

*The Calledar Chronicles*  
Part 5 – Onarra  
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Onarra sat in the waiting chamber of the tiny temple. She was doing her best to appear calm and *nonchalant*. She didn't want to show any fear of being called to meet with the Teshkaht, the high priest of Those Who Wait. It couldn't be called a request. When the invitation to see this man came, there were three options, accept it and go, turn it down and die, or run away and hope to avoid being caught and killed.

She stared at the wall across from her. It was white marble and covered with carvings of mythical creatures. The artwork was *ostentatious*, meant to draw the eye and show anyone looking how fine a place they were visiting. The cult hadn't built this temple. It had belonged to the Children of the Everblossoming Arches.

There were other temples he could have taken for his base of operations. Locations that were far larger, but certainly none had the *opulent* décor of a temple belonging to the Children. In addition to white marble walls, the carpets were finer than anything outside of a king's palace, and real gold and silver filigree decorated the door frames, window frames, and every other surface.

"Teshkaht, will see you now," said the dark-haired young man who had to be a *novice* in the cult to be running messages and the like. Favored to be working for the high priest, though, it would have its benefits. He wore a loose, brown robe, with a rope for a belt around his waist, and his feet were bare. "He appreciates your patience in waiting for him to complete his business."

*Such plain, mundane clothing. Nice clothes aren't a part of the benefits. Humber even than what I wear.* Onarra thought. *Despite their rise in power, things haven't improved for the people at the bottom. What will his master be like?* She had heard stories of course, but they couldn't be trusted, and she had never been to one of his speeches. Neither religion nor nationalism played an important part in her life, which was why the armed priests who had come and gathered her up for this visit had been a surprise. She never did anything to draw the attention of the worshippers of Those Who Wait.

The novice didn't say anything else as he led her inside. Onarra realized that she was *parched*. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had something to drink. How long had she been waiting to see High Priest Teshkaht? Her time waiting seemed strangely fluid. It hadn't felt like a long time, but the rumble in her stomach and the dryness in her throat said otherwise.

"Kill her." The words came from behind the screen that cut the room in half as soon as she was through the door.

The novice turned, a blade in his hand. The edge was a sickly green. With no hesitation, he stepped in, a thrust aimed at her chest. Onarra knew that it would only take a scratch to kill her, which is why she didn't give the novice a chance. Turning, she let the thrust pass by her, latching onto the young man's wrist with her left hand, while she drove her right fist into his throat. The dagger fell from his hands, and he dropped to the ground, his face turning purple.

“My, my. You are far more *precocious* than I had anticipated, so skilled and dangerous at such a young age. It is certainly not something to be expected. Where does one come by such skills so early in life? Anyway, I ramble. Come in and sit down. Do not worry about him. He has served his purpose, and his life has not gone to waste.”

He spoke with the voice of a skilled actor or *orator*. His words flowed over Onarra’s ears and tried to burrow into her mind. She took control of herself. There were stories about Teshkaht’s ability to control people too, terrible stories. She was beginning to believe everything that she had heard about the high priest, including the ones that said he wasn’t actually a man.

Onarra walked around the screen and found the high priest sitting in a plain, but heavily padded chair. There were other chairs arrayed in front of him. She chose the seat farthest from him and sat on the edge of the chair, her hands folded in her lap.

“Not *pretentious* in the way you dress or behave. No sign of stress or distress because you just killed an attacker. Oh my, you are indeed an interesting young woman.”

“Dressing above my station would draw attention that I don’t desire or want. My life is a simple one, and I prefer it that way, High Priest.” She wasn’t sure how to address him and hoped that she hadn’t said anything to offend him. Onarra’s gut told her that this man could kill her even though he was reclined in a soft chair that would be hard to rise out of.

“You are wondering if you have offended me. Surely not child, and even if I had, I would not waste a tool with the potential that you have.” Teshkaht smiled widely at her surprise. “I have work for you, my dear. Work that cannot be completed by one of the Faithful. There are *perfidious* doings afoot, and I would have you eliminate those who plot treachery against me.”

“How much are you paying?” Onarra replied.