

She had a firm grasp on the citizens' hearts. Still more was required; they were not ready. The road ahead was hard, and she needed to know that their minds were one with hers.

With all of the important decisions she had made, she had neglected to choose a symbol for the Dream. The lion crest of Donius' family needed to be replaced. It did not represent the people. It was seen as fierce and unforgiving; Donius and his ancestors were the lions and the subjects were the prey. Lilandra needed something that allowed the citizens to think they could rise as high as their dreams. A bird. It had to be. All humans dreamed of flying. It would be perfect.

It was a little known truth that people's minds follow their behavior. Get them to do something and they will come up with their own reasons why they did it. Those reasons would almost always be positive. She had reached a point where the citizens had given her much. They loved her as much as their deeds gave them reason to. The soldiers trained and readied themselves without pay. The farmers worked harder to compensate for their sons and daughters who answered the call and joined the army. No one sacrificed for something they do not believe in.

If asked, each citizen who gave would come up with his own reason why he gave. They would not, of course, understand that adoring their Regent demanded a price. In order to pay that price, they had to love her dearly. Lilandra knew that sacrificing both was a cause and an effect of love. She needed to increase their love for her. That meant a greater sacrifice.

Material goods, taxes, and work had assured her that they adored her. Yet, those prices did not show the depth of their love for her. She needed to bind them with a sacrifice that they would have to justify to themselves as worthwhile. She rested her head on the tub and let her mind go. As she absently soaped her breasts, she wondered how many mothers felt regret at having children ravage their bodies and destroy their dreams.

With a splash she sat up. Hot water had done it again. Children. Every citizen had given much, but only in material things. If she could convince them to give their children, their most cherished possessions, to the cause, they would be bound to her forever.

Her mind whirled with the possible details. Any child under seven years would be suitable. The people of Atani would share in the joy and responsibility of raising the children. They would be given the benefit of a nation's knowledge and love. In time, those children would grow and would give back to Atani. Each one would be the perfect, selfless citizen.

Those parents would come up with their own reasons why giving away their child was a noble act. Even with those reasons, Lilandra thought that an extra incentive would be helpful. It wouldn't have to be much. Persuasion had three secrets, and she knew them all. The first was that the source of the message must have status. Parents rarely listened to children, but Antians revered her. The second secret was knowledge of the audience. Lilandra knew what they people needed more than they did. The third secret was that the message must join the source and the audience. And that she had mastered with the citizens' assemblies.

All people had dreams of glory, if not for themselves, then certainly for their children. If one of the children who was given up and raised by the citizens were chosen

to be the next ruler, the nation would see that as something beyond noble. It would be perfect.

No longer would the rulers be born into the privilege. They would come from the citizens and be raised by the citizens. No future ruler would know who his parents were, thus they would have no ties except those to the nation that nurtured and raised them.

The idea was so perfect, Lilandra hurried her bath. She wanted to begin to make plans. She leapt from the tub, splashing water everywhere. Like the clothes she left strewn about, the water on the floor was beneath her notice. She could barely wait for the next citizens' assembly in the coliseum.