

Dear Elisabeth,

I write to you now as mother scorns out the window of the carriage at the capital and its inhabitants. She remarks that “at least up north we know how to keep our streets clean of vagrants.” I have no idea to what she is talking about, I look out the window and I see people who are only trying hard to live their lives. I still don’t understand why we had to make this journey from our homeland hundreds of kilometers to here. Mother is a strong woman and surely should could take care of the County on her own. I will miss its forests and people the most. Specially you Elisabeth, you are my best friend in the whole world and don't think I was joking when I told you that I wanted you to be my countess! I will just have try my best at the court of my Liege.

Your greatest friend,

Friedrich

A Wolf in King Arturius’s Court

By John "Sargonius"

Lord-Captain William Feusier had for a long time now served as the Commandant of the House Guard for His Majesty Arturius VII, King of the United Archaian Commonwealth and Dominions. He loved thinking about it as being Commandant of the Royal House was pretty important considering the territory that House controlled. The Centurion Guard like to brag that they were the ones who protected the King but it was he, William Feusier, that guarded every member of House Gaius, the most powerful House in the Kingdom.

He considered himself a strong man from a strong family with strong ties to the Royal House. House Feusier had long served the Gaiaans and William was now their favorite son achieving a position so close to Major Domo, the most treasure Royal Appointment in all of the Kingdom. Poor dear sweet Octavian Vespian was reaching the end of long fulfilling career and the King would need a replacement, and who better than someone so close and familiar with the inner workings of the Palace than himself?

The Palace staff was in a frantic mood on this early summer morning scurrying about with things to do. He had caught several maids gossiping in the lower courtyards which isn't proper and had to scold them. He knew what they were all in a fuss about as a Countess from the northern lands and her son were coming to stay in the house of their liege. Upon hearing the death of the boy's father, the King had invoked his duty and right as liege lord to bring them here to palace for their safety and it was his job, as Commandant of the House Guard, to ensure that the safety here in the lands of his Majesty's House, was best.

There was some trouble with the Madurians of House Ustermar who always like to cause trouble ever since they lost their claims to the throne. Every couple of decades they would make some outlandish claims and drudge up an army to try and settle this dispute they had with House Gaius. After their last defeat about a hundred years ago it was made illegal to have internal military disputes inside the Kingdom. That had been at the beginning of His Majesty's Father's reign. Those damn Madurians didn't even wait for the late King's body to cool before they marched on the Capital! Rest assured he wouldn't let them disrupt the peace of these palace grounds while his Lord's guests were here.

“The carriage you are expecting approaches, my lord” states a page that ran up from the Forward Yard interrupting the Captain's train of thought.

“Yes. Yes! Run out the guard and open the gate for His Majesty's guests. I will not be shamed by something happening to them so close to the palace.”

“At once, my lord” he replied before saluting and running off to tell them of his commands. Feusier quickened his pace to make sure he was there when they arrived so that he could greet them as the king had instructed him to do.

It wasn't a long walk from the Canal Lawns to reach the Forward Yard and when he got there the carriage had just pulled through the gate onto the main driveway that looped in front of the Grand Entrance with its new marble stairs. Feusier quickly checked himself to make sure his dark green uniform, one of two, he was wearing was straight, his black shoes were un-scuffed (they were his nicer pair), and that his hair curls felt right and that his sideburns and mustache were groomed (not that he would be able to do anything about it). The other day he had caught a grey hair peeking out of dark brown hair which only could mean that he was getting wiser!

The carriage halted and servants in their dark green uniforms opened the carriage door while younger similarly dressed servants retrieved luggage from the back of the carriage. From inside the main compartment came a silver colored wolf in a large yellow dress topped with a yellow matching bonnet stepped out. Following her was a smaller, darker, more grayish colored wolf dressed in a dark blue suit and trousers.

“I am the Countess Louise von Dessau and this is my son the heir-apparent Friedrich von Dresden.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you Countess and your son” he said bowing. “I am Lord William Feusier, Commandant of the House Guard. His Majesty has entrusted me into your service. I do apologize for the condition that the palace grounds are in for at the moment we are currently going through the fourth major renovation of the Palace so that we don’t get surpassed by the new palaces the Humans of the Western Kingdoms are building these days.”

“Yes how foolish of a venture of them. It is the opinion of most of my confidants that they should spend that money on their armies and not wasting it on turning deserts green if they wish to compete with the honor of His Majesty.”

“Well said, Countess.”

“What renovations are you making to the palace, Lord Feusier?” The Commandant look at the boy mildly shocked at how assertive he had sounded as most kids his ages weren't very outspoken.

“During a yearly inspection there were several faults discovered growing in the walls so the King made the decision that it would be best to just replace and redesign everything instead of the usual repair. The walls except for the more historical Forum wall are going to be replaced with iron fencing and the landscaping is all being redone. The outside of the Palace is also going to be resurfaced.”

“I find that a Palace is not only a symbol of a King anymore these days but also of the people and the people need to admire their prestige.”

“I agree, your lordship, and I can assure that His Majesty shares your point of view. Now if you will please follow me, the King wished to meet with you as soon as you arrived. Don’t

worry the stewards will handle your bags, Her Majesty has personally seen to your apartment.”

The good Captain led them up marble stairs into the Palace. "What we have here my lords is the Hundred Hall added to the palace after the assassination of King Tiberius III in five-twenty five. It is called that because one hundred Centurions who tirelessly guard the hall at all times and make sure that no would-be assassin makes it to the throne room which at those times was in the front of the palace open to everyone."

"Has that been effective Lord Feusier?"

"It has been found that having two hundred well trained deadly eyes watching you when you have a sinister intent is a bit unnerving and people tend to give away their intentions."

"That handles the loons but what about experienced trained assassins that aren't unnerved by your security."

"Very good question, your lordship. Well while it would be suicide to attack head on that you would have to be crazy or you are very ambitious, and those who are ambitious can make it through this, but then they must deal with the throne room guard and the king himself who is a formidable swordsmen and fighter. He did very much so enjoy boxing in his youth."

"I did hear some of his exploits back in Dessau as they were the talk of my father's court when it came time for the King to take the throne."

"Here we are my lords, the Grand Doors of Justinian. Carved from a single tree they stand at twenty meters in height and six meter wide with a two decameter thickness."

"They are beautiful" Friedrich stated in awe. The Captain had not lied about their stature. They were arched at the top and the faces of the door were chambered with panels of intricate

designs that told of great moments in the history of the Kingdom. If Friedrich remembered correctly from his tutors, Justinian Gaius Sadow succeeded Lucius Flavius Sadow bringing the crown back into Gaian hands and moved the Capital from Akadium in Germania Minor here to Sadowium where the Tiberius River forks into the Shydow River. The door spun a very good picture of Justinian and his exploits. At the crown of the door was a large bust of Adaka the Great molded into the wall and it faced as though he was peering down which at one time would have been the Front Courtyard now this long hallway.

"Yes they are, my lord, but it is not polite to keep the King waiting so let us hurry on in." He gestured to the two guards who stood at either door. They tapped their halberds thrice on the tile which made a distinct noise and a smaller man sized door opened in the right door. "Please follow me, my Lords."

"Of course, Lord Feusier, lead on" the Lady Louise said following the slightly smaller man through the secret door. Once inside they stopped and waited for the court to acknowledge their presence. Friedrich took the time to study the throne room in detail. It was a circular room with a vaulted ceiling. The young lad suspected that this had once been a pure rotunda but it was hard to tell from the outside as where the dome would have been there was now a large gold colored onion dome sitting on top of it. A gift from the Muscovich Csar.

The rotunda was decorated with green, gold, and various pictograph tiles on the floor while the ceiling was paneled in gold leaf. It was lined with grand marble columns that held up what was a second floor that hosted balconies for various courtiers. In the shadows of those balconies were more Centurions. Above the balconies were great arched windows that illuminated the room but he believed that at night the room was lighted by new artificial means

as Arturius being the king of curiosity (as the papers sometime labeled him) had been the king to have the palace wired for electricity were it previously was all gas lighted.

"Presenting to His Majesty the King, The Lady Louise, Countess of Dessau and The Lord Friedrich, Count-heir of Dresden." Friedrich knew that was his cue and he put his best noble walk on as he strode up with his mother across the tile work over to the throne, the great Lion Throne, to speak with their Liege, the King of close to half the world. Mounted behind him was the Royal Crest and on one side was Flag of the Royal National Forces and the other was the Flag of the Senate, the voice of the people.

The King himself was an older person with great dignity still left within him. He was an imposing person on that throne dressed in his Royal best to receive petitioners. On his head was the Dominion Crown which symbolized his authority over all the lands of the Kingdom and to the right of the throne was his sword and in his left hand was the scepter which represented Justice. This King knew that he just as much an actor as a ruler.

"It is good to see you again, Countess, I was deeply saddened when I heard of your father's death" the King spoke in a deep and resonating voice.

Curtsying she answers "thank you so very much, your Majesty, your sympathy means much to me. I do believe that you haven't met my son Friedrich." Friedrich bows before his Liege. "I hope that we weren't interrupting your court, your Highness."

"No no, it is always a pleasure to have one of my vassals at court. Today is the Sabbath and most of the petitioners are at services. I make sure that my service is early in the morning so that I can receive foreign heads or men from far off such as these minor noblemen from the East. As men from the East they have their Sabbath on the morrow. Now come up here lad so that I

can get a good look at you." Friedrich nodded his head and stepped closer to the king. "You seem like a fit lad, very good. I wouldn't want someone unfit take your father's place. He was a very progressive person your father was yes. There were great things at work in his heart and I want you to swear to me that you promise that you can fill his shoes."

"I swear to you, my liege, that I would never let anything stand in my way of accomplishing the goals my father so ambitiously set out for our people. I know my father was a progressive man who strived to see that each man got what he deserved as a man. He believed that Armend had graced all men with basic rights and that it is our job as governors to ensure the rights of the governed."

"That my lad is a good start, now off you go, I believe you have a busy day and I would hate to keep you and your mother for too long. My wife would never let me keep that down; we will have plenty of time to talk later." Friedrich bowed again and slowly backed away for he knew it was an insult to show your back to the King. "Oh, Lady Louise, you needn't worry about your son's throne. I have placed a Royal Interdict upon those lands and any who moves against you will meet the wrath of the Lion and the Wolf."

"Thank you so very much. Good day to you, my lord" said his mother. The King replied by nodding and gesturing for the nearest Eastern man to give his petition. Captain Feusier led them out through a door behind and to the right of the throne. As they left, Friedrich heard something disturbing.

"You cannot ignore the Lansites anymore, your majesty, they've gained strength and the violence is escalating. The Knights of the Argent Cross can't deal with this problem, maybe fifty years ago we could of, but not now." That was all he heard before the door closed behind him.

He would have to ask mother who these Lansites were and why they were causing problems for The Knights of the Argent Cross, the holiest of the knightly orders in the East.

"This, my lords, is the South Hall and it houses all four hundred apartments for the guest and servants for his Majesty. It goes from two floors here in the west to four in the east. On the other side is the East Hall which houses the new offices for the Royal Physicians, the Opera House, which serves for special functions of state and private uses as we know that the Royal Opera on the far side of the Forum is the King's favorite. Then we have the North Hall which houses the Ball room, the main chapel, the Royal Suites, His Majesty's office, and His Majesty's Government. Any questions?"

"We will be restricted to the South Hall?"

"Friedrich, I don't think that is prudent."

"It is alright, my lady, he is a young boy and they need space to run. His Majesty has seen to it that you have full access to both the South and East Halls and all the Courtyards that surround them. To go to the North you must work there or have an invitation and the Throne room is for Petitioners and sessions of Court only."

"What about War?"

"Friedrich where are your manners!"

"Please excuse me, my lady, if I may indulge the young lord, it is a good question. War is handled from Fort Tiberius which is off limits to anyone who does not work there or is not the King. Before you ask the Royal Cathedral which sits on the palace grounds in Cathedral Square

is open to the public but other than Sabbath we ask that you use one of the Chapels here in the Palace for your religious needs."

"Thank you, Lord Feusier, you are a most gracious guide to the Palace and my curiosity is sated, for now."

"Thank you, young lord. Her Highness has prepared an apartment on the third floor for you. It would be best to take this stair case over here to the right. It can take a while to find your way around the palace at first. If either of you get lost all you need to do is ask one of the guards and they will give you directions." He gestured to two men in dark green uniforms at the bottom of the stair case on either side. They were armed with rifles and stood rigidly at attention. Friedrich took the time to scan for anyone else, but other than the guards, the halls were empty.

The stairs were eloquent and made of a fine dark wood, most likely from the Eywen Tree that was once very common in the region. There was a finely woven green and gold rug with simple embroidery that ran up the stairs. On the walls of the staircase, Friedrich noticed were pictures of great moments in Archaian history. In one picture was Saint Adrian of Germania Minor defending Teutonic children from ruthless Pagan Rebels. Then right after him was a picture of Saint Leon Fidelis who led the Second Crusade and the converting of the last of the Teutonic Mountain Kingdoms. Behind him in the picture was Saint Benedictus, who founded many monasteries in the Teutonic Mountains, and Saint Greggorius who led the First Crusade which caused the disruption of the crown but brought the Archaians to the True Religion. After that there were just some people who could have been senators. To be honest, Friedrich had trouble telling Archaians apart with those colorless eyes of theirs. He only knew the Saints because the Bishop of Dresden had made sure that he knew them by heart.

The climb wasn't difficult and within a couple of minutes the three of them were at the top of the stairs. They were greeted by a large picture of an Archaian dressed in full military regalia with a sword clasped between his hands as if it were a cane as it rested on the ground. Upon the man's head was the Silver Crown, symbol of the Eastern Lands.

"That is a portrait of the late Crowned-Prince Titus Arturius Gaius Sadow, son of the King, Father of the Crowned-Prince, may he walk forever in the grace of the Lord. The King was devastated by the news of his son's death in that tragic steam engine explosion."

"Yes, all of Dresden and Dessau mourned with the king's loss" stated the Countess.

"It was even sadder that the Prince's dream of better safer working conditions did not happen till after his death. The company that made the engine that exploded went bankrupt after that as they lost their Royal contracts. It turned out that poor workmanship due to poor conditions in the factory led to the accident. Fearing loss of prestige due to loss of Royal contracts many of the Nobles stepped up and enforced better conditions for laborers. Now your room should be down the right." They continued on their journey through the halls of the Palace.

"Lord Feusier, if conditions were so bad; why didn't the King step in and order the changes himself?"

"Most people believe that it is not the King's place to meddle in the affairs of the Economy young lord."

"But his Majesty commands great influence over the affairs of this nation and if the people are in trouble than it should be his duty to intervene on their behalf."

"That might be true, but the Senate is the body in charge of the needs of the people. The King sits above all of the noble Houses and thus rules over the Nobles. The Nobles are granted fiefs of land, which is the King's, and thus the people on those lands. So it is the Nobles' fault that conditions were so poor, as it is their job to administrate the land that the King gives them."

"But it is the King's land and we are the King's subjects and as such he should be concerned about our well being."

"Friedrich! That is enough of that, mind your manners."

"It is alright, my lady, it is just a youthful indiscretion, a slip of the tongue. Such talk might otherwise be an insult to the Monarchy."

"I think it is you who insults the Monarchy and gives far too much power to the Nobility Lord Feusier. His Majesty should delegate less to the Nobles as far too often they are concerned more about themselves than those who serve under them, not like his Majesty who is wise and just."

"You have a lot to learn young lord about how the world works. Here is your apartment, number 329." He stood off to the side of the door ushering them into the room. The entryway of the apartment was small and to the right was the coat closet. It opened up to the main living space which was a nicely furnished sitting room decorated in the colors of Dresden-Dessau which was combination of reds and gold with some black. In the center of the room in a wheelchair, with her stately nurse behind her, was Her Majesty the Queen, overseeing the mass of staff that was finishing the room. She turned and gave a great big smile to the Countess.

"Oh my, look how big you have grown. The last time I saw you, was when your father brought you to the King's birthday all those years ago. And look, he's so tall already!"

"Your Majesty" the Countess replied curtsying and Friedrich bowing. "I was meaning to get Joseph to go to his Majesty's last birthday, so that we could introduce our son, but my father passed and we didn't make it down."

"It was such a dreadful shame. Your father was a great man, as was yours, young Friedrich."

"Thank you, your Majesty."

"So polite, his tutors must have done well."

"Well the way he was treating poor Lord Feusier; I would have to disagree."

"Oh, the Commandant is used to it. He gets drilled by the Prince every chance they are together. Children these days are so thirsty for knowledge and Lord Walter down the hall won't keep quiet about it."

"Who is that, your Majesty" inquired the Countess.

"Lord Walter is head of the Educators Guild. He's staying at the palace while he is doing a study of the surrounding area. He is of the opinion that the State should do more for the education of the children of our Nation. I do not see what more he could want, the King decreed that all children must go to Primary school thus outlawing the use of Child labor. That of course, if you remember, caused strife with the working class as they lost almost half of their income so the King suggested that companies improve their wages."

"Some people just are never happy, your Majesty."

"Indeed. This is the best time ever to be a citizen of Archaia and they want more. Some people just need to understand how the world works and that something just are not going to happen, especially over..."

"... your Majesty?"

"You come out from there right now!" The Countess and her son quickly look to see what the Queen was talking about. Out from the Coat closet walked a young boy not much older than Friedrich. He had light brown hair cut to the style and wore a fine blue suit. "Lord Magnus must be worried sick!"

"I'm sorry Grandmother, but I just had to the Anthro-boy."

"I swear, your curiosity is going to get you into trouble one of these days. Lady Louise and Lord Friedrich, may I introduce to, his Highness the Crown-Prince of the Archaian Commonwealth, Ataemus Cicero Gaius Sadow. He should be off studying with Lord Magnus, his tutor, but since he was able to sneak out I guess it is Lord Magnus's fault, once again."

"Thank you Grandmother. Can I show Friedrich around?"

"If it is alright with the Countess."

"I see no problem, your Majesty; I think it would be good for him. Besides, there is much I wish to discuss with you."

"Thank you, Countess," he bowed to her, "and you Grandmother" he bowed to her too. She waved him permission to leave. "Come, Friedrich, let me show you the Lower Courtyards." Friedrich bowed to the Queen and ran off after the young future king.

The Countess turned to the Queen and said "I hope they don't cause too much of a disturbance."

"No it is quite alright, the guards love the sounds of children playing. Also when Lord Magnus finds the Prince, he'll find young Friedrich with him."

"That would make it easier for him I guess. If you think it is alright than I except your judgment. Now if you don't mind me changing the subject, I noticed that the Palace gardens were being redone. I would love to help even if it meant just standing there watching the others work. I just don't want to feel like a burden around here."

"It would be lovely to have you there in the meetings. Your mother had such pretty gardens and I'm sure she had you out in them all the time."

"I tried my best to keep gardens in Dresden but I could never seem to pull off what my mother did. She did, however, give me a good eye for detail."

"Good. How does tomorrow at tea sound?"

"Splendid, your Majesty."

"So, your Highness, where are we going?"

"Please call me Ataemus, I'm tired of everyone but Grandmama and Grandpapa calling me that."

"I'm not sure..."

"That is an order from your future king. I'm not above using my position to get what I want when it's in my reach."

"When you put it that way, your High ... Ataemus.

"That is better. I want to start on the Hill."

"The Hill?"

"It was constructed during the Turian war, during the Saxonian Insurrection, when Hamuro made his march towards Sadowium to draw Marius away from his siege of Akadium Caucasus."

"As Hamuro sided with the Fluvii" answered Friedrich as his tutors had taught.

"Actually Hamuro had plans to take the crown for himself after he had defeated Marius, but as you surely know he was defeated by Horatio, who was Marius's Major-Domo, thanks to the Hill, which was the first cannon fort in our nation's history. There is a monument constructed on top of the Hill to commemorate the battle."

"So the cannons were effective?"

"More enemies were killed in pit traps. They were very loud and scared Hamuro's horses. They thought it was thunder which..."

"That is why the royal artillery are called Thundercallers!"

"Indeed. You catch on quickly."

"Just because I look like a wolf doesn't mean that I think like one." They had reached the doors that led outside.

"I didn't imply that you were stupid because you're an Anthropoid, it's just that most kids younger than me aren't very bright."

"Well I'm not like most of those spoiled Southern heirs. In the North it's every man for himself so we don't slack around. I maybe twelve but I am no child."

"According to tradition you are still a child until fourteen, then you can claim the rights of Manhood. Now shake that seriousness from your eyes, my tour isn't finished yet. After you, my guest" says the young prince gesturing to the door that was being held open by House guards.

"Don't think that just because you give me courtesy that it will make me forget my anger" he said stepping out into the dimming light as the sun finished its journey across the blue sky. Friedrich didn't realize that it was that late but he hadn't checked his pocket watch or the many of the clocks that adorned the walls of the palace. While the sun wasn't setting it still must be close to dinner time.

"This is how you treat your future king?" He took a large pace so that he was once more beside the younger noble.

"You told me to treat you like we were equals, Ataemus. If you were my king, would you tell me that I can't be mad at you when you do something I don't like?"

"That doesn't mean you should show him disrespect. We'll take a left at that statue."

"Did I show you disrespect back there?"

"I guess not."

"Then if we're going to be friends I suggest that we leave assumptions behind."

"There were assumptions?"

"Yes. You think that because I look different than you that I can't act like you. While in my people's history there would be truth to that idea, people who act differently from everyone else in the Kingdom now, act so out of craziness or because they choose to."

"And you?" They stopped and looked at each other. Friedrich was more or less staring because he was insulted that Ataemus even had to ask.

"I choose to be myself and how I have been taught, which being the son of a noble means that I had great tutors. It is far more than many of my fellow Lupus in the North. We still have a problem with poverty and social injustice."

"What assumptions do you have of me?" They started to walk again.

"I guess I thought you would be another spoiled weakling like the other noble children of the South."

"We'll I assure you that I was raised proper. Also how can you blame me for allowing my fellow nobles of the South be trained to be ass kissers and spineless buffoons."

"You can't be serious!"

"I am Sadow, the wolf who hides in the darkness. It is where we get the word shadow. How do you think our Kingdom has survived for almost fourteen hundred years. The Sadow aren't just a House, they're a political machine. This recent plan is the brain child of Justinian Charles, my great-great-great-grandfather. He was the creation of the merging of the Sadow and Bastion lines. He took a page out of the Francian playbook and forged an absolute monarchy that brought out the true form of Feudalism."

"Don't you think turning your nobles into sniveling little girls makes them less effective administrators?" Ataemus just burst out laughing in a loud chuckle. Friedrich was not amused.

"Sorry but that is just too funny. The nobles haven't actually administered for over a hundred years. They leave that to their parliaments which are constructed following guidelines set by the crown. Meaning, they have only the smartest and most efficient of the middle class."

"But why?"

"Don't you see, we're a wolf among wolves. All the Lycean clans want the throne and have always wanted the throne. All we have done is taken their fangs out."

"What about my fangs?"

"I like the story of Arturius and Urd'Challi. Arturius and the Fifth Legion marching up doing battle with the great White Terror of the North. Them being rivals, they had this bond, this friendship! Urd'Challi became Ulysses, Master of War for the great Arturius, true heir to the throne. Of course it's a little sour that Arturius's grandson was dethroned by the First Crusade."

"Those were hectic times."

"Here I have my chance! I can be Arturius and you can be Ulysses. We'll take the world by storm!"

"Is that the only reason you want to be friends with me, because I'm an anthropoid?"

"Well it is a key part of my plan. It would be a moral boost for both sides. Your people would be glad to have someone such as yourself be in such a high position while my people remember the story."

"The King wants me to be a progressive."

"The King doesn't remember what he wants anymore. He may still be as shrewd as he ever has been, but as to the plans he had for the end of his reign, he knows they fall to me to accomplish them. I have plans of my own."

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"Why shouldn't I think to my future? It is my future. This is going to be my Kingdom. Shouldn't I run it the way I think is best?"

"You have a point, but I'm still not sure what you want me to do."

"Be the strongest noble you can be. I need a strong ally if I am to accomplish my dreams. It's just around the right over there." They turned right and the hill was right in front of them. It was just a normal hill, much smaller than Friedrich had imagined. The Palace walls might be higher than the hill was, though the walls were newer than the hill. The climb to the top wasn't hard up the stone stairs built into what would have been the back side during the battle. There was only twenty of them.

At the top of the Hill there was a bronze monument to commemorate the battle and a few old cannons. Ataemus ran behind the monument and waved Friedrich to hurry up. Friedrich was curious but disappointed as there was nothing special on the other side.

"You're about to see a secret my dad shared with me. He said 'Son, I'm about to show you the greatest gift a future king can give to the future crown prince, a place to go where you can be yourself.' He made it very clear though that this is not a hiding place, but a place to take a breath." The Archaian prince pulled out a small metal object from his pocket and put it in a small hole at the base of the monument. There was a hiss as a dusty gust escaped from cracks in the ground. Out popped a secret door which Ataemus pulled complete open. It revealed an opening that had a ladder which led down into the center.

"What is this?"

"Being an artillery fortification they had to have a place to store the ammunition. Being a man made hill they built it around a bunker." He grabbed the ladder and started to climb down. "Don't forget to close the door on your way down."

Friedrich followed him down making sure he pulled the hatch shut placing the tunnel in darkness. There was a click and light came up from below and he could once again see the ladder in front of his face. Down he continued into the dustiness of this hole in the ground but he was amazed at what he found. It was actually a rather spacious room with a couple electric lights hanging from the ceiling. The space was covered in boxes, furniture, and various knick knacks.

"What is all of this?"

"Well my father installed the lights himself as he didn't like the idea of me with gas lamps. Everything else is my hobby. Well, except for the furniture. One needs a place to sit. You know they say that in the future automobiles will run on electricity. They need to invent better batteries than what we have now. Steam though seems to work fine enough for now so they don't really bother with it. Father always complained about how the technology we use now is hundreds of years old and we need new batteries anyway." Friedrich caught a hint of something in the corner of his eye and he turned and gasped.

"Is that a model of the *HMS Liberty*?"

"Yes. That's my true passion, Airships. It's the future of warfare you know."

"No one really use Airships though except for scouting and to command from."

"That is such a waste! As of now, only us and the Human Kingdom of Bretta, who in turned shared it with the Trollban, have any real Airships. Together the Western Alliance has more than us to which I think is a mistake on our part. We need to capitalize on this technology! We need to build a whole fleet of Airships instead of the one squadron that we have now. We need to start developing new weapons to which to arm them with."

Something stirred within Friedrich on that day, some would say it was the martial spirit of his people. He wouldn't know specifically what it was for years, but he knew then that he was destined to do something great. He looked at that model and he knew that his future was set on a path of burning glory. Everyone for generations to come would remember Ataemus the Great and Friedrich von Dresden IV and the greatness they accomplished in their lifetime and those same people would remember this as the day where it all began.

"Ok, Atty, let's do it. Let's take the world by storm. A great iron storm where the Thunder of Archaia rains down from the heavens to light their souls a blaze with our greatness. Let's show them all what we can do together!"

"See I knew you would come around. Wait, Atty?"

"If we are going to be friends they we must have nick names." He looks at his pocket watch and is shocked at how late it was. "Seven-thirty! My Lord, Atty, we don't want to be late for dinner."

"Okay back up the ladder then, Freddy. No that's no good. Just you wait, I'll find you a good nickname, one worthy of the friend of the King."