



WRITING CONTEST

Short Story (April 9th to May 8th)

Theme: Revenge

Participants:-

Bhavya

Khushi

Anna

BookNerd99

Submit your stories starting from the page with your name.
Add pages as necessary.

Bhavya

Content/ Trigger Warnings- Death, Murder (in detail, on page), Blood, Loss of a Father, Loss of a Mother, Suicidal ideation (mild), Child Abandonment (discussed), Wastage of food (mentioned), Loneliness, Mild Swearing (usage of damned)

~Written by Bhavya

Datoil: Johnny Roark

“How does it feel to be free, *da*?” Johnny had asked his father one morning, his eyes hopeful. “Free, eh?” His father countered. “There’s no kind of freedom where we live, son. Everybody here is tied to one another. Death is a better freedom than life in *Datoil*.” The hope had gone from Johnny’s eyes at that, but Johnny had soon discovered that his father wasn’t wrong.

There *was* no freedom in *Datoil*, a small, disgusting lane, where no sane person lived. But Johnny didn’t care about being a sane person. He cared about staying alive and if he had to live in this scrawny lane with no freedom, he’d prefer that over death.

Johnny walked towards his cabin, whistling a tune he had heard his *da* sing when he was a little boy. He didn’t have much memory of his *da*, except for a few restless nights where he saw his father’s worried face and wondered what was wrong. “*Nothing happened, Johnny. Everything is fine.*” *Da* used to say, and Johnny had believed him, until five tall men in black clothes had come in, pistols in their hand and then they took his father away.

They weren’t really men though, their kind were called *Kimōro* in *Datoli*, the language they spoke in *Datoil*. *Blessed. Magic User. One with the power of the Gods.* Johnny felt differently. *Kimōri*. He called them. *Abomination. Cursed.* They had killed his *ma* before he had ever gotten a chance to see her, and then they had taken his *da*.

Johnny entered the cabin he’d chosen for himself years ago, when he was a little boy still mourning the loss of a father. The thought left him dazed, but it didn’t sting like before. Johnny

didn't know if his *da* was dead or alive, and he didn't know which to pray for. *Death is a better freedom than life in Datoil*, his father used to say. Perhaps his *da* would have preferred death.

But he had enough time to forget old wounds, to erase them from his memory and pretend nothing happened. Now he was Johnny Roark. One of the most feared criminals in *Datoil*. A liar and a murderer. A cutthroat and a thief.

Johnny hung his coat on the wall, sitting on the rusty chair that made a squeaking noise whenever he did so. His green eyes fell to the note on his table, and he knew there was only one person who must have left it there. *Meet me near Peter's restaurant*.

Johnny sighed. Rising from the squeaking chair, he put on his black coat and walked back outside, closing the cabin door shut.

He didn't mind Peter's restaurant, but the wretched place was too damn pretty for *Datoil*. It was painted pink, and he could have sworn it had sparkly golden lights. *Too pleasant for my liking*, he thought, and it clashed terribly with his black hair.

Johnny waited patiently outside the white, locked door of Peter's restaurant. It didn't exactly have a name as far as Johnny knew, and Peter had the good sense not to paint a pink banner. At least he had some semblance of a brain.

"Johnny Roark." A familiar voice called. Bartha was looking him over, her brown and grey hair full of flour, wearing a pink apron that matched the entrance of Peter's restaurant.

"Good to see you Bartha." Johnny said, tipping his head slightly. "What business have you called me for?" Bartha had been working at Peter's restaurant for as long as he could remember, and he supposed she was a nice old lady with a nice job at a nice place. At least as nice as it could be in *Datoil*.

Johnny recalled her stealing burnt cakes for him from the restaurant when he was a little boy, some of them barely coated with sugar frosting. It was a basic rule at *Datoil* to never accept anything for free, so Bartha's sugar cakes were always thrown for the street dogs to chew on, but he had appreciated the sentiment then.

Bartha bit her lip, which Johnny knew was a nervous habit. "Let's go inside." She said, then lowered her voice. "I've got information on your father."

Johnny's eyebrows shot up. "I don't know what you're talking about." He said, unclasping his shoulders for dramatic effect. "My father died years ago."

Johnny fought the rage that coursed through him, the voice in his head screaming. *Revenge. Take your revenge Johnny. Make them pay*. He wouldn't think of that. Revenge was a foolish

dream, a pointless desire. If there was one thing Johnny Roark had learned all these years alone at *Datoil*, it was to never take revenge on anyone. *A waste of resources.*

“No.” Bartha said, her voice surprisingly fearless. “They didn’t kill your father that day Johnny. He’s still alive and I know where he is.”

Johnny stared at Bartha. There wasn’t anything dishonest about her composure, yet he couldn’t help the nagging feeling that she was not telling him the truth. But what would she gain from lying?

“I don’t want any information.” Johnny said firmly. “I don’t care if my father is dead or alive. It’s his life. None of my business.” And he saw it then, the slightest mark on Bartha’s left hand, small enough to be missed. *Kimōri. Abomination. Cursed.*

Bartha scoffed. “Don’t pretend with me, boy. No one knows as well as I do how much you want him back. I can take you to him, just get inside the—.”

“Alright.” Said Johnny, slowly moving his left hand to his gun in his cloak. He didn’t need to turn to shoot a perfect aim. The person standing behind him, who was most likely ready to attack was dead.

Bartha gasped, but Johnny didn’t waste any time before putting a knife against her throat. “You’re not Bartha, are you?” He pressed the blade closer, drawing a drop of blood. She choked, but the blood was gone in an instant. *Kimōri can feel pain, but no human can kill them.* Johnny shoved the thought out of his mind.

The man Johnny had just killed lay on the floor and Johnny searched him for a mark that branded him as *Kimōri*, just to be sure. He couldn’t see any. The man he just killed was certainly a human. Likely someone who had wanted Johnny dead.

“Where’s Bartha? The real one?” Johnny pressed harder against the woman. “If you really knew me as well as you claim, you’d also know I won’t hesitate to slit your throat.”

“How did you know I wasn’t Bartha?” A sob escaped her as he held the knife tighter.

Johnny glanced sideways, shooting a girl coming his way with a gun of her own. Her body fell flat on the floor. *How many humans had they hired?* “I just knew.” He said, kicking the woman who was not Bartha hard. She growled in anger, trying to free from his grasp. He stayed put.

She was a *Shapeshifter*, one of the most powerful of her kind, Johnny knew as much. What he didn’t know was why they were after him. “Tell me where Bartha is.” He snapped.

“Dead.” The woman said and there was satisfaction in her voice. “I killed her.” The little resolve Johnny had broke and he pushed the knife ready to slit her throat. She let out a muffled laugh. “You can’t kill me boy. You don’t have it in you.”

Johnny’s expression was amused. “You just saw me murder two people, and you’re saying I don’t have it in me?”

“You can’t kill one of my kind.”

Johnny dragged the woman, still keeping the knife at her throat. “You will tell me where Bartha’s body is, and you will tell me all that you know about my father *if* you want to stay alive. Am I clear?”

“No.” The woman said with determination in her voice.

“And why is that?”

“Because it won’t be necessary.”

“What do you mean— ”

A sharp, stinging pain hit Johnny and he stumbled back, his grip on the woman loosening. The woman smiled, returning to her true form. Raven hair, green eyes and a brown face. She looked just like him. “Remember me Johnny Roark?”

Johnny blinked. He felt as though she had cast a spell on him, forcing him to remember each and every horrid moment of his life. Each lie he had told, each theft he had made, each life he had ended. “*Remember me Johnny Roark?*” But he couldn’t remember. Memories were a poison. The more that you had, the worse they made you. And Johnny Roark made sure he never remembered. The lesser poison he had, the better.

“I don’t remember.” He said, and he saw something in her face crumble. *Good*. Johnny didn’t think before he lunged at her, pinning her to the floor. If she was a *Shapeshifter*, it was unlikely she had any other power and he wasn’t one of the most feared criminals in *Datoil* for nothing. “Where is Bartha’s body, and what do you know about my father?” He hissed. He’d already drawn enough blood, all of it fading immediately. *Kimōri can feel pain, but no human can kill them*.

“I burned Bartha’s body.” She said and Johnny willed himself to forget each memory he had with Bartha. Each note she left him, each meeting they had, each sugar cake she made. He would forget, just like always. He would make himself forget.

“And my father?” Johnny asked.

The women laughed again. "He was one of us, didn't you know? *Kimõro. Magic User.*"

Johnny flinched. "No, he wasn't. Your kind killed my mother."

"He was." She said, enjoying every moment of torture she was putting him through. "He didn't tell you. He was afraid."

"Then you should feel sorry," Johnny snarled, pressing the blade harder. "You never gave him a chance to tell me."

Forget about it Johnny. Forget like always, the voice in his head screamed. But he couldn't forget, for despite all that he liked to believe, Johnny Roark couldn't forget his parents and what was done to them. He couldn't erase the memory, it was too important to be erased. He couldn't pretend it didn't happen, as it *did* happen. *Revenge was a foolish dream, a pointless desire*, he used to believe, but it wasn't. Revenge was a supreme power, a kind of wish that gave you peace.

He wanted revenge. He wanted vengeance. And he was going to take it.

Thus Johnny Roark didn't hesitate before driving that knife harder than he ever had in the woman's throat. This time she yelled in agony, but any mark of injury was gone in a flash. *Kimõri. Abomination. Cursed.*

A bitter sound escaped her. "You can't kill me boy. You will never be able to. You don't have it in you."

"Why did you kill Bartha?" Johnny barked.

"I wanted my revenge." She said, lifting her chin. "I needed Bartha's body to take her form. But she was a petty sacrifice for a greater cause. Do you know who your father was, Johnny Roark? He was a *Nâhzrâ. A Deserter. A Traitor.* It was because of him your mother died. Do you know what power he possessed? He could silence someone. He could silence *anyone*. Shut their magic and stop it from working. Control their soul. But he gave that power away. He left me. All for a mortal. What a weakling! A miserable, lousy, useless fool—"

"My father was not a fool." Johnny said in a flat voice. "He was a greater person than you ever were."

"And who am I?" She said. "Do you know? Do you remember Johnny Roark?"

"Yes." Johnny said, and now he remembered who she was. *Mira.* His half-sister. "You're my sister."

The women smirked. “Took you long enough, Johnny Roark.” And then she grabbed his knife, sticking in his heart.

Johnny knew how *Kimōri* were. How their power was greater than anything humans like him could possess, and yet he was Johnny Roark. One of the most feared criminals in *Datoli*. A liar and a murderer. A cutthroat and a thief.

There was no one to mourn him, Johnny knew. Bartha would have perhaps, but she was dead because of him. A sacrifice to *Kimōri*, just like everyone else.

Johnny Roark was now a dead man, with no one for comfort, with no thought to to bring him at ease. He was a dead man who never thought his last words would be shouting at his sister as loud as he could: *I will take my revenge. I will burn down every single one of your kind. I will tear all of them to pieces and I will make you watch. I will come back.*

He never knew if Mira heard him, for Johnny Roark took a deep breath to ease himself. It was his last.

Written for Short Story Competition in Bookmarked, theme ‘Revenge’ (goodreads)

Written by @Bhavya, May 2021

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BookNerd99

BTW: Pretty major trigger warning, especially at the end.

When I was 15, my little sister who was only 12, was murdered by a boy my age named Warrow. He snuck into my parents' house late one night and stabbed her through the heart. Blood was all over her bed, and dripping onto the floor. That's one of the two things I remember with perfect clarity.

The other? I remember that after I had heard Anna scream, I ran to her room, where he stood over her, chuckling. Just as he noticed me and turned around, I snatched his knife and drew a deep, bloody gash from his left eye to his right collarbone.

He managed to escape the house, but he was clumsy from blood loss and the security cameras caught him, though the video was fuzzy.

After Anna's death, my parents and I were interrogated many times. Samples from Anna's room were taken and analyzed. That, along with the fuzzy video of the murderer, identified him as Warrow Daricus Jole.

My parents and I grieved. And grieved. And grieved. I only went to things I had to, like school, but no longer attended social events like parties. Around the age of 17, I stopped my sadness, replacing it instead with anger. From then on, I had one purpose in life; getting revenge on Anna's murderer. No matter what, I would kill him.

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Three years later, here I am, applying to work for the b*stard. I had just graduated high school, yes, I was held back a couple of years, but decided against going to college. So, I needed a job and as luck would have it, the very person who I wanted revenge on was offering it. The pay was ok, about as much as you would hope to get for doing odd jobs around the house.

I filled out an application and sent it in. Nearly two weeks later, I got a text stating that my application was approved and I was to start the next day. The rest of that day I spent preparing a disguise, because I knew that otherwise Warrow would recognize me.

After a restless night's sleep, I was all ready to go. My face looked nothing like it usually did. Normally I had bright blue eyes, some acne, long blond hair, a few stray freckles, and soft cheeks. But for my job I had cut my hair to just above my shoulders and dyed it silver, put in contacts that made my eyes a stormy gray, and used makeup to conceal my acne, freckles, and sharpen my cheekbones.

I grabbed my car keys and practically flew out the door. I hopped in my car and drove as fast as I could to get to work.

After a half hour drive, I had arrived. Warrow owned a nice little cottage out in a meadow. There wasn't anything sinister about it, rather, it looked quite comfortable. Flowers blooming out front, a soft sky-colored paint, and a little chimney with smoke rising from it that completed the look.

I got out of my car and knocked on the door. Warrow answered, his scar terribly unmatched to his kind smile. He was good at hiding his guilt behind his smile, wasn't he?

You won't be smiling for too long, I thought happily. Not after I kill you.

I smiled, too. "Hi, I'm Gannara Amberth. It's nice to meet you. You have a lovely cottage."

"Why, thank you!" He blushed, obviously not used to the attention. At least, he acted that way. "I'm Sam Ganso. Why don't I show you around a little bit, my cottage may look small, but the tasks are not." He chuckled a little bit.

*D*mn you, monster. Shut up! Murderers don't deserve to laugh. Warrow, or Sam as he liked to call himself looked happy and carefree when he laughed. You have blood on your nasty hands. You aren't allowed to have those feelings.*

Sam showed me around the house, outside of it, anyway. *What secrets do you hold inside?* Occasionally when he wasn't looking, I would peek inside a window. I saw nothing suspicious. *But that doesn't mean anything.*

"....and here's the garden. This is where you'll be doing the most work." Sam stopped in front of the lushest garden I'd ever seen. "Well, I'll leave you to it. Just knock if you need anything."

"Ok, I sure will!" I had the perfect smile plastered on my face to fool him.

As soon as he left, I got started on the garden. I grabbed a long, green hose and started watering the flowers, which were sorted into a rainbow array. They were stunning.

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About an hour later of watering plants, I decided to take a break. And by taking a break, I mean snooping. I started walking around Sam's property, looking everywhere that could possibly hide a dark secret or a body.

I was out in the wooded area of 'Murder Cottage', as I had dubbed Sam's property, when I stumbled upon a tree. Three long gashes cut through it, and there was no mistaking the fact that they were claw marks. The claw marks felt....strange. Not only did they terrify me for no reason, but they felt almost....dark. Like a creature not of this world had created them.

I started jogging back toward the house, torn between panic and denial that I saw anything.

Two hours later saw me still wandering the forest, hopelessly lost. Then I heard it. The tell-tale snap of a twig, *right next to me*. Upon hearing a snuffling noise and deep growl, I froze. My body felt nothing but fear, wanted nothing but to run, but I was frozen. The only thing I could do is turn around and face the creature behind me. So, I did.

Standing before me was a lion shaped demon, its body and eyes perfectly black, its maw dripping with slimy black ooze. It smelled like sh*t. Its teeth twitched into something that vaguely resembled a smile before it leapt, and I was out.

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I was whistling a jaunty tune to throw off the fact that I had been snooping around Sam's property.

While in the forest, I had found absolutely nothing, so I hightailed it back without problem to Murder Cottage before Sam caught me. If he became suspicious of me, I could lose my only chance to kill him, or worse, he could kill *me*.

Well, speak of the devil. Sam came sauntering out, sandwiches and lemonade in hand. I gave a chuckle. Fake, of course. "Isn't it way past lunch?"

Sam countered with, "Have you even eaten lunch yet?" He looked sternly at me, obviously wanting the truth. It felt like he could see right through me.

I gave an annoyed huff. "No, I haven't."

Sam smiled and shook his head, and we both sat down for cheese and turkey sandwiches. They were....heavenly. So was the lemonade.

The rest of the day flew by with us chatting, me struggling to come up with lies on the spot. Well, very twisted truths, anyway. *I hope he's struggling much more than me.*

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3 months passed, just like that. I searched and searched, but found nothing. Even when I searched his house, under the guise of having to use the toilet. Still nothing.

Every other week, a paycheck rolled in. I got a decent amount of money, enough to pay for gas and groceries. My house was paid for by my parents, so I didn't need to worry about that.

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Another month gone. It was time. It was time for Sam to die under my hands, just as Anna had died under his.

When I arrived at his house, I didn't bother with a cheery facade. Instead, a cruel smile found its home on my face.

"Hey, Gannara! What's up?" He'd mistaken my smile for good news. *Ha! Good news for me, but not for you.*

I now stood in front of him. He no longer looked curious, just confused. "Why are you smiling like that?"

"Oh, Warrow. Don't you remember. Maybe the name Anna will reboot your memory? You know, the girl who did nothing to you, yet you chuckled at killing her?"

He just shook his head, the little sh*t! "No. I didn't do that. You must have the wrong person."

"Good try, trying to save yourself by feigning ignorance. But it won't work with me." I pulled out a knife that I had held onto all these years, the one that had killed Anna. "Now you will die by the same blade."

"Please, no! I didn't do anything. Honest! I swear!" He was sobbing now, and I loved it. That fear, that horror. Beautiful.

I traced his scar lightly with the knife, drawing a thin line of blood. "Ever wondered how you got that scar? It was me. I gave it to you the night you murdered Anna."

"I didn't kill your sister!" He screamed.

I just chuckled. "End of the line Warren. Goodbye." I said cheerily as I raised my knife. I enjoyed watching as he realised he really was going to die before plunging my knife deep into his heart, and twisting it for good measure.

Pain registered on his face, but only for a second. His body went slack, and his eyes went blank. My job was done. Warrow was dead.

Suddenly, a memory consumed me. I remembered being out in the forest, meeting a demon. And now I remembered what it had said: "Don't worry, I'm not going to kill you. I just wanna play a game. If your heart is as pure as you think, you'll remember this and not kill Warren. If you do kill him, you will be turned into a demon."

Now I could feel the demon breathing down my back. "I win. And by the way, Warrow is the name of a demon who possessed Sam and made him kill Anna. That demon is me."

I slashed at him, but he was too fast. He soon had my neck between his teeth, and he bit down. I heard, but didn't feel, as he snapped it. Then it healed. I knew that was only because I was now a demon, just like Warrow.

He chuckled, and I did too, no longer truly in control of myself. "Congratulations on your killing. Your new name is Murderer."

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To this day, nobody knows what happened to the girl with the murdered sister. All they know is that the day she disappeared, there were 12 killings, the age that Anna was when she was murdered.

Anna

Title: Cold Blood

Author: Anna {Follow me for reviews! (✿◡◡)}

Some violence/gore

It happened twice in a span of years, but far too close together according to Kai Orman. The same ugly man with his sneering grin and rancid stink tramped up to the door with his dreadful command, dressed in his country's colors of gray and black. Since he was little, Kai saw them as colors of dead men's bones and ravens' mournful echoes through the mountains. They had stolen the place of the old colors, the colors of purple and bronze, when Oskye had been free.

Many years ago during a huge uprising, the ruler of Oskye had been murdered, the country overthrown by Lutharia, and the people forced into captivity. Lutharia conquered kingdom after kingdom and country after country. With each success, their power strengthened and they grew more undefeatable.

This man in particular was a Lutharian, first ordering for Kai Orman's father to join their army to fight against the country of Askal. Their mother was long dead from disease and the two boys were still young. Without proper support, the farm was sold and the two boys moved to a small run down shack. Kai's older brother, Seth, was barely old enough to make an income to support the two of them. And again, it happened. On a night just as dark and blustery as the night their father had been taken away, the Lutharian found their shack and knocked on the door with a message for Seth.

"According to Great King Draven Foghlaidh XVI of Lutharia, you, Seth Orman, are to join the army by sundown tomorrow. If no action is taken, a price will be on your head, all ownership of anything confiscated from yourself and all living relatives. We will kill you," the man said haughtily. Something in his eyes gleamed, and this time, now that Kai was old enough to understand, he felt anger spark in his chest. To the Lutharians, the captured people

of Oskye were nothing more than pawns thrown into the worst of the battles without worrying about losing good men to the bloodshed. He nearly spoke but the look Seth flashed him silenced him for the time being. Seth stood at the door, conversing with the man as if it were a great honor to be called into their service, and that his death was not looming above him like a dark storm cloud.

“I understand, thank you,” Seth told the man at the door. He had tonight and tomorrow to prepare and say goodbye to his brother. He shut the door and returned to his chair by the fire. His face was unreadable as he stared into the flames.

“You’re going along with it,” Kai stated flatly. Seth did not answer.

“Seth. What’s wrong with you? You know what happened to father!” said Kai more firmly, more upset. He stood, knocking the chair over with a clatter in the process. Seth held up a hand to stop him and turned. Sighing heavily, he ran a hand through his black hair.

“I don’t have a choice, Kai. If I refuse, I’ll be sentencing myself and you to death. You are old enough, so take this chance to flee the country. Don’t look back.” The muscles in his jaw were tense. Kai wanted to call Seth a coward. Seth was sacrificing himself for Kai. Kai didn’t know if he could live with himself after that. Where was he to go, anyway? To the country who’d slain their father?

But that was it. The decision had been made. Nothing Kai did would stop Seth. The next day Seth set off, leaving an angry Kai behind in the dust with nothing but a chance to flee for his own life. Again, Kai had had family mercilessly ripped out of his life.

A few months passed. Kai still hadn’t been able to leave, in need of a horse and enough food and money, so he remained in the small shack, earning what little income he could and growing impatient. Every few days, Kai searched to find out the status of his brother. Was he still alive? Was he too far gone after the army’s cruel treatment? The day right before Kai would have been called into service himself, he found out that his brother had been murdered. Killed along with hundreds of thousands of other men. Their blood ran thick together in the valleys and carved out rivers, coursing down to the ocean. And his brother was among the carcasses that lay slaughtered beneath the sky.

Kai's pain mounted deep in his chest, climbing higher and higher until it exploded in the words he spoke and the actions he took. When the Lutharian recruiter arrived, Kai grabbed a nearby mallet leaning against the side of the house and slammed it across his temples. It left a huge purple indent on the man's face and from the looks of it, the man would need more than just rest in order to recover. If he ever did.

Kai was going to go after the man who killed his father and brother and give him the punishment he deserved. Losing them both was too much. It broke him inside. Kai snatched a neighbor's horse, disappearing into the night with the few belongings he had.

They galloped through town after town, retreating to the woods for the night. It was too risky to stay in one place for long. To think that there weren't Lutharian mercenaries on his heels was crazy. They'd hunt their target down and didn't stop until a blade sliced across their neck or buried itself into their chest. Kai knew he'd be trailed the rest of his life. He wouldn't dare to let himself become forced into service for the ones who'd ruined his life.

During the day, he'd use what little money he had to purchase the cheapest meal he could in the taverns and sit in the farthest corner, hood pulled over his face. While Kai ate, he kept an open ear on where the Askalian armies were. According to the Lutharians, when Kai had gone to find out where his brother was, General Vakkan Galerius had been leading the troops who'd murdered his father and brother, both on different occasions. That was the man he wanted most of all. After days of searching, Kai had pinpointed the town where that specific man was located, and after a little bit of walking, had come across the correct inn. It hadn't been too difficult once he spotted the crammed stables of stallions and packhorses.

General Vakkan Galerius was drinking in the inn, surrounded by his soldiers. The dining room was packed to the brim with their bodies, heavy drunken laughter rising to the ceiling beams in waves to whatever dirty jokes were being passed around the tight space. Kai wondered how long they'd remain careless and relaxed. As he stepped further into the room, finally shutting the door when someone growled at him for letting in the frigid air, several faces turned their beady eyes on him. The Askalians whispered among themselves, comments directed at Kai himself. Kai moved towards the bar to order an ale and slapped coins onto the counter. Finally the men ignored him and went back to their own conversations. The bartender retrieved the coins, sliding them into a waist pocket and moving to the counter behind himself. Picking up a glass and wiping the rim with a rather nasty end of a rag, he stuck it underneath a barrel and poured ale to the brim. Kai grimaced but took the drink

anyway when it was slid towards him, knowing it was really only an attempt to blend in for the moment.

General Vakkan Galerus was right there. While there were other places, there was one seat right across from the man. Kai knew it was dangerous, but he also knew that his last wish, the one that had been ground into his brain from the moment he left after hearing of Seth's death, would lead him to his end. He was expecting it to. But as long as he would be able to avenge the unworthy death of his father and brother, it would be okay. He knew it would be. Before Kai could change his mind, he was slipping through the tangle of sweaty bodies and sitting down across from the man. He was close enough now that he could see each of the scars embedded in Galerus' skin, feel the tension rise as the men shifted around him to strike him down if needed. Most of the conversations and raucous laughter ceased.

"Who are you?" Galerus sneered, folding his hands casually in front of himself. For all he cared, Kai was a street urchin that could be easily tossed away into the flames with the firewood. He looked very amused, which did appear strange on the evil man's face.

"Kai Orman," Kai said quietly. His eyes burned into Galerus. He hated the man more than he could possibly bear. He knew who this man was, the one who'd sent men after Seth and his father in turns, slicing them both down. But he wanted to hear the man say it. Admit to his mistakes. "You are an evil man, Vakkan Galerus."

"Oh, yes," Galerus said coolly. He was not ashamed of that fact. It meant a lot for him to win at war, to kill off worthless men and take over their countries, to cause trouble and prove his strength to his opponents. "Does it look like I am not aware of that?" He laughed, and so did a few of his henchmen.

Kai's fist tightened, and it slowly crept down to his waist, ready to draw his knife. That's all he had. This man before him had more than fifty men at his disposal right now, each armed with swords and beyond, including Galerus himself. Kai only had a knife. But he also knew what he was planning on doing with it.

"I doubt you know of a man named Seth Orman, my brother, and Tassian Orman, my father," Kai said. "Osbye."

Galerus didn't say anything for some time. He was trying to figure out what this little rat wanted with him, or why he dared to sit at the same table with him and speak this way. "I have killed lots of Oskyian men. Why do I care?"

Kai growled under his breath and finally his hand latched onto his knife. "You've murdered my family. I've come all the way from Oskye myself to make sure you cannot take another life. No matter what the cost is, it's enough for my brother and father." Suddenly Kai was leaping forward, springing from his seat like a bolt from a crossbow, knife in hand directed at the base of his throat where his armor did not protect him. He crashed into the general, knocking him backwards onto the floor with a thud. Somewhere in the attack, Kai's knife sunk deep into the man's throat, causing him to gurgle as blood began welling up. "You took them both from me!" Kai screamed, stabbing it deeper and scraping the tip of the blade against a bone. The general clawed helplessly at Kai's knife, a look of terror flitting through his eyes. At the same time, men were leaping to their feet, grabbing Kai by his shoulders and yanking him backwards. As Kai was pulled away, it felt like slow motion. He saw life disappearing from the general's face and felt a cold edge sink deep into his own chest, barely registering what it was until he lay sprawled back on the floorboards, blood racing from the wound in his chest. The pain sprang up instantly, searing through his torso and causing blackness to creep in from the edges of his vision.

"For my brother. For my father," Kai gasped hoarsely, allowing his eyes to close. "I promised my brother I'd repay the man who stole their lives. At least I did that one thing for them."

The darkness folded over Kai, swallowing him whole in a blanket of emptiness.

Khushi