

## Chapter One- The Chamber of Scaraden

"I want to know why I was summoned?" Urganak yelled as he stopped in the threshold of the door, his breath stolen at the vastness of the grand hall. He had been inside its white walls before but rarely enough that the hugeness of it still made him feel like a tiny speck in the universe. He looked towards the great domed roof, supported by two figures both standing far over fifty feet. He cast his eyes away from the marble, sculpted in the likeness of the first kings of Scaraden, who had formed the eternal empire.

Urganak marched forward, a ceremonial cape billowing with every step. A couple of paces behind, two of his murka generals followed, their arms scraping the red floor tiles. As he walked, Urganak straightened the medal on his chest. The image of the flag of his 'home' planet filled him with confidence, even if the red moon of the warrist movement would outrage the members of the council.

The chairs of the hall were empty along Urganak's march but statues of all the high kings stared down at him from marble eyeballs but Urganak kept his own eyes on the stage in front of him. Eight of the nine seats were occupied

and the figures were sat forward watching Urganak as intently as the statues did. Urganak stopped at their feet and bowed at the large marble figures that stood behind the council. The king eternal, those who had led Abgdon during times of war. He wished beyond anything that they were here now. They would understand his cause. Two were out there somewhere. Prisoners of those Ilmgralite fools. Only the third had died truly, one of only a small few of the ilma who had died after the curse had come upon them.

The council regarded Urganak with their golden eyes and Urganak met their stares confidently, but he could not keep his gaze from moving to the middle seat of the council that sat empty. It would seem King Crio would not entertain him.

"Urganak Mortrim." One of the figures said. He was wearing robes of pure white that seemed to match perfectly with his fully white scaled skin. That made Urganak snarl, the perfection of the ilma. His skin was covered in red scales and many dotted his narrow face.

"Gorin." He replied scornfully.

"Remember your place graul." Came another voice from a far chair. Urganak's eyes strayed towards him and black veins flared before he could control it.

Urganak took a deep breath, he had to remember what he was. The ilma were the chosen people after all and his power was just a gift. Urganak turned his frustration back into the cruel determination for his cause and so turned his eyes back to Gorin, "My place." He murmured, "Is to hunt down those who hold the essence of our people captive. To bring war to a race who has aided the Ilmgralite's in their tyrannical hold on the universe."

Gorin stood swiftly. The air in the hall seemed to surround Urganak and his eyes flicked to the floor in fear, "We called you back one season ago." The head of the council said without showing any of the anger Urganak was sure he felt, "Yet you returned to Uralese. That was a mistake."

Urganak's golden eyes flashed black for a second and he spoke grimly, "Uralese is still a troublesome world and our might should not be forgotten there long. I returned our fleet and came with the only ship I could spare."

An old lord stood. He looked like he was close to his rebirthing, but he still spoke with the musical power of the ilma, "It is impressive for one of the graul to rise so high within our ranks." Urganak nodded but it was an insult and he knew it, "You were sent to Earth to find evidence of Cirtroug's imprisonment, not to release him." He took a deep laboured breath, "We have all seen the signs. The Gods are moving, they are planning their final strike to crush the ilma. Crio will avoid war at all costs."

"Crio is a coward." Urganak said before he could stop himself.

"HOLD YOUR TONGUE!" Gorin yelled and all the air was sucked from Urganak's lungs and he stood, gasping in the vacuum that Gorin had created. Urganak could feel the pressure swelling his eyes and his chest tightening. His legs wanted to fall but it seemed Gorin was holding him up as well. Slowly, with a white smile, the ilma released him. The first breath after the denial was like syrup.

"What do you know of Uralese?" Urganak asked through his deep breaths, "It must seem a troublesome place, the once slave world of Ilmgral. What petty trifles did they ask for it? You should see it high council, graul, murka and livet, children starve in the streets while wars rage across its continents. It is a forgotten world."

The old Lord spoke again, "All Uralese is worth is the virdact that we mine from it. The livet's could barely write before we found them and now they live in luxury."

"Starvation is not Luxury." Urganak said grimly, "Uralese needs a war, only in war do our people find sufficient work, only then DO YOU NOT LEAVE US TO ROT!"

"YOU WERE SENT TO STUDY EARTH, NOT TO RELEASE THAT MANIAC CIRTROUG UPON THE HUMANS!" Gorin yelled and thunder crackled in the sky above Scaraden.

Urganak took a step back, "I did release him." He muttered, "On Uralese the truth of the Gods was shown to me, the true legacy of the ilma. I harness it now and it showed me how we can defeat both the Gods and the Ilmgralites. Earth is the key, the one who defeated Cirtroug was of Ilmgral, reskinned among the humans with all their divine darkness." He saw the dark look in the councils eyes and decided to press further, "Not only did the Ilmgralites create those abominations on Earth, not only did they imprison Abgdon's great heroes on that world, but they send their people to live among them, to breed them into the army Ilmgral needs to rule this universe. I will not stand by and let that happen. You are the ilma, the chosen people, tasked with keeping the Gods from tearing our universe apart. Well the Gods work through Ilmgral. I can see it in the stars, and they will use Earth to finally crush us."

Gorin seemed tired, his eyes fell pityingly onto Urganak. *A sign of mortality*, he thought. Urganak would not have much longer in the universe and his haste for war was due to that fact. The council of the ilma of Scaraden had none of those issues. Gorin had served since the first days of Abgdon. His father, who gave his energy to terraform Abgdon, had been born just after the curse had been bestowed to the ilma. Gorin had patience and he would not let Urganak lead Crio into a war where only the destruction of the universe would follow. Gorin returned to his seat, "Urganak." He paused, "You are hereby suspended from command. You will return to Uralese and surrender your fleet to Flight Marshal Cambane."

Urganak smiled, black smoke coursed through his veins, darkening his mind. He knew it would come to this. If the council would do nothing, it was best that he was a part of no nation to fight the war his way. At least until both Abgdon and Ilmgral had no choice but to intervene, "As you wish my lords." He bowed low and looked at the statues of the kings, "May the eternal church never falter and the Gods tremble at the might."

The council elders nodded and watched as Urganak and his two servants left the hall in disgrace. Gorin turned to the lord beside him, who whispered in Gorin's ear, "We should blast him out of the sky."

"No." Gorin shook his head, "Urganak is a fool, reckless and narrowminded, blind to anything else but his goal and that will one day see him to his death but he is beloved on Uralese. The empire of the ilma have split once already and we do not need the resource planets rising up under his dark dream." Gorin then signalled for one of the guards, who had sat silently behind, to step forward. The ilma who stood beside Gorin was young in terms of the ilma. He had never lost the physical form he held but he was powerful and full of youthful aggression, "You will go with Urganak and make sure he follows our command. It would be good for the people of Uralese to see one of the Guardians of Eternity."

"As you wish my lord." The man said and he marched quickly to follow Urganak.

"War is upon us." The old Lord continued, "Crio will not be able to delay it. We should recall our fleet. If the foretold war is not against Ilmgral then it will be against the Gods themselves."

Gorin pointed to the hall before them, "Scaraden stands forever. We built this hall so not even Livella herself could stand within it. If it is to be war, then the darkness shall lead us to victory and neither Ilmgral nor the Gods will stop us. The time is not yet ripe, however. We are too few after the last war. Crio is desperate to learn where our kin are imprisoned."

"What of earth?" A young lord, only risen after Crio had ascended to be king, spoke then, "Urgarak is right. One of the graul has reskinned among them, that is rare enough but then to live as a human. One like that, allied with the half breeds, could bring a new power to the universe that had never been foretold by Livella."

Gorin seemed un-moved, "Ambassador Lucast assured us he has no memory of his past." He then smiled cruelly, "Though the thought intrigues me. Maybe in him, the experiments of old will work. A child of Ilmgral with all of our gifts mixed with the darkness and natural brilliance of humanity, a sight that might even make the Gods tremble."