

# *Perdita*



*By*

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*We look for that city,  
That bright and shining city,  
That city on a hill,  
Zion.*

## *The Crime*

The night had fallen gently on the sleepy kingdom following a day that had been bright and peaceful. The fields had been mown, the bread had been baked, the floors swept and the linens aired. The soft breeze whispered that tomorrow would be bright and shining as well.

The servants of the High King were readying the great house for the night. The king and his household had all retired to their family rooms. In the nursery, the nurse sat rocking the young prince. His cry had been unusual tonight, and she was tired from the watch.

Quiet was sitting about the King's house like a great calm; the sun had shuttered his eyes and darkness was now gathering in the streets and hedgerows. Outside in the deepening colors of the evening a traitor was working his greedy trade. Every night at sunset the great house closed its outside gates and doors and drew its bridges. Once the bridges were drawn, and the gates and giant doors were closed, they would not be opened again until after the daybreak. It was the responsibility of the field marshal to walk the doors at each gate every night to see that they were barred; to climb the battlements and look down to see, before the last light had left the sky, that the bridges had been raised. After this, he would appear before the King and make his bow, and everyone in the great house would know that they were now

## *Perdita*

safe for another night. Today, however, the field marshal still sat in his room at the top of the highest tower, his feet on his desk, with his head back against the wall in an unnatural sleep. Shadows were moving silently along the back of the castle wall. The small gate at the back of the castle that opened on the side of the mountain was ajar, and the bridge had never been raised. The shadows poured in silently in an unending line, moving soundlessly into the house of the High King. The fire was started in a corner of the stable. Slowly, insidiously, like a malignant virus, smoke seeped up the walls, along the floors, under the doors and in over the window sills. It was late summer so fires were not in many of the rooms of the castle and even the kitchen fire had been banked for the night. The first warning they had that something was wrong was the smell of smoke.

A knight ran into the hall where the family was gathered to tell the King they had a fire in the stable. King Caelestis turned and told everyone to stay in that part of the castle and if the smoke became thicker to climb up the stone steps of the tower to the open air but not to open the door until he returned.

Then stepping out into the hall and through the opposite door leading to the nursery, he told the young nurse to do the same. The stable was below the great house, though not inside the main walls. Still the fire would spread rapidly and require all the men and able bodied women in the great house to work hard to extinguish it.

The shadows had divided. They were in number, just in case the plan had an unforeseeable flaw. The first group had gone along the wall behind the stable and behind the outbuildings storing the horse gear, and armory. Here they sat quietly, allowing the fire to do its

## *Perdita*

damage. The second group stole silently up the now abandoned center stair into the top floor where the family enjoyed fresher air in the summer. They were not poorly informed; they went straight to the nursery and knocked at the door. “Who is it?” The question came from inside the door. “The King sent up fresh water in case the Crown Prince should choke on the smoke.”

“Clearly,” she thought, “the fire was not in the passageway if the kitchen servant could stand there with the water,” so she pulled back the bolt. They rushed at her pulling a burlap sack over her head, tying it quickly around her mouth so she couldn’t scream. They bundled her up like a bag of feed over a hard shoulder and carried her from the room, down the stairs, to the main level. She could tell they were carrying her further down to another level, through the back kitchen, the kitchen garden and pens that held the chickens, piglets, ducks, and goats, though the door in the wall, through the gate, across the bridge, into the wood. She was slung across the back of a horse and jolted till she fainted from the knowledge that she was most certainly going to die.

The king and his men, all the young men of the castle, and the young women formed a bucket chain, and drew water from the well and the animal troughs. Before very long the fire was out. The King, looking around for his field marshal realized his absence and sent someone looking for him.

“When you find him, tell him to report to me,” said King Caelestis, as he went to reassure his family that they were safe. He knocked at the door of the hall where the family was, and upon gaining entry

## *Perdita*

assured them that all was well. Then he stepped across the hall to the nursery and knocked. When no answer came, he opened the door and went in. It was puzzling that the nurse was not here, or the young prince, but perhaps she had taken him up to the tower as commanded. The King bounded up the steps to the tower two at a time only to find it empty. He came down, called his knights, and all the servants; he ordered the whole house and all the castle grounds and buildings searched. It was pointless, the young Prince, barely three years old, was gone, as was his nurse.



Babur held the reins of the horse carrying the bigger of the two bundles. The other bundle lay in front of him on his own horse. Not a sound came from either one. The child moved soundlessly now and again. He thought to himself that here was his greatest moment. He had finally been able to inflict the worst pain possible on his enemy. He smiled at the thought. Across his saddle was the greatest treasure of the kingdom of Caelestis, the thing most precious to his enemy; the young prince.

Babur rode into his camp shouting orders, “Get the men up, get them ready to form the line, we only have a few hours advance on Caelestis, we must move now!” Babur thundered, “Get these wagons to the rear. Have you finished digging the ground works?” Turning his horse in a circle, he dashed off towards the ground works.

## *Perdita*

Yes, they were prepared; all the boulders were in place. He had been preparing the groundwork on the site months before. Turning again he crossed the field through the tents to the back of the site, he found his field marshal on his way. "Is the hole ready?" Babur demanded.

"Yes, Your Highness, the hole is prepared. The ladder is in place as you directed," the soldier answered. The soldier, Paul, did anything and everything that Babur commanded him, no matter how challenging. "A very worthy soldier," thought Babur. "This Paul was dependable."

"Here," he said, handing the smaller of the two bags to Paul. "Take the child down the hole and pull up the ladder when you come out. As soon as you come out, make sure all the men are roused and fed. At daybreak we will man the line."

Babur strode away to his own tent. He was far too excited to consider resting. He had all the fruition of his plans in sight. Sleep was the last thing on his mind.



King Caelestis was in his governing room his thoughts on the tasks before him. His field marshal had never regained consciousness, clearly he had been poisoned. Now King Caelestis was certain that they had a traitor in their midst. He looked up at Hyong waiting by the door. Hyong was the person dearest to him in the entire world besides his son, the Crown Prince Karsten. He was his best friend. He had come as an assistant to him when he married Hyong's sister Hwan.

## *Perdita*

Hwan-ah had died when the prince was born, but Hyong had stayed. He was at his side night and day; they were closer than brothers.

Caelestis commanded, "Have Mikel report to me on the instant."

"He is waiting outside," Hyong said with a bow. Stepping to the door he opened it and motioned for Mikel to enter. Mikel was already aware of all that had transpired. He was ready for any plan the High King Caelestis would lay out for him. It was now only about two hours since the fire, and Mikel knew that Caelestis would not have wasted any of those precious minutes. Mikel was the general in charge of all Caelestis' armies, and now his Field Marshal.

"First, ring the bell for the call to arms, I know it is dark, but those who are near and can make out their way to the city are our most faithful and capable men. Have Ettore, Marshal of the Horses, prepare all but my own and Hyong's mounts with saddles and battle armor, ready to ride at first light." Said the king. "Put Ryder at the head.

He will be next in command to you."

"Babur has been building his defenses in preparation for this new attack. His tracks will still be evident at dawn so we will have no trouble finding him. He has put Karsten in a hole in the ground. At the first provocation, he will cover him." The king said to Mikel.

"Next start a rumor, pick one of the house maids and make sure you are overheard. *"The field marshal was poisoned, and the traitor left the bridge down and the gate open, but the*

## *Perdita*

*King knows who it is, and there will be no mercy.*” Make sure you watch the kitchens for the second cook has a black heart and I expect he will run to Babur. Send someone to watch him and report back to me.”

“Thirdly, prepare wagons with all the rest of the armor from the armory, and have the army cook and his men prepare wagons of food stores. Ettore should see to the feed wagons as well. You will be gone a week, no more than ten days. By dawn, the rest of the men from further afield will start arriving, form them into battalions and set the captains in place. Do these things and return to me. Mikel returned to the High King. In less than an hour, Caelestis had all the maps ready and pointed to the points in front of him as he said, “You will find Babur, camped here. He has stone work and a wall prepared here. He has been moving boulders in preparation. He will have archers behind the wall with breaks” he said pointing, “Here, and here,” Caelestis showed him, “For his horsemen to come through.”

“Karsten is in a hole, here, in the back, behind the food wagons and all the tents. Someone is watching Karsten, and will be near. Not everyone who serves Babur has a black heart. Some still are faithful to honor and virtue; they just haven’t yet broken free. You must give everyone opportunity to turn; Babur is more evil than people understand, and they are deceived.” The king continued. “You will ride out with the rest of the army before the sun is high in the sky. The horsemen must approach from the sides, but must appear to be coming from the front. Send in the initial horsemen with shields above their bodies, and to the front, with barely enough room to see. They should ride through the openings

## *Perdita*

in the walls which will cause the havoc and distraction we need. Then release the greater number set to the sides to ride in on the flanks. When they have opened the lines the greater army will come in fresh behind them, and then they need to fall back and refresh for the main onslaught when we are past the rocks.”

“While everyone on horseback is fighting, take the foot soldiers – half will follow the soldiers to the front attacking the wall. It will become our wall by the end of the second day of fighting. Send the other half of the soldiers around this mountain, and up to the top, through this ravine,” he said pointing at his maps. “When they near the top, they will be hidden on the front side, and can then slowly make their way down the front side of the mountain to the top of this hill. Then on the morning of the third day, they must attack from the rear. We must have a fresh attack from the front and flanks so they do not suspect the rear guard.” “Now go,” Caelestis said, “And make it so. And Mikel, take Fortunato with you, he is to stay by your side continually.”

The next morning Mikel and Fortunato rode out leading the second wave. With battalions of horsemen, archers and foot soldiers behind them, followed by the wagons of food and feed, they were on their way to battle.

The day was bright and the army intent on their objective. By now there wasn't a single soldier that wasn't aware that they were saving the life of the young Prince Karsten. Mikel and Fortunato, being great friends, were happy when they were together, but were their happiest when they were

## *Perdita*

together fighting. So today the two friends, Mikel and Fortunato, were in a great mood as they left Caelestis City. Today, fulfilling their purpose filled their hearts with joy and gave them the courage of a hundred men. Since they had that much fighting skill between them, it was a bright day. The friends were joined at the front of the army by Jabir, the High Counselor. The three riding ahead of the army made excellent progress. They were seeking high ground to watch the first onslaught. The mounted horse soldiers left at dawn with the main army following only three hours behind, but would still take most of the day to come to the battle field. The first wave of the mounted soldiers was well ahead, and the main army would not catch up with them before they were engaged in battle, but very soon thereafter. The horsemen rode as fast as the armored horses would carry them. The three from Caelestis City could hear the battle noises ahead of them and Mikel could well remember the map, so he took the road to the west that went over the mountain leading above the battle ground. The battle was progressing just as anticipated. The first wave was well engaged with the enemy. On the front line the mounted soldiers were fighting with their swords and spears, attacking the enemy on the ground that was trying to prevent their progress through the opening. Now they were beginning to fight their way through creating an entry in the rock wall.

The men in the front were on horseback, but Babur's men behind the rocks were foot soldiers, so the horsemen with their trained war horses rearing and stomping were able to defend themselves well against the men on the ground and

## *Perdita*

chaos broke out quickly among those on Babur's side behind the stone battlements.

Disorder spread like a disease through Babur's foot soldiers, pressed ever closer to the heart of the conflict, while the soldiers on horseback pushed ever deeper causing a greater chasm in the masses on the ground which was intensified as even more mounted men from Caelestis were able to push through the opening into the melee. They were able to hold their progress and kept the fighting at an intense fervor. They fought with all their strength and were beginning to tire. Then as planned, the new horse troops arriving with the main army, as they had been instructed, replaced the men who were now falling back. The horsemen had now all pushed through behind the wall.

From the rear, Babur saw his men defending the wall pushed back and and in anger sent word to the rear to fill the hole with the child in it.

Paul, receiving his instructions, told the soldiers to go and help defend the wall, he would see to the hole. Taking three long limbs as poles, he placed them on three sides of the child, until they touched at the top and then put in tree branches over the sides forming a sort of tent. He continued putting in pieces of greenery and broken tree branches till the top of the hole was filled.

Paul then covered over the top of the poles with a piece of tent canvas, laying dirt over the top completely covering all, but a small hole in the top over which he piled more branches so that air could still get in the hole. He had already let down dried jerky and boiled eggs into the hole. There were also

## *Perdita*

apples and a jerkin of water. The child was the smallest child, but that was all he could do. And it would be dark. If he tried to carry away the young boy now, they might both be killed. Paul would gladly die to protect the child, but for now, the safest place for the child was in the hole. Especially if Babur thought the job was done.

Babur released his horsemen. He had held them anticipating the main army, but because Caelestis's horsemen had broken through he needed them now to drive them out from behind the wall. The action of the horsemen from both armies behind the wall dispersed the foot soldiers so Babur sent word to his captains to pull them to the sides.

They fought hard and did not lose ground, but the sun in its course ended its circumference, and the rays dropped from the sky. According to custom, the soldiers would retire from the field. But Caelestis' soldiers were not going to refight the same battle the next day, so as Babur's soldiers left the field Caelestis' horseman would not chase them in the dark, but if need be, they could stand their ground all night.

As the sun was setting, Mikel from his overlook could see that the horsemen were holding the ground and said, "Fortunato, send a runner to the rear where the fresh foot soldiers are. Tell them to work their way to the front, even though it is dark and replace the horsemen, we will need both the men and horses to be fresh in the morning."

When the sun came up in the morning, the ground was full of the foot soldiers from Caelestis' army. Here, Babur sent his horse soldiers first. He pressed the foot soldiers back against the rocks, slowly unable to move and defend

## *Perdita*

themselves, he was slaughtering them. Mikel sent his archers against the other side of the wall. They fired over the tops of the soldiers against the rocks into the horsemen, busy in the battle their shields were not up and many were injured right at the start. When Babur's horse soldiers raised their shields against the oncoming rain of arrows, the men of Caelestis on foot below them, battered them with their heavy swords and morningstars so Babur's mounted men and horses were taking the worst.

Following behind the archers; Mikel sent his horse soldiers, however now Babur had his archers shoot wholesale into the fray, sacrificing his own soldiers in the process. He drove all of Caelestis' soldiers back behind the rocks with his archers. Mikel sent his archers, displaced when the horsemen had fallen back, again behind the rocks to fire on Babur's archers

Sending his foot soldiers again through the openings in the rocks, Mikel's men reformed on the other side. Holding their shields outward on the outside of the block and over their heads like a roof in the inner parts of the block, made the onslaught from Babur's archers largely ineffective. Babur could not send his horsemen against the rain of arrows from both sides, but he could send his foot soldiers from the sides beneath the arch of the arrows. He sent them pushing to the center from the sides to the rear of Caelestis' archers, attacking them from the rear.

Mikel sent his horsemen in to clear the field behind the archers and regained the field behind the rocks just as the

## *Perdita*

sun was setting. Tomorrow the rearguard would be in place, and it would be a new day.

Inside Babur's camp, the entire army was exhausted. Watchmen were posted on the edge of the camp. Paul looked into Babur's tent. King Babur had dismissed the generals himself some time ago. He was bent over his maps. Paul said goodnight and left. He moved to the rear of the camp, looked around to make sure that all were sleeping around him. He moved over to the hole, dug through the top layer of dirt, pulled back the covering, and started removing the tree branches. There wasn't any way to know if the child was still alive, but he had to try. He brought his horse over and tied a rope around the horn on his saddle, dropping it down in the hole. He climbed down the rope. He could feel the child's body in the dark, he picked him up and laid him over his shoulder and took the rope tightly in his hands, and then he whistled a soft whistle.

Paul had trained his horse well, and they had been together a long time. The horse slowly backed away from the hole, pulling Paul and the child to the top. Paul put the child in a burlap sack and laid him across the horse. He turned back quickly to the hole throwing the tree branches back in and the cloth pushing the dirt back in and around, rapidly trying to make it look as natural as he could in the darkness. His challenge now was getting out of the camp unseen. He walked quietly to the back of the camp, holding the horse's reins in his hands. If anyone were to happen to see him from the glow of the fires, they would only see him and the horse, but they wouldn't be able to recognize him without being close enough to speak. He walked along the edge of the

## *Perdita*

camp to the rear, and began to walk along the base of the hill to the west. He encountered a sentry at the very edge of the camp, but as soon as Paul identified himself as the Field Marshal, the sentry recognized his superior and continued his watch. Outside the camp was a grassy hill and Paul was able to walk slowly up the hill rising as he went at an angle slowly away from the encampment below. It wasn't a bright night, but he could see the ground before him, if not his footfalls. He walked slowly letting the horse pick his steps. He took the track out of the camp that rose up into the woods and over a ridge of hills. He needed to get out of the range of sentries as fast as he could, but there wouldn't be anyone in the woods. So he climbed up through the trees, slowly in the dark, till he reached the top of the hill that was clear and lit by the moon. Staying in close to the tree line he was moving around the open area. He stopped dead in his tracks as three men stepped from the shadows. His heart stopped. He held his breath. He waited. Who were they?

Fortunato stepped forward to take the horse's reins. No one spoke. No one wanted to draw attention to their presence on the hill. Mikel stepped in close to Paul's ear and whispered, "What are you doing here?"

Paul said, "Who are you?"

"I am Mikel, Field Marshal to the High King."

Paul knelt in deference to the rank of Mikel. "I am Paul. I am the Field Marshal for King Babur. On the horse is the young Prince. I don't know if he is alive or dead, but I am returning him. What Babur has done is reprehensible. We must get the prince back home safely. We must get him to a

## *Perdita*

safe distance before we revive him. He is young and his cries will carry far.”

Jabir stepped forward and said, “I will go with them away from here.”

Mikel nodded in ascent, and handed the reins back to Paul. “Yes go, if you come across more of our people give him support for the trip home.”

So Paul and Jabir with their precious cargo headed further away from the campsite, carefully in the dark, over the other side of the hill to the road back toward Caelestis. They kept traveling until morning. In the early frost, and breaking of the dawn, they hid in a glade in the woods and pulled the little body down. They laid him gently down on a bed of pine needles and pulled off the bag. He lay perfectly still. His eyes were closed. Jabir pulled out his leather bottle and poured water out on a piece of fabric and wiped the little face. He was still lying there without movement and Paul was getting concerned and was going to shake the child, but Jabir pulled him back.

“He may just be sleeping, be gentle”. Jabir said. Jabir sat down on the ground and picked up the child. He rubbed the hair from forehead and called his name gently. “Little Prince. Little Prince, you must wake up. Your

Uncle Jabir wishes to see you. Little Prince are you there?” The child lay silent, but turned his head toward Jabir, ever so slightly.

“Uncle?”

## *Perdita*

“Yes, my little Man, it’s me.” said Jabir, giving him a great hug. Tears of thankfulness spilled from the great warrior’s eyes as he held the young prince in his arms. Paul was on his knees, tears were falling down his face as well. “Father of Light, thank you for your protection, provision and care.”

Jabir lay Prince Karsten back down, and he smiled down at him. The prince smiled weakly back up at him. Then the small boy turned and looked over towards Paul. He gave him a calculating look. “You took me out of the hole didn’t you,” he said to Paul. “Thank you, I was wanting to go home.”

“And home we will go right now!” said Jabir hoisting him up.

“But Uncle, can we eat first?” asked the little prince. “Of course my little Man, this is the best sign yet, if you are hungry!”

Up on the hill, a runner was sent from Mikel with message to his troops below, “Tell Ryder to go ahead with full force, the treasure is on its way home. Tell him to finish the job, the field is his.”

Babur had sacrificed his mounted soldiers in battle that day; so the next morning when the sun rose the full onslaught of Caelestis Army came against him and ran him from the field. It was assumed that his field marshal was among the dead. He didn’t wait to see as he was fleeing for his life.

## *Perdita*

This is the completion of the first chapter of “Perdita - A Lost Child”. For more information see [www.PerditaALostChild.com](http://www.PerditaALostChild.com) or email [Info@PerditaALostChild.com](mailto:Info@PerditaALostChild.com) or see “Perdita A Lost Child” On Amazon.com