

## Between Water and Mountains

### Chapter II

#### Betrayals and Bargains

He sat on his throne of hard wood surrounded by thick walls of stone. He was a tall skeletal figure, lean and long-limbed with sunken eyes that seemed to burn with fervor. A shimmering circlet of silver and gold adorned his brow but his garments were a simple drab gray smock. *What was a king in a place where all men were kings?* He smiled, his long thin fingers stretching at his direction. The others stirred uneasily at his movement, shrinking back at the look on his face. How humorous a king was, a roll of the dice with a nation the wager. He'd never wanted to be a king, but they'd crowned him and brought him to this dark palace all the same.

*Dakavun*, prison of the Wise. A dungeon for Faeven on a barren and forsaken island wrapped in the power of the Magaerin. The *Rhoaken* oversaw this lost place, the warriors of the Wise, keeping a tireless watch over their captives. They were weak, these *Rhoaken*, they shrank from his gaze even caged as he was. They knew what he saw, that their flesh was naught but tinder awaiting a flame. He could see the fear inside them when they met his eyes or spoke his name. Makavar, the Destroyer, master if not king of this island of forgotten souls.

He had shaken the Magaerin to their core, spreading the seeds of destruction and chaos across the realms, annihilating every *Rhoaken* sent against him. All but the last, *Nalaar*. That was a name he remembered, an adversary fit for his power and cunning. Their contests had been many and long, but at the last it was he who was vanquished and overcome, defeated by *Nalaar*'s hand. It amused Makavar that the champion of Iskarian was now an exile. How fickle the Magaerin were.

Makavar listened, as if he could hear the waves crashing against the rocks below the bleak walls. There was something there, sounds from beyond the walls, a change in the feel of the air. The circlet he wore might prevent him from drawing power, but he could still sense the energies that suddenly raged nearby. The barriers over *Dakavun* were gone and flashes of destruction tore the air. He stood slowly and the others looked to him, their eyes filled with question, hope and fear.

"Prepare yourselves my children," he said softly, his eyes burning in the dim light. "Our time here is all but spent."

The furious storm of energies lessened and Makavar did not react as spirals of darkness materialized behind him in a shadowed corner of the room. The darkness firmed into a man dressed in black from head to toe. A dark

hood covered his hair and a cloth concealed his face, all except the eyes.

Makavar's voice was quiet and he spoke without turning, his eyes blazing into nothing. "I hear the soft voice of chaos whispering her sweet promises from the shadows," he said in a reverent breath and then he smiled.