

Alexandra: Rooting out Vermin
Tales from the Stormthrower

I

Alexandra sat on a small hill, watching the movements of the people below and in front of her, in the city that was built against the mountain and filled the whole image of her incantation. She had been instructed to carefully walk through the city, identify the enemy movements and infiltrate and if possible to root them out. Slowly got an idea of the traders heading in and out of the city in recent days, selling their wares in the market. Recognized one of the people who posed as a trader, but always took the same goods in and out of town. Disguised herself, strolled down the hill and joined the stream of travelers and cautiously followed the merchant.

Through the gate, she could see the central staircase which brought travelers quickly through the stacked districts of the mountain city. Large white trees protected the steps against the ever-present wind. The tall straight trunks had their branches intertwined already low to the ground, forming the foliage in a green screen between the imposing white columns. A single big branch sticking out on the stairs was used to hang fire baskets. The blackened shells now fell away from the green, but made in the evening a brightly lit avenue for citizens to parade on.

The trader pushing his wares of course took the route through the surrounding neighborhoods. The lower areas were on the first slopes of the mountain. Here were the workplaces of the heavy industry and large warehouses. Only on the steep slopes were the most expensive areas of the city with on top the town hall, partly in the rock-hewn, partly stuck to the mountainside, forming a beautiful dome over the square of a hundred miles.

The trader, however, mover through the lower districts and stopped only at a small tavern with narrow agile handcarts. She had took on a couple of a new disguises and found a bench not far from the tavern and pretended she was just resting.

A small portion of the merchandise was loaded into one of the small handcarts, the dealer donned the harness and dragged it to the higher districts. Leaving the rest of the goods unattended. Sighing, she stood up and strolled up the hill, overhauled the cart slowly, walked by and at regular intervals rested on one of the many benches. Cheerfully greeted the trader every time he came by, until he declined into the avenue of one of the villas. Waved and climbed on to the town hall.

Her shadow had been noted long before he followed her into the town hall, down the long stone corridors to the public registration office. The line was short this time of the day so her turn came quickly. Smiled when her shadow silently removed himself from the room. Back on the square of a hundred miles she took on one of the benches, enjoyed the view and sought and found the discoloration that denoted where the sea lay.

She took the descent along the steps of the central staircase. Also rested here with regularly intervals and then walked into one of the residential areas, adapted her disguise when she could, wove a net around herself and disappeared from sight. Went back, took the

next shadow into her mind and reappeared in quiet street, two districts higher in the city. Used the central stairs to the residential area where the villa was and walked jauntily through the gate into the neighborhood. Did graceful bows to senior people and disappeared in a quiet moment.

The villa where the trader was heading was full of elves, she had found her place on one of the beams high in the reception room, carefully making sure her movements caused no shadow on wall or ceiling. The merchandise was displayed before her. Large lances with metal half swords as point. Several war axes of dwarf making and various other weapons that did not belong in a peaceful town.

In the great hall were several barrel vaults which ran parallel to the mountain, where the pressure of the mountain was too high, the pillars were connected by cross beams, from which she could keep an eye on all what happened. The presentation by the trader, who had dressed for the occasion in a with gold plating adorned quilted tunic and trousers, demonstrated the weapons and let a few occupants try a customized weapon. All their movements betrayed them as experienced warriors.

The tapestries, hung along the walls, vibrated gently by the eddy currents spinning in the room. She noticed it and increased the strands quickly, so quickly a stiff breeze went through the room. The warriors stood already with drawn weapons and clotted together in small groups when they could find no opponent. She collected some air magic and bounced through the vaults, here and there steering fireballs in the storm. It spread and formed a barrier around the room. Push off from the ceiling and raced through one of the groups. A blue glow danced through the air where her sword struck goal. Fell flat on the ground to avoid a thrown knife, pushed her selves with great violence into the air and bounced from pillar to pillar, until the militia had no idea where she was. Fanned the storm and blew ice storm over another group. Had already dropped herself when one of the magicians added himself into the struggle.

Fire and ice flew from both sides over her, then by her, she encapsulated the magic, weaving through it a few wires of her own and threw it back at the magicians, pulling one from the shadows long enough to reach him with her sword. Ran through a group of warriors whirled around her axis sword drawn and was gone before they had touched the ground. More and more participants were lying flat on the ground in surrender. The rest of the militia made an sortie to one of the exits. The mage made a passage into the fire screen, however this caused such a gust that a large portion of the fire screen forced itself a way out overwhelming the mage. The militia had no choice and they lay down their arms and surrendered.

The storm, already weakened, slowly died and it was dead quiet in the hall until a hail shot, with hundreds of small stones, tore the silence announcing the city guard. On the ground she fiddled with her disguise, waited until the guard had taken possession of the hall, loosened the wires and as she slowly appeared, saluted the centurion, and without looking back walked past him, out the door, into the city. Did some shopping, packed her things and headed to the next customer.

The end