

# The Banished

by  
Brian Gardner

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Story by  
Brian Gardner

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Cover Art Concept  
by  
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(“Welcome” in Rarkellian ornamental-historical script.)

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## Special Thanks:

I wanted to take a moment to thank  
each one of my associates and friends,  
who assisted in the editing of

The Banished.

Thank You!

# CONTENTS

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One - 1

Plentis

Two - 6

Seeking His Destiny

Three - 8

History Lesson

Four -

Rarkel

Five -

The Meeting

Six -

The Assassin

Seven -

Revealing the Truth

Eight -

The Installation of Flaren Tesmerend

Nine -

Reconciliation

Epilogue -

E1 - E3

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Pronouncing the various names of characters, locations and things  
in this story. ` = where syllable accent falls. Like with `cray-on.  
Characters, Places and Things in order of their appearance in this story.

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**`Plentis:** rhymes with: “men-kiss”.

**Varo** (1 & 2): rhymes with “arrow”.

**Dalg** (system): “dowl-g”.

**Vert:** rhymes with “hurt”.

**Pa`rel Kelm:** *Pa* (like a father). *rel* rhymes with *fell*. *Kel* rhymes with *bell* with an “m” at end.

**Delius Tern:** *`Dell* rhymes with “bell” + e + us. *Tern:* said like “turn”.

**`Lacra:** *La* said like “law”. *cra* rhymes with “craw”.

**`Vela:** *Ve* rhymes with “be”. *la* rhymes with “tub” without the “b”.

**`Kaltan:** *Kal* rhymes with first three letters of “California” = “cal”. *tan* said just like when you get a *tan* in the sun.

**`Tamus:** *Tam* rhymes with “jam” + us.

**Sa`val:** *Sa* rhymes with “but” without the “t”. *val* rhymes with “call”.

**`trialia:** *trial* rhymes with “hill” + “e” and “ah”.

**`Vertemus:** *Ver* rhymes with “her”. *temus* rhymes with “to muscle” without “cle”

**Rar`kel:** *Rar* rhymes with “car”. *kel* rhymes with “fell”.

**`Dedius Lankas:** *Dedius* rhymes with “hideous”. *`Lankas:* *Lank* rhymes with “bank” + “us”.

**`Flaren Tesmerend:** *Flar* rhymes with “hair” + *en* rhymes with “hen”.

*Tesmerend:* *Tes* rhymes with “yes” but with a “z” sound = “yez”. *me* like “yes” without the “s”. *rend* rhymes with “bend”.

**Sair-ah-`mean `Taber:** *Sair* rhymes with “hair” + “ah” + “me”. *an* rhymes with “pan”. *Taber:* rhymes with “saber”. Like a sword.

**Drelin Norris:** *Drelin* rhymes with “felon”. *Norris* rhymes with “Morris”.

**Mephen Stihm:** *Mephen* rhymes with “left in” without the “t”, *Stihm* rhymes with “him”.

**`Rascan** (Refreshment Zone): *Ras* rhymes with “has” + can.

**Smarsh** (Ale): *Smarsh* rhymes with “harsh”.

**`Kellas:** *Kell* rhymes with “fell”. *as* pronounced “uz”.

**`Breyton** (Stihm): *Brey* rhymes with “day”. *Ton* just like the word “ton”.

**`Jacomen Dern:** *Ja* rhymes with “day”. *co* rhymes with “go” + “men”. *Dern* rhymes with “earn”.

**Larns Jusk:** *Larns* rhymes with “barns”. *Jusk* rhymes with “dusk”.

**Ter`main`Se-lain:** *Ter* rhymes with “tear” a paper. *main* just like the word “main”. *Se* rhymes with “sea”. *lain* rhymes with “cane”.

**Delvin** (Norris): *Delvin* rhymes with “Melvin”.

**Orin`Taldag:** *Orin* rhymes with “pour in”. *Taldag* rhymes with “grab-bag”.

**`Tareahlon`Du-fall:** *Tare* rhymes with “tear”. Like tear a paper. *ah* rhymes with “paw”. *lon* rhymes with “lawn”. *Du* rhymes with “do”. *fall* just like the season “fall”.

**Selme`req`Vollender:** *Sel* rhymes with “sell”. *me* rhymes with “bet” without the “t”. *req* rhymes with “wreck”. *Vollender* rhymes with “colander”, used for food in the kitchen.

**`Clokien** (Spring): *Clo* rhymes with “go”. *kien* rhymes with “be in”.

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# The Banished

## Chapter 1

# Plentis

Plentis, a planet orbiting a tired, class 2 star, was a harsh world on which to live. The habitable area consisted of only one large landmass. The rest of the planet was covered by water. Light from the sun, that this planet faithfully orbited, provided only minimal warmth to its atmosphere and surface.

While life on this world was bad enough, adding to the dreary scenario was that it, along with two other uninhabitable planets, Varo 1 and Varo 2, were located in what was known as the Dalg system. The Dalg system was located in an out of the way sector, hardly ever visited by anyone.

However, someone *was* providing the inhabitants with food, materials and other low technology necessities. Whoever was bringing those supplies, never chose to have any contact with the inhabitants. The supplies would appear regularly in what could be loosely termed as a “shrine”. Some credited the Gods. The people on Plentis had of course, regularly returned to this “shrine”. Some privately thought otherwise. Why, they wondered, was someone teleporting supplies into the “shrine” and who was piloting the supply ships? And why did they choose not to have any contact with them? Regardless, on and on it had gone for many generations.

In another cruel twist, every five years, the comet, *Vert*, as it was known to the inhabitants, would move through the Dalg system. Rather than being a marker of the passage of time or an enjoyable visual spectacle, Vert left only destruction in its wake. The result was flooding, earth tremors and partial destruction of nearly every structure that had been built during the previous five years.

During the hand-full of generations that had lived on this planet, their technology had progressed very slowly. The only advances that were made increased the efficiency of growing crops, attempts at building stronger structures and trying to make life more livable.

And odd as well, loss of life during Vert's visits and the upheavals it caused was virtually non-existent. The leaders chalked it up to the fact that they only built one story structures, that the wood and other building materials available were very weak and light weight or simply that it was the mercy of the "Gods".

Through their history there had always been discontentment from the younger more restless inhabitants. They would begin by aggressively challenging the "old ways", and would express their frustration about the continual rebuilding and then



damage every five years by Vert. They would forward the idea that it was not the "Gods" but that someone was piloting ships that provided and somehow delivered the supplies. They would dream of being free of such a planet. Many believed that their ancestors had originally come from some other world and that they might have been banished here for some unknown reason. The members of the Elder Council, steeped in their ways and apparently beaten down by the inevitability of it all, would quiet those younger members and their challenges and questions with the harsh reality that it would never, could never change. Some even went so far as to say that the "Gods" would be displeased with such talk.

They always urged that the best course of action was to get back to tending the crops, so food would be available and to help with the re-building, planning and the preparations for the next visit by the comet.

After a few years, the younger ones would finally give up, accept the inevitable and adopt the viewpoints they once railed against. But a young man named Parel Kelm had been at it for over three years and showed no signs of letting up.

"I will be heard, Uncle!" said Parel.

"No, you will *not* be allowed to stir up the others with such talk at the morning meeting," said Delius Tern. "When your mother and father passed away, I felt that you would be a challenge as they had filled your head with their radical ideas. Stirring you up with ridiculous talk of a secret society called The Vela that knew the true history of our people. I reluctantly agreed to see to your upbringing. We will continue to live and die on Plentis. There is no other option open to us!"

"Try and stop me this morning if you will, but there is no law, *yet* that stops me from talking about what *I* believe to be true. *We are free people!* But we are being forced to stay here! I know this, though I can't explain how. My parent's teachings were not radical ideas and I became suspicious. They knew something that most refuse to face. When I learned that it was not "Gods" but manned supply ships visiting this planet that delivered the supplies, my interest in the truth was aroused.

More recently I heard from those that keep track of our food supplies, that the supply shipments are arriving *less frequently* now and that each time less and less supplies arrive. Because of these facts I have heard and discovered, I have become convinced that someone controls our very existence. I believe we are not native to this world.

I must find out where our ancestors really came from. I know that we are people that have been banished for some reason.

And Vert? How many times have I looked towards the sky and cursed its

wretched and destructive visits? Always damaging our structures. And no matter what advances we made, we were forced time and time again, to spend all our efforts rebuilding instead of advancing our technology so we can someday leave this world! No. I *will not* be quieted!" shouted Parel.

"You would be better off planning for the return of the comet you despise so much", said Delius. "In the time we have left - perhaps you *can* find a way to advance the construction of our structures, so they *do* withstand Vert. Or you could work on re-designing the irrigation system, so that we can grow more crops, so that we can survive if *no* shipment ever arrives again. Why not use your talents for something *useful*, instead of wasting your energy on chasing ghosts that do not exist? You and your girlfriend Lacra have loved each other almost since the day you met years ago. Why not ask *her* if you should continue to pursue this reckless course."

But before Parel could respond with another volley of reasons why he was right, Delius began to cough uncontrollably and stumbled. Parel helped him to lie down on a nearby bench and then ran to get a medical for help.

Two hours later, the medical staff allowed Parel to speak to his Uncle alone for a few minutes.

"Uncle, are you all right?" said Parel.

"I am reaching my twilight - rather quickly it seems."

Deleus coughed a bit and gasped for a breath, then composed himself. He looked deeply into Parel's eyes.

"The medicals have told me that I will not see the old sun rise tomorrow, or perhaps I will - they are not sure. But I know."

"Uncle, I am sorry to have caused your illness to flare up by speaking my mind so strongly."

"It is not your strong words, but that by engaging me in debate you forced out of me what I have hidden from you...from everyone, for many months. They will need strong leaders if they are to survive at all. With your will and strength, *you* can be that leader."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, even...even on what you tell me may be your parting bed, said Parel. But I cannot become the leader. I cannot and will no longer carry forward the idea that we must stay as...as prisoners here. I will not waver in this resolve, no matter how many risings and settings of the old sun, I see. I am sorry to disappoint you Uncle."

"Very good Parel, very good. You pass the test that The Vela told me I must have you take. I am pleased by your resolve and your spirit. I am actually proud that you say you will never stop believing as you do. You are the strongest seeker of the

truth about our origins in five hundred years of our history, a truth that has been kept alive by a secret order known as The Vela. Your ancient ancestor feared something like The Vela might exist, but he never did find out. He was Kaltan. Kaltan the criminal, Kaltan the murderer!"

"I have heard tales from my parents about those that originally settled here. But Uncle, why would you speak of Kaltan in such a way. Was he indeed a murderer? What *is* the history of how this area on the planet was settled?

"Parel, I grow weary. I can feel the parting coming on. You *must* listen. There *is* something I must tell you before the medicals return and give me something to ease the pain before the parting. After that, what I know will be forgotten forever and that must not be allowed to happen! I have carried this necklace since I became one of the members of The Vela. I am the Carrier. It is a secret appointment set up by those not in agreement with Kaltan. No one, not even your father knew who the Carrier was. Those on the Elder Council, most of which still follow Kaltan's wishes, do not even know The Vela exists. This was done as a precaution. A way of protecting the true history of our people from any that would try to erase it forever. Yet the truth is located in a secret place called the Vault of Records. This was set up by the ones that sent us here. It has been maintained by the ones that did not agree with Kaltan's ruthless ways who were also banished only because they lived on the same island of Tamus as Kaltan did. The rulers felt that they also could not be trusted. I have been to the Vault of Records only once. Yet I never chose to be the rebel that Kaltan spoke and feared might someday be born and grow up to speak out. Speak out about the truth. Alas I did not have your resolve. I was afraid of stirring up old truths. You see I once burned with the fire as you do Parel."

Just then talking was heard in the hallway outside the room. One of the medicals opened the door, suggesting that it was time for Delius to rest.

"Yes. Thank you medical Saval. Another moment with my nephew, please."

"Very well," responded the medical.

Delius waited until Saval was out of sight.

"Now Parel, you must take this quickly. If you truly believe what you have told me, go with this locket to the vault today and you will find your destiny there."

Before Parel could speak, three medicals, came back into the room. As they did Delius closed Parel's hand around the necklace and looked into his eyes with a pleading look. Parel quickly hid the necklace.

"We must attend to your Uncle now Parel. Please wait outside."

"Uncle, I will come visit you again. Rest well," said Parel as he left the room.

Delius did not respond to Parel, but he smiled. As the medicals returned to

the room, they began again to check his vital signs. They looked at each other gravely.

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## Chapter 2

# Seeking His Destiny

Away from the medical rooms and walking in the square, Parel felt a duality of emotion. On the one hand he felt a surging sense of excitement: He might be the only one with the verve in five hundred years to expose the truth of what lay in the Vault of Records. On the other hand, he was now, the Carrier. If his Uncle lived, would he take back the necklace and his status until another time? If his Uncle died, how was he to conduct himself in his relationship with the others on the Elder Council? Who else on the council were members of The Vela? How could he contact them without supporters of Kaltan's ideas discovering this secret group?

As he was contemplating these questions, Parel heard his Uncle's supportive words again in his mind and it strengthened his resolve.

"I will go there today, Uncle", murmured Parel aloud.

Lost in his reverie, he bumped into Lacra Suman, the woman he planned to marry.

"Parel. Who were you speaking to? *Where...*are you going today?"

"What...uh, err...ah. Hello Lacra. It was nothing. I was just speaking to myself. Where are *you* going? To the town square?" asked Parel.

"Parel, I thought you wanted to marry a smart girl!"

"Of course, I do - right after the third harvest."

"Oh really? Then why are you treating me like an idiot?" asked Lacra. "You were lost in thought. And you were acting strangely, like you were in some sort of trance."

As she said these last words, Lacra held out her arms in front of her, closed her eyes and walked forward like a zombie, making fun of Parel. After a few steps she opened one green eye, looked over at him and flashed a beautiful smile and a face framed in black hair that had caught Parel's attention the first time he had seen her. Then she laughed. It was the most beautiful "music" he had ever heard. Parel laughed at her antics, they kissed, he held her and looked into her eyes and spoke earnestly.

"Lacra, my Uncle is very sick and is dying. He has told me something that I cannot share with anyone. I must go to a special place where I believe my destiny awaits me. I will return to you. But I must do this one thing *alone*. You must trust me."

"I trust you. You know that Parel. But if I am to be your wife, why must you do this alone? I want to be by your side in *all* that you experience."

"Please trust me and *do not follow me!* I have to leave now. I will join you when I have taken this next step in my life. I love you."

And with that they kissed and he hurried off. She stood by watching him for a moment and then turned to go. Now he needed to focus on the task at hand, his destiny. When he had reached the last of the structures, Parel looked back once more to see if he was being followed. He saw no one. He turned away, faced the forest and pulled out the necklace. The device attached to it now showed a glowing dial where before only a blank faceplate was seen. The device showed a simple directional grid.

When Parel went to the left, the screen faded back to silver, but when he moved to the *right*, an arrow appeared, indicating the direction in which he should proceed. To the right was the oldest and only dense section of forest. After walking for about twenty minutes, the faceplate again went blank. Parel stopped and head a twig snap behind him. He looked, but he saw and heard nothing except the wind moving softly through the trees in the distance. Looking back at the faceplate and turning sharply to the left, the device now glowed bright blue. Only now no arrow could be seen, just a red circle.

*What now?* he thought.

Turning left and right produced no change in the display of the dial. He was Perplexed. *This must be the location.* He thought. *But here...in the middle of the forest?*

The only unique feature in the forest in his immediate vicinity was a mound to his right. He moved toward the mound of earth and as he did the red circle on the blue dial grew larger. Coming around the back of the mound, the red circle had almost now encompassed the entire face of the device and it was blinking on and off. He pushed the red dial. As he did, the back of the mound began to rise - a door opening to a dimly lit chamber with stairs leading down into a room under the ground! The dial on the device had turned back to plain silver. Parel began to descend the stairs. Just before the door closed, someone slipped into the chamber and into the shadows.

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## Chapter 3

# History Lesson

Parel walked toward the center of the room. A pillar began to rise out of the floor, as did a chair. The rectangle unfolded to take the shape of a viewing screen. Parel came closer and sat down in the chair in front of the pillar. The control panel for the viewing screen was quite simple in design. It was marked in his language and he pushed the "view" button.

Immediately the history of a planet called Rarkel appeared on the screen. A man that Parel had never seen before began telling the story of this world. Most of the history was not of much interest to Parel. Wars had ravaged the planet in the earlier years of their civilization and political strife was often a part of their culture. And then their history took a peaceful turn.

*Once our combined Governments found a way to come to peaceful terms with each other, our world became a much more civilized society. The only exception being the island country of Tamus. The inhabitants of Tamus were an arrogant and violent people, bent on destroying the peace that our world had struggled to win. Raiding parties continued to attack and to destroy cities. Any time a retaliation was planned, the rugged hills, valleys, poor weather and limited visibility that almost always shrouded the island, made it impossible to find and capture the inhabitants.*

What Parel heard next nearly took his breath away.

*The ruling parties in their frustration at the continual attacks, decided to launch a combined raid on the island country. Their plan was to capture the rebel leader Kaltan and all the inhabitants and hold a trialia to decide what would be done with them once and for all. To their surprise there were only about one thousand of his followers. This total comprised the warrior men and a few women who were proud to say they had aided Kaltan. There were also others not in agreement with the attacks, who had continued to live on a remote section of the island.*

*A trialia was held in Vertemus, the universal city where representatives from each of the governments resided. It was odd that these representatives should even be interested in a trialia of such people. However, the representatives felt that perhaps if not dealt with properly, this rebellious spirit might someday grow and threaten their cities as well. So, a major decision was made that day. As soon as an agreement was reached, Kaltan was brought before the representatives. He stood defiant to the last as the verdict was read.*

*They were to be relocated. They would be removed to a one continent planet called Plentis, located in an out of the way sector.*

Parel pressed “pause” for a moment to grasp this reality. He pressed “view” again.

*The decision though harsh was not without compassion. By banishing them for a period of two generations, the representatives felt certain when that term was up, those banished could be trusted to return to Rarkel in peace.*

*Throughout that time, supplies that would certainly be needed to sustain life would be teleported to the planet regularly from supply ships. But there was to be no contact with the exiles until the term was up. Also, so that the term of banishment could not be used to build technology with which to try and attack Rarkel, every five years the government would send, a Variable Emitting Resonance Terminal to orbit the planet. This device known as a V.E.R.T. causes damage only to structures. In this way the exiles would be kept busy repairing them and not building means of escape and destructive technological weapons.*

*To this Kaltan responded that he would keep the hatred alive two terms, ten terms, a hundred terms and that he and his people would never forget the decision made this day. Kaltan swore it would be avenged. Kaltan, his followers and the other inhabitants of Tamus were then loaded on transport ships.*

*Devices were kept active and intact in The Vault of Records that would be established so that when the two-term sentence was over, the exiles could send a message signaling their desire to return in peace to Rarkel. The message to be transmitted was simply: ‘Greetings from Plentis to Rarkel. We now wish to return in peace, as our time of banishment has been fulfilled.’ They were instructed to use section four of the transmitter and to send the coded message to quadrant 11-A-4573.*

Here the recording ended. As soon as the history playback finished, the screen went dark and the pillar sunk back into the floor. Then the necklace began making a soft beeping noise. Looking at the face plate, it was again directing him to move. This time to an area in the back of the vault. He came to what appeared to be a blank wall with no markings on it. When he pushed the dial that was now red, suddenly a drawer appeared. Pulling open the drawer, he saw that a light illuminated an old large book. On the cover were the words, *The History of Plentis from 01 to the Present. Compiled by The Vela and the first Carrier.*

On the first page of the old book were the names of the original Carrier and the members of The Vela, but Kaltan's name was not listed there. The Carrier had recorded the truth about his continued preaching that his people should not tell their children what really happened, but to teach them they were indigenous to this



planet. That the Gods provided all the supplies which arrived in what he said should be called the "Holy Shrine" and that VERT was in fact a comet, not a technological device. He wanted this done, the writings in the book said, so his people never again could be tempted or forced to live under the "terrible oppressors" on Rarkel that had unjustifiably banished him and his people.

His hatred of the banishment blinded him to the possibility that those who did not partake in the attacks and those who would be born after him might desire to return in peace to Rarkel.

Further on in the book an entry read: *I am Dedius Lankas. I am a member of The Vela. It has been three generations since our banishment from Rarkel. There is still an ideological disagreement of the goals of The Elder Council and those members of The Vela and of The Carrier; that being to get our people back to our home world of Rarkel. The Elder Council has decided to continue to exist here and to forward the false story devised and passed down by Kaltan.*

*They no longer allow talk about the possibility that we are a free people. They refuse to let it be known that there are those back on Rarkel that do not want the banished to ever return to the home world. They know that at some point a plan of cutting back the supplies will begin. It will start slowly at first, but eventually they will stop altogether. That will spell a death sentence for all those remaining. But it will be a slow and painful death. We can grow some crops but as the supplies of seeds, medical supplies and other necessities run low, things will turn grim. This plan was apparently known and feared by Kaltan and a few others, as we boarded the transport ships. He spoke openly to any that would listen, that death would be better than ever returning to Rarkel. Some of us paid close attention to his grim words.*

*I have been told by the medicals that I have but a few weeks to live. I will not, in my last days, openly challenge the entire Elder Council and thereby expose The Vela and the Carrier. But I felt I must come here to this place where truth still lives. Where the freedom to look at the truth is still possible. Where I can at least record these words for whoever might read them and be willing to bring out into the open, the truth of our history and the banishment that can be ended by sending the transmission and code to Rarkel.*

*Many of those who were banished do not want to live under these conditions any longer. They are a peaceful people. The embers of hatred, for the most part have grown cold and died long ago. I know in my center that the Carrier could end our banishment immediately and save all of us. There would not be civil strife. It is time to return home in peace to our world. Finally, do not forget that even Kaltan on his dying bed foretold to those Elder Council members that still followed his hatred*

*and resentment of the banishment, that someday they would have to fight, right here against a 'rebel' as he put it. This individual would preach that we are not of this world, but free men. In fact, this individual might even consider returning in peace if the true history was learned. Just before he died, he warned his followers to do everything possible to hide the truth from the people and to suppress any movements in such a direction and to destroy any secret groups that held such beliefs.*

*You may be just the person he foretold would be born here. If you are, the destiny of the exiles hangs on your decision. You now have a choice to continue to preach the false history to these people and let them die in miserable agony, or to tell them the truth and send the transmission to Rarkel that is long overdue. I pass now into the future. Whoever you are, now that you have read these words, especially if you are the Carrier, please do not let my dying wish that our people would return safely to their true home to be in vain.*

There were no more entries in the old book. Parel now paused in thought.

*What am I to do now? I have come to this place, this Vault of Records to learn the truth and to discover my destiny. Yet now that I am here, I never imagined the tremendous responsibility such a decision might mean.* "And I am all alone and I have this...this fateful decision to make. What am I to do next? Parel said aloud.

"First", said a voice from a dark corner of the room, "You are NOT alone."

To Parel's surprise, there stood Lacra.

"Lacra!" whispered Parel, "What are you doing here?"

"Parel, why are you whispering? The dead cannot hear you!"

"You should not have followed me!" Parel admonished her.

"And if I didn't, who would have heard your sad words," mocked Lacra.

"Parel, I cannot believe the test you continue to force me to take that challenges my love for you. Here you are the Carrier, the one with the truth with a chance to be the leader of our people and to save them...save us from starvation and death! This is what you have spent your entire second stage speaking about, arguing with your Uncle about, *impressing me with!* And now you can't decide what to do? I'm glad I followed you. Not to decide for you, but to stand by your side as I have always done, because I admire you so and I love you. I know in your center that you *do* know what to do."

"Lacra, I have chosen well in falling in love with you, though perhaps you have not chosen as well with me - the one that often gives you such tests as you say.

But I think you are right. I *do* know what I want to do, what I *must* do, what is right. Yet Lacra you do not seem surprised about being here in the Vault of Records with new truths all around us. Would you like to see what Dedius Lankas wrote?"

"Do you forget so easily, Parel, that when you read, you read aloud. It has been a long time since I heard these words and it brought back many memories both sad and happy to me."

"What do you mean, it has been a long time? You have heard these words before? How can that be?" asked Parel urgently.

"Because Parel, my ancestors never chose to follow Kaltan, though we were unfortunate enough to live on Tamus and were exiled. My family has always been a part of The Vela. Also, because Parel, my love, Dedius Lankas was a relative and my father told me his beliefs, his words and the story of the rebellious one that Kaltan predicted would someday arise. The first time I heard the story, I fell asleep that very night dreaming I would meet and fall in love with that person and return with him in peace to Rarkel."

Parel stood up. A different look was upon his face. In the dim light within the Vault of Records, Parel Kelm had the look of a leader of people, dignified, certain, willfully strong in purpose, moral, clear minded and determined to speak the truth no matter what the outcome might be.

"I *will* lead our people back to Rarkel in peace and safety. What I have heard here today is the strongest validation of what I have believed for so long," Parel declared.

Parel and Lacra now left for a meeting with the Elder Council and the other exiles bearing a message that Parel hoped would be greeted with approval, thus saving *all* his people from a terrible fate.

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## Chapter 4

# Rarkel

The week ahead on the planet Rarkel looked to be a bright one for many reasons. The weather was to be fair, with just a mild breeze. But it was to be more than just a beautiful week of weather. Within seven days would come the installation of the first World Minister for the entire planet. The people having tried many forms of government, had finally decided what they truly wanted was to live under a leader that would wield power with a benevolent view towards all. This leader must come from a family tracing its lineage back to the beginning of the history of this society.

The leader they chose, must come from a family that had shown a benevolent attitude in its dealings with others from the deepest and earliest roots of its family tree to the latest buds out on the limbs of its newest generations. And the people knew they had found exactly such a person in Flaren Tesmerend. Flaren had been groomed for many years for this position. Support for Flaren, aside from his parents, came from Sairahmean Taber. He too came from a family held in high esteem. But in Sairahmean was found the richness and balance of wisdom, fairness, compassion, deep knowledge and intuitiveness.

It was explained to him by Sairahmean one day, when Flaren asked why family histories were so important.

"It dates back to our earliest civilizations. In that time the winters were very much harsher than they are today. When it was time, choosing men who were skillful hunters but also trustworthy, could mean life or death for those that remained behind. This tradition regarding those who had shown their skill *and* those who had also shown they could protect the lives of others, has continued down the ages to this very day."

Flaren and Sairahmean spent every day together, either in study, in mock debates on the topics of the times or the history of his people. Of all that he was taught, no other discussions interested Flaren more than the history of the great conflict with the rebels of Tamus.

Sairahmean, dug deep into the historical archives in order to obtain more stories for him. Sairahmean encouraged Flaren's intense study into this time period because he hoped that knowledge of it would instill in Flaren a deep desire never again to repeat the mistakes that were made in those times.

The only conflict arising from this interest was when Flaren wanted to try and contact those that were banished to Plentis. This was always blocked by the World

Ministry Council and until Flaren was established as the first World Minister, he had to abide by their wishes. In fact, if left in power they would never have agreed to allow contact with Plentis to come from Rarkel *first*.

The viewpoint of the council members was that the exiles had been banished and they had been given the code to send when they had agreed to come back in peace. The receiving stations had been meticulously maintained ever since the banishment was decreed.

Behind closed doors they laughed at the idea of keeping the equipment serviced and ready for a message they felt would never come and hoped would *never* come. This was especially true of the head of the council, Drelin Norris.

It was for this reason that after the initial query was immediately denied for any first contact to Plentis, as proposed by Flaren, that quickly Sairahmean counseled him to drop the matter totally.

Privately they knew once he was installed as World Minister, contacting those who were banished would be one of his first official acts. However, for the present, he worked with Flaren to concoct a story that the request was simply a "history lesson exercise" and that the request should never have been taken seriously.

Because of the tremendous reputation as a scholar that Sairahmean held, the Ministry office sent acknowledgment: they would log no blemish on Flaren's family record and the matter, would be dropped. This incident, however, *had* caught the attention of Drelin Norris.

Drelin Norris had always spoken in negative terms about those that had been banished and was also privately opposed to a change in the government, which would usher into power young Flaren and relegate the council to a mere advisory role with reduced participation in the affairs of the government. Drelin would become an "honorary adviser." However, he had to keep his feelings quiet for the present, as public opinion was universally in support of this change. However, his bias caused him to create a plan for remaining in power and for getting rid of Flaren. Although he had started working on the plan, it was not to be revealed until the day of Flaren's installation.

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## Chapter 5

# The Meeting

One of Drelin's plans was to alienate Sairahmean from Flaren. A few days before the installation would take place, Drelin called for an aide.

"Have Sairahmean Taber come to my chambers today just after 4th quarter Sun," said Drelin.

"Certainly Sir," came the answer from one of the many assistants assigned to Drelin.

Sairahmean upon learning about the summons, didn't think too much of it. After all he was often summoned to council members chambers to either give his advice on pending decisions or to perform some high-level council or diplomatic duty. Except this time, it was Drelin Norris alone, who had summoned him, bypassing the normal routine of a request through formal channels. Suspicious, he took a few precautions before leaving to answer the summons. As he neared Drelin's office his premonition grew stronger. He felt a cold chill. He looked down the hall and saw that a door to the courtyard was open.

*Cold chill from the air as the sun sets*, he thought. *But why a meeting so late in the day?* Sairahmean shrugged it off and entered the office. Drelin was alone and the room was rather dark. Only one light illuminated a tiny part of his desk.

"Welcome to you, my friend. Yes, come in...sit down. It has been a while since we last spoke," said Drelin with a sickening sweet tone in his voice.

"Yes. I have been busy, as you know, with the final training and preparations with Flaren," he said.

"Ah yes...Flaren Tesmerend. The name just rolls off the lips doesn't it? How is he doing? The juvenile that would be World Minister. Things are not as they were when we were young: changing our political system that has been in place for generations; young people taking over control of our world..."

Sairahmean interrupted Drelin's banal remembrances.

"Pardon me, but you are wrong. The old ideas *will* make way for newer ones or be left behind. But - you have *never* been one for small talk, what can I help you with today?"

"Yes, you can help me. Why it's the *real* reason that I asked you here. And you know, no one who could speak of it knows that I summoned you. As you are aware, a summons from anyone within the World Ministry Council are always kept completely secret so that if the meeting is on highly sensitive matters, security is

maintained. And now to answer your question with an offer that you are fortunate enough to have had placed before you. Join with those who will prevail through the coming storm, if you are as wise as the reputation that proceeds you portends," suggested Drelin, with a wild look in his eyes.

"What *are* you talking about?" asked Sairahmean earnestly.

"My simple friend. What am I talking about? Choices...choices that one can make to *ensure* survival or snuff it out with a single stroke. That's what I am talking about."

"Drelin with every word you speak you make less sense than before!"

"Here you are wrong, wise-man! I will now make more sense than I have in my entire existence," said Drelin with that wild light in his eyes still. You would be wise indeed to forget about Flaren Tesmerend, as he will *never* be installed as World Minister, I am very sure of that!"

"What are you talking about? How are you going to fabricate a challenge to Flaren's installation?" he asked urgently.

"Oh, but it is not me that will challenge his installation. It is the information that will be placed in his records then found on the day of his installation that will utterly ruin him. Information about his family. Yes, information that at this moment is being *written*...a black blot on his record and his family's history. That which the people have held so dear for so very long. You can either be swept up in his demise or rise to heights you never expected by distancing yourself from him...*now*", said Drelin.

"I will never join you and I will expose what you are planning!"

"Go ahead! Leave fool! Flaren will soon learn that trusting in you was a poor choice - a poor choice indeed! If you will not join me and forsake Flaren, then leave me now! Leave this world!" screamed Drelin.

Sairahmean left Drelin's dimly lit office. He found his way to the front doors of the building, but because of the late hour they were locked. He would have to leave through one of the caretaker doors in the back of the building. His concern grew with every step. He was now certain that there would be an attempt on his life. He must not be assassinated! If he was, Flaren's reputation would be destroyed, he would never be installed as World Minister and Drelin would remain in power!

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## Chapter 6

# The Assassin

Sairahmean proceeded cautiously out the door into the alley behind the ministry building. All was quiet. His hearing seemed to grow so that even drips of water and a scavenger rat scurrying nearby seemed to roar in his ears. He was nearly to the relative safety of the main avenue. Then he heard it. The rush of quickly moving, but shuffling feet behind him.

As he turned, an unknown man rushed up and drew a knife. He took what he thought might be his last breath. He reacted instinctively to block the attacker's death stab. But as he raised his arm in defense, the look on his attacker's face turned from that of hatred to utter shock. His attacker fell onto the street, dead. Behind him stood someone he *did* recognize. There holding a stun-knife was Mephen Stihm.

"Mephen Stihm...well...why have you broken the order that you are to stay away from me and my family?"

"Perhaps instead of bringing up an old ruling and family history, you should be thanking me for *saving your life*."

"I always acknowledge those that have assisted me and I do thank you. Now, why have you broken the order?"

"If you must know, I have been breaking that...order...for a *long* time Sairahmean. I have been following you for the past seven years waiting for just such an instance. I had nearly given up hope on ever clearing my family's name. Fortunate for you I didn't give up - don't you agree...old friend?"

"Yes, but I did not know you cared to clear your family's name, since you apparently agreed with your father's actions against my family. At least that was the last word I had heard on it."

"You have always been a direct person. One to analyze every situation...fully. However, we are standing in a dimly lit alley, in certainly not the best part of the city. There is a *dead* assassin at our feet. I strongly suggest that we find a quiet corner of a refreshment zone and talk there instead."

"What do we do with the body - just leave it here?"

"Depends." Mephen quickly bent down by the body of the assassin and pushed aside a portion of his hair at the base of his skull. He pulled back a patch of grafted silicone that resembled skin. Under this flap, came the glow from a small



violet colored rectangle. He shook his head and replaced the patch. He then turned the body over and pulled out an electronic device from his coat pocket. He pushed a few buttons. He had to try this several times. Finally, a flap opened on the man's neck.

"What is that device you are using?"

"Cost me a bundle. Criminal Voice Recognition Unit Removal Processor. With it I can take off the assassin's voice. I'll need it to report that you have been... killed."

He then removed a small electronic unit.

"This re-produces the assassin's pre-coded but disguised 'voice'. But too bad for this fellow. Better stand back a bit."

He brought out his stun-knife again and made a delicate adjustment to the dial on the top of the handle. He pointed it at the dead assassin and pressed a button. A flow of energy particles emitted from the stun-knife and silently struck and enveloped the assassin's body. It vanished.

"Why did you do that?"

"He was a violet level criminal. *'Instant extermination to the cellular level - of any violet level criminal caught in the act of committing...another crime,'*" he said, repeating the line he had memorized. "It's from section 86-39-A-23 of the Rarkelian public enforcement assistance code. Still on the books, though it's a little-known law. The sentence can be carried out by anyone."

"Tell me what is was that you took from his throat?"

"Voice box. When you get to this level as a criminal assassin, the most professional ones have them installed. When they report in that uh...*the job has been done*, the ones that ordered the removal can ensure that it's not a set-up, you know...someone else on the line. Let's go. I certainly don't want to be hanging around here should a patrol show up do a scan and discover oddly high levels of residual energy particles."

The Rascan Refreshment Zone was nearly empty. It was the lull before second crew workers arrived to wash down a hard day's work. They found a table in the back and in the shadows. Wisely, they had picked up drinks at the bar, so they could talk privately without interruption. Sairahmean only drank purified water from the ice on asteroids. Very rare but very high in minerals, once any impurities were removed. Mephen had only a local brew, but one of the best.

"Now I believe I owe you an explanation Sairahmean," said Mephen obviously enjoying his ale. "Ever had a Smarsh Ale? Only becomes carbonated *after* it enters your system. Quite a sensation."

"Ah...no. I have not had the *dubious* pleasure. But what of the explanation you owe me?"

"All right. When I was a much younger man, I did agree with my Father's actions - the ones you mentioned had torn our family apart. As a businessman for many years myself, I had heard rumors that my Father had embezzled millions of Kellas from your family. What was it? Oh yes...fake mining acquisitions on asteroids that did not exist. Even one small uninhabited planet your Father planned to eventually retire on and set up as a retreat. When he asked for a tour, my Father gave a list of weak excuses. *That* Mr. Taber, one of your relatives, went to the star chart record hall for this sector. Couldn't find one of the asteroids anywhere on it and that planet had *disappeared* too. He had paid a bundle to secure these... non-existent pieces of property.

When this blew up and came into the open, at first I suspected your family of plotting against my Father. But since I was not working with him on any of these dealings, I had the opportunity of coming to the trialia, disguised. After hearing two weeks of testimony and facts about my Father's dealings over the years, I turned my allegiance away from him. But it was too late to stop things from happening that had been set into motion from nearly the first day of the trialia.

My Father seeing where this was all going took steps to poison himself. It would be done over about a week's period, as the poison had to be secretly placed in his food in small amounts so that the scanners would not detect any trace of it. He wrote up a will and named me as the oldest person in our family line and thereby responsible for all debts and...well...any *crimes* committed by any senior members of the family. I was able to pay off most of the debts with the Kellas that were judged legally acquired. The rest of the Kellas went to pay back those he had swindled. The court found my Father, and not me, guilty of the crimes. However, your family stepped in and made them order that neither I nor any member of my family could go anywhere near any of your family members ever again. My family now had a permanent blemish on it. That's when I decided to start being your unofficial bodyguard, to try make amends and clear *my* families name. I hope the last seven years have not been spent in vain.

But now to the matters immediately at hand. First and most importantly, you must stay out of sight until I call you and let you know I have used the voice box to inform the one that ordered your death, that the job has been done. My guess is that I should contact...let's see...perhaps Drelin Norris and tell him you have been...ah, that the job has been completed?"

"You have the right man in Drelin. And...your quest has not been in vain. For what you have done today, your family name will be restored, of that I assure you.

But I cannot take that action immediately now that I am supposed to be dead. I also can't stay hidden for too long what with Flaren's installation in a few days.

"I will make the call today right after I leave you," said Mephen.

"Very good. Though you have done much today to erase the blot on your family name, perhaps there is one other task you might agree to undertake. Perhaps you may also save our world's future. How is your brother's son Breyton Stihm? Didn't I read that he was honored recently for some sort of advanced work with computer security systems? Does his father still hold a dim view of me and my family?" asked Sairahmean.

"He holds no views any longer - he passed away a few years ago. Breyton turned against him. He told me that his father's views had died and that he too would someday like to clear his limb of the family line."

"And so, he should...and can."

"I do not think he has the patience that I have demonstrated. I doubt his willingness to spend the next seven years following you. Cosmosis! It might even be longer! You're the one with the 'oh so respectable' life remember?"

"Perhaps for young Breyton, events of these days might shorten the time it takes for him to clear his family limb."

"Yes. He does have the skill you mentioned *and* a fascination with electronics, covert data gathering research *and* of course computerization analysis of records that have been altered. All very dry and totally unlike any Stihm that has come before."

"Very good. I have an idea that I cannot speak openly of just yet. But have Breyton meet me in my private office at the rise of the sun tomorrow. You come along as well. And protect him!

"What has Breyton done that he needs protection...what would cause him to need anyone's protection?"

"Mephen, it is not what he *has* done, but what he *can do* that requires you to protect him. There are evil men who would stand to gain much if Flaren's family were to fall from the grace of the people. And there are spies out and about and in action everywhere now that his time draws near. Meet with me but tell no one. Your arrival with Breyton will bring my plan into action and may very well make a hopeful future for our society a reality. I must leave now."

"We'll be there...for whatever you have planned which Breyton *must play a part in*," taunted Mephen.

As Sairahmean moved off, Mephen muttered to himself: "Breyton helping to create a hopeful future for our society? He can't even keep his room clean!"

Sairahmean had left. Then Mephen remembered that he had a task of his own to complete.

He now made his way to a very isolated area of the city. Pulling the voice box from inside his cloak and wiping off some of the blood, he entered the number for the Ministry Office and using the voice box asked for Drelin Norris. Drelin came on the line in just a few moments.

"Who is this?" asked Drelin.

"You know who it is...the job is done. Neat and clean."

In his own ears his voice sounded menacing, chilling...the electronic voice of a man that had killed many times before.

"Why did you make me wait so long before reporting? I have had to make up all kinds of excuses as to why I was staying so late! And why does your voice sound so rough?" asked Drelin. "It barely fits the parameters of your frequency?"

"You ask too many questions and force me to stay on the phone too long fool! The man grabbed my throat as his last desperate act. And then I disposed of the body...completely."

"Very good. You will find transport 423 in hanger 32A. Take it to the resort on Parcarn as agreed. The money for the deed will be waiting for you there. The coordinates have been entered into the destination computer. All you must do is activate the command protocols and sit back and relax. Once on Parcarn, you can retire in the life of luxury, peace and of course women from several rare races, just as you requested. My part of the deal is now done. Now, goodbye forever. Never contact me again! The debt is paid!" screamed Drelin.

"Goodbye to you...forever as well!" said Mephen through the voice box.

He hung up the phone. He would go to hanger 32A and disarm the computer *self-destruct inputs*, which Drelin had certainly entered into the transport flight computer. It was Drelin's style. Hide *all* evidence. Resetting the computer would be the *responsible* thing to do. He now pulled out another set of clothes from his carry bag and changed into a repairman's uniform. He moved off in the direction of the city where the hanger was located, wondering what Sairahmean had planned for the next morning's meeting.

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## Chapter 7

# Revealing the Truth

Back on Plentis it was now up to Parel Kelm to try and turn the tide and opinion of five generations about the true nature of those eking out a bare existence; one that showed signs of being completely snuffed out by the continually shrinking supplies that had started to be the norm. Parel had enacted one of the oldest laws - that when any inhabitant had something of a grave nature - an *all must attend* meeting could be called. He had called for such a meeting.

Though it was at first met with resistance by the Elder Council, they had referenced the book of their laws for verification of the request Parel had made. He had only just found out about this "all attend meeting law" from the recordings he had listened to in the Vault of Records. The Elder Council members planned to call another town meeting directly afterwards, if needed, to discredit what they felt he would say. The news spread quickly and in the afternoon, they were assembled to hear what Parel had to say. The Elder Council had time to put together a plan for interrupting the town meeting, thus quieting the rebellious Parel once and for all.

He now stood before the gathered inhabitants. He knew that what he would present as evidence might change the future history and fate of all that stood before him forever. Lacra was in the crowd near him watching apprehensively but intently.

Parel was duly introduced by one of the Elder Council members and the law he was using in requesting the *all attend meeting* was also duly read. They reminded the assembled there that he was known for his belief in wild rumors and that whatever he was about to say might be completely a fabrication.

Parel urged any that believed that they were not from Plentis to step forward and to stand with him. At first, he thought perhaps he had made a mistake and that *no one* would step forward besides Lacra. But just as he was about to lose hope, out from the crowd stepped a very important man, who many trusted. His name was Jacomen Dern.

"Be silent and allow yourselves to hear what Parel has to say. He will speak the truth! My name is Jacomen Dern. Some of you know me as the leader of many people. All of you have *heard of me* as I too, like this man, have been outspoken in my own way for some time about the matters that he will now speak of.

I know his Uncle Delius Tern. I have known for some time that he was the Carrier, a position which he has not yet mentioned, but one that has existed, secretly for generations. I was unable to persuade Delius to come forward with what he knew but this young man has taken that stand and he is going to speak only the truth. You must listen to him!"

Parel brought out the necklace with the device for locating the Vault of Records on it. The dial glowed. They all could see that this device contained a high level of technology.

"I will now tell you, *truthfully*, what I found in the Vault of Records."

He began to tell all that he had heard and read in the Vault.

As Jacomen looked out toward the people before him, his sharp eyes detected a sinister figure in the crowd quite close to the staging area where Parel was speaking. This figure was raising a blow dart tube to his lips. It was aimed directly at Parel. He was but a few feet away from him, but now he moved with surprising speed to place himself between the figure raising the blow dart to his lips and the intended target. The dart flew and a moment later Jacomen felt the dart pierce his chest and dive deeply touching his heart. He was already losing consciousness and falling to Parel's feet. Jacomen remembered nothing more of this life. He had died.

In the crowd, Jacomen's men that had been listening and watching intently, grabbed the assassin and brought him forward. His name was Larns Jusk. Larns was terrified from being caught so quickly. His intended target stood not dead but alive before him. He began to shout uncontrollably like a mad man. All of his rants were directed at the Elder Council members.

"I told you he could not be killed! I told you he would let out the secrets we all wanted hidden forever! But you would not listen to me. Now what good are all the things that you promised me? In the secret meeting you told me that after my deed was done, I would be a free man, wealthy and offered my choice of any woman. Now look what you have done! I am doomed! I will take all of you with me!"

Suddenly Larns raised another blow dart which had remained hidden in his cloak, to his lips and started blowing into it. But at this point he was beyond mad and had not put any darts in the tube. This only made him blow harder until he collapsed from hyper-ventilation. Jacomen's men searched him and then held him down securely.

At this point all on the Elder Council were shocked at this turn of events and *all* looked *very* guilty. It was one of Jacomen's men who was the first to speak.

"I am Termain Se-lain. I am the second in control after Jacomen. I was chosen many years ago to take over if ever what has happened here today, did occur. I say to you, that if the Elder Council, who now sit with *no word* of protest against what Larns has accused them of, did conspire together, never forget that lies are used by those that have secret motives and who had done secret deeds. It is only the truth running free through many minds that such men want to silence. The truth is what they fear. I ask you now with a vote of hands if we should listen to the rest of what Parel has to say?"

All hands but Larns and the Elder Council members went up high into the air.

Now Parel began to relay what he had heard and read in the Hall of Records. He gave details of the *real* history of the people before him and then invited people to come with him to the Vault of Records to see for themselves that what he told them was true. A delegation from each group was chosen. They would then return and report what they had seen and heard to all those assembled today. When he had finished speaking, Termain's friends removed Jacomen's body and took Larns to a holding cell. The four delegates, including Termain, then left with Parel and Lacra to personally witness the information he said was stored in the Vault of Records.

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## Chapter 8

# The Installation of Flaren Tesmerend

Two days after Sairahmean's meeting with Mephen and Breyton, a wonderful midday meal and an incredibly colorful and dramatic entertainment interlude preceded the installation of Flaren Tesmerend as World Minister of Rarkel. The outgoing World Ministry Council head, Drelin Norris, was to give his final speech and then formal introduction of Flaren.

It quieted Drelin's nerves that Sairahmean was nowhere in sight. He had been concerned about the call from the assassin and though he had been monitoring the emergency channel, in secret, there had not been any reports of a crash of any transports, including transport 423. Perhaps he had missed the report. *Drop that useless worry*, he thought.

One thing Drelin was certain of: Flaren Tesmerend was about to have the biggest disappointment of his life. All was ready with the false information that he had placed in the computer. With virtually the entire population watching what they thought would be the installation of the new leader, his plan would work beautifully to totally discredit him and his family and to keep Drelin in power for the rest of his life. He now broke off these musings to begin the speech that he had long planned for.

"People of Rarkel, today we stand on the threshold of a new dawn of the way in which we will govern ourselves for generations to come. I stand before you as the head of the World Ministry Council now ready to relinquish the reins of power to a new system that will be headed by young Flaren Tesmerend. My duty these long years has always been to protect the interests of the people governed. Today is no different."

As Drelin said these words, he nodded to an aide who would activate the file in the computer. Drelin went on speaking.

"But before I relinquish the reins of power, please turn your attention to your data screens, as I have some very important information that all must see."

At this point Drelin nodded to his aide and was pleased to see the incredulous looks coming over the faces of the people nearby him and the general gasp he sensed emanating from millions of citizens, as they read the information on the data screens. What Drelin knew they were seeing were the fabricated claims of graft corruption,



incest and drug smuggling - all *reportedly* done by Flaren and his family. Now Drelin's voice changed and bitterness replaced the sweet tones he had used up to this point.

"As you can see by the information on your data screens, Flaren Tesmerend and his family should be banned from office forever!"

"I think you have that a bit wrong Drelin. If you will look at the data screen near you, it will be plain even to you, that it is you and your family that will be banned from office forever!"

Sairahmean now stood up and cast aside the hooded robe he had been wearing.

Drelin could not believe his eyes and ears. Sairahmean standing there! He rushed over to a data screen to see what could have gone wrong. To his horror there for millions to see, was the history of *his* family.

*The family of Norris was secretly in league with Kaltan and his people but outwardly showed hatred towards Kaltan and his followers. Once Kaltan was victorious in his attacks, the family of Norris planned to form a government with Kaltan and rule forever by edict not by the will of the people. When it was apparent that an edict was coming down upon Kaltan and his followers, all plans that had been worked out with the Norris family and Kaltan were destroyed or hidden. It was the head of that strong and influential family, Delvin Norris, also an influential member of the Ministry, that first devised the concept of the banishment for two generations, but really had no idea of ever bringing those people back to Rarkel. This was done to hide forever the very people that could have exposed the Norris family treachery.*

*After sufficient time had passed Delvin's plan would-be set-in motion. Shipments would slowly, covertly, be lessened until those on Plentis had all starved to death thereby "solving" the problem of them ever coming back and exposing what he had done. He passed this down the family line and through his own words to certain members of the World Ministry Council. Delvin Norris passed his hatred onto the younger members of his family that took over leadership positions after his parting time had come.*

*Drelin Norris particularly followed his great grandfather's words of long ago. His desire is to remain in power at all costs and he ordered the murder of Sairahmean Taber and the planting of false information on the Tesmerend family into the main computers on the day of Flaren's installation in order to remain in power. He has worked for years to strengthen his position and secure his idea of the type of government he believes Rarkel should have. A type of government which the majority of people have shown they no longer desire.*

Drelin looked up from the data screen. Those that were a few feet from him swore afterwards that he looked to be on the edge of complete insanity. Then he spoke with a wild look in his eyes.

"Certainly you, the fine people of this world, are not going to believe these accusations against me, which have long been planned and plotted by Sairahmean Taber and Flaren Tesmerend! I'm sure such a well-educated populace as I am addressing, can see that this is just cleverly written words on a data screen.

They have presented no evidence against me other than these *words*! If they want to accuse the very head of the World Ministry Council, Drelin Norris, let them present evidence that these words are true and that I am of the mind they say I am. Let them show evidence! They cannot since there is none!"

All was still. It was Sairahmean that broke the silence and drew the attention of the population.

"We have proof. Look now to the data screen Drelin and see the proof we offer."

When Drelin had seen his family's true history on the data screen, he had been shocked. What he saw before him now pushed him over the edge of sanity. The vision that met his eyes was a dimly lit office. *His office!* What was being replayed was his *secret meeting* with Sairahmean!

*You would be wise indeed to forget about Flaren Tesmerend, as he will never be installed as World Minister. I am very sure of that!*

*What are you talking about? What are you planning? How are you going to fabricate a challenge to Flaren's installation?* questioned Sairahmean.

*Oh, but it is not me that will challenge his installation. Information will...how can I say it? Information will be placed in his records then found on the day of his installation that will utterly ruin him. Information about his family. Yes, information that at this moment is being written. A black blot on his record - his family's history. Family records, family history! That which the people of Rarkel have held so dear for so very long! You can either be swept up in his demise or rise to heights you never expected, by distancing yourself from him...now.*

*I will never join you and I will expose what you are planning!*

*Go ahead! Leave fool! You are the trusted adviser to Flaren, but he will soon learn that trusting in you was a poor choice - a poor choice indeed! If you will not join me and forsake Flaren, then leave me now! Leave this world!* screamed Drelin on the playback.

Here the playback stopped. A hush fell over the courtyard. Drelin looked up from the data screen. The look in his eyes was unsettling. Drelin then reached into his coat and spoke:

"You will never have me! I am going where you cannot find me...ever!"

These were his last words. He then turned a stun knife on himself and in a moment he vanished. It was again Sairahmean that broke the silence.

"Fellow Rarkellian's, we have witnessed a close call for all of us and for future generations yet born. Still, as important but also unsettling as this day has been, I believe it still to be the wisest course of action to take a recess and *then* to proceed with the installation. If any here in the World Ministry Council courtyard should object - let them have their voice heard now."

Sairahmean's call for any objections was met with absolute silence.

After the assembled dignitaries had a chance to compose themselves, all returned to the center of the World Ministry Council courtyard for the installation of Flaren Tesmerend. During the recess, Flaren had been given a communication that he immediately shared with Sairahmean, but no others. Both men looked relieved by whatever news they had learned.

As he finished his first speech as World Minister to those assembled in the courtyard and also to those seeing his speech via broadcast, he looked to Sairahmean who had returned to his seat with the other ministers and family members who were present. Sairahmean merely nodded. Flaren then turned towards the gathering and raised one hand for silence. They now listened intently.

~ ~ ~

## Chapter 9

# Reconciliation

"Fellow Rarkelians, I have just received a transmission that is long overdue. I am happy as your first World Minister to be able to announce something of great importance. Over five hundred years ago our world banished Kaltan and one thousand of his followers, all inhabitants of Tamus, for what should have been two generations, to a planet, Plentis, in the Dalg system. This was for crimes committed against our citizens. It was decreed that they could return however, after this time had passed by simply sending a message to us that they now wished to return in peace.

I have just received such a transmission from the current spokesperson for those exiles, a man named Parel Kelm. We are now preparing to dispatch a convoy ship. The crew will ensure the authenticity of the message and after a meeting with them, will ensure the genuine desire to return in peace. We must do this to protect the safety of all our citizens. If all goes well, the relatives of those that were banished so long ago, our fellow citizens, will be returned home at last!"

The assembled crowd screamed, waved and applauded their approval of this announcement. He acknowledged the crowds and then took a moment to look back at Sairahmean again. This time a broad smile had swept across his face. Information from Plentis was now being displayed on the data screen in front of Flaren.

Back in the Vault of Records on Plentis, Parel, Lacra and the four delegates, after a briefing and unanimous vote to contact Rarkel, waited anxiously for an answer to the transmitted code.

"Perhaps after so many years, there is no one listening any longer Parel", said delegate Termain.

"Wait! Something is coming in!" exclaimed Parel.

The response said that the message had been received, and they were glad to hear from their fellow Rarkellians again. Warm greetings were also sent by the first World Minister, Flaren Tesmerend. Preparations were now underway to verify the transmission and peaceful intent from Plentis.

Lacra, looked over Parel's shoulder at the message and was impressed.

"A message to us from the first, newly installed World Minister. What was his name? Flaren Tesmerend? That has a nice ring to it. Sounds like a good guy," she said.

"It would be *nice* too, if you started showing a little respect to the first World Minister of...of our world. And a little respect to the spokesperson for the Rarkellians in exile," said Parel.

"Yes, of course, your exile-ship! After all, where would I...where would the *exiles* be without you?"

The smile, effervescent charm, the playful nature and the beauty of Lacra, the woman that he was in love with was shining across at him in the dim light of the Vault of Records.

"Come to me Lacra. A kiss before we leave for...home?"

"OK, but not a long one! I can't wait to get you back to *our* world. Then...we can spend all the time we want...um...kissing."

"Mmmm. Sounds great. You know I have just realized. We have paid... *overpaid* our debt. Once the term of the banishment was over, our ancestors and all of us were actually free citizens of Rarkel! Free men!"

"And free women!" cut in Lacra.

"Yes! Free men and free women...heading home."

~ ~ ~

# Epilogue

E-1

Of the approximately one thousand Rarkelians that remained on Plentis at the time that Parel sent his message of peace to Rarkel, twenty-four chose to stay; the Elder Council members and a few of their followers. They wished to have no contact with Rarkel. They requested that the shipments be stopped. They would not allow *any* communication devices that could link them to the home planet, left on Plentis. They also requested that the hall of records be relocated back on Rarkel.

Flaren, as World Minister, was authorized to grant all their requests. However, he kept it a secret that he ordered a probe to circle the planet to monitor the activities of the *Tamus 24*, as they came to be known on Rarkel.

Three years after Parel and the rest of the exiles had departed from Plentis, a particularly harsh Winter came upon much of the planet. For several months, the cloud cover was so heavy that the probe could not track the *Tamus 24*. When the clouds and enormous storms subsided, the probe sent back the data that none of the twenty-four had survived the storms. A scouting party sent to Plentis confirmed this.

As was requested in a data log left in their camp, the *Tamus 24* were cremated and then their ashes were "buried" all together in a space bound buoy. This was stipulated by the leader of the *Tamus 24*, Orin Taldag, because "We have no home to return to. Now that we have passed, we prefer to be shot into space and to roam endlessly seeking a new home, rather than being buried either on Plentis or Rarkel."

~ ~ ~

Larns Jusk who killed Jacomen Dern, was brought back to Rarkel to stand trial. He was given a life sentence of helping others in need as directed by the warden of the jail in Clair-more City. Larns seemed at first to agree with and to respond well to the sentence, but after only eight months, he killed himself by ingesting chemicals he had requested for cleaning up his cell. As he left no suicide note, his body was cremated and his ashes were spread widely over a common burial ground, named the Star-fire Sea.

~ ~ ~

The five followers of Drelin Norris who were found guilty of plotting with him to stop Flaren's installation, were ordered to repay the citizens through a lifetime of helping those needing assistance. Four of them had medical training and spent the rest of their lives working in emergency centers. Their assistance was monitored by medicals and each of them were judged to have repaid the citizens many times over by the time they had become too aged to continue these activities. At this time, they were sent to the Val-don retirement center where they lived out the rest of their lives.

The 5<sup>th</sup> member of those found guilty, Tareahlon Du-fall, had an engineering background. He spent his life assisting various design teams when sorting out new spaceship prototypes. Seven times his engineering expertise altered designs that would have proved dangerous to crews. He tested these prototypes himself, a dangerous job, but one that Flaren validated him for taking on.

In fact, it was during a test flight of a new, small, Zenith class star ship, the eighth major project that he assisted on, that there was an explosion on the bridge. Tareahlon teleported the rest of the test crew to safety back on the planet. Even through badly injured, he continued to run the tests, to transmit vital information on what had gone wrong and the actions needed to prevent another such occurrence with this ship configuration. His transmissions provided technicians on Rarkel the information they needed to make the Zenith class star ships much safer for future crews.

~ ~ ~

The Hall of Records was relocated back on Rarkel, as requested by the Tamus 24 and Parel Kelm. It is now on permanent display in the Hall of History in the cultural museum, in the city of Polaris.

~ ~ ~

Mephen Stihm, was appointed as Security Chief by Flaren and he carried out his duties with distinction, *though* he could still be found, sipping and thoroughly enjoying a Smarsh Ale from time to time.

~ ~ ~

Breyton Stihm finally learned to keep his quarters orderly, especially his office in the security division. He was appointed Chief of Electronic Security for Rarkel by Mephen.

~ ~ ~

Parel and Lacra were married on Rarkel and it was a lavish ceremony indeed. Parel became the Vice World Minister once it was researched *and* discovered that his family tree was a very honorable one.

~ ~ ~

Flaren Tesmerend continued as the World Minister for many years. He married Selmereq Vollender, a beautiful red-haired woman with an equally proper family history. Sairahmean once had told a historian that he introduced them when they were both only eight years old. When they were both fifteen, it was again Sairahmean's duty to speak to them to see if they favored each other. When he found that they did, he began the arrangements for Flaren's eventual rise to World Minister and the equally demanding task of preparing Selmereq for her role as the wife of the eventual World Minister of Rarkel.

~ ~ ~

As for Sairahmean Taber, all who had come to depend on his counsel enjoyed his presence for many years. In fact, it was Flaren who once said that he wondered if Sairahmean would out-live him. Although Sairahmean enjoyed a long and healthy life to age one-hundred and thirty-four, in the last year of his life he spent most of his time preparing for his parting. When he died in peaceful sleep in the spring, everything he needed to complete to assure that all Rarkellians would have just and proper leaders for the foreseeable future, had been finished.

Sairahmean Taber was cremated and his ashes were spread onto the most revered body of water, the Clokien Spring, also known as the Endless River. It was called this because waters from the Clokien traveled thousands of miles, finally spilling into a deep underground chamber.

Here, the natural geo-thermal heat from the planet, forced the water along underground channels, all the way back to the start at the Clokien *spring*. Then the water bubbled out, to start the process all over again...

The End



# The Banished

~ ~ ~

The Banished is a science-fiction and human-interest story with treachery, romance, deceit, betrayal and success in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.

It tells the story of a people on a lonely planet, Plentis.

Will the people there come to discover their true heritage?

~ ~ ~

The Banished also tells the story of a nearby planet, Rarkel and the struggles for power, as the citizens demand a fundamental change in the way they will be governed.

There are those that are resisting this change  
for their own selfish and power mad desires.

Will the choice of the people of Rarkel be victorious,  
or will those with covert plans win in the end?

~ ~ ~

Only by visiting these worlds, can the reader discover  
the answers to these questions.

So, take a journey by reading this story  
by author and award-winning journalist Brian Gardner.  
He weaves a delightful tale for the reader and introduces heroes like  
Parel Kelm, Sairahmean Taber and Flaren Tesmerend  
and villains like Drelin Norris and Larns Jusk.

~ ~ ~

Don't stay in your own universe. Journey to these other worlds  
for a fun, exciting, suspenseful and surprise filled tale,  
of a universe...somewhere out there...

~ ~ ~