

## Talis' Tale

By: Mohale Matsapola

“Talis Riverwind, I don't think you understand the phrase non-negotiable!” shouted the elderly commander standing before Talis in rich fabrics and fine garb.

“I believe I do,” Talis replied in a calm voice clad in a white work shirt, brown leather vest, and baggy tan pants, “tis obviously a code for sending me out on a fool's errand whilst I have apprentices to attend to.”

“Don't play dumb with me Journeyman Riverwind! You are one of the only mages right now NOT being asked to go and see to the Egg in Bristol!”

“That's even more reason I should stay here, where the Fire Master wished me to be.” Talis replied, his tone uninterested in the commander's words. He began to play with his amethyst amulet. His tone turned sour “I'm told to remain here to have the honor of watching over the smelly cesspool that is London. Even though all the action is taking place in Bristol! Even though I aided to slay the dragon! Even though I took a sacred vow when joining the Order of the Sun to always protect the innocent and my comrades! Even though-“

“I do believe I understand your complaints Mage Riverwind,” stated the commander flatly, adding a hint of impatience to his tone as he continued, “as you have been making them for months now. Now see here, the Fire Master ordered you to stay here at the same time as he taught you the ways of his element and, far as I can tell, for the same reason. You are a powerful Mage, and it will take a mage powerful enough to challenge Bloodtharken to protect London in the event the Draco Disciples attack! On that note, this order for you to investigate these strange rumors of Draco Disciples to the north, something about sick children or dark magic, are also from the Fire Master written in his own hand, er, or well your own hand. It's very confusing to me.”

Talis sighed. He had to, yet again, explain why the Paragon of Fire looked like him “It's simple, really. He needed a mortal shape and like you said I have a great deal of magical power, obviously he wanted a body with the aptitude of holding and channeling a lot of magical energies to hold his large spirit, and apparently I'm it. So he made a copy of my body to hold his fiery elemental form. Though I do wish he'd smile more all that anger cannot be good for my health... his health.”

The commander put on the table a parchment that looked very much like Talis' own handwriting but was slightly more aggressively written. The writing had to have belonged to the Fire master; who else could write in his handwriting so clearly? Finally, Talis decided if the Fire Master was so adamant about it, it must have been important. Though, that meant giving the commander the satisfaction of being right. Talis sighed, "I'll see thee upon my return Commander, Anon."

And with that Talis left the Commanders Office at the local Order of the Sun lodge outside of London. Talis went to his horse, a beautiful white horse named Glory, and rode North to see what it was exactly that he was supposed to be looking into. As he headed deeper into the woods Talis decided summon up an old friend to see if the spiritual realms had sensed any disturbances. Crafting a circle and filling it with sticks and leaves Talis slams his staff on the ground and began the chant:

"A child's laugh  
A baby's tear  
A wizard's staff  
And you Appear  
Everywhere though you are  
I summon you from lands afar  
Wee Folk I call out to thee  
Answer before I fall  
Show thy ethereal form to me  
Answer this ancient call!"

And with the last words of the spell bubbling on his lips Talis unleashed his spell focusing with the mathematical precision of an Alchemical on calling his old friend, the Hob, into the circle. The air inside the circle rippled as if something were trying to make its way through a veil and the real world was in its way. Knowing what this meant Talis withdrew a vial of barrier dissolving salve from his pouch and threw it at the disturbance and out of it fell what appeared to be a young man with yellow blond scraggly hair, bright blue eyes, and green and yellow skin that looked like a leaf in late summer. The creature tumbled to the ground in a roll landing like a puppy on its rear shaking its head. A fierce grin crossed the Hob's handsome face as it saw Talis who, per usual upon these encounters, offer it his walking stick. The Hob attacked the staff immediately, sinking its teeth into the wood like a hound to a bone. Talis waited patiently for the faerie to tire of the stave. The hob eventually grew bored and ran on all fours over to the young mage then stood like man and stuck its hand out. Talis grasped it and suddenly Talis heard the Hob's soft voice in his head.

"Why is it that you have summoned me human?" said the Hob its grin still fierce.

"I have been sent to deal with rumors of strange dealings to the North. I was wondering, old friend, have you sensed any disturbances of any spiritual kind in the Faerie Realms?"

The hob's grin faded slightly, not fading away, but rather turning slightly less joyful. Suddenly Talis felt a vision coming upon him. The city of Bristol was covered in decaying shadows that cackled with a woman's voice as a gem hovered above the fallen body of beautiful woman covered in red and black dragon scales. As the gem flashed over the woman the area became too bright to look at and soon everything Talis saw became too bright to look at. "Can't see. Too much power. Dark Lady." was all Talis heard in his head

"I know not what occurred there," Talis spoke quietly, bitterness and sadness making his face sour "I was asked to remain in London by the Fire Paragon."

At this the Hob giggled showing him vision of crying gypsies and disappointed champions. "Good."

The Hob let go of Talis' hand and the young mage knew he'd hear no more of the faerie's words or see any of it's visions. The Fae had to speak and show the truth always. This was one of the reasons Fae rarely spoke at all and when they did they made sure it was through some magical means that they didn't accidentally misspeak and the way humans do. If the Hob had broken whatever strange connection he had made with him then there was no more answer to be had, save for one.

"So friend, you helped me to aid in slaying the dragon Bloodtharken, do you wish to help me now?"

Getting back on all fours The Hob nodded with an excited face at Talis, its eyes alight with the promise of adventure. Talis walked up to Glory and with practiced ease mounted the horse. Looking back down at Hob, Talis was wondering if it was going to mount the horse or attempt to run as fast as Glory. As Talis took off on the horse, the Hob gave its answer, it flew. As Talis side glanced as he galloped through the woods he noticed the hob flying, its human face filled with joy soaring next to him, leaving not but a magical trace of sparkling energy behind.

And so they rode for miles watching as the woods gave way to a river across which lay great fields of wheat and barley leading to a castle in the distance. Eventually the two of them arrived at a wide wooden bridge that reached out over a river. As Talis crossed the bridge he felt Glory tense beneath him. His amethyst amulet began to buzz, a warning that evil was not far. Suddenly, a metal ringing sound passed by Talis ear and a dagger stuck out from the bridge post in front of him causing Glory to rear back in surprise.

"An assassin!" Talis cried, he grew more worried for his friend then himself "Look out Hob! They have Iron!"

Iron was one of the few items in the world that could bring harm to one of the Fae. This fight had

just gotten serious. As Talis turned around he saw a familiar man with long shaggy black hair in a black cloak looking at him with burning grey eyes, one of which had a tattoo of the Draco Disciple mark amidst a face full of runic markings. Talis knew this mark well. It was the tattoo born by Mark Korvis, once a mage of the Lunar Tribe proven spy for the enemy and banished.

“Get thee hence Mage Riverwind, or I shall destroy thee!” the assassin hissed as hideous runes that covered his body began to glow a sickly green color, “ We have long since known that the Order of the Sun would send you here and offer this one chance to return alive.”

“I hate to point out the obvious to you, Disciple, but you appear to be outnumbered. I would ask you how you plan to defeat me should I refuse your offer to retreat.” Talis replied with a wolfish smile on his face.

And with that, four disciples came up from out of the water, their long swords already drawn, sailed through air and landed on the bridge surrounding Korvis. Talis grin faded.

"Oh." Talis said

“Disciples! ATTACK!” shouted Korvis

“For Druscilla!” they shouted.

“Lux Defendre!” came Talis’ spell as a translucent yellow-white barrier of light formed in front of the Hob and himself.

Several of the disciples had already began hacking away at Talis’ shields with no avail.

“Disintegraeux!” Cried Korvis causing a green beam came from his fingertip and struck Talis’ shield breaking its energy asunder.

The cloaked disciples descended on Talis immediately. The closest disciple made a lunge on Talis hoping to plunge the blade into his heart. He was able to dodge the blade, but only just, as he looked to find the flat of the blade against his ribs. Quickly, Talis muttered off another one of his prepared spells and dancing lights appeared all around them. While distracted, Talis quickly withdrew four small glass vials filled with red liquid from his pouch and cast them at the four swordsmen. As the vials connected the four were set ablaze as if in the midst of a funeral pyre.

Their screams did not last long as their forms were reduced to ash, cloak and all. Korvis stood stunned looking at his fallen comrades.

“Well, that was hardly a challenge.” Talis said looking around at the piles of ashes on the bridge as the breeze started to carry them away, “Right then, your turn.”

Then Korvis’ face turned quickly from fear to murderous rage “You filthy pus-riddled bastard! I will not be unmade by someone’s Moorish errand boy!”

Talis’ eyes flared with indignation “I am no one’s errand boy,” Talis said in a low dangerous tone, “and I am done talking to animals.”

“Shrinking down as features blur  
With bushy tail covered in fur  
Tufty paws in place of hands  
A kitten now before me stands!”

Green energy flowed from Talis’ hands and circled around Korvis. As the magic surged around him he began to scream and howl. Soon, the howls gave way to meowing and yeowling as he was turned into a small adorable green eyed, black furred feline. A baby kitten now stood in Talis’ path in a pile of what used to be the Draco’s clothes. Talis was very pleased to know the spell actually worked. It would seem he had a certain elf to thank later. The Hob ran forward on all fours and scooped up the kitten. Holding it in its hands the Hob looked at the kitten as a child might, playful joy in its eyes. The Hob opened its faerie jaw wide enough to swallow the kitten whole and began to move the tiny creature toward its mouth.

“Hob no!” Talis said sternly “It’s not nice to pick on the helpless. Can you read what’s in his mind?”

Resting its palm on the top of the kitten’s head the Hob’s eyes began to glow. A shiver went up Talis’ arms and shoulders as his senses became suddenly aware of the Fae’s magic expanding its energies against his own. The Fae were powerful indeed, Talis had never felt an aura like this before. It was wild and yet somehow organized, like the chaotic ordered systems of the trees. The Hob then removed its hand from atop the kitten’s head and stared, eyes still glowing, at Talis. Talis again felt like he was receiving one of his visions and suddenly images filled his mind:

Korvis was talking with another person, who was shrouded in shadows, in a pub somewhere. Talis couldn’t make out any features about the man. Korvis handed the man a bag of coins. The shadowed figure made a deep sigh and took the money.

“Think of the money as extra incentive.” Korvis spoke with a grin on his face

“I shall do this thing you wish of me. My clan needs this money. But after I’ve done this, watch yourself, your money doesn’t buy your safety if the Order of the Sun demands vengeance.” Said the Shadowed man

“Aye, but if the Seer of London lives I foresee him disturbing our efforts to the north of London near Oxford, not to mention, the dangerous potential of him bringing about the revival of an ancient power.. That much damage to our cause is worth the risk of my life.”

“Look, I’m not interested in your little history lesson or why you want the kid killed! I’ll just do my job and you do whatever it is you do! I’m just here for the people I love!”

“You just do as you’re told and take the money; it’s what’s best for all involved. If all goes according to plan, I’ll take care of Riverwind and you’ll never so much as see him before my ritual at the bridge is complete and the land there is taken by the Draco Disciples after our plague kills the children binding their innocent souls to the darkness. ”

And with that, the vision ended and Talis’ blood ran as cold as the river below him. Talis had in his life acquired many titles. Once he had saved a noble woman from being killed by highwaymen during the Queen’s Progress by using his power of foresight, a gift he’d been born with. The Queen of course was told and Talis was sent a letter signed by her Spymaster Francis Wolsingham thanking him for his efforts not only with saving the woman but in using his talents to save the woman but also in his efforts in fighting forces which may have grown to threaten her phone and raising him to the title of Seer of London. Of course this title was to be kept secret; the Queen could ill afford records of Moors bearing titles in her kingdom and Talis had kept it a secret from everyone, save his wife. He couldn’t have lied to her if he tried, after all, he was a good husband. How the Disciples had figured out this secret was both disturbing and dangerous. And it would appear the danger was not over yet, it would seem there was but one more assassin to deal with and then Talis could finally return home.

“Hob, I thank thee but it would seem all I have left to do is to defeat one more assassin and I’m free to leave and declare my mission complete. I have no more need of you”

The Hob gave Talis a worried look.

“Don’t look at me like unto that!” Talis spoke as he would to a worried pet “I am doing this for

your own good! Blades can harm you my friend and I don't want to see you hurt. I shall see the anon friend."

The Hob stood up and hugged Talis and a warm gentle energy flowed over him. He smelled the flowers of spring right after a refreshing rain.

A vision came to Talis' mind of him sitting at home with his wife and two young daughters laughing and enjoying a nice meal. "Be safe. The Fae do not know much of lament and I'd be most saddend if you died."

And with that the faerie was gone. Gone back to the realms of Fae it came from. Its words had touched Talis deeply, Talis had always cared for good magical creatures. It was nice to know that somewhere one cared back

"Sentimental creature," Talis said a little choked up "it's but one lone warrior. Why does it worry so?"

Talis put the Draco kitten into one of his saddle bags, remounted the white steed, and continued his ride towards a castle in the distance. He had somewhere important to be.

Talis had gotten past the castle gates without any incident and now stood in the one place he visited more than any other these days, a church. The chapel in this town was small but it wasn't poor by any means. The pews were made from fine oak and the altar was in pristine condition with a golden chalice atop it. Many finely worked candles also were lit in the chapel and the place looked well cleaned and looked after. Obviously, the nobles of this village kept it well, a testament to God of their righteousness. Talis often came to church to pray. Sometimes he thanked the lord for his talents and visions that they saved him and gave him a better lot in life than that he was born into. Other times, he came for guidance like now when he knew his life was in danger but by God's holy grace he couldn't figure out from who. And so, Talis continued to pray, kneeling with staff in his left hand and holding the amethyst stone of his he prayed that he might receive a vision of the assassin's face, that somehow Talis would learn the identity of this next assassin before it was too late.

"Now who knew mages prayed?" came a familiar gruff voice from Talis' past.

"Grease?!" Talis cried out in surprise staring at the Barbarian before him, muscled body adorned with leather armor brandishing scorpions "By God's light! What brings you here my friend and most welcome fellow

"Talis." Replied Grease "May I have a word with you elsewhere?"

“What wrong with here?” Talis asked raising his eyebrow

“Such a word is not suitable in the Lord’s house. I’m not big on faith but I’m big on staying out of people’s way.” Grease said as he gave an uneasy look around the chapel

“Tis well, let us walk then.” Talis finally crossed himself before leaving the chapel with Grease.

The land outside the chapel was very comparable to Bristol. It had oak trees that seemed to meld into the civilized landscape around the humans, a seemingly perfect balance between the natural world and the human world. A low fog had settled along the ground of the village and the villagers looked at Talis with suspicion. Talis naturally assumed it was because he was Moorish. Soon however, he heard whispers asking if he was one who’d hexed the children.

“Is he with those men in dark robes?” he heard a whispered voice ask

“I don’t know but I don’t trust him.” Came another voice

Talis just kept his eyes ahead of him and said nothing to the villagers. He had been met with suspicion everywhere he went outside of London, wherein he was just met with dislike. Grease led Talis into the fields surrounding the village in complete silence.

“Well, Grease.” Talis spoke getting impatient to know what it was that the barbarian had traveled all the way from Bristol to say “What words did you wish to share with me? I still must find this final assassin the Draco’s sent.”

Grease turned to the young mage. His face was not right; it lacked his usual cheerily violent disposition. His usual nearly mad grin was instead a solemn mask of seriousness. His eyes bore into Talis not with friendship but with something... else.

“I know who you seek, but I fear you are mistaken. I said I needed A word with you, Riverwind.” Grease spoke looking toward the ground taking a deep breath and then faced Talis taking his large greatsword from its leather sheath. “And that word is goodbye.”

And with that, Grease arched his blade toward the shocked mages neck. Talis ducked quickly and rolled away from the large man. Talis may not have been gifted as a warrior but he’s had

enough encounters with warriors in his past to know how to evade their blows. Grease and the Barbarian King had even shown him some tricks the previous year. Talis remembered the king's wise words; he had told him that once you evade, strike back at your opponent so he knows you're a threat and doesn't try to overwhelm you. Remembering this, Talis quickly reached into his pouch fumbling quickly for a vial of something, ANYTHING! Quickly, he felt his fingers clasp around glass and threw the vial at the sword's handle. His face turned into a smile when he saw he'd throw the right vial, the red one. As the vial connected with the sword's handle the red liquid became orange flame causing the barbarian to release the blade quickly. As it made a soft thud on the muddy earth beneath it, Grease quickly withdrew and threw a dagger at Talis. Remembering the formulae in his head quickly cast a spell emitting lightning from his fingertip. As the bolt hit the blade is made a loud FZZZT and deflected the blade off into the fields. In response, Grease withdrew another dagger throwing it into Talis' left shoulder. Withdrawing the blade from his shoulder quickly, Talis throw it away and began using his other hand to reach into his pouch. Gaining the advantage, Grease withdrew another blade and charged at him. Reaching into pouch, Talis reached and grabbed the powdered components needed for his next spell and threw it toward the charging barbarian. Talis didn't know why his friend had betrayed him, but breaking loyalty in the Order of the Sun had one consequence, and he was going to show this barbarian what it was.

“IGNIS FLAMMA!” Talis screamed as he felt his rage leave his aching bones, rise through his arms, and leave through his palms, just as Ignis had taught, and as his rage connected with the powdered components in the air the two of them ignited into a raging ball of flame.

The fireball hit the ground in front of Grease and exploded outward in a rush of force, flame, and thunderous noise. The ground shook so hard Talis was thrown from his feet and hurled backward through the air, crashing hard into the ground on his back. He knew he'd cast the spell too close to avoid damage but hopefully Grease had taken the worst of it. Fear, guilt, and anger gripped Talis' heart as smoke filled the space where Grease had been. He couldn't believe that Grease, his friend and ally, would work for the Draco Disciples. What would cause him to make such a betrayal? This question haunted Talis' mind as the smoke cleared revealing Grease's body lying still and motionless on charred ground, his eyes closed. Also present, standing near the smoke when it cleared was the shapely form of a familiar woman. It was Illyria, Talis remembered, a woman from the Lunar Tribe who'd helped to slay Bloodtharcken.

“What do you want here Illyria?” said Talis not wanting the Lunar Tribe to get involved and take credit for the Order's victory over the Draco Disciples “The Order of the Sun has just completed it's business here. The evil has been vanquished and all that remains to be done is to determine-“

“BASTARD!” Illyria screamed drawing her blade and quicker than Talis could blink she was on top of him sword blade buried in his wounded shoulder. “I'LL KILL YOU! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!”

Pain flared through Talis' arm soon only to turn into bitter numbness. Illyria cocked back her fist and, with the strength of solid stone, she punched Talis from the sword and straight into the

ground, drawing a horrible popping noise from the mage's body and leaving a large imprint from where he'd fallen. With him helpless on the ground, the warrior took her blade and plunged it into Talis belly with a loud scream filled with fiery anger and will and pulled it out with the same ferocity. Talis knew that she'd done him in. But how? She'd descended on him with the fleetness of a breeze, struck his shoulder like a vicious wave, knocked him from the blade like an angry mountain and finished him with a strike that rivaled the ferocity of Ignis. AHA!

"Gaurdian..." Talis whispered as a warm feeling came over him in his final moments. But as the warmth drifted over him Talis realized he didn't feel death coming toward him, he felt it retreating. The warmth continued to flow over him focusing on his wounds easing his pain and making him feel more like himself. The HOB! Talis remembered this was the same warm feeling he had when the Hob hugged him. Somehow, the Hob's magic was healing him; and with that realization, Talis Riverwind rose to his feet. The answer was obvious to Talis, both the Gaurdian and the Barbarian were working with the Disciples in this matter somehow. Not that it surprised Talis that the Lunar Tribe was involved. He'd seen first hand the betrayal a Lunar Tribe member was capable of. Talis knew that his magic's were not enough to defeat a Champion of the Elements outright. But his newest creation might be able to distract her. Talis emitted a loud whistle into the air and from out of the woods, Glory came running. Damn he loved that horse! Reaching quickly into his saddle bag he withdrew a small pistol. Meanwhile, Illyria had run back to Grease's body poured some liquid down his throat and as he roused he heard her choke back tears as she had hugged.

"Illyria..." Grease spoke hoarsely "You have to get out of here! They'll kill us all if you stay."

"What? What is this mad speech you speak of my love!" Illyria quizzed "I saw Talis attack you, I feared you dead!"

"The Disciples..." Grease answered "They have the clan under surveillance...you too. They told me that if I didn't take this job they'd kill all of you. "

"Liar!" Talis screamed "I saw you take the money! I saw Korvis hand you a sack of coins to make Death my mistress!"

Illyria looked to her waist and saw the sack of coins that hung there. "You told me to go and take these coins to the clan...that it was from your new job!" her jaw clenched and she balled up her fist and hit Grease in the head "You IDIOT! Why didn't you tell me I was being watched! I could have helped you!"

Grease grabbed his head and winced "The area here has disciples all over it, five of 'em at least! I couldn't tell you until I found them and made sure you were safe. Besides, Korvis is too

powerful to be stopped!”

Talis held up Kitty Korvis to Grease. “You mean this Korvis” Talis words came out bitter “ well, the next time a Disciple says he forseees me stopping him, let me. The other Disciples are dead I fought them at the bridge.”

“SEE! Even Talis could handle this problem of course you could of told me!” Illyria said gesturing towards Talis

“And what is THAT supposed to mean?!” Talis asked feeling the heat of indignation rise to his cheeks

“You want me to show you Riverwind?” Illyria said a wolfish smile crossing her face as she drew her blade, “even you can’t face a Guardian.”

Talis had heard enough! He aimed the pistol at Illyria and-

“ENOUGH!” Came a woman’s voice and fire filled the field and left just as quickly as it had come. Rowena stood in the middle of now dry charred earth.

“Rowena?” Talis said to his friend his voice thick with surprise and confusion

“Talis, honestly, do you ever go more than a few moments without getting yourself in way over your head?”

“Well you know me. I’m always guilty of trying to have good time.” He spoke sarcastically “and you know I just LOVE getting in trouble!

“Trust me Talis,” She said not taking her eyes of Illyria, spell at the ready “You have no idea what we’ve learned. She’s beyond you now, Dragonslayer. All the Guardians are.”

“Well then Rowena,” came Illyria’s voice brimming with sarcasm “ what does the wise and powerful Order of the Sun think we should do now?”

“Go home.” Said Rowenna with authority and conviction “It’s obvious the Draco Disciples have

been defeated and the only disciple who could give the order to kill off your clan is now a cat. I'll have the Alchemechanicals of the Order locate and take out the rest of the Disciples set against the Barbarians myself. Other than that this fight is pointless. Talis can't survive you."

"Ha!" said Illyria looking at Talis with vindictive eyes

"And Grease can't survive Talis. " she continues as if Illyria hadn't spoken "So unless you wished your new found lover to die, Scorpion Warrior, I suggest you leave. Besides, Talis obviously is bearing protection some sort. Or didst thou not notice the hole missing in his belly?"

Illyria looked back at Grease who just started looking steady on his feet and then back to Talis.

"We have enough problems to worry about as is, we don't need anymore in fighting!" her serious glance then went to Talis "I just came from the town looking for you. The children there are said to be starting to recover. It is my belief that when you turned Korvis into a cat you broke his magics."

"Then now what?" Talis asked "Mission complete then?"

"Nay," came Rowena's voice "use your brain. Wasn't this a bit too easy? You're mission was London. It's my belief you just failed it."

"Master Ignis asked me away to do this mission!"

"Well of course he didn't! We had our hands full in Bristol until today, trust me. Ignis sent no command for you. When asked he told me himself, your mission was London."

"But the letter was sent..."

Talis felt one of his visions coming one again.

A cloaked figure was in a fancy estate just outside of an old man's room with a dagger. Talis recognized the old man's face. It was Lord Benjamin Atlee, his old mentor, and the closest thing he had left to a father...

“God’s death!” Talis shouted

Rowena rushed to his side her serious eyes now giving way to kind ones as she saw tears form in Talis’ eyes “What is it? What didst thou see?”

“You were right Rowena.” Talis said with tears choking his voice “I was lured out here...it was a trap. I failed. I need to return to London immediately!”

“Go. We’ll take care of things here.” Rowenna said as she helped him toward his horse.

And Talis rode harder than he ever had toward London’s gates.

Talis did not put Glory in the stable of the Atlee estate when he arrived he merely ran toward the door to find one of the guards waiting for him. Talis heart grew cold as he sank to his knees to the ground. This couldn’t have happened. The Disciples would not sink so low. His vision had to be wrong...it had to be. And there as his pain and heartache sank him to his knees and he pleaded with the fates to not allow such a thing to have happened. Talis looked the guard in the eye who looked at Talis’ face with pity.

“I’m sorry son. The bastards got in while we were on break. Lord Atlee ordered all of us to get a beer on him and when we’d returned...there was so much blood everywhere. I’m afraid he didn’t go peacefully. But I swear we’ll get who did this son, I swear it.”

"Korvis was a puppet sent to lure me away from here." Talis spoke to himself

Talis had been tricked, he knew this. He had been played a fool in an elaborate game conducted by a murderer who’d taken the only person that Talis knew would understand him. And Talis would have his revenge. Anger wasn’t what filled Talis’ veins. Only rage had a home in his heart now. The rage became fire in the palm of Talis’ hands. The guard jumped back as Talis rose to his feet, the fire of his rage now beginning to spread up his arms over his shoulders to the top of his head burning his shirt and vest to cinders.

“No,” spoke Talis in a voice unlike his own “I will find this person. And when I do, I swear by every tome, by air and fire and light, not even the Paragons will ever find a trace of him again.”

As Talis stood in the darkness he noticed something, the kitten in the saddle bag was missing now; Korvis had escaped. And what was worse...the spell to turn Korvis into a cat wasn’t permanent. Rowenna had been right; London was Talis’ mission, and he’d failed.