Prince of Thorns

Prince of Thorns introduces **Jorg Ancrath**, a thirteen-year-old prince turned ruthless warlord, in a brutal, post-apocalyptic medieval world. After witnessing the murder of his mother and brother, Jorg abandons his royal life to lead a band of outlaws, embracing violence and cunning as his weapons.

With a blade in his hand and vengeance in his heart, Jorg cuts a bloody path across the **Broken Empire**, where fragments of a long-lost technological civilization lie buried beneath castles and corpses. But as he closes in on his enemies, he must confront the darkness within himself—and the horrifying truth about the world he seeks to conquer.

Mark Lawrence’s debut is a lightning bolt of grimdark fantasy, blending savage action, psychological depth, and a protagonist who challenges every notion of heroism.

Chapter 1

The chapter opens with a grim scene in the town of Mabberton, where the aftermath of a brutal battle is described in vivid detail. The narrator, Jorg, observes ravens gathering over the corpses as his companion, Rike, loots the dead. The town square is drenched in blood, with corpses strewn about in grotesque poses. Jorg reflects on the irony of war, calling it a "thing of beauty" despite the carnage, and notes how the farmers' defiance led to their slaughter. His cold detachment and dark humor underscore his ruthless nature.

Jorg’s interactions with his fellow warriors reveal the dynamics of their group. Rike, greedy and violent, complains about the meager spoils, while Jorg hints at other forms of "gold" to be found. Makin, the peacemaker, diffuses tension with jokes and suggests

seeking out farmers' daughters as part of their plunder. The camaraderie among the men is laced with brutality, as they casually discuss their next targets. Jorg’s authority is evident as he silences Rike with a warning look, asserting his control over the group.

The narrative shifts to Jorg’s confrontation with Bovid Tor, the dying leader of the farmers. Bovid, mortally wounded, addresses Jorg as "boy," provoking his anger. Jorg taunts him about the fate of his potential daughters, revealing his cruelty. Bovid’s disbelief at Jorg’s youth—mistaking him for fifteen—fuels Jorg’s indignation, as he boasts of his ambitions to become king by that age. The exchange highlights Jorg’s pride and his obsession with power and recognition, even in the face of death.

The chapter closes with Jorg ordering Bovid’s decapitation, leaving his body for the ravens. His final thoughts dismiss Bovid’s underestimation of him, reinforcing his determination to achieve greatness. The last line, referencing Brother Gemt’s abrasive nature, adds a darkly humorous note, encapsulating the chapter’s tone of violence and defiance. Jorg’s nihilistic worldview and relentless drive for dominance are central to the chapter’s themes.

Chapter 2

The chapter opens with Jorg and his band of outlaws, the Brothers, riding through a scorched landscape during a relentless summer drought. They burn the village of Mabberton, reveling in destruction and violence. Makin and Rike exchange crude remarks about farmers and their daughters, highlighting their merciless nature. Jorg reflects on the chaos of their actions, framing it as part of the empire’s collapse. The fire consumes the village, symbolizing both their brutality and the world’s decay, while Jorg’s detached narration underscores his nihilistic worldview.

Gemt, one of the Brothers, criticizes Jorg for burning Mabberton, fearing it will alert the Baron’s men. Jorg dismisses his concerns with sarcasm, though Gemt’s warnings hint at underlying tensions within the group. The exchange reveals Jorg’s volatile leadership style—he tolerates dissent but harbors violent impulses. Gemt’s constant objections irritate Jorg, who fantasizes about killing him, showcasing his ruthless pragmatism and simmering rage. The Brothers gather around, sensing conflict, as Jorg prepares to assert his authority.

Jorg questions the group about their destination, the Horse Coast, and the route they must take—the dangerous Lich Road. He manipulates the conversation to justify his actions, arguing that the fire serves as a deterrent to pursuers. Gemt reluctantly agrees but remains defiant, sealing his fate. Jorg’s calm demeanor contrasts with his brutality as he stabs Gemt, demonstrating his willingness to kill even his own men to maintain control. The execution is swift and calculated, reinforcing his dominance.

The chapter closes with Maical, another Brother, beheading Gemt under Jorg’s orders. The act underscores the group’s brutal hierarchy and Jorg’s capricious violence. A final note reveals Maical’s broken psyche, hidden beneath a tough exterior, hinting at the psychological toll of their lawless existence. The chapter paints a grim portrait of Jorg’s leadership—charismatic yet tyrannical—and the Brothers’ savage camaraderie, set

against a world spiraling into chaos.



Chapter 3

The chapter opens with Jorg and his band of outlaws, the "brothers," traveling along the monotonous Lich Road. Their journey is interrupted by the discovery of a gibbet holding four prisoners—two dead and two still alive. The group, eager for diversion, races to investigate. Jorg, riding his horse Gerrod, arrives first and reflects on the road's eerie perfection, built unnaturally straight and level across a bog. The brothers, including the brutish Rike and the Nuban, gather around the gibbet, betting and joking, while Jorg remains unbothered by the gibbet's inexplicable presence in the marsh.

Upon reaching the gibbet, Jorg and Makin discuss the strategic advantage of the Lich Road, comparing it to a defensible bridge. Thunder rumbles in the distance as the group settles in, and Jorg takes the opportunity to read his prized copy of Plutarch, admiring the craftsmanship of the monk who illuminated it. Meanwhile, one of the surviving prisoners, a vocal and defiant man, taunts the brothers, provoking them with insults. The tension escalates until Jorg recognizes the prisoner as Father Gomst, his former tutor, who is shocked to see the prince leading such a brutal band.

Father Gomst, now a broken and desperate figure, pleads with Jorg to flee, warning of an impending danger lurking in the marsh. His urgency is met with skepticism until eerie lights appear in the distance, moving unnaturally across the bog. Gomst's warnings grow frantic, but Jorg, stubborn and defiant, refuses to run, standing his ground against the unknown threat. The chapter ends with a sense of foreboding as the brothers, now silent and uneasy, face the approaching lights and the coming storm.

The final line, a darkly humorous aside about Brother Gains being the cook only because he’s bad at everything else, provides a brief moment of levity amidst the growing tension. The chapter masterfully blends action, character dynamics, and atmospheric dread, setting the stage for an ominous confrontation while revealing

glimpses of Jorg's complex past and leadership style.



Chapter 4

The chapter opens with a haunting scene as the protagonist and his companions flee through a rain-soaked marsh, pursued by spectral figures of the dead. The brothers scatter in terror, some succumbing to the mire, while Father Gomst prays desperately in his cage. The first ghost emerges, radiating an eerie, cold light, and the protagonist stands alone, arms outstretched, unafraid. His calm defiance contrasts sharply with the panic around him, hinting at his deeper understanding of the horrors they face.

As the lich approaches, the protagonist engages it with chilling composure, mocking Gomst’s prayers and declaring his father’s earthly power. The ghost reveals its torment, claiming to carry "hell," but the protagonist remains unfazed. He reflects on his past, recalling a traumatic childhood event where Count Renar’s men murdered his family. The memory of his mother’s throat being slit and his brother William’s brutal death fuels his resolve, shaping his worldview. The thorns that once restrained him now symbolize the harsh lessons that taught him life’s cruel game.

The protagonist reveals his philosophy: life is a game, and victory comes from detachment. He scorns those who cling to sentimentality, comparing them to chess players who lose because they love their pieces too much. When the lich invades his mind, he confronts it with his own emptiness and despair, turning the tables. The ghost flees, unable to withstand his cold indifference. The chase is brief, as the protagonist’s focus remains on the larger war—one he is determined to win by playing without attachment.

The chapter concludes with the protagonist’s unwavering confidence in his strategy. He sees the world’s suffering as mere moves in a game, and his lack of fear gives him an edge. His traumatic past has hardened him, and his encounter with the lich only reinforces his belief that emotional detachment is the key to victory. The rain, the ghosts, and the memories all fade into the background as he reaffirms his commitment

to outplay his enemies, no matter the cost.



Chapter 5: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with the protagonist, a nine-year-old prince, consumed by thoughts of revenge after surviving a brutal attack that killed his mother and brother. Found barely alive in hook-briar by Sir Reilly and his men, he witnesses the aftermath of the massacre, including the discovery of his family's mutilated bodies. A shield fragment reveals Count Renar’s insignia, igniting a fiery resolve in the prince to survive and seek vengeance. Despite his severe injuries, he is taken back to the castle, where his physical pain is overshadowed by the burning hatred that keeps him alive.

In the Healing Hall, the prince endures agonizing treatment as Friar Glen and his aide, Inch, attempt to remove the briar hooks from his flesh. His tutor, Lundist, intervenes with medical advice from a book, but the friar dismisses him, prioritizing spiritual purity over practical care. The prince’s wounds become infected, plunging him into a feverish delirium for weeks. During this time, he experiences violent episodes, including an escape attempt that results in Inch’s death and a fire in the hall. The friar, convinced the boy is possessed, abandons him, leaving Lundist to oversee his recovery.

Throughout his illness, the prince teeters on the edge of death, haunted by visions of the afterlife—a dark river, a stone bridge, or a frost-covered door—symbolizing his struggle between surrender and survival. His hatred for Count Renar becomes his anchor, a force stronger than love or fear, pulling him back from the brink. When the fever finally breaks, he is left physically scarred and emotionally hollow, as if something fundamental has been stripped from him. The arrival of spring marks his slow return to strength, though his innocence and former self seem irrevocably lost.

As the prince recovers, Lundist resumes his tutelage, delivering a hollow reassurance that the king will visit once his grief eases. The prince, however, sees through the lie, recognizing his father’s indifference. His first question to Lundist—whether revenge is

a science or an art—underscores his transformation. No longer a child, he is now a vessel of vengeance, poised to channel his pain into a calculated pursuit of retribution. The chapter closes with a chilling foreshadowing of the darkness that will define his path forward.



Chapter 6

The chapter opens with Jorg, the protagonist, reflecting on the fleeing spirits and the cowardice of his companions after a confrontation. He reunites with Makin, who advises him to pick his battles wisely rather than fight everyone. Jorg, however, asserts his determination to face all challenges head-on, declaring his intent to win the ongoing war. Despite Makin's warnings, Jorg's resolve remains unshaken, and his leadership earns Makin's loyalty, even as they rescue their mud-stranded comrades, Rike and Maical, from the marsh.

Jorg decides to retrieve Father Gomst, an old priest hanging in a gibbet cage, despite the reluctance of his companions. As he ventures back alone, the oppressive silence and darkness amplify his inner turmoil. He frees Gomst using a stolen ancestral sword, a symbolic act that contrasts the blade's noble history with its current use. Gomst, initially fearful, softens upon recognizing Jorg, but their interaction takes a darker turn when Jorg delivers a chilling confession of his past and future sins, unsettling the priest.

The confession reveals Jorg's manipulative nature as he coerces Gomst into absolving him, not out of repentance but to legitimize his ruthless ambitions. He declares himself God's instrument, aiming to sway the faithful to his cause. Gomst, horrified yet powerless, grants absolution, and they rejoin the group. Jorg's headache intensifies, hinting at an external force influencing him, possibly supernatural or psychological, adding to his volatile demeanor.

The chapter concludes with Jorg announcing their detour to the Tall Castle to deliver Gomst to his father, King of Ancrath. This decision, seemingly strategic, is tinged with personal vendetta and a desire to confront his past. The headache's persistence suggests an underlying struggle for control, both internally and externally, as Jorg's path grows increasingly ruthless. The chapter underscores his complex morality,

blending brutality with calculated charisma, as he maneuvers toward his ultimate goal of victory.



Chapter 7

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and his companions arriving at the ruined town of Norwood, which has been burned to the ground. Makin suggests the destruction is the work of Count Renar, while Father Gomst speculates it could be Baron Kennick’s men. Jorg reflects on his childhood memories of Norwood and concludes Renar is responsible, noting the absence of bodies and the likelihood of a mass pyre. The scene sets a grim tone, highlighting the brutality of war and Jorg’s detached, almost appreciative view of it as a form of "artistry."

Jorg interrogates Father Gomst about his recent whereabouts, revealing the priest had been sent by Jorg’s father to identify his son among the dead. Gomst’s nervous demeanor betrays his mission, and Jorg deduces his father is still searching for him after four years. The revelation that the Queen is pregnant and a heathen advisor named Sageous is influencing the king adds tension. Jorg’s sharp questioning underscores his distrust of authority and his father’s cold, calculating nature, which prioritizes succession over familial bonds.

A confrontation erupts when Rike, furious over the lack of loot, attacks Fat Burlow and turns his rage on Jorg. Jorg diffuses the situation by leading Rike to a hidden cache of festival beer beneath the grain-store tower. The discovery momentarily distracts Rike, but Jorg maintains control by holding a sword to his throat. The interaction showcases Jorg’s cunning and ability to manipulate his volatile companions, even as tensions simmer beneath the surface.

The chapter closes with Makin’s return and Gomst urging Jorg to return to his father, which Jorg angrily rejects. Rike’s confusion over Jorg’s royal title and the group’s dynamics adds a layer of dark humor. The scene underscores Jorg’s conflicted identity—caught between his past as a prince and his present as a ruthless leader of outlaws. The chapter masterfully blends action, intrigue, and character development,

leaving the reader eager to see how Jorg’s past will continue to haunt him.



Chapter 8

The chapter opens with Jorg and his band of brothers drinking beer amidst the ruins of the burgermeister’s house. The men regard Jorg with newfound respect, though tensions simmer beneath the surface, particularly with Rike, who eyes Jorg warily. Jorg reveals his ambition to wage war not just against local lords like the Count or Baron Kennick, but against the entire fractured empire. His companions are skeptical, dismissing his claim to the throne as one among many, but Jorg remains undeterred, envisioning an end to the endless cycle of petty conflicts that define their world.

Jorg’s strategic mind comes to the fore as he orchestrates an ambush for an approaching enemy force. He spins a tale of bandits laden with loot to motivate his men, but it becomes clear the real threat is a disciplined troop of soldiers. Jorg meticulously positions his brothers in hidden locations, setting traps and assigning roles to maximize their advantage. His authority is unquestioned, even as Makin and others express confusion about his true intentions. Jorg’s leadership is both calculating and charismatic, blending manipulation with a vision of grandeur.

As the enemy scouts appear, the tension escalates. Brother Elban, one of Jorg’s chosen men, recognizes the soldiers for what they are and considers fleeing, but Jorg dissuades him with a mix of threat and cryptic advice. The chapter highlights Jorg’s ability to command loyalty through fear and persuasion, even as the stakes rise. The arrival of the main enemy force, bearing house colors, confirms the gravity of the situation, setting the stage for an inevitable confrontation.

The chapter closes with a sense of impending violence, as Jorg and his small group stand exposed, baiting the enemy into the trap. Father Gomst’s prayers underscore the moral ambiguity of Jorg’s actions, while Jorg himself grapples with a familiar, almost prophetic, pain that hints at deeper forces at play. The stage is set for battle, with Jorg’s ambition and cunning poised against the disciplined might of his foes,

marking what he believes could be the first page of his legend—or his downfall.



Chapter 9: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg engaged in a tense lesson with his tutor, Lundist, who tests his understanding of their discussion on how enemies define individuals and nations. Jorg, though distracted by violent memories, correctly summarizes the lesson, revealing his sharp intellect. Lundist points to neighboring territories as threats to Ancrath, but Jorg fixates on Count Renar, expressing a visceral desire for revenge. Lundist, with piercing blue eyes, recognizes the depth of Jorg’s hatred and urges him to focus on intellectual pursuits like strategy and philosophy, but Jorg’s mind is consumed by bloodlust.

Jorg’s inner turmoil surfaces as he recalls killing a man without memory or remorse, hinting at his fractured psyche. He yearns for Lundist to explain his own nature, but the tutor’s wisdom has limits. When Jorg declares his intent to kill Count Renar, Lundist responds with pity, advising him to choose hatred as his enemy instead of embracing it. Jorg, however, rejects this path, hardening his resolve. Their exchange underscores Jorg’s internal conflict—between the desire for vengeance and the fleeting temptation of redemption—but he ultimately clings to his rage.

The tension escalates when Lundist reveals that the Army of the Gate will not march against Renar, crushing Jorg’s hopes for justice. Jorg reacts with disbelief and fury, unable to comprehend his father’s decision to accept a truce with Renar. Lundist explains the political pragmatism behind the choice: Ancrath lacks the strength to attack Renar while defending its borders, and the alliance forged through Jorg’s mother’s marriage is now broken. The revelation leaves Jorg feeling betrayed and hollow, his thirst for vengeance unquenched.

In the chapter’s closing moments, Jorg’s cold determination solidifies. Despite Lundist’s attempt to soothe him with a walk in the sunshine, Jorg’s smile is sharp and bitter, his heart frozen by unresolved pain. The chapter ends with a cryptic note about

“knife-work,” foreshadowing Jorg’s ruthless path ahead. The scene encapsulates his transformation—from a grieving boy to a prince forged by hatred, unwilling to bend or forgive.



Chapter 10

The chapter opens with the protagonist and his men capturing Sir Renton, a wounded knight from Marclos's retinue. Despite his injuries and dire situation, Renton attempts to assert his status and threatens the protagonist, referencing the stabbing of Count Renar's son under a flag of truce. The protagonist dismisses Renton's bravado, mocking his claims of wealth and highlighting the futility of his defiance. The exchange sets a tense tone, revealing the protagonist's ruthless demeanor and his disdain for social niceties, as well as Renton's desperate attempts to cling to dignity.

As the interrogation continues, Renton places his faith in Father Gomst, hoping for divine intervention. The protagonist, however, coldly undermines this hope, stating that God will only witness Renton's impending death. The scene is punctuated by dark humor and casual brutality, such as the protagonist's request for beer amid discussions of Maical's death. The brothers' indifference to violence and their focus on looting further emphasize the grim world they inhabit, where survival and vengeance take precedence over morality.

The protagonist probes Renton for information about Count Renar's plans, but Renton claims ignorance, invoking God as his witness. The protagonist responds with a chilling threat, suggesting Renton will face torture and execution at the hands of peasants. He reflects on his own traumatic past, revealing how the murder of his family fuels his relentless pursuit of vengeance. Renton challenges the protagonist's sense of entitlement, asking why his suffering is more significant than others', but the protagonist deflects, framing his brutality as a unique "gift" for avenging wrongs.

In the final exchange, the protagonist elaborates on his philosophy of vengeance, rejecting Makin's suggestion to break the cycle of hatred through mercy. Instead, he advocates for exterminating all enemies, drawing his sword as a symbolic gesture. The chapter ends abruptly, leaving the reader with a stark impression of the protagonist's

unyielding ruthlessness and the bleak, violent world he inhabits. The dialogue and imagery reinforce themes of power, trauma, and the dehumanizing effects of revenge.



Chapter 11: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and his tutor, Lundist, stepping out of the schoolroom into the sunlight. Lundist emphasizes the importance of keen observation, urging Jorg to listen and interpret the sounds around them—training swords, birdsong, and the fluttering of the execution flag. This exercise reveals Lundist's teaching philosophy: a sharp mind notices details others overlook. The black-and-scarlet flag signals the king's order to clear the dungeons, foreshadowing the brutal executions to come on Saint Crispin's Day. Lundist reflects on the political use of terror, comparing Ancrath's methods to the elaborate tortures of Ling.

Jorg's thoughts drift to Count Renar, the man responsible for his mother and brother's deaths. He fantasizes about revenge but dismisses prolonged torture, preferring a swift, personal justice. Lundist warns against the excesses of Ling, hinting at his own past as a slave, while Jorg dryly notes its absence from his father's maps. Their conversation underscores the chapter's themes of power, violence, and the moral ambiguities of rulership. The pair then encounter Sir Makin, the new Captain of the Guard, who embodies the martial values Lundist critiques.

Sir Makin challenges Jorg to spar, teasing him with a younger opponent before reluctantly agreeing to let him face Robart, a skilled squire. Lundist protests, citing Jorg's injuries and the king's displeasure, but Jorg insists, asserting his autonomy. The tension between Lundist's intellectual guidance and Makin's physical bravado highlights Jorg's internal conflict: whether to rule through wisdom or force. Makin tests Jorg's swordsmanship, surprised by his skill despite his youth, and ultimately allows the duel to proceed.

The chapter closes with Jorg preparing to fight Robart, defying expectations and asserting his pride. His determination to face the stronger opponent reflects his stubbornness and desire to prove himself, even as Lundist and Makin represent

opposing paths for his future. The scene sets the stage for Jorg’s growth, balancing his ruthless ambition with the lessons of his tutor and the harsh realities of his world. The execution flag looms overhead, a grim reminder of the violence that shapes his kingdom—and his choices.



Chapter 12: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and his tutor, Lundist, descending into the dungeons of the Tall Castle, where they are met with the harrowing screams of a prisoner. Lundist expresses discomfort with the visit, citing the King’s disapproval, but Jorg dismisses his concerns, determined to confront the source of the suffering. The oppressive atmosphere and the tutor’s hesitation highlight Jorg’s defiance and his willingness to challenge authority, even as the screams evoke traumatic memories of his mother’s death, suggesting a deeper psychological wound driving his actions.

Upon entering the dungeon, Jorg encounters two ordinary-looking warders torturing a Nuban prisoner, whose black skin and scarred body starkly contrast with the banality of his tormentors. The warders justify their brutality with religious and racial prejudice, claiming the Nuban is a heathen deserving punishment. Jorg, disguised as a curious servant, engages them in conversation, feigning indifference while subtly probing their motives. The scene underscores the casual cruelty of the torturers and Jorg’s calculated detachment, though the Nuban’s silent, unwavering gaze hints at an unspoken tension between them.

The Nuban’s dignified demeanor and cryptic responses intrigue Jorg, who questions the warders about the prisoner’s crimes. Their vague answers—claiming he is dangerous simply for being caught—reveal the arbitrary nature of his suffering. Lundist interjects, explaining the prisoners are bandits captured by the king’s army, but Jorg’s focus remains on the Nuban. The prince’s curiosity shifts to a challenge as he observes the man’s scars and shackles, culminating in a pivotal moment where he removes a pin from the Nuban’s manacle, demanding proof of his danger.

The chapter climaxes with Jorg’s audacious act of freeing the Nuban’s wrist, defying both the warders and Lundist’s warnings. This gesture symbolizes Jorg’s rejection of blind authority and his desire to test the Nuban’s claimed lethality. The Nuban’s calm

affirmation of his danger and Jorg’s provocative command—“Show me”—set the stage for a confrontation, blending themes of power, rebellion, and the search for truth. The chapter leaves the reader anticipating the consequences of Jorg’s reckless defiance and the Nuban’s next move.



Chapter 13: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with a violent confrontation in a dungeon, where the Nuban, a formidable prisoner, swiftly overpowers his captors, Berrec and Grebbin, using their own weapons against them. His brutal efficiency and lack of hesitation set the tone for the scene, while the reactions of other prisoners—cheering or screaming—highlight the chaos. Lundist, an older man, unexpectedly rushes toward the Nuban and the narrator, Jorg, instead of fleeing, revealing a sense of urgency and hidden strength. The Nuban’s physical dominance and Lundist’s composed demeanor create a stark contrast, foreshadowing their clash.

Jorg, the young narrator, aligns himself with the Nuban, sensing a kinship in the man’s wildness and the bonds he shares with his "road-brothers." He demands the Nuban owe him a life in return for his freedom, hinting at a deeper vendetta. Lundist intervenes, attempting to dissuade Jorg from joining the outlaws, insisting their path is not for him. However, Jorg feels drawn to their raw power and purpose, rejecting Lundist’s warnings. The tension escalates as a massive prisoner, Brother Price, emerges and nearly kills Jorg before the Nuban intervenes, honoring his debt.

The Nuban’s authority among the prisoners becomes evident as he orders the release of the others, solidifying his leadership. Jorg, now standing beside him, reflects on Lundist’s fate—lying injured or dead—and feels only a faint echo of guilt. The scene underscores Jorg’s transformation from a sheltered boy to someone hardened by trauma, as he chooses the brutal world of the outlaws over the "soft lies" of his past. The imagery of fire and memory reinforces his irreversible departure from innocence.

The chapter closes with Jorg’s introspection, recalling the violent night that shattered his childhood and forced him into a harsher reality. He acknowledges that most people transition gradually into adulthood, but his own passage was abrupt and brutal. The Nuban and the outlaws represent a new family for Jorg, one forged in violence and

survival, as he rejects his former life entirely. The chapter sets the stage for his journey ahead, marked by vengeance and a ruthless pursuit of power.



Chapter 14

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and his men departing Norwood, leaving behind a ruined town and sullen peasants. Despite his instinct warning against returning home, Jorg is drawn back to Ancrath, driven by a desire for vengeance against the Count of Renar. As they travel through the lush countryside, the contrast between the war-torn lands he’s accustomed to and the peaceful beauty of his homeland strikes him. Makin, one of his companions, remarks on the familiarity of the scent of home, but Jorg dismisses it as a weakness, believing attachment to land makes men predictable and vulnerable.

Jorg’s cynical worldview is further highlighted when he argues with Makin about the value of homeland. He declares that he would sacrifice Ancrath’s fields without hesitation if it served his goals, emphasizing his ruthless pragmatism. The group encounters a garrison at Chelny Ford, where Captain Coddin initially mistakes them for mercenaries. Jorg reveals his identity through Father Gomst, the King’s priest, and asserts his authority. Though Gomst subtly mocks Jorg’s road-worn state, the prince uses it to portray himself as a hardened warrior, rejecting the comforts of courtly life.

As they continue their journey, Jorg’s return becomes a spectacle. The garrison riders spread news of his arrival, and villages prepare elaborate welcomes. In Bains Town, crowds erupt in celebration, calling him the "Stolen Prince." The scene is chaotic, with minstrels, jugglers, and a dancing bear adding to the frenzy. Jorg remains detached, observing the adulation with a mix of amusement and disdain. Captain Coddin’s quick action to control the crowd earns Jorg’s grudging respect, though the prince’s thoughts linger on the violence he could unleash if provoked.

The chapter underscores Jorg’s complex relationship with his homeland and his identity as a prince. While he rejects sentimental attachments, his return forces him to confront the legacy he left behind. The juxtaposition of his brutal pragmatism and the

people’s reverence for him creates tension, hinting at the conflict between his past and the man he has become. The chapter ends with the anticipation of his arrival at the Tall Castle, where his father and the unresolved vendetta against Count Renar await.



Chapter 15: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with the protagonist, a young boy referred to as "Castle Boy," escaping the Tall Castle with a group of hardened men, including the intimidating Price and Rike. They exit through a discreet route, the Brown Gate, marked by bloodstains and the lingering memory of Lundist, a figure left behind. The boy navigates the group dynamics with sharp wit, refusing to show weakness despite his youth. The setting is grim, with a storm brewing, casting an eerie light over the landscape as they plan their next move. The boy’s voice, still high and pure, contrasts with the rough demeanor of his companions, highlighting his precarious position among them.

The group debates their escape strategy, with Price advocating for a swift, hard journey to put distance between them and the castle. The boy, however, suggests a clever alternative: dispersing into the city to hide among its inhabitants, arguing that blending in would be safer than fleeing en masse. His persuasive speech wins the men over, but Price challenges him, questioning how they’ll afford shelter and food. The boy reveals a purse of coins, asserting his value to the group, but a scuffle ensues when one man attempts to steal it. The boy retaliates with a dagger, demonstrating his resolve and earning a tense standoff with Price.

Price tests the boy’s courage, lifting him by the jerkin and demanding to know if he’s afraid. The boy meets his gaze unflinchingly, and a silent understanding passes between them. Price relents, agreeing to the boy’s plan but confiscating his purse. The boy pairs with the Nuban, a black-skinned man whose presence would draw attention in the city, so they head east into the fields. As they travel, the Nuban warns the boy to fear Price and the gods, but the boy dismisses both, revealing his reckless defiance. The storm breaks, drenching them as they navigate muddy paths, the boy reflecting on the comforts he’s left behind.

The Nuban shares a cryptic tale of their capture, revealing they were taken by a "dream-witch" who ensnared them in sleep, allowing the King’s men to seize them. The boy is skeptical, questioning the witch’s motives and his father’s involvement. The Nuban offers no clear answers, and the boy suppresses his curiosity, choosing to focus on their journey. The rain persists as they press onward, the boy’s thoughts lingering on the Nuban’s warnings and the uncertain path ahead. The chapter ends with a sense of foreboding, as the boy’s defiance clashes with the unseen forces shaping their fate.



Chapter 16: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with a young Jorg trapped in a nightmarish storm, both literal and psychological. Inside a carriage, he experiences vivid, horrifying visions—a baby shaken to death, children burning—while his mother, or a figure resembling her, urges him to sleep. The storm's violence mirrors Jorg's growing unease as he realizes the woman is not his mother but a monstrous entity. The scene crescendos when he confronts her decaying visage, breaking free through a surge of rage and leaping into the storm, symbolizing his escape from terror and manipulation.

Awakening in a barn, Jorg finds himself disoriented but quickly registers danger: a tall man with a massive crossbow stands over the sleeping Nuban, preparing to kill. The remnants of Jorg's nightmare linger, but the urgency of the situation sharpens his focus. Weaponless, he grabs a baling hook and moves decisively, using the storm's noise to mask his approach. His attack is swift and brutal, yanking the hunter off balance just as he aims at the Nuban, who wakes and kills the assailant. The scene underscores Jorg's resourcefulness and instinct for survival.

The aftermath reveals the crossbow's craftsmanship, which the Nuban identifies as originating from his people. He acknowledges owing Jorg another life debt, but the moment turns somber when Jorg declares his ultimate goal: killing Count Renar. This statement extinguishes the Nuban's brief smile, hinting at the gravity and darkness of Jorg's vendetta. The exchange underscores the weight of their shared violence and the unspoken complexities of their alliance.

The chapter blends horror, action, and character dynamics, illustrating Jorg's trauma and ruthlessness. His nightmare reflects deep-seated fears and guilt, while his real-world actions demonstrate his cunning and resolve. The Nuban's reaction to Jorg's vendetta suggests moral tension, foreshadowing future conflicts. The storm serves as a metaphor for chaos and transformation, marking a pivotal moment in Jorg's journey

from victim to avenger.



Chapter 17

Prince Jorg returns to the Tall Castle after four years, struck by how unchanged everything appears despite his own transformation. The familiar corridors and grandeur of the palace evoke a mix of nostalgia and resentment, as he anticipates a confrontation with his father, King Olidan. Instead, he is met with indifference—his father has retired, and Jorg is directed to meet Sageous, the king's enigmatic advisor. The prince's frustration mounts as he senses he is being manipulated, culminating in a tense exchange with a guardsman named Robart, whom he threatens to assert control over the situation.

Jorg's encounter with Sageous in the library reveals the heathen's unsettling power. Despite his unassuming appearance—dressed in a simple cloth and covered in intricate tattoos—Sageous exudes a quiet dominance. His gaze paralyzes Jorg, stripping him of his aggression and leaving him vulnerable. The prince's attempts to provoke or intimidate Sageous falter, as the advisor remains unfazed, even amused. Jorg's internal struggle is palpable; he yearns to act violently but finds himself physically and mentally subdued by Sageous's influence.

The dynamic between Jorg and Sageous underscores the chapter's tension. Sageous's ability to disarm Jorg's defiance hints at a deeper psychological game, one that the prince is ill-equipped to win. Their conversation reveals Sageous's role as a manipulator, possibly controlling King Olidan as well. Jorg's threats and bravado crumble in the face of Sageous's calm authority, leaving him feeling powerless and exposed. The advisor's cryptic remarks about dreams and identity suggest a looming psychological battle, foreshadowing further conflict.

The chapter closes with Jorg succumbing to an overwhelming fatigue, seemingly induced by Sageous's subtle gestures. As he struggles to stay conscious, the heathen's words about dreams and self-discovery linger, implying that Jorg's true test lies ahead.

The encounter leaves the prince physically drained and mentally unsettled, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of his psyche and the forces manipulating him. The chapter masterfully blends tension, intrigue, and psychological warfare, highlighting Jorg’s vulnerability despite his outward defiance.



Chapter 18

The chapter begins with Prince Jorg waking abruptly in an unfamiliar bed, disoriented and alarmed by the unfamiliar comfort of his surroundings. He realizes he is in the Tall Castle, recalling the pagan’s spell that had ensnared him. Stripped of his clothes and gear, he feels vulnerable and suspicious of whoever placed him there. Despite his exhaustion, sleep eludes him, and he grows increasingly uneasy in the oppressive darkness, sensing an unseen presence lurking nearby. His tension mounts as he stumbles through the room, searching for his sword and struggling to open the shutters, only to be met with a chilling sight.

When Jorg finally opens the shutters, moonlight reveals a haunting portrait of his mother, a figure of icy perfection who once despised the painting for its aloofness. The image triggers painful memories of her and his younger brother William, both victims of a brutal attack. The scene becomes surreal as his mother’s portrait accuses him of failing to save them, her screams echoing the horrors of their deaths. William’s ghost appears, his wounds grotesquely visible, further tormenting Jorg with guilt and despair. Overwhelmed, Jorg nearly throws himself out the window before being snapped back to reality.

Makin, Jorg’s companion, bursts into the room, revealing that Jorg had been screaming and blocking the door in his sleep. The vivid nightmare dissipates, leaving Jorg shaken but determined. He realizes the pagan Sageous manipulated his fears, using his grief and guilt as weapons. Though enraged and eager to kill Sageous, Jorg decides to spare him for the time being, recognizing the need to understand the larger game at play. His resolve hardens as he vows to uncover the truth behind the forces manipulating him.

The chapter ends with Jorg regaining his composure, dismissing Makin’s concern and refusing to fear the dark. His nightmare has exposed his deepest wounds, but it has

also sharpened his focus. The encounter leaves him more determined to confront his enemies, both supernatural and mortal, as he seeks to unravel the mysteries surrounding his past and the machinations of those who seek to control him.



Chapter 19

The chapter opens with the protagonist, Jorg, waking in an unfamiliar, luxurious room in the Tall Castle. Disoriented by the comfort, he reflects on his rough past, marked by years of hardship and wearing ragged clothing. Despite the opulence, no servants attend to him, which suits his self-reliant nature. He avoids his reflection in a mirror, a subtle hint at his discomfort with his own identity, and prepares to leave, observing the castle’s bustling courtyard from his window.

Jorg navigates the castle corridors, reminiscing about his childhood adventures in the kitchens, where he and his brother William learned harsh truths about life and death. The kitchens symbolize a place of raw honesty, contrasting with the sterile lessons of Latin and strategy. His memories are tinged with violence, as he recalls witnessing the brutal preparation of food, a metaphor for the ugliness and inevitability of death. The confined space of the castle unsettles him, highlighting his preference for the freedom of the open road.

His journey takes an unexpected turn when he encounters a striking woman with green eyes and red hair. Instinctively, he reacts with aggression, pinning her against a wall before realizing she is no threat. Their exchange is charged with tension and mutual curiosity. She mocks his appearance and questions his presence, while Jorg, though initially defensive, is drawn to her boldness. Their banter reveals her noble status and his own ambiguous motives for returning to the castle, suggesting a deeper conflict or unseen forces guiding his actions.

The chapter concludes with their arrival at the kitchens, where Jorg reveals his Brotherhood brand, a mark of his violent past. The woman’s reaction shifts from disdain to fascination as she notices his extensive scars, prompting Jorg to deflect with a half-truth about a childhood injury. Their interaction underscores his internal struggle with identity and trauma, while her probing questions hint at a potential connection

between them. The chapter leaves their dynamic unresolved, teasing further development in their relationship and Jorg’s mysterious purpose in the castle.



Chapter 20

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and Princess Katherine sharing a meal in the castle kitchens, surrounded by curious servants. The scene is intimate yet performative, as Jorg plays the role of a charming prince, though his thoughts reveal his calculated nature. The arrival of Sir Makin interrupts their moment, bringing news that both Jorg and Katherine are summoned to the throne-room. Makin’s polished appearance and flirtatious interaction with Katherine briefly stirs Jorg’s jealousy, hinting at underlying tensions among the characters. The warmth of the kitchen contrasts sharply with the formality awaiting them in the castle’s upper halls.

As they navigate the bustling castle, the atmosphere shifts to one of grandeur and political maneuvering. The Torrent Vault, lined with the armor of past kings, serves as a symbolic prelude to the throne-room. Makin’s deliberate placement of Jorg ahead of Katherine underscores the prince’s status, though the herald’s omission of Jorg’s name signals a deliberate slight. The throne-room itself is a stark, imposing space, filled with courtiers whose whispered judgments and glittering finery highlight the cutthroat nature of court life. Jorg’s instinct to assess their wealth reflects his lingering road-mentality.

The focus shifts to King Olidan, Jorg’s father, who remains unchanged in demeanor and appearance, draped in the same wolf-skin robe from years past. The new queen, Katherine’s lookalike, sits beside him, her pregnancy hidden beneath an ornate gown. A striking glass tree, possibly her dowry, stands between the thrones, its emerald leaves mirroring Katherine’s eyes. Sageous, the mysterious figure in black robes, observes Jorg with quiet intensity. The scene is laden with unspoken power dynamics, as Jorg’s return disrupts the court’s delicate balance.

The chapter culminates in a tense atmosphere as Jorg and Katherine approach the thrones, hand in hand, under the scrutiny of the court. The perfumed nobles and

armed guards create a sensory overload, contrasting with the raw simplicity of Jorg’s life on the road. The presence of a knight in dragon-adorned armor hints at impending conflict. Jorg’s internal monologue reveals his awareness of the high-stakes game he’s re-entering, where old habits clash with new ambitions. The chapter sets the stage for a confrontation, blending personal grudges with political intrigue.



Chapter 21

The chapter opens with a tense confrontation between the protagonist, Jorg, and his father, the King. After dismissing the court, including a visibly shaken Katherine and the pregnant Queen, the King demands a private audience with Jorg. The interaction is charged with unspoken hostility, underscored by the King’s refusal to address Jorg as "son." Jorg’s mocking bow to Katherine reveals their mutual hatred, a painful but necessary acknowledgment of their fractured relationship. The scene is layered with symbolism, comparing emotional wounds to physical injuries that fester if left untreated, foreshadowing the chapter’s themes of betrayal and vengeance.

The focus shifts to the Queen’s pregnancy, which threatens Jorg’s claim to the throne. His observation of her swelling belly evokes a memory of Brother Kane, whose minor wound led to a gruesome death—a metaphor for how seemingly small threats can become deadly if ignored. This reflection underscores Jorg’s paranoia and his father’s calculated indifference. Meanwhile, Sageous, the court’s enigmatic magician, lingers, visibly disturbed by the destruction of a mystical tree. His hesitation and eventual dismissal highlight his loss of control and the King’s unwavering authority, further emphasizing the power dynamics at play.

The King abruptly shifts the conversation to his demand for Gelleth, a formidable neighboring territory. He challenges Jorg to prove his worth by conquering it, a test of both skill and loyalty. Their exchange is a high-stakes game of verbal sparring, with Jorg masking his rage beneath calculated responses. The King’s cold, emotionless demeanor unnerves Jorg, who recognizes the absence of humanity in his father’s eyes—a stark contrast to the malice or curiosity he’s seen in others. This moment crystallizes their toxic relationship, devoid of warmth or mutual respect.

Jorg reluctantly agrees to the King’s demand, though he doubts the feasibility of taking Gelleth with only 200 men. His internal monologue reveals his simmering anger over

his mother’s death and his brother William’s murder, both traded away by the King for political gain. The chapter ends with Jorg’s vow to deliver Gelleth and the head of its lord, in exchange for Sageous and the King’s acknowledgment of him as a son. This closing ultimatum sets the stage for Jorg’s next move, blending ambition with a desperate need for validation.



Chapter 22

Jorg and Makin sit in The Falling Angel tavern, surrounded by their rowdy companions and the raucous atmosphere of Low Town. Makin, uneasy and abstaining from his ale, questions Jorg about his knowledge of Castle Red, a formidable stronghold built into a mountain. Jorg admits ignorance, prompting Makin to recount his past visit as a squire, describing the castle's imposing walls and lavish throne room. The scene is chaotic, with Rike devouring a chicken and Brother Burlow stumbling by, but Makin's tension hints at deeper concerns about the castle's defenses.

Makin warns Jorg that attacking Castle Red would be suicidal, emphasizing its near-impregnable design: towering walls, iron doors, and extensive underground provisions. His grim tone contrasts with the tavern's debauchery, as a whore named Sally interrupts, only to be dismissed abruptly. Makin's focus remains on the castle's strategic challenges, explaining that even ten thousand well-equipped men might take a year to conquer it. The whore's failed seduction attempt underscores the gravity of their discussion, as Jorg remains fixated on the castle's vulnerabilities.

Jorg probes further, asking how many men would be needed if they could find a secret entrance. Makin estimates nine hundred veteran garrison troops would still pose a significant threat, even with an open door. Meanwhile, Sally shifts her attention to Jorg, flattering him and offering to "teach" him, but he twists her wrist and pulls her close, unnerving her. The tavern's chaos escalates as Rike and others brawl in the background, but Jorg's cold demeanor and Makin's warnings create a tense undercurrent.

In the final exchange, Jorg mockingly renames the whore "Katherine" and asserts control, mirroring his ruthless approach to the looming battle. His indifference to her fear reflects his broader recklessness, as he contemplates attacking Castle Red with only two hundred men and no clear plan. The chapter ends with a stark contrast

between the tavern’s disorder and Jorg’s calculated menace, foreshadowing the deadly stakes of his ambition.



Chapter 23

The chapter opens with the protagonist, Jorg, lounging in bed with a prostitute named Sally, while attempting to read a stolen book balanced on her back. The book, taken from his father’s library, contains cryptic Builder texts filled with unfamiliar terms like "Neurotoxicology" and "Mass Destruction." Jorg’s casual morning is juxtaposed with his intellectual curiosity, as he muses on the book’s obscure references to a valley called the Gorge of Leucrota and its potential connection to human monsters. The scene is intimate yet laced with tension, highlighting Jorg’s dual nature—both predatory and scholarly.

As Jorg reads, he struggles to decipher the Builder language, recalling his tutelage under Lundist, who praised his aptitude. Despite his fluency, the text’s meaning eludes him, though phrases like "binary weapon leakage" and "mutagenic effects" pique his interest. The chapter subtly hints at a post-apocalyptic setting, where ancient technology and its remnants hold dangerous secrets. Jorg’s frustration with the text is interrupted by Makin’s arrival, announcing an escort to the Forest Watch. Sally’s shock at discovering Jorg’s royal status adds a layer of dark humor to the scene.

The conversation shifts when Sally mentions "little red people" inhabiting Castle Red, a detail Jorg had overlooked. Makin confirms that the region’s inhabitants, known as the Blushers, are famously red-skinned due to contaminated water. This revelation ties back to the book’s mention of "rosiosis," suggesting a link between the Builder’s toxic legacy and the locals’ condition. Jorg’s mind races with the implications, connecting the dots between the Castle Red’s soldiers, the Gorge’s monsters, and the potential for a hidden weapons stockpile.

By the chapter’s end, Jorg is torn between pursuing the Forest Watch’s mission or indulging in further speculation—and Sally’s company. His decision to delay departure underscores his calculating nature, weighing pleasure against strategic gain. The

chapter masterfully blends world-building, intrigue, and character dynamics, leaving readers curious about Jorg’s next move and the mysteries of the Builder’s toxic past.



Chapter 24

Prince Jorg, in high spirits after a night of revelry, meets Captain Coddin, who has been reassigned from border duty to escorting Jorg to Crath City. Despite his usual disdain for people, Jorg finds himself liking Coddin, attributing it to his good mood. Accompanied by his loyal companions—Makin, Elban, and the enigmatic Nuban—Jorg sets out on the Old Road toward Rennat Forest. The group shares banter, reflecting on past battles and Jorg's ambitions, including his desire to reunite the Broken Empire and become Emperor, even at the cost of defying his father's wrath.

As they ride through the autumnal forest, Jorg's thoughts drift to Katherine, a woman who seems to haunt him. A dark, whispering voice urges him to kill her, suggesting it would free him from her hold. The imagery of violence unsettles him, blurring the line between his own thoughts and the malevolent influence of the forest. This internal struggle highlights Jorg's complex nature, torn between ambition and darker impulses, as well as his vulnerability to the land's eerie allure.

The group is intercepted by the Forest Watch, a patrol of six men who initially dismiss Jorg's ragged appearance until Coddin reveals his identity as the Prince of Ancrath. The watchmen lead them deeper into the forest to meet the Watch Master, Lord Vincent de Gren, a recent appointee of Jorg's father. The journey is arduous, with Jorg struggling in his heavy armor, and the watchmen's indifference to royalty underscores the isolation and harshness of the forest outpost.

Upon reaching the Watch Master's headquarters near Rennat Forest's waterfall, the group is met with curiosity by the watchmen. The cold wind and fluttering cloaks create a somber atmosphere as they wait for an audience. The chapter ends with Jorg's anticipation of meeting Lord Vincent, hinting at further tensions and the challenges ahead in his quest for power. The setting reinforces the themes of danger and unpredictability that define Jorg's journey.

Chapter 25

Prince Jorg and his companions return to the Tall Castle under the scorching noon sun, greeted by an air of tension. Jorg carries his family sword, signaling his authority, and the group encounters Sageous, a mysterious figure in white robes. Makin warns Jorg about Sageous's dangerous reputation, revealing that the glass tree Jorg destroyed was no mere trinket but a creation nurtured with blood. Despite the brothers' mockery, Sageous's presence unsettles them, hinting at his hidden influence over Jorg's past actions.

Sageous confronts Jorg about his departure from the castle four years prior, probing his motives and failures. Jorg claims he left to kill the Count of Renar but admits he never succeeded, instead inadvertently aiding Renar's interests. Sageous suggests Jorg was manipulated, his choices not entirely his own, and offers to restore his free will. The exchange grows tense as Jorg defiantly asserts his autonomy, though Sageous's calm demeanor undermines his confidence.

The confrontation escalates as Jorg grapples with Sageous's insinuations. He denies being under any external control, vowing brutal retribution if proven otherwise. Sageous, however, remains enigmatic, implying another force has guided Jorg's path. Jorg's anger masks his unease, and a sharp pain behind his eyes hints at deeper manipulation. The chapter's tension peaks as Sageous turns away, leaving Jorg to confront the unsettling possibility that his will has never been his own.

In the final moments, Jorg's bravado falters. He finds himself gripping his own hand, blood seeping between his fingers—a visceral symbol of his internal conflict. The encounter leaves him questioning his agency, with Sageous's words echoing in his mind. The chapter closes on an ambiguous note, blending physical pain with psychological turmoil, as Jorg stands at the precipice of a revelation about his past and the forces that may have shaped it.

Chapter 26

The chapter begins with Prince Jorg seeking solace in the church after encountering Sageous, a pagan with unsettling powers. He disrupts the mass with his band of rough companions, displaying irreverence toward the sacred space. Jorg manipulates Father Gomst into joining their journey to Gelleth under false pretenses, showcasing his cunning and disregard for authority. The priest’s discomfort and prejudice, particularly toward the Nuban, highlight the tension between faith and superstition in their world.

As the group departs, Sageous reappears, offering Jorg protection and hinting at darker forces at play. Their confrontation reveals Sageous as the mastermind behind past attempts on Jorg’s life, including the imprisonment of his brothers. The Nuban intervenes with a crossbow, symbolizing defiance against Sageous’s influence. This moment clarifies Jorg’s past struggles and solidifies his resolve, as he warns Sageous to flee before his return.

The journey to Gelleth is fraught with hardship, marked by relentless rain and the grim camaraderie of Jorg’s men. Father Gomst’s attempts to hear confessions backfire as the men’s brutal histories overwhelm him. Amidst the cold and exhaustion, Jorg dreams of Katherine, hinting at unresolved emotions. The group’s dynamics—Burlow’s care for the horses, Rike’s temper, and the Nuban’s quiet wisdom—paint a vivid picture of their ragged yet resilient fellowship.

Arriving at the Gorge of the Leucrota, the men grow uneasy as they camp near ominous caves. Jorg, adorned with braids and charms for protection, stands watch with his sword, sensing impending danger. The chapter closes with an air of foreboding, as the group’s nervous silence mirrors the eerie stillness of the cliffs, setting the stage for the trials ahead.

Chapter 27

The chapter opens with an eerie tension as darkness falls over the gorge, and the protagonists encounter an unnatural light emanating from a cave. The light, cold and unchanging, reveals a radiant girl named Jane, whose glowing skin and silver eyes evoke both awe and dread. Behind her stands Gorgoth, a monstrous figure whose grotesque form dwarfs even the largest among the group. The brothers, initially paralyzed by fear, rally under their leader Jorg's command, preparing for a potential threat while grappling with the unsettling presence of the newcomers.

Jorg, displaying his characteristic bravado, confronts Gorgoth directly, testing the monster's resolve with a sudden, aggressive gesture. The tension momentarily breaks as Gorgoth stumbles, and Jorg laughs, masking his own unease. Jane, however, unnerves him further by revealing her ability to peer into his mind and past, speaking cryptically of the "threads" and "weight" surrounding him. Her prophetic tone and intimate knowledge of Jorg's thoughts unsettle the group, hinting at deeper, unseen forces at play.

The encounter escalates as Gorgoth summons his hidden kin—a host of leucrota, each more grotesque than the last—revealing the brothers are surrounded. Jane and Gorgoth demand to know Jorg's intentions, accusing him of bringing death regardless of their cooperation. Jorg, ever the strategist, offers a bargain: the gift of "God" in the form of Father Gomst, a priest. His proposal is laced with irony, as he acknowledges the hopelessness of their situation while maintaining his usual sardonic wit.

The chapter closes with a sense of impending confrontation, as Jorg's offer hangs in the air. Jane's eerie presence and Gorgoth's brute force create a precarious balance, leaving the brothers on edge. The interplay of fear, power, and manipulation underscores the chapter's dark tone, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of the mountain's secrets and Jorg's ruthless ambition.

Chapter 28

The chapter follows Jorg and his companions as they navigate the eerie, Builder-made tunnels of Mount Honas, where necromancers are drawn to the ancient death magic at the mountain’s heart. The group, including Jane, Gorgoth, and the Nuban, traverses decaying corridors filled with remnants of forgotten technology. Tensions rise as Jorg taunts Jane, whose prophetic abilities unsettle him, and he briefly experiences a vision through her touch, warning him to flee when he meets an unnamed "her." The atmosphere is oppressive, blending dread with the grotesque beauty of the underground world.

Jorg’s interactions with his companions reveal his complex morality and manipulative nature. He dismisses Father Gomst’s distress at being traded to the leucrota, mocking the priest’s faith. The Nuban’s silent disapproval prompts Jorg to justify his actions, hinting at his internal struggle between cruelty and the lingering influence of those he respects. The dynamic between Jorg and Jane is particularly charged, as her fear of him and his violent impulses underscore his reputation as the "Dark Prince."

The group reaches a vast underground lake, where Jane and most of her leucrota kin remain. Gorgoth leads Jorg and the others deeper into the mountain, where they encounter two leucrota children—malnourished and marked by their species’ traits. Gorgoth insists the children are destined for the necromancers, claiming they lack the strength to survive. Makin and Jorg react differently: Makin pities them, while Jorg mocks Gorgoth, indifferent to their fate. The scene highlights the brutality of the leucrota’s world and Jorg’s ambivalence toward suffering.

The chapter closes with the children devouring scraps of food, their animalistic behavior contrasting with their human-like vulnerability. Gorgoth explains that leucrota develop their monstrous traits over time, implying the children are doomed. The encounter leaves a lingering sense of unease, reinforcing the themes of predation and

survival in a world where morality is often secondary to power. Jorg’s detachment and the group’s moral divisions foreshadow further conflict as they approach the necromancers’ domain.



Chapter 29

The chapter begins with Prince Jorg and his companions following Gorgoth through a treacherous ascent within a mountain, navigating narrow, crudely carved stairs in a dark, vertigo-inducing shaft. The climb is perilous, with the ever-present threat of a fatal fall, yet the group presses on, driven by necessity. Jorg observes the eerie fascination of the abyss and the unsettling ease with which the leucrota children, Gog and Magog, navigate the climb. Their apparent indifference to danger contrasts sharply with the brothers' grim fate, as Gorgoth leads them to be sacrificed to necromancers.

Jorg interrogates the children, naming them Gog and Magog, and probes their willingness to face death. Gog reveals a defiant resolve to protect his brother, hinting at an underlying law that permits them to fight. The exchange underscores the harsh realities of their world, where even the young must confront brutality. The group's dark humor and casual dismissal of their fallen comrade, Brother Gains, reflect their hardened attitudes toward mortality. Jorg's internal reflections reveal a calculated ruthlessness, as he channels his anger toward the necromancers they are destined to confront.

The journey culminates in a series of eerie, empty halls filled with dust and bones, signaling the proximity of the necromancers. The atmosphere grows increasingly oppressive, with the stench of death permeating the air. Jorg's curiosity leads him to examine a skull, a macabre reminder of the fate awaiting them. Gorgoth assures the group that the necromancers will find them, a promise soon fulfilled when a seductive yet sinister woman, Chella, emerges from the shadows. Her presence is both alluring and terrifying, captivating Jorg despite an internal warning to flee.

Chella's arrival marks a turning point, as she coolly demands the sacrifice of Gog, reinforcing the chapter's themes of power and submission. Jorg, though momentarily

entranced by her, remains aware of the danger she represents. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with the air turning icy and the sound of grinding rock hinting at impending confrontation. The tension between fascination and horror, survival and sacrifice, drives the narrative forward, leaving the reader anticipating the next encounter.



Chapter 30

The chapter opens with a tense confrontation between the protagonist and a necromancer, marked by swift, violent exchanges. The protagonist wields a legendary sword, but the necromancer evades his attacks with unnatural speed. A thrown skull injures her, revealing her grotesque, writhing flesh. Meanwhile, the protagonist's companions—Makin, Gorgoth, and others—begin to shake off their daze and prepare for battle. The necromancer taunts them, her voice eerie and distorted, as the atmosphere grows increasingly hostile and surreal.

The battle escalates as the necromancer summons an army of reanimated skeletons, plunging the environment into freezing mist and darkness. The protagonists fight desperately, their weapons growing heavy with cold as the undead advance relentlessly. Casualties mount, including Roddat and Brother Jobe, their deaths described with brutal clarity. The cold becomes unbearable, sapping strength and resolve, yet the group presses on, driven by survival instinct and camaraderie. Rike and Gorgoth stand out in the chaos, their raw power providing fleeting moments of advantage.

Amid the chaos, the protagonist realizes the necromancer is the key to ending the onslaught. Breaking away from the group, he ventures into the darkness, driven by hatred and determination. Disoriented and weaponless, he relies on his senses to track her, eventually stumbling upon a hidden chamber. There, he discovers the Nuban—a companion—captured by the necromancer, who is draining his life force. The scene is chilling, underscored by the necromancer’s unnatural strength and the Nuban’s helpless struggle.

The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, with the protagonist confronting the necromancer as she pauses her assault on the Nuban. The tension is palpable, leaving the reader anticipating the next move in their deadly duel. The necromancer’s power and

malevolence are fully displayed, while the protagonist’s resolve is tested to its limits. The setting—a shadowy, claustrophobic chamber—adds to the sense of impending doom, setting the stage for a decisive confrontation in the next chapter.



Chapter 31

The chapter opens with Jorg returning to his band of brothers after an absence, finding them wounded and mourning their dead. The atmosphere is tense, marked by resentment toward Jorg for his perceived abandonment. Red Kent and Makin greet him with thinly veiled reproach, while Rike, a brutish and menacing figure, confronts him with a stolen ring. Jorg reveals the death of the Nuban, a respected member of their group, which sparks a violent reaction from Rike, who insults the fallen man. Jorg, driven by rage, attacks Rike without hesitation, targeting vulnerable points with precision despite the obvious physical disadvantage.

The fight escalates as Jorg uses his agility and knowledge of combat techniques to outmaneuver Rike, who relies on sheer strength. Jorg lands several blows, including a knee to the groin and strikes to pressure points, but Rike proves relentless. The battle becomes a spectacle, with the brothers placing bets and cheering, turning the brutal confrontation into entertainment. Jorg’s anger fuels him, but he also recognizes the futility of fighting Rike head-on, opting instead for strategy and speed to avoid being overpowered. The clash highlights Jorg’s reckless bravery and his ability to think under pressure.

As the fight continues, Jorg gains the upper hand by using the environment to his advantage, dodging Rike’s charges and striking with improvised weapons. The brothers’ reactions shift from amusement to admiration, particularly when Jorg corners Rike with the Nuban’s crossbow, forcing him to retract his insult. The confrontation ends with Jorg exhausted but victorious, earning a grudging respect from the group. Makin acknowledges the Nuban’s worth, and Jorg lies about the manner of his death, preserving his comrade’s honor. The scene underscores the brutal camaraderie of the group and Jorg’s complex leadership.

The chapter closes with Gorgoth, a silent observer, watching Jorg with an inscrutable gaze. His presence adds an air of mystery, hinting at deeper tensions or alliances yet to unfold. The aftermath of the fight leaves Jorg physically drained but emotionally resolved, solidifying his position among the brothers. The chapter captures the raw violence, loyalty, and hierarchy within the group, while also foreshadowing future conflicts and the enduring consequences of Jorg’s actions.



Chapter 32

The chapter opens with Jorg and his band of brothers fleeing up the Great Stair, pursued by vengeful ghosts. The eerie, half-formed spirits exude a chilling coldness, but Jorg defiantly laughs at them, wielding a dark power that seems to repel their advance. Makin, unable to see the ghosts, drags Jorg to safety as the spirits erupt into spectral flames, their screams echoing behind them. The group eventually stops to rest in a cavernous bowl carved by an ancient river, exhausted but alive, though the threat of Castle Red's overwhelming forces looms above them.

Makin voices the group's doubts about their odds against Castle Red's defenders, but Jorg responds with characteristic bravado, mocking their lack of faith in his luck and leadership. He delivers a sharp warning against dissent, reinforcing his authority with a veiled threat. The brothers, though wary, fall into line, and they resume their ascent, leaving the Great Stair behind for the structured halls of the Builders. Jorg navigates the labyrinthine corridors with uncanny precision, relying on a mental map from the Builders' book, further solidifying his mystique among his followers.

Their journey leads them to a massive, gleaming steel door blocking access to a vault—an imposing obstacle that even Jorg seems momentarily stumped by. When Rike challenges him about how to open it, Jorg deflects with a crude joke, masking his uncertainty. The scene underscores Jorg's blend of arrogance and adaptability, as well as the tension between his calculated plans and the unpredictable challenges they face. The door symbolizes both the literal and figurative barriers standing between Jorg and his ambitions.

The chapter closes with a brief reflection on Liar, one of the brothers, whose name originated from a violent encounter with Jorg. This anecdote reinforces the brutal, loyalty-forged-through-fear dynamic that defines Jorg's band. The chapter as a whole highlights Jorg's ruthless charisma, his supernatural encounters, and the precarious

balance of power within his group as they press onward toward their dangerous objective.



Chapter 33

In Chapter 33 of *Prince of Thorns*, Jorg and his companions encounter a formidable silver door embedded in Builder-stone, seemingly impenetrable. Despite their initial efforts to break through with brute force—using hammers and flails—the wall only yields minimal damage, frustrating their progress. Jorg, however, remains contemplative, pacing the room while his men settle into idle activities. His attention shifts when he discovers a hidden panel in the wall, revealing a mysterious compartment. This discovery hints at a possible alternative to their physical struggle, suggesting a more cunning approach may be needed.

The hidden compartment, initially empty, suddenly comes to life with a disembodied voice speaking an unfamiliar language. The voice demands a name and password, revealing itself as an ancient entity trapped for over a millennium. Jorg attempts to reason with it, offering threats and bargains, but the entity remains steadfast in its demand for authorization. The brothers, superstitious and wary, gather around as Jorg engages in a tense dialogue with the unseen presence. The entity’s calm demeanor contrasts sharply with Jorg’s growing frustration, highlighting the clash between human desperation and mechanical logic.

As the exchange continues, the entity reveals its prolonged isolation and the psychological toll of its confinement. Jorg, sensing vulnerability, shifts tactics, appealing to the entity’s loneliness and offering freedom in exchange for cooperation. The entity’s response—rooted in its programmed purpose—reflects the limitations of its artificial awareness, unable to comprehend true liberation. This moment underscores the chapter’s exploration of themes like isolation, memory, and the boundaries between human and artificial intelligence.

The chapter culminates in a standoff between Jorg’s relentless determination and the entity’s rigid protocols. Despite his threats and promises, the door remains closed,

leaving Jorg and his men no closer to their goal. The encounter leaves lingering questions about the nature of the entity and the Builders’ legacy, while also emphasizing Jorg’s resourcefulness and adaptability. The unresolved tension sets the stage for further exploration of the world’s mysteries and Jorg’s relentless pursuit of power.



Chapter 34

The chapter opens with Jorg and his companions entering a vast, ancient vault filled with geometric containers. The space is described as an armory, though the weapons are hidden inside the dust-covered boxes. When Burlow eagerly prepares to loot the vault, Jorg warns him that the containers hold deadly Builder poisons capable of killing through touch or air. He explains that even trace amounts of these toxins, leaked over centuries, have already mutated people downstream, like Gorgoth and the "Blushers" of Castle Red, hinting at their catastrophic potential.

Jorg reveals his plan to use the poisons as a weapon against Castle Red by igniting a slow fire to release the toxins as smoke. Makin expresses concern about the collateral damage, questioning whether the poison could spread beyond the castle to neighboring regions, including Ancrath. Jorg dismisses these worries, arguing that his father, the king, would accept any means to secure their borders. His ruthless pragmatism is underscored when he threatens Elban, though he ultimately relents, acknowledging the value of his remaining companions despite their flaws.

A tense confrontation ensues between Jorg and Makin, with the latter challenging the morality of indiscriminate slaughter. Jorg angrily defends his stance, declaring that success justifies any means, even at the cost of thousands of lives. However, he eventually concedes to scale back his plan, agreeing to use only one poison container instead of risking a global catastrophe. The chapter highlights Jorg's volatile nature, blending brutality with moments of reluctant restraint.

In the end, the group retrieves a single sphere of poison to deploy against Castle Red. The narrator reflects that Makin's opposition in the vault—though ultimately futile—reveals a moral courage that contrasts sharply with Jorg's ruthlessness. The chapter closes with a grim acknowledgment that the reduced plan still causes widespread death, but it narrowly averts an even greater disaster, leaving the reader

to ponder the consequences of Jorg's unchecked ambition.



Chapter 35

The chapter opens with Jorg and Makin surveying the aftermath of their escape from Castle Red, discussing the unseen threat of death and the moral weight of their actions. Makin expresses unease about Jorg’s youth and his seemingly innate ability to manipulate situations, questioning whether Jorg truly understands the consequences of his choices. Their conversation is interrupted by a cataclysmic explosion as Mount Honas erupts, obliterating the castle and sending a devastating shockwave toward them. The brothers are cut down by the blast, leaving Jorg momentarily adrift in a void.

Jorg finds himself in a surreal, ethereal space where he encounters familiar adversaries: Sageous, Chella, and the ghostly child Jane. They debate Jorg’s role in the unfolding chaos, with Sageous questioning who empowers him. Chella, a necromancer Jorg thought dead, taunts him, while Jane, seemingly trapped in a broken state, communicates cryptically with Jorg. The scene underscores Jorg’s defiance and his growing awareness of the forces manipulating him, as well as his unresolved conflicts with these spectral figures.

Jane’s presence becomes central as she reveals her fractured reality, appearing both whole and broken simultaneously. She implores Jorg to protect Gog and Gorgoth, hinting at their significance. Her words carry a prophetic tone, urging Jorg to reflect on his motivations and the unseen influences guiding him. Chella’s venomous reaction and departure highlight the tension between Jorg and his enemies, while Sageous remains intrigued by Jorg’s unexplained power.

The chapter closes with Jane’s fading presence and her cryptic advice about Jorg’s past and the “hand upon his shoulder.” As the smoke envelops him, Jorg is left grappling with the implications of her words and the devastation around him. The encounter leaves him with more questions than answers, setting the stage for his continued

journey amid the ruins of his choices and the looming threats of those who seek to control or destroy him.



Chapter 36: - Four years earlier

The chapter opens with a conversation between the young protagonist and the Nuban, a mercenary companion, as they approach the castle of Count Renar. The protagonist insists on finding a way to assassinate the Count despite the Nuban's repeated warnings that it's impossible. He argues that conventional tactics—targeting weaknesses—are flawed because they trigger layered defenses. Instead, he proposes a direct approach, targeting the Count's most relied-upon protection, a magician named Corion. The Nuban remains skeptical but doesn't argue, highlighting their dynamic of mutual respect despite differing perspectives.

As they near the castle gates, the protagonist questions the Nuban about Corion's rumored magical abilities and the mercenaries guarding the Count. The Nuban confirms the magician's reputation but offers no certainty. To gain entry, the protagonist cleverly offers the Nuban's enchanted crossbow as a bargaining chip, piquing the guards' curiosity. The rain intensifies as they wait, symbolizing the growing tension. The protagonist reflects on his vengeful mission, acknowledging its futility yet embracing the burning desire for retribution, which drives him forward.

After a long wait, they are admitted into the castle, escorted to Corion's chambers in the neglected West Tower. The protagonist feigns naivety by asking if they should surrender their weapons, drawing mockery from the guards. The atmosphere grows ominous as they stand before Corion's door, marked with a disturbing symbol. The guards abruptly leave, and the door opens to reveal a darkness that evokes primal fear in both the protagonist and the Nuban, suggesting Corion's terrifying power.

The chapter ends with a chilling encounter as Corion's voice commands them to enter, accompanied by unseen screams. The protagonist's resolve wavers momentarily, but the scene culminates in his first glimpse of Corion, leaving the outcome uncertain. The chapter masterfully builds tension, blending strategic dialogue with visceral horror,

and sets the stage for a confrontation with the enigmatic magician.



Chapter 37

The chapter opens with the protagonist and his companions retreating from the ruins of Castle Red, their victory overshadowed by exhaustion and the absence of their fallen comrade, the Nuban. The journey back to the Tall Castle is arduous, marked by the physical strain of descending mountains and the emotional weight of their losses. Despite their triumph, the group feels hollow, with little material gain to show for their efforts. The protagonist reflects on the intangible currency of victory—political leverage and his father’s approval—while grappling with the burden of carrying unwelcome news.

As the group travels, the dynamics among the survivors shift. Gog, a young companion, displays an unsettling fascination with fire, hinting at deeper mysteries surrounding his nature. The protagonist’s thoughts oscillate between memories of his childhood, his strained relationship with his father, and his lingering obsession with Katherine, a woman from his past. The journey becomes a metaphor for his internal struggles, blending physical fatigue with unresolved emotional tensions. The familiarity of the landscape contrasts with the weight of his recent actions, underscoring his transformation.

Upon reaching the Tall Castle, the protagonist confronts the court with a mix of defiance and calculated bravado. He revels in the shock his presence elicits, particularly from his stepmother, Queen Sareth, who openly doubts his success. The protagonist’s recounting of the Forest Watch’s losses is delivered with sardonic humor, masking the gravity of his achievements. His father’s restrained reaction and the absence of Sageous, a key adversary, suggest deeper political machinations at play. The chapter highlights the protagonist’s sharp wit and his ability to manipulate perception.

The chapter closes with the protagonist standing before the court, his three-fingered tally of losses serving as a provocative challenge to their expectations. His tone is triumphant yet ambiguous, leaving the court—and the reader—to ponder the true cost of his victory. The interplay of power, family, and legacy lingers, setting the stage for future confrontations. The protagonist’s resilience and cunning shine, but the emotional toll of his journey remains unresolved.



Chapter 38

The chapter depicts a profound encounter between Jorg, the protagonist, and an angel in a realm of darkness and light. Jorg initially embraces the void, finding solace in its eternity, until the angel arrives, radiating purity and compassion. Her presence illuminates the space, offering redemption and unconditional love. Despite her ethereal beauty and sincerity, Jorg reacts with defiance, his voice cracking with doubt. He stands naked and stained, a stark contrast to her brilliance, yet he resists her call, clinging to his anger and pride as familiar anchors.

The angel’s offers of forgiveness and renewal are met with Jorg’s bitter sarcasm and self-loathing. He recounts his sins—theft, murder, and betrayal—with a twisted smile, as if daring her to recoil. Her unwavering compassion only fuels his defiance, as he rejects the idea of being remade into someone "happy" but unrecognizable. The tension between them grows, with Jorg’s darkness spreading across the pristine floor, symbolizing his refusal to surrender his identity, even at the cost of salvation.

Their exchange escalates into a battle of wills. The angel warns Jorg that pride is the root of all evil, likening him to Lucifer, who fell from grace. Yet Jorg embraces this comparison, declaring pride his only possession. The darkness swells around them, swallowing the angel’s light as Jorg chooses eternal shadows over divine submission. His final words echo the chapter’s opening, reinforcing his cyclical descent into isolation and defiance.

The chapter explores themes of redemption, identity, and the corrosive power of pride. Jorg’s refusal to accept forgiveness underscores his tragic flaw: an inability to relinquish the pain that defines him. The angel’s purity highlights the cost of his choice—a fleeting chance at peace sacrificed for the grim comfort of self-destruction. The prose, rich in metaphor and contrast, paints a haunting portrait of a man at war with his own soul.

Chapter 39

The chapter opens with a wounded protagonist lying near death in his mother’s tomb, overhearing a conversation between two Teuton women, Katherine and Hanna. The older woman, Hanna, advocates for ending his suffering with a pillow, while Katherine, though harboring resentment for his past actions, hesitates. The protagonist, barely conscious, recognizes Katherine’s voice and recalls her striking features, revealing a complex history between them. The dialogue underscores the tension between mercy and vengeance, as Hanna’s harsh words contrast with Katherine’s conflicted emotions.

The setting shifts to the tomb, where the protagonist’s mother, a queen, lies in repose, her marble likeness a silent witness. Katherine admires the queen’s strength, hinting at her own aspirations, while Hanna dismissively compares her to the current queen, Sareth. The protagonist reflects on his last visit four years prior, when he vowed never to return, linking his past grief to his present vulnerability. The tomb becomes a symbol of legacy and loss, with the protagonist’s fate hanging in the balance.

Hanna’s hostility escalates as she attempts to strangle the protagonist, her rough hands tightening around his throat. Katherine intervenes, revealing a shift in her perspective: while she once desired his bloody demise, his prolonged struggle has softened her stance. She argues for letting him die naturally, acknowledging the inevitability of his fate. This moment highlights Katherine’s internal conflict between vengeance and compassion, as well as the protagonist’s tenuous grip on life.

The chapter concludes with Hanna relenting under Katherine’s command, leaving the protagonist’s fate unresolved. The tension between the women’s opposing views—Hanna’s brutal pragmatism and Katherine’s evolving empathy—drives the narrative. The protagonist, caught between life and death, remains a passive observer, his survival uncertain. The tomb, a place of familial and political significance, serves as a poignant backdrop for this struggle, emphasizing themes of power, legacy, and

mortality.



Chapter 40

The chapter delves into the protagonist's confrontation with Corion, a powerful and enigmatic figure who exposes the fragility of human understanding and control. The narrative reflects on how people cling to illusions of order, masking the chaos beneath with science or religion. Corion shatters these illusions, revealing the protagonist's vulnerability as he strips away his autonomy, reducing him to a pawn in a larger game. The encounter underscores the theme of hidden depths beneath civilization's thin veneer, where primal fears and unseen forces dictate reality.

Corion demonstrates his terrifying power by manipulating the protagonist's mind, erasing memories and bending his will. He reveals his knowledge of the protagonist's past, including his connection to the dream-witch Sageous, and positions him as a piece in a grand political strategy. Corion explains that monstrous beings like himself must work through mortal rulers, as society rejects their direct rule. The protagonist's rage and defiance surface briefly, but Corion's control is absolute, reshaping his purpose and redirecting his vengeance away from Count Renar.

The protagonist's psyche fractures under Corion's influence, plunging him into a nightmarish void where he relives a strangulation scene—a metaphor for his loss of agency. Upon awakening, he finds himself in a castle chamber, having nearly been killed by an old woman. The name "Renar" reignites his suppressed memories and fury, restoring his sense of identity. This moment of clarity reveals the extent of Corion's manipulation and the protagonist's role as a manipulated pawn in a shadowy conflict.

The chapter concludes with the protagonist's reawakening to the truth, symbolized by his reunion with Katherine. Her accusation of murder and drawn knife hint at deeper betrayals and conflicts yet to unfold. The protagonist, now aware of the game's players and rules, resolves to act, though his path remains fraught with danger and ambiguity.

The chapter masterfully blends psychological horror, political intrigue, and visceral action, setting the stage for a reckoning with the forces that have shaped his life.



Chapter 41

The chapter delves into the physical and psychological toll of combat, emphasizing how fatigue often determines survival in a fight. The narrator reflects on the exhaustion of wielding a sword and the inevitability of defeat when strength wanes. This theme is underscored by a confrontation with Katherine, whose knife at his throat forces him to confront his own vulnerability. The moment is charged with tension, as he grapples with his inability to resist, highlighting the brutal reality of violence beyond the structured rules of dueling.

Katherine’s rage and the narrator’s depleted willpower create a pivotal scene where death seems imminent. As she attacks, he recalls past horrors, likening the knife’s threat to earlier encounters with mortality. The narrative shifts to a philosophical debate about the "game" of power and survival, questioning how much of his mindset is influenced by Corion, a shadowy figure from his past. This introspection reveals his growing disillusionment with the ruthless ideology he once embraced, suggesting a deeper internal conflict.

The chapter takes a darker turn as the narrator, momentarily regaining strength, overpowers Katherine but is then tempted by a sinister voice urging him to kill her. The briar’s influence manifests as a corrupting force, pushing him toward brutality. Yet, as he nearly succumbs, he recognizes Corion’s manipulation, realizing his actions have been orchestrated. This revelation sparks defiance, and he spares Katherine, vowing revenge against Corion instead. The moment underscores his struggle between his violent nature and fleeting glimpses of humanity.

In the aftermath, the narrator reclaims agency, taking Katherine’s dagger and setting his sights on Count Renar and Corion. The chapter closes with a grim lesson from Brother Roddat, emphasizing the deadly cunning of cowards. This coda reinforces the chapter’s themes of betrayal, survival, and the blurred line between strength and

weakness, leaving the narrator poised for a reckoning with his past and his enemies.



Chapter 42

Prince Jorg returns to his father’s castle, confronting the same jailer who once tried to stop him years earlier. He intimidates the man with threats and violence, recalling his past escape with a band of outlaws. This time, Jorg seeks only Sir Makin, a knight imprisoned in the dungeon. The jailer, recognizing Jorg’s ruthlessness, reluctantly lets him pass, but Jorg still assaults him for good measure. As he moves deeper into the dungeon, Jorg reflects on the absence of his sword, a symbol of his identity and power, gifted to him by Makin during their first encounter.

Jorg navigates the grim torture chamber, finding Makin in a deplorable state—beaten, filthy, and barely recognizable. Makin initially believes Jorg is dead, as he witnessed the prince’s apparent demise at the hands of his father. Jorg, however, dismisses this, insisting he’ll die only on his own terms. Their reunion is fraught with tension, as Makin struggles to stand and Jorg grapples with whether to abandon him. The prince coldly considers leaving Makin behind, rationalizing that his broken state would only slow him down on his mission to the Count’s castle.

A pivotal moment arises when Makin reveals that Lundist, Jorg’s former tutor, was executed by the king for failing to protect him. This news stirs conflicting emotions in Jorg, who wavers between his ruthless pragmatism and lingering loyalty. Makin’s resilience and refusal to beg earn Jorg’s reluctant admiration, but the prince still contemplates killing him to tie up loose ends. The internal struggle highlights Jorg’s duality—the ruthless strategist molded by his father and the remnants of his younger, more vulnerable self.

The chapter concludes with Makin seizing an opportunity to overpower Jorg, knocking him unconscious. This abrupt reversal underscores the unpredictability of their relationship and Jorg’s vulnerability despite his arrogance. The final shift to Brother Sim, a shapeshifting ally, hints at the broader themes of identity and deception that

permeate the narrative. Sim’s unassuming nature masks his lethal potential, mirroring Jorg’s own complexities and the ever-present danger in their world.



Chapter 43

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and Makin riding through heavy rain toward Count Renar’s castle, seeking revenge against an old charm seller rather than the Count himself. Makin questions the logic of their mission, noting the charm seller had previously spared Jorg and the Nuban. Jorg hints at supernatural influences, suggesting the charm seller enchanted the Nuban’s crossbow. Their conversation shifts to the nature of the world, with Makin asserting it revolves around war, specifically the Hundred War for the Empire’s throne. Jorg seems to agree but remains cryptic, foreshadowing deeper motives.

As they approach an inn called The Three Frogs, Jorg recalls killing Price, Rike’s brother, outside it years earlier. He describes the encounter in vivid detail: Price, enraged and seemingly manipulated by unseen forces, attacked Jorg, who miraculously felled him with impossibly accurate stone throws. Jorg implies the battle was orchestrated by supernatural players—Corion, who guided his hand, and Sageous, who poisoned Price’s mind. The retelling underscores Jorg’s belief that he and his companions are pawns in a larger, mystical game.

Inside the inn, Jorg and Makin reflect on the dangers ahead, particularly the charm seller Corion’s power. Makin expresses skepticism about their odds, but Jorg reveals he has acquired a “spark” of magic after biting a necromancer’s heart. This newfound power, he claims, might give him an edge against Corion and Sageous. The revelation hints at Jorg’s growing ruthlessness and willingness to embrace dark forces to defy those manipulating him.

The chapter closes with Jorg and Makin settling into the tavern, their banter masking the gravity of their mission. Jorg’s arrogance and dark humor shine through as he taunts the locals, but beneath the bravado lies a calculated determination. The interplay between their camaraderie and the looming supernatural threat reinforces

the chapter’s themes of power, manipulation, and revenge, setting the stage for their confrontation with Corion.



Chapter 44

The chapter opens with Prince Jorg and his companion Makin approaching the ominous castle known as "The Haunt," its foreboding appearance setting a tense tone. They arrive during a tournament, and Jorg hints at a plan involving a "test of strength" while preferring to remain incognito. Their journey is interrupted by Sir Alain Kennick and his men, who arrogantly demand they clear the road. Jorg provokes Alain by insulting his family and revealing his own identity as Prince of Ancrath, escalating the confrontation.

A tense standoff ensues, with Jorg bluffing about an ambush to intimidate Alain’s men. Seizing the moment, Jorg tackles Alain off his horse, resulting in the knight’s accidental death. Makin warns of the consequences, but Jorg remains defiant, stripping Alain of his armor and assuming his identity. The duo debates their next move, with Makin suggesting escape while Jorg insists on pressing forward, undeterred by the risks.

Jorg decides to infiltrate the tournament’s Grand Mêlée to confront Count Renar, despite Makin’s warnings about the suicidal nature of the plan. As they ride toward The Haunt, they encounter Sir Keldon, a hedge-knight who reveals unsettling news: King Olidan of Ancrath is mobilizing his armies, with rumors of impending war. This revelation adds urgency to Jorg’s mission, though he remains focused on his immediate goal.

The chapter concludes with Jorg and Makin parting ways with Sir Keldon, heading toward The Haunt under the guise of paying respects. Jorg’s determination to face Renar, despite the mounting dangers, underscores his reckless bravery and single-minded pursuit of vengeance. The tension builds as the stage is set for a high-stakes confrontation, with Jorg’s true identity and intentions hidden beneath the stolen armor of his fallen foe.

Chapter 45

Prince Jorg and Makin struggle to navigate a steep mountain path, complaining about the impracticality of their stolen horse. Their journey is interrupted by armed men who initially threaten them but relent when Jorg reveals his identity as the prince who overthrew the previous Watch Master. The men escort them to a hidden encampment where Jorg reunites with his old companions, including the Watch Master Coddin, Rike, and Gorgoth. Tensions rise as Coddin reveals King Olidan’s orders to bring back Jorg’s head, but Jorg dismisses the threat, declaring his intent to carve his own path.

Jorg announces his ambition to seize the Renar Highlands and establish his own kingdom, offering his followers knighthoods in exchange for loyalty. He appeals to Coddin and the Forest Watch, invoking vengeance for the deaths of his mother and brother. Coddin remains skeptical, emphasizing that a true king is judged by the loyalty of his closest allies. Jorg turns his attention to Rike and the other brothers, deliberately provoking them with reverse psychology to secure their commitment. His manipulative tactics succeed, as Rike and the others vow to stand by him.

The chapter highlights Jorg’s cunning leadership style, as he alternates between charm, threats, and psychological manipulation to rally his followers. He reveals his plan to infiltrate Baron Renar’s tourney, relying on his brothers to hold the gates of The Haunt until Coddin’s forces arrive. Despite the danger, the brothers enthusiastically pledge their support, drawn by Jorg’s promises of power and revenge. The dynamic between Jorg and his men underscores the precarious balance of loyalty and self-interest in their brutal world.

The chapter ends with Jorg’s confidence unshaken, as he prepares for the impending conflict with Renar. His ability to command loyalty, even from volatile figures like Rike, demonstrates his growing prowess as a leader. However, Coddin’s lingering reservations hint at the challenges ahead, as Jorg’s ambitions may yet test the limits

of his followers’ devotion. The stage is set for a bloody confrontation, with Jorg determined to claim his destiny—regardless of the cost.



Chapter 46

The chapter opens with the protagonist, disguised as Sir Alain, entering a brutal Grand Mêlée tournament. The announcer introduces the competing knights, each armed with weapons designed to crush armor and bone. The protagonist, wielding only a sword, observes the grim reality of such battles: defeating armored opponents often requires bludgeoning them into submission before delivering a fatal blow. The scene is set with Count Renar and the enigmatic Corion watching from the stands, adding an air of tension and foreboding to the violent spectacle about to unfold.

As the battle commences, the protagonist quickly dispatches two knights with lethal precision, defying the unspoken rules of the tourney, which typically discourage outright killing. His ruthless efficiency draws attention, particularly from Sir William of Brond, whom he also kills after a brief exchange. The protagonist’s disregard for convention—such as targeting a knight’s horse—further marks him as an outsider. The chaos of the Mêlée is vividly depicted, with blood, screams, and the clatter of weapons filling the field, while the protagonist embraces the brutality, seeing it as a means to eliminate potential threats.

The aftermath of the carnage leaves few knights standing, including Sir James of Hay, a formidable opponent who advances on the protagonist with grim determination. The protagonist, now drenched in blood, reflects on his actions and the possibility that Corion, a shadowy figure from his past, has manipulated events to bring him to this moment. The tension escalates as Sir James, silent and relentless, engages him in a one-sided duel, overpowering him with sheer strength and nearly killing him with his axe.

In the final moments, the protagonist faces imminent death, his earlier bravado replaced by raw fear. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger, leaving his fate uncertain as Sir James prepares to deliver what seems like a final blow. The protagonist’s internal

monologue reveals a stark realization of his mortality, contrasting sharply with his earlier ruthless confidence. The scene underscores the themes of manipulation, violence, and the thin line between control and chaos in a world where power and survival are inextricably linked.



Chapter 47

In Chapter 47 of *Prince of Thorns*, Jorg launches a daring assault on Count Renar, charging through soldiers on horseback and crashing into the royal stands. Despite his boldness, Renar escapes when a bodyguard intervenes. Jorg's chaotic attack leaves his horse panicking, forcing him to dismount onto a guard, breaking the man's ribs. He hurls an axe at Renar but misses, striking another guard instead. As Renar retreats with his soldiers, Jorg prepares to pursue but is halted by Corion, a powerful magus who immobilizes him with a mere gesture, leaving him helpless and vulnerable.

Corion taunts Jorg, criticizing his reckless strategies and mocking his defiance. He reveals that Jorg's past victories, like the conquest of Gelleth, surprised even his enemies but insists such luck won't save him now. As Corion presses a knife to Jorg's throat, Jorg attempts to resist using necromantic powers stolen from a necromancer's heart, but Corion dismisses these efforts as feeble. The magus asserts that willpower is the true force at play, and his dominance over Jorg's body and mind seems absolute. Despite Jorg's defiance, he remains pinned, his life hanging by a thread as Corion prepares to deliver a fatal blow.

Through Corion's magic, Jorg is forced to witness the brutal deaths of his allies across the battlefield. He sees Elban and Liar fall to Renar's soldiers, while Gorgoth and Gog make a desperate dash toward the castle, cutting down foes but suffering wounds. Burlow, defending Jorg's position, is overwhelmed by spearmen. These visions emphasize the hopelessness of Jorg's situation, as his companions are systematically eliminated. Corion uses these scenes to break Jorg's spirit, reinforcing his control and the inevitability of Jorg's defeat. The chapter's tension peaks as Jorg, bleeding and paralyzed, faces his apparent end.

At the last moment, a panicked horse kicks Jorg, sending him crashing into Corion and breaking the magus's hold. The impact dislodges Corion's knife, and Jorg, seizing the

opportunity, drives his dagger into the magus’s ribs. The chapter ends abruptly, leaving Jorg’s fate uncertain but hinting at a possible reversal of fortune. The chaotic, visceral battle underscores the themes of defiance and survival, as Jorg’s relentless will—even in the face of overwhelming odds—keeps him fighting until the very end.



Chapter 48

The chapter follows Jorg Ancrath as he charges toward The Haunt’s castle gates amidst the chaos of the tourney field. Despite being targeted by arrows, he presses forward, driven by a mix of determination and emptiness after the death of Corion, whose influence had once goaded him. The Forest Watch’s archers provide cover, but resistance grows as he encounters a line of spearmen blocking his path. Jorg’s allies, Rike and Makin, appear behind him, wounded but relentless. Seizing an opportunity, Jorg deceives the soldiers by claiming allegiance to the House of Renar, exploiting their confusion to gain passage.

Inside the castle courtyard, Jorg encounters Gorgoth, a massive figure holding up the portcullis while riddled with arrows. The scene is littered with charred corpses, the work of Gog, a young boy with terrifying supernatural abilities. Gorgoth warns Jorg of the boy’s uncontrollable power, hinting at the dangers of his rapid transformation. The courtyard is filled with disorganized soldiers, many drunk from the tourney, as Jorg confronts the grim aftermath of Gog’s destructive capabilities. The air reeks of burning flesh, evoking memories of Jorg’s own violent past.

Count Renar, Jorg’s uncle, emerges with a contingent of guards, demanding Jorg’s death. Jorg reveals his true identity as the heir to the throne of Renar, taunting the Count and implying he has already killed the Count’s sons. When a crossbowman is ordered to shoot Jorg, the man is mysteriously set ablaze, his death orchestrated by unseen forces. Jorg harnesses necromantic energy, summoning the voices of the dead to terrify the soldiers. The spectral screams and his display of dark power send the guards into panic, their weapons falling as fear takes hold.

The chapter culminates in Jorg’s relentless pursuit of vengeance as he charges at Count Renar, screaming with fury. Despite the absence of Corion’s influence, his hatred for his uncle burns undiminished, driving him to confront the man who ordered

the murder of his family. The scene is charged with violence and supernatural horror, underscoring Jorg’s ruthless nature and the dark forces at his command. The chapter leaves the reader anticipating the brutal confrontation between nephew and uncle, set against a backdrop of fire, death, and spectral torment.



Chapter 49

The narrator, now a king, reflects on his past from the solitude of a high tower in The Haunt, surrounded by books and comforts like fine glass and wine. He contemplates the journey that brought him here, acknowledging the violence and chaos of his youth while recognizing how far he has come. The imagery of ink and writing symbolizes his attempt to untangle the secrets of his life, though he questions how much of his past is distorted by time. The presence of Gog, now grown, and Rike in the courtyard hints at the remnants of his old life, now integrated into his new role.

The chapter delves into the narrator’s introspection about his transformation from a reckless, destructive youth to a more measured ruler. He admits to past atrocities but feels no remorse, viewing his actions as part of a journey that shaped him. He muses on the idea of daily rebirth, suggesting that growth comes from distancing oneself from past versions. Despite achieving his goal of becoming king by fifteen, he finds the title insignificant compared to the weight of his experiences. His ambition now extends beyond kingship, as he vows to become emperor by twenty, a declaration made with the same defiance that marked his earlier life.

The narrator’s relationship with his past is complex, as he grapples with the influence of figures like Corion, who may have manipulated his actions, and the Nuban and Tutor Lundist, who hoped for his redemption. He acknowledges the darkness within him but claims ownership of it, rejecting excuses. His treatment of Count Renar, whom he tortures daily, reflects this duality—he recognizes the cruelty but feels compelled to continue, though he hints at eventual mercy. This internal conflict underscores his self-awareness and the tension between his violent instincts and his desire for growth.

The chapter closes with a stark assertion of identity, as the narrator embraces his flaws and challenges anyone to judge him. His gaze turns outward to the lands beyond his kingdom, signaling unrest and ambition yet to be fulfilled. The writing serves as

both a record and a reckoning, a bridge between his past and future. The tone is unapologetic, blending introspection with a chilling resolve, leaving the reader with a sense of inevitability about the narrator’s relentless pursuit of power.

