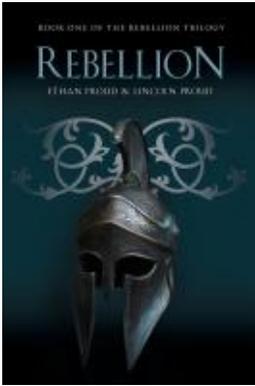


BOOK ONE OF THE REBELLION TRILOGY

REBELLION

ETHAN PROUD & LINCOLN PROUD





Rebellion is the first book in the epic fantasy series: The Rebellion Trilogy. Rebellion begins as Jergle, a duke in the country of Durthia, prepares his initial assault on the capital. However, a rebel courier brings him word of the king's plan, which derails Jergle's scheme. To counter this, Jergle storms the capital, hoping to have the element of surprise on his side. Much to his dismay, little goes according to plan... See also - VENGEANCE: Book Two of the Rebellion Trilogy

Rebellion: Book One of the Rebellion Trilogy

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Rebellion

Book One of the Rebellion Trilogy

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&
Lincoln Proud**

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Prologue

The room was poorly lit; only three torches were burning in their brackets. The torches on the far side of the room had been snuffed out. Jergle allowed the door to swing shut behind him. A table was set up in the middle of the room, its lone occupant sat expectantly. His hood was pulled up revealing only the lower half of his face. His skin was a ghostly pale; his veins shone blue along his jawline.

From somewhere behind this lone figure the rasp of shell against stone floor could be heard, echoing through the room as some unseen creature paced. Or perhaps it was a pair of unseen creatures. Jergle was not daunted, but nonetheless he gripped the hilt of his sword a little tighter. The figure didn't rise as a sign of respect as most did when greeting Jergle. The duke's eyes narrowed.

"My servants say you requested an audience with me." Jergle stated coldly. He was perturbed by the lack of respect this stranger flaunted.

"I did indeed." The voice came slithering off the tongue, wintry and almost reptilian with its malice. Yet, it had a velvet exterior that warmed the ears of his audience, Jergle, after they had felt the bite of his sharp words. He rose and spread his hands in a gesture of friendship. A clacking staccato of insect legs heralded the approach of the unseen lurker. As Jergle guessed, it was a pair of creatures. But creature was such an ill-fitting word. Monstrosity was much more appropriate. Jergle's face couldn't hide the shock and terror that ran along his spine, chilling his blood. He heard a dark chuckle from the master of the monsters. Jergle's attention was captured by the intriguing man and pulled away from the hideous beasts that flanked him.

"There is a need for a rebellion."

Chapter 1

The stables, barracks and armory were bustling. From the armory came a hot metallic odor that mingled with the air outside. The sound of hammers falling on metal filled everyone's ears with an incessant ringing. Soldiers in armor could be seen sweating under the hot sun in the courtyard of Gareth. Excitement filled every corner of the castle. Women and children were hanging back out of the way, but soldiers could be seen chatting with them. Many of the new recruits were young, and spoke with their mothers; while the older warriors could be seen with their wives and children.

Through the throng of bodies, a striking figure walked along, inspecting everything. His hair went down past his shoulders. At his side was strapped an impressive long sword. He also carried with him an air of command which no one disputed. Jergle had a wild excited grin on his face as the duke walked toward the stables. His years of planning and hard work would finally pay off. Durthia's ruler would no longer oppress Jergle and his fiefdom. Jergle had been informed by an acquaintance, several years ago, that the king of Durthia was trying to oppress all of the farmers into the south-eastern corner of Durthia. Jergle would not allow this.

As he entered the stable the young hand preparing his horse looked up, but did not stop working to stand at attention for his ruler. Under any other circumstance or in any other fiefdom the boy would have been flogged for his disrespect. Jergle was much more sensible in his reign. He would rather that the boy kept working than waste time to simply stand for the duke, just to get back to work.

"Is all of Harfall's tack assembled?"

"It is sire," the stable boy said without looking at Jergle.

"Has he been well fed? Rested? And is he ready for the march?" Jergle continued questioning his servant.

"Yes sire, everything is ready. I am just checking the stirrups, and your horse will be ready." The boy gave a more detailed response hoping that the duke would leave him to his work. And his plan almost worked. Jergle was walking off when he paused to ask another question.

“Whose horse is that? I don’t believe I have seen it before.” The duke became curious.

“That would be Torall’s horse, sire. You probably don’t recognize the horse because it hasn’t been here before. Torall is one of your newer commanders; his horse has always been kept elsewhere.” Jergle looked like he understood as he walked away. He was also feeling smug about his stable boy. He spoke far too well for a servant, but being around commanders all of the time did help with literary skills.

As Jergle left the commanders stables he looked at each horse very impressed. They were some of the largest horses in Durthia, making them superior chargers; hopefully they would be able to handle the king’s unique cavalry. The horses, coupled with their skilled masters would be devastating, regardless of the king’s most powerful warriors.

The wind whipped Jergle’s hair around his face. With a last flick of his hand he removed his ink black hair out of his eyes; he was not surprised to see his son walking quickly to the stables. His son, Sorrongoth, had his father’s black hair, but had his mother’s tan skin and dark brown eyes. Sorrongoth had never met his mother Surtia, who died birthing him. Although his father had a rather slight build, Sorrongoth was massive. He had large broad shoulders, but stood a few inches shorter than the other soldiers. He wasn’t short, he just wasn’t as tall. He was roughly five feet eleven inches. Sorrongoth could beat anyone in Gareth in a contest of strength. Jergle didn’t say it to his son’s face, but sometimes he joked with the other commanders about finding a horse big enough to support Sorrongoth in battle. Yet, they managed it. Sorrongoth found a suitable horse three years ago, when he was nineteen. He had chosen the horse when it was a little over a year old; at the time, it had trouble supporting Sorrongoth. As the years went by though, it had grown into a powerful charger. The two could hardly be separated and Sorrongoth spent much of his free time in the stables or out riding.

Sorrongoth wore his customary white tunic that had laces from the neck halfway down the chest; it was a very hot day, so Sorrongoth left the shirt untied. His breeches were a dark blue, and

he wore them tucked into a pair of black boots that went halfway up his calf.

During battle Sorrongoth was quite impressive in his bronze and silver armor. All around him bodies would be lying dead. Sorrongoth's seven-foot spear was a tool of destruction. The spear ended with a broad triangular blade, and the wooden haft of the spear had intricate carvings that depicted an old battle. The scene went all the way around the haft beneath the blade, but then spiraled downward two feet, and ended with a blue leather wrapping placed right beneath the engraving. Jergle was thrilled with the craftsmanship that had gone into his son's weapon, for it had served his son well. Sorrongoth had never come out of a battle with anything worse than a scratch, and his proud father doubted he ever would.

Jergle next went to the armory, which was adjoining the barracks. Inside the armory, the air seemed heavy and thick, heat rolled out through the open door as Jergle stepped inside. A loud clanging echoed from behind one of the doors as the blacksmiths continued to work. Jergle exited the sweltering room through a door to his right. The room he entered was much cooler. Weapons and armor hung on racks that lined the entire room. The metal gleamed in harsh contrast to the grey walls. Soldiers walked through the room casually in small groups to pick up armor and swords. In the middle of the room the four commanders talked quietly. They stood nonchalantly with their helmets tucked under their arms. Ulthen, the senior commander had his bow slung over one shoulder. In his free hand, he held the rebels flag. Across a background of dark blue, a white wolf was caught in mid-stride. The fabric was limp in the still room.

Ulthen had grey hair and light blue eyes. He was of medium height and medium build. He was one of the oldest men in the rebellion, he and Jergle had also known each other for a long time. They had met when Jergle was seventeen and when Ulthen was twenty-nine-almost-thirty. Jergle was a young noble and was just starting to attend the royal courts and balls. Ulthen was also a noble, he just had more experience. That was a long time ago, and now

Jergle was thirty-eight and Ulthen was fifty. Ulthen lead the archers in battle along with Oterall.

“Is everything in order?” Jergle inquired as he neared the group.

“Yes. We are only waiting on a few of our runners, they have yet to arrive.” Ulthen answered and Yerak nodded eagerly. Yerak had been supporting the rebellion since its beginnings, but most found him extremely annoying. He was thicker and shorter than the other commanders. Yerak had mousy brown hair and features that resembled an overgrown rodent. Neither his features nor his personality helped him to be liked, but for some reason that most of the soldiers did not understand, Jergle had promoted Yerak to a commander. Torall and Oterall had been recruited in the past year, but despite being the latest recruits they had proven themselves early on and had been promoted quickly.

Torall led the foot soldiers with Jergle. Torall had brown hair that was darker than the average color. He was tall and muscular, but a long shot from Sorrongoth’s extreme build. Torall was thirty-two years old and was only a few years older than Oterall. Oterall was fair-skinned and had blonde hair and blue eyes. Like most of his peers his hair went slightly past his shoulders. Sorrongoth was also a commander, but he was not usually found with the other lieutenants.

“Good, everything is according to plan; we should be leaving early tomorrow.” Jergle replied and left the men to whatever they were doing prior to his interruption and headed to the barracks. Inside the barracks soldiers were talking in small clumps. Even though the soldiers were talking in small groups the room was crowded and the few soldiers who tried to maneuver found themselves weaving between their fellow warriors. The room was full of tables that were meant for dining, but there was no food on the tables for the moment. Jergle surveyed the room, looking for the table that was closest to the middle of the room. The tables were in rows of six and columns of three. This made it so that none of the tables were in the exact center. Jergle choose a table in the second row, third column. He made his way slowly through the crowded room, bumping into soldiers the entire time. None of the soldiers seemed to mind though, they never even turned to look. Finally,

Jergle made it to the table. Nimbly, he stepped onto a chair then up onto the table.

“Silence; tomorrow we begin our conquest of the corrupted country of Durthia!” Jergle said in a loud powerful tone that filled the room. He never looked in one direction for more than a few seconds; instead he turned so that he could see every soldier in the room. “The rulers of this country have cast it into a long-lasting lethargic sleep; tomorrow we will shake Durthia awake with such a force that this country cannot counter. Too long have we obeyed its laws and sat silent as its puppets. Tomorrow Durthia will fall!” Cheering erupted in the barracks. The noise was deafening. All around the rebel leader’s table was a sea of roiling bodies in armor. Jergle smiled at his work, he had always been persuasive and cunning. Actually, Durthia was not in a long-lasting lethargic sleep, but Jergle liked how it sounded. Jergle raised a hand in an order for silence. “Kuronas has oppressed us for decades. In the upcoming months, we shall bring Durthia to its knees. The people shall tremble before us! Durthia will fear this new power of which it has never seen before. Durthia will not expect this; the rulers will be looking to their borders for attack. A rebellion is unthinkable for the people of this pitiful country. This country will be rocked with fear! My people, Durthia will be ours!” The room shook with the cheers of the soldiers. The din was unbearable, but a leader like Jergle, though, after many campaigns was used to this and stood a moment longer on the table gloating in his ability to rouse any crowd. Tomorrow Durthia would be shook to its foundations; the foundations would crumble leaving room for Jergle to build a new society. The cooks began to enter the room with trays laden with food. Jergle stepped off the table and exited the room, he dined in the citadel and hardly ever with the soldiers. The door to the barracks shut behind him and he could still hear the clamor of the warriors roused by his words.

Chapter 2

Northwest of Gareth, on the high desert plains two souls journeyed north. They set a slow and relaxed pace, for neither was in a great hurry. Spring had almost come in full, many of the early season forbs were blooming, and some of the later seasons plants were beginning to sprout. Sagebrush dotted the landscape, and small drifts of snow still managed to exist tucked right next to the shrubs.

Wind whipped across the barren landscape, and aside from the occasional group of pronghorn or the eagle circling overhead there was no wildlife to be seen. However, that didn't mean that small rodents weren't scurrying about in the brush, or tunneling beneath the ground. Wildlife thrived in Durthia, albeit on a smaller scale.

Despite that most life was small, there were exceptions. To the northeast, the mountains housed giant monsters that no one could explain. The beasts that came from the Shadow Cappe Mountains were evil creatures that had no legends to explain them, and only a few had names. Trolls were rumored to inhabit the mountains in a deep swamp, but no one had ever been able to verify its existence. If anyone had found it, they had not lived to tell about it.

Seruke leaned forward and patted his mounts muscled neck. He and Phera had been gone for far too long; and both eagerly advanced towards their destination. The runner had only been back to the town of Benaer once, and briefly at that. The young man had not even gotten the chance to see his family; his mission had been urgent, and after delivering his message to the towns duke he had been forced on another errand, and this one much farther south.

As the two walked something caught Seruke's eye. In the distance, he could see flags and tents. Concern etched itself on his brow as he tried to think what the army would be doing marching towards to Benaer. He was still many miles from home, and Benaer did not have a black flag with a red crescent moon. Realization raced across Seruke's face: Ornock was marching on Benaer, quite possibly the smallest rebel town. Seruke urged Phera onward, her paws silently padding the hard ground. Phera was not any regular mount; she was a raghasarg, a giant wolf. Her shoulders stood higher

than a horses, and she was much faster. A short mane ran from her head all the way down to her tail. The hair that made up the mane was thick and a dark brown and it was wider and thicker across her shoulders. She was a beautiful mottled brown and black, and her presence sent fear down the spines of most humans; even the ones who fought with her and her rider. Raghasargs were not commonly tame, and were usually thought of as great dangers to farmers who herded livestock...a small pack of these giant wolves could decimate a farmer's livelihood.

Seruke pulled Phera up to a halt, and dismounted. Once he was on the ground he pulled for Phera to lie down in the grass. She did not hide so well for her size, but between the sagebrush and grass, from the distance of the camp she would have looked like a dark boulder. Hopefully none of the soldiers noticed that there had been no stone there the night before.

The runner sunk down onto his hands and knees, and stretched himself out along the ground. He raised his body off the ground and slunk along on his hands and toes. Seruke crept between the grass and shrubs like a fox. The gritty dirt felt good under his hands, and he reveled in the smell of dirt and sagebrush. His eyes focused on the flag of the nearest tent as a marker. He was so intent on watching the flags position change that he failed to notice where he put his hands. With a quiet yelp, he rolled over onto his side holding onto his right hand, but he still had not paid enough attention, and now he truly was paying for it, for he rolled onto another cactus. This second cactus made him jump, and he twisted off of it only to roll onto a small clump of the annoying plants. He felt the sharp needles pierced the leather vest and tunic he was wearing, and to stab him unmercifully in the ribs. This time Seruke did not jump off of his inanimate assailant. He stopped, and just lay on the cactus, to take a look at his surroundings. He cursed his stupidity, and plucked the needles out of his hand before he carefully navigated his way out of the cactus patch he had found himself in.

Once he had extricated himself from the natural trap he proceeded to very carefully remove the rest of the needles. This took some doing for him, because the needles in his back were very

stubborn, and he couldn't quite reach them well enough. Aggravated with wasting so much time over something so ridiculous, without needles in his shoulder, back or hand, he crept the rest of the way to the tent he had chosen. This time he was more careful of where he put his hands.

When Seruke finally reached the tent, his arms were burning from the strain of crawling such a distance. He could even feel his torso resenting him from keeping it flexed and tense for so long. Seruke was relieved to be on his feet again and moving; he crept through the enemy encampment with ease. It was still early morning, so most of the soldiers were drowsy, or still in bed. All of this made Seruke's job much easier; he smiled to himself at how pathetic the soldiers all looked. They were not so far from Ornock that the march would have made them so exhausted, but they all looked as if they had been on the road for several days.

As the runner got closer to the middle of the camp, more people were awake, and he had to be much more cautious. Getting caught would end poorly and probably quite painfully for him. He kept this in mind as he peeked around the corner of the tent he was hiding behind. He looked at the ground, and was prepared to wait for the people talking by a fire pit to leave. His stomach suddenly dropped to his feet. There on the ground was a large pair of boots that were filled with a rather large man, who did not look very happy. Options ran through Seruke's mind with lightning speed. His choices were thin. He smiled up at the man, and pressed his finger to his lips, and winked. Hopefully the man would think he was going to pull a prank on one of his fellow comrades. Hopefully the man didn't recognize Seruke as an outsider.

Fortunately, his ploy worked, and the large man rolled his eyes and walked off without conversation. This worked out quite well, for although Seruke could be quite convincing and confusing, conversation was not what he wanted right now. Perhaps if the man thought he belonged to Ornock's army so would everyone else. Deciding to take the risk, knowing he could outrun every person in the camp, he walked out towards the men at the fire. They looked up at him, but their glance did not linger, and they continued talking

with each other. The runner walked past trying to see where the commander's tent would be. He wandered around the camp, and finally found what he was looking for. But once again there was a problem; two guards stood by the tents door. Already knowing how he was going to get in, Seruke walked past them casually and turned towards the back of the tent. Making sure that no one was around to see him or that nothing was in his way on the other side, he crawled under the tents back wall.

Seruke was shocked to find the most lavish tent he had ever seen, and he had seen a lot of tents. There was not only a very large cot, but an elegant couch as well. Whoever the commander of this battalion was he certainly liked to be comfortable. Next to the bed was a small intricately carved table with parchments covering it. There was another table on the other side of the room that must have been for dining for there were all sorts of fancy things lying on it, a goblet, dinner ware...was this tent really a commanders? Seruke couldn't believe it. With a sigh of disgust, he began snooping around.

He found a bunch boring maps; the runner didn't need a map to find where he was going. There were also old letters, and plans that had already been executed. Nothing of interest. Then he saw something, a rolled up piece of parchment that he had somehow overlooked. The seal was broken, and old. As he unfurled the document, he was beginning to fear that his assumption had been correct. He slowly read what he had hoped he wouldn't. His shaky hands slowly curled the parchment back up, as his eyes stared blankly at the ornate table he had found the instructions on. His home town was to be destroyed. Apparently, the king of Durthia had plans similar plans to Jergle. Destroy the enemy one city at a time. He could not allow this to happen; his family still lived in Benaer. He had already assumed that the army was advancing on his home, but he had still hoped it wasn't true.

A suicidal thought began to form in his mind. Could he sneak through the camp, and kill the army one man at a time? Many were still sleeping, he could do it. But could he kill that many men in cold blood? Seruke had killed before; in fact, he had killed many times. He hated doing it, but what else was there? He could save his town,

but many of the men in the battalion he was thinking of assassinating had families, wives, children. Could he do that to their families back home? He began to question the rebellion that he was part of, and not for the first time either.

Something was amiss, but he could not quite figure out what it was. He realized that his moral compass was a little off, but something about the rebellion just seemed wrong. Seruke felt dirty, and not because of the dirt clinging to his clothes. He did not usually feel so uncomfortable doing something, but for some reason he did not like what was going through his mind. Jergle had been very good to him as a runner; he couldn't just walk out. Just as he was beginning to shake the disconcerting thoughts from his mind he heard voices outside of the tent. He quickly looked around for a place to hide. He moved away from the small table and hid under the larger one to the left of the room that had a large table cloth that draped down to the floor.

Seruke heard three separate voices enter the tent. One, obviously, was the commander, his general and a third meeker voice. The voices were coming closer; Seruke began to sweat as the three persons sat down at the table he was hiding under.

"You came along distance in a very short amount of time." The commander's voice was full of condescension. "So, tell me, what is so important that the King could not wait to inform me once Benaer was destroyed?"

"Well, sir, the King has caught wind of Jergle's plans. Benaer can wait; destroying her will not take much work. There is a greater problem on the rise." The small voice almost whispered.

"Humph," The general grunted. "Hopefully you can tell us why we are to march *back* to Ornock?" his attitude was already slipping. Seruke felt a sense of pity wash over him for the runner sitting at the table; messengers were usually treated quite foully, even though a whole kingdom relied on them for communication.

"Sirs," the boy mumbled. Then he raised his voice so that they could hear him. Jergle is about to begin a march on one of Durthia's fiefs. The king does not know which one will be attacked or when, but every one of his loyal supporters are to guard themselves. Cenock

will distribute a portion of her forces to some of the smaller fiefs that might be in more danger.”

“When is the king sending some of his army away?” It was obvious that the commander of Ornock was hoping to receive some reinforcements.

“He already has, to Ornock, Sarenka, and Koron. The only reason he is sending forces to Ornock is that he fears that you, being one of the smallest fiefs, are in the greatest danger. Plus, you are so close to Benaer that it would benefit Jergle to have the two northernmost towns under his control. You are to march back to Ornock immediately.”

“Thank you. You may go.” The commander stood up as did the courier. Seruke heard a few coins jingle from one hand to the next; at least the commander had the decency to pay the lad.

Once the boy left the commander turned around and poured himself some wine into the goblet sitting on the table. The commander and general started up a simple conversation that Seruke was sure he would have to sit through and endure before he could sneak out. He wasn't so lucky. For the general stretched his legs out under the table. The shocked man jumped right out of his seat when his legs hit the lump hiding under the table.

Seruke stood up, and launched the table at the still startled general. He turned and flashed a gleaming smile at the commander, and gave him a very low and sweeping bow. Before either of Ornock's warriors could recover Seruke was walking towards the wall of the tent, drawing an elegant blade from his back. With a quick slash the tent had been hewn open, and Seruke had stepped outside. He walked slowly between the tents trying to get as far as he could without running and giving himself away. It would not be long before the two men he left realized who he actually was. He had made it about fifty paces before he heard shouting from behind him.

“Seize that boy! He's a spy!” the commander shouted. Seruke smiled and took off running. Soldiers stared at him before they realized that they were supposed to catch him. As if any of them could. The runner couldn't help but feel a bit miffed though. Boy. He had been called a boy. He was nineteen, and did not take kindly to

that title. “Oh, well,” he thought. There were far more important things to be worrying about at the moment.

As soon as Seruke had been given away he took off at a dead sprint. No one should be able to catch him, but then again, he was in the middle of the enemy’s camp. He wove inbetween tents trying to confuse his pursuers. One man came at him from his right side. He was shocked at how fast the man was, he was a few feet behind Seruke, and keeping up. The runner didn’t want to kill the man, but he didn’t want to be killed either. Realizing that his sword was still in his hand he slowed down so he was closer to the man behind him. Once the man was close enough Seruke whipped his sword arm behind and spun with the motion. His sword sliced through the man’s clothing and created a long red line across his chest. Seruke’s maneuver almost made him fall over, but he stayed on his feet and ran as the soldier from Ornock fell to the ground. Seruke grinned; the man would live, but he would carry a nice scar. He would not forget the runner.

Seruke heard the hooves of horses behind him. By the time he reached Phera she was already on her feet starting to walk in the direction they had been heading. Seruke leaped onto her back, and turned her around towards Gareth. “Not that way,” he breathed, “we aren’t so lucky as to go home.” The enemy camp fell away behind them, and the horses were no match for Phera’s speed. Gareth was a good three days’ ride away, hopefully they would make it before Jergle’s army left.

The two ran for a very long time. They even made it through the strip of the Genriok forest that split Durthia horizontally. However, nightfall was closing in, and the two needed to stop and sleep. Seruke found a pleasant outcropping of rocks, and decided to make camp. He swung off of Phera, and instantly wished he hadn’t. He quickly grabbed the saddle to support himself. His legs had cramped painfully after the long ride. Phera stood patiently as he rubbed the cramps out, and unsaddled her. Once all of the bags were unloaded from the raghasarg’s back she went off hunting. Seruke ate his own small dinner of bread and cheese. Once Phera returned the two of them hunkered down for the night. The two slept peacefully. Not

many of the animals on the plains would bother a full grown raghasarg.

Chapter 3

Jergle woke early in the morning. The room was almost pitch black, the temperature felt as if it was below freezing. Jergle cast aside his bedspread and immediately regretted it. If it felt freezing from within the warmth of his bed it was even colder outside. The only warmth emanated from the hearth, where the embers of the last night's fire still glowed. Jergle's feet touched the cold stone and he recoiled before making his way to the hearth. He stoked the flames and set some wood on the struggling fire. After a few minutes the fire roared to life and sent heat out into the room. Jergle opened the shutters, and the grey morning light flooded in. Jergle's room was very lavish; he had several chairs that were cushioned generously. Each one was carved to Jergle's specification. A large couch was pushed against the far wall. It was just as ornate as the chairs. His bed was rather ordinary, made out of a dark wood. It was piled with blankets this time of year, but in a few weeks they would be discarded for lighter linen sheets. Jergle walked over to a large chest. The chest was almost four feet high and two feet wide, and five feet long. It was as ordinary as the bed, but the clothes inside were meant for royalty. Jergle opened the chest carefully so that the lid would not slam against the stone wall and crack. The rebel wasn't choosy with what he wore. His pants were a solid black. He picked a simple grey shirt that had laces at the throat. To go over this shirt, he wore a blood red tunic made out of a stiffer fabric than the other shirt. It had black embroidery. He pulled on a pair of rich leather boots that went half way up his calf. Lastly, he strapped on his sword and headed into the hallway.

The halls were illuminated with torches that gave a touch of color to the bleak stone walls. Jergle strode slowly along the walls until he reached his son's room. Jergle figured that Sorrongoth would be at least awake. He knocked on the heavy wooden door. In the same second he heard the handle click and it swung open. Sorrongoth walked away from the door giving his father room to step in. Sorrongoth was wearing only a pair of brown breeches and a pair of black boots. Sorrongoth's tan skin rippled over his extreme

musculature every time he moved. He had very few scars, only one was visible, it was only about two inches long. The small scar stretched across as many of his ribs as it could. Sorrongoth had got the scar when he was younger, and was playing with a knife after sneaking away from a banquet. The other scar was on his thigh, he had gotten that scar when he had fallen off of a horse and hit a sharp rock. He had been sixteen at the time.

Sorrongoth pulled on a loose green shirt, grabbed his spear and sword and left his room with Jergle.

“How long until we leave?” Sorrongoth asked. Sorrongoth enjoyed battles, or at least he enjoyed the adrenaline and the victory that he always achieved. He was not necessarily brutal or barbaric, but rather he liked to pit himself against other opponents...and the victory thrilled him.

“Two hours if all goes well.” Jergle replied casually, despite this façade he was very nervous, for years he had been planning this moment.

“Good, I’m ready to be on the march now. We’ve waited a very long time for this. Durthia will be ours.” Sorrongoth said, his eagerness clear in his voice. Jergle let a smile tug at the corners of his lips. At the end of the corridor they went their separate ways. Jergle was headed to make sure that everything was in order, and Sorrongoth was either headed out to see his horse or give a last farewell to Alexa.

Jergle walked across the courtyard and into a large shed. Large wooden doors dominated the front of the buildings. A team of horses was required to open the massive gate that stood thirty feet high and forty feet wide. Jergle was not using this door, instead he took a smaller door, just to the left of the behemoth gates. Once inside the smell of fresh wood filled his nostrils. Three catapults loomed before him. Each one crafted to have the most devastating effects on the fortifications of a stronghold. Jergle was confident that with these weapons and his army, he could defeat Durthia.

Jergle left the siege tools in the shed feeling smug. In one and a half hours he would begin his conquest of Durthia. Everything was ready, all he needed was the soldiers to prepare. The thrill of a plan

being set into action sent a buzz through his body. Durthia would be his, he relished the idea. He closed his eyes and visualized himself sitting on the throne, draped in expensive furs. The finest gems clinging to his fingers, and the crown perched on his head. The purest gold, inlaid with precious jewels and carved with precision, the crown would be the prize. Nothing could be better.

Most of the soldiers were awake and preparing for the march. The stable hands, cooks and healers were preparing carts full of food and other supplies they would need. After they had marched to one castle and moved on to the next, more carts would be brought up to prevent the soldiers from starving. Hopefully the plan of destroying strongholds one by one and moving north as they went would work. The country's capital, Cenock would be the second to last castle to fall.

The soldiers were ready; everyone was dressed for the march. Armor and swords clanged as the soldiers moved around. Jergle stood in front of the army, the catapults were about to be wheeled out of the shed and into the courtyard. The shed doors were pulled open by a team of ten draft horses. Light shone into the building and Jergle saw a figure slip into the shadows. He nodded to Oterall who saw the movement as well. Oterall got off his horse and walked slowly to the building. The warehouse was quiet, Oterall's eyes slowly adjusted to the lack of light. Even though the enormous gates were open, the warehouse was too long for the light to filter into the back corners. He heard shallow breathing, but couldn't identify the source. Oterall took a step forward and heard wood crunching. He looked down and saw splintered wood. He heard a movement and he snapped his eyes up and saw a man hiding pitifully behind a catapult. The man was small, probably twenty at the oldest. He had a starved look about him. In his hands he held an axe. Oterall turned his attention to the siege tools. Long slivers and chunks were all that remained of the baskets that would hold the rocks or flaming pitch. Oterall drew a dagger and approached the man. The man made no movement and didn't protest when Oterall drug him into the light.

“He’s sabotaged our catapults, it will take days to repair them!” Oterall shouted and Jergle’s face clouded with anger.

“We will waste no time preparing them, send for the carpenters. And bring the spy to me.” Jergle said. He wanted to kill the man, but he knew that he could garner some information first. The man was brought to Jergle’s side after the axe had been taken away. The man couldn’t look Jergle in the eyes.

“Who sent you?” Jergle asked coldly.

“Please, don’t-” the man whined pitifully.

“I want to know which thane you are working for.” Jergle said, the question left no room for argument.

“King Kuronas.”

“Why did you come? You aren’t a soldier.”

“Because I need to feed my family.” The man said simply.

“How much did he pay you?”

“He said he’d pay me if I completed the mission. I don’t know how much.”

“Then, I guess you aren’t feeding your family. Here you are, captured and your family is probably worried about you. And there is no food on their table.” Jergle said, slightly amused at the man’s situation. “You have two options; tell us what you know-”

“I’d rather die.” The man said blankly.

“I was going to say or we throw you in the dungeons, but if death is your wish, I’d hate to deprive you of it.”

“Please don’t.”

“What do you know?”

“Nothing.”

“Lock him away.” Jergle said and he turned his horse away from the spy. The spy cringed as he was pulled roughly towards the dungeons. Jergle paid him no attention, if one of his spies had been caught Kuronas would have tortured them for information and then starved them. What he was doing was much more humane. An idea formed in Jergle’s mind as he heard the man’s screams.

“Bring him back to me.” Jergle called, and then sent a servant to fetch Sorrongoth. Sorrongoth was at his side in a few minutes.

“Instead of jailing this saboteur, you will ride out and leave him somewhere in the west.” Jergle said making his plan known.

“But in a few days we will be leaving for war.” Sorrongoth protested.

“Not that far west, you will leave him near Icekeep.” Jergle said and Sorrongoth nodded his understanding. Sorrongoth headed to the stables without another word. Corefelk, Sorrongoth’s powerful bay charger, looked up in recognition as his master walked in. Sorrongoth wasted no time in saddling the horse and the two were out of the stables in an instant. Sorrongoth rode up to his father’s side and heaved the spy onto Corefelk’s saddle.

“Get back soon.” His father said, but it sounded more like an order.

“I won’t take long.” Sorrongoth promised. He kicked his heels into Corefelk and the horse thundered out of Gareth’s front gates. The horse’s heavy hooves kicked up dust covering their departure in a blur of dirt and wind.

Sorrongoth had barely been on the road for an hour when the man started complaining and demanding water. Sorrongoth ignored the petulant pest and kept riding. Corefelk kept up his pace and neither slowed nor stumbled. The next day went by much the same as the day before. They had only slept for a few hours the last night and had risen early. The prisoner made his objections, but they fell on deaf ears. Finally, Sorrongoth found a decent place to release the man.

“Get off my horse and farewell.” Sorrongoth said sardonically. The man was happy to oblige and was off Sorrongoth’s horse and scurrying off into the nearest grove as soon as the command had left Sorrongoth’s lips.

The ride back to Gareth was much more peaceful than the one from Gareth. No longer did Sorrongoth have to listen to the whining of the spy. Only the incessant hammering of hooves on earth broke the silence. Sorrongoth let his mind wander. Corefelk knew where he was going and did not need to be directed. Sorrongoth trusted that if

he fell asleep in the saddle and fell off, Corefelk would stop and wait for him to mount again. Sorrongoth anticipated the battles in the coming weeks. He had waited and waited for the campaign, and it was only a few days away. He couldn't concentrate on anything but the conquest of Durthia without losing interest in the topic. He was focused on one thing: the war on Durthia.

Sorrongoth stopped for one more break as the sun started to set. He had brought little food, not even half a loaf of bread remained. Sorrongoth ate it in silence as Corefelk grazed on the hardy native grasses. Sorrongoth rolled out a bedroll and slept, the sounds of night fell in around him.

Sorrongoth woke and regretted not bringing anything warmer with him. His bedroll had offered little protection against the freezing cold, patches of frost covered the ground, glittering in the morning light. Shrubs around him were covered with dew, every time he moved the sagebrush showered him in little droplets of icy water. He got up slowly, and found Corefelk only a few feet away. He wearily crawled into the saddle after he had rolled all his things together. Once again, he was galloping towards Gareth. The wind was brisk and chilled Sorrongoth's cheeks and nose, luckily, within the next hour the sun began to warm the ground and the temperature rose.

It wasn't long before Sorrongoth saw the castle walls. Corefelk started to slow down as they got closer and closer to Gareth. Eventually the horse stopped, its gaze settled on something moving in the distance. Sorrongoth followed his horse's gaze; he saw a black shape moving very quickly. He guessed that it was a runner on an urgent mission. The shape began to take form as it got closer. Sorrongoth could make out a wolfish shape. Its rider was slender and was bent over the creature's neck, urging it faster. Sorrongoth recognized the figure immediately. Seruke was the only person in Durthia that rode one of the famed raghasargs.

Sorrongoth turned his horse back towards the castle and called up to the gatekeepers. The gates groaned as they slowly opened. Sorrongoth rode Corefelk through the massive gates as soon as they

could fit through. A crowd was assembled just behind the gates. Soldiers dressed in armor and carts full of supplies were prepared for the long march. Sorrongoth spotted his father quickly. Jergle was seated on Harfall, the dapple-grey horse was at ease with all the men bustling around him.

“Father,” Sorrongoth shouted, Jergle heard him and rode over. “I saw Seruke on his way. I’m pretty sure that it’s his break, so whatever his reasons for coming must be urgent.”

“I agree.” Jergle said before addressing the soldiers gathered. “It had been three days since the rebellion had a minor setback. Now, we are ready to march on Durthia!” The crowd roared, Jergle held up a hand for silence. “But, we must wait a little longer. My son has seen a courier headed to Gareth, we shall wait and see whether his message has tidings of good or ill.” The crowd’s enthusiasm dropped. “Fear not, Durthia will be ours!” Jergle said and the crowd roared again. Jergle smiled to himself, he couldn’t end the speech negatively. Now the soldiers were cheering with excitement. Jergle heard the gates creak open again and saw a black creature lope through the gates, Seruke still on her back. Most of the soldiers cringed away from Phera, the massive beast instilled fear in every man and horse. Jergle was slightly amused by this, Phera wouldn’t kill any of the men in the rebellion, but the war would prevent many of them from ever returning home.

Seruke made his way through the throng; he was headed straight for Jergle. It wasn’t very difficult to maneuver through the crowd, none of the soldiers stayed in his way. It was one of the perks of riding a giant wolf. When Seruke reached Jergle, he dismounted. Jergle was pleased with this sign of respect, but he found it unnecessary. Runners were sent on the most dangerous missions, through the most hostile territories for small scraps of information. But without them the rebellion would have failed long ago. Seruke himself had left the country on many occasions, seeking aide or new devices from the surrounding lands. He was somewhat mute on some of the things he had done to get it though.

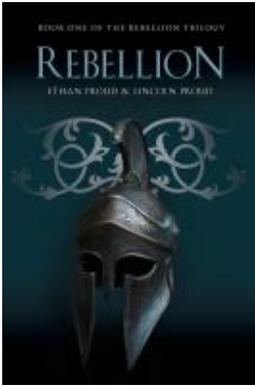
“The king knows of your plans.” Seruke said, getting right to his point. “He has sent half of his army out to other fortresses, so that they can offer a more effective resistance.”

“Ah,” Jergle said, a little stunned. His mind was racing.

“Sir, perhaps with half of her forces deployed, Cenock should be your first target. Besides if you manage to capture the capital city, I’m sure that the rest of Durthia would fall soon after.” Seruke smiled. Jergle leaned forward and whispered in Seruke’s ear:

“You have saved me a lot of thinking and time,” He continued in a louder tone, “here is the payment for your troubles, and while you are here you are welcome to stay in the royalties’ guest chambers.”

“Thank you for your hospitality,” Seruke bowed and took his leave. He had absolutely no intention of staying in the castle, it was too fancy for him. Once Seruke was gone Jergle turned to the soldiers assembled. “We have another minor setback. Instead of our current plan, we will attack the heart of Durthia’s corruption. Today, we set out to crush Cenock!” The crowd was once again riled. The gates opened for the third time this day and the army marched out, the commanders in the lead, with the troops in organized columns behind them. The catapults were wheeled out of the shed, newly repaired they would aid the rebellion to destroy the enemy’s defenses. Jergle led the troops on towards Cenock, the looming and nearly impenetrable fortress. But, Jergle knew that everything had a weakness.



Rebellion is the first book in the epic fantasy series: The Rebellion Trilogy. Rebellion begins as Jergle, a duke in the country of Durthia, prepares his initial assault on the capital. However, a rebel courier brings him word of the king's plan, which derails Jergle's scheme. To counter this, Jergle storms the capital, hoping to have the element of surprise on his side. Much to his dismay, little goes according to plan... See also - VENGEANCE: Book Two of the Rebellion Trilogy

Rebellion: Book One of the Rebellion Trilogy

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