

**PRINCE  
OF STORMS**



# PRINCE OF STORMS

KAY  
KENYON

◆ BOOK FOUR *of* THE ENTIRE AND THE ROSE



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For Lou Anders



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# PROLOGUE



*And their mouths will be stopped with silver.*

—from the *Book of the Drowning Time*

SHE SAT ON THE THRONE, insane, but no one blamed her for that. Ghoris was a navitar. Titus Quinn shifted under her unnerving gaze, trying to believe she was a friend. Could a navitar know compassion and loyalty, or only the frazzled mysteries of the Nigh? A frisson of awe crept over him as he looked into her inhuman eyes.

Out the porthole he saw the Sea of Arising, its shining, flat expanse darkened in the distance by the shadow of the Ascendancy.

Quinn glanced at Mo Ti, who sat on the ship keeper's bench. Mo Ti had cared for Ghoris, but even he could not really understand her, and he was offering no help now. Quinn needed answers; he must frame them so that Ghoris could understand. She looked down at him from her seat on the pilot's dais.

"War," Quinn said. "Will it come to that?" War had been massing up against a slim barrier: Titus Quinn's promise to Sydney that she would rule the Ascendancy. She didn't. Titus Quinn did. Such was the simple frame of the approaching conflict.

"War not with dirigibles and cannon. But in the Nigh, Ghoris. Have you seen it? In the binds?"

"All die," Ghoris said with precise enunciation.

The trouble with prophecy was that it might be the answer to the wrong question. Everyone dies. He wanted to know the manner of death.

He tried a different tack. "Tell me about the other navitar." He had been

warned that his daughter's navitar-advisor, Geng De, could alter future events.

Ghoris nodded, smiling, as though he had finally figured things out. "Twists," she said. "Twists the threads."

The cabin darkened. Perhaps they had drifted under the Ascendancy's footprint—unless fear colored his perceptions. *Twists*. Was it true, then, that his daughter had forged a bond with a sorcerer? He longed not to believe this. But, as to *threads*—these he'd seen himself. He'd been on a ship of the Nigh and seen how the navitars—Ghoris, for one—reached into the thin air, bringing the threads of reality into their hands, carving a path through the Nigh and across the light-years, viewing the futures as they went. But never had a navitar tried to *twist* those futures. Until now. Such power would warp a plain man into something grotesque. Something capable of unnatural evil.

"Does the navitar try or does he succeed?" How did such power come to this wretch? Why, of all navitars, *this one*, the one who would burn the Rose and restart the terrible engine? Why this one?

Ghoris shrugged her bulky shoulders.

He turned to Mo Ti. "Help me. You've lived with her. Ask her."

Mo Ti shifted on the ship keeper's bench. "She does not know. She sees only visions. And they have made her mad." He rose and made for the cabin door. "I will not work against Sen Ni. I do not like her boy-navitar, but I will not work against her."

Quinn stepped between Mo Ti and the door. "Would she have such a creature around her? One who'd pervert the future?"

"You do not know your own daughter."

"No. Not with the boy at her side."

"You do not know what a sentient might do to keep their world alive?"

Under the warrior's gaze, Quinn forced himself to answer. "She'd do whatever it took."

"As you should have." Mo Ti pushed past him, saying as he closed the door, "Find another ship keeper. I am done." It had been a temporary duty, after Quinn and Mo Ti sent Ghoris's last ship keeper on a mission to find Su Bei. But Mo Ti didn't owe Ghoris or Quinn any more time.

Ghoris watched him leave. A smile creased her globular cheeks. "That one will kill you in the end."

He hardly cared how he would die. But he cared how the Rose would die. If Geng De *wove* reality, then Quinn would have to stop him.

Alone now with Ghoris in the pilot's cabin, Quinn's voice broke: "Will I have to strike my own daughter down?"

"She will fall, oh fall. It is the strong thread."

His heart cooled. "Find me a future where that isn't so." Desperation made him ask.

The navitar gathered her robes about her and slowly rose from her chair. "Traveler, we will go."

It took him a moment to realize that she meant into the binds.

He'd come here to see what Ghoris knew, and now she was saying, *see for yourself*. She raised her arms and as she did so the ship jolted. He heard the great funnel at the prow clang as it dropped into feeding position.

Taken by surprise, his guards would no doubt try to stop her, but it was all happening too fast. Ghoris thrust her hands into the membrane over the dais and the ship nosed steeply down. Normal light evaporated from the cabin. They dove into the Nigh. Shouts came from the deck below.

The cabin door opened and one of his Chalin guards staggered in, calling his name.

"We're diving," Quinn said. "Sit down. Or fall down." Already he was fighting off lethargy. He braced himself against the wall. The guard reached out for the support of the bulkhead.

"You must have your vision," Ghoris crooned. She had dropped back into her seat, dripping with the slime of the Nigh, or appearing to.

Sleep crept in like a slowly closing door, but he thrust a foot into the opening. Stay awake, stay . . . His guard staggered, then slid down the bulkhead, his consciousness drowning in the river.

Ghoris sat in her pilot's chair, swirling her fingers and staring at them in an unsettling way. "Ah, the future. It comes."

A gauze fell over his vision and Ghoris faded. At the same time a second and more vivid form stood up beside her. It was also a navitar, red-robed and

rotund. The second pilot reached for something. A cane came into his hand, and he leaned heavily on it.

A quiet voice: "I never knew you for a navitar, yet here you are, half awake in the river."

Quinn recognized that voice from somewhere. The memory was a ripple on water, receding. The boy—that was what he seemed, a boy, by his soft features, his indeterminate sex—looked warily toward the cabin door. He was blind. Or blind to Quinn.

"Yet here you are," repeated the figure in red. "How strange. And Ghoris, the old hag. I thought she was about done with the Nigh. Not many old navitars. Ever notice?"

Quinn heard himself say, "They drown themselves in the Nigh." But what were they talking about?

"True." The young man turned, looking for the source of Quinn's voice. "Sen Ni finally gave up on you. I predicted you'd betray her." He brought his cane down savagely on the back of Ghoris's chair. "And you did."

Startled by the cane's blow, Quinn reeled against the bulkhead, feeling half drunk. "Sen Ni gave up . . ."

"On you, Titus Quinn. Let's have that clear. On you." He swayed his head from side to side like an animal trying to catch a scent.

The red-robed figure was hunting, his movements strong and fluid, while Quinn was weak, clutching the edge of reality with slipping fingers.

Quinn inched along the bulkhead, using a hand to steady himself, his legs like pillars of cement. It was important to keep moving, to not be in the same place as before. "You are . . . a navitar."

The young man knifed his cane in Quinn's direction, turning it. He peered into the air, blind but for the probing cane that was an extension of his hand, his will. "You know me, Titus Quinn. You are in my world now. The river belongs to Geng De, not to you. Isn't that right, Ghoris?" Geng De glanced in her direction.

She remained immobile, cocking her head, listening.

"Weaving," Quinn rasped as he moved away from the cane. "Navitars swear not to. Broken vows."

The cane slowly came around, following his voice. "Broken vows. Per-

haps you'll not want to dwell too long on that concept. But yes, I'm different than the old woman. I am a child of the Nigh. You should have made friends with us, Quinn."

In a startling gesture toward the unconscious guard, Geng De swung around and shot a hand forward, grabbing at the empty air. As he did so, the guard toppled sideways, crashing heavily to the floor. At this sound, the navitar sidled down from the dais and moved toward the guard, prodding him with his cane. He looked confused. "Not alone, here. You have helpers, then. I'll remember his threads. He'll be mine."

Quinn was now wedged between Geng De and the dais. He stepped up next to Ghoris.

His proximity seemed to agitate her. "Overflows," she moaned. "The children swim, their mouths stopped with silver." She held in her hand a mass of threads, hopelessly tangled.

Geng De saw this and lunged his cane into the mass, dispersing it. Regaining his balance, he spun around and growled. "Where are you? By the deep Nigh, where?"

"Following you," Quinn whispered. The frame of a portal behind him pushed into his back. "You can't have it, Geng De." He couldn't have the Rose for burning. But hadn't he settled that already? Ahnenhoon, shut down. Lord—whoever it was, some lord—shut it down. "Can't have it."

Geng De thumped his staff along the floor as he searched the cabin, not thinking to look on the dais. "I'll have it. But that is just the beginning. You won't want to be here. Leave the Ascendancy. Leave the Entire. I'll spare you, then."

Ghoris smirked, now sitting more alert in her chair. "He'd have killed you by now if he could, Titus."

Geng De pivoted in her direction, nodding at her. "That's right. I can't touch his threads. He's the one rogue strand, or I would have dropped him from the Ascendancy the day he took it from Sen Ni."

"I'll never give you the Entire," Quinn heard himself say. "Or the Rose."

Geng De turned and looked right at him. He had him, now. Saw him at last. The navitar's staff seemed to thump on the floor as he approached. Stepping up to the dais, Geng De stalked forward and thrust his cane at Quinn,

pinning him against the bulkhead. The cane went through him like a knife through a dream.

Geng De whispered, "What do you . . ." He thrust the cane deeper. "What do you *want*? Power?"

"No, I've never . . ."

Still holding the cane like a spit through Quinn's heart, he whispered, "That is a lie. You do want power. You've had just a taste, and already you're corrupt."

"I don't . . . I'm not . . ."

Geng De smiled. "And don't even know it, do you?" He lowered his cane, leaning on it, inches away from Quinn's face. His voice went very soft as though confiding a secret. "As a babe, I fell in the Nigh. They made me a navitar at the age of four. I haven't had a life, but that will change—change, because of your daughter. I saw Sen Ni in the strands, a pure form, a destiny of beauty, but choked by you unless I weave—weave very well. I've sworn to her I will. And if your strand evades me, there are always others."

"Nooo," Ghoris moaned.

Geng De glanced at her. "Yes, old woman. Yes." He said to Quinn, "Your ties of the heart. Oh, I see those, touch those."

But Quinn would always love who he loved. "You can't change me."

"You're already changing. You should leave before you become something you wouldn't like." He shook his head at Quinn's confusion. "Never mind." He twiddled his hands in front of his face, staring intently. "Here are your lovely ties, the little threads of the ones you especially like. Nicely visible, burning hot." He examined his hand, scanning it as though its movements trailed stories.

Ghoris moaned. It seemed a kind of summons. Geng De murmured, "I'll take them one by one, until no one is left." He turned from Quinn and shambled toward Ghoris's chair. "Move over, hag."

Stiffly, he lowered himself down, merging with her. As his form faded, his voice hovered for a moment in the cabin. "One by one . . . one by one."