

# Origin of Swords

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# Chapter 1

## Twilights Shadow

“In your dungeon are there chains enough to hold me? Guards enough to stop me when I am free? And when the time comes are you man enough to face me? or will you too turn and flee?” The chained man said confidently to emperor Colin, the tall armored man standing before him. The man simply gestured at the guard holding the chains.

“Silence cur!” shouted the large guard and cuffed the chained man about the ear with a wooden truncheon. The chained man stumbled and looked upon his jailer with contempt and said “Strike me now with all your might, while my chains allay your fright. Strike me now while you may, for with complete truth I say, I shall take your life ere you see tomorrows light. ”

“ Ralstor” said the tall armored man. “Yes my emperor” responded the jailer. “Ralstor, take this fool to the dungeon, and show him just how many chains we poses, tell the men to find out who hired him and then execute him in the public square. Perhaps then whomever hired him will learn that assassins are a waste of money. Oh and when we find out who hired him, find them, torture them in the public square then kill them”

“Some are yet free seeking peace and prosperity. Some wallow in mire oppressed by the emperor most dire. While I still breathe you’ll find no reprieve, and tomorrow shall see your pyre!” growled the chained man. The emperor sighed and responded “And by all means gag him! If I have to suffer through another rhyme I may just slit my OWN throat.” Ralstor bowed and said “At your command emperor.”

Then, suiting actions to words, Ralstor jabbed the chained man in the stomach with the truncheon causing the man in chains to gasp. Ralstor then wrapped a spare length of chain around the prisoners head ensuring that the prisoners mouth could not work its way free of the improvised bit. The prisoner now had his feet hobbled, his hands chained behind his back, another chain around his neck and a final chain wrapped around his head and in his mouth. Ralstor began tugging on the chain around the prisoners neck “Now come with me you filthy retch you can keep the other prisoners company!” The man was dragged forcibly from the throne room and out a set of large wooden doors.

Ralston took great pleasure in jerking the man along causing the prisoner to stumble down the many hallways and stone steps leading to the dungeon. On their halting path through the great castle, evidence of the recent usurpation was everywhere from the guards still on full alert to the not quite removed blood stains on the walls and floors.

The new emperor had gained the throne barely a month prior, just long enough to cause unrest and inspire the citizens to pool their resources and attempt to remove the foul beast of an emperor. The empress Nora had been a fair and just ruler, possibly a little too lax in her security as her cousin Colin, the new emperor, had little trouble overthrowing her guards and slaughtering her. The only current threat to his rule lay in Nora's sister, Lavender, however emperor Colin had a large bounty placed on Lavender's head. The bounty combined with the fact that Lavender had not been seen in the empire for several years made Colin confident in maintaining the throne.

The chained man was an assassin caught in a barely concealed attempt to infiltrate the castle. As a swarthy man with green almond shaped eyes, black hair, dressed completely in black, carrying a pair of short swords with a crescent shaped scar marring the left side of his face he was instantly apprehended as soon as he set foot in the castle. He refused to answer question or rise to the insults concerning his lack of stealth or skill. He would only speak in rhyme or poem and then only to threaten. The guards beat him, stripped him to the waist, and gave his swords to the captain of the palace guard, Ralstor. Ralstor had then ordered the would be assassin chained and personally delivered him to the emperor, presenting the assassin and the weapons.

The swords were of unrivaled craftsmanship. A matched pair of short swords, one single edged with a slight curve. The other straight and double edged. Each was 70 centimeters long and very well balanced. The hilts of both swords were a matte gray metal the handle of the curved sword was black ray skin wrapped in red cord, the straight blade was red ray skin wrapped in black cord. Each had a black scabbard with strange runes worked on them in red lacquer. The straight sword had a sun setting behind mountains engraved just above the hilt and was known as Twilight. The curved sword bore the mark of a waning gibbous moon and was known as Shadow. When the assassin was caught he carried the straight sword over his left shoulder and the curved on his left hip. When the prisoner and his weapons were presented to the emperor the swords were gifted to Ralstor who now carried them upon his belt as he roughly transported the assassin to the dungeon.

As the assassin was lead deeper into the castle, the guards and torches grew less and less frequent. As they began descending the final staircase just enough light was cast to show the disturbing stains on the stones and the growth of moss and mold on the walls. Once they reached the bottom of the spiral stairs and the door to the dungeon Ralstor kicked the prisoner in the back of the knees causing him to fall and said "Now stay there while I get the door open.". Ralstor then unhooked the large ring of keys from his belt and, walking toward the door, began searching for the key to the dungeon.

While Ralstor's back was turned the prisoner rolled his shoulders to bring

his arms up and over his head, dislocating and reseating his shoulder joints in the process. Hearing the rattle of the chains Ralstor dropped the keys and spun around, reaching for his truncheon. Before Ralstor could swing the truncheon the assassin had leapt in the air and with both feet delivered a mighty kick to Ralstor's chest knocking him back into the dungeon door. Landing in front of Ralstor the assassin viscusly head butt the hapless guard three times in quick succession each causing Ralstor's head to slam into the door of the dungeon. A voice from the other side said "Yeah yeah! just a minute!" Then while Ralstor was still dazed, the assassin quickly grabbed the ring of keys and unlocked his bindings. Then removing Twilight and Shadow from Ralstor's belt he said

"I stand before you free from chain and I return to you the gift of pain. Forced upon me by your will I now return it with added steel!" The assassin then swung the straight bladed Twilight and removed Ralstor's head from his body. "The last gift I give to you, is a death, swift and true. For though my task grows from evil's seed, I will not do evil's deed."

While the assassin was removing the scabbard for his swords from the Ralstor's cooling body, the dungeon door opened to reveal a man bare to the waist and covered in spatters of blood. He said "whats all the commotion?" as he was cleaning a blood spot of his glasses, " I was in the middle of an interrogation! Couldn't you,," here he paused in his complaint as the severity of the situation finally hit him.

"Evil's foul shepherd. Rending soul from flesh and bone. Go to your penance." whispered the assassin as he thrust Shadow through the throat of the jailer. Then he flung the door open and stepped inside. He surveyed the foul pit of despair that was the castle's dungeon. Though the emperor had only been in power a short while, his demeanor and his evil followers had already left their mark upon the dungeon. Never had it been a happy place, as jails never are, but in times past it was clean and justice was swift and merciful. Emperor Colin was a firm believer in torture and extracting what he wanted to hear from his prisoners. Like calls to like and so Colin had a following of foul evil people who were more than happy to do his bidding. The dungeon now reflected this and was full of the smell of the charnel house and the sad mewling of broken and bleeding prisoners.

A quick glance revealed three more jailers standing at tables in the middle of the room torturing prisoners. There were six cells at the back of the room and two on each side. There were also five tables holding prisoners in various stages of torture and a number of relatively healthy prisoners chained to the walls. Pointing Twilight at the nearest prisoner then with a word and a gesture the assassin unlocked the shackles holding the prisoner who looked the most vital and said. "Through magics gift I set you free, and now I slaughter your jailers three. Whilst I do this dark good deed see to it the others are freed." The assassin then tossed the keys to the prisoner who nodded his thanks and quickly set about releasing the other captives.

While this exchange took place the torturers had begun approaching the assassin. The jailer directly in front of the assassin was holding a dagger and said "Try your luck mate but three against one does not favor you!" The assassin

then ran forward toward the man with the dagger. Just as the man swung his dagger, the assassin leapt and rolled to the side in front of a torturer holding a pole with a serrated blood spattered blade on the end. Rising to his feet and leading with his swords the assassin caught the jailer by surprise and in the stomach with both blades. Lifting his assailant above his head and hurling him across the room into the third, hook wielding, torturer knocking him to the ground. The assassin then turned to face the man with the dagger. The Jailer with the dagger had gone completely pale beneath the flecks of blood dotting his face and began to stammer as the assassin moved toward him “n-n-now w-w-wait a min-” before he could finish his sentence the assassin had raised both swords and, pointing Twilight’s straight blade at the jailer, he swept Shadow’s curved edge along the length of the blade and uttered three harsh syllables and a ball of brilliant orange flame, the color of the setting sun, leapt from the tip of Twilight and engulfed the jailer in flames. As the flaming jailer screamed the assassin walked past him and spinning shadow to a blade down grip stabbed the flaming jailer in the stomach, then in one smooth rotation spun around to his left, pulling Shadow free, and at the same time decapitating the burning jailer with Twilight.

The Still burning head landed at the feet of the third jailer who had just extricated himself from the dead body of his former co-worker. Seeing the assassin, a flaming head, and an increasing number of freed, angry prisoners he turned to run from the room. Quickly slinging the blood from shadow and re-sheathing it upon his left hip, the assassin then ducked and grabbed the dropped dagger. Just before the remaining jailer could leave the door the assassin threw the 25 centimeters of steel and struck the fleeing figure behind the knee.

“Swift and sure is the kindest way,” said the assassin as he walked toward the now crippled jailer “but Justice would be to make you pay, though I am in position to make this decision, and so you must see what the others say.” Then with a last glance at the prisoners, all of whom were holding some form of weapon, the assassin gave a last kick to the torturer and left the torture chamber and began quickly retracing his steps back to the throne room.

After deftly dispatching any guard who attempted to stop him and leaving those he could avoid to be dealt with by the recently freed prisoners he found himself in front of the double doors leading into the throne room. Pausing briefly to center himself and to catch his breath, the assassin then drew both swords and kicked the doors open. The emperor rose from the throne but before he could say or do anything the assassin once again pointed Twilight uttered the words of the spell and drawing Shadow along the other swords length cast a burning ball of magical fire at the emperor. Then with a spinning back kick he slammed the doors shut and with another word and a gesture he fused the doors together sealing off the main exit preventing escape or reinforcements.

There were eight pillars in the room, four on each side, and behind each stood a guard. The room was open to the floor above on both sides and at the back. The previous empress encouraged her people to come and witness the day to day dealings of the empire. The current emperor however simply posted archers in the viewing galleries, two on each side and two in the back. These

archers, upon witnessing the assassins dramatic entrance, immediately began to nock arrows.

The emperor, having dodged the fireball, shouted “ GAURDS! ARCHERS! KILL HIM!” and preparing to follow his own orders grabbed his own sword and shield from their stands next to his throne. The throne room was in the form of a rectangle, longer on the sides with the main doors facing the raised dais upon which sat three thrones, the lesser of the two were originally for the ruler and the rulers spouse. The new, grander throne was emperor Colin’s, who refused to sit on the old throne.

As the first pair of guards began to approach the assassin rolled forward, avoiding two arrows, and sprang up between the first two guards. The guard on the right met a swift death as Twilight pierced the chain amour which was insufficiently protecting his chest. The right guard managed to get his shield up in time to block Shadow but he did not drop his sword fast enough to protect his right leg as the assassin struck down with Twilight cleaving down to the femur. As the guard screamed and dropped his sword the assassin quickly jumped up and over him rotating in mid air to land behind the guard facing the his back. Two arrows impacted in the guards chest as the assassin crossed both swords over his shoulders and scissored the guards head from his body.

As the guards body dropped the assassin spoke in a loud clear voice “ My quarrel lies not with you. The emperor’s crimes are more than few. Soon his life will end, soul from body I will rend. Lay down your arms and your lives I’ll spare, for see how those who face me fare!” As he finished speaking another archer let loose an arrow. The assassin knocked the arrow aside with Twilight’s straight blade. Then with a shout he hurled Shadow at the archer. With a blur and a loud whistle the sword flew through the air rotating so quickly as to appear as a wanning moon. It struck the archer, passed threw him and stuck in the wall behind.

The assassin then spun to face the soldier coming up on his right with an overhand chop the assassin brought Twilight down toward the guard. Responding as he was trained the guard raised his shield and drew his hand back to stab the assassins exposed chest. Quick enough to blur the assassin struck the guard in the throat with the knuckles of his right hand. As the guard made gurgling noises the assassin entered into the soldiers range, dropped his right hand down to knock the sword from the soldiers grip then grabbing the soldiers right wrist, ducking and shoving his left shoulder into the guards stomach, he raised up and threw the guard behind him to collide with two more of the sentinels charged with protecting the emperor.

Upon witnessing the rapid decimation of his protectors the emperor roared in rage and spread his arms wide. Rotating his arms in a circle and chanting in a foul and dark tongue the emperor brought his shield around in front of himself, parallel to the ground, then laying his sword flat upon it Colin finished his evil chant and what appeared to be liquid darkness shot from the blade straight at the assassin. Hearing the chant the assassin turned to face the emperor and holding Twilight up in a salute said in a sing song voice: “Though I walk the path from light to dark, and ’tis twilight’s sign with which I am marked. Though

the gift of darkness is what I bear 'tis lights own purpose that I share!" Just as the last syllable left the assassins mouth the sword Twilight began to glow the orange-red of sunset, the glow of a dying forge, it cast a harsh red light over the entire room.

As the bolt of darkness met the sword it melted as shadow before the sun and the emperor and the eleven remaining soldiers cried out at the sudden light. The assassin using the momentary blindness leapt up to the wall and then kicking off to a pillar and then back again to the viewing gallery. Landing near a startled archer the assassin wasted no time in cleaving through the archers bow and into his chest. The assassin then turned and ran with all his might toward the archer at the opposite end of the balcony. The archer there calmly nocked an arrow, took aim and fired.

Just as the arrow would have hit the assassin he ducked and slid underneath tripping the archer. In one gracefull movement the assassin rose up from his slide and used his momentum to carry the archer over the side of the viewing gallery. The ill fated archer landed with a sickening wet snap as his neck shattered. With out pause the assassin continued his head long rush.

Upon rounding the corner to the back balcony the assassin caught an arrow fired by the furthest archer spun it in his fingers and stabbed the nearest archer in the chest. Then continuing his charge he held Twilight like a spear in both hands and with a shout impaled the second to last archer in the belly then tipped him over the side. As the assassin rounded the corner to face the last archer he met a flurry of fireballs having been launched from the six soldiers remaining on the lower floor. The assassin quickly did a back handspring to avoid the firestorm. He then held out his right hand, uttered a word and Shadow pulled free from the wall, spun through the remaining archer and returned to the assassins hand.

The assassin then peered over the edge of the balcony and quickly pulled back as another fireball flew at him. Backing up and taking a running jump from the balcony he threw Shadow at the cluster of guards cutting through two and sticking in third. The assassin landed with a forward roll and immediately had to throw himself to the side as the emperor swung his large broadsword in a horizontal strike which would have cleaved the assassin in half had it connected.

The assassin came to his feet reached out his arm and called Shadow back to his hand. The Three remaining guards cautiously approached the panting assassin. The emperor chuckled lightly and said " Where are your rhymes now assassin? Surrender, you can not best me!" The assassin simply flipped his swords to flick the blood from them, set himself in a fighting stance and said "Come what may, I must stay till in a grave you lay."

Then a fight like no other began, the assassin moved faster than anyone could have believed. Fending of strike after strike and returning them in turn. His first injury came from a guard who sliced into the assassins left arm and in turn received a vicious kick to the sternum followed by slice to the throat taking him out of the fight and into the beyond. The next soldier to fall did so by being twisted and slammed into the emperors own sword. The assassin began to slow as he grew tired and so took another injury, a stab to the left shoulder

causing him to drop Twilight.

As soon as the sword left the assassins fingers its glow faded. The remaining two soldiers and the emperor redoubled their efforts thinking the battle nearly won. When suddenly the assassin leapt out of the fray and with two sharp words hurled Shadow at them from mid-air. The sword missed the emperor and one of the guards the third lost his head to the rapidly spinning blade which then arced back to the assassins hand.

As soon as the assassin leapt away the emperor began his spell again. With arms flung wide and dark words filling the room he began summoning the darkness to do his bidding. The assassin lacking Twilight to counter the spell ran forward in a desperate attempt to stop the emperor. The last remaining soldier stepped in front of the rushing figure in an attempt to waylay his progress. Without breaking stride the assassin performed a twisting front flip over the last remaining guards head slicing it off in the process. Landing in a forward roll which allowed him to scoop up twilight.

Just as the emperors spell entered its last stage the assassin shouted “Twilights last light casting aside the Shadow driving the darkness home and away. One last chance to end evil, one last chance to save the day! Darkest day undone by light, in one fell swoop avoid the night! Sever the ties that bind this life to this form. No more, no less embrace the glittering swarm!” On the last word the assassin drove both Twilight and Shadow into his own belly. He then immediately shattered into a swarm of glittering shards of metal which swirled around the emperor in a razor sharp cyclone piercing amour and flaying flesh from bone. The maelstrom of steel lasted only an instant, but long enough to end the brief reign of evil.

As the broken form of the emperor fell to it’s knees and then to the floor. The glittering cloud of steel shards coalesced back into the two swords in the middle of the room and clattered to the floor. Shortly there after the door to the throne room was forced open. The freed prisoners stormed into the throne room but in their midst was a woman in her mid twenties dressed in light purple robes. She gazed upon the bloody form of Colin the usurper and said “Death was what you deserved cousin, but not at this cost.” She then picked up Twilight and Shadow and holding them both out at arms length and began to speak in a low dronig voice.

“Dealer of death, form of darkness given flesh.  
Though your task was completed you paid far more than was needed.  
Rise again to serve your land  
return to life this I command.”

As she spoke the torches in the room began to grow dim only the form of the dead emperor remained lit as though the setting sun were shining upon the bleeding form that once was his body.

“Remove the cause of death most dire.  
Return to me he who should not expire.  
return to him his old frame  
only made from this one full of shame  
return to me the man I most admire!”

With this verse the Shadow and Twilight began to hover of their own accord casting light on the body of the late emperor Colin. Then the lady in the purple cloak continued:

“Though darkness born, for light you died,  
to save a kingdom was for what you vied,  
in this task you have succeeded,  
though in the end you were defeated,  
come stand once again by my side!

As she completed the last verse Twilight and Shadow plunged into the body of Colin and the glow from the swords increased so that it became impossible to look upon them. Finally the lady said:

“You have all my thanks.  
for halting the foes ranks.  
now return to me!”

With the final phrase complete the light increased to a point where it penetrated even closed eyes. Then a deep bass note which had barely been audible before scaled up through the frequencies until it became a high pitched whine. Then instantly the sound and the light stopped and there was a gasp and a thud. When the lady in purple opened her eyes the assassin lay on the ground where once was the battered form of the emperor. In his hands he clutched both swords. His body covered in nothing but scars.