep prying eyes away from what I was doing. However, I had work to do and could not just disappear for long periods. Sometimes I over think things, if I just relax and let things happen it usually works itself out. The answer to my problem came that very day. I was busy writing in the village log all the information that the farmer had given me. It did not take long as he did not have much to report. Daana was reviewing my work, when she was finished, I assumed that she would dismiss me for the day but did not.



“Viktor, you did well today. Your reports are getting better each time. Very concise and to the point. I am happy to see you making so much progress.” She said, as I stood waiting for her to let me go for the day. The Village log, and the rest of the written dispatches were all kept in a small area in the back of the main hall of the village. The Hall was a meeting place, but also served as sleeping quarters when visitors arrived, or where celebrations were held. Twice a year we hold a festival. One at the start of the growing seasons, asking the powers that be for a good harvest. The other was at the end of the season to celebrate the harvest. The hall was also used for the occasional wedding or funeral ceremony. Most of the time it was used as a place for the elders to meet, and where Conroy, Daana and I would do our work. The Room where we worked had a rather large table, that we could use to spread out the information we gathered, write reports, and update the log. Daana was currently sitting in a chair behind the table as she spoke to me. I had been working on a much smaller table, when I was updating the log with my report. Daana did not say I was free to go, instead she put all the logs and reports she had been working on to one side and looked at me. “I have a question for you.” She said, I was a little surprised, but I grabbed the chair I had been sitting on and sat down across from Daana, curious as to what she wanted to ask me.

“As you know we write a report each month, that report is then taken to the Village of Ashford, then they take it along with their report to the next village. This chain continues until all the reports arrive at the capitol for the kings’ men to review and document.” Of course, I knew this, but did not say anything, I just nodded my head. “Well, I would normally send the report with a hunting party. However, it seems that all hunters have gone north, because of a report of a large herd of Deer that had been seen. We do not know how long they will be gone, and we cannot delay sending the report. It would be very unwise as the king may send soldiers to investigate why. The soldiers serve a purpose, to protect the kingdom, but if they come here for any other reason other than trouble. Well, it could lead to more issues. We are a quiet village and enjoy the peace we have. We do not need soldiers here with nothing

better to do than drink and interfere with our daily lives. You understand we need to send our report, and I was thinking you are old enough to make the journey. Would you be interested in doing this?"

I was very careful not to let the expression of excitement show on my face, I tried to look as if I was thinking seriously, considering if I could be successful in what Daana was asking. The truth was how I could not believe my luck. The trip to Ashford would take at least four days each way. It would have been much faster on a horse, but the hunters were the only ones to have horses other than the work horses used to plow the fields of the farms. I did not mind the walk; it would give me time to learn about my new skill. I would be far from anyone, I would have time, and I maybe could discover more answers to my questions. I looked at Daana "I think that I am ready, I understand how important this is and believe I will be successful, I would be happy to go, and thank you and the elders for your trust in asking me" I replied, "I will do what's necessary for the village." I added. I did not want to appear too eager.

"That is good Viktor, I appreciate you are willing to do this. You will leave tomorrow at first light. Go home and prepare yourself. I would expect you to be gone for eight days, maybe nine depending on the condition of the roads and weather, ten days at most. Make sure you have everything you need for that time. I will finish the village report and have it ready for you tonight. Meet me here just after sunset."

I had a few hours before sunset, so I went home to pack. I really did not have many personal things, but I would need a few things to camp along the road. This time of year was pleasant but still I needed to be ready. I packed a bed roll and blanket, as well as my writing tools. I only had one other set of clothes but packed them as well. Then I went off to the village stores to collect a little food for the trip. Hanina was the master of the stores, she had a few younger villagers working with her, learning the trade. It may seem like a simple task, keeping all the village food accounted for and shared equally. But things are not always so simple. Hanina understood much about crops, meats, grains, and everything

else that could be eaten. Her job was important, some food would spoil before others, so those items needed to be shared sooner rather than later. Sometimes a person ate more and sometimes less. She would plan for visitors and celebrations; she always knew how long the village could survive on the stores on hand. If supplies were constantly resupplied, there would be no issue. During a bad season, or when the hunters returned home with less than what was expected. Hanina would immediately begin to adjust and ration the supplies until such time as she felt they were well stocked again. The Elders and the people of the village respected her skill and never questioned when she put the village on what she called a 'diet.' Hanina never wanted people to worry, so she never said that supplies were low. She would just tell the Elders that the villagers were looking too fat and needed to lose some weight, so everyone was going on the Hanina Diet. She was also very patient with the younger folks who were learning the skills she was so good at.

“Good afternoon Hanina,” I said as I entered the stores building. “I came to get supplies. Daana has requested that I take the reports to Ashford. She said that I should be gone for eight to ten days. I was hoping you could spare something for me, so I would not have to hunt or forage for food.” “Hi Viktor, Yes Daana told me you would be taking the report to Ashford this time. I have already prepared a sack with what you will need.” She said to me, already reaching for a bag of stuff and handing it to me. “This should be enough for your trip, but you must ration yourself. You may find yourself hungry more than normal because of all the walking you will do. You will need a little more food than what you normally eat, but not so much. The best thing to do is eat a little, give it a chance to fill your stomach and then eat more if you need to. Do not eat with your eyes, if you pay attention and are careful you will be fine.” She told me, it almost felt like an order. Everyone respected her as did I so her advice was to be taken seriously. I took the bag from her and headed back home. When I arrived, I needed to add the stores of food to my bag. Hanina had given me a supply of dried meats, a hard crust bread that can last for weeks without mold, some dried fruits, and nuts. It was nothing spectacular, but it would be enough.

I could also hunt and fish if I found the time. I had finished packing and everything seemed in order. The sun was just setting, so I headed back to meet with Daana.

Daana was still sitting behind the large table when I arrived. "Good evening," I said, "Good evening, Viktor" Daana replied. "This is the village report." She said as she handed me a tube that was made of leather. The leather would keep the papers dry and safe from the elements. These same leather tubes were used by scribes and messengers everywhere. Having one in your possession was like a pass, people knew what they were and who carried them, they let you travel freely without being questioned as to your intentions or business. They were also stamped with the king's mark, so if one was ever found or the carrier fell to misfortune anyone who found it would take it to the nearest settlement and eventually it would end up in the Kings court. "Please be careful as you travel." Daana said "the roads are good, and reports say they are safe. The weather should also be good for your journey. You are to go directly to Ashford and meet with Abe. He will take the reports from you. He may also have reports that you can bring back. I know you are a well-behaved young man, but Ashford is not like our village. They do not seem to be as concerned about the proper ways young people should behave with each other, or they do not always follow the strict rules of the church. You are a young man, and some folks might think you are a suitable candidate for their daughters. Villages are always looking to grow and bring more skills under their control. I think you will be perfectly safe, or I would not send you. You would be best to just stay with Abe, he will look out for you. Just take care of business and return as quick as you can. Remember when you are in Ashford, you represent our village. What you say and do will reflect on all of us. You must be respectful to everyone, show them that we are good and decent folks." I nodded to Daana "I will do as you ask, no shame will come to this village from me." I replied.

“There is one more thing we need to discuss Viktor,” Danna reached into a pocket on her dress and took out a silver coin. “Take this, I do not think you will need it. Abe will make sure you have a place to stay and food. However, it is better to be safe.” In the village we did not use coins, we all shared or traded for what we needed. We would sell crops and wild game to merchants that traveled through the area, but the coins were kept by the Elders and used for the village. I took the coin from Daana, “I am sure I will be fine, and I will give this back to you when I return.” I spoke. “Viktor, you have been a wonderful student, you have learned everything that Conroy and I have taught you. We are sending you on this task because we believe you are ready. You are no longer a student of ours, but a fellow scribe.” Daana said to me. “Conroy cannot go out into the world any longer, and I have too much to do here. You are young, smart, and capable. If you are successful in this trip, you will be formally recognized as a village scribe. You will be responsible for delivering our reports and reporting back on what you find and hear. The hunters have done a fine job, but sometimes they can exaggerate what they report, or they are off doing their own work for the village so cannot help us. Complete this task well and the task will be added to your work around the village.” I was a little shocked but what Daana was telling me, but more excited than anything. Daana continued to talk, and I had to focus. “You will receive one silver coin per month as payment. You are responsible for your own needs; you will have to budget for your trips. If the need arises, and you must go on a longer trip, the elders may offer more coins as a one-time expense. So, feel free to spend the coin as you wish. However, you will not receive another until the following month so spend wisely. I should also tell you that some of the villagers have relatives in other communities that you may visit. They will often pay you to write and deliver letters for them. This is the skill of a scribe, that we can trade for. Good luck on your first trip, I will see you back here in no more than ten days.”

I returned home but could barely sleep. The current events kept me awake all night; I was excited to leave. It would give me a chance to think about all that had happened and plan as to what I

wanted to do. The night seemed to last forever, but soon the sky was starting to lighten, the sun would be up soon. I rose and gathered my things. I have only spoken a little about my family, and I do not intend to say more at this time except to say I was raised in a good home. My parents provided well for everyone. They along with my teachers taught me values. I do have siblings as well, and maybe I will talk about them more at some point, but for now it is not that important. That morning my parents were up to wish me good luck and to be careful. I told them I would and that I would be back in eight days or so.

I was outside and on the road as the sun came up over the horizon. I felt the excitement of something new, the start of an adventure. I assumed most people would feel this way, but later I learned that was not true. As difficult as it was for me to stay in one place and never think beyond the village, for others it was the opposite. The thought of leaving was terrifying, they preferred to just stay safe and comfortable with what was known. I felt like these first steps were the start of my life, that everything before was not important. Now is when my life started, now is what mattered. Everything was the same. The villagers were rising, and the farmers were already working in the fields as I walked past. For them it was just another day. It was new for me, a special day, looking back little did I know, it was the start of an exceptionally long ordeal. I was young and had an optimistic view of the world, so for now we can say it was an adventure. Sometimes I miss my youth, when things were different, I was a much different person, happy and joyful. Not to say everything goes bad or that I still do not feel joy. When you are young it just seems that everything and anything is possible. That fades with age.