

DAYS OF SHATTERED FAITH

ADRIAN
TCHAIKOVSKY

DAYS OF SHATTERED FAITH

ALSO BY A DRIANT CHAIKOVSKY

THE TYRANT PHILOSOPHERS

City of Last Chances
House of Open Wounds
Days of Shattered Faith

SHADOWS OF THE APT

Empire in Black and Gold
Dragonfly Falling
Blood of the Mantis
Salute the Dark
The Scarab Path
The Sea Watch
Heirs of the Blade
The Air War
War Master's Gate
Seal of the Worm

TALES OF THE APT

Spoils of War
A Time for Grief
For Love of Distant Shores
The Scent of Tears (with Frances Hardinge et al.)

ECHOES OF THE FALL

The Tiger and the Wolf
The Bear and the Serpent

The Hyena and the Hawk

DOGS OF WAR

Dogs of War

Bear Head

CHILDREN OF TIME

Children of Time

Children of Ruin

Children of Memory

FINAL ARCHITECTURE

Shards of Earth

Eyes of the Void

Lords of Uncreation

OTHER FICTION

Cage of Souls

Alien Clay

Service Model

Guns of the Dawn

Spiderlight

Ironclads

Firewalkers

Ogres

Walking to Aldebaran

One Day All This Will Be Yours

And Put Away Childish Things

Saturation Point

The Doors of Eden

Feast and Famine (collection)

DAYS OF SHATTERED FAITH

ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY



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This is a work of fiction. All characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are
either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

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A long time ago now, I played in a LARP entitled Maelstrom, as part of a group of expatriates driven to other shores by a revolution at home. It was a remarkably immersive experience, not for battles for great heroic deeds, but for small moments of everyday living. I played an architect and spent most of the time engaging in petty ambitions, socialising and just generally *being* an ordinary man in a different world. Amongst my companions of the tankard and the fire was one Stefan, chancer, wheeler-dealer and minor noble, whose fellowship contributed a great deal to the fun I had. It seems particularly appropriate, therefore, to dedicate this book to the memory of Stefan's player, my friend James Coote.

About the Author



ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY is a British science fiction and fantasy writer known for a wide variety of work including the Children of Time, Final Architecture, Dogs of War, Tyrant Philosophers and Shadows of the Apt series, as well as standalone books such as *Elder Race*, *Doors of Eden*, *Spiderlight* and many others. His Children of Time series has won the Arthur C. Clarke, Hugo, and BSFA awards, and his other works have won the British Fantasy, British Science Fiction and Sidewise Awards.

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Any Other Business

Personal Accounting

Mosaic: God's Flesh, Hell's Blood

The Road to Everywhere

Render Unto the Sea

Author Note

An Invitation from the Publisher

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE PALLESEEN

Sage-Invigilator ‘Gil’ Angilly – Pallesen Resident in Usmai

Sage-Broker Berkely – Valuations

Sage-Invigilator Palinet – Pallesen Resident in Peor

Sage-Inquirer Dalry – scholar

Fellow-Archivist Annet – scholar

Fellow-Archivist Drathel – Decanter

Fellow-Monitor ‘Flint’ Postry – Ventures

Fellow-Invigilator Wattery – Demonist

Companion-Invigilator Galversty – Demonist, deceased

Companion-Monitor Steggers – Ventures, Flint’s second

Companion-Invigilator Samellers – Diplomatic aide

Cohort-Invigilator Loret – Aide to the Resident

Cohort-Monitor Croskin – Unnatural

THE USMIAT ROYAL FAMILY AND COURT

His Tranquillity Oparan – Alkhand of Usmai

Kaleithi – his absent wife

Gorbudan – the First Son

Dekamran – the Second Son, the Heir

Premath – the Third Son

Enshili – the Daughter

Sorhist, the ‘Serpent’s Fang’ – brother of the Alkhand, deceased

Follo – Preceptor of the Ustrani monks
His Quietude the Grand Moerend Arkanith
Lhisamena – Preceptor of the Tesemer
Coregan – custodian and functionary
Hakoran – Emorandi officer
Dolethi – poet
Teerasla – Tesemer Louse Speaker

OTHERS IN ALKHALEND

Kakrops – the frog god, a divine being
Tarcomir – Loruthi envoy to Usmai
Hullseer Orhuhst – leader of the Cotto pirates
The Warden of the House of Hard Angles
The Under-warden of the House of Hard Angles
Oathan – Pallesen alchemist at the Fever Lodge
Tally – Jarokiri Surgeon at the Fever Lodge
The Reckoner – Miracle Worker at the Fever Lodge
Happy Jack – of the Fever Lodge, Maric
Kilbery – of the Fever Lodge, Pallesen
Caecelian ‘the Viper’ – of the Fever Lodge
Kass – Ibaleth queen

NATIONS AND PEOPLE

Cotto – a coastal, piratical people
Goshumai – a state of the Successor Coast
Janni Despotate – a long-fallen empire reliant on demons
Lor – a powerful mercantile state recently humbled by the Pallesen

Lucibi – a state of the Successor Coast

Moeribandi Empire – a necromantic dominion, now fallen, that once controlled the Successor States

Pallesand – expansionist state exporting perfection

Peor – a state of the Successor Coast aided by Pallesand

Usmai – greatest of the states of the Successor Coast

PLACES

Alkhalend – the capital and greatest city of Usmai

Constellar Gardens – the gleaming gardens about the House of Tranquillity

The Emora – the wealthy cliffside districts of Alkhalend

The Fever House – the expatriate hospital in the Sand Lanes

The House of Hard Angles – prison in the Sand Lanes of Alkhalend

House of Tranquillity – the Alkhand's Palace

Mantekor – Gorbudan's fortified stronghold

Sand Lanes – the poor districts of Alkhalend

Slate House – the Pallesen consulate building in Alkhalend

The Successor Coast – the region of the former Moeribandi Empire south of the Garmours

The Successor States – the region formerly under the Moeribandi Sway

Tesemera – the sanctum and chapterhouse of the Tesemer

Water Lanes – the dockside district of Alkhalend

Waygrove – a portal to other worlds near Alkhalend

THINGS

Alborandi – order of masked monks who tend to the Waygrove

Alkhand – the ruler of Usmai

Clavamachy – a duel with clavars

Clavar – cutting blade used by male Usmiat duellists

Emorandi – noble inhabitants of Alkhalend's Emora

Falx – the two-handed Tesemer sword

Hookloper – Tesemer steed

Hus – strong Cotto liquor

Ibaleth – reptilian creatures from beyond the Waygrove

Kepishi – Usmiat slang for foreigners from overseas

Louse Speaker – a Tesemer elite warrior-monk

Mirror Throne – the throne of Usmai

Moerend – a priest of the old Imperial death cult

Ogrodon – enormous Ibaleth war-beast

Pel – the utilitarian language of Pallesand

Ramaht – the traditional drink of Usmai

Seraphi – troops swearing loyalty to a nation not their own

Skia – the rapier used by female Usmiat duellists

Skiamachy – a duel with skias

Spiribandi – order of monks

Taumachy – the game of pitting animated wooden animals against one another

Tesemer – the Louse Monks, a militant order from beyond the Grove

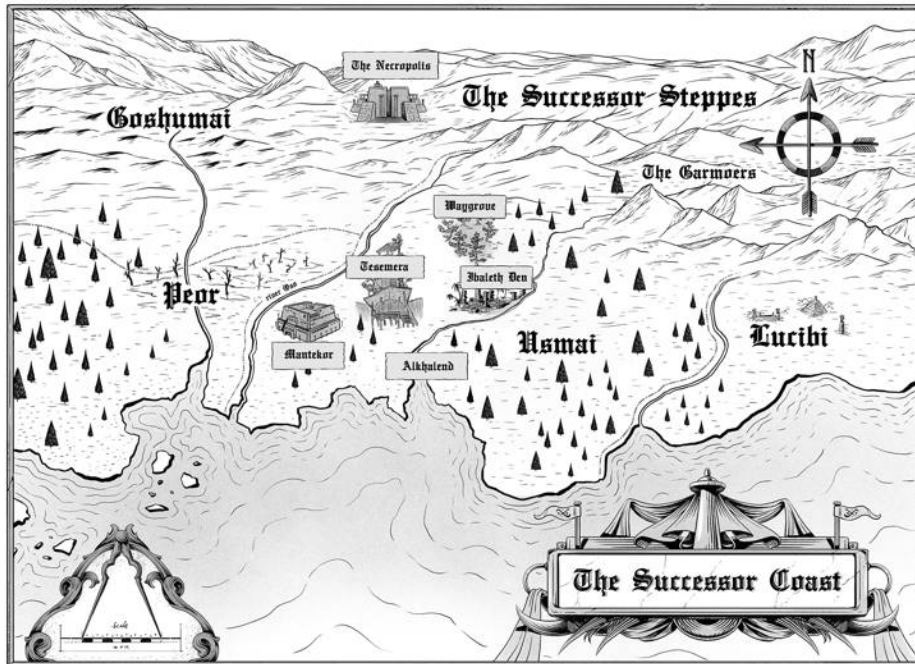
Usmiri – the language of Usmai

Usrani – order of monks worshipping Kakrops and performing civic duties

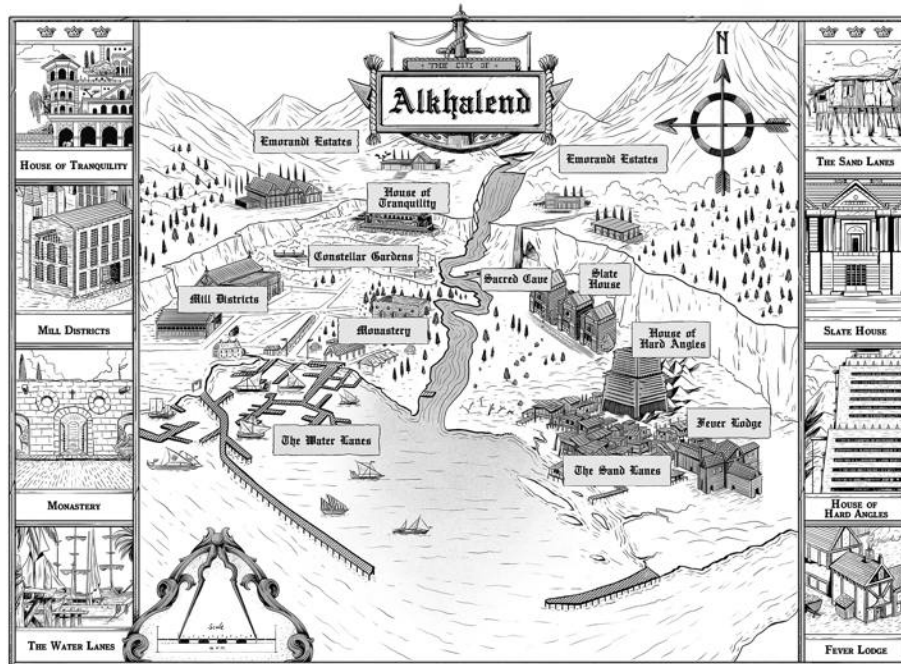
White Petal Crown – the crown of Usmai

Windsaw – Tesemer fighting beast

A map of the Successor Coast



A map of the City of Alkhalend



Fresh Off the Boat

On the ship, as it tacked in past the sea wall, she was in her coffin of a cabin trying, by stub of candle and sequin of mirror, to make herself presentable. Clean shirt, clean face, uniform darned and done up. What does the mirror show her? By the time she's done, and the drum of feet overhead has the character of unloading and disembarking, not just seamanship, all that's visible is a bobbing phantom, a paleness like the face of a drowned woman sinking into dark water. When she makes the deck, evening is shading into night. Of the wonders of Alkhalend – "Oh you must view it from the sea, the waters, the palaces!" – there is nothing. Even the moon has taken the night off. She steps off the gangplank into darkness. And now this.

Loret had spent the voyage braced for pirates. The war with the Loruthi was done but all the boats and fleets and whole pillage-happy coastal fiefdoms were still out there, and hungry as ever. She'd thought she'd be past the threat of them when she stepped onto shore, except what she stepped onto wasn't even the shore. Someone had put a shifting maze of jetties and rafts and boats between her ship and dry land, and then hung it with an inadequate quantity of lanterns that made every step a flirtation with drowning. And she could swim, as even the meanest child of the Archipelago could, but not in a space where great floating weights of wood clashed together like nautical teeth.

The city was only in evidence from its own lamps, and these were strung upwards as though the whole of Alkhalend had been arrested in the midst of being lifted into the heavens by divine fiat. Not an image that should come readily to a good, god-denying Pallesen girl, but desperation was the prybar that opened foolish minds to divinity, as they'd said back in the phalanstery.

They'd said a lot of things in the phalanstery, in the classes she'd sat through with her mind on her belly, or anything else. Now she wished she'd listened rather better because this place wasn't anywhere she'd wanted to end up.

Alkhalend, the Jewel of the Waters, capital of Usmai, greatest of the Successor States that had once been part of the... she couldn't even remember the name of whatever dead empire had once claimed this part of the world, and then petrified into a little kernel of tombs centuries ago, a receding tide that had left places like Usmai to grapple with their neighbours over who got to wield the big stick. Usmai, Alkhalend; yes, such beauty, yes, so exotic. She'd never wanted to be here. If she'd been curious she could have read a book or something.

And dark, so the beauty and exoticism just became a lot of unfamiliar and unpleasant noises that sounded terrifying.

Then the man, appearing at her elbow. The enormous, tattooed, scarred, terrifying man. Was this what an Usmiat looked like? She rather thought it wasn't. He was seven feet tall and bare chested except for a leather harness. He addressed her in a language she didn't know – one she didn't even know anything *like* – and then in Usmiri, bringing his face down close to hers and making the words slowly. Not like a man who wasn't happy with the language but like a man who thought she was very stupid. And she did speak Usmiri. Or she spoke *some* Usmiri. And had not been practising from her primer on the voyage because someone had assured her that Pel and Usmiri shared a lot of vocabulary and so 'you'll pick it up really quickly'. The man spoke to her now, and she caught only a word that sounded a lot like 'lost'.

She had nodded before realising that, as a lone foreign woman in a shifting maze of docks, admitting to being lost wasn't the wisest thing in the world.