

PROLOGUE



Wax crept along the ragged fence in a crouch, his boots scraping the dry ground. He held his Sterrion 36 up by his head, the long, silvery barrel dusted with red clay. The revolver was nothing fancy to look at, though the six-shot cylinder was machined with such care in the steel-alloy frame that there was no play in its movement. There was no gleam to the metal or exotic material on the grip. But it fit his hand like it was meant to be there.

The waist-high fence was flimsy, the wood grayed with time, held together with fraying lengths of rope. It smelled of age. Even the worms had given up on this wood long ago.

Wax peeked up over the knotted boards, scanning the empty town. Blue lines hovered in his vision, extending from his chest to point at nearby sources of metal, a result of his Allomancy. Burning steel did that; it let him see the location of sources of metal, then Push against them if he wanted. His weight against the weight of the item. If it was heavier, he was pushed back. If he was heavier, it was pushed forward.

In this case, however, he didn't Push. He just watched the lines to see if any of the metal was moving. None of it was. Nails holding together buildings, spent shell casings lying scattered in the dust, or horseshoes piled at the silent smithy—all were as motionless as the old hand pump planted in the ground to his right.

Wary, he too remained still. Steel continued to burn comfortably in his stomach, and so—as a precaution—he gently Pushed outward from himself in all directions. It was a trick he'd mastered a few years back; he didn't Push on any specific metal objects, but created a kind of defensive bubble around himself. Any metal that came streaking in his direction would be thrown slightly off course.

It was far from foolproof; he could still get hit. But shots would go wild, not striking where they were aimed. It had saved his life on a couple of occasions. He wasn't even certain how he did it; Allomancy was often an instinctive thing for him. Somehow he even managed to exempt the metal he carried, and didn't Push his own gun from his hands.

That done, he continued along the fence—still watching the metal lines to make sure nobody was sneaking up on him. Feltrel had once been a prosperous town. That had been twenty years back. Then a clan of koloss had taken up residence nearby. Things hadn't gone well.

Today, the dead town seemed completely empty, though he knew it wasn't so. Wax had come here hunting a psychopath. And he wasn't the only one.

He grabbed the top of the fence and hopped over, feet grinding red clay. Crouching low, he ran in a squat over to the side of the old blacksmith's forge. His clothing was terribly dusty, but well tailored: a fine suit, a silver cravat at the neck, twinkling cuff links on the sleeves of his fine white shirt. He had cultivated a look that appeared out of place, as if he were planning to attend a fine ball back in Elendel rather than scrambling through a dead town in the Roughs hunting a murderer. Completing the ensemble, he wore a bowler hat on his head to keep off the sun.

A sound; someone stepped on a board across the street, making it creak. It was so faint, he almost missed it. Wax reacted immediately, flaring the steel that burned inside his stomach. He Pushed on a group of nails in the wall beside him just as the crack of a gunshot split the air.

His sudden Push caused the wall to rattle, the old rusty nails straining in their places. His Push shoved him to the side, and he rolled across the ground. A blue line appeared for an eyeblink—the bullet, which hit the ground where he had been a moment before. As he came up from his roll, a second shot followed. This one came close, but bent just a hair out of the way as it neared him.

Deflected by his steel bubble, the bullet zipped past his ear. Another inch to the right, and he'd have gotten it in the forehead—steel bubble or no. Breathing calmly, he raised his Sterrion and sighted on the balcony of the old hotel across the street, where the shot had come from. The balcony was fronted by the hotel's sign, capable of hiding a gunman.

Wax fired, then Pushed on the bullet, slamming it forward with extra thrust to make it faster and more penetrating. He wasn't using typical lead or copper-jacketed lead bullets; he needed something stronger.

The large-caliber steel-jacketed bullet hit the balcony, and his extra power caused it to puncture the wood and hit the man behind. The blue line leading to the man's gun quivered as he fell. Wax stood up slowly, brushing the dust from his clothing. At that moment another shot cracked in the air.

He cursed, reflexively Pushing against the nails again, though his instincts told him he'd be too late. By the time he heard a shot, it was too late for Pushing to help.

This time he was thrown to the ground. That force had to go somewhere, and if the nails couldn't move, he had to. He grunted as he hit and raised his revolver, dust sticking to the sweat on his hand. He searched frantically for the one who'd fired at him. They'd missed. Perhaps the steel bubble had—

A body rolled off the top of the blacksmith's shop and thumped down to the ground with a puff of red dust. Wax blinked, then raised his gun to chest level and moved over behind the fence again, crouching down for cover. He kept an eye on the blue Allomantic lines. They could warn him if someone got close, but only if the person was carrying or wearing metal.

The body that had fallen beside the building didn't have a single line pointing to it. However, another set of quivering lines pointed to something moving along the back of the forge. Wax leveled his gun, taking aim as a figure ducked around the side of the building and ran toward him.

The woman wore a white duster, reddened at the bottom. She kept her dark hair pulled back in a tail, and wore trousers and a wide belt, with thick boots on her feet. She had a squarish face. A strong face, with lips that often rose slightly at the right side in a half smile.

Wax heaved a sigh of relief and lowered his gun. "Lessie."

"You knock yourself to the ground again?" she asked as she reached the cover of the fence beside him. "You've got more dust on your face than Miles has scowls. Maybe it's time for you to retire, old man."

"Lessie, I'm *three months* older than you are."

"Those are a long three months." She peeked up over the fence. "Seen anyone else?"

"I dropped a man up on the balcony," Wax said. "I couldn't see if it was Bloody Tan or not."

"It wasn't," she said. "He wouldn't have tried to shoot you from so far away."

Wax nodded. Tan liked things personal. Up close. The psychopath lamented when he had to use a gun, and he rarely shot someone without being able to see the fear in their eyes.

Lessie scanned the quiet town, then glanced at him, ready to move. Her eyes flickered downward for a moment. Toward his shirt pocket.

Wax followed her gaze. A letter was peeking out of his pocket, delivered earlier that day. It was from the grand city of Elendel, and was addressed to Lord Waxillium Ladrian. A name Wax hadn't used in years. A name that felt wrong to him now.

He tucked the letter farther into his pocket. Lessie thought it implied more than it did. The city didn't hold anything for him now, and House Ladrian would get along without him. He really should have burned that letter.

Wax nodded toward the fallen man beside the wall to distract her from the letter. "Your work?"

"He had a bow," she said. "Stone arrowheads. Almost had you from above."

"Thanks."

She shrugged, eyes glittering in satisfaction. Those eyes now had lines at the sides of them, weathered by the Roughts' harsh sunlight. There had been a time when she and Wax had kept a tally of who had saved the other most often. They'd both lost track years ago.

"Cover me," Wax said softly.

"With what?" she asked. "Paint? Kisses? You're already covered with dust."

Wax raised an eyebrow at her.

“Sorry,” she said, grimacing. “I’ve been playing cards too much with Wayne lately.”

He snorted and ran in a crouch to the fallen corpse and rolled it over. The man had been a cruel-faced fellow with several days of stubble on his cheeks; the bullet wound bled out his right side. *I think I recognize him*, Wax thought to himself as he went through the man’s pockets and came out with a drop of red glass, colored like blood.

He hurried back to the fence.

“Well?” Lessie asked.

“Donal’s crew,” Wax said, holding up the drop of glass.

“Bastards,” Lessie said. “They couldn’t just leave us to it, could they?”

“You *did* shoot his son, Lessie.”

“And you shot his brother.”

“Mine was self-defense.”

“Mine was too,” she said. “That kid was *annoying*. Besides, he survived.”

“Missing a toe.”

“You don’t need ten,” she said. “I have a cousin with four. She does just fine.” She raised her revolver, scanning the empty town. “Of course, she does look kind of ridiculous. Cover me.”

“With what?”

She just grinned and ducked out from behind the cover, scrambling across the ground toward the smithy.

Harmony, Wax thought with a smile, *I love that woman*.

He watched for more gunmen, but Lessie reached the building without any further shots being fired. Wax nodded to her, then dashed across the street toward the hotel. He ducked inside, checking the corners for foes. The taproom was empty, so he took cover beside the doorway, waving toward Lessie. She ran down to the next building on her side of the street and checked it out.

Donal’s crew. Yes, Wax had shot his brother—the man had been robbing a railway car at the time. From what he understood, though, Donal hadn’t ever cared for his brother. No, the only thing that riled Donal was losing money, which was probably why he was here. He’d put a price on Bloody Tan’s head for stealing a shipment of his bendalloy. Donal probably hadn’t expected Wax to come hunting Tan the same day he did, but his men had standing orders to shoot Wax or Lessie if seen.

Wax was half tempted to leave the dead town and let Donal and Tan have at it. The thought of it made his eye twitch, though. He’d promised to bring Tan in. That was that.

Lessie waved from the inside of her building, then pointed toward the back. She was going to go out in that direction and creep along behind the next set of buildings. Wax nodded, then made a curt gesture. He'd try to hook up with Wayne and Barl, who had gone to check the other side of the town.

Lessie vanished, and Wax picked his way through the old hotel toward a side door. He passed old, dirty nests made by both rats and men. The town picked up miscreants the way a dog picked up fleas. He even passed a place where it looked like some wayfarer had made a small firepit on a sheet of metal with a ring of rocks. It was a wonder the fool hadn't burned the entire building to the ground.

Wax eased open the side door and stepped into an alleyway between the hotel and the store beside it. The gunshots earlier would have been heard, and someone might come looking. Best to stay out of sight.

Wax edged around the back of the store, stepping quietly across the red-clay ground. The hillside here was overgrown with weeds except for the entrance to an old cold cellar. Wax wound around it, then paused, eyeing the wood-framed pit.

Maybe . . .

He knelt beside the opening, peering down. There had been a ladder here once, but it had rotted away—the remnants were visible below in a pile of old splinters. The air smelled musty and wet . . . with a hint of smoke. Someone had been burning a torch down there.

Wax dropped a bullet into the hole, then leaped in, gun out. As he fell, he filled his iron metalmind, decreasing his weight. He was Twinborn—a Feruchemist as well as an Allomancer. His Allomantic power was Steelpushing, and his Feruchemical power, called Skimming, was the ability to grow heavier or lighter. It was a powerful combination of talents.

He Pushed against the round below him, slowing his fall so that he landed softly. He returned his weight to normal—or, well, normal for him. He often went about at three-quarters of his unadjusted weight, making himself lighter on his feet, quicker to react.

He crept through the darkness. It had been a long, difficult road, finding where Bloody Tan was hiding. In the end, the fact that Feltrel had suddenly emptied of other bandits, wanderers, and unfortunates had been a major clue. Wax stepped softly, working his way deeper into the cellar. The scent of smoke was stronger here, and though the light was fading, he made out a firepit beside the earthen wall. That and a ladder that could be moved into place at the entrance.

That gave him pause. It indicated that whoever was making their hideout in the cellar—it could be Tan, or it could be someone else entirely—was still down here. Unless there was another way out. Wax crept forward a little farther, squinting in the dark.

There was light ahead.

Wax cocked his gun softly, then drew a little vial out of his mistcoat and pulled the cork with his teeth. He downed the whiskey and steel in one shot, restoring his reserves. He flared his steel. Yes . . . there was metal ahead of him, down the tunnel. How long was

this cellar? He had assumed it would be small, but the reinforcing wood timbers indicated something deeper, longer. More like a mine adit.

He crept forward, focused on those metal lines. Someone would have to aim a gun if they saw him, and the metal would quiver, giving him a chance to Push the weapon out of their hands. Nothing moved. He slid forward, smelling musty damp soil, fungus, potatoes left to bud. He approached a trembling light, but could hear nothing. The metal lines did not move.

Finally, he got close enough to make out a lamp hanging by a hook on a wooden beam near the wall. Something else hung at the center of the tunnel. A body? Hanged? Wax cursed softly and hurried forward, wary of a trap. It *was* a corpse, but it left him baffled. At first glance, it seemed years old. The eyes were gone from the skull, the skin pulled back against the bone. It didn't stink, and wasn't bloated.

He thought he recognized it. Geormin, the coachman who brought mail into Weathering from the more distant villages around the area. That was his uniform, at least, and it seemed like his hair. He'd been one of Tan's first victims, the disappearance that sent Wax hunting. That had only been two months back.

He's been mummified, Wax thought. *Prepared and dried like leather*. He felt revolted—he'd gone drinking with Geormin on occasion, and though the man cheated at cards, he'd been an amiable enough fellow.

The hanging wasn't an ordinary one, either. Wires had been used to prop up Geormin's arms so they were out to the sides, his head cocked, his mouth pried open. Wax turned away from the gruesome sight, his eye twitching.

Careful, he told himself. *Don't let him anger you. Keep focused*. He would be back to cut Geormin down. Right now, he couldn't afford to make the noise. At least he knew he was on the right track. This was certainly Bloody Tan's lair.

There was another patch of light in the distance. How long was this tunnel? He approached the pool of light, and here found another corpse, this one hung on the wall sideways. Annarel, a visiting geologist who had vanished soon after Geormin. Poor woman. She'd been dried in the same manner, body spiked to the wall in a very specific pose, as if she were on her knees inspecting a pile of rocks.

Another pool of light drew him onward. Clearly this wasn't a cellar—it was probably some kind of smuggling tunnel left over from the days when Feltrel had been a booming town. Tan hadn't built this, not with those aged wooden supports.

Wax passed another six corpses, each lit by its own glowing lantern, each arranged in some kind of pose. One sat in a chair, another strung up as if flying, a few stuck to the wall. The later ones were more fresh, the last one recently killed. Wax didn't recognize the slender man, who hung with hand to his head in a salute.

Rust and Ruin, Wax thought. *This isn't Bloody Tan's lair . . . it's his gallery*.

Sickened, Wax made his way to the next pool of light. This one was different. Brighter. As he approached, he realized that he was seeing sunlight streaming down from a square

cut in the ceiling. The tunnel led up to it, probably to a former trapdoor that had rotted or broken away. The ground sloped in a gradual slant up to the hole.

Wax crawled up the slope, then cautiously poked his head out. He'd come up in a building, though the roof was gone. The brick walls were mostly intact, and there were four altars in the front, just to Wax's left. An old chapel to the Survivor. It seemed empty.

Wax crawled out of the hole, his Sterrion at the side of his head, coat marred by dirt from below. The clean, dry air smelled good to him.

"Each life is a performance," a voice said, echoing in the ruined church.

Wax immediately ducked to the side, rolling up to an altar.

"But we are not the performers," the voice continued. "We are the puppets."

"Tan," Wax said. "Come out."

"I have seen God, lawkeeper," Tan whispered. Where was he? "I have seen Death himself, with the nails in his eyes. I have seen the Survivor, who is life."

Wax scanned the small chapel. It was cluttered with broken benches and fallen statues. He rounded the side of the altar, judging the sound to come from the back of the room.

"Other men wonder," Tan's voice said, "but I know. I know I'm a puppet. We all are. Did you like my show? I worked so hard to build it."

Wax continued along the building's right wall, his boots leaving a trail in the dust. He breathed shallowly, a line of sweat creeping down his right temple. His eye was twitching. He saw corpses on the walls in his mind's eye.

"Many men never get a chance to create true art," Tan said. "And the best performances are those which can never be reproduced. Months, years, spent preparing. Everything placed right. But at the end of the day, the rotting will begin. I couldn't truly mummify them; I hadn't the time or resources. I could only preserve them long enough to prepare for this one show. Tomorrow, it will be ruined. You were the only one to see it. Only you. I figure . . . we're all just puppets . . . you see . . ."

The voice *was* coming from the back of the room, near some rubble that was blocking Wax's view.

"Someone else moves us," Tan said.

Wax ducked around the side of the rubble, raising his Sterrion.

Tan stood there, holding Lessie in front of him, her mouth gagged, her eyes wide. Wax froze in place, gun raised. Lessie was bleeding from her leg and her arm. She'd been shot, and her face was growing pale. She'd lost blood. That was how Tan had been able to overpower her.

Wax grew still. He didn't feel anxiety. He couldn't afford to; it might make him shake, and shaking might make him miss. He could see Tan's face behind Lessie; the man held a garrote around her neck.

Tan was a slender, fine-fingered man. He'd been a mortician. Black hair, thinning, worn greased back. A nice suit that now shone with blood.

"Someone else moves us, lawman," Tan said softly.

Lessie met Wax's eyes. They both knew what to do in this situation. Last time, he'd been the one captured. People always tried to use them against one another. In Lessie's opinion, that wasn't a disadvantage. She'd have explained that if Tan *hadn't* known the two of them were a couple, he'd have killed her right off. Instead, he'd kidnapped her. That gave them a chance to get out.

Wax cocked the hammer of his Sterrion and sighted down the barrel. He drew in the trigger until he balanced the weight of the sear right on the edge of firing, and Lessie blinked. One. Two. Three.

Wax fired.

In the same instant, Tan yanked Lessie to the right.

The shot broke the air, echoing against clay bricks. Lessie's head jerked back as Wax's bullet took her just above the right eye. Blood sprayed against the clay wall beside her. She crumpled.

Wax stood, frozen, horrified. *No . . . that isn't the way . . . it can't . . .*

"The best performances," Tan said, smiling and looking down at Lessie's figure, "are those that can only be performed once."

Wax shot him in the head.



Five months later, Wax walked through the decorated rooms of a large, lively party, passing men in dark suits with tailcoats and women in colorful dresses with narrow waists and lots of folds

through long pleated skirts. They called him “Lord Waxillium” or “Lord Ladrian” when they spoke to him.

He nodded to each, but avoided being drawn into conversation. He deliberately made his way to one of the back rooms of the party, where dazzling electric lights—the talk of the city—produced a steady, too-even light to ward off the evening’s gloom. Outside the windows, he could see mist tickling the glass.

Defying decorum, Wax pushed his way through the room’s enormous glass double doors and stepped out onto the mansion’s grand balcony. There, finally, he felt like he could breathe again.

He closed his eyes, taking the air in and out, feeling the faint wetness of the mists on the skin of his face. *Buildings are so . . . suffocating here in the city*, he thought. *Have I simply forgotten about that, or did I not notice it when I was younger?*

He opened his eyes, and rested his hands on the balcony railing to look out over Elendel. It was the grandest city in all the world, a metropolis designed by Harmony himself. The place of Wax’s youth. A place that hadn’t been his home for twenty years.

Though it had been five months since Lessie’s death, he could still hear the gunshot, see the blood sprayed on the bricks. He had left the Roughs, moved back to the city, answering the desperate summons to do his duty to his house at his uncle’s passing.

Five months and a world away, and he could still hear that gunshot. Crisp, clean, like the sky cracking.

Behind him, he could hear musical laughter coming from the warmth of the room. Cett Mansion was a grand place, full of expensive woods, soft carpets, and sparkling chandeliers. No one joined him on the balcony.

From this vantage, he had a perfect view of the lights down Demoux Promenade. A double row of bright electric lamps with a steady, blazing whiteness. They glowed like bubbles along the wide boulevard, which was flanked by the even wider canal, the still and quiet waters reflecting the light. An evening railway engine called a greeting as it chugged through the distant center of the city, hemming the mists with darker smoke.

Down Demoux Promenade, Wax had a good view of both the Ironspine Building and Tekiel Tower, one on either side of the canal. Both were unfinished, but their steelwork lattices already rose high into the sky. Mind-numbingly high.

The architects continued to release updated reports of how high they intended to go, each one trying to outdo the other. Rumors he'd heard at this very party, credible ones, claimed that both would eventually top out at over fifty stories. Nobody knew which would end up proving the taller, though friendly wagers were common.

Wax breathed in the mists. Out in the Roughs, Cett Mansion—which was three stories high—would have been as tall as a building got. Here, it felt dwarfed. The world had gone and changed on him during his years out of the city. It had grown up, inventing lights that needed no fire to glow and buildings that threatened to rise higher than the mists themselves. Looking down that wide street at the edge of the Fifth Octant, Wax suddenly felt very, very old.

“Lord Waxillium?” a voice asked from behind.

He turned to find an older woman, Lady Aving Cett, peeking out the door at him. Her gray hair was up in a bun and she wore rubies at her neck. “By Harmony, my good man. You’ll take a chill out here! Come, there are some people you will wish to meet.”

“I’ll be along presently, my lady,” Wax said. “I’m just getting a little air.”

Lady Cett frowned, but retreated. She didn’t know what to make of him; none of them did. Some saw him as a mysterious scion of the Ladrian family, associated with strange stories of the realms beyond the mountains. The rest assumed him to be an uncultured, rural buffoon. He figured he was probably both.

He’d been on show all night. He was *supposed* to be looking for a wife, and pretty much everyone knew it. House Ladrian was insolvent following his uncle’s imprudent management, and the easiest path to solvency was marriage. Unfortunately, his uncle had *also* managed to offend three-quarters of the city’s upper crust.

Wax leaned forward on the balcony, the Sterrion revolvers under his arms jabbing his sides. With their long barrels, they weren’t meant to be carried in underarm holsters. They had been awkward all night.

He should be getting back to the party to chat and try to repair House Ladrian’s reputation. But the thought of that crowded room, so hot, so close, sweltering, making it difficult to breathe. . . .

Giving himself no time to reconsider, he swung off over the side of the balcony and began falling three stories toward the ground. He burned steel, then dropped a spent bullet casing slightly behind himself and Pushed against it; his weight sent it speeding down to the earth faster than he fell. As always, thanks to his Feruchemy, he was lighter than he should have been. He hardly knew anymore what it felt like to go around at his full weight.

When the casing hit the ground, he Pushed against it and sent himself horizontally in a leap over the garden wall. With one hand on its stone top, he vaulted out of the garden,

then reduced his weight to a fraction of normal as he fell down the other side. He landed softly.

Ah, good, he thought, crouching down and peering through the mists. *The coachmen's yard*. The vehicles everyone had used to get there were arranged here in neat rows, the coachmen themselves chatting in a few cozy rooms that spilled orange light into the mists. No electric lights here; just good, warmth-giving hearths.

He walked among the carriages until he found his own, then opened the trunk strapped to the back.

Off came his gentleman's fine dinner coat. Instead he threw on his mistcoat, a long, enveloping garment like a duster with a thick collar and cuffed sleeves. He slipped a shotgun into its pocket on the inside, then buckled on his gun belt and moved the Sterrions into the holsters at his hips.

Ah, he thought. *Much better*. He really needed to stop carrying the Sterrions and get some more practical weapons for concealment. Unfortunately, he'd never found anything as good as Ranette's work. Hadn't she moved to the city, though? Perhaps he could look her up and talk her into making him something. Assuming she didn't shoot him on sight.

A few moments later, he was running through the city, the mistcoat light upon his back. He left it open at the front, revealing his black shirt and gentleman's trousers. The ankle-length mistcoat had been divided into strips from just above the waist, the tassels streaming behind him with a faint rustle.

He dropped a bullet casing and launched himself high into the air, landing atop the building across the street from the mansion. He glanced back at it, the windows ablaze in the evening dark. What kind of rumors was he going to start, vanishing from the balcony like that?

Well, they already knew he was Twinborn—that was a matter of public record. His disappearance wasn't going to do much to help patch his family's reputation. For the moment, he didn't care. He'd spent almost every evening since his return to the city at one social function or another, and they hadn't had a misty night in weeks.

He needed the mists. This was who he was.

Wax dashed across the rooftop and leaped off, moving toward Demoux Promenade. Just before hitting the ground, he flipped a spent casing down and Pushed on it, slowing his descent. He landed in a patch of decorative shrubs that caught his cloak tassels and made a rustling noise.

Damn. Nobody planted decorative shrubs out in the Roughts. He pulled himself free, wincing at the noise. A few weeks in the city, and he was already getting rusty?

He shook his head and Pushed himself into the air again, moving out over the wide boulevard and parallel canal. He angled his flight so he crested that and landed on one of the new electric lamps. There was one nice thing about a modern city like this; it had a *lot* of metal.

He smiled, then flared his steel and Pushed off the top of the streetlamp, sending himself in a wide arc through the air. Mist streamed past him, swirling as the wind rushed against his face. It was thrilling. A man never truly felt free until he'd thrown off gravity's chains and sought the sky.

As he crested his arc, he Pushed against another streetlight, throwing himself farther forward. The long row of metal poles was like his own personal railway line. He bounded onward, his antics drawing attention from those in passing carriages, both horse-drawn and horseless.

He smiled. Coinshots like himself were relatively rare, but Elendel was a major city with an enormous population. He wouldn't be the first man these people had seen bounding by metal through the city. Coinshots often acted as high-speed couriers in Elendel.

The city's size still astonished him. Millions lived here, maybe as many as *fivemillion*. Nobody had a sure count across all of its wards—they were called octants, and as one might expect, there were eight of them.

Millions; he couldn't picture that, though he'd grown up here. Before he'd left Weathering, he'd been starting to think it was getting too big, but there couldn't have been ten thousand people in the town.

He landed atop a lamp directly in front of the massive Ironspine Building. He craned his neck, looking up through the mists at the towering structure. The unfinished top was lost in the darkness. Could he climb something so high? He couldn't Pull on metals, only Push—he wasn't some mythological Mistborn from the old stories, like the Survivor or the Ascendant Warrior. One Allomantic power, one Feruchemical power, that was all a man could have. In fact, having just one was a rare privilege—being Twinborn like Wax was truly exceptional.

Wayne claimed to have memorized the names of all of the different possible combinations of Twinborn. Of course, Wayne also claimed to have once stolen a horse that belched in perfect musical notes, so one learned to take what he said with a pinch of copper. Wax honestly didn't pay attention to all of the definitions and names for Twinborn; he was called a Crasher, the mix of a Coinshot and a Skimmer. He rarely bothered to think of himself that way.

He began to fill his metalminds—the iron bracers he wore on his upper arms—draining himself of more weight, making himself even lighter. That weight would be stored away for future use. Then, ignoring the more cautious part of his mind, he flared his steel and *Pushed*.

He shot upward. The wind became a roar, and the lamp was a good anchor—lots of metal, firmly attached to the ground—capable of pushing him quite high. He'd angled slightly, and the building's stories became a blur in front of him. He landed about twenty stories up, just as his Push on the lamp was reaching its limit.

This portion of the building had been finished already, the exterior of a molded material that imitated worked stone. Ceramics, he'd heard. It was a common practice for tall buildings, where the lower levels would be actual stone, but the higher reaches would use something lighter.

He grabbed hold of an outcropping. He wasn't so light that the wind could push him away—not with his metal minds on his forearms and the weapons he wore. His lighter body did make it easier to hold himself in place.

Mist swirled beneath him. It seemed almost playful. He looked upward, deciding his next step. His steel revealed lines of blue to nearby sources of metal, many of which were the structure's frame. Pushing on any of them would send him away from the building.

There, he thought, noting a decent-sized ledge about five feet up. He climbed up the side of the building, gloved fingers sure on the complexly ornamented surface. A Coinshot quickly learned not to fear heights. He hoisted himself up onto the ledge, then dropped a bullet casing, stopping it with his booted foot.

He looked upward, judging his trajectory. He drew a vial from his belt, then uncorked it and downed the liquid and steel shavings inside it. He hissed through his teeth as the whiskey burned his throat. Good stuff, from Stagin's still. *Damn, I'm going to miss that when my stock runs out*, he thought, tucking the vial away.

Most Allomancers didn't use whiskey in their metal vials. Most Allomancers were missing out on a perfect opportunity. He smiled as his internal steel reserves were restored; then he flared the metal and launched himself.

He flew up into the night sky. Unfortunately, the Ironspine was built in set-back tiers, the upper stories growing progressively narrower as you went higher. That meant that even though he Pushed himself directly up, he was soon soaring in open darkness, mists around him, the building's side a good ten feet away.

Wax reached into his cloak and removed his short-barreled shotgun from the long, sleeve-like pocket inside. He turned—pointing it outward—braced it against his side, and fired.

He was light enough that the kick flung him toward the building. The boom of the blast echoed below, but he had spray shot in the shells, too small and light to hurt anyone when it fell dispersed from such a height.

He slammed into the wall of the tower five stories above where he'd been, and grabbed hold of a spikelike protrusion. The decoration up here really was marvelous. Who did they think would be looking at it? He shook his head. Architects were curious types. Not practical at all, like a good gunsmith. Wax climbed to another shelf and jumped upward again.

The next jump was enough to get him to the open steelwork lattice of the unfinished upper floors. He strolled across a girder, then shimmied up a vertical member—his reduced weight making it easy—and climbed atop the very tallest of the beams jutting from the top of the building.

The height was dizzying. Even with the mists obscuring the landscape, he could see the double row of lights illuminating the street below. Other lights glowed more softly across the town, like the floating candles of a seafarer's ocean burial. Only the absence of lights allowed him to pick out the various parks and the bay far to the west.

Once, this city had felt like home. That was before he'd spent twenty years living out in the dust, where the law was sometimes a distant memory and people considered carriages a frivolity. What would Lessie have thought of one of these horseless contraptions, with the thin wheels meant for driving on a city's fine paved streets? Vehicles that ran on oil and grease, not hay and horseshoes?

He turned about on his perch. It was difficult to judge locations in the dark and the mists, but he did have the advantage of a youth spent in this section of the city. Things had changed, but not *that* much. He judged the direction, checked his steel reserves, then launched himself out into the darkness.

He shot outward in a grand arc above the city, flying for a good half a minute on the Push off those enormous girders. The skyscraper became a shadowed silhouette behind him, then vanished. Eventually, his impetus ran out, and he dropped back through the mists. He let himself fall, quiet. When the lights grew close—and he could see that nobody was below him—he pointed his shotgun at the ground and pulled the trigger.

The jolt punched him upward for a moment, slowing his descent. He Pushed off the birdshot in the ground to slow him further; he landed easily in a soft crouch. He noticed with dissatisfaction that he'd all but ruined some good paving stones with the shot.

Harmony! he thought. This place really was going to take some getting used to. *I'm like a horse blundering through a narrow marketplace*, he thought, hooking his shotgun back under his coat. *I need to learn more finesse*. Out in the Roughs, he'd been considered a refined gentleman. Here, if he didn't watch himself, he'd soon prove himself to be the uncultured brute that most of the nobility already assumed that he was. It—

Gunfire.

Wax responded immediately. He Pushed himself sideways off an iron gate, then ducked in a roll. He came up and reached for a Sterrion with his right hand, his left steadying the shotgun in its sleeve in his coat.

He peered into the night. Had his thoughtless shotgun blasts drawn the attention of the local constables? The guns fired again, and he frowned. *No. Those are too distant. Something's happening.*

This actually gave him a thrill. He leaped into the air and down the street, Pushing off that same gate to get height. He landed atop a building; this area was filled with three- and four-story apartment structures that had narrow alleyways between. How could people live without any space around them? He'd have gone mad.

He crossed a few buildings—it was handy that the rooftops were flat—and then stopped to listen. His heart beat excitedly, and he realized he'd been hoping for something like this. It was why he'd been driven to leave the party, to seek out the skyscraper and climb it, to run through the mists. Back in Weathering, as the town grew larger, he'd often patrolled at night, watching for trouble.

He fingered his Sterrion as another shot was fired, closer this time. He judged his distance, then dropped a bullet casing and Pushed himself into the air. He'd restored his

weight to three-quarters and left it there. You needed some weight on you to fight effectively.

The mists swirled and spun, teasing him. One could never tell which nights would bring out the mists; they didn't conform to normal weather patterns. A night could be humid and chill, and yet not a wisp of mists would appear. Another night could begin dry as brittle leaves, but the mists would consume it.

They were thin this night, and so visibility was still good. Another crack broke the silence. *There*, Wax thought. Steel burning with a comfortable warmth within him, he leaped over another street in a flurry of mistcoat tassels, spinning mist, and calling wind.

He landed softly, then raised his gun in front of him as he ran in a crouch across the roof. He reached the edge and looked down. Just below him, someone had taken refuge behind a pile of boxes near the mouth of an alley. In the dark, misty night, Wax couldn't make out many details, but the person was armed with a rifle resting on a box. The barrel was pointed toward a group of people down the street who wore the distinctive domed hats of city constables.

Wax Pushed out lightly from himself in all directions, setting up his steel bubble. A latch on a trapdoor at his feet rattled as his Allomancy affected it. He peered down at the man firing upon the constables. It would be good to do something of actual value in this city, rather than just standing around chatting with the overdressed and the overprivileged.

He dropped a bullet casing, and his Allomancy pressed it down onto the rooftop beneath him. He Pushed more forcefully on it, launching himself up and through the swirling mists. He decreased his weight dramatically and pushed on a window latch as he fell, positioning himself so he landed right in the middle of the alleyway.

With his steel, he could see lines pointing toward four different figures in front of him. Even as he landed—the men muttering curses and spinning toward him—he raised his Sterrion and sighted on the first of the street thugs. The man had a patchy beard and eyes as dark as the night itself.

Wax heard a woman whimpering.

He froze, hand steady, but unable to move. The memories, so carefully dammed up in his head, crashed through and flooded his mind. Lessie, held with a gun to her head. A single shot. Blood on the red brick walls.

The street thug jerked his rifle toward Wax and fired. The steel bubble barely deflected it, and the bullet tugged through the fabric of Wax's coat, just missing his ribs.

He tried to fire, but that whimpering . . .

Oh, Harmony, he thought, appalled at himself. He pointed his gun downward and fired into the ground, then Pushed on the bullet and threw himself backward, up out of the alleyway.

Bullets pierced the mists all around him. Steel bubble or not, he should have fallen to one of them. It was pure luck that saved his life as he landed on another roof and rolled to a stop, prone, protected from the gunfire by a parapet wall.

Wax gasped for breath, hand on his revolver. *Idiot*, he thought to himself. *Fool*. He'd never frozen in combat before, even when he'd been green. *Never*. This, however, was the first time he'd tried to shoot someone since the disaster in the ruined church.

He wanted to duck away in shame, but he gritted his teeth and crawled forward to the edge of the roof. The men were still down there. He could see them better now, gathering and preparing to make a run for it. They probably wanted nothing to do with an Allomancer.

He aimed at the apparent leader. However, before Wax could fire, the man fell to gunfire from the constables. In moments, the alleyway swarmed with men in uniforms. Wax raised his Sterrion beside his head, breathing deeply.

I could have fired that time, he told himself. *It was just that one moment where I froze. It wouldn't have happened again*. He told himself this several times as the constables pulled the malefactors out of the alley one at a time.

There was no woman. The whimpering he'd heard had been a gang member who'd taken a bullet before Wax arrived. The man was still groaning in pain as they took him away.

The constables hadn't seen Wax. He turned and disappeared into the night.

A short time later, Wax arrived at Ladrian Mansion. His residence in the city, his ancestral home. He didn't feel like he belonged there, but he used it anyway.

The stately home lacked expansive grounds, though it did have four elegant stories, with balconies and a nice patio garden out back. Wax dropped a coin and bounded over the front fence, landing atop the gatehouse. *My carriage is back*, he noticed. Not surprising. They were getting used to him; he wasn't certain whether to be pleased by that or ashamed of it.

He Pushed off the gates—which rattled at the weight—and landed on a fourth story balcony. Coinshots had to learn precision, unlike their cousin Allomancers, Ironpullers—also known as Lurchers. Those would just pick a target and Pull themselves toward it, but they usually had to grind up the side of a building, making noise. Coinshots had to be delicate, careful, accurate.

The window was unlatched; he'd left it that way. He didn't fancy dealing with people at the moment; his abortive confrontation with the criminals had rattled him. He slipped into the darkened room, then padded across it and listened at the door. No sounds in the hallway. He opened the door silently, then moved out.

The hallway was dark, and he was no Tineye, capable of enhancing his senses. He felt his way with each step, being careful not to trip on the edge of a rug or bump into a pedestal.

His rooms were at the end of the hallway. He reached for the brass knob with gloved fingers. Excellent. He carefully pushed the door open, stepping into his bedroom. Now he just had to—

A door opened on the other side of his room, letting in bright yellow light. Wax froze in place, though his hand quickly reached into his coat for one of his Sterrions.

An aging man stood in the doorway, holding a large candela- brum. He wore a tidy black uniform and white gloves. He raised an eyebrow at Wax. “High Lord Ladrian,” he said, “I see that you’ve returned.”

“Um . . .” Wax said, sheepishly removing his hand from inside his cloak.

“Your bath is drawn, my lord.”

“I didn’t ask for a bath.”

“Yes, but considering your night’s . . . entertainments, I thought it prudent to prepare one for you.” The butler sniffed. “Gunpowder?”

“Er, yes.”

“I trust my lord didn’t shoot anyone too important.”

No, Wax thought. *No, I couldn’t.*

Tillaume stood there, stiff, disapproving. He didn’t say the words he was undoubtedly thinking: that Wax’s disappearance from the party had caused a minor scandal, that it would be even *more* difficult to procure a proper bride now. He didn’t say that he was disappointed. He didn’t say these things because he was, after all, a proper lord’s servant.

Besides, he could say them all with a glance anyway.

“Shall I draft a letter of apology to Lady Cett, my lord? I believe she will expect it, considering that you sent one to Lord Stanton.”

“Yes, that would be well,” Wax said. He lowered his fingers to his belt, feeling the metal vials there, the revolver at each hip, the weight of the shotgun strapped inside his coat. *What am I doing? I’m acting like a fool.*

He suddenly felt exceedingly childish. Leaving a party to go patrolling through the city, looking for trouble? What was wrong with him?

He felt as if he’d been trying to recapture something. A part of the person he’d been before Lessie’s death. He had known, deep down, that he might have trouble shooting now and had wanted to prove otherwise.

He’d failed that test.

“My lord,” Tillaume said, stepping closer. “May I speak . . . boldly, for a moment?”

“You may.”

“The city has a large number of constables,” Tillaume said. “And they are quite capable in their jobs. Our house, however, has but one high lord. Thousands depend on you, sir.” Tillaume nodded his head in respect, then moved to begin lighting some candles in the bedroom.

The butler's words were true. House Ladrian was one of the most powerful in the city, at least historically. In the city's government, Wax represented the interests of all of the people his house employed. True, they'd also have a representative based on votes in their guild, but it was Wax they depended on most.

His house was nearly bankrupt—rich in potential, in holdings, and in workers, but poor in cash and connections because of his uncle's foolishness. If Wax didn't do something to change that, it could mean jobs lost, poverty, and collapse as other houses pounced on his holdings and seized them for debts not paid.

Wax ran his thumbs along his Sterrions. *The constables handled those street toughs just fine*, he admitted to himself. *They didn't need me. This city doesn't need me, not like Weathering did.*

He was trying to cling to what he had been. He wasn't that person any longer. He couldn't be. But people did need him for something else.

"Tillaume," Wax said.

The butler looked back from the candleas. The mansion didn't have electric lights yet, though workmen were coming to install them soon. Something his uncle had paid for before dying, money Wax couldn't recover now.

"Yes, my lord?" Tillaume asked.

Wax hesitated, then slowly pulled his shotgun from its place inside his coat and set it into the trunk beside his bed, placing it beside a companion he'd left there earlier. He took off his mistcoat, wrapping the thick material over his arm. He held the cloak reverently for a moment, then placed it in the trunk. His Sterrion revolvers followed. They weren't his only guns, but they represented his life in the Roughs.

He closed the lid of the trunk of his old life. "Take this, Tillaume," Wax said. "Put it somewhere."

"Yes, my lord," Tillaume said. "I shall have it ready for you, should you need it again."

"I won't be needing it," Wax said. He had given himself one last night with the mists. A thrilling climb up the tower, an evening spent with the darkness. He chose to focus on that—rather than his failure with the toughs—as his night's accomplishment.

One final dance.

"Take it, Tillaume," Wax said, turning away from the trunk. "Put it somewhere safe, but put it away. For good."

"Yes, my lord," the butler said softly. He sounded approving.

And that, Wax thought, *is that*. He then walked into the washroom. Wax the lawkeeper was gone.

It was time to be Lord Waxillium Ladrian, Sixteenth High Lord of House Ladrian, residing in the Fourth Octant of Elendel City.

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