

# A Season of Honor

L. D. Alford

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# THE CHRONICLES OF THE DRAGON AND THE FOX

*Fantasy ladies and knights come alive  
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## **The End of Honor** BOOK ONE

An intragalactic war threatens to tear apart  
the Human Galactic Empire and the lives of  
Prince John-Mark and his bride-to-be, Lyral Neuterra.

## **The Fox's Honor** BOOK TWO

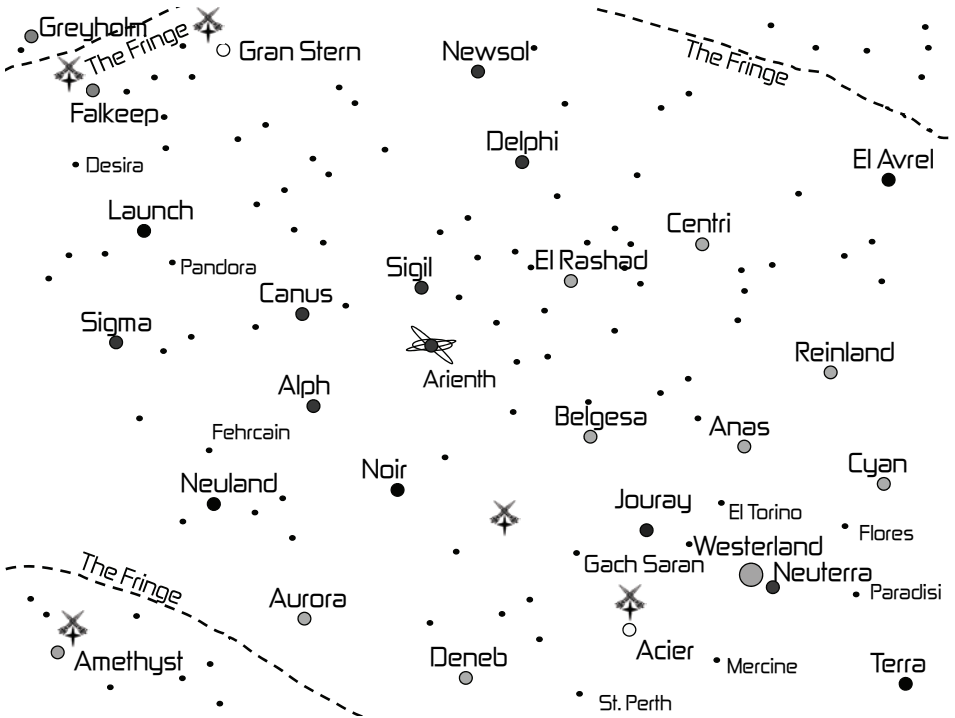
It was a time of treachery and vengeance...  
of nobility and redemption...all because of love.  
But the ultimate price could be Devon Rathenberg's life.

## **A Season of Honor** BOOK THREE

Baron Shawn du Locke must choose between  
honor and desire...with the fragile peace of the  
Human Galactic Empire hanging in the balance.



# THE HUMAN GALACTIC EMPIRE





## One

“Shawn!” Count Ian Acier exclaimed.

Shawn grimaced, then tendered Ian with a crooked smile. “Yes, the adjunct of the Emperor.” Ian watched the younger man’s eyes. They were cold, gray, hard as steel, and he smiled. They embraced.

Count Ian Acier was dressed in his usual military garb. He was attired in desert tan, the casual uniform of his troops. His long, large body fit the uniform well. His hard-bitten features were set off in their most handsome frame by the color and cut of the clothing.

“My friend, my brother—” Ian seized Shawn in a tight embrace—“I feared for your life. The Emperor himself would not be safe had he harmed you.” As they parted, Ian clasped Shawn’s shoulders.

Shawn let out a hard laugh. “Yes, thank God, you and many others feel the same way. Still, by the Imperial Concession, I am made—” he searched for a word—“ineffectual.”

“There, you are wrong. Even after your ten years of exile, the Imperial Huscarls are still loyal to you, and do not forget that during the Imperial Concessions at Neuterra, you represented fully a third of the Landsritters. Those Houses will not long forget the treachery of the Emperor or your actions.”

“My actions resulted in my exile and our current problems.”

“Would you act any differently today?”

“No! But I was a fool. Before he could act, I should have seen the evidence of the Emperor’s desires. I would have snuffed out his

ambitions as I would kill a snake, but enough—for ten years, I have thought too much on that.” Anger filled his features briefly before his expression calmed, eased. Shawn sat down and, with a sigh, let his whole face fall into a smile. “Now I am finally free to do what I want. I am free of the Emperor’s exile, long free of the duties of Crown Prince—as you know, my cousin Devon Rathenberg owned that title well before the Concessions. The Imperial Huscarls may still honor me, but I have not been their leader for ten years. By my accounting, I have no responsibilities.”

“I thought so. You’re an officer, a warrior. For hire?” Ian walked behind his large desk.

“Yes.” Shawn laughed almost easily. “I am opening a professional trade.”

“Would you like some coffee?”

“Only if it’s imported. The best I’ve tasted on this ball of sand is reconstituted simumeals.”

A guarded look came over Ian’s face. As he sat down behind the desk, he pressed the call button. “Coffee for two, Sergeant.” Then blandly he asked, “How long have you been on Acier?”

“Before I got your message, I was thinking of joining your forces.”

“I don’t use mercenaries.”

“Yes, so I was told. Almost—almost, I would be tempted to swear fealty to you.”

“No!” The Count’s eyes blazed. He nearly leapt out of his chair. “When the time comes, it is I who shall again swear fealty to you, my lord.”

The silence hung between them.

Shawn’s eyes glazed slightly and he lowered his head. His words were quiet and distinct. “My dearest friend, I would gladly have you fight at my side again. And if I again had a House and a title, my proudest moment would be your acceptance of its burden of responsibility. If I had anything to offer, I would offer you that today. I am not even allowed a Sigil.” He closed his eyes and looked away from Ian. He clenched his fists. “But, since I have nothing to offer—” Shawn looked directly at the Count—“please, you must simply treat me in the state the Emperor left me.” At this he smiled.

The Count smiled too. “Shawn, the late Prince John-Mark, you are to me General, brother, child of my soul. I shall treat you as Baron Shawn du Locke, but never shall I or any of those men who were on Neuterra forget our place under your leadership—and your honor.” A single rap on the door completed this last declaration. Ian didn’t turn his gaze from Shawn. “Enter.”

A wizened and wrinkled old Sergeant dressed in military livery opened the door and carried in a platinum tray. The rich smell of expressed coffee filled the room.

“That is imported,” stated Shawn irrefutably. “Where did you get it?”

“Neuterra.” Ian grinned, and they both laughed out loud.

The ancient Sergeant placed the tray on a small table and served the coffee.

“I thought you might like a snack—to get the taste of simumeals out of your mouth.” The tray was generously filled with meat rolls and pastries.

“Good.” Shawn selected a few choice morsels. “I was afraid your dry world had little else to offer.”

“The sale of heavy metals makes this world and my House rich,” Ian added. Then, aside: “That’s all, Sergeant.”

“Yes, Sire.”

Ian watched in silence as the old Sergeant backed out of the room and tightly shut the door.

“It is too bad,” continued Ian, after the door closed, “that the House Acier is in decline.”

Without uttering a sound, Shawn opened his mouth, shut it, then leaned forward as if to speak.

The Count cut him off. “Say nothing, my friend. You know I have no heir. You know that is my chief problem with both the Emperor and the Landsritters. I am not young and my beautiful Elizabeth—my beautiful Elizabeth—we cannot have any more children. Not naturally, not artificially; you know the Code.”

“I know the Code well.”

Ian continued angrily, “I didn’t want to speak of business with you, yet. I wanted this to be simply a time for old friends to be together. Like

old times again.” He put down his coffee cup so suddenly the saucer broke with a crack.

“Sometimes the importance of old friends being together is business.” Shawn sipped his coffee.

“Perhaps,” mused the Count. “What is your true opinion of my forces on my planet of Acier?”

“Well trained, dedicated, as always, a spectacular army.”

“But with an almost nonexistent intragalactic naval arm. I have one of the most powerful ground armies in the Human Empire, but I am not a Duke. I don’t have a Duke’s five battleships to protect this system.”

“Yes, but your special orbital defenses, the arrangements with the Intragalactic Combine, as well as Neuterran fealty keeps your skies clear.”

“Only until I die, or as long as the Intragalactic Combine remains loyal to a more-than-five-centuries-old charter.”

“Your family held the charter even before that.”

“That was much before the weakening of the Landsritters and the Emperor’s reorganization of the kingdoms. The Emperor has left me with little defense but the Combine. And they constantly want more for their protection, as well as for their transport charges. At this rate, I’ll need protection from the Combine.”

“The Combine has more than once warned the Emperor away from Acier. They twice threatened to boycott the Imperial Capital, Arienth. The Emperor could never tolerate that. The planet would starve without imports.”

“The Emperor has been flouting both Imperial law and agreements since he took the Iron Throne. Though we forced the Imperial Concessions on him, he has not learned his lesson. You also know, with the change of lands of the Rathenbergs, the Houses, which for centuries have been aligned with House Acier, are now too far away to defend it.” Count Ian looked out the window. “My Duke Neuterra is too weak. The death of Lyral...”

Shawn flinched.

Count Ian continued speaking, “...and the War for the Imperial Concession destroyed his spirit. Neuterra is an undependable ruler, and

though I can afford them, the Noble Accords prevent me from purchasing the forces I need. I have another solution. House Nior lies very close to this sector; their estates almost neighbor this system. The noble—I believe you know well, Duke Pieter Nior—has agreed to the alliance of our Houses through the union of his eldest son, Christopher, and my daughter, Elina.”

“He was neutral in the confrontation with the Emperor.”

“Yes, his family and House has always held fealty directly to the Emperor, but you know that Duke Pieter would never place the worth of Acier into the hands of the Emperor. He is too shrewd a man, and he is a Duke; with his battleships, he can hold the planet from space.”

“The Emperor could never officially disagree to the match; he doesn’t have the backing or power to go against Duke Pieter Nior. Ian, your plan has potential. I believe it will work.”

“It means the end of House Acier and the beginning of House Acier-Nior. The title is agreed on.” Count Ian looked at Shawn. “You have never met my daughter. Have you?”

“No, but if she is anything like Elizabeth, she must be a stunning beauty.”

“You will see her tonight.” The Count’s words were clipped. “I want you at dinner. You will reacquaint yourself with my whole family. My Elizabeth has missed you like a son. You must also meet my fosterling, Kran Nior. He was the beginning of the agreements that will promote my House, and he is a good boy; I raised him as if he were my own son.”

“From what you have said, it sounds as though the arrangements are complete. Why do you need me, Ian?”

Ian pursed his lips. “The Emperor cannot stop the agreement through his legitimate power; he will attempt to stop it by killing Elina. Without her, there cannot be an agreement, and my House is doomed. The Emperor will stop at nothing. The planet Acier subordinate to a Duke will have power that will rival him, and that, under the circumstances, may be the beginning of a new dynasty. I would like to live to see that.”

Shawn laughed. “So I am to be the young girl’s chaperone. That is a duty I have never been entrusted with before.”



“Yes, chaperone, so to speak. You will convey the responsibility of my House. Like you defended the honor of so many Houses before, you will carry it with you in the person of my daughter. You must take her, as the Noble Accords command, to the Imperial Planet, Arienth. With her will go the agreement and the dowry of this planet, after my death. Carry her and the agreements to Arienth, see my daughter wed, and protect the rights of my House, and you, Shawn, will fulfill fealty. I would go myself, but I fear for the safety of Acier. If the Emperor struck here, he could win all in a single coup.”

“You ask me to stand in your place for this House. That is in direct violation of the Emperor’s ban. You tempt him.”

“You will be a courier only—a courier with the power to sign the House agreements. The Emperor will say nothing. He fears you and your backing. Will you do it?”

Shawn smiled slyly. “As an independent courier, surely I will not violate the Emperor’s rulings. Of course I’ll do it. If it meant my death, I would still be honored to serve you and the House Acier.”

“You swear?”

“By my honor. What little is left me.”

“Good—you will go as a party of simple travelers. I have arranged with Pieter Nior to convey you secretly to Jouray. A Combine liner will take you from there to Arienth. Elina and her party will dress in the colors of Jouray; the family Jouray is large, and Jean Jouray is only a Baron. The Emperor will not expect this kind of transfer. We will adhere to all formalities, and in the colors of Acier, you will alight in safety on the Imperial Planet.”

“Who goes in the lady’s party?”

“A lieutenant from my forces, Lieutenant James Nieder. The Matron Pembray and Elina’s maid, Karra, will accompany the Lady Elina. That is your army: a young man, an old woman, and two girls.”

“Pembray?” Shawn shook his head in quiet recognition.

“Shall we drink to it?” Ian opened a cabinet among the books and brought out a very old bottle. “This is the finest of my cellars.” He poured two glasses and handed one to Shawn. “Noblesse!”

“Noblesse!” returned Shawn as he tossed back the stinging liquor.



## Two

In the galaxy, Acier was an enigma. This year, it was classified as a star. However, over the centuries, its classification had changed by Imperial decree, religious ruling, scientific theory, and experimental discovery. The Imperial astronomers might, in their fancy, change that classification next week. Or, given their fickleness, if a stellar artifact like it was discovered, maybe they would create a new classification. As yet, there was nothing else like it in the galaxy.

Acier was the smaller companion in a binary system. Its partner was a large white sun of approximately 1000 solar masses. Acier was the size of a very large gaseous planet, smaller than a thousandth of a solar mass. But it was not gaseous. That is, the surface of Acier possessed a firm, thick crust, and it was not much hotter than Venus in the Terran system. It was so similar to a planet that it took thousands of years before some scientist, whose name is lost in the annals of time, investigated the peculiar secret hidden in its core.

Most stars are a furnace of hydrogen fusion, creating light elements and energy in profusion. Some fewer stars use carbon fusion in a cooler, longer burn that builds heavier elements. For billions of years the tiny star Acier burned iron. The physics of the process, once discovered, were obvious, but the likelihood of it was one in a hundred million. It stood to reason that in a galaxy of 50 billion solar bodies, other stars similar to Acier must exist. Yet nothing similar had ever been found.

The byproduct of the iron fusion engine buried deep inside this peculiarity was little energy. Almost all of it was required to keep the

process going. What Acier produced was copious amounts of heavy elements. In fact, it manufactured the very elements on which the human Empire was built and thrived. A person could walk, with the protection of radiation suppressers and a vacsuit, on the very surface of the star Acier. Using standard planet mining equipment, heavy elements up to atomic number 120 could be scooped up liberally and processed on the spot. And magnificently, you could dig almost forever and still harvest this miraculous mine because slowly, ponderously, under your very feet, the core of this tiny ball of elemental matter was producing more and more of the surface you harvested. Scientists predicted that the star would continue to live for another billion years or so. Social scientists, at best, gave a much shorter span for the Empire and for humanity in general.

Acier was the chief mine for the Empire. All the metals required for civilization could be taken from there—well almost all. There was the problem of separation and purification. Because of lower residual radiation, normal steels were preferred to Acier's. As a matter of fact, residual radiation prevented any of the usual metals created by Acier from being used for common goods. Then there was the problem of transportation. The cost of moving the metals had to work into the profit problem. All in all, the only profitable metals produced by Acier were radioactive. Of the steel, lead, mercury, gold, silver, platinum, and all that was produced, only a smattering was provided at low cost for sealed electronics, research, or other isolated industrial uses where radiation would not pose a human problem. The metals that Acier produced at a high profit were those harnessed for energy, or used in a myriad of manufacturing, research, and military roles, and for those very heavy atomics, Acier was the only cost-effective source. The Emperor said Acier was the bastion of radioactive production. The Houses called it strategic. Economists called it a monopoly. The consumers called Acier's market control a stranglehold.

Only one planet in the Acierian system was considered significant enough to dignify with a name, and following the tradition of most star systems in human space, the planet shared its name with its sun. The planet Acier was the fifth body in orbit around Acier's companion star. It was a healthy enough distance from the white star that it could

support human life. Barely cool enough, it had a developed, although poorly matured, ecosystem. Even though enough oxygen existed to support Terran life, the planet wasn't easily terraformed. It was nine-tenths desert and one-tenth rock, but the rulers of Acier could easily afford to generate its people's needs from rock, sand, and atmosphere. Even accounting for Imperial taxation, Acier was the richest of the Counties in the Imperial holdings. The Count of Acier had been held by a continual line through Count Ian. They held fealty under the Duchy of Neuterra since the beginnings of the Empire, and they had been a source of contention for the Emperor since time immemorial.

The Emperor during whose reign Acier was discovered had displayed a stroke of genius when he established a Count over the system. The Noble Accords did not allow a Count to have interstellar forces, and the Emperor could, if required, enforce his wishes militarily on the products of the planet. The Count of Acier, although wealthy, was stuck on a small, inhospitable planet. Although Acier possessed powerful ground forces, it didn't have an interstellar naval branch. As such, it was always at the mercy of the Emperor.

In response to the lack of interstellar power, the only option left to the rulers of Acier was to develop intelligence forces. Intelligence allowed the Count of Acier power through blackmail, alliance, and knowledge. Therefore, Acier was not only a source of heavy atomics; it was the best supplier of spies, agents, bodyguards, and information in the galaxy. The situation was politically stable. That is, it was until the recent conflict that ended in the Imperial Concessions. Even the Emperor felt the crunch when, with the power of the Dukes of Neuterra, Rathenberg, and Falkeep, Acier was able to resist his demands. After the reunification of the Landsritters and the new peace in the Empire, Acier again took her place in the forefront.

Acier was a symbol to the smaller houses of the Landsritters. It was the richest of the minor Houses. It was powerful, yet a County. The Count of Acier was popular and well supported. He was accorded a position in the Landsritters equivalent to a Duke. Emperor Perodus knew he had little hope in a direct assault on Acier—he'd tried that before. However, he believed the planet would soon fall into his hands—the ancient line of Acier was about to die out. With the family

Acier out of the way, Perodus would have the power to place the planet under the House of his choice. Perhaps he would move a cadet House into place, maybe a Barony. The anticipation of his increase in power and wealth was a toothsome dainty on the Emperor's tongue. He would have the power to develop the military strength of the Houses of his choice, and soon he would have the mastery to crush the Families the Concession forced him to bow to. His revenge would be sweet.

The Emperor Perodus was no fool. He realized that his enemies—particularly the House Acier—searched for a way to counter the inevitable. As he steepled his hands over the latest report from his agents on Acier, his eyes narrowed. It was difficult to get anything in or out of the planet. And with the complications of the Concessions...

Since the Duke of Neuterra and his allies Count Acier, Duke Rathenberg, Duke Falkeep and his own brother John, or whatever he was named now, had forced him to accede through the Concessions to limit his Imperial power...

The Emperor threw the papers across the desk. "Bah!" What was he to do to remedy these difficulties? His forces were decimated. His power restrained. The Landsritters, that body of pompous fools, were given a free hand in determining Imperial policy.

A loud knock rudely interrupted the Emperor Perodus, his Majesty of the Human Galactic Empire, from his angry reverie. Count Rathenberg, the Steward of the Empire, entered the Emperor's open office door. *Count Rathenberg*. The Emperor almost hated that face. The Steward of the Empire was one of the difficulties forced on him by the Concessions of Neuterra. By the Codes, a member of the House of Rathenberg had to be the Steward of the Empire. After he took the throne, Perodus had deposed his father's Steward, Duke Rathenberg, in favor of the Duke's cousin, Count Rathenberg. He had done it as much to get rid of the Duke, who was aligned with Neuterra and John, as to reward the Count for his support in unmasking Prince John's treachery.

But now Perodus couldn't get rid of the man. The Concessions proclaimed Duke Rathenberg the heir to all his cousin, Count Rathenberg's lands, while Count Rathenberg took over the hereditary position of Steward and the Steward's lands on Arienth. Count Rathenberg was a good, stolid Steward, but he was a scrupulous man,

and not accustomed to the details and structure of the Empire. Perhaps, thought Perodus coldly, Count Rathenberg's heir might do a better job. He could easily provide a debilitating accident to force the retirement of the Count. That was an idea worthy of later contemplation. Right now, the Emperor had more weighty things to worry about.

This whole mess was the fault of his brother, John. He needed to remind himself of his brother's new name. That was also part of the Concessions. Shawn. Baron Shawn du Locke, Baron of the Realm. That took care of the most dangerous man in his Empire. He laughed out loud, startling the Count.

The Emperor waved away Rathenberg's curious stare. "Have you found my brother yet?" That could be dangerous too. To lose a man as crafty and well liked as Shawn du Locke was the work of foolishness.

"No, Sire," answered Count Rathenberg. "As you know, only a few months ago, when his exile was over, Baron Shawn du Locke left the estates of the Crown Prince Devon Rathenberg. We traced the Baron to the Rathenberg system. We believe Duke Rathenberg is hiding Baron Shawn du Locke, but the Duke's holdings are almost impenetrable to us, so it is difficult to prove."

"Why should my sweet brother be hiding from me...?"

Count Rathenberg opened his mouth to speak.

The Emperor held up his hand and closed his eyes. "You don't need to answer that, Rathenberg. How could you lose the most watched man in the galaxy?" The Emperor wanted to upbraid the Count but instead continued, "Inform me immediately when you find him. How goes our surveillance of Acier?"

"Count Ian has made some tentative contacts with the House Jouray. Other than that, nothing."

"This must not slip through your fingers, Rathenberg. The power of the House Imperial depends on controlling Acier. Ian Acier must not find a way to revive his dying line or pass control of the system after his death. When he dies, Acier must come under my control. The resources of Acier will belong to me. And, as soon as I can garner the power, I will throw off the yoke of the Concessions."

As he placed more reports on the Emperor's desk, the Count answered in a weary voice, "Yes, your majesty."



## Three

Shawn's steps echoed hollowly in the huge chamber as he entered Acier's grand dining room. Ian stood at the bar and poured a drink. Count Ian didn't turn around. "I hope you still like this liquor. When your exile ended, I had it imported from Neuterra just for you. I knew you would eventually find your way back to the greatest victory of your military career."

Shawn half-bowed. "You've always taken good care of me, Ian. Thank you."

Ian handed Shawn the crystal goblet and paused as he took it. Ian gazed intently at his longtime friend.

Shawn was of average height, but lean. Ian overtopped him by almost ten centimeters. *A man easy to underestimate*, thought Ian.

But Shawn possessed an intensity of feature and movement that marked him in any crowd. In the subdued light of the hall, Shawn's light gray eyes appeared translucent and glanced at Ian as if they could see into his very thoughts. *You believed Shawn, you knew him, and you desired to be the center of his attention.* His cheekbones and slim nose framed his mouth and pointed to every delicate expression that played upon his lips. Right now, a gentle smile touched the corners of his mouth. In Ian's thoughts, Shawn looked noble.

Every time he thought about it, Ian was amazed that the decree of the Emperor disbarred this man from his inheritance. Under his breath, Ian cursed the Landsritters and himself for letting the Emperor have his way in that.



Shawn half-turned, admiring the hall. The room was old, very old, and by modern standards bare. Its stone walls and wooden floor bespoke the wealth of Acier and hearkened to an older age. Its great fireplaces and tapestries told of a time of secure nobility and honor, of relative and frivolous peace. Shawn loved it. He felt at home here and particularly in this place, ceremonially, the Hall of Justice and rule of the House Acier.

Shawn knew all the standards and coats-of-arms that lined the walls. He'd fought alongside many of the Houses they represented. He could imagine each of the men who wielded the power behind the decorations. The hall was filled with echoes of ages of the nobles of Acier.

Shawn looked at his host. Ian, the brave, the stern, leader of the lesser houses among the Landsritters, and though almost twice his own years, a friend and a brother-in-arms. Ian had changed into a dress uniform, a mixture of the Imperial Capital, Arienth, and his own desert troops' garb. The cloak, sash, and gold of an Imperial noble set off the sand color of his uniform. Shawn wore the dress black and white of the Imperial Huscarls but without rank, sash, or gold. His cloak was a simple drapeau.



At the foyer doorway, Ian's ancient Sergeant cleared his throat, and the Countess of Acier stepped gracefully into the room. Countess Elizabeth Acier was dressed in brilliant white, a gown imported from and made for Imperial Arienth. Her smile sparkled as intensely as the dress, and her five decades were not at all evident in her face or figure. A regal and beautiful woman, she hated this room for all it represented. It was the center of her husband's power, a good thing, but the emblems along the walls displayed centuries of deaths, suffering, and destruction. In



their depictions she could read the families lost, the friends killed, the thousand places of devastation. When the decision was hers, the family ate in a smaller dining room near the family suites. If Ian wanted to honor and impress, he used this room.

These musings swept through her mind as she crossed the dark, wooden floor of the dining room. She still wondered whom Ian had invited to dinner. She hadn't heard of any noble visiting either their planet or their capital—then she recognized the man.

“Ian, why didn't you tell me he was here?” Her smile widened.

Shawn was a sudden apparition from the past. Ten years had not changed him at all. His face was luminescent and noble. Elizabeth reached out to Shawn, but he took her hand firmly in his and knelt at her feet. She appeared confused for a moment. Then she noted the decoration of his uniform, and her smile drooped and fell.

“Lady Elizabeth.” Shawn kissed her hand. “You are as beautiful and young as I remember you.”

“John-Mark, my Prince?” Her voice was low. It trembled with emotion.

“No.” His voice, though quiet, was hard; though gentle, it was filled with tension. “I am only Shawn now.” He glanced up into her eyes.

“No! That should not be...”



A warm droplet touched Shawn's hand as Lady Elizabeth pulled her fingers out of his grasp. With dignity, a strength Shawn admired in her, she turned and walked slowly, her face hidden, to the head of the table and stood on the right of her husband.

For almost ten years, Shawn had had no need to think about his lost rank and position. He knew Elizabeth realized the consequences of the Imperial Concessions and their result. But she had never seen him like this. The reminder of his loss irritated him.

While Shawn knelt and watched the Lady Elizabeth, a delicate hand and the hem of a long blue gown moved into his line of sight. The

hand and gown stopped in front of him, and without thinking, Shawn took the hand and touched it in the kiss, then looked up.

For one moment, his mind became totally disconcerted. His thoughts transported him back years in time. Shawn's mouth dropped open and a thousand emotions took hold of him. He barely heard the Lady Elizabeth, her composure renewed, command him in a low and severe voice, "Prince John-Mark or Shawn, whoever you are now called. You will not dishonor my House by placing the finest son of the Emperor Maricus on his knees. Stand up! I say. Stand up!"

Shawn stood. His eyes blazed but for a different reason. "Ian! Ian! You did not tell me. You knew, and you did not tell me." Shawn ran his fingers through his hair. "You knew, yet with the full knowledge your daughter looked like her, you still accepted my oath."

Ian's voice was almost as hard. "Yes Shawn, I have your oath, and because of my House, I will extract the full measure from you. You will not fail because you cannot fail. You never dishonored me before, and you will not now."

For more of the story, read on...

# A Season of Honor

L. D. Alford

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You won't want to miss...

# The End of Honor

BOOK ONE



An intragalactic war  
threatens to tear apart  
the Human Galactic Empire...

The death-knell of the Human Galactic Empire has sounded—it is the crash of an axe against the virgin white marble of the Hall of Accords. It is the bitten-off cry of the Lady Lyral Neuterra, whose head lies sundered from her smooth shoulders. It is the death of the Emperor at the hand of his own son. It is the whirlwind of a thousand ships sent to enforce the new Emperor's will. And only Prince John-Mark, the Emperor's youngest son, can bring the Empire back from the edge—back to peace and honor.

Prince John-Mark had intended to wed the Lady Lyral—now he can only mourn her. Revenge is his great desire, but he cannot be revenged without tearing apart the civilization and people he loves...

For more information about L.D. Alford and *The End of Honor*:

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# The Fox's Honor

## BOOK TWO



It was a time of treachery and vengeance...  
of Nobility and redemption...  
all because of love.

Prince Devon Rathenberg, the Emperor's Fox and chief of intelligence, has fallen in love with the Lady Tamar Falkeep—the third daughter of the least Duke in the Human Galactic Empire. But custom dictates they can never marry.

Then the unthinkable happens. In the insurrection that threatens to tear apart the Human Galactic Empire, Devon designs a plan to reveal the Empire's internal enemies. It's a plan of desperation that, by design, will result in the ultimate sacrifice: his own death. But before he dies, Devon is determined to win the heart of Lady Tamar and declare his love....

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## About the Author



“The finest escape in literature is an escape into a real and inviting culture,” asserts novelist **L.D. ALFORD**. He enjoys exploring with originality and intimacy those cultures and societies we think we already know. He builds compelling tales that make ancient and future worlds real to his readers. His stories uniquely explore the connections between events close and familiar and those that are possible—all woven together with threads of reality and fascinating technology that bring

the future alive.

L.D. Alford is familiar with both technology and cultures. He is an experimental test pilot with over 6000 hours in more than 60 different kinds of aircraft. He also served in worldwide military operations as a member of three different operational combat squadrons. L.D. earned a B.S. in Chemistry from Pacific Lutheran University, an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Boston University, and is a Ph.D. candidate in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Dayton. He is a graduate of Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, and the US Air Force Test Pilot School. He is widely traveled and has spent long periods in Europe and Central America. He is a featured writer for **www.WingoverKansas.com** and the author of the acclaimed novels *Centurion*, *Aegypt*, and *The Second Mission*, as well as Book One, *The End of Honor* and Book Two, *The Fox's Honor*, in The Chronicles of the Dragon and the Fox series. He has also written and published over 40 technical articles.

L.D. Alford is currently working on the sequels to *Aegypt: The Goddess of Light*, *The Goddess of Darkness*, *The Shadows of Darkness*, and *The Shadows of Light*.

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