

# The Chosen One

A Bystander's Perspective

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Old man Jenkins arranged the counter of his shop as quickly as he could, setting the prices just a little lower and putting his best items in more obvious spots. It sounded like bad business, and on any other day it would be, but today the Darkbanisher approached.

Sixteen years ago, the Prophet of Mount Inva descended from her mountain and proclaimed that the Age of Darkness was coming to an end, that the Darkbanisher would usher in an Age of Light. A boy was born that could bring down the Dark Lord, though he must not know of his destiny too early, but all should help him along his path to glory. She travelled from town to town, but ultimately made the mistake of going to Traballia, Capitol of the Golden Empire. The Emperor's Blackguards scooped up the Prophet from the street and made an example of her. Public beatings followed by a slow and painful execution. But she died with a smile on her face, her faith unbroken.

Then a year ago new rumours began to circulate amongst the merchants and travellers. Tales of a boy who survived his village burnt by the Dark Lord's minions setting up as a merchant, going from town to town selling what he could, but also solving all their problems. In Adai he had been carrying the exact plant in large quantities to cure a spreading illness. In Vesal he'd brought them just enough metal to forge a new part for their windmill so they could continue to produce food. In Chasselle he had been wearing a silver chain that protected him from a curse and had a wagon

full of flamewater that he used to burn the Altar of the Dark Lord which had been causing the problems. He was a hero.

“He’s here!” shouted someone outside and Jenkins made the final adjustments. A few minutes later he heard a wagon stop outside, then his door opened. He was a young man, the Darkbanisher. At sixteen he was quite tall, with broad shoulders and a thick mop of dirty blonde hair. His eyes were relaxed and bright blue. He wore simple garb: a tunic, sturdy trousers, a long coat, all in various shades of deep brown.

“Greetings,” said Jenkins. “Welcome to my shop. What can I do for you today?”

“A man said you were the wholeseller in this town, is that right?” asked the Darkbanisher. His voice was deep beyond his years, strong and firm, yet showing a kind heart behind it. This boy was already a man.

“It is, it is. Tell me what you’ve got.” Jenkins took a list and read through it, though started up some idle chatter to fill the silence. “Been on the road long, young man?”

“About a year now. My father always said I should be humble, but I think I’m doing well for myself. It’s been hard going, but I’m still here.”

“Oh, run into trouble?”

“I’ve seen some of the things the Empire has done,” the boy said with a sad nod. All people had seen that, and it was never pretty. The Dark Lord seemed to want his Empire on the very edge of survival with how often farmed were burned. “But, that’s not going to stop me going to the Capitol. I’ve got wares to sell, you know?”

“Oh, I know very well.” He was going to slay the Dark Lord. “Going to take down the competition, are you?”

“Yeah, I’ll show the Dark Lord some real gold by the end

of it.” The boy had a beautiful laugh. “I’ve been told some people who may be willing to help me make it big. I’m surprised so many people out in the villages know of big city merchants. The name I heard the most was Volzarius, so I guess I’ll go find him first. He’s apparently a priest, so I’m not sure why he’d help me sell, but I’ll give it a shot.”

Volzarius was known as the Underman of Light. He was the token holy man that the Dark Lord allowed so that the masses still had a little hope. So that they’d keep working. Jenkins had seen him speak ten years prior. He had true faith in the Light of Fe, and if there was anyone who could help the Darkbanisher ascend to his destiny it was that priest.

“He sounds like the right man for you to see,” said Jenkins. He put little circles next to the items he wanted to buy and handed the list back. “Just name your price.” Even if it took him out of pocket, he’d give this man the money to reach Volzarius. If the Empire was gone, life would be so much sweeter. The Darkbanisher had to succeed.