



THE
OCTAGON'S
EIGHT



MAIRON OAKLEY

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BY
MAIRON OAKLEY

READING SAMPLE

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@tebreus
www.maironoakley.com

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1: Introduction



I had never seen the sea. It was not unusual for my kind, but rarely did this matter. There are seas of a sort where I come from; vast stretches of water, fathoms deep and as black as ink, walled in by stone. Any knowledge I had gleaned from the tales of others did nothing to prepare me for the sight of it, that real sea. I remember a great sense of both awe and terror. It came about that I had to rapidly learn everything there was to know about it. This is because I had to cross it.

Every year, the city of Hanging Hold throws an event that briefly quadruples its population with an influx of the morbidly curious. The ‘Hold’ part of the city name describes the prison. The ‘Hanging’ part describes the fact that the prison itself is clutching precariously to a towering cliff, its bare feet dipping into a cold and unforgiving sea. The prison is home to those that have been deemed too dangerous for the average local guardhouse. The danger could be due to

magic, or trickery, or politics, or, as it was in my case, general assumption. Ain'nath do not get the courtesy of trials or second chances upon the Surface; we are dangerous because it has been decided outright and there are tales and legends to support it.

The event that drew in the masses was officially called 'The Crossing' and unofficially 'The Drowning'. The latter described the tragic outcome of every year and onlookers often hoped that this would happen whilst the 'Crew' was still in view to the non-magical eye. It seems that there is nothing more fun than to watch your enemies forced onto something that floats and sent off out to sea to see how long they can survive.

We survived until we were out of eyesight, even to the nobles in the towers of the city. We also survived long enough to have our story spun into several versions on the tongues of bards and in the manuscripts of writers. I could not write back then, nor read in my own tongue or any other, but I can now, and I refuse to let those years of learning go to waste without marking down what I took those lessons to scribe. There is no version of the tale that I am quite happy with, whether it is due to omission or ornamentation. Here I write my version with two wishes; the first that the world can finally hear the truth, and the second, that once the truth has parted from my head, I can finally rest, the nightmares banished, and the pains laid to sleep.

I take up this pen, as I would a sword, to end them.