

# The Feast

## **Chapter Five**

The Grand Hall was filled with the enticing scent of charred meat, a blend of spices, garlic, paprika, and a hint of lemon. The guests who gathered to partake in the joyous celebrations couldn't help but be drawn in by the smell. As the morning hours slipped away, King Joseph Stryder and his son Jakob Stryder returned to the Palace, finding themselves seated at the Royal Table that offered a commanding view of the entire Grand Hall. From their vantage point, they could observe the numerous guests, seated at smaller tables spread throughout the hall. The royal table itself was positioned just below the steps leading up to the King's throne, The Throne of Legion. With a legacy that spanned centuries of great Kings and Queens, the Legion Nation had earned a reputation for embodying honor and integrity. The Grand Thrones of King Joseph and Queen Janet, Jakob's late mother, were positioned on top of the stairs. They were made of giant navy-blue marble slabs with streaks of dark gray bleeding throughout. The air in the Grand Hall was buzzing with conversations and the clinking of silverware against plates. Jakob, seated next to his father, stared down at his plate, playing with his food. He never really enjoyed the more formal parts of the celebrations, finding them boring. And to top it off, he wasn't hungry anymore, having already devoured the delicious elk steak caught by The Bowhunter earlier in the day. His father had promised him a taste before the main feast, and it did not disappoint.

In true Legion tradition, a feast was held around midday to mark the beginning of the celebrations. People from all over the Legion city-states and even from all around Hyperion made their way to the Legion capital to join in the festivities. Under King Joseph' rule, there was a prevailing sense of peace among the five nations and even the neutral Republic to the south.

Today, Jakob appeared disinterested in the whole affair, his mind seemingly wandering as he gazed into the Grand Hall. The hall itself was a sight to behold, with its light grey marble

floor and marble pillars decorated with elegant white moldings. Bored with his surroundings, Jakob's eyes shifted to the servers, their large skewers of meat catching his attention. He wondered about the weight of each piece and challenged himself to guess which type of meat it was from a distance.

**"Lamb wrapped in bacon, Beef Ancho, Tomahawk,"** he whispered to himself, just loud enough to hear. The Legion Nation was famed for its meats, but they also had an excellent reputation for the quality of their fish. Jakob enjoyed some of the fish dishes as well, until he noticed the salmon.

**"I didn't want salmon, I said it three times,"** Jakob muttered in annoyance. However, his frustration was interrupted when he caught the eye of his two closest friends, Celeste Fanefi and Aleki Ornella. Throughout the afternoon, he would take any opportunity to pass by his friends and say hello. But his main motive was to playfully annoy Celeste. He would walk by her, randomly poking her on the side, surprising her and making her mad. Jakob laughed mischievously as he walked away. On his way back to his seat after his fourth round of bothering Celeste, his father asked him,

**"Jakob, have you seen your uncle Fred?"** Jakob scanned the ends of the Royal table where many members of the Legion Order and nobility were seated, but his uncle was nowhere to be found.

**"No, I haven't seen him at all in weeks."** he replied. Joseph fell silent for a moment before adding,

**"If you see him, tell me. He was expected back today from his journey east."** Over the years, Jakob and his uncle Fred Stone had formed a strong connection. Out of everyone in his

life, Jakob found comfort in confiding his innermost thoughts and secrets with Fred. Unlike others, his uncle never passed judgment on him, regardless of the trouble or mischief he found himself in. Fred allowed Jakob to express himself freely, even if it meant using foul language. Lost in his thoughts about his uncle, Jakob's attention was abruptly caught by a sound.

**“Clink, Clink, Clink.”** Jakob heard from the right of him, his father was standing tapping a glass getting everyone’s attention. The sound of the room went completely still.

**“Thank you all for coming today, we gather here in celebration. I know most of you are eager for the news and I encourage you to enjoy yourself. There is plenty of meat and wine to go around. Today we celebrate and honor the falling of Hyperion City one thousand years ago and the founding of the five nations by Luehtaz himself. Although the five nations live separately from one another, we still gather in unity for our shared history. It’s been some years since we have gathered in mass and it’s good to see some old friends’ faces and some new. We say praise for those we have lost.”** There was a short pause,

**“Let us not pity the departed. We shall find comfort in the remembrance of those we have lost, for their journey does not come to an end. It is a path we all must tread. In the end we do not face darkness, but instead we transform into Light, returning to the embrace of Matakanui’s love in the white shores and far off green country of Elysium. Let us reserve out sympathy for those who fail to live a life filled without love. We must not forget the true enemy.”**

Everyone applauded and took a drink from their glass. More glasses were handed out and he continued in a more cheerful tone,

**“It just so happens that today also falls on the day my greatest treasure was born into this world, my son heir to throne Jakob Stryder!”** There was a roar from the people and Jakob stood up taking a quick bow.

**“After we are finished here, we will all head down to Paradise Falls where we will have our race. Rovers have been so graciously permitted to us for use by The Grand Reserve. Emissary Francis Lafaille is here with us to sanction the event and it will be a thrilling day. Lastly, I know this is the reason why most of you are here. When the race is over today, we will announce the identity of The Guardian. The secret has been held close by the Vantis Guard, but today we will announce the identity of the Guardian and usher in a time of peace and prosperity for all of Hyperion. We will now accept your greetings. Thank you all for coming, Mata be with you.”**

The King raised his glass and took a large drink. Everyone in the hall followed until he put his down. It was normal tradition for the King to take a long gulp making his guests drink until he was done. When the King finally finished there was loud applause, and everyone continued onto their conversations.

**“I can’t wait to meet the Guardian! Dad, can you introduce me to the Guardian before everybody else.”** Jakob asked looking up to his father with much enthusiasm.

**“He’s closer than you think.”** Joseph smiled back.

Jakob didn’t know what he meant by that, but it didn’t matter, the table was moved, and people already began to walk up to where they were seated.

**“I’ve waited all my life to meet the Guardian. This is amazing. We could go on adventures together and travel the world. I mean I am the future king, so we have to be**

**friends. I wonder who it is.**” Jakob seemingly accepted his fate as the future King, now that he could be friends with the Guardian.

**“Jakob prepare yourself. We will have the leaders of the nation’s come to greet us. After that we will make our leave to Paradise Falls.”** Joseph finished. Approaching them were two graceful women, their slender frames, and waves of light brown hair. Their flawless skin seemed to glow, complementing their deep green eyes. Despite their similarities, a difference in age and height set the two women apart. Both women donned form-fitting green dresses, designed with slits that crossed their midsections. Accessories crafted from brown wood, reminiscent of tree bark. As the two women approached, the master of Ceremonies Decimus Gavros and the Chamberlain Joey Solis stepped forward from their seats next to the king. Chamberlain Joey began to speak,

**“My King, we have the honor of presenting to you The Keeper of the Wood of the Anemis of Stonewood, descendant of The Emathrion Coven, Faylen Emathrion and her daughter the Heir to the Wood Aestra Emathrion.”** The Chamberlain totally botched the names. Jakob couldn’t help but laugh as Joey gave him a side eye. The King was fond of much of the nobility around Hyperion, however it was still formalities and respect to introduce them. The King and Jakob both stood up and bowed.

**“It’s been too long since I visited Stonewood, its lovely to see you, Faylen. My wife loved to visit and see the beauty of the Wood. Thank you for being here. Give my wishes to your husband.”** The greetings went on for a while, many people of each nation came to bow and give their offerings. The most important people were the Kings or Queens of the other nations. That’s mainly who Jakob was interested in. After several other guests, the leader of the Simions of the Kanui Nation approached with his wife, their attire was vibrant. Draped in

flowing, sleeveless silk garments, the rich red covered their bodies. The garments gracefully extended past their knees, tightened at the waist with delicate ties. Their hair styled, knotted above their heads. Jakob was impressed with how kind they were, he learned that the leader of Simions was called the Koa Ohana, his name was Hoashi Tatsuya, and his wife Akimi Tatsuya and they were cousins to his servant Tita. Jakob would also later meet for the first time the Master of the Dunes from the Regulators of the Dunes of the Emproyles Nation, Kushma Tuscany of House Khalifa. His commanding presence was accented by his impressive height. He had an abundance of amber jewelry, each piece seemed to tell a story of its own. Notably, a prominent ring caught Jakob's attention, boasting a strikingly large letter "K" engraved upon it. The man, seemingly conscious of its significance, gently caressed the ring. He couldn't help but notice that the leaders of every nation took their heritage quite seriously. Each one of them, as they approached, held a staff resembling his father's, yet uniquely tailored to their nation. The most amusing part of it all was when the Chamberlain, in his attempt to introduce them, stumbled over their name's multiple times. Jakob glanced over at Aleki and Celeste, who were also listening and sharing a laugh. As the next pair of men drew near, their imposing presence became evident. Draped in carefully crafted grey armor. Intricate patterns of deeply etched lines throughout their armor, accentuated by the glimmer of countless precious jewels that enhanced its surface. It was quiet and awkward, and the Chamberlain began to speak,

**“My King this is...”**

**“No need.”** King Joseph said as he stood up.

**“So, this is the little bastard ehh.”** One of the men said grabbing the corners of his body armor as he looked to Jakob.

**“And this is yours?”** The King responded and raised his arm pointing to the smaller man standing next to him. There was a long pause and deep stair between the two men. Suddenly they both broke out in laughter.

**“It’s good to see you my old friend.”** The King walked forward and gave the man a big hug. Joseph turned back and said to Jakob,

**“Son this is the Ruler of Atmas of the Emproyles Nation, Serge Voyevoda and his son Ivan Voyevoda.”** Jakob was thrilled to hear the name Voyevoda. He read all about them. The Voyevoda family came from a long line of Shadow-Beast hunters. They hunted Winged Serpents, Boas, Wendigo’s, Sirens, Ghouls, Banshees and even Fell Men. Some say they were crazy because they told the legends of the beasts they faced. But Jakob believed every bit of it. He was trying to compose himself and bowed with excitement while the men talked.

**“I’ve brought some fine Vutka for you to have today and fresh Vampiro eggs for you to have, there are a delicacy you know.”** Serge said with one arm still around the King. The King looked at the eggs and was creeped out. It was two large black eggs with red lines all over.

**“Maybe next time Serge.”** The king finished.

**“Well, more for me. Can’t wait to see the race, I love it when there’s a huge crash, Boom! ha-ha”** Serge said loudly, very animated in his conversation. The Brutes of Atmas were known to be a bit on the eccentric side, their nation was built in the mountains of The Vast Barricade. Not seeing daylight for long periods of time made them different to say the least. The men hugged and said goodbye. These were the last of the important guests of the five nations and



Jakob was eager to leave already. Joseph was beginning to walk back to his seat, and he heard a cough as if someone was calling him. The King turned back around,

**“You’re forgetting someone, mon ami.”** A man said as he approached.

The Master of Ceremonies quickly began speaking,

**“My King this is Councilman of the Republic Angel Espina and as you know the Emissary of Grand Reserve Francis Lafaille, they were both invited here directly by your brother Fred Stone.”** As both men approached, they strolled with their hands casually placed behind their backs, observing their surroundings with keen eyes. Before acknowledging the presence of others, they offered a subtle bow. There was an unsettling vibe about them that Jakob couldn't quite put his finger on. Their scrutinizing gazes seemed to pass judgment on the Palace, igniting a sense of anger within him.

**“Thank you, Gentlemen, for your gracious presence in my Kingdom, we are always pleased to work with the Grand Reserve and those of The Republic.”** King Joseph said in a welcoming tone. The first man was clad in a form-fitting, dark brown long-sleeved coat, tightly buttoned across his broad chest. Black fabric peeked out around his neck. The coat, extending down to his waist with a slightly longer front. He also had thick black boots, reaching just below his knee-length pants. As Jakob observed the man, he couldn't help but notice the weathered lines etched upon his face. The man sported a mustache of unique design, unlike any Jakob had encountered before. However, what truly captured Jakob's fascination was the prosthetic mechanical hand adorning the man's wrist. When the man spoke with a deep raspy conniving voice, his words flowed smoothly, with exotic accent from the east.

**"Thee Honors is ours, mon liege. I am most certainly lookin forward to seein what happens at the Rovers Race. The Republic grants one thousand Crowns to the winner of the race, sacrebleu! I thank Mr. Lafaille for bringin' me along to this magnifique event. The custom of the nation's differs from ours of The Republic, mais hopefully we can bring the culture and ideals of our government, ouais, so that way we can make some deals to benefit us both."**

The man came across arrogant and condescending. The Aristocrat councilmen of The Republic always had a way of looking out for their own interests and letting their money speak louder than their actions. As the man was about to continue, Ernest Lafaille stepped forward,

**"What Sir Espina means is your that hospitality is enough, and we will donate to your celebrations as much as we can, including more Rovers if needed. Please let us know when Fred Stone arrives. We are eager to see the brother of the King who spoke so highly of your virtue and with the hopes of continuing great communication with the Grand Reserve to further our endeavors."**

Francis Lafaille was better with the selection of his words. He was more experienced with diplomatic relations. The King was pleased but Jakob did not like either of the men. He tried to find some reason not to like them, even what they both were wearing bothered him. The Emissary Francis donned the imperial attire of the esteemed Grand Reserve. On his head was a distinguished black tricorne hat, featuring three pointed edges with a delicate gold trim. Along with his tailored black coat, decorated with silver cuffs and various silver accents such as buttons and pins. From a distance, Jakob speculated that the emissary might be wearing a white wig underneath his hat, although he was not certain. As the men concluded their conversation and bid farewell with firm handshakes. Jakob and his father began making their

way towards the escort that would lead them to the starting point of the Rover Race. Jakob eagerly rose from his seat, his excitement for the race now evident.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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