

# The Black Wind

## Tale Two of Doore's Despair

by Michael J. Allen

A tall man in a dark cassock atypically crafted of tailored, Asian silk stood in the center the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia. Beneath an impossibly expansive dome, light dazzled the faithful as if the sunlight was born within the cathedral itself. Mosaics dappled the tile floors with a rainbow of hues.

Issac Doore's eyes were closed, his face uplifted. Hunger and rapture warred for dominance on his thin face. The warm light fell cold upon him, but he devoured it anyway, absorbing it against a pursuing darkness he could not escape. Visitors and worshippers gave the dour man a wide berth.

His dull grey eyes snapped open, revealing bottomless sorrow. He blinked it away, hiding it behind a hard gaze. He spun on the spot and marched from the temple, seeing none of its splendor.

He emerged onto the streets of Constantinople, and even in decline it teemed with commerce. Barkers besieged his ears with cries of goods, simple and extravagant. He paused and absorbed the echoes of long renowned riches. The sounds of opulence were marred only by the sight of empty pedestals of stolen statuary. Trains of goods trudged through the city, exhausted from the long Silk Road.

The Silk Road. Memories robbed his calm and defeated the shield obscuring pain's testament in his eyes. Ever stalking death - dealt bloody by the greedy and impartially by sickness and disease - echoed in his mind's eye.

He resumed his march.

Not far at hand, the remainder of Constantinople's Hippodrome lay in ruins. He remembered it as it was before the fourth crusade and its brigand commanders had reduced the great monument to rubble, just as they had brought the city down with their avarice. Doore paused in the shadow of a towering Egyptian obelisk and gazed at the Hippodrome, a fallen monument from Roman days. Echoes of roaring thousands whispered in his ears. Cheers of triumph and cries of tragedy nudged his ears like whispers of long lost memories. His mind's eye could all but see the racing chariots, rolling like thunder and sometimes crashing like waves. Whispers transformed into screams.

He felt plunged beneath a storm cloud's darkened shadow under a cloudless day. Voices cried out in the long past night, screaming for salvation, shrieking for the release of death and eternal peace. Their cries lingered as if unable to depart. Disembodied spirits from memory and premonition besieged him with pleading questions.

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