

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# BRANDON SANDERSON



—MISTBORN—  
SECRET  
HISTORY



**From #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Brandon Sanderson, *Mistborn: Secret History* sheds light on events hidden in the shadows of the original Mistborn trilogy.**

Kelsier, sentenced to die mining the Pits of Hathsin after attempting to rob the Lord Ruler's palace, arose as a powerful Mistborn and inspired the revolution that shook the foundations of the Final Empire. His name and deeds passed into legend.

But was that truly the end of his tale? Whispered hints to those he called friends suggested there was a lot more going on. If you think you know the story of the Mistborn trilogy, think again—but to say anything more here risks revealing too much. Even knowing of this tale's existence could be heresy.

There's always another secret.



Brandon Sanderson

# **Mistborn: Secret History**

**Mistborn - 3.5**

ePub r1.6

Kelsier 27.05.2023

Brandon Sanderson, 2016

Cover art: Howard Lyon

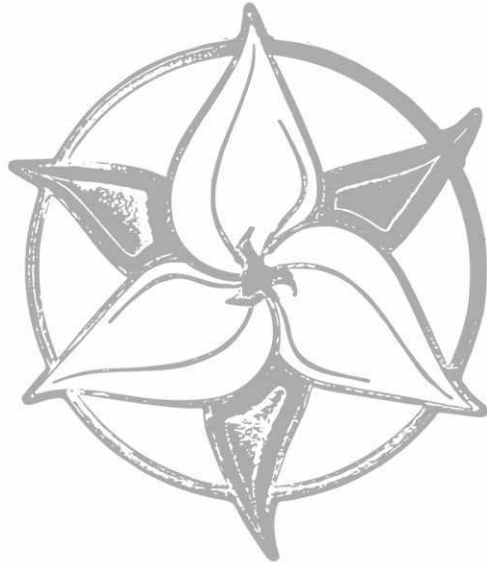
Illustrations: Isaac Stewart, Ben McSweeney

Digital editor: Kelsier

ePub base r2.1



**BRANDON  
SANDERSON**



— M I S T B O R N —  
**SECRET  
HISTORY**

  
epublibre

**FOR NATHAN HATFIELD**

*Who helped Mistborn come to be.*

# CONTENTS

*Preface*

**PART ONE:** *Empire*

**PART TWO:** *Well*

**PART THREE:** *Spirit*

**PART FOUR:** *Journey*

**PART FIVE:** *Ire*

**PART SIX:** *Hero*

**EPILOGUE**

*Postscript*

*Acknowledgments*

*About the Author*

# PREFACE

This story contains enormous spoilers for the first three Mistborn novels. Seriously, please don't read this unless you've read those books. I'd actually prefer you wait until you've finished book six, *The Bands of Mourning*, because some of the reveals in this story will spoil that book as well.

What follows is something I started planning in 2004, over a decade ago at this point. For years I wasn't certain if I'd be able to write it; it depended on how popular Mistborn was, and on whether people cared about the greater cosmere or not.

Well, responses to both have been incredible. So, off and on over the years I worked on scenes for this when I had a spare moment. Though I love how it turned out, I want to warn you. Structurally, this isn't like most pieces I've written. It relies on knowledge of the original Mistborn Trilogy, and though it tells its own cohesive narrative, the elements of that narrative are scattered across three years' time in-world.

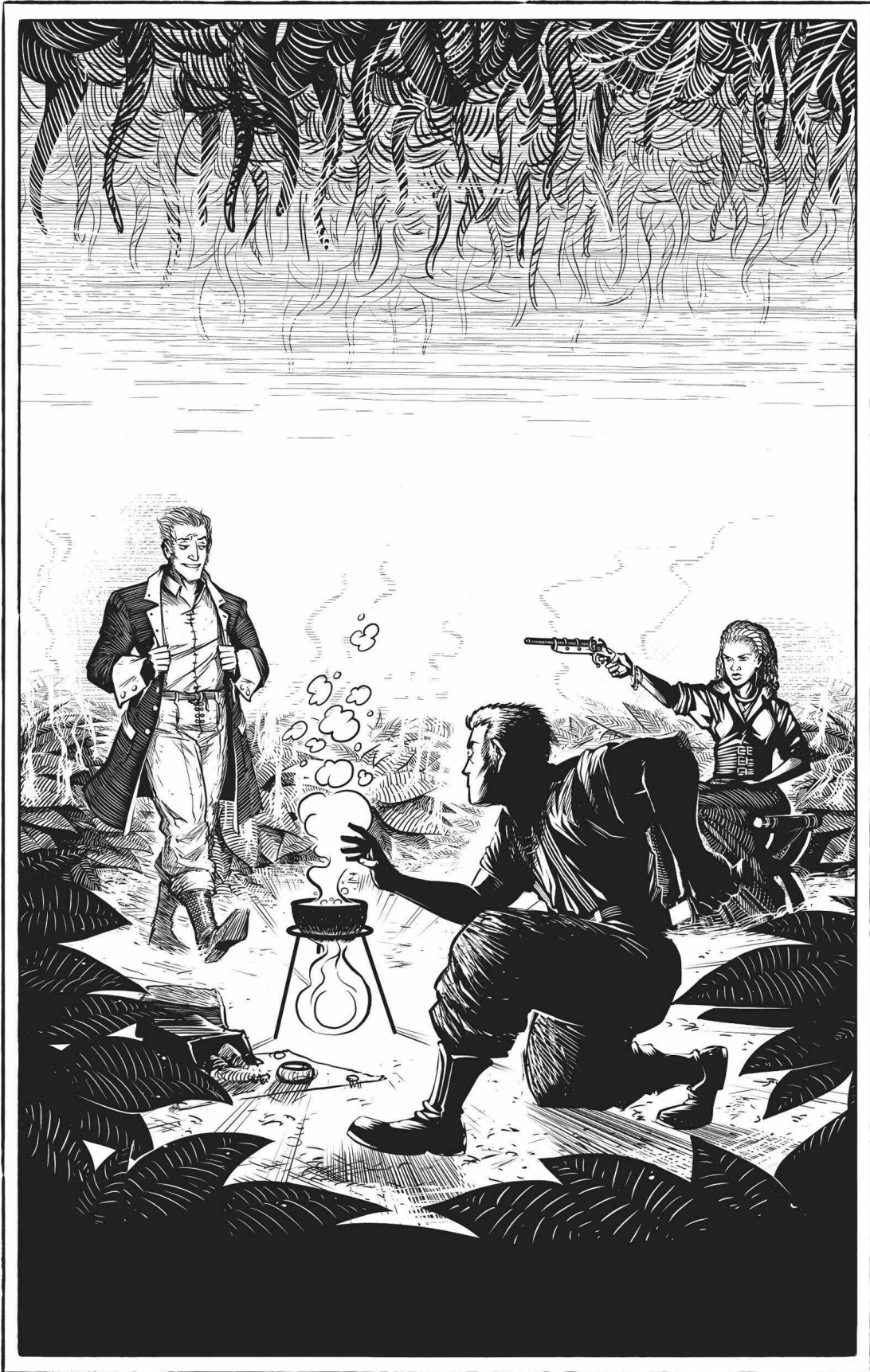
That creates something unlike anything I've done before. Something weird, but audacious in its own right.

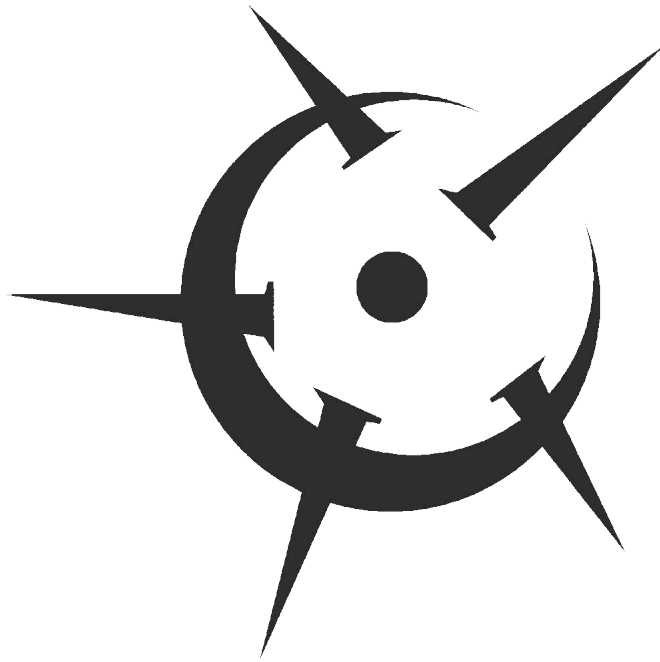
Now, it's finally time to reveal some secrets.



— M I S T B O R N —  
**SECRET  
HISTORY**

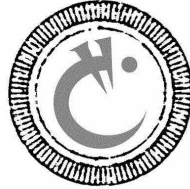
This novella contains major spoilers for the original Mistborn trilogy  
and minor spoilers for *The Bands of Mourning*.





PART ONE  
**EMPIRE**

# 1



**K**elsier burned the Eleventh Metal.

Nothing changed. He still stood in that Luthadel square, facing down the Lord Ruler. A hushed audience, both skaa and noble, watched at the perimeter. A squeaking wheel turned lazily in the wind, hanging from the side of the overturned prison wagon nearby. An Inquisitor's head had been nailed to the wood of the wagon's bottom, held in place by its own spikes.

Nothing changed, while everything changed. For to Kelsier's eyes, two men now stood before him.

One was the immortal emperor who had dominated for a thousand years: an imposing figure with jet-black hair and a chest stuck through with two spears that he didn't even seem to notice. Next to him stood a man with the same features—but a completely different demeanor. A figure cloaked in thick furs, nose and cheeks flush as if cold. His hair was tangled and windswept, his attitude jovial, smiling.

It was the same man.

*Can I use this?* Kelsier thought, frantic.

Black ash fell lightly between them. The Lord Ruler glanced toward the Inquisitor that Kelsier had killed. "Those are very hard to replace," he said, his voice imperious.

That tone seemed a direct contrast to the man beside him: a vagabond, a mountain man wearing the Lord Ruler's face. *This is what you really are*, Kelsier thought. But that didn't help. It was only further proof that the Eleventh Metal wasn't what Kelsier had once hoped. The metal was no magical solution for ending the Lord Ruler. He would have to rely instead upon his other plan.

And so, Kelsier smiled.

"I killed you once," the Lord Ruler said.

"You tried," Kelsier replied, his heart racing. The other plan, the secret plan. "But you can't kill me, Lord Tyrant. I represent that thing you've never been able to kill, no matter how hard you try. I am hope."

The Lord Ruler snorted. He raised a casual arm.

Kelsier braced himself. He could not fight against someone who was immortal.

Not alive, at least.

*Stand tall. Give them something to remember.*

The Lord Ruler backhanded him. Agony hit Kelsier like a stroke of lightning. In that moment, Kelsier flared the Eleventh Metal, and caught a glimpse of something new.

The Lord Ruler standing in a room—no, a cavern! The Lord Ruler stepped into a glowing pool and the world shifted around him, rocks crumbling, the room twisting, everything *changing*.

The vision vanished.

Kelsier died.

It turned out to be far more painful a process than he had anticipated. Instead of a soft fade to nothingness, he felt an awful *tearing* sensation—as if he were a cloth caught between the jaws of two vicious hounds.

He screamed, desperately trying to hold himself together. His will meant nothing. He was rent, ripped, and hurled into a place of endless shifting mists.

He stumbled to his knees, gasping, aching. He wasn't certain what he knelt upon, as downward seemed to just be more mist. The ground rippled like liquid, and felt soft to his touch.

He knelt there, enduring, feeling the pain slowly fade away. At last he unclenched his jaw and groaned.

He was alive. Kind of.

He managed to look up. That same thick greyness shifted all around him. A nothingness? No, he could see shapes in it, shadows. Hills? And high in the sky, some kind of light. A tiny sun perhaps, as seen through dense grey clouds.

Kelsier breathed in and out, then growled, heaving himself to his feet. “Well,” he proclaimed, “*that* was thoroughly awful.”

It did seem there was an afterlife, which was a pleasant discovery. Did this mean . . . did this mean Mare was still out there somewhere? He’d always offered platitudes, talking to the others about being with her again someday. But deep down he’d never believed, never really thought . . .

The end was not the end. Kelsier smiled again, this time truly excited. He turned about, and as he inspected his surroundings, the mists seemed to withdraw. No, it felt like Kelsier was *solidifying*, entering this place fully. The withdrawal of the mists was more like a clearing of his own mind.

The mists coalesced into shapes. Those shadows he’d mistaken for hills were buildings, hazy and formed of shifting mists. The ground beneath his feet was also mist, a deep vastness, like he was standing on the surface of the ocean. It was soft to his touch, like cloth, and even a little springy.

Nearby lay the overturned prison wagon, but here it was made of mist. That mist shifted and moved, but the wagon retained its form. It was like the mist was trapped by some unseen force into a specific shape. More strikingly, the wagon’s prison bars *glowed* on this side. Complementing them, other white-hot pinpricks of light appeared around him, dotting the landscape. Doorknobs. Window latches. Everything in the living world was reflected here in this place, and while most things were shadowy mist, metal instead appeared as a powerful light.

Some of those lights moved. He frowned, stepping toward one, and only then did he recognize that many of the lights were people. He saw each as an intense white glow radiating out from a human form.

*Metal and souls are the same thing*, he observed. Who would have thought?

As he got his bearings, he recognized what was happening in the living world. Thousands of lights moved, flowing away. The crowd was running

from the square. A powerful light, with a tall silhouette, strode in another direction. The Lord Ruler.

Kelsier tried to follow, but stumbled over something at his feet. A misty form slumped on the ground, pierced by a spear. Kelsier's own corpse.

Touching it was like remembering a fond experience. Familiar scents from his youth. His mother's voice. The warmth of lying on a hillside with Mare, looking up at the falling ash.

Those experiences faded and seemed to grow *cold*. One of the lights from the mass of fleeing people—it was hard to make out individuals, with everyone alight—scrambled toward him. At first he thought perhaps this person had seen his spirit. But no, they ran to his corpse and knelt.

Now that she was close, he could make out the details of this figure's features, cut of mist and glowing from deep within.

"Ah, child," Kelsier said. "I'm sorry." He reached out and cupped Vin's face as she wept over him, and found he could feel her. She was solid to his ethereal fingers. She didn't seem able to feel his touch, but he caught a vision of her from the real world, cheeks stained with tears.

His last words to her had been harsh, hadn't they? Perhaps it was a good thing that he and Mare had never had children.

A glowing figure surged from the fleeing masses and grabbed Vin. Was that Ham? Had to be, with that profile. Kelsier stood up and watched them withdraw. He had set plans in motion for them. Perhaps they would hate him for that.

"You let him kill you."

Kelsier spun, surprised to find a person standing beside him. Not a figure made of mist, but a man in strange clothing: a thin wool coat that went down almost to his feet, and beneath it a shirt that laced closed, with a kind of conical skirt. That was tied with a belt that had a bone-handled knife stuck through a loop.

The man was short, with black hair and a prominent nose. Unlike the other people—who were made of light—this man looked normal, like Kelsier. Since Kelsier was dead, did this make the man another ghost?

"Who are you?" Kelsier demanded.

“Oh, I think you know.” The man met Kelsier’s eyes, and in them Kelsier saw eternity. A cool, calm eternity—the eternity of stones that saw generations pass, or of careless depths that didn’t notice the changing of days, for light never reached them anyway.

“Oh, hell,” Kelsier said. “There’s actually a God?”

“Yes.”

Kelsier decked him.

It was a good, clean punch, thrown from the shoulder while he brought his other arm up to block a counter strike. Dox would be proud.

God didn’t dodge. Kelsier’s punch took him right across the face, connecting with a satisfying *thud*. The punch tossed God to the ground, though when he looked up he seemed more shocked than pained.

Kelsier stepped forward. “What the hell is wrong with you? You’re real, and you’re letting *this* happen?” He waved toward the square where—to his horror—he saw lights winking out. The Inquisitors were attacking the crowd.

“I do what I can.” The fallen figure seemed to distort for a moment, bits of him expanding, like mists escaping an enclosure. “I do . . . I do what I can. It is in motion, you see. I . . .”

Kelsier recoiled a step, eyes widening as God *came apart*, then pulled back together.

Around him, other souls made the transition. Their bodies stopped glowing, then their souls lurched into this land of mists: stumbling, falling, as if ejected from their bodies. Once they arrived, Kelsier saw them in color. The same man—God—appeared near each of them. There were suddenly over a dozen versions of him, each identical, each speaking to one of the dead.

The version of God near Kelsier stood up and rubbed his jaw. “Nobody has ever done that before.”

“What, really?” Kelsier asked.

“No. Souls are usually too disoriented. Some do run, though.” He looked to Kelsier.

Kelsier made fists. God stepped back and—amusingly—reached for the knife at his belt.

Well, Kelsier wasn’t going to attack him, not again. But he *had* heard the challenge in those words. Would he run? Of course not. Where would he run



to?

Nearby, an unfortunate skaa woman lurched into the afterlife, then almost immediately *faded*. Her figure stretched, transforming to a white mist that was pulled toward a distant, dark point. That was how it looked, at least, though the point she stretched toward wasn't a place—not really. It was . . . Beyond. A location that was somehow distant, pointing away from him no matter where he moved.

She stretched, then faded away. Other spirits in the square followed.

Kelsier spun on God. "What's happening?"

"You didn't think *this* was the end, did you?" God asked, waving toward the shadowy world. "This is the in-between step. After death and before . . ."

"Before what?"

"Before the Beyond," God said. "The Somewhere Else. Where souls must go. Where *yours* must go."

"I haven't gone yet."

"It takes longer for Allomancers, but it will happen. It is the natural progress of things, like a stream flowing toward the ocean. I'm here not to make it occur, but to comfort you as you go. I see it as a kind of . . . duty that comes with my position." He rubbed the side of his face and gave Kelsier a glare that said what he thought of his reception.

Nearby, another pair of people faded into the eternities. They seemed to accept it, stepping into the stretching nothingness with relieved, welcoming smiles. Kelsier looked at those departing souls.

"Mare," he whispered.

"She went Beyond. As you will."

Kelsier looked toward that point Beyond, the point toward which all the dead were being drawn. He felt it, faintly, begin to tug on him as well.

*No. Not yet.*

"We need a plan," Kelsier said.

"A plan?" God asked.

"To get me out of this. I might need your help."

"There *is* no way out of this."

"That's a terrible attitude," Kelsier said. "We'll never get anything done if you talk like that."

He looked at his arm, which was—disconcertingly—starting to blur, like ink on a page that had been accidentally brushed before it dried. He felt a *draining*.

He started walking, forcing himself into a stride. He wouldn't just stand there while eternity tried to suck him away.

"It is natural to feel uncertain," God said, falling into step beside him. "Many are anxious. Be at peace. The ones you left behind will find their own way, and you—"

"Yes, great," Kelsier said. "No time for lectures. Talk to me. Has anyone ever resisted being pulled into the Beyond?"

"No." God's form pulsed, unraveling again before coming back together. "I've told you already."

*Damn*, Kelsier thought. *He seems one step from falling apart himself.*

Well, you had to work with what you had. "You've got to have some kind of idea what I could try, Fuzz."

"What did you call me?"

"Fuzz. I've got to call you something."

"You could try 'My Lord,' " Fuzz said with a huff.

"That's a terrible nickname for a crewmember."

"Crewmember . . ."

"I need a team," Kelsier said, still striding through the shadowy version of Luthadel. "And as you can see, my options are limited. I'd rather have Dox, but he's got to go deal with the man who is claiming to be you. Besides, the initiation to this particular team of mine is a killer."

"But—"

Kelsier turned, taking the smaller man by the shoulders. Kelsier's arms were blurring further, drawn away like water being pulled into the current of an invisible stream.

"Look," Kelsier said quietly, urgently, "you said you were here to comfort me. This is how you do it. If you're right, then nothing I do now will matter. So why not humor me? Let me have one last thrill as I face down the ultimate eventuality."

Fuzz sighed. "It would be better if you accepted what is happening."

Kelsier held Fuzz's gaze. Time was running out; he could *feel* himself sliding toward oblivion, a distant point of nothingness, dark and unknowable. Still he held that gaze. If this creature acted anything like the human he resembled, then holding his eyes—with confidence, smiling, self-assured—would work. Fuzz would bend.

“So,” Fuzz said. “You’re not only the first to punch me, you’re also the first to try to *recruit* me. You are a distinctively strange man.”

“You don’t know my friends. Next to them I’m normal. Ideas please.” He started walking up a street, moving just to be moving. Tenements loomed on either side, made of shifting mists. They looked like the ghosts of buildings. Occasionally a wave—a shimmer of light—would pulse through the ground and buildings, causing the mists to writhe and twist.

“I don’t know what you expect me to tell you,” Fuzz said, hustling up to walk beside him. “Spirits who come to this place are drawn into the Beyond.”

“You aren’t.”

“I’m a god.”

*A god. Not just “God.” Noted.*

“Well,” Kelsier said, “what is it about being a god that makes you immune?”

“Everything.”

“I can’t help thinking you aren’t pulling your weight on this team, Fuzz. Come on. Work with me. You indicated that Allomancers last longer. Feruchemists too?”

“Yes.”

“People with power,” Kelsier said, pointing toward the distant spires of Kredik Shaw. This was the road the Lord Ruler had taken, heading toward his palace. Though the Lord Ruler’s carriage was now distant, Kelsier could still see his soul glowing up there somewhere. Far brighter than the others.

“What about him?” Kelsier said. “You say that everyone has to bend to death, but obviously that isn’t true. He is immortal.”

“He’s a special case,” Fuzz said, perking up. “He has ways of not dying in the first place.”

“And if he did die?” Kelsier pressed. “He’d last even longer on this side than I am, right?”

“Oh, indeed,” Fuzz said. “He Ascended, if just for a short time. He held enough of the power to expand his soul.”

*Got it. Expand my soul.*

“I . . .” God wavered, figure distorting. “I . . .” He cocked his head. “What was I saying?”

“About how the Lord Ruler expanded his soul.”

“That was delightful,” God said. “It was spectacular to watch! And now he is *Preserved*. I am glad you didn’t find a way to destroy him. Everyone else passes, but not him. It’s wonderful.”

“Wonderful?” Kelsier felt like spitting. “He’s a tyrant, Fuzz.”

“He’s unchanging,” God said, defensive. “He’s a brilliant specimen. So unique. I don’t agree with what he does, but one can empathize with the lamb while admiring the lion, can one not?”

“Why not stop him? If you disagree with what he does, then do something about it!”

“Now, now,” God said. “That would be hasty. What would removing him accomplish? It would just raise another leader who is more transient—and cause chaos and even more deaths than the Lord Ruler has caused. Better to have stability. Yes. A constant leader.”

Kelsier felt himself stretching further. He’d go soon. It didn’t seem his new body could sweat, for if it could have his forehead would certainly be drenched by now.

“Maybe you would enjoy watching another do as he did,” Kelsier said. “Expand their soul.”

“Impossible. The power at the Well of Ascension won’t be gathered and ready for more than a year.”

“*What?*” Kelsier said. *The Well of Ascension?*

He dredged through his memories, trying to remember the things Sazed had told him of religion and belief. The scope of it threatened to overwhelm him. He’d been playing at rebellion and thrones—focusing on religion only when he thought it might benefit his plans—and all the while, *this* had been in the background. Ignored and unnoticed.

He felt like a child.