

Chapter 86: More Spies

Raimie

Dim had been right to direct my attention away from Bright. The people at my back must know that I was a primeancer by now, and I was afraid that I'd have to soon run into the dangerous unknowns of Auden because of that.

When he'd retrieved me earlier, Oswin might not have seemed hostile, but with the crisis over, that neutrality might disappear. If that weren't enough, several other soldiers had joined the spy while I'd been working.

Two of them, I recognized: the red-head and the small man or teenager from before, but the other two were strangers. One of them was the definition of plain, although he was taller than the others, and the second was more thickset. Despite the glow emanating from Nylion at the sight of him, he was also the one I was most worried about, given how much his throat was working.

"You're... you're..." he said.

How should I play this? I couldn't be too cocky, or it might push them into summoning a mob, but maybe with some projected confidence, I could calm them down, enough so they'd listen to reason.

"I'm what?" I asked. "Average looking? A competent fighter? A fast learner?"

When the stocky man started shaking his head, the tall one rubbed his back, although he quickly removed his touch.

Clearing his throat, Oswin said, "Forgive us, sir. We've had our suspicions for quite some time, but seeing them confirmed... it gives us hope."

Wait, what?

"*Hope?*" I asked.

That wasn't usually a word associated with what I was.

Elbowing Oswin, the small man said, "Sure! You're a primeancer, right? When it comes to the war effort, that'll be a huge advantage."

"...War ...effort?" I squeaked.

What the hell was happening here?

With a frown, the small man turned to Oswin, who was still rubbing his side.

"Is he ok?" he said. "He sounds like a parrot."

Rolling his eyes, Oswin said, "Little, that's no way to talk about your king."

When the small man huffed, crossing his arms, the red-head smacked him upside the head.

"Listen to him, ya brat," she said.

Squeezing my eyes closed, I started rubbing my temples.

"Would someone please explain who you are and why you aren't trying to murder me?" I said.

When someone snorted a laugh, I cracked an eye open to find a range of amused expressions facing me.

"Why would we kill you?" the small man asked. "You're an... Ele primeancer, right? At least, the stuff you were playing with looked like Ele."

Oh... this was too much. My poor head... Gods, why couldn't I just go to sleep like my body was begging me to do?

"I primarily use Ele, yes," I said, dragging the words out of my mouth, "but at times, Daevetch comes in handy too."

"Are you kidding me?" the small man said. "You mean these four were telling the truth about-?"

He cut off as Oswin returned his earlier elbow ribbing, but soon enough, he continued.

"That's impossible, though. Primeancers belong to one side or the other, never both."

He was right. I'd never considered it more deeply than surface level, but the old primeancer legends had never talked about someone wielding both energies.

With my head cocked, I reached for my sources, pulling Ele to one hand and Daevetch to the other. As always when using both, a miniature war threatened to rip me in half, but I ignored it to stare at what I was holding.

Why could I do this? Was I really so different?

When one of the strangers coughed, I winced, casting both energies aside. That had been stupid... or maybe not. This group did know what I was, at least in part.

I should clear that up.

“So far as I’m aware, I’m the first of my kind,” I said. “A dual primeancer.”

And here was where the lot of them ran, screaming, from me.

Shifting in place, the tall man rasped, “You were right, Middle. Alouin help Doldimar. We have a secret weapon again.”

Again?

“You know how I said I’d never swear vows, spymaster?” the small man said. “Yeah, you can forget that. I’ll swear whatever I must if I get to work for him.”

As the others nodded agreement, I took a step back, fighting to ignore my pounding head.

“Hang on a minute. Why haven’t you ‘ended the threat?’” I said. “Don’t get me wrong. I’m glad you haven’t, but isn’t that what usually happens to primeancers?”

With a grim smile, Oswin said, “Oh, it is.”

“But we don’t care what you are or what power you might have,” the stocky one added. “What matters is who you are.”

“And you seem like a decent enough kid,” the red-head said before smirking. “Definitely not the ‘end the world’ type.”

“And if you do ever trend that way, we’re more than capable of ending the threat you’d become,” the tall man rasped.

With a cheeky grin, the small man said, “I just think primeancers are cool.”

I glanced between these strangers, opening and closing my mouth a few times before I could push free of shock.

“Ok. Who are you people?”

“Who they are doesn’t matter right now. When you’re established in Auden, I’ll introduce them more fully,” Oswin said. “For now, suffice it to say that they’re my subordinates, no matter how much they might like to forget that fact.”

He scowled at the others while details clicked into place.

“So, they’re spies too?” I said, sweeping a finger over the unknowns.

“Ha! You could say that,” the red-head said.

With a pointed glare at her, Oswin said, “As I mentioned, what they are doesn’t matter. What does is that if they do their job, you’ll never see them.”

So... spies. Hmm. Where had Oswin found these people?

"All right. Good to know," I said. "What now?"

Could I trust these people to keep their mouths shut about my magic? Too many among the soldiers had learned about it. If we weren't careful, knowledge of it would spread among the rest, and I knew what would happen after that. I wasn't sure how to date, I'd been so lucky with who'd uncovered my secret, but that good fortune couldn't last forever.

"Now comes something that should have happened a while ago," Oswin said.

He drew his sword, getting down on one knee, and I internally groaned while Nylion sent a spike of queasy dislike from the depths.

"I, Oswin, humble spy of the King's Hand, do swear fealty and unwavering support to Raimie, the rightful claimant of the Audish throne," he said. "Ever will I be your knife in the dark, ever to safeguard you and keep blood off of your hands. May my heart and mind always belong to you."

Looking down on this man, I wasn't sure why I wanted to rage against what he was offering, leaving my fingers twitching, but I did know that I couldn't accept this gift.

"I don't want this," I said. "I'm not a king, Oswin."

He said nothing, and I knew he wouldn't move until this exchange was completed. Sighing, I nicked my thumb on his blade instead of drawing my own before pressing it into his forehead.

Struggling to speak each word with gravity instead of rattling them off, I said, "I, Raimie, last in the line of Audish kings, do accept Oswin as my faithful servant. I swear to honor and protect you as best I'm able to. Ever will I work toward your benefit, ever to provide opportunity for you. May I always serve you as a leader should."

Pausing, I nearly removed my touch, but Nylion—as well as something unknown inside—had me pushing my thumb into Oswin's skin, hard enough that he had to look up at me.

"I also swear to be your friend, no matter how much of a snarky, stubborn jackass you can be."

Maybe Oswin gasped. I wouldn't know, too busy jabbing my finger at the others.

"Don't. you. even. *think*. about getting down on one knee right now," I said. "You want to swear fealty? You can do it after you've properly introduced yourselves."

Grinning, the stocky man said, "You present an interesting pattern, young one. Should be fun to follow."

He and the other three bowed before scurrying off, all while Oswin got to his feet.

With his hand to his forehead, he mumbled, "My friend?"

I didn't bother replying, checking on my splinters. They too had vanished, removing the last trace of abnormality from the campsite, but I didn't try calling them back to the physical plane. I could do that after I got some much-needed rest, time that would let Bright heal too.

"So. Which of these is mine?" I asked.

I'd rather not dwell on what had just happened or the fact that I had another subject. I wanted to collapse onto a bedroll and lose myself to a dream state. Maybe I could talk with Nylion while I was there.

"Forgive me, sir, but your father would probably appreciate an update from you," Oswin said.

"Don't you agree?"

Or that could wait for another hour or two.

"You're right. Of course you're right," I groaned. "I don't suppose you know where he is, do you?"

Glancing over my shoulder, I caught Oswin sweeping a hand back the way we'd come before.

"Right this way, sir," he said.

Revision #2

Created 28 August 2024 01:12:05 by FatalisticFable

Updated 7 September 2025 21:38:39 by FatalisticFable