

#1 New York Times Bestselling Author

PATRICK
ROTHFUSS

THE WISE
MAN'S
FEAR



*The
Kingkiller Chronicle:
Day Two*

THE WISE MAN'S FEAR

THE KINGKILLER CHRONICLE: DAY TWO

PATRICK
ROTHFUSS



DAW BOOKS, INC.

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM, FOUNDER
375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014

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PUBLISHERS

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EPILOGUE

The Kingkiller Chronicle:

Day One: THE NAME OF THE WIND

Day Two: THE WISE MAN'S FEAR

For more about The Kingkiller Chronicle visit www.patrickrothfuss.com

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eISBN : 978-1-101-48640-5

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DAW Book Collectors No. 1540.

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To my patient fans, for reading the blog and telling me what they really want is an excellent book, even if it takes a little longer.

To my clever beta readers, for their invaluable help and toleration of my paranoid secrecy.

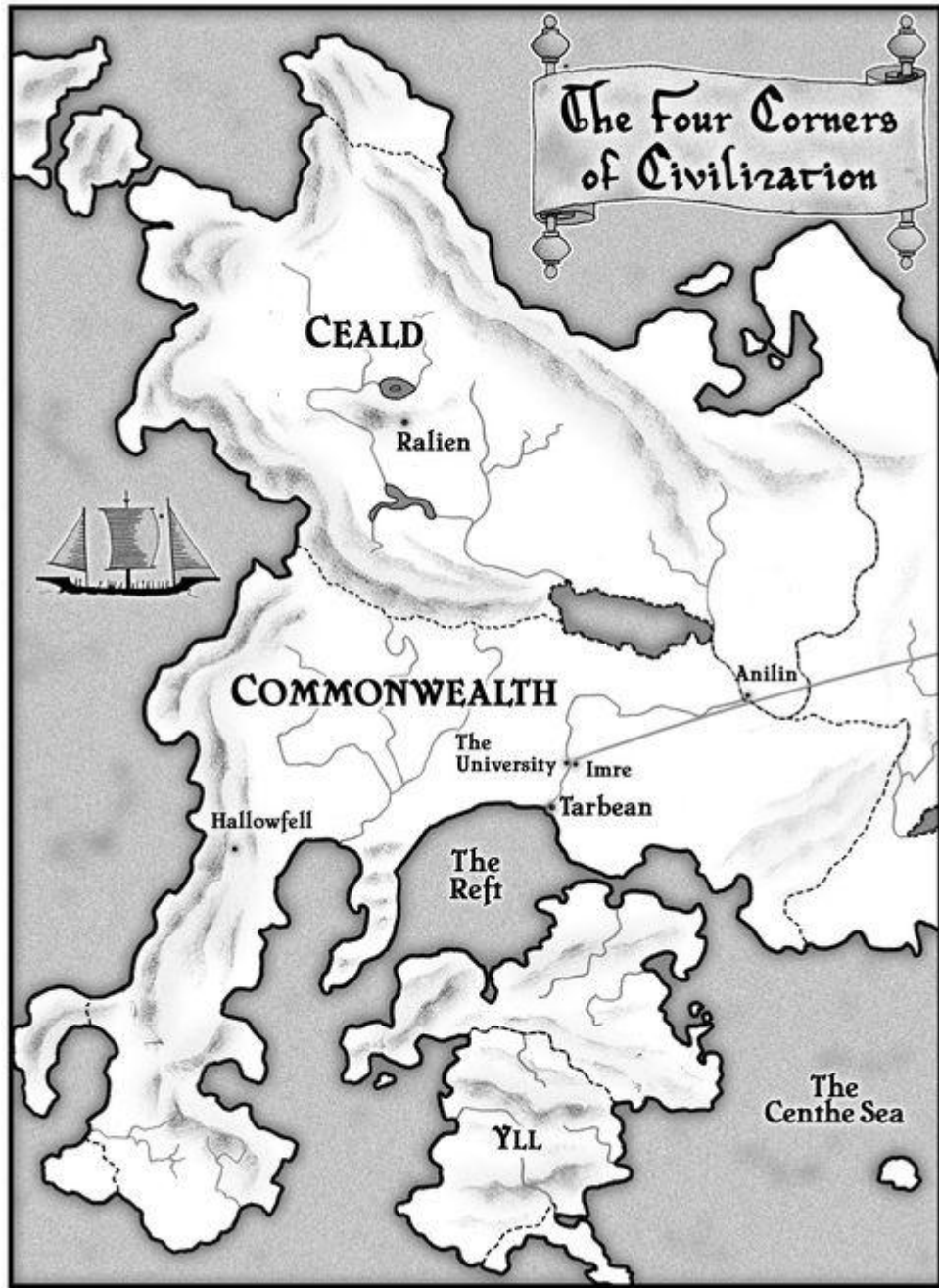
To my fabulous agent, for keeping the wolves from the door in more ways than one.

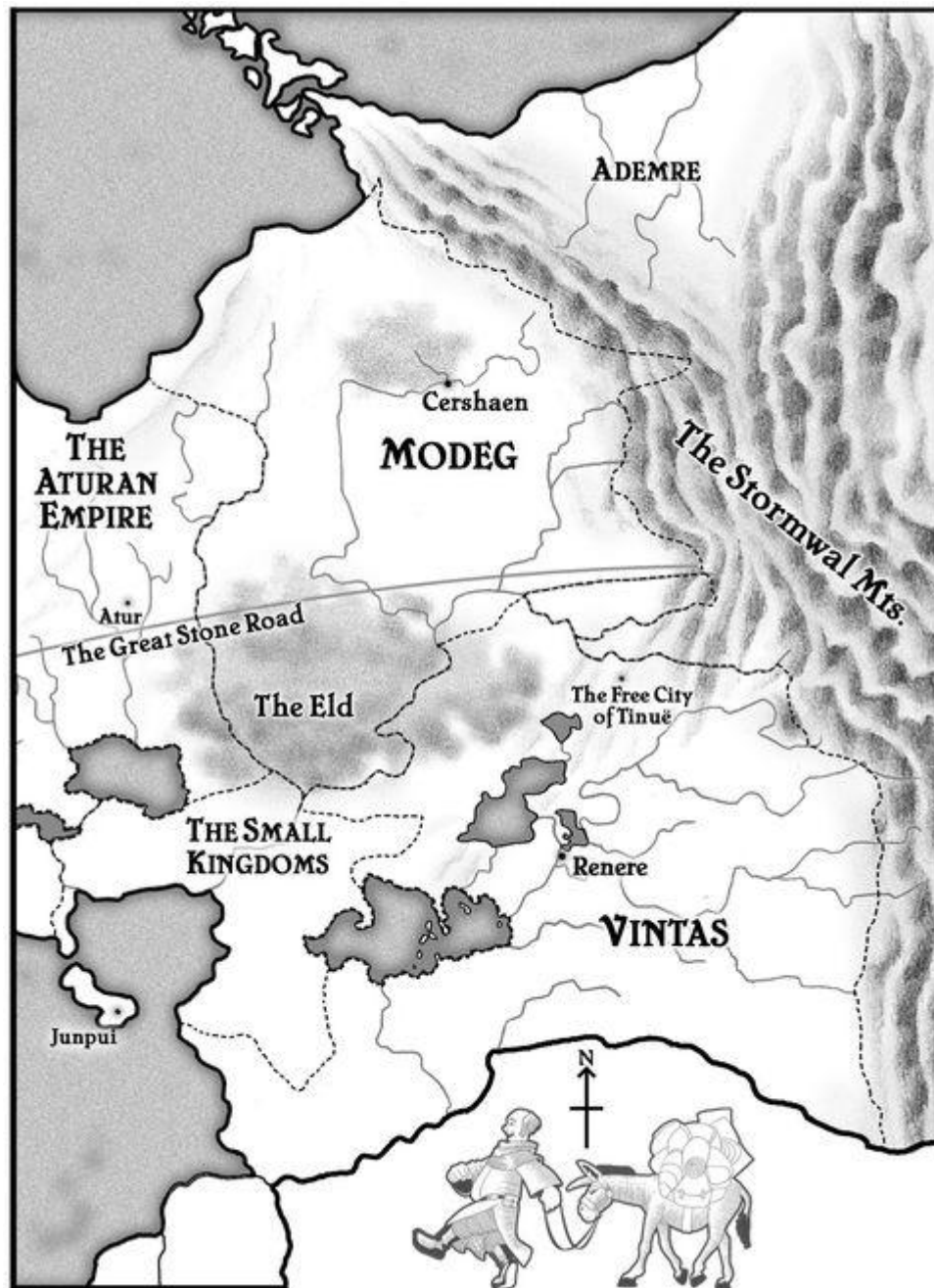
To my wise editor, for giving me the time and space to write a book that fills me with pride.

To my loving family, for supporting me and reminding me that leaving the house every once in a while is a good thing.

To my understanding girlfriend, for not leaving me when the stress of endless revision made me frothy and monstrous.

To my sweet baby, for loving his daddy even though I have to go away and write all the time. Even when we're having a really great time. Even when we're talking about ducks.





PROLOGUE

A Silence of Three Parts

DAWN WAS COMING. The Waystone Inn lay in silence, and it was a silence of three parts.

The most obvious part was a vast, echoing quiet made by things that were lacking. If there had been a storm, raindrops would have tapped and pattered against the selas vines behind the inn. Thunder would have muttered and rumbled and chased the silence down the road like fallen autumn leaves. If there had been travelers stirring in their rooms they would have stretched and grumbled the silence away like fraying, half-forgotten dreams. If there had been music . . . but no, of course there was no music. In fact there were none of these things, and so the silence remained.

Inside the Waystone a dark-haired man eased the back door closed behind himself. Moving through the perfect dark, he crept through the kitchen, across the taproom, and down the basement stairs. With the ease of long experience, he avoided loose boards that might groan or sigh beneath his weight. Each slow step made only the barest *tep* against the floor. In doing this he added his small, furtive silence to the larger echoing one. They made an amalgam of sorts, a counterpoint.

The third silence was not an easy thing to notice. If you listened long enough you might begin to feel it in the chill of the window glass and the smooth plaster walls of the innkeeper's room. It was in the dark chest that lay at the foot of a hard and narrow bed. And it was in the hands of the man who lay there, motionless, watching for the first pale hint of dawn's coming light.

The man had true-red hair, red as flame. His eyes were dark and distant, and he lay with the resigned air of one who has long ago abandoned any hope of sleep.

The Waystone was his, just as the third silence was his. This was appropriate, as it was the greatest silence of the three, holding the others inside itself. It was deep and wide as autumn's ending. It was heavy as a great riversmooth stone. It was the patient, cut-flower sound of a man who is waiting to die.

CHAPTER ONE

Apple and Elderberry

BAST SLOUCHED AGAINST THE long stretch of mahogany bar, bored. Looking around the empty room, he sighed and rummaged around until he found a clean linen cloth. Then, with a resigned look, he began to polish a section of the bar.

After a moment Bast leaned forward and squinted at some half-seen speck. He scratched at it and frowned at the oily smudge his finger made. He leaned closer, fogged the bar with his breath, and buffed it briskly. Then he paused, exhaled hard against the wood, and wrote an obscene word in the fog.

Tossing aside the cloth, Bast made his way through the empty tables and chairs to the wide windows of the inn. He stood there for a long moment, looking at the dirt road running through the center of the town.

Bast gave another sigh and began to pace the room. He moved with the casual grace of a dancer and the perfect nonchalance of a cat. But when he ran his hands through his dark hair the gesture was restless. His blue eyes prowled the room endlessly, as if searching for a way out. As if searching for something he hadn't seen a hundred times before.

But there was nothing new. Empty tables and chairs. Empty stools at the bar. Two huge barrels loomed on the counter behind the bar, one for whiskey, one for beer. Between the barrels stood a vast panoply of bottles: all colors and shapes. Above the bottles hung a sword.

Bast's eyes fell back onto the bottles. He focused on them for a long, speculative moment, then moved back behind the bar and brought out a heavy clay mug.

Drawing a deep breath, he pointed a finger at the first bottle in the bottom row and began to chant as he counted down the line.

Maple. Maypole.

Catch and carry.

Ash and Ember.

Elderberry.

He finished the chant while pointing at a squat green bottle. He twisted out the cork, took a speculative sip, then made a sour face and shuddered. He quickly set the bottle down and picked up a curving red one instead. He sipped this one as well, rubbed his wet lips together thoughtfully, then nodded and splashed a generous portion into his mug.

He pointed at the next bottle and started counting again:

Woolen. Woman.

Moon at night.

Willow. Window.

Candlelight.

This time it was a clear bottle with a pale yellow liquor inside. Bast yanked the cork and added a long pour to the mug without bothering to taste it first. Setting the bottle aside, he picked up the mug and swirled it dramatically before taking a mouthful. He smiled a brilliant smile and flicked the new bottle with his finger, making it chime lightly before he began his singsong chant again:

Barrel. Barley.

Stone and stave.

Wind and water—

A floorboard creaked, and Bast looked up, smiling brightly. “Good morning, Reshi.”

The red-haired innkeeper stood at the bottom of the stairs. He brushed his long-fingered hands over the clean apron and full-length sleeves he wore. "Is our guest awake yet?"

Bast shook his head. "Not a rustle or a peep."

"He's had a hard couple of days," Kote said. "It's probably catching up with him." He hesitated, then lifted his head and sniffed. "Have you been drinking?" The question was more curious than accusatory.

"No," Bast said.

The innkeeper raised an eyebrow.

"I've been *tasting*," Bast said, emphasizing the word. "Tasting comes before drinking."

"Ah," the innkeeper said. "So you were getting ready to drink then?"

"Tiny Gods, yes," Bast said. "To great excess. What the hell else is there to do?" Bast brought his mug up from underneath the bar and looked into it. "I was hoping for elderberry, but I got some sort of melon." He swirled the mug speculatively. "Plus something spicy." He took another sip and narrowed his eyes thoughtfully. "Cinnamon?" he asked, looking at the ranks of bottles. "Do we even have any more elderberry?"

"It's in there somewhere," the innkeeper said, not bothering to look at the bottles. "Stop a moment and listen, Bast. We need to talk about what you did last night."

Bast went very still. "What did I do, Reshi?"

"You stopped that creature from the Mael," Kote said.

"Oh." Bast relaxed, making a dismissive gesture. "I just slowed it down, Reshi. That's all."

Kote shook his head. "You realized it wasn't just some madman. You tried to warn us. If you hadn't been so quick on your feet . . ."

Bast frowned. "I wasn't so quick, Reshi. It got Shep." He looked down at the well scrubbed floorboards near the bar. "I liked Shep."

"Everyone else will think the smith's prentice saved us," Kote said. "And that's probably for the best. But I know the truth. If not for you, it would have slaughtered everyone here."

“Oh Reshi, that’s just not true,” Bast said. “You would have killed it like a chicken. I just got it first.”

The innkeeper shrugged the comment away. “Last night has me thinking,” he said. “Wondering what we could do to make things a bit safer around here. Have you ever heard the ‘White Riders’ Hunt’?”

Bast smiled. “It was our song before it was yours, Reshi.” He drew a breath and sang in a sweet tenor:

*Rode they horses white as snow.
Silver blade and white horn bow.
Wore they fresh and supple boughs,
Red and green upon their brows.*

The innkeeper nodded. “Exactly the verse I was thinking of. Do you think you could take care of it while I get things ready here?”

Bast nodded enthusiastically and practically bolted, pausing by the kitchen door. “You won’t start without me?” he asked anxiously.

“We’ll start as soon as our guest is fed and ready,” Kote said. Then, seeing the expression on his student’s face, he relented a little. “For all that, I imagine you have an hour or two.”

Bast glanced through the doorway, then back.

Amusement flickered over the innkeeper’s face. “And I’ll call before we start.” He made a shooping motion with one hand. “Go on now.”

The man who called himself Kote went through his usual routine at the Waystone Inn. He moved like clockwork, like a wagon rolling down the road in well-worn ruts.

First came the bread. He mixed flour and sugar and salt with his hands, not bothering to measure. He added a piece of starter from the clay jar in the