

CELENIM



The Castle of the Dwarfs

THE IRON MOUNTAINS

The Gate of Skar

DORAK

CALEX

MAITH



THE RE

NIMBO



The Gates
of Skrillex


LIVATO

ELDENWALD

MORSMETAK


The Caves
of Eldenwald

ELATERA

 Elemental Circle

 Earth

 Wind

 Fire

 Water

REALM

The king of Calex

-

The Necromancer

The king of Calex
-
The Necromancer

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Inhabitants of the Realm

Celestials

Residence: Calex (capital of the Realm, also called the Foot) and Celenimbo (the sky city)

Characteristics: Humanoid beings with wings made of feathers and quills

Element: Air

King Lotengo

King Lotengo the Seer - The king of Calex and ruler of the Realm

Queen Oliniga

Wife of the King of Calex

Domingo

Domingo the Prince / the Handsome - Brother of the King of Calex

Delphigo

Delphigo the Fiery - Son of King Lotengo and Queen Oliniga

Baltigo

A messenger from Calex

Lago

Lago the Wise - Advisor to the King of Calex

Siltaga

Baltigo's best friend

Indrago

Air element mentor

Rodrigo

Captain of the King's Guard

Water Nymphs

Residence: Livato Lake

Characteristics: Nymphs with dragonfly-like wings

Element: Water

Nymphadora

Nymphadora the Noble - Regent of the Livato Lake

Demons

Residence: Skrilex (underground prison)

Characteristics: Red-skinned devilish creatures with fire characteristics

Element: Fire

Azexes

Azexes the Commander - General of the Demon Army of Skrilex

High Elves

Residence: Latira Forest

Characteristics: Elves – surface dwellers (normal skin with white stripes on the face)

Element: Earth

Sindarin

Sindarin the Honest - Leader of the High Elves of Latira

Necromancers

Residence: Morsmetak

Characteristics: Half-dead (can originate from any race)

Element: Earth

Okeitik

*Okeitik the Collector - Leader of the Necromancers of Morsmetak
(Former Dark Elf)*

Arachnatak

*Arachnatak the Spinner - Leader of the Order of Spinners - Servant of
Okeitik the Collector (Former Dark Elf)*

Domitik

*Domitik the Necromancer - Half-Celestial, half-Necromancer (Former
Celestial)*

Dark Elves

Residence: Eldenwald

Characteristics: Elves – underground dwellers (white skin with black stripes on the face)

Element: Earth

Lovantik

Lovantik the Bold - Leader of the Dark Elves of Eldenwald

Ratik

Apprentice of Okeitik the Collector

Chatak

Ratik's best friend

Wizards

Residence: Dorak Desert

Characteristics: Humans

Element: Air/Earth/Water/Fire

Cirrus

Leader of the Wizards of Dorak

Dracon

Dracon the Sorcerer - Apprentice of Cirrus the Wizard

Ba'Rhin

Fire element mentor

Dwarfs

Residence: Iron Mountains

Characteristics: Small humanoids - mountain dwellers

Element: Fire

Thelmur

Thelmur the Brave – Chief Dwarf of the Mountains

Foreword

A word from myself, to you, dear reader:

Welcome to a world where magic and power intertwine, where betrayal and heroism go hand in hand. This story is a journey through dark forces and heroic deeds, in which the boundaries between good and evil are blurred and the four elements of nature are central.

I invite you to immerse yourself in the adventure of Baltigo and his quest for the truth. Let yourself be carried away by the mystical world of magic, conflict and emotion.

Get ready for a story full of excitement, surprises and a touch of fantasy in every page. But beware: in the Realm, nothing is what it seems, and the greatest power often lies in the smallest things.

Happy reading and magical discoveries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin". The script is fluid and cursive, with a small loop at the end of the word.

Chapter 1

Baltigo the messenger

From the Book of Fire:

"A red sunset is both a warning and a promise; it indicates the chaos that may come."

The sun was about to set and the sky had something ominous about it. Baltigo rested for a while on a small hill that rose just above the swamp. The long, scorching journey to Morsmetak had already pushed him to his limits. He hoped to catch up with the black-grey clouds and get a summer downpour over him as a refreshment; maybe there was even enough rain to refill his water bottle.

The Celestial turned around and looked at the position of the sun. It was still above the horizon, but a faint purple-red glow was already visible.

'A red sunset,' the messenger whispered softly, looking at the colours of the sky in all directions. It gave him a restless and anxious feeling, because it reminded him of his childhood. He had experienced the same feeling then, after reading a book about the four elements of nature in the palace tower of Calix: Air, Earth, Water and Fire. In one of the passages of that book it says that the red sunset is a sign of Fire. And that every time a deep red glow hangs over the sky, some unfortunate event occurs. That memory even sent a shiver down his spine. So far, nothing significant had happened during his journey to Morsmetak.

'Could the red sunset perhaps be related to the events of last night?' he wondered aloud. Although the death of the king of Calix was almost a full day ago and there was no sign of a red sunset the previous evening.

'I just hope nothing happens tonight when I have to hand over the queen's letter,' he murmured, then sighed deeply.

'Okay, the king has died. I am on a mission for the queen; I need to complete my task as quickly as possible. I must hurry now,' he said with clenched fists to remind himself of the importance of his assignment.

From the top of the rocky hill on which he stood, the messenger saw Morsmetak looming in the distance. After confirming he was headed in

the right direction, Baltigo looked around and descended the grassy side of the hill. Carefully he stepped down with small sliding steps.

At the foot of the hill, the messenger resumed his journey over the marshy, soggy ground. The brackish soil of the swamp stretched between Calex and Morsmetak. It was far from pleasant for Baltigo to walk and fly over. Where the sun had dried up several small puddles, it sometimes even smelled of rotting fish. Here and there a piece of ground stuck out a little higher and some grass grew on it, but if you stayed there too long, you would gradually sink into the soil as well. Fortunately, the wings of the messenger lifted him off the ground just in time, so he only briefly touched the water puddles and muddy spots.

The Celestial continued further into the marshy area, although he didn't really 'walk'. For Celestials, flying was normally the way to get around, but Baltigo didn't like to just fly. Unlike other Celestials, he really liked the contact with the ground. The messenger preferred to touch the ground with every stroke of his wings, and by propelling himself forward with his wings each time, his steps were also several lengths longer. Despite his unique style, he was still one of Calex's fastest messengers - perhaps even the fastest!

With each leap Baltigo took, his chalk-white wings flapped loudly. His long golden yellow hair fluttered in the wind. The hood of his grey cloak had been blown back; it flew up and down and barely touched his back. A thin trim around the hood was made of elf silver; it shimmered and reflected the last sunlight with every movement. The cord that held his cloak together under his chin was pulled tight around his neck as he walked, and he felt its slight chafing in his neck. But he didn't mind. You don't know you're working until the material tells you; that had always been his motto.

Under his cloak he wore the typical Celestial robe. It looked a bit like a short dress, with a silver trim at the bottom, a dark brown belt around his middle and a cut-out V-neck that slightly exposed the muscular chest of the messenger. A small brown leather pouch hung from the belt, tied with a thin string. As a messenger, it was handy for carrying something, like his bottle of water. On his feet he wore brown sandals that were wrapped around his legs with two long leather cords.

While walking and flying, Baltigo briefly turned around again, because he wanted to reach Morsmetak before complete darkness set in. I still have plenty of time, he thought, seeing that the bright yellow sun was just above the horizon. When it fully sets, I should arrive exactly at that moment at the gate.

Baltigo would see Morsmetak for the very first time, because Celestials were never welcome in the city of the half-dead. As a messenger, however, he had no other choice; he had to travel to where the authorities of the palace of Calex deemed necessary. And Lago the Wise, the advisor to the late Celestial King Lotengo the Seer, had hastily sent him to the city in stone with an important message from Queen Oliniga. Early in the morning, the Wise had ordered him, 'You need to fly faster than the wind... or walk in your case ... or... or... both! You know what I mean!'

With a simple nod, the messenger then set off, along with three others who were also sent to the far corners of the Realm: to the High Elves in the Latira Forest, to the Wizards in the Dorak Desert and to the Dwarves in the Iron Mountains. However, no messenger was sent to the Livato Lake, because no one had been seen there for several years. Morsmetak was further away than the other destinations, but Baltigo was determined to return to Calex before the others at all costs, once he had delivered his letter. That would still take at least a short night's sleep and a full day of travelling back.

The city of the half-dead gradually came more into view. The ground felt firmer and the journey to Morsmetak was nearing its end. 'I'm almost through the swamp. Soon, after all that splashing and spattering, I'll finally feel stone beneath my feet. Then I can walk the last part and let my wings rest. The wings of Calex's fastest messenger. Ha! Maybe even the fastest in the entire Realm!' He paused briefly and then shouted out, 'Fast Baltigo!' The messenger jumped, skipped and flew on. No one else was allowed, under Lago the Wise's orders, to deliver the message of Queen Oliniga to Okeitik the Necromancer of Morsmetak - and he wasn't about to let that honour pass him by.

Chapter 2

The gatekeeper of Morsmetak

Quote from the gatekeeper:

"I guard the city, along with everything that lies behind it."

Baltigo had arrived at the entrance gate of Morsmetak. The ground around the city walls gave him goosebumps. The city moat served as a deterrent to everyone approaching the city. Everywhere he looked, there were corpses, bones and skeletons that had been eaten to the bone by vultures, ravens and other carnivores. He knew that the Necromancers, after guiding the soul of the deceased, threw the corpse over the city wall.

The messenger tried to look away from the bodies and focused on the large pitch-black gate. He walked on and in the meantime, he hid his wings under his cloak. They probably know that I am a Celestial; I don't have to parade that around, he thought.

When he stood in front of the gate, Baltigo looked up and down for a few moments. The gate was made of robust black wood with heavy iron spikes sticking outwards, clearly indicating that unwanted visitors were not welcome. But Baltigo had to get inside. He needed to speak with Okeitik the Necromancer and deliver the queen's message as quickly as possible.

He gazed some more at the black wood and then saw a large stone hanging from a long dark grey chain. One side of the egg-shaped stone was ground to a blunt point and was slightly sunk into the wood. He pulled the stone back and let it fall against the gate. The gong sounded far beyond the city walls and startled Baltigo, causing him to jump back a little bit. Beneath the wooden cover of the gate was a metal construction that caused the noise. The echo made all the birds fly up, except for the ravens sitting on the carcasses; they kept pecking at the corpses, because it was a habit to hear the city gate.

Not much later, Baltigo heard footsteps on creaking wood. On top of the gate, there was a small tower where the gatekeeper sat. Baltigo took a few steps backward, looked up, and then saw a dark silhouette walking in his direction from the tower.

Usually, the guard knew beforehand that someone wanted to enter the city, but when a Celestial approached the city gate, he could sometimes hardly hear the faint rustling of their steps and wings. Unless that Celestial lowered himself to the ground with his full weight, but the guard had only experienced that once before. Often, the birds had already taken flight from the city moat before the visitor could use the stone at the gate. Because the birds only flew up after the gong this time, the gatekeeper immediately realised that a Celestial was waiting.

As he continued walking along the city wall to Baltigo, the gatekeeper decided it was better not to let a Celestial into the city anymore. He asked with feigned surprise: 'Who goes there?' the guard looked down with suspicion and saw the white, pearling wings peeking out slightly from underneath Baltigo's cloak.

Baltigo tilted his head and looked up. 'I am Baltigo, gatekeeper; I am a messenger of Calex, and I have a message for Okeitik the Collector.' He saw that the guard was wearing a closely fitting black cloak and that, except for his snow-white nose, the rest of his face was completely concealed by the shadows of the cloak's hood.

The gatekeeper stepped closer and stood just above Baltigo. Necromancers had a natural aversion to Celestials. He sniffed some air and shouted: 'A Celestial, indeed? What causes a Celestial to come to our gate at this late hour? What is the reason for your nightly visit?'

Baltigo tried to ignore the challenging words: 'Lord gatekeeper! I kindly ask you to let me enter the city, I genuinely have no ill intentions. I am merely the bearer of bad news.' Meanwhile, Baltigo thought: I really can't say more or I will get into trouble myself. I need to get the queen's letter to Okeitik and then return to Calex as quickly as possible.

The guard repeated his words slightly less provocatively. 'A Celestial, at dusk, in Morsmetak ...' and shook his head while looking at the red glow cast by the setting sun on the horizon. 'I advise you to return at a more suitable time, lord Celestial. The city is preparing for the night. There are some inns around the city, if you wish,' after which the gatekeeper turned around to walk back to his tower.

Darned, that man isn't making this easy for me, Baltigo thought. 'Could you be persuaded to a conversation at closer distance,

gatekeeper? Then I can show you the queen's letter.' Baltigo tried to convince the guard. It worked; the gatekeeper turned around.

'A letter from the queen?' Such a delivery couldn't just be ignored by the gatekeeper. Okeitik the Collector wouldn't take kindly to him sending away a royal messenger with an important message.

'Yes, my lord, I have been sent by Her Majesty, the queen of Calax, with news that cannot wait until dawn. I have been sent to Morsmetak to speak to Okeitik the Collector as soon as possible. It is crucial that the leaders of the peoples are informed of important news.'

'I will come and inspect your letter.' The gatekeeper left the top of the gate and headed back to the tower. There, he took a stone staircase that ran downwards along the inside of the wall. The black cloak he was wearing fluttered up from the ground. Necromancers can move extremely fast over the ground, as long as they can see where they are going. Then they rush from one place to another. In no time, the guard was downstairs and pulled the heavy lever of the gate. The lock creaked loudly as it opened and with great force the guard pulled on the iron door. The weight of the door caused it to move slowly, and once it was slightly ajar, he had a hard time stopping it. The gatekeeper put his right hand through the crack and said briefly, 'The letter?'

'Please.' Baltigo looked directly at the gatekeeper, but in the meantime, the guard had put a black cloth over his face, leaving only his small slit eyes visible. He saw a small patch of the guard's bright white skin and one jet-black lock of hair in front of his eyes - nothing more. Baltigo took out the small bag woven from silver thread from the inside pocket of his cloak and handed it to the gatekeeper. The guard opened the bag and placed the letter in his other hand. He inspected the king's seal, which was applied in red candle wax and which secured the letter. The seal consisted of a crown on top of a circle of the four elements: a rolled-up curl in the shape of a whirlwind for Air, a leaf for Earth, a droplet for Water and a small flame for Fire.

After examining the wax seal on the letter and returning it to the messenger, the gatekeeper said: 'Okeitik the Collector is not in the city, but I will give you access and safe passage to the palace.'

'Thank you, lord gatekeeper.' Baltigo bowed his head slightly and placed a hand over his chest as a sign of respect.

‘No need to thank me. You’d better come inside quickly, because it’s a bright red sunset.’ The guard turned around, raised his right hand, and pointed east. ‘If you follow the main road, you’ll reach the Collector’s Palace without trouble. Lord Okeitik is not there, but his servant will receive you.’

After Baltigo had passed the guard, he briefly stuck his head outside. Then the guard closed the gate again, looked at Baltigo and thought again about that time when a Celestial had flown over the gate without hesitation and landed on the ground with a lot of noise. The guard had then made his way as fast as lightning to the Celestial, aiming an arrow at his nose, while he was still crouched. At that moment, the guard had angrily shouted: ‘No one flies over the gate unpunished, king or not!’

Chapter 3

Arachnatak the Spinner

Quote from Arachnatak:

"The less I am seen, the more I can mean."

Baltigo had finally reached his destination: Morsmetak, the city in stone. The road was paved with shiny black obsidian that showed a crack here and there. Wherever he looked, he saw rough, rocky houses and chiselled, hewn or stacked stones. The openings that served as windows and doors had been roughly cut out of the stone. Not a piece of wood or a tree anywhere, no plants or gardens. Sometimes he could look inside and saw that the houses were carved deeply into the rocks. Now he understood why they called Morsmetak 'the city in stone'.

What a difference with Celenimbo! As soon as he had fulfilled his assignment, he would immediately fly from Calnex to Celenimbo to tell Siltaga everything. His best friend was also a messenger and lived in the city in the sky, while Baltigo lived in Calnex, the city of kings on the ground.

Thinking of her made him forget that, as a Celestial in the city of the half-dead, he was the odd one out. Until he suddenly got too close to a Necromancer, who in turn took it as a provocation with a simple gesture. The half-dead immediately grabbed the hilt of his crescent moon-shaped sword. Baltigo stumbled back a bit, raised both his hands into the air and bowed his head forward to reassure the Necromancer that he meant no harm. After a few steps, Baltigo lifted his head again and continued towards the palace of Okeitik the Collector.

As the messenger progressed further and had looked at the houses with wonder, he became more aware of the figures around him. He had only sporadically noticed the many staring gazes. In the dim light of the candles and lanterns, he could not always see the Necromancers clearly, but gradually he recognised some typical characteristics.

Most of them wore black cloaks and dark grey skirts that ended in sharp points and billowed eerily above the ground. The upper bodies of the half-dead were protected by a suit of armour that was held in place with several straps and buckles. One wore a ring with a small skull on his finger, another a chain with an amulet around his neck, and yet another

held a staff with a slightly larger skull on top. The green light emanating from the rings, chains or skulls gave Baltigo an uneasy feeling. He was gradually feeling less comfortable among all that green and black and hurried to the Necromancers Palace.

Further ahead, he also saw some Dark Elves from the Eldenwald forest. They were smaller but radiated a stronger connection to nature. Around their arms and legs, a long piece of tree root was wrapped and around their chests, two plates of hard wood served as armour. Their faces were white-pale and black stripes ran from the pointed ears diagonally across the cheeks towards the nose and chin. Just like the rings of a tree, you could tell the age of a Dark Elf from the stripes on his face. Every few years, a new black line was added.

They had large, pointed ears that transitioned into a few upright hairs. Their black hair was braided with dark green grass blades and tied into a long ponytail that reached about to the middle of their back. Most of them wore a belt with a dagger or a knife around their waist; others carried a bow and a quiver with dark brown wooden arrows on their back. All of them wore a short hood, tightly closed in front with a brown cord.

Baltigo wondered why they all looked as if a war could break out at any moment. Every Necromancer or Dark Elf he passed was fully armed. He dismissed the thought again as he approached the palace of Okeitik the Collector.

The last part of the main road sloped slightly upward and ended in a large staircase whose edge and railings were finished in the same black obsidian stone as the streets. The staircase led to the forecourt of the palace, where a large pool lay in the centre. In the pitch-black liquid of the pool, green lights shimmered, swimming alternately to the surface, where they flickered and sparkled briefly, before returning to the depth. It was only when the lights reached the surface that Baltigo realised they were flames.

The Pool of Darkness, the messenger thought. The Pool of the Necromancers, where they housed souls. The sight was both terrifying and beautiful at the same time. Frightening because of the thought that souls swam within, yet majestic due to the flickering display of green lights. A single upstanding rim of black stone separated the liquid from

the ground over which Baltigo walked. He stepped around the dark pool and continued his way to the large gate of the Necromancers' Palace. One last time, he turned briefly. He saw the city walls in the distance, bathed in a greenish steaming light shining upwards from the city. It was emanating from the many Necromancers who still kept their weapons ready.

He turned back towards the entrance gate of Okeitik's palace, towering high above him. It was made of tourmaline and had sharp points, just like the city gate. It seemed as if he was looking into an enormous, smooth mirror. The black tourmaline sparkled brightly in the flickering light of the torches that burned around it, as if the gemstone had been polished a thousand times over with a cloth. Without Baltigo realising it, the gate had gradually opened to the courtyard, just as white-green fumes rose from it.

In the courtyard stood a woman in the middle of four demarcated paths laid out in the shape of a cross on the floor. She was staring at the big black gate with one arm extended. Her palm faced downwards, and her fingers were curved as if she was holding an invisible sphere. She made small, spasmodic movements while muttering a few words he could not understand.

At that moment, Baltigo looked back and saw the gate closing and the fumes disappearing. She's doing that with her hands, he thought, glancing back at her. The woman was waiting for him as he walked further along the path towards her. She wore a long black cloak, similar to the gatekeeper who had let him into Morsmetak. Meanwhile, she had clasped her hands together and the sleeves of her cloak fell in a large arc in front of her. Her face had hollow cheeks, with a thick diagonal black stripe on each eye stretching from the side of her forehead to the tip of her nose. As he came closer, Baltigo noticed not only the two main black lines on her face, but also six other fine lines on her cheeks, resembling the legs of a spider. She was neither a Necromancer nor a Dark Elf. She was a spinner: a specific group of followers within the Necromancer people.

'Welcome to Morsmetak, Baltigo!' The woman's voice sounded like an echo in a water well. As she greeted Baltigo, she tilted her head slightly

backward to produce more volume. 'I am Arachnatak, the servant of Okeitik the Collector.'

Baltigo was taken aback and unsure of how to respond. 'You ... You know my name?'

Arachnatak was surprised by his reply, opening her eyes slightly with a curious expression. 'Is that how we greet each other these days, Lord Baltigo?'

The messenger was caught off guard and apologised. 'My apologies, Lady Arachnatak! I am indeed Baltigo, a messenger of King Lotengo and Queen Oliniga. Thank you for welcoming me to the city in stone. I bring news from the queen.' He brought his right hand to his chest again and gave a small nod with his head.

Baltigo wanted to ask a second time how it was possible that she knew him, but she spoke first. 'Don't you know how Necromancers and Dark Elves communicate?' Arachnatak now spoke with a softer voice, as she had received the expected apology from Baltigo.

'No, I do not. How do you know my name?'

'The gatekeeper's raven was ahead of you, Lord Baltigo. It kept an eye on you from above. As a Celestial, you could have flown here yourself, couldn't you?' Arachnatak did not shy away from provoking. Every question she asked always had an underlying purpose. She mainly wanted to know what kind of person Baltigo was and whether he knew the customs of the city. One of these was that it was forbidden for a Celestial to fly over Morsmetak.

'I love the contact with the ground, madam. I like to walk. And I didn't want to cause a stir by flying over the city. I know that is a sensitive issue.' Meanwhile, Baltigo wondered why he had not seen the raven on the way to the palace.

'You did the right thing, that is indeed forbidden. It could have incurred the wrath of the Dark Elves. But that aside. You have important news, you say?'

'That's correct. I bring bad tidings from Calex and wish to speak to Okeitik the Collector to deliver the queen's letter to him.' Out of habit, Baltigo gave a nod of his head and closed his eyes simultaneously to indicate he was on a royal mission. He pulled out the letter, took it from the silver elven pouch, and showed it to the servant.

Arachnatak recoiled at the sight of the silver woven pouch containing the letter and looked at it sideways, suspiciously. She glanced at the letter and the seal on it and said, 'I don't have to hold that letter to know it's real. That's fine. You may put it away again.'

Bewildered by what had just happened, Baltigo put the letter back in the pouch and into his cloak. He wondered why she had such an aversion to the silver pouch.

Arachnatak turned towards the palace and said with the same deep echo: 'Follow me, I will take you to your quarters where you can spend the night, while awaiting the Collector's arrival.'

Baltigo asked over her shoulder, 'Do you think I might still be able to speak with Okeitik tonight?'

'That depends on Ratik, his apprentice. He and the Collector are carrying out a soul journey in the Eldenwald forest.' She then shuffled towards the palace with quick spider-like movements and led Baltigo to a sleeping quarter on the third floor.

Arachnatak opened the door of the room while trying to reassure Baltigo. 'Do not let your sleep be disturbed on a night like this. If it can be any consolation to you, sometimes the red sunset has no ill effects. I know that, as Celestial, you are concerned with these things, but the stories aren't always true. Good night.' She closed the door to the room and made her way to the palace's eastern terrace, where Okeitik and Ratik could arrive at any moment.

Baltigo waited patiently, looking out from a windowsill. The sun had completely set by now, but it still cast a faint red-purple light above the distant horizon. Despite her words about the red sunset and not needing to worry, Baltigo found himself wondering again why he hadn't seen or heard the raven that had betrayed his arrival. The raven was not there; I didn't see it fly. It simply wasn't there.