

Vilneus

Chapter 1

Karl

The smoldering lingering, worn out fire spewed an acrid aroma throughout the bowels of the mud plastered hut that the members of the Klingor clan called home. Little Karl slept fitfully curled into and among a pile of dirty rags that adorned a far corner of the kitchen. The hard packed dark earthen floor had become an extra appendage, a part of him. It smelled dank and damp but was warm and secure, like a hand enveloping him; it formed and folded around him, holding him securely. His coughing had grown more and more disconcerting and constant over the past few months, so much so that Max had had to move him as far as possible away from the rest of the family.

There were no doctors in Vilneus, but even if there had been one, there was little that medicine, modern as it was in this year of the Lord 1745, could do. Bleeding, leeching and inhaling sulfur, though all in all very dramatic seemed useless and too demanding at this stage for little trembling Karl to endure. Karl was four years old but trapped in a two year-old's body. Everyone in the family knew, and felt, that he would never see his fifth birthday. His frail form virtually never stopped quivering and