The Warrior-Prophet

The Prince of Nothing
Book Two

R. Scott Bakker
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*The Darkness That Comes Before: The Prince of Nothing, Book One*
The Warrior-Prophet

The Prince of Nothing
Book Two

R. Scott Bakker
To Bryan

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my brother, both of heart and vision
Acknowledgments

Since I had over fifteen years to write The Darkness That Comes Before, I really had no idea what I was getting into when I committed to finishing The Warrior-Prophet within one year. I had thought a year was a long time, but now, after watching the seasons flicker past my window quicker than commercials, I know better. As a consequence of my miscalculation, I inadvertently complicated the lives of all those around me, both professionally and personally. Never have I been so indebted to so many. I would like to thank:

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For those interested in exploring Eärwa beyond the boundaries of these covers, you can visit www.princeofnothing.com or Wil and Jack’s message board at www.three-seas.com.
Here we see philosophy brought to what is, in fact, a precarious position, which should be made fast even though it is supported by nothing in either heaven or earth. Here philosophy must show its purity as the absolute sustainer of its laws, and not as a herald of laws which implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to it.

—IMMANUEL KANT, FOUNDATIONS OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS
What Has Come Before …

The First Apocalypse destroyed the great Norsirai nations of the North. Only the South, the Ketyai nations of the Three Seas, survived the onslaught of the No-God, Mog-Pharau, and his Consult of generals and magi. The years passed, and the Men of the Three Seas forgot, as Men inevitably do, the horrors endured by their fathers.

Empires rose and empires fell: Kyraneas, Shir, Cenei. The Latter Prophet, Inri Sejenus, reinterpreted the Tusk, the holiest of artifacts, and within a few centuries the faith of Inrithism, organized and administered by the Thousand Temples and its spiritual leader, the Shriah, came to dominate the entire Three Seas. The great
sorcerous Schools, such as the Scarlet Spires, the Imperial Saik, and the Mysunsai, arose in response to the Inrithi persecution of the Few, those possessing the ability to see and work sorcery. Using Chorae, ancient artifacts that render their bearers immune to sorcery, the Inrithi warred against the Schools, attempting, unsuccessfully, to purify the Three Seas. Then Fane, the Prophet of the Solitary God, united the Kianene, the desert peoples of the southwestern Three Seas, and declared war against the Tusk and the Thousand Temples. After centuries and several jihads, the Fanim and their eyeless sorcerer-priests, the Cishaurim, conquered nearly all the western Three Seas, including the holy city of Shimeh, the birthplace of Inri Sejenus. Only the moribund remnants of the Nansur Empire continued to resist them.

Now war and strife rule the South. The two great faiths of Inrithism and Fanimry continually skirmish, though trade and pilgrimage are tolerated when commercially convenient. The great families and nations vie for military and mercantile dominance. The minor and major Schools squabble and plot, particularly against the upstart Cishaurim, whose sorcery, the Psûkhe, the Schoolmen cannot distinguish from the God’s own world. And the Thousand Temples pursue earthly ambitions under the leadership of corrupt and ineffectual Shriahs.

The First Apocalypse has become little more than legend. The Consult, which had survived the death of Mog-Pharau, has dwindled into myth, something old wives tell small children. After two thousand years, only the Schoolmen of the Mandate, who relive the Apocalypse each night through the eyes of their ancient founder, Seswatha, recall the horror and the prophecies of the No-God’s return. Though the mighty and the learned consider them fools, their possession of the Gnosis, the sorcery of the Ancient North, commands respect and mortal envy. Driven by nightmares, they wander the labyrinths of power, scouring the Three Seas for signs of their ancient and implacable foe—the Consult.

And as always, they find nothing.
The **Holy War** is the name of the great host called by Maithanet, the leader of the Thousand Temples, to liberate Shimeh from the heathen Fanim of Kian. Word of Maithanet’s call spreads across the Three Seas, and faithful from all the great Inrithi nations—Galeoth, Thunyerus, Ce Tydonna, Conriya, High Ainon and their tributaries—travel to the city of Momemn, the capital of the Nansur Empire, to become Men of the Tusk.

Almost from the outset, the gathering host is mired in politics and controversy. First, Maithanet somehow convinces the Scarlet Spires, the most powerful of the sorcerous Schools, to join his Holy War. Despite the outrage this provokes—sorcery is anathema to the Inrithi—the Men of the Tusk realize they need the Scarlet Spires to counter the heathen Cishaurim, the sorcerer-priests of the Fanim. The Holy War would be doomed without one of the Major Schools. The question is why the Scarlet Schoolmen would agree to such a perilous arrangement. Unknown to most, Eleäzaras, the Grandmaster of the Scarlet Spires, has waged a long and secret war against the Cishaurim, who for no apparent reason assassinated his predecessor, Sasheoka, ten years previous.

Second, Ikurei Xerius III, the Emperor of Nansur, hatches an intricate plot to usurp the Holy War for his own ends. Much of what is now heathen Kian once belonged to the Nansur, and recovering the Empire’s lost provinces is Xerius’s most fervent desire. Since the Holy War gathers in the Nansur Empire, it can march only if provisioned by the Emperor, something he refuses to do until every leader of the Holy War signs his Indenture, a written oath to cede all lands conquered to him.

Of course, the first caste-nobles to arrive repudiate the Indenture, and a stalemate ensues. As the Holy War’s numbers swell into the hundreds of thousands, however, the titular leaders of the host begin to grow restless. Since they war in the God’s name, they think themselves invincible, and as a result see little reason to share the glory with those yet to arrive. A Conriyan noble named Nersei Calmemunis comes to an accommodation with the Emperor, and convinces his fellows to sign the Imperial Indenture. Once provisioned, most of those gathered march, even though their lords and a greater part of the Holy War have yet to arrive. Because the host consists primarily of lordless rabble, it comes to be called the Vulgar Holy War.

Despite Maithanet’s attempts to bring the makeshift host to heel, it continues marching southward, and passes into heathen lands, where—precisely as the Emperor had planned—the Fanim destroy it utterly.

Xerius knows that in military terms the loss of the Vulgar Holy War is insignificant, since the rabble that largely constituted it would have proven more a liability than an advantage in battle. In political terms, however, the Vulgar Holy War’s destruction is invaluable, because it has shown Maithanet and the Men of the Tusk the true mettle of their adversary. The Fanim, as the Nansur well know, are not to be trifled with, even with the God’s favour. Only an outstanding general, Xerius claims, can assure the Holy War’s victory—a man like his nephew, Ikurei Conphas, who after his recent victory over the dread Scylvendi at the Battle of Kiyuth has been hailed as the greatest tactician of his age. The leaders of the Holy War need only sign the Imperial Indenture.
and Conphas’s preternatural skill and insight will be theirs.

Maithanet, it seems, now finds himself in a dilemma. As Shriah, he can compel the Emperor to provision the Holy War, but he cannot compel him to send Ikurei Conphas, his only living heir. In the midst of this controversy arrive the first truly great Inrithi potentates of the Holy War: Prince Nersei Proyas of Conriya, Prince Coithus Saubon of Galeoth, Earl Hoga Gothyelk of Ce Tydonna, and King-Regent Chepheramunni of High Ainon. The Holy War amasses new strength, though it remains in effect a hostage, bound by the scarcity of food to the walls of Momemn and the Emperor’s granaries. To a man, the caste-nobles repudiate Xerius’s Indenture and demand that he provision them. The Men of the Tusk begin raiding the surrounding countryside. In retaliation, the Emperor calls in elements of the Imperial Army. Pitched battles are fought.

In an effort to forestall disaster Maithanet calls a Council of Great and Lesser Names, and all the leaders of the Holy War gather in the Emperor’s palace, the Andiamine Heights, to make their arguments. Here Nersei Proyas shocks the assembly by offering a many-scarred Scylvendi Chieftain, a veteran of past wars against the Fanim, as a surrogate for the famed Ikurei Conphas. The Scylvendi, Cnaiûr urs Skiötha, shares hard words with both the Emperor and his nephew, and the leaders of the Holy War are impressed. The Shriah’s Envoy, however, remains undecided: the Scylvendi are as apostate as the Fanim, after all. Only the wise words of Prince Anasûrimbor Kellhus of Atrithau settle the matter. The Envoy reads the decree demanding that the Emperor, under pain of Shrial Censure, provision the Men of the Tusk.

The Holy War will march.

**Drusas Achamian** is a sorcerer sent by the School of Mandate to investigate Maithanet and his Holy War. Though he no longer believes in his School’s ancient mission, he travels to Sumna, where the Thousand Temples is based, in the hopes of learning more about the mysterious Shriah, whom the Mandate fears could be an agent of the Consult. In the course of his probe, he resumes an old love affair with a harlot named Esmenet, and despite his misgivings, he recruits a former student of his, a Shrial Priest named Inrau, to report on Maithanet’s activities. During this time, his nightmares of the Apocalypse intensify, particularly those involving the so-called “Celmomian Prophecy,” which foretells the return of a descendant of Anasûrimbor Celmomas before the Second Apocalypse.

Then Inrau dies under mysterious circumstances. Overcome by guilt and heartbroken by Esmenet’s refusal to cease taking custom, Achamian flees Sumna and travels to Momemn, where the Holy War gathers under the Emperor’s covetous and uneasy eyes. A powerful rival of the Mandate, a School called the Scarlet Spires, has joined the Holy War to prosecute their long contest with the sorcerer-priests of the Cishaurim, who reside in Shimeh. Nautzera, Achamian’s Mandate handler, has ordered him to observe them and the Holy War. When he reaches the encampment, Achamian joins the fire of Xinemus, an old friend of his from Conriya.

Pursuing his investigation of Inrau’s death, Achamian convinces Xinemus to take him to see another old student of his, Prince Nersei Proyas of Conriya, who’s become
a confidant of the enigmatic Shriah. When Proyas scoffs at his suspicions and repudiates him as a blasphemer, Achamian implores him to write Maithanet regarding the circumstances of Inrau’s death. Embittered, Achamian leaves his old student’s pavilion certain his meagre request will go unfulfilled.

Then a man hailing from the distant north arrives—a man calling himself Anasúrimbor Kellhus. Battered by his recurrent dreams of the Apocalypse, Achamian finds himself fearing the worst: the Second Apocalypse. Is Kellhus’s arrival a mere coincidence, or is he the Harbinger foretold in the Celmomian Prophecy? Achamian questions the man, only to find himself utterly disarmed by his humour, honesty, and intellect. They talk history and philosophy long into the night, and before retiring, Kellhus asks Achamian to be his teacher. Inexplicably awed and affected by the stranger, Achamian agrees.

But he finds himself in a dilemma. The reappearance of an Anasúrimbor is something the School of Mandate simply has to know: few discoveries could be more significant. But he fears what his brother Schoolmen will do: a lifetime of dreaming horrors, he knows, has made them cruel and pitiless. And he blames them, moreover, for the death of Inrau.

Before he can resolve this dilemma, Achamian is summoned by the Emperor’s nephew, Ikurei Conphas, to the Imperial Palace in Momemn, where the Emperor wants him to assess a highly placed adviser of his—an old man called Skeaös—for the Mark of sorcery. The Emperor himself, Ikurei Xerius III, brings Achamian to Skeaös, demanding to know whether the old man bears the blasphemous taint of sorcery. Achamian sees nothing amiss.

Skeaös, however, sees something in Achamian. He begins writhing against his chains, speaking a tongue from Achamian’s ancient dreams. Impossibly, the old man breaks free, killing several before being burned by the Emperor’s sorcerers. Dumbfounded, Achamian confronts the howling Skeaös, only to watch horrified as his face peels apart and opens into scorched limbs ...

The abomination before him, he realizes, is a Consult spy, one that can mimic and replace others without bearing sorcery’s telltale Mark. A skin-spy. Achamian flees the palace without warning the Emperor and his court, knowing they would think his conviction nonsense. For them, Skeaös can only be an artifact of the heathen Cishaurim, whose art also bears no Mark. Senseless to his surroundings, Achamian wanders back to Xinemus’s camp, so absorbed by his horror that he fails to see or hear Esmenet, who has come to rejoin him at long last.

The mysteries surrounding Maithanet. The coming of Anasúrimbor Kellhus. The discovery of the first Consult spy in generations … How can he doubt it any longer? The Second Apocalypse is about to begin.

Alone in his humble tent, he weeps, overcome by loneliness, dread, and remorse.

Esmenet is a Sumni prostitute who mourns both her life and her daughter. When Achamian arrives on his mission to learn more about Maithanet, she readily takes him in. During this time, she continues to take and service her customers, knowing full well the pain this causes Achamian. But she really has no choice: sooner or later, she realizes, Achamian will be called away. And yet she falls ever deeper in love with the
hapless sorcerer, in part because of the respect he accords her and in part because of
the worldly nature of his work. Though her sex has condemned her to sit half-naked in
her window, the world beyond has always been her passion. The intrigues of the Great
Factions, the machinations of the Consult: these are the things that quicken her soul!

Then disaster strikes: Achamian’s informant, Inrau, is murdered, and the bereaved
Schoolman is forced to travel to Momemn. Esmenet begs him to take her with him,
but he refuses, and she finds herself once again marooned in her old life. Not long
after, a threatening stranger comes to her room, demanding to know everything about
Achamian. Twisting her desire against her, the man ravishes her, and Esmenet finds
herself answering all his questions. Come morning he vanishes as suddenly as he
appears, leaving only pools of black seed to mark his passing.

Horrified, Esmenet flees Sumna, determined to find Achamian and tell him what
happened. In her bones she knows the stranger is somehow connected to the Consult.
On her way to Momemn she pauses in a village, hoping to find someone to repair her
broken sandal. When the villagers recognize the whore’s tattoo on her hand they begin
stoning her—the punishment the Tusk demands of prostitutes. Only the sudden
appearance of a Shrial Knight named Sarcellus saves her, and she has the satisfaction
of watching her tormentors humbled. Sarcellus takes her the rest of the way to
Momemn, and Esmenet finds herself growing more and more infatuated with his
wealth and aristocratic manner. He seems so free of the melancholy and indecision that
plague Achamian.

Once they reach the Holy War, Esmenet stays with Sarcellus, even though she
knows Achamian is only miles away. As the Shrial Knight continually reminds her,
Schoolmen such as Achamian are forbidden to take wives. If she were to run to him,
he says, it would be only a matter of time before he abandoned her again.

Weeks pass, and she finds herself esteeming Sarcellus less and pining for Achamian
more and more. Finally, on the night before the Holy War is to march, she sets off in
search of the portly sorcerer, determined to tell him everything that has happened.
After a harrowing search she finally locates Xinemus’s camp, only to find herself too
ashamed to make her presence known. She hides in the darkness instead, waiting for
Achamian to appear, and wondering at the strange collection of men and women about
the fire. When dawn arrives without any sign of Achamian, Esmenet wanders across
the abandoned site, only to see him trudging toward her. She holds out her arms to
him, weeping with joy and sorrow …

And he simply walks past her as though she were a stranger.

Heartbroken, she flees, determined to make her own way in the Holy War.

Cnaiûr urs Skiötha is a Chieftain of the Utemot, a tribe of Scylvendi, who are feared
across the Three Seas for their skill and ferocity in war. Because of the events
surrounding the death of his father, Skiötha, thirty years previous, Cnaiûr is despised
by his own people, though none dare challenge him because of his savage strength and
his cunning in war. Word arrives that the Emperor’s nephew, Ikurei Conphas, has
invaded the Holy Steppe, and Cnaiûr rides with the Utemot to join the Scylvendi horde
on the distant Imperial frontier. Knowing Conphas’s reputation, Cnaiûr senses a trap,
but his warnings go unheeded by Xunnurit, the chieftain elected King-of-Tribes for the
coming battle. Cnaiûr can only watch as the disaster unfolds.

Escaping the horde’s destruction, Cnaiûr returns to the pastures of the Utemot more anguished than ever. He flees the whispers and the looks of his fellow tribesmen and rides to the graves of his ancestors, where he finds a grievously wounded man sitting upon his dead father’s barrow, surrounded by circles of dead Sranc. Warily approaching, Cnaiûr nightmarishly realizes that he recognizes the man—or almost recognizes him. He resembles Anasúrimbor Moënghus in almost every respect, save that he is too young …

Moënghus had been captured thirty years previous, when Cnaiûr was little more than a stripling, and given to Cnaiûr’s father as a slave. He claimed to be Dûnyain, a people possessed of an extraordinary wisdom, and Cnaiûr spent many hours with him, speaking of things forbidden to Scylvendi warriors. What happened afterward—the seduction, the murder of Skiötha, and Moënghus’s subsequent escape—has tormented Cnaiûr ever since. Though he once loved the man, he now hates him with a deranged intensity. If only he could kill Moënghus, he believes, his heart could be made whole.

Now, impossibly, this double has come to him, travelling the same path as the original.

Realizing the stranger could make possible his vengeance, Cnaiûr takes him captive. The man, who calls himself Anasúrimbor Kellhus, claims to be Moënghus’s son. The Dûnyain, he says, have sent him to assassinate his father in a faraway city called Shimeh. But as much as Cnaiûr wants to believe this story, he’s wary and troubled. After years of obsessively pondering Moënghus, he’s come to understand that the Dûnyain are gifted with preternatural skills and intelligence. Their sole purpose, he now knows, is domination, though where others use force and fear, the Dûnyan use deceit and love.

The story Kellhus has told him, Cnaiûr realizes, is precisely the story a Dûnyain seeking escape and safe passage across Scylvendi lands would provide. Nevertheless, he makes a bargain with the man, agreeing to accompany him on his quest. The two strike out across the Steppe, locked in a shadowy war of word and passion. Time and again Cnaiûr finds himself drawn into Kellhus’s insidious nets, only to recall himself at the last moment. Only his hatred of Moënghus and knowledge of the Dûnyain preserve him.

Near the Imperial frontier they encounter a party of hostile Scylvendi raiders. Kellhus’s unearthly skill in battle both astounds and terrifies Cnaiûr. In the battle’s aftermath they find a captive concubine, a woman named Serwë, cowering among the raiders’ chattel. Struck by her beauty, Cnaiûr takes her as his prize, and through her he learns of Maithanet’s Holy War for Shimeh, the city where Moënghus supposedly dwells … Can this be a coincidence?

Coincidence or not, the Holy War forces Cnaiûr to reconsider his original plan to travel around the Empire, where his Scylvendi heritage will mean almost certain death. With the Fanim rulers of Shimeh girding for war, the only possible way they can reach the holy city is to become Men of the Tusk. They have no choice, he realizes, but to join the Holy War, which according to Serwë, gathers about the city of Momemn in the heart of the Empire—the one place he cannot go. Now that they have safely crossed the Steppe, Cnaiûr is convinced Kellhus will kill him: the Dûnyain brook no liabilities.

Descending the mountains into the Empire, Cnaiûr confronts Kellhus, who claims he
has use of him still. While Serwë watches in horror, the two men battle on the mountainous heights, and though Cnaiûr is able to surprise Kellhus, the man easily overpowers him, holding him by the throat over a precipice. To prove his intent to keep their bargain, he spares Cnaiûr’s life. After so many years among world-born men, Kellhus claims, Moënghus will be far too powerful for him to face alone. They will need an army, he says, and unlike Cnaiûr he knows nothing of war.

Despite his misgivings, Cnaiûr believes him, and they resume their journey. As the days pass, Cnaiûr watches Serwë become more and more infatuated with Kellhus. Though troubled by this, he refuses to admit as much, reminding himself that warriors care nothing for women, particularly those taken as the spoils of battle. What does it matter that she belongs to Kellhus during the day? She is Cnaiûr’s at night.

After a desperate journey and pursuit through the heart of the Empire, they at last find their way to Momemn and the Holy War, where they are taken before one of the Holy War’s leaders, a Conriyan Prince named Nersei Proyas. In keeping with their plan, Cnaiûr claims to be the last of the Utémot, travelling with Anasûrimbor Kellhus, a Prince of the northern city of Atrithau, who has dreamt of the Holy War from afar. Proyas, however, is far more interested in Cnaiûr’s knowledge of the Fanim and their way of battle. Obviously impressed by what he has to say, the Conriyan Prince takes Cnaiûr and his companions under his protection.

Soon afterward, Proyas takes Cnaiûr and Kellhus to a meeting of the Holy War’s leaders and the Emperor, where the fate of the Holy War is to be decided. Ikurei Xerius III has refused to provision the Men of the Tusk unless they swear to return all the lands they wrest from the Fanim to the Empire. The Shriah, Maithanet, can force the Emperor to provision them, but he fears the Holy War lacks the leadership to overcome the Fanim. The Emperor offers his brilliant nephew, Ikurei Conphas, flush from his spectacular victory over the Scylvendi at Kiyuth, but only—once again—if the leaders of the Holy War pledge to surrender their future conquests. In a daring gambit, Proyas offers Cnaiûr in Conphas’s stead. A vicious war of words ensues, and Cnaiûr manages to best the precocious Imperial Nephew. The Shriah’s representative orders the Emperor to provision the Men of the Tusk. The Holy War will march.

In a mere matter of days, Cnaiûr has gone from a fugitive to a leader of the greatest host ever assembled in the Three Seas. What does it mean for a Scylvendi to treat with outland princes, with peoples he is sworn to destroy? What must he surrender to see his vengeance through?

That night, he watches Serwë surrender to Kellhus body and soul, and he wonders at the horror he has delivered to the Holy War. What will Anasûrimbor Kellhus—a Dûnyain—make of these Men of the Tusk? No matter, he tells himself, the Holy War marches to distant Shimeh—to Moënghus and the promise of blood.

Anasûrimbor Kellhus is a monk sent by his order, the Dûnyain, to search for his father, Anasûrimbor Moënghus.

Since discovering the secret redoubt of the Kûniûric High Kings during the Apocalypse some two thousand years previous, the Dûnyain have concealed themselves, breeding for reflex and intellect, and continually training in the ways of limb, thought, and face—all for the sake of reason, the sacred Logos. In the effort to
transform themselves into the perfect expression of the Logos, the Dûnyain have bent their entire existence to mastering the irrationalities that determine human thought: history, custom, and passion. In this way, they believe, they will eventually grasp what they call the Absolute, and so become true self-moving souls.

But their glorious isolation is at an end. After thirty years of exile, one of their number, Anasûrimbor Moënghus, has reappeared in their dreams, demanding they send to him his son. Knowing only that his father dwells in a distant city called Shimeh, Kellhus undertakes an arduous journey through lands long abandoned by men. While wintering with a trapper named Leweth, he discovers he can read the man’s thoughts through the nuances of his expression. World-born men, he realizes, are little more than children in comparison with the Dûnyain. Experimenting, he finds that he can exact anything from Leweth—any love, any sacrifice—with mere words. So what of his father, who has spent thirty years among such men? What is the extent of Anasûrimbor Moënghus’s power?

When a band of inhuman Sranc discovers Leweth’s stead, the two men are forced to flee. Leweth is wounded, and Kellhus leaves him for the Sranc, feeling no remorse. The Sranc overtake him, and after driving them away, he battles their leader, a deranged Nonman, who nearly undoes him with sorcery. Kellhus flees, wracked by questions without answers: sorcery, he’d been taught, was nothing more than superstition. Could the Dûnyain have been wrong? What other facts had they overlooked or suppressed?

Eventually he finds refuge in the ancient city of Atrithau, where, using his Dûnyain abilities, he assembles an expedition to traverse the Sranc-infested plains of Suskara. After a harrowing trek, he crosses the frontier only to be captured by a mad Scylvendi Chieftain named Cnaiûr urs Skiötha—a man who both knows and hates his father, Moënghus.

Though his knowledge of the Dûnyain renders Cnaiûr immune to direct manipulation, Kellhus quickly realizes he can turn the man’s thirst for vengeance to his advantage. Claiming to be an assassin sent to murder Moënghus, he asks the Scylvendi to join him on his quest. Overpowered by his hatred, Cnaiûr reluctantly agrees, and the two men set out across the Jiünati Steppe. Time and again, Kellhus tries to secure the trust he needs to possess the man, but the barbarian continually rebuffs him. His hatred and penetration are too great.

Then, near the Imperial frontier, they find a concubine named Serwë, who informs them of a Holy War gathering about Momemm—a Holy War for Shimeh. The fact that his father has summoned him to Shimeh at the same time, Kellhus realizes, can be no coincidence. But what could Moënghus be planning?

They cross the mountains into the Empire, and Kellhus watches Cnaiûr struggle with the growing conviction that he’s outlived his usefulness. Thinking that murdering Kellhus is as close as he’ll ever come to murdering Moënghus, Cnaiûr attacks him, only to be defeated. To prove that he still needs him, Kellhus spares his life. He must, Kellhus knows, dominate the Holy War, but he as yet knows nothing of warfare. The variables are too many.

Though his knowledge of Moënghus and the Dûnyain renders him a liability, Cnaiûr’s skill in war makes him invaluable. To secure this knowledge, Kellhus starts seducing Serwë, using her and her beauty as detours to the barbarian’s tormented