

**ASULON**  
**A PTI Press book**

**ASULON**  
**The Sword of Fire-Book One**  
**By William R. McGrath**

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## An excerpt from chapter four of Asulon

“When I first set foot upon the shores of Asulon, I knew and cared only for strength of arms,” said Moor. “I grew to manhood in a world where a strong sword could change the law to suit your will, where might made right. Your father taught me another way. Not that naive tale that ‘right makes might’, for a sharp sword will cut through a righteous man as easily as an evil one. No, your father taught me something useful, that righteousness and truth stand alone, in and of themselves, and that they exist whether men recognize them or not, whether a good or evil man has won the day.

“Your father won me over with the logic of his argument. He described truth as being like the measurement of a tree. You might say that a tree measures five fathoms tall and I might say seven. Thus we have only two possibilities: one of us is right and the other wrong, or that we are both wrong—the tree being of some other height. In any case,

my cutting off your head will have absolutely no effect on the height of that tree. Nor will that diplomatic lie that ‘we can both be right’ change the dimensions of our tree one bit. No, truth remains truth, no matter what men think or do or say. Our task lies in whether or not we recognize that truth when it comes before us.

“Your father told me that Asulon had begun to fall into these evil ways, where ‘might made right’, though here a fat purse, rather than a strong sword, became the weapon of choice.

“‘But’, your father said, ‘there is still time for Asulon to change.’ Many men in the land still thought as he did and he asked me to join them in restoring the old ways of honor, courage and virtue, the ways that said great men should serve the truth and not the other way around. What your father showed me was a nobler way to take revenge on the kind of men who killed my family than simply becoming richer than they through the same means they used.

“Though new to Asulon, I had heard much of it in my travels. In Asulon a man could make his own destiny, no matter what his birth; in Asulon all men, rich and poor, high and low, obey the same law. I put my faith in *that* Asulon before I came here; the same Asulon your father remembered from his youth. But in this generation he could see a change coming, a change led by men of wealth and power, men whose gold came from Asulon, yet who hated Asulon. Men who thought none wiser than themselves, and believed they deserved to rule all, men who spoke of loving ‘the people’, but who did not trust those same people to govern themselves.

“Your father set himself against these men and their plans for Asulon. Your father strives to protect Asulon, but not just the country, the idea that a man, no matter his birth, lives free to choose his own path, to rise or fall, prosper or fail, build or travel or buy or sell, all on his own, and no other man—be he captain of wealth or king of the land—may tell him otherwise. This, then, is your father’s Asulon, a land where all men stand equal in the eyes of the law.”

Animated now, Moor rose from his chair and walked over to the sand table, picked up a wooden stylus and began to draw in the sand.

“Your father spoke to me about the genius of Asulon. How the founding laws set a balance between freedom and safety.”

Daniel saw that Moor had drawn the four points of the compass in the sand, each marked with its respective direction.

“Your father called this theory ‘Asulon’s Compass.’ On this compass the four cardinal points, West, East, North, and South, represent four types of government,” said Moor, pointing to each.

“To the extreme West lies the land of Anarchy. Here each man rules himself and does what is right in his own eyes. Nothing in this land protects the weak from the strong. In this land of pure democracy, the majority rules,” Moor’s eyes glinted in what served him as a smile. “But, of course, in a pure democracy, you often have five wolves and one sheep taking a vote on what to have for dinner.”

He thrust the stylus into the sand at the eastern end of the compass.

“In the extreme East we find the land of Absolute Monarchy, where one man rules over all. The people here have nothing to fear from a king perfect in wisdom and goodness, but a foolish or evil king can make this realm hell on earth. Whole clans can be slain if one of their members displeases the king.”

Moor then moved the stylus to the top of his compass.

“In the extreme North lies the land of Unchanging Law. A law made here cannot be changed. This may be good when a law is well made, for it allows men to keep their heads in times of trouble. Not all the laws here will be perfect though, for men make laws and men are not perfect. An evil ruler can run afoul of his own law in this land and so takes care in what he orders, but even bad laws cannot be corrected here, no matter how flawed.”

He moved the stylus again.

“In the extreme South lies the land of Ever-changing Laws. Engaging in any activity here means a daily gamble. In this land, men live in fear that they may do something illegal even though their actions were legal the day before. Men spend all their time trying to predict the ways the law will go, as a sailor in uncharted seas spends all his time predicting when a reef will appear. So they go forward slowly, if at all.”

Moor lifted the stylus from the sand and began to circle it over the table.

“What, then, to do? Where shall people live and have both freedom and safety? Go too far one way and the strong shall have freedom, but the weak shall live in fear. Go too far another and the people shall live safely for a time, but as slaves under masters who ‘know better than they’ how to run their lives.”

Moor now thrust the stylus into the very center of the compass.

“Here, your father explained to me, in the center of all, lies the course between these extremes.

The Elder Laws of Asulon sought to take this course, to hit the target at the very center and so strike a balance between safety and freedom, progress and stability.

“To guard the weak from the strong, the Elder Laws recognize certain rights given, as your father said, ‘by God to all men’, as the Ten Sacred Rights, beyond the touch of government or of our fellow men. Instead of pure democracy—all the people voting on every law—elected men represent the people’s interests; your senators vote on the laws of the land. But even they must still fit their laws within the framework of the Sacred Rights.

“To prevent one man from ruling all men, laws control the king. A strong king, vital in times of war, rallies the troops and gives them courage. He acts as a father figure and comforts the people in times of trouble. Yet the king does not control the treasury. He can propose a law, but only the representatives of the people can pay for the law’s implementation.

“The Elder Laws also keep Asulon centered between unchanging and ever-changing law. Among the greatest works of wisdom man has written on earth, the Elder Laws can be changed if two-thirds of the people of Asulon agree to the change. Perhaps being human, the founders of this country did not hit the perfect center of their target. But having this center as a target has helped keep the people of Asulon free, and done much to prevent her leaders from straying too far in any direction.

“Above all else, your father desires to bring Asulon closer to its center. His enemies name him an extremist and say he wishes to move Asulon one way or the other, but, in truth, he intends to return it to the Elder Laws, to its center, where the weak are protected and the strong are free. In your father’s vision of Asulon, I finally found a purpose for my life, an idea worth fighting for and even worth dying for.”

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