

Chapter 88: Found You

Rhylix

We share a unique bond, Eriadren.

The signs had stopped. For three hours now, I'd followed the ones Ren had left for me, but I couldn't find any more. I'd already retraced my steps between the last few, making sure I hadn't missed anything, and that effort had once more led me here, to this innocuous clearing with nothing in it.

Gods, I knew I'd told my sister that everything would be fine but... had she been ambushed? Had she been hurt?

No. I'd seen how she'd handled herself before. She'd learned everything Auden had to teach her, which meant...

Again, I glanced over my surroundings, and again, I saw nothing to indicate that even the most basic of human civilization lay nearby.

Even still.

"Ren!" I called into the gathering dusk. "If you're somewhere nearby, can we please not play seek and find? I have time-sensitive information for my ally."

I waited for a while after this, perfectly aware that it might take a minute to neutralize any safeguards my sister had placed around her home. In the meantime, I picked at my crudely tied together cloak, wishing I could have retrieved more than this flimsy piece of clothing from my things when fleeing Da'kul. I'd love to have even a basic weapon on me right now, something besides primeancy at least.

Speaking of that...

"Creation, can I get an update on Raimie, please?" I asked.

Stepping into view, my constant nuisance crossed their arms.

“It’s the same as it’s been the last dozen times you’ve asked: unknown,” they said. “What else would you expect? Your ally’s piece of Order is gone.”

And wasn’t that a terrifying thought? What would happen to Raimie now? He was solely a Daevetch primeancer. Given how strong of a reaction I had to that dark energy, how would this affect our relationship? How quick would his descent into insanity be, and once he reached an inevitable point of no return, would I be able to put him down?

Many of these questions were concerns I’d had when Raimie could still access Ele, but they hadn’t been as urgent because I’d believed his use of both energies would slow the process of his fall. Now, I must truly consider them, which I didn’t like.

And that wasn’t even touching everything that accompanied the destruction of an Ele splinter.

“I know it’s silly to ask, but would you please return to the whole and see if you can find any news about him there?” I asked. “It would ease my mind.”

“In that case, of course I’ll go,” Creation said.

As they popped out of view, I shook my head. Ever since overriding me while in Da’kul, they’d been exceedingly polite to me, which I didn’t understand.

How many times had they forcibly pulled me out of situations that they’d deemed too dangerous in the past? They’d never changed their behavior after those past performances, but then, they’d been doing a lot of things I’d never have thought them capable of lately.

What had changed?

The sound of a *crack*, splitting the night, drew me out of my thoughts, and I stared as a cliff face I’d previously passed over... opened. As it gaped wider, it revealed evidence of civilization behind it, and I started laughing. Sometimes, I forgot how ingenious my people could be when it came to the art of survival.

Since what I was seeing was obviously Ren’s home, I started toward it, noting the figure standing in the center of the presented opening. While I took everything in, my sister watched me with a shit-eating grin. Hell, she must be proud of this place, and she should be. No enemy would find it without the greatest of luck.

Doldimar was known to be pretty damn lucky, though.

“So?” Ren said. “What do you think?”

“I think...”

As I trailed off, I looked over a host of people going about their day, much like those from Ada’ir did. They comported themselves as if the threat of violence—should they be discovered—couldn’t touch them.

So resilient.

"I think I missed my home," I said before facing my sister. "Thank you for the reminder of what Auden's like at its best."

"Of course," Ren said with a toothy grin before waving me into the city. "Shall we?"

Gods, how I'd like to enter this sanctuary. After the last few days, filled with running, I'd welcome a short respite but...

"I can't stay," I said. "Unless Raimie's here? I have urgent news for him."

"I'm sure you do," Ren said, patting my shoulder. "I'm also sure that it can wait for you to catch your breath. Maybe I can find you something better to wear while we're at it."

She bemusedly eyed my cloak, making me wince.

"I wish I could, but there's no time," I said. "You didn't see the army coming for my allies, Ren. I have to get my news to them as quickly as possible."

The mention of an army made Ren pause, but soon enough, she was smirking at me again.

"How hard have you pushed yourself to get here, Rhy?" she asked. "You must have used a lot of Eselan magic, among other things, too."

"Of course I did," I said. "I had to reach my ally as soon as I could."

With her smirk widening, Ren said, "And you don't think you've gained enough of a head start to take a break?"

She... had a point.

"Fine," I said. "Better clothes and some weapons would be welcome."

"Good to see that my big brother can still show sense," Ren said.

Had that been sarcasm? I didn't get long to ponder this question as Ren swiftly moved into the city.

Under other circumstances, I might take the time to marvel at this place, a genuine font of human creativity, but I had to know.

"Is Raimie safe? Did you get him back to his people?"

With a side-eyed glance, Ren said, "Don't you mean *your* people?"

Right. That was what they should be, wasn't it?

But as usual, I had a hard time with connecting, with seeing them as anything more than a means to an end.

Except for when it came to Raimie.

“Ren...” I said with a sigh.

Snorting, my sister did a poor job of hiding her smile.

“Raimie’s fine. He and his people have been establishing a base camp for days now,” she said before frowning. “He’s made quite the impression here too.”

Oh, no.

“Does that mean he’s visited?” I asked, trying to keep the question light.

I’d wanted to be here for that. With me as a facilitator, I’d been hoping to ease an inevitably tense introduction, but based on Ren’s short nod, I’d guess that hope had been for naught.

“Most of Tiro hasn’t been receptive to him, given who he is and what it means for them,” she said. “Had-had and I have been doing our best to change their opinions but...”

Grimacing, she raised a hand to wobble it from side to side.

“That hasn’t been going so great.”

Of course it hadn’t. Who wanted a reminder of the reason, no matter how long distant, that one’s life was a disaster? I’d known Raimie’s identity would be a problem for future endeavors, both his and mine, but the only way to alleviate those tensions would be nothing short of a miracle.

So, maybe I should focus my attention elsewhere.

“Had-had?” I said, raising an eyebrow.

“Oh! He’s my brother in all but blood,” she said. “After you left, Tanwadur and Eliade took me in. They already had an adopted son, Kylorian, but you won’t meet him for a while. He’s almost always in greater Auden, helping where he can. Hadrion, or Had-had as I call him, came after me.”

She had a family here. Of course she did. She’d mentioned them when we’d parted, but I hadn’t yet taken the time to consider what that would mean for me.

Would they hate me, the brother who’d left her behind? How much had Ren told them about me? Did they know about my connection to primeancy?

As if summoned by the thought, Creation popped into being not far ahead, and at the sight of them, Ren clicked her tongue. She knew better than to say anything else, though, not with so many people around us. Instead, she diverted us toward an abandoned alley, all while I stared at the

splinter.

Something was off about them, more than it had been for the last few months. Their face was pale with their vacant eyes skittering over the roadside, which I didn't understand. The guise that a splinter wore was meant to reassure people that there was nothing to fear, and right now, what Creation was projecting inspired nothing but disquiet in me.

Had something gone wrong with them, and if so, what could it be?

Revision #2

Created 28 August 2024 04:56:24 by FatalisticFable

Updated 7 September 2025 21:41:16 by FatalisticFable