

## The Ghost of Vorlion

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Long ago, far in the west of Statera, the Sunfall kingdoms reigned. Goliaths of power and might, these mystical houses had stood for ages, some even going as far as to claim Zaelstone blood ran in their veins. Some of the men and women that ruled these kingdoms were seen as fair, honest rulers, while others were proclaimed tyrants and usurpers. However, baked as monarchy was into their culture, the people of said kingdoms never went as far as to instate a different kind of regime. Emperors and empresses were overthrown, all in due time, but never did the people take power into their own hands. One king or queen would fall, another would take their place. Such was the way of the Sunfall kingdoms.

You see, monarchies in Statera were much different to those we once knew in places such as western Europe, some of which still linger. No, Stateran monarchies were not necessarily a question of birth right. Sure, the integrity to rule a kingdom often did run in the family, but that was never the deciding factor. Where usually it was customary to have the eldest son claim heirship, Stateran monarchies saw the sunkeeper's blessing as the ultimate sign. Though those that were not blessed by the sun were not prohibited of rulership, individuals who did bear Lux' blessing often rose up to 'claim what was theirs to take'. Such was the case in the kingdom of Vorlion, an ancient throne deep in the heart of Statera's plains and hills, in the most north-eastern part of Lux' fields.

Vorlion's walls were tall, its towers fair and bright, glistening in the ever-shining golden light, that shone like a million, fireless embers. During the day, her streets were busy, and her markets filled, men and women coming from far and wide,

some to seek fortune, others hoping for some distant fame. At night, torches made the city a beacon of ever-present life, as the windows glow and guards protect. Vorlion, for generations, would be the great, shining pride of the Sunfall plains, forests, and hills.

Beneath the hills, glistening streams would wind, following the current that took them so far away, far to the southern harbours of Erdalok. The water kept the grass green and the apples red, on the trees that bordered a farmer's homestead. Humble lives these people lived, some of the few that the never-ending greed always missed. There, on the fields, they would plough and sow until a new generation would grow, in the soil of ancient blood and marrow. Over the ground wars were fought, fires burnt, with diseases coughed, dogma and superstition stirred.

Forever, Vorlion would remain.

Forever, Vorlion would live.

Never, *he* would die.

For in the darkest reaches of the Dreamglade, something woke. Something snarled and growled at the night sky's moonlight, shunning the silver rays from its eyes. Something woke, and nobody can recall why. It woke and cried. It woke and defied. It woke and saw the other side. A new caster was born under the light of the moon, irises dark as the endless void, skin paler than the starlight. Something dark that way came. Lunarborn, a new soul would rise, a soul to be born into royalty by the name *Trelandir*.

Trelandir would receive a largely traditional childhood from his parents. During the first few years of his life, he was regarded as a firstborn royal, praised, and put on a pedestal as

an heir to the throne of Vorlion. Five years later, however, the king and queen brought forth a daughter, the solarborn Etrilae, a girl with the sun-gold ensnared in her golden hair, its light encased in her deep blue eyes, destined for beauty and a future of light, prosperity. Where her brother's looks seemed tainted and troubled, she shone with Lux' own splendour, the eyes of the realm in the palm of her hand.

Trelandir faded into the background as his sister was revered by the other Sunfall kings and queens. Princes and princesses came from far and wide, seeking her hand. Trelandir watched from the shadows, his dark eyes broad, widened in the shade. Fade he did, until not much more than a distant remnant remained. He was loved by his sister, which brought the boy warmth, but the princess' perfection made him torn.

For decades, he roamed the castle halls. His parents fell, the throne passed on to Etrilae, golden-hearted and golden-haired. Years went on as Etrilae ruled, the two growing tall and more different over time. Trelandir's skin got paler, Etrilae's eyes brighter, their powers manifesting and strengthening over the years. Slowly, the ancient stars started to reach out to Etrilae, calling from across Lux' realm to fuel her powers, allowing the queen to summon beings of light as her guardians.

Vorlion would know prosperity, kindness, and life. Trelandir remained a spectre behind his sister's back, so faint that some had even forgotten his name, his legacy. All of him seemed lost, until Vorlion's darkest hour struck. The Hellfire crisis came, Hile Forno's troops marched across the land and burned all in their wake. The Sunfall kingdoms rallied their troops, standing proudly, determined not to let their sovereignty fall to a self-appointed liege. Bloody battles were fought and the kingdoms briefly united under the Sunfall Banner, seeking to

end the fierce threat once and for all. Then again, none could truly stand against the lord who brought such violent flame, embers from another plane. Steel clashed and voices raged, calling warriors from all across the plains to their side. A valiant attempt was made to halt the Hellfire Lord's advance, but none of them could stand against the demonic rule.

It was not long until the blaze met with the gates of Vorlion, soon advancing into the throne room as the city burned. Etrilae called for her brother to join her side, and reluctant the prince obliged. Shadows and darkness trailed his step, her gaze sharp and deadly, as night fell for Vorlion. No longer shone the torches bright, instead allowing the burning towers to light up the dark sky. Lord Hile sent his vassals, commanders of then unknown power. A final time, Etrilae called the sunkeeper's might to her side, as Trelandir called upon his cloaked patron's strength. The throne room was turned into a battleground, a forsaken warzone of elemental prowess. Trelandir and Etrilae drew the star-signs of their forebearers upon the palace floors with their echoing step, slaying two of Hile's commanders. However, none could face the strength of the chaos focus, and Etrilae was struck by black ice. To her knees the lady fell, at her brother's feet. Trelandir's darkened eyes widened again, untamed like the endless void they swallowed all light in the room as even the moon felt dark. His voice quaked and dropped, echoing in the broken halls.

*"Sister, do you not understand, to kneel is something you never had to do for me, why start today?"*

*"Brother, do not meet my fate because of my failing strength."*

*"There is only one way."*

*"Unleash the moon for me."*

All the rage of years that came and went, the bundled hatred of generations, it made his hand tremble and his tongue remain stale. Bitter was his tone as he spoke the cant.

*“I call upon the keeper of the dark,*

*He who claims the abyss,*

*I ask for your approval’s mark,*

*That my strength may be true and pure as the eternal mist,*

*Repay you I will once they have met their doom,*

*For I summon the Blood Moon.”*

And the skies turned a deep crimson, the moon drenched in blood. The stars faded from the night, like Trelandir faded away so long ago. The prince raised the dead with the sadness of a thousand souls getting ripped out of their bodies flooding into his mind. His eyes turned full black, and his gaze withered, allowing no more sign of life to shine from his frigid body. That ever-lasting pain and dread never left. Not when he left the attackers in pools of blood on the palace doorstep, not when the dark keeper took what he was owed. The bodies of the dead fell to the floor once more, lifeless, motionless, returning to their dormant sleep. Like that, Trelandir was left, alone, with no voices to remind him of the kingdom that once was.

The soil turned red with the blood of a thousand lives taken, as the bark of the apple trees turned black with grief. The leaves followed suit, draining the crimson from the ground, and turning a deep, dark purple. With the prince’s pain, none could escape his bane. From the most obscure reaches of the

Dreamglade, shadows came, shrouding their new lord in eternal darkness. From that shade, the keeper would speak.

*“Young one, I know your pain,  
Such horror will forever stain,  
Though the grief will always remain,  
There is nothing more to gain  
From this sad refrain,  
But this world will forever remember your name,  
They will know that King Trelandir came,  
They will know that nothing will forever be the same,  
Your body will strain,  
But your spirit will remain,  
Rise, Ghost of Vorlion,  
Reminder of when something dark this way came,”*

Trelandir would follow the keeper’s command and allow the tainted shadows to take what was theirs, to forever remind the kingdoms of the day when something dark, finally, this way came.

Now the Nightmare Woods stand on his grave, his very essence still fuelled by the pain. Sometimes, one can still hear the violin he used to play, in the abandoned halls of a palace that would never be the same.