

Vastaväalt's Rising

By Christopher Lackey

Under the tapestry of pale stars that washed over the high black sky above them, the Orynvaït of Evinevid slid slowly back to their sétùs on their bottoms at the end of another work orbit. Slithering slowly across the flat barren surface, they made their way to the Temperimkst, the area surrounding the holy sétù Temperimk. Trudging past the uneven rocks their planet was scattered with, everyone had their shmeel slung over their top appendages, a sac of "offering" in which Hadrithra they mined that orbit was carried. Hadrithra was Orynvaït food, a velvety dark pink paste drawn from its only known source, the Irkmtt ("precious source"), which was a patchwork of sludgy pits in a depression on the eastern edge of Erinevid. Its deep pink taint contrasted the opaque orange pastel ground everywhere else on the planet. The majority of Orynvaït would labour there during the entire orbit, coming back diligently at the end to drop their shmeel at the Temperimkst entrance before returning to their sétùs. A member of their race named Siiski, who had the special job of Hadrithra converter, waited for them there.

Siiski took each shmeel, emptied it of raw Hadrithra and gave it back filled with Hadrithraëte, the processed form of it she made. This routine never changed, orbit in orbit out, but this eve was a special occasion, the only time it did. It was the beginning of Sanjandil, the thirty-seven orbit procreation season. To mark the occasion, Siiski gave everyone a small amount of Batheeshe, a rare delicacy, in addition to their regular Hadrithraëte ration. Each Orynvaït that left Siiski oozed away with a bit more exuberance than their waiting peers, the loose file of pink globs behind them waiting for their rations, forming a crooked trail of lumps that shifted their weight on their bottoms impatiently.

Being responsible for these things allowed Siiski the privelege of living in the Temperimkst. The Temperimk was the very first sétù on Erinevid, a stone that served as an Orynvaït's domicile, around which they would rest and ingest their Hadrithraëte. It was discovered and inhabited by the original Orynvaït, Orynvyn. The difference between a sétù and a regular rock was its connection to an ancient underground network known as the Redigiveer ("current"), that the Orynvaït linked to and received ust ("life giving feed") through, from the ku ("ruler"). Only the Ku and offspring occupied the Temperimk sétù. The current one, Tüdruku splotched beside Siiski presently and acknowledged her, which gave her a slight jitter. A bit later, after all the Orynvaït had returned from the Irkmtt and had time to ingest their Hadrithraëte and connect to their sétùs, Tüdruku climbed onto the Temperimk to deliver Tüdrुकust.

Tüdrükust was much more than feed in the eating sense; it was a telepathic current through which all aspects of communication between Orynvaït passed: dialogue, dictation, and mental fornication. It was done in the eve of each orbit, but could be done one on one at any time. Tüdruku generally expressed benign emotions in it, but was able to inflict pain and agony on receivers. She never had needed to though, because no threat had ever come in the Orynvaït's entire history.

As Ku, Tüdruku did not live off Hadrithraëte. She lived off Batheese, which normal Orynvaït only received during Sanjandil, exclusively. Since Orynvaït were asexual, they reproduced by shedding a small part of their glob, then breaking off a piece of appendage and sticking it into it. This left them weakened, and they were given Batheese to help recoup their strength. Procreation had to be sanctioned by Tüdruku for the reason of the substance's rareness, and the rule that infant Orynvaït had to receive constant Tüdrükust for the rest of Sanjandil, requiring her energy levels to be high. Having the extremely demanding role of dictating the functioning of the society in addition to being the sole provider of maternal guidance to the young was why she had unlimited Batheese on demand.

It was not possible, however, for regular Orynvaït to enter into communication with Tüdruku outside of Tüdrükust. Only her daughter, Tugevaastmeline, and Lõuna could. Lõuna was the special counsellor and top aide to Tüdruku, which gave her the title of Eesti. So she was known to all Orynvaït as Lõunaeesti. She had lived for enough Sanjandils to know everyone, and had briefly served as Eesti to the previous Ku. All Orynvaït were undistinguishable in appearance, except Tüdruku, who had larger proportions than everyone and a light green hue, rather than the drab pink complexion. The only other Orynvaït who displayed any green hue were the Ifktarorynvaï, a small group of elite recruits who maintained the redigiveer and gathered Batheese, and this displayed the unmentioned tax they skimmed for the work they did.

Tüdruku, on this eve was busy and agitated during the Espooln, the time when young Orynvaït were taken off of their sétùs to have Hadrithraëte. Aavik, the counsellor responsible for minding new Orynvaït and supervising infant Tüdruku was convened briefly about the status of the setus on which births were about to occurring, but could not be of help. Tüdruku was most anxious to communicate with Lõunaeesti who had still not returned. She feared a shortage of Batheese because 5 sétùs had been allowed to become Taïker, having more than 1 Orynvaït and 1 offspring. It had all been carefully planned out as it was every Sanjandil, but paranoia always reigned in Tüdruku during the first 10 orbits or so. Adding to her stress this time was the fact that, for the first time in her reign, a Temperimkst resident was going to reproduce. Vokäal, the Irkmtt boss,

was going to beget this Sanjandil along with the 40 others. Lõunaeesti returned, and Tüdruku felt relieved by her presence. They finalized last minute details together, Sanjandil began, and the Orynvaït who had been chosen by Tüdruku to beget began to divest themselves of small parts of their bodies in the shelter of their sétù's, dotting the hard flat plain of Erinevid.

At dawn, Tüdruku beamed when Lõunaeesti confirmed that all 41 new Orynvaït had been born smoothy, including the Temperimkst's newest addition, Vastaväalt. But the joyful atmosphere that initially reigned disappeared within a couple orbits: there was something strange about him from the get-go. Tüdruku always felt things from all the different Orynvaït during Tüdrukust, which was normal. But from Vastaväalt's very first Tüdrukust, his energy dominated the Redigiveer like no other before him. Tüdruku could already tell that an exceptional Orynvaït had been born.

His first few orbits were very tumultuous. It was fine for new Orynvaït to act out and resist Tüdrukust; a few of Aavik's interventions would quickly right this 95% of the time. The resistance in the other 5% of cases was easily suppressed, and it would have concerned Tüdruku if there was none because there needed to be a pool of robust candidates who could become Ifktarorynvaï and counsellors and replace the previous generation. Vastaväalt clearly fit in this category. Aavik had never been so easily thwarted in her attempts to stabilize an infant, and it was often Lõunaeesti who had to subdue Vastaväalt during Tüdrukust. He also quickly learned to interject during it, something that only ever occurred to a small number of Orynvaït and which was always vanquished with ease, but nevertheless added to Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti's uneasiness.

At the end of Vastaväalt's third Sanjandil on Erinevid, he was sent to the Irmktt with Vokäal with the idea he would learn the ropes and eventually take over. Tugevaastmeline in eight Sanjandils had still never left the Temperimkst or been exposed to any Orynvaït outside of it. Tüdruku believed that Vastaväalt could be a trustworthy Hadrithra boss to Tugevaastmeline some orbit, but for now he needed to be put to work. His restlessness made him a very destabilizing influence inside the Temperimkst, and she could no longer easily subdue him with surges in Tüdrukust. In fact, Tüdruku had never actually needed to use before Vastaväalt's arrival. She hoped labour in the Irmktt would give him an outlet and placate his disruptiveness.

Some orbits into his first stint in the Irmktt, Vastaväalt clashed with Vokäal over his work. Every orbit, he would collect as much Hadrithra as ten other average Orynvaït put together. Vokäal's initial stern appearances at Vastaväalt's side failed to put a stop to this, so he eventually humiliated him by having him punished during Tüdrukust for subordination. Vastaväalt, who had mastered a technique of concealing his emotions,

received the punishment surges in silence. He resented receiving this from Vokäal's sétù over a matter that he thought was to be sorted out between him and his father.

One orbit in his fourth Sanjandil, as he was labouring by himself deep in the Irkmtt, Vastaväalt had the idea to do something no Orynvaït had ever done before. Instead of loading his shmeel with Hadrithra, he ingested some directly, and perked up with an immediate surge of energy. Orynvaït ingested nothing during the work orbit, and Vastaväalt was amazed to discover that it was better than anything he had ever experienced in his life. Maybe not as good as Tüdrुकust, but it had been the first time any Orynvaït had felt good without...Tüdrुकु.

His discovery was important, and he struggled to conceal his excitement that eve. He continued ingesting his Hadrithraëte without drawing attention to himself. It was so feeble and weak compared to raw Hadrithra, he said to himself, frustrated, how the Orynvaït could have accepted this for so long without ever questioning it? He didn't know, but noticing Tüdrुकु and Tugevaastmeline ingesting their Batheeshe at that moment filled him with dread the unavoidable Tüdrुकust that was about to follow.

Over time, Vastaväalt gained strength and intelligence from his secret habit, and noticed several inefficiencies inside the Irkmtt. An Orynvaït would come back to the same spot alone several times in one orbit, even if it was very bare, instead of working with others in spots that clearly had more potential. One day, he flailed his mass around and tried to direct Orynvaït towards more sources in plain view that were clearly higher yield than the one'e they were in. But his efforts did not get off the ground, because his father always seemed to come around at the worst times and catch him.

That Orbit, Vokäal and Lõunaeesti escorted Vastaväalt back to the Temperimkst, and Tüdrुकु was merciless in one-on-one Tüdrुकust with him when he got there. She sent violent waves, telling him she had no idea where he came from or why he'd already broken five or six ancient traditions that were as old as the Orynvaït themselves, but it would be seen to that no incidents would ever occur again. The shocks Vastaväalt received were so intense that he was fully incapacitated by the end, and lied by his sétù for the next three orbits unable to move or ingest anything. After this, he realized what kept the Orynvaït where they were, was their inability to communicate outside of Tüdrुकust. All communication inside Tüdrुकust then, he said to himself, was oppressive in nature.

For the first several orbits he was back in the Irkmtt, Vastaväalt didn't cause trouble. Tüdrुकु's punishment was severe; if he acted again, the plan had to be well thought out. And it clearly wasn't going to be possible by himself. He needed to enlist

help. He continued, slowly, plodding over his little pile of Hadrithra, filling the shmeel several times each orbit, biding his time. Realizing that being young time was on his side, he continued patiently to mull over the predicament of bringing change to the Orynvaït.

But it wasn't long before Vastaväalt became restless with the tedium of Orynvaït life. Some orbits later, when he realized an Orynvaït was working beside him in silence and ignoring him, which was perfectly normal, Vastaväalt got behind him, nudged him forcibly towards the rock, and then threw himself onto it quickly. "Hey! I'm Vastaväalt. Who are you?" he hissed through. Startled and not knowing what to think, the other jumped back off and returned to his work as if nothing had happened. A bit later, Vastaväalt tried again. During the moment they were both back on the rock he quickly pushed a sentence through. "Hey! Do you hear me? Answer me!" Finally receiving "Why are you doing this? What do you want from me?", Vastaväalt was jubilated. "Hey!" he exclaimed. "We can talk! Do you see? We're talking outside of Tüdrुकust!" "I know, you better stop, are you insane?" "Tell me your name!" Vastaväalt implored. The other hesitated for a second, as they both hung onto opposite sides of the rock. "Henii" he sputtered, and slid off.

Vastaväalt knowing the exchange had shocked Henii didn't stop him from feeling an immediate bond with him. He was ecstatic at his breakthrough. Had this ever happened between two Orynvaït before? It didn't matter, they would speak again and he would try to get others to learn how to "Ust" with each other. The second Orynvaït he did this with during the next orbit, Kantaangkole, was much more enthusiastic than Henii, and promised to stay in contact.

And Henii came around, along with many others. Finding out that it was possible to enter into communication with each other outside of the redigiveer was great. But what was more remarkable was that combined with the gains in energy and strength that followed consumption of raw Hadrithra, it planted a seed of revolutionary optimism inside them. But Vastaväalt had instructed those initiated to his growing underground network to exercise caution, as he had noticed an unexpected dark blue lining forming in his complexion. He didn't want Tüdrुक and do to them what she had to him after his first attempt at reforming Hadrithra exploitation.

His organizing, while initially successful, was also tremendously risky. The eleventh recruit of the new Ust, Stalveernen, saw the threat posed by Vastaväalt to Orynvaït loyalty to Tüdrुक and informed on him. It was miraculous that the first ten had all been more enthusiastic than Henii and had kept the secret safe. Stalveernen immediately led Vokäal to witness what was going on. Shocked, Vokäal went to the

Irkmtt sétù right away to enter into emergency Tüdrükust with the Temperimsk. He became stricken with rage and had to cut off the conversation several times to regain his composure while explaining Vastaväalt's misdeeds to Tüdruku. Pacing nervously, she conferred with Lõunaeesti over such a difficult case could be resolved. They decided that the punishment should extend beyond the obvious banishment from the Irmktt, because Vastaväalt represented a new and dangerous threat on Erinevid. They would have to make a strong example of him. They agreed it was imperative that such corruption of Orynvaït life could never resurface.

Tüdruku consequently suspended most of her orbit-to-orbit activities to concentrate on inflicting especially painful Tüdrükust on Vastaväalt. More of it, in the next Sanjandil, than regular Orynvaït would receive in their first five of their life, and a kind so ferocious that his health couldn't be guaranteed when it was over. Lõunaeesti was given the special task of taking enough of Vastaväalt out of himself to make 3 new Orynvaït, a loss no Orynvaït could be sure of surviving. As they were outside Sanjandil season, the various pieces of him were allowed to wither and perish. Vastaväalt was weakened so much that when he was finally allowed to resume regular Tüdrükust, Tüdruku felt nothing more than a weak din. Lõunaeesti cleared him to return to the Irmktt.

Through it all, one small spark burned inside him, one that persisted during all the amputation, all the Tüdrükust, all the moments of weakness when he felt his whole available being dedicating all its effort to the protection of it. It wasn't ill will towards Tüdruku or Lõunaeesti, despite their torture; because all his energy had to be focused on protecting the spark. Vastaväalt hadn't counted on it, but the next orbit in the Irmktt, was thrilled to learn from Henii in his first non-torture ust in a Sanjandil and a half with that he had kept the network alive with sporadic, low-key usts in Vastaväalt's absence. Vastaväalt thanked him and said he had done better than he ever could have imagined by keeping it alive. There was a new great task for the Outer Ust movement, as it would be henceforth known, he said, a task that had been burning impatiently inside him for his entire internment. The movement had to target the real power source: the Irmktt. Henii was shocked when he found out what that the spark was that burned inside Vastaväalt: He had to kill Vokäal.

"Vokäal, eliminated?" Henii exclaimed. "It's impossible. There is no known sending of one Orynvaït by another to join the Qhomiv."

"There almost was. Myself. And there is a good chance that if we do not succeed I will be the first. There is only one way for the Outer Ust movement to grow and that is by taking over the Irmktt."

“But it is sure to fail! How does elimination even happen? This will surely be our last chance at anything. Our only chance!”

“It will, but I think I know a way it might be achieved. And if it is to fail Henii, I am willing to risk my life. I cannot blame Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti for exercising their control. I just hope you and Kantaangkole will realize this project in the event of my joining the Qhomiv. All I know is that Vokäal is a weak, deceptive worthless Orynvait who sacrificed me, the one he begot, to Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti, without gaining a single thing from it himself. The Outer Ust network survived under his nose in spite of all that, and it must be put into action in no less than twenty orbits if it is to succeed!”

The Outer Ust and raw Hadrithra ingestion resumed with new vigour. Filling shmeel quotas first thing in the orbit and spending the rest engaged in one-on-one ust, learning Vastaväalt’s Tüdrukust resistance techniques, and spreading the plans for the seizure of the Irmktt, starting with the death of Vokäal, became the routine of the Outerusters. Out of the five-hundred-sixty-three Orynvait on Erinevid, four-hundred-sixteen worked in the Irmktt. Of these, twenty-seven were now loyal to Vastaväalt and another forty-six had been initiated into Outer Ust. To sniff out traitors and Tüdruku-sympathizers like Stalveernen, Vastaväalt had Kantaangkole set up a fake surveillance squad who would descend upon recruits after their introduction to Outer Ust, pretending to act on behalf of Lõunaeesti and demanding information about rumours that a non Tüdruku-sanctioned ust was spreading. It was very effective, and there were a surprisingly low number of snitches - only three – in the first forty-six new recruits. Vastaväalt, though, recognized the limits of luck. He knew that cracks would start appearing and now was the time to seize his chance. Eighteenth orbits into his return, the preparations began to carry out his plan.

Two orbits later, Vokäal returned to the Irmktt sétù from an inspection and was surprised to find four Orynvait waiting for him. Sensing that there was a problem, he followed them into the Irmktt; there must have been an accident. He would have to go to where they led him, since it was forbidden for them to engage in communication. They got to a deep Hadrithra deposit and his guess was correct – two bits of appendage were sticking out from under a pile of Hadrithra at the bottom. This was terrible – he had never experienced this situation although he vaguely remembered being told what to do in it by Lõunaeesti, many Sanjandil’s ago, when he became Hadrithra boss. That was of no help to him now and he decided to go back to the Irmktt sétù and enter into emergency Tüdrukust, hoping Lõunaeesti would make it in time to save the trapped Orynvait.

As he turned around, there were ten Orynvaït blocking his way. Taken aback by this— what did they mean by standing there? -he was abhorred when the realization kicked in at the last second that this was Vastaväalt's doing, the traitor! They shoved him forward, and he awkwardly fell over backwards down the deposit. As soon his sloshy mass dropped over the edge, fifteen others began to push large rocks down into the gap. At the bottom, Vokäal was horrified to discover the bits of appendage were not even attached to a living Orynvaït, before being crushed by a barrage of falling rocks. He was still alive, having withstood the ferocious assault, when Vastaväalt forebodingly appeared in the light at the top, and the largest rock to be dropped was pushed forward by all twenty-five Orynvaït there, extinguishing Vokäal and sending him to the Qhomiv.

“Orynvaït, tell me your name. The Outer Ust Movement has taken over the Irmktt. We have sent the eternal traitor and oppressor Vokäal to the Qhomiv. Vastaväalt is entering into ust with Tüdruku as we speak – we have declared the end of Tüdrुकust – and negotiating a deal where we might still provide the Temperimkst with Hadrithra. Hadrithra is much better and nutritious raw, and Siiski will not be here to make Hadrithraëte for you so it will no longer be available. You will be free here to enter into Ust with your fellow Orynvaït at any time as I am doing with you for the first time and you will not be obliged to have or use a sétù. If you wish to leave and rejoin Tüdruku you are free to do so. But this is real and you must decide. I must go now because you are many that this must be explained to. Vastaväalt promises you a free and better life. Please stay.”

The first words heard by those who were not part of the Outer Ust movement heard were so shocking that they didn't know how to respond. Everything they had ever known was turned upside down. And before they had a chance to respond, the Outeruster who was hurriedly transmitting this speech through the rock they bewilderdly clung to had bolted over to the next one and was throwing another Orynvaït on it. It was surely a mistake. Life without Tüdruku, without Tüdrुकust?! Vokäal sent to the Qhomiv by Vastaväalt? This was ridiculous...it was chaos...madness. Only a Tüdrुकust session could resolve this and clarify what was what, and here they were being told it was banned. Well, yes, of course. There was no redigiveer in the Irmktt. But what was the meaning of it all, then? The vast majority, perplexed, loaded up their shmeels indignantly and returned slowly, as they always did, across the plain to their sétùs. The strategy of the Irmktt takeover was unsuccessful, because three-hundred-and eighty-nine out of the four-hundred-seventeen Orynvaït that were there that orbit returned with their Hadrithra to the Temperimkst, leaving Vastaväalt with twenty-eight new recruits to add to his forty-six strong militia. At seventy-four, they were now a tenth of the Orynvaït population.

Amidst the melee, Vastaväalt and Kantaangkole were at the Irmktt setu, deadlocked in negotiations with Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti which were rapidly going sour. Vastaväalt looked up from the Irmktt sétù and was floored by the sight of all the Orynväit sludging back with their Shmeels. The idiots! He was going to have to lie to try and hold the hard line. Lõunaeesti, irritated but calm, did most of the negotiating

“I still can’t understand what you did to Vokäal.”

“Forget Vokäal! He was sent to the Qhomiv! It is useless to mention him anymore.”

Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti conferred, then sent their decision – “It is grave what you did, Vastaväalt. It is much worse than everything else you did put together. Lõunaeesti and I are at a loss; the only thing we can think of is to do to you and your band of rogues what was done to Vokäal”

“You and Lõunaeesti are finished. I control the Irmktt now. What was done to my father will be done to any of you who dare attempt anything hostile. We are willing to provide you with Hadrithra. But don’t threaten us.”

“Vastaväalt, your attempt was better this time, but it will be your last. It is sure to fail. We cannot from any point of view allow anything like this to happen. The Orynväit are loyal to Tüdruku and all their future kus. How could you think it could be otherwise? This eve when they return with their Shmeels we will do as we have done on every eve of our history, except all will know that there is the enormous task next orbit of going and removing you and your supporters from the Irmktt. You have made history, Vastaväalt. But not the kind you wanted.”

Kantaangkole got excited and brazenly addressed Tüdruku and Lõunaeesti directly for the first time in his life “You will not succeed! Over half the Orynväit have joined us. We have created ways of sending you to the Qhomiv like your slave Vokäal! And we will leave this useless Irmktt to you; we have secured far bigger Hadrithra sources outside of it right under your noses!”

“Kantaangkole?” Tüdruku exclaimed “You of all Orynväit are Vastaväalt’s accomplice? I’m ashamed of you. You had a bright future. You will not succeed.” And Kantaangkole went flying back with a fierce blast of Tüdrुकust. Vastaväalt rushed back to pursue the negotiations but nothing else came through the redigiveer. He briefly shuddered at the memory of being on the receiving end of so many of those torturous blasts, and felt great sympathy for Kantaangkole as he helped him up. He tried to sound confident as he wished him a fast recovery and talked about strategy, but inside he couldn’t help but wonder if he’d grossly overplayed his hand.

“My dear Orynvait, this is Lõunaesti! I will be starting the Tüdrükust this eve because, as you all know, we are experiencing extreme turmoil for the first time in our history. Vastaväalt and his gang of miscreants are occupying the Irmktt, which I thank you all for returning from. Tüdruku has temporarily assumed command of the Ifktarorynvaï and is with them right now preparing for the massive mission we are undertaking at dawn of next orbit. A mission we need each and every one of you ready for!”

“I don’t need to explain the heinous acts of treason committed by Vastaväalt, because he did it for you himself after he seized control of the Irmktt. Raw Hadrithra, “Outer Ust”! I will tell you, dear Orynvait, I always knew he was the most troubled one of us, but this is truly evil beyond anything Tüdruku or I ever could have imagined. And our beloved fallen Vokäal! We must avenge him!” The five-hundred-strong group sent their raucous approval to through the redigiveer to Lõunaesti, united in the righteous satisfaction that they did the right thing.

“My dear friends, we are one-hundred-strong. There is no redigiveer, so stay at your rock. Henii and Kantaangkole will pass Vastaväalt’s instructions down the line in an orderly manner. Please be patient.”

“As you saw this orbit, my friends, the majority of our race chose endless slavery to Tüdruku over freedom...”

“...Freedom to say as we wish, and grow smarter from our exchanges. Freedom to sustain ourselves from the rich Hadrithra of Erinevid, and not Siiski’s terrible, weak Hadrithraëte...”

“...Tüdruku and Lõunaesti, knowing that this is the greatest threat their monopoly over us has ever faced, will be here next orbit to challenge us, you can be sure of that...”

“...they will be emboldened by the vast number of Orynvait who returned to them, in spite of the liberation we offered them. The only response I can give you for that is it was too much too soon. Their perpetual enslavement to Tüdrükust has made them unable to see what is good and what is right. Thank you for choosing courage and deliverance from domination!!!”

“We must take in all the Hadrithra we can tonight, because the task demanded of us is enormous...”

“...We cannot hold the Irmktt outnumbered seven to one...”

“...and they will certainly come at us with everything they have...”

“...they will round us up and put us in permanent remedial Tüdrükust...”

“It will take us a long time to find other sources of Hadrithra, sources which I am sure exist, but time which we do not have the luxury of right now.”

“And now, as you’ve all eagerly been anticipating, the leader of all Orynvaït – Tüdruku!”

“Thank you, Lõunaesti. Thank you for leading Tüdrükust in this terrible emergency that has befallen Erinevid. As I plead with all of you to understand, Vastaväalt’s treachery has reached heights that we never could have imagined, and this is why Lõuna gave Tüdrükust for the first time tonight. It may be necessary in the future – I make no guarantees. Just now, I needed to get the Ifktarorynvaï to connect a part of the Redigiveer which is not being used to some dormant sétùs that the conspirators will be permanently confined to. We leave for the Irmktt at dawn. I will go first myself with all of the Ifktarorynvaï, and you will assemble into four squads under Aavik, Siiski, Lõuna and Stalveernen. When we return and the traitors are all put away, Batheeshe celebration rations for all! And the orbit after, Stalveernen, who showed enormous courage and did a great service to the Orynvaït by exposing Vastaväalt’s betrayal, will begin his functions as Irmktt boss. Let’s all congratulate him; if it wasn’t for his work we might not be in such a favourable position to crush Vastaväalt’s uprising.”

“Since they will not leave us in peace!”

“Since they refuse to allow Orynvaït a choice!”

“Since they will insist that we be tortured and live in perpetual misery!”

“Since Tüdruku took our free will, we will take what is dearest to Tüdruku! Kantaangkole will lead a brigade of three at the onset of the attack next orbit to the Temperimsk. He will make contact with the Irmktt sétù to say that Tugevaastmeline is being held and will be sent to Qhomiv, unless control of the Irmktt is ceded once and for all!”

At dawn of the next orbit, for the first time ever, Tüdruku led twenty-two Ifktarorynvaï in a procession towards the Irmktt. The four assigned formations slowly congregated at their meeting points and were to sit tight until Lõunaesti gave the order. Meanwhile, Lõunaesti held a pre-attack strategy scrum with the three other squad

chiefs at the Temperimsk. If no Tüdrुकust came through it in five hours, she was to order the advance.

Tüdrुकu contemplated, as her large mass lurched forward, sensing the wall of Ifktarorynvaï behind her, that indeed Vastaväalt had succeeded at putting her in a vulnerable position. If the failure of his seizure of the Irkmtt was guaranteed, which it surely was, her survival as Ku was not. Nonetheless, she couldn't very well say this to the Orynvaït – Vastaväalt was a rogue and she was going to deal with him herself head on, again, once and for all. She had left Tugevaastmeline in the Temperimkst and placed her in the care of Tymoë, an average but trustworthy Ifktarorynvaï.

Vastaväalt on his end had successfully predicted Tüdrुकu and Lõunaeesti's strategy, knowing that Tüdrुकu would appear first with the Ifktarorynvaï and hope to strike fear and awe in his troops and make them renounce their loyalty to him. He had deployed half his reserves, sixteen teams of two holding medium sized rocks together with which they were to use force, with the rest lying in wait in the back of the Irkmtt. Tüdrुकu was going to be forced to unleash her terrible powers on a singular basis, but then again she had never had to release them through the Redigiveer.

Kantaangkole was given a last minute salute by Vastaväalt, who left him with two capable Outerusters at the Irkmtt sétù. Their instructions were to flee as soon as they saw Tüdrुकu approaching and cut across the plain the long way around to the back of the Temperimskt and grab Tugevaastmeline. Vastaväalt disappeared into the valley to take command of his battalion/

The teams of two had formed a perimeter around the front of the Irkmtt. Vastaväalt's instructions were to brace for attack at first appearance of the Ifktarorynvaï line on the horizon. They were to attempt to engage them two on one, and bludgeon them to Qhomiv, and some minutes later this was exactly what they were doing. They let Tüdrुकu pass as per Vastaväalt's orders, he was certain sending her to the Qhomiv at the outset would have been catastrophic and seriously undermined any future negotiating leverage. She was crestfallen at the sight of her own subjects, these Orynvaït turned murderous traitors, and she flung one of the pairs on a rock and unleashed a blast of Tüdrुकust fury that sent them both flying. She slimed on angrily towards the Irkmtt, and left behind the scattered two-on-one pairings embroiled in fierce battle.

Henii and two other Outerusters checked an Ifktarorynvaï against a wide, flat rock and with their appendages slug another rock at him with full speed. The Ifktarorynvaï fell, severely hurt, before fading off into Qhomiv. Unfazed by the carnage, they moved

efficiently along to face the next. Displaying tenacity in the heat of combat quite foreign to their race, Vastaväalt's Outerusters took the Ifktarorynvaï down with rock clotheslines and attempted to crush them into oblivion while they were down. They had a fair bit of success and injured or outright sent to Qhomiv fourteen out of twenty-two Ifktarorynvaï, who turned out as Vastaväalt told them in encouragement to be nothing more than glorified, lazy nobles. The remaining who continued to withstand the assault fled in Tüdruku's direction towards the Irkmtt sétù; they saw Lõunaeesti's reinforcements defiantly approaching from afar.

Vastaväalt had organized his remaining forty Orynvaït into twelve teams of three, and each one had their leaders stationed at advanced points to relay the attack signal from him and his "gang of four" outerusters who were waiting far to the right of the Irkmtt sétù. When Tüdruku arrived there, they hurried to the positions to alert that the armies were fast approaching and it was time to launch into attack mode. Vastaväalt and the four planned to go around as fast as they could, causing havoc and giving their Outeruster three packs the upper hand wherever possible. It would not be long before they were going to prove vital.

Kantaangkole and company, taking the long way, did avoid the main front of Aavik and Lõunaeesti that was advancing up the middle, which most certainly would have decimated them. They would have done the most damage to Stalveernen's outfit but they were coming along the lower ridge; Tüdruku had specifically instructed this as she knew an ambush would most likely be planted across the top. Alas, it was something much worse than an ambush that was planned. Siiski waved her brigade back to a halt when three Orynvaït carrying a large boulder came bounding over the plain towards them. It was Kantaangkole. But this was not part of the plan.

When she reached the Irkmtt Tüdruku found the whole area deserted. Kantaangkole and the two operatives had fled some minutes prior to arrival. She feared an ambush now but Vastaväalt and three others sprung out in the distance to her far right. Aavik and Lõunaeesti's fronts arrived in a huge half circle, engulfing the front half of the Irkmtt. They were immediately peppered by fast rock assaults coming at them from all directions. Lõunaeesti was reached by two Ifktarorynvaï that had escaped the first offensive and they pounded one of Vastaväalt's units to a rock, who were then liquidated by a powerful Ust blast from Lõunaeesti. Good so far, Tüdruku thought to herself, as Stalveernen arrived from the far back, closing another part of the battlefield off. But where was Siiski?

Kantaangkole spoke quickly to his two operative in an impromptu huddle on a rock. Their plan was changing on the fly, he explained. They hadn't expected to meet

any advancing battalions on this route, but this was Siiski's entire division. Engaging them was out of the question; at three on a hundred they had no chance. They would try to stall and injure them, meaning two quick attacks if possible, but there was only one target: Siiski. If she could be engaged, she was to be engaged.

Tüdruku couldn't wait on Siiski any longer. Vastaväält's three packs were quick and they were doing surprising amounts of damage. The most disappointing losses so far were the Ifktarorynvaï, who should have been able to take care of this all alone at their level of responsibility but who were only three left in the fight. Exasperated, Tüdruku jumped in the battle and started thrashing Outerusters left and right onto rocks and giving the hardest blows of Tüdrukust she had. Lõunaeesti and Aavik's numbers were holding steady and advancing, while Vastaväält had absorbed the remains of some fallen units and had ten in the back decimating Stalveernen's outfit. Orynvaït flew on and off rocks as they never had before, Hadrithra was also being increasingly flung about to slow down Tüdruku's army and reduce visibility. Tüdruku saw that the valiance of the Outerusters was inspired by their fearless commander, who alone had sent twenty Orynvaït to the Qhomiv already. She rushed to the back to get him herself.

Siiski had directed her brigade to surround Kantaangkole and company and finish them in a stampede. But he had the good luck of choosing her weak side, and easily put down three Orynvaït in one shot with the massive boulder. Five others came to overwhelm them, but were quickly pelted with stones that they were injured by. Siiski was agonized, she couldn't afford this, the operation wasn't a lock unless her battalion got through, and this was costing valuable time. Exasperated, she went after Kantaangkole herself and slung him over a 45 degree angle rock. She had him down but couldn't contain him – she had weak Ust skills and hadn't sent anything out in several Sanjandils. He rolled over, moving her weight around so she was under him on the rock; harassed by twenty Orynvaït, his two operatives dug deep and held them at bay for barely an instant, while heaving a huge stone in the air and onto Siiski as Kantaangkole slid out of the way just in time for it to sandwich her brutally to Qhomiv. The three fled with a tiny advance on the squad, which was in total disorder, undecided on whether to pursue them or follow orders and go to the Irkmtt. The dawdling finished when a vocal young Orynvaït named Zailaiyaa finally insisted if they managed to kill Siiski, they had no hope of catching them, and they would be more useful at the battle. This had to be done in Outerust and the brigade was paralyzed by inertia for a long time before finally understanding the small pack led by Zailaiyaa had made the decision on their behalf. They clumsily followed, still far from the Irkmtt.

By now Lõunaeesti and Aavik's squads had returned to the front of the Irkmtt with prisoners, having largely subdued their adversaries. Henii and 15 others had been surrounded by them and were being held captive. Tüdruku was engaged along with what was left of Stalveernen's side in fierce fighting with Vastaväalt's final ten at the back of the Irkmtt. Vastaväalt and the two that he had started with had proven very adept rock wielders and had eliminated alone a quarter of Stalveernen's side. Tüdruku herself that orbit had already sent 13 of the Outerusters to Qhomiv, something that she was greatly pained to do, but the necessity of which she was absolutely convinced - it was the survival of the whole Orynvaît in the balance. She continued to blast away Outerusters fiercely, two at a time.

Lõunaeesti had sent Aavik's to the back to help Tüdruku and Stalveernen finish the job when she finally saw Siiski's brigade arrive. She wondered what the delay until it became clear they were without Siiski. The fifteen secured prisoners were not her worry but nobody had accounted for other operatives at large. She immediately scurried over to the Irkmtt sétù. Tugevaastmeline!

Tüdruku was getting tired, but she angrily threw Vastaväalt's two accomplices against a flat rock and emptied herself of the most guttural rot that she had ever channelled. Vastaväalt jumped on her back to interrupt it but it was too late. Stalveernen with four other Orynvaît in tow slammed down stones on both of them, finishing them off. They were lost to Qhomiv. Tüdruku pinned Vastaväalt against the rock and put all her weight on top of them. Stalveernen eagerly came forward with his gang and several rocks suspended in the air, ready to be dropped, but Tüdruku waved them off. This was her job to finish.

"This is it Vastaväalt! I have you. I told you it was useless and you still made me do this to you. Look at all the lives you have sent to the Qhomiv today! Are you satisfied with your pathetic ambitions now?"

"It is you who have sent ...(*gasp*)...them all. I plead you... Tüdruku - finish me right now. I will die by your largest surge ever...I who have re...received more than... (*pain*) more than all here..."

"Oh, you think you will die in nobility as your Orynvaît brethren you forced me to send... Vastaväalt...No! I will send you...without Tüdrukust. I will send you this same vile way you have introduced, corrupted us with...But admit...admit you have lost Vastaväalt. You were foolish to...confront me."

"I admit nothing! We have not lost. Kantaangkole has...Tugevaastmeline."

Lõunaeesti appeared behind Tüdruku. Tüdruku bitterly realized if she was there that the battle was won but the war was not. “Go ahead!” Vastaväalt laughed bitterly “I’d rather go to Qhomiv than share Erinevid with you.” And Tüdruku was overcome with a rage, a terrible rage, and gave one last, enormous blast of Tüdrukust. Vastaväalt was flattened to the rock with pain. And Tüdruku, in the angriest of movements, hoisted the huge rock on which they were struggling, slipping Vastaväalt underneath as it fell, and crushing him into the hard red ground. She collapsed against an adjacent rock. “Master?” she faintly heard Lõunaeesti sometime later “Master? The battle is over. But we have to enter into a power-sharing agreement with the Outerusters.”

“My dear Orynvaît, this is Lõunaeesti speaking again. This orbit, the forty fifth of the thirty sixth Sanjandil in Tüdruku’s reign, we have lived through a decisive battle and our first war. I want to thank all of you who survived and fought bravely and let us take a moment to all mourn this tragedy that has befallen us, but also to be grateful that we did not all go to Qhomiv this orbit.”

“My dear Orynvaît let us remember our fallen brethren who have gone to the Qhomiv. Siiski did perish this orbit. As did all of the Ifktarorynvaï. Our dear leader Tüdruku, peace be upon her, did not go to Qhomiv, but is greatly weakened and will not be able to give Tüdrukust or lead anymore. Vastaväalt did not survive the hostilities either. According to tradition, Tugevaastmeline should now be our leader, but she has asked me to exercise authority temporarily. She was beset upon by Kantaangkane and some other Outerusters, and has confessed to me that she always had a great admiration for Vastaväalt and would like to incorporate some of his ideas into Orynvaît life when she takes over. Kantaangkane will be an advisor in the Temperimskt and Henii will assist Stalveernen in the Irkmtt in our new power sharing agreement.”

“While I may have reservations about this, from a practical standpoint, we have no choice on Vastaväalt’s ideas becoming reality. Tüdruku and I overlooked the precaution of having another Orynvaît learn Hadrithra conversion and with Siiski no longer with us, raw Hadrithra will now become a reality for all of us...”

“And without my Ifktarorynvaï I have nobody to maintain the Redigiveer or mine Batheeshe add that to Tüdruku’s current state and...I’m afraid you’ll have to start.” – It gave her great displeasure to say it - “usting amongst yourselves...”

“Two orbits ago we were five-hundred-and-sixty three. We are now but three-hundred-and-eighteen. Vastaväalt was not a Ku but he changed the Orynvaît more than the two-hundred-twenty-seven previous ones in less than two orbits. My dear Orynvaît, it is a lot for us to believe. But we must be strong and adapt to survive to our new reality,

lest we all go to the Qhomiv. And let us never be so close minded to let two-hundred-and-forty-five of ourselves join the Qhomiv in one orbit ever again!"