

LES PRINCES DU FEU

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L'AMOUR FRATERNEL
DEVRA SE MONTRER PLUS FORT QUE TOUT

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Le Princes du Feu

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(ROMAN)

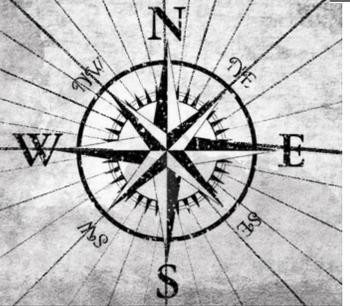
"From small sparks is often born great fire."

SAYING

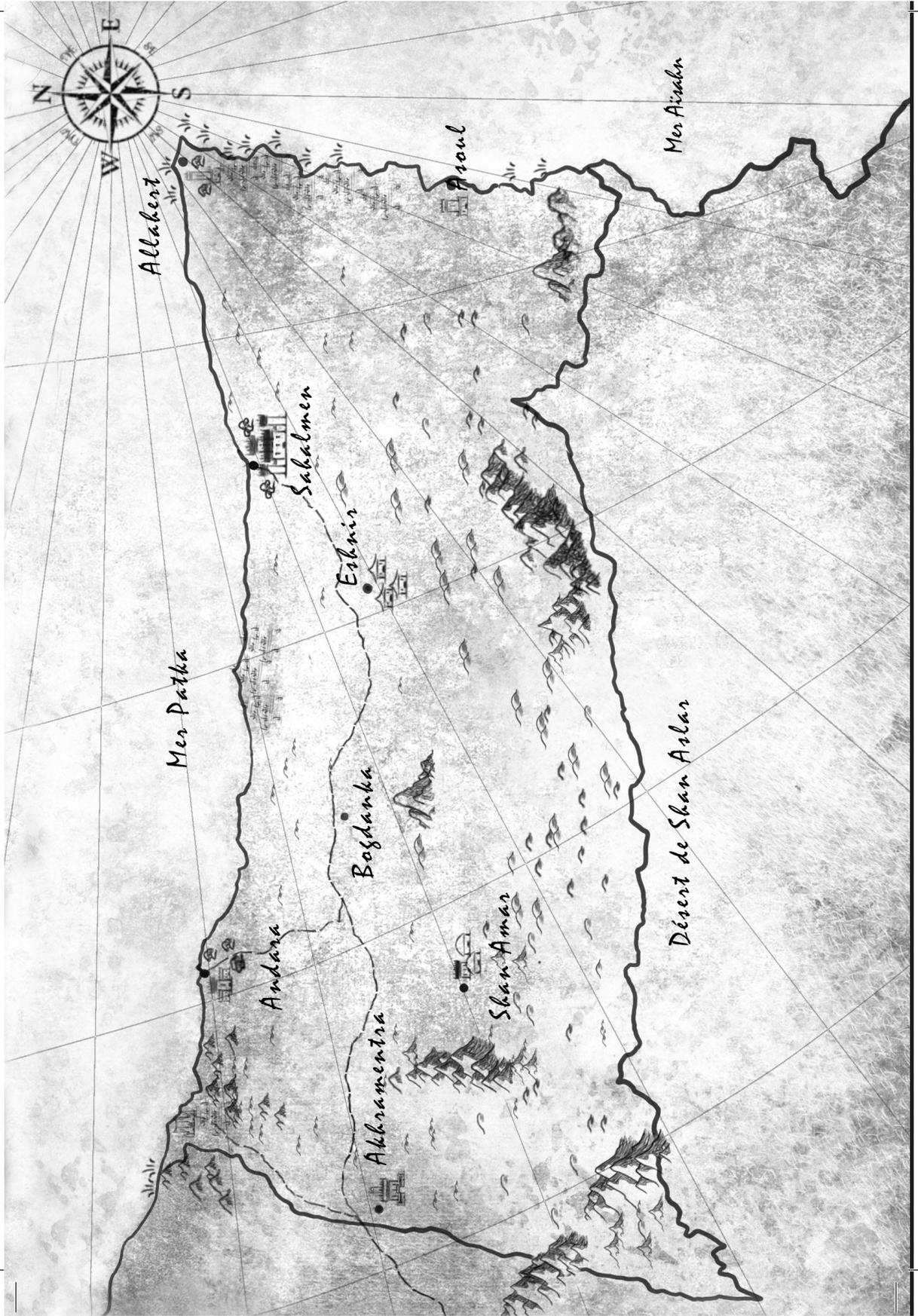
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To Norbert,
Who hoisted the mainsail too soon.
We will miss you.

CARTE DU MONDE



Utopie ufologique bel



Sahalmen : نيملاھس Capital, residence of the Fire Kings

Protector god : Kraäm

Activities : political, military and heart of the Kraäm cult with the Tower of the Adepts

Bogdanka : انادغوب Nurturing City

Protector God : Ekin

Activities : crops, cultivable plains, reeds, fruits, roses and flowers

Akhramentra : اتنيمركأ City of knowledge

Protector god : Nimet and Vür

Activities : studies, research, astrology, libraries...

Allahert : تريھالآ Naval city

Patron god : Nür

Activities : naval factory, moon festival, lighthouse city

Andara : ارادنا Merchant city

Protector god : Kale

Activities : merchant port, the biggest souks of Shanmara

Eshnir : رينشا City of the earth

Protector god : Ipek

Activities : silk, linen, wool, precious wood

Asoul : حور Builder City

Protective gods : Tess and Yezim

Activities : architecture, stone work, clay, mosaic

Shan Amar : رامع لاش City of sands

Patron god: Aslan

Activities : glass work, military training city, warrior city



Divinités

Kraäm : god of fire, main god of Shanmara and the city of Sahalmen, patron of the Adepts of Kraäm

Vir : goddess of the star of the day, sister of Kraäm, goddess of the city of Akhramentra

Nür : god of the moon, worshiped in Allahert

Kale : protector god of the sailors, worshiped in Terryan sea, in the West and in the city of Andara

Gess et **Uezim** : gods of the earth and builders, gods protectors of the city of Asoul

Aslan : god of sand, worshiped in Shan Amar

Nimet : god of wisdom, worshiped in Akhramenta

Ipek : god of cattle, worshiped in Eshnir

Ekin : god of the harvest, worshiped in Bogdanka

And elsewhere...

Frida, Prij, Brima : goddesses of the Archipelago of Mist and especially of the Islands of Stones

Wai et **Dakani** goddesses of the sea and the wind, they are notably the idols of the crew of the Albate

PROLOGUE

The shadows were closing in, fast. They were spreading over the ground like dark streaks and veined the reddish sand of the city of Akhramentra. Buildings of white stone, rickety carts, structures of wood or even metal ... nothing resisted them. They covered everything.

The wind had risen from the east that morning. Black clouds had announced their coming: the Djinns were approaching. For ten years already, the demonic creatures have been attacking the regions bordering Shanmara. After engulfing the kingdom of Olahert, these evil beings were now turning their attention on the eastern plains of the great Fire Empire. Adepts of Kraäm, masters of the inferno, dragon trainers... Nothing seemed to stop them.

But long before the horn sounded high above the minarets, two children were playing quietly in the temple courtyard. The bloomed orange trees send their petals around them, and a light breeze cooled the air that the sun was heating. The clash of wooden swords clattered over the playful whistling of the tropical birds. Occasionally, a few shouts echoed against the patio walls.

A ray of sunlight in the eyes, a pebble bigger than the others, and one of the two brothers fell to the ground, his back in the yellowed grass. It was the younger, the frailer one. His fake sword slipped away and the frizzy-haired boy raised an arm to protect himself from his older brother's blows.



“Kylian! Stop it! Ouch! Stop, I said!” The taller man finally ceased the assault. With a triumphant look in his eyes, he pointed his blade on his victim. His hair was smoother, his skin lighter, but the features of the sand people were still recognizable.

“Stop acting like a baby, Samir. Get up!”

“You’re cheating!”

“No, I’m not. You’re the one who keeps falling.”

Samir pursed his lips and squinted his eyes. Caught, he raised a hand and closed it around the weapon. Between his fingers a glow appeared and soon some flames shot out to devour the wooden toy. With a cry of surprise, Kylian dropped his own sword which bounced to the ground, then stomped angrily with his foot.

“Now you are the one cheating! We said fire was forbidden!”

“You’re too big,” replied the other, getting up and dusting himself off. “This is not fair. I would never be able to win...”

A humming sound tore through the city sky. A low sound, a bad omen. Birds flew away in a scattered cloud while a hubbub went up from the streets below. The game stopped there, and the children tried to figure out where the tumult was coming from. Second alarm. Screams pierced through to them; screams of terror. Samir ostensibly moved closer to his elder, his head between his shoulders.

“What is it?” asked Kylian, looking at the walls of the enclosure.

“Kylian! Samir!”

Hurried footsteps came up from the blue ceramic path. A woman wrapped in a white drapery was crossing the courtyard. Gravity stretched the features of her childish face, yet one could read in her eyes the courage and the vivacity of a queen.

Others followed her. All came running with the same expression of intense fear. Sometimes some of them shouted or gave orders. When she reached the children, the woman pushed back the shawl covering her ebony hair and grabbed their hands without further explanations. The two brothers had never seen such fear in their mother’s eyes. She, such an upright, bold woman. Despite her small size, Queen Yasahël of Shanmara knew how to impose herself. Her strong character was not a secret.

The boys let themselves be led through the long corridor, which was entirely covered with mosaics and geometric designs. Convex domes pierced the ceiling and niches opened onto small balconies covered with



arched overhangs. Despite the many openings to the outside, incense burners tumbled from the walls, releasing a pungent odor that makes people cough.

Under the arms that urged them to run, the two brothers glanced at each other questioningly, in case either of them knew what was causing such a panic.

“Faster,” urged one of the men accompanying them.

This Akhramentra’s diplomat was recognizable by his golden tunic. The other men, tight in their black canvas trousers and their thick, spiked boots, were dressed in the traditional clothing of the adepts of Kraäm, the great fire warriors.

A hissing sound came up to them, followed by a buzzing noise, like a sandstorm. The light faded suddenly; the sun’s rays no longer came through. The adepts had to use their magic to maintain a sufficient visibility. A pass, a wave of the hand and small flames swirled around them, dancing like crazy sheaves suspended in the air.

The man in the golden tunic grabbed the queen’s arm.

“We won’t make it... The shelter is too far.”

Without another word, he led her into a large reception hall. Some carpets dotted the floor and silk veils tumbled from the ceiling. The woman stood in the center of the room, the two little ones desperately clutching her hands. Fear flooded their golden eyes as the adepts closed the heavy, painted earthenware doorway.

The warriors used their gifts to apply luminous seals on the iron gates. The metal became incandescent as lines, heated to white, drew a divine arabesque. Nothing evil could enter here, but the queen watched in anxiety numerous openings that pierced the heights of the walls. It was impossible to seal them all in time! The shadows would pass through the moucharabiehs. Out there it was already dark, and the buzzing was intensifying. It was as if an insect swarm was encircling the palace and crashing against the walls in a series of sordid crushes.

Yasahel’s eyes were desperately searching for a solution. She had to keep her children safe. She had to protect her sons! Her search ended on the sight of a large chest, able to contain an adult or two children, solid and decorated with gilding.

It would do the trick.



“Mother, ‘Samir asked shyly. “What is happening?””

“The Djinns!’ Kylan burst out, leaning against his mother. ‘It’s the Djinns! Those who brought down Olahert and Tatkamba! They abduct people to leave only ghost cities behind them!’

Samir opened his eyes wide. His lips were trembling as a shiver ran through him.

‘Are we going to die?’

The queen hissed disapprovingly, without being able to hide the anguish that animated her. Already, incessant whispering were seeping through the niches. Unnatural shadows were moving on the walls. The great Dark Wave was pressing the gates of the city and would soon engulf Akhramentra.

Without further ado, Yasahel dashed to the trunk and opened it to eject its content. Vases, fleeces, ornaments... Everything ended up on the ground. Once the trunk was emptied, she held up an authoritative finger, despite her knotty throat.

‘Inside!’ The boys were reluctant, so she had to force them to kneel. ‘I’m going to close the trunk,’ she explained, not daring to look her sons in the eye, ‘and use the Kraäm’s fire to seal it. The shadows won’t be able to find you there. Stay hidden inside, don’t come out. Under no circumstances!’”

Suddenly panicked, the two children became alarmed. Their voices rose to a high pitch and then intertwined in a mix of refractory cries and tears.

“But... Mother, what about you? ” worried Kylan.

“Come on! Come on, let’s go! Don’t leave us.”

The queen’s thin fingers grasped their chins, and her golden irises, inherited from the kings of Shanmara, plunged into those of the little ones. Her lips trembled slightly, but her voice was unwavering. She could not weaken before them.

“We will meet again. Kylan ... you are the big brother. Protect Samir. Whatever happens, whatever you could hear, don’t go outside.”

The woman’s gaze was fixed on the elderly and he could only keep his mouth shut. Unlike his brother, he was not crying, but his heart sank at that moment.

“Mother...”



The lid closed, the queen's face disappeared under the cries of her sons. Samir stirred as an incandescent glow chased the darkness from the small wooden box. It had just been sealed with the sacred fire. The younger man tried to open the chest with his shoulder, but Kylian belted him to keep him still. Arms locked by his sides; the child began to scream.

"Let me go, Kylian!"

"Stop it, Samir! Stop it! Calm down!"

"We have to help mother! We are not going to let her out there to be taken away by the Djinns!"

"I must protect you, she asked me to..."

Their jerky breaths filled the confined space and the air seemed more and more suffocating. Then a rumbling sound rose. High-pitched screams, an unbearable rush, and the trunk shook. Both children screamed in fright. Kylian desperately clutched Samir's shirt in fear that he would disappear too. The sound of the wind, a real storm, and suddenly everything calmed down. Nothing. Not a sound.

The younger boy was crying and begging. His tears were beading on his brother's bare arm.

"Save her, Kylian. Save Mother. You're the future king. You must help her. You must save her. It is your role; it is your responsibility!"

Lost, shocked, the elder stammered without managing to loosen his grip. The muscles of his arms were gripping Samir in a vice so tightly that he was in danger of cramping. A vague hesitation, a repression of tears, and Kylian slowly brought his eye to the keyhole.

Beyond it, darkness. Then a bright light burst forth, forcing him to blink to avoid being blinded. When the streaks retreated and his vision was clear again, he saw something: in the center of the room, a figure stood. Standing with arms flailing, head down... He recognized his mother's long dark hair. She looked asleep, her body flaccid, but she was there, she was alive! The heart of the child leaped with relief against his chest, but soon his succinct hope collapsed in on itself. Something was wrong. Her feet ... they did not touch the ground. Her toes barely licking the fabric of the rugs.

Kylian gasped as something stirred behind the queen. A long, black shape unfolded; a deformed humanoid composed entirely of darkness. White eyes, blurred contours, tapering limbs... The thing turned its head in his direction, as if it could see him through that tiny hole.



Kylian's fingers tightened a little more on his brother's chest, as the queen's body slowly rose into the air. The smoke beast extended its arm. Kylian only saw his mother's body being propelled straight on him and he threw himself backwards with a burst of sobs.

Samir's screams increased. The youngest son begged his elder to help their mother, to save her. It was his duty, his task, his responsibility... But, frozen in his trunk, his fingers so tight that they were painful, Kylian could hardly open his mouth. His staring eyes were lost in the darkness of their shelter while thin whispers filtered through his trembling lips.

"I... I can't. I can't. I can't..."

For hours, they lay there, snuggled up to each other. Samir crying, Kylian petrified with horror.

No body was found, no blood. All had been swept away.

"I think that's when my story began when I started to shirk my duties. To run away from my responsibilities, rather than having to accept failure. How could I rule with this weight on my conscience? What merit did I have? I wanted to never go through that again. I wanted to never carry that guilt again. "