

The black shard scratched Aëlyss' cheek. She gasped as her opponent approached, staring at her with glistening eyes. The elf jumped down the muddy slope behind her, once again fleeing in front of the otherworldly menace. Running across the snowy plains, she did her best to put distance between her and the creature.

She reached the edge of the woods, panting and sweating despite the cold. No signs of the Shadow. This entity was relentless, chasing her night and day. It was relentless, but slow. Running was usually enough, for a time. Though, somehow, the Shadow always managed to find her again, ready to spill her elven blood.

Aëlyss entered the Human kingdom of Laaria in the early afternoon. Snow was about to fall, she had to find assistance quick. Then, she heard sounds in the distance. What was a subtle rumble at first became more violent. Screams resounded, drowned only by sudden clashes of steel. The vagrant finally saw a bridge where a fight was raging. Blood tainted the cut stones and snow alike. A few Laarians held their own against a troop of Silent ones. They were losing this battle.

This bridge was the only way to go south, to any lands still under the protection of the Free People of this world. Aëlyss had to do something, not only for her own sake, but for the men fighting before her eyes. She drew her sword. No one had seen her yet, thus, she managed to set a foot on the bridge without alerting any opponent. She whispered an incantation while forming symbols with her free hand. Immediately, weapons scattered around started to float.

With a single swift movement of her arm, the elf let the projectiles fall on the Soulless ones. Two died impaled by spears, one received an axe across the shoulder. That wasn't enough to let the humans take advantage. Moreover, several creatures noticed the incident and spotted the intruder sneaking upon them. They detached from the ranks, marching toward Aëlyss. She smirked as she curled up like a wolf ready to spill blood.

The fight was fast and brutal. Aëlyss was as exceptional of a swordswoman as a sorceress. She cut down the gray elves before any could harm her. Corpses fell left and right. Large pools of blood were making the stones slippery. Aëlyss' fury weakened the creatures' formation. Humans were still unaware of what was happening on the other side, but they were able to hold their position.

The elf was bellowing with each blow she struck. Fatigue was her worst enemy now. Too many Soulless ones still lived. For but a moment, Aëlyss considered falling back. In an instant, a bolt of sparkling blue light flashed from the other shore. Like a feral imp, it bounced from one gray elf to the other, leaving them paralyzed or unconscious. A horseman appeared under the hurrahs of the survivors. He looked like a mage, in a heavy plated armor. The gemstone at the top of his scepter glowed and the bolt flew back inside it. Soldiers rushed to finish off the Soulless ones. Then, they noticed Aëlyss, sword in hand, covered in blood.

In haste, they formed a line in front of her, weapons pointing at her throat.

- Don't move, woman ! spat an old scarred man.
- 'she a spy ? asked another.
- She came from the north, that can only means trouble.
- She's covered in gray ones' blood tho...
- Don't fall for it. 'telling you, tis a trap !

The cold was biting her flesh so hard that trying anything was not an option. She stood still, watching the mage. If anyone here was able to understand her, it was him. Finally he alighted from his steed. The officer strolled past his men and stopped a few steps before the elf, a grin on his face. Noticing her severe gaze, he bowed with respect.

- Now, now... he laughed. Let's calm down, shall we ?
- I'd love to, she growled. Unfortunately, it's not that easy, knowing your men are about to cut me to shreds.
- They would not move unless I command them to.

He waved his hand. Soldiers stepped back. The officer smiled again.

— You must understand, times are strange. Foes are more common than friends nowadays.

- I am well aware, do not worry.
- Then, you would also understand that I need to see your face. Would you kindly take down your hood, please ?

Aëlyss sighed, raising her hands, revealing her unique features. Men stirred, reassuring their grip on their weapons. The officer raised an eyebrow. She was pale as snow. Alabaster skin, white hair and brows, milky eyes like a blind woman. A touch of pink on her cheeks, eyelids and lips. A beauty from another world.

— What is that monster, Captain Caspian ? squealed one of the spearmen.

— "That" is a Princess, you rude ignorant.

— You know me, she grimaced.

— I'm more aware of your prowesses than you as a person, White Princess.

She felt her body stiffen. She held her breath for a second. *What could a human mage has learned about me during my... absence ?* she thought.

Caspian invited her to follow him. She hesitated, putting her sword back into its sheath with caution. Soldiers stared at her with anger, suspicion and fear. The mage offered her his arm. At the second she reached for it, he touched her forehead with his scepter. She felt his magic running through her veins. In a second she lost control of each muscle in her body and fell to the ground. She tried to speak, but no words left her mouth. A tear pearled at the corner of her eye. Her vision became blurry and dark. Her heart was pounding as Caspian crouched beside her.

— You see, Princess. History is not so easily forgotten. You sold your Kingdom to the Enemy and led the Scholars, your own people, to annihilation. Almost a century has passed. This is what you are well known for, now. That, and your outrageous affinity all currents of the Immaterial. Trust me, now you are in our hands, we will learn your secrets.