

Chapter 89: A Proper Reunion

Rhylix

One that might let me slip free of my prison.

At my side, Creation numbly followed us into an alley. Their strange appearance might have ruffled me, but Ren just looked irritated, both about it and them. Once we were out of sight, she spun on Creation while planting her hands on her hips.

“What do you want?” she snapped.

I expected that to rouse Creation from whatever this funk was, but they merely blinked at my sister for a moment before turning my way.

“Your ally is alive and well,” they dispassionately said.

Raising an eyebrow, I drawled, “Yes... Ren told me. How do you know that?”

Creation slowly shook their head as if unable to believe what they were contemplating.

“I learned his status while checking with the whole,” they said. “His Order piece had recently returned to share it.”

That shot my eyes wide open.

“His Order piece?” I said. “Meaning Bright?”

When Creation nodded, I frowned.

“I thought you said it was destroyed.”

Licking their lips, Creation tried to speak but ended up clearing their throat instead.

“They were. Destroyed, I mean,” they eventually said. “Lighteater wiped them out of existence.”

“Then how...?”

I didn't know what else to say. So far as I'd been aware, no Ele splinter could recover from a brush with Lighteater, the same as Daevetch splinters couldn't with Shadowsteal. I'd thought those swords were the only check on otherwise all-powerful beings, but here Creation was, saying my long-held belief was wrong.

“It was your ally,” they said.

With their brow furrowed, they vaguely gestured, struggling with their words.

“He did... something. We're not sure what yet,” they continued, “but it pulled his Order piece back into being. Unfortunately, they're still addled, so we haven't gotten a full report on what happened but...”

With a shiver, Creation shrugged helplessly before chewing on their lip, which was an interesting look on them. I'd never seen them so uncertain before.

Still. According to them, Raimie had done the impossible again. Somehow, this didn't surprise me. Why didn't it?

Not that it mattered. To me, this was simply further proof that I'd been right to place my faith in my friend.

“Right! How did I forget that he's a... one of you?”

Jumping, I snapped my attention to Ren. Somehow, her presence had temporarily slipped from my mind, not that I could blame myself for that. Creation had just shared shocking news.

Even still, that had been sloppy of me and with what I'd been saying, potentially dangerous. If she were anyone else...

Crossing her arms, Ren frowned.

“We'll have to hope the idiot doesn't let that piece of information slip as easily as he did with his identity,” she said. “With how much trouble I'm already having getting people on his side, I can only imagine how much more impossible the task would be if that secret got out.”

Hmm. Ren had mentioned it earlier, but still, I had to clarify.

“You're helping Raimie?” I asked. “From what I saw before, I thought you disdained him.”

To my great surprise, my sister flushed, hugging herself as she looked away.

“He's not so bad once you get to know him,” she said. “Still unbelievably stupid at times, mind you—”

She gave me a pointed glance before shifting in place.

“—but... not so bad.”

Oh.

“You like him,” I blankly said.

Which had been a mistake. Jerking her head up, Ren started scoffing denials, all while I quashed a smile. That relationship would certainly be interesting to watch.

Apparently unable to handle me, Ren stalked forward to once more join the busy thoroughfare, and chuckling, I glanced at Creation, noting their continued, disconnected state with a sigh.

“Bright’s recovery is a good thing, yes?” I said before giving Creation a moment to acknowledge me. “Then, let’s not question it. You and I both know Raimie’s extraordinary. What’s another example of that?”

Slumping, Creation said, “I know. It’s just concerning as well.”

But then, they glanced toward where Ren had disappeared around a corner, making a face.

“You should hurry and catch up,” they said. “I’m glad you’ve reunited with her. Please, don’t let me disturb that.”

At this, I narrowed my eyes at the splinter. Did that mean they’d known Ren was alive the whole time I’d thought her dead?

I couldn’t get into that issue right now, though, not when my sister was pulling away from me. Taking off in a trot, I hurried after her.

Ren had been right about taking a break. Clean and with a fresh set of clothing donned, the problem of an overwhelming army, bearing down on my ally, didn’t seem as daunting.

I wasn’t discounting the danger of it! We were most likely still doomed, but now, I could acknowledge that sharing this information when I was rested and calm would be better for everyone.

When I left my borrowed room, my sister looked up from where she was waiting at the table, glancing me over with a grin.

“You look better,” she said.

“I feel better,” I said with a nod. “Thank you for making me take a break.”

“Of course! I did the same thing often enough when we were kids, right?”

Standing, Ren clasped her hands in front of her with a gleam in her eyes.

“Now, before we head to my family’s place for dinner—and don’t you dare argue with me about that—I have something for you.”

Crossing my arms, I did my best to keep from looking down my nose at her, but when she laughed, I knew I hadn’t done a good job with that. She retreated into the room beside my borrowed one, quickly returning with a wrapped bundle. When she offered it to me, I hesitantly accepted, picking at the cloth’s edge while holding her gaze.

Nodding, she flapped a hand at me.

“Go on! Open it!”

So, I tugged the cloth away, and when I saw what had been in the package, my mouth dropped open.

“This is...” I whispered.

Reverently, I lifted a sword and dagger into the light. I’d know these blades anywhere. The chorded, blue tassels hanging from their pommels. The insignia engraved in the center of the dagger’s guard. These were historical masterpieces.

They were also mine. I’d lost them shortly before leaving Auden and upon arriving here, had meant to go looking for them when I had the time. They were possibly the only items that held enough sentimental value for me to undertake such a difficult search.

It seemed I wouldn’t need to make the effort.

Partially withdrawing the sword from its sheath, I examined it for a moment before glancing up at Ren.

“How...?”

She’d know what I meant.

Clasping her elbows, Ren said, “I went home a few days after it was Harvested. Wasn’t sure why I was doing it, but I needed to make the visit, and Dury was kind enough to accommodate it. I found our mother...”

Trailing off, she bit her lip, suddenly finding the fire in the hearth beyond interesting, and I squeezed my eyes closed.

What must that have been like? I remembered what the Kiraak had done to our mother with crystal clarity, but I hadn’t stuck around long enough to view the end result. Reaching my younger sister had seemed more important.

But she'd seen our mother's remains... gods.

"I buried her," Ren eventually said. "Couldn't do the same for the rest of the dead, but I gave them the respect they deserved. I didn't find our... my father."

Oh, no.

Cracking my eyes open, I hesitantly said, "Do you think he...?"

With a sigh, Ren shrugged.

"They probably took him, yeah, but there's no way to confirm it."

"Damn it," I breathed.

Why, why, *why* were these horrible things possible?

After a moment, Ren said, "Anyway, I found those weapons with your things and took them home with me, along with a few other items. Figured you'd want them if you ever found me."

"Ren, I'm sorry it took so long-

My sister lifted a hand to stop me.

"You did your best," she said. "I don't blame you."

I could accept that, even if I wasn't ready to forgive myself for it.

"Well, then," I said. "Thank you for this."

After bobbing the sword and dagger in the air, I finished unwrapping them before getting them settled on my hip, and once that was done, a ridiculous amount of tension fled from me. It was amazing how terrifying I found an unarmed state, especially when I was in Auden.

Perhaps seeing my relief, my sister snorted, gathering me in a hug.

"I've missed you," she said into my chest.

And I clutched her to me, this wonderfully impossible survivor of everything I was.

"I've missed you too."

Soon after this, we made our way to the home of Ren's adoptive family, only to find it bustling when we arrived. We stepped into a kitchen filled with activity, and after a moment, one of the women glanced at us, lighting up when she saw my sister.

"Little bird! Thank Alouin you're here!" she shouted over clanging pots and pans. "I'm almost finished here. Just need to wrap some rolls for Jariah and Morthasi's kids. Could you bring a few

dishes to the dining room?”

“Sure, Eliade!” Ren called before nudging me. “Come on.”

After balancing two plates in my arms, I followed my sister out of the kitchen, casting a glance over its many inhabitants as I did.

“That was your mother?” I asked as I caught up with Ren.

Smiling, she said, “Yes. You’ll have to forgive how harried she is right now. Tiro’s still struggling with a recent influx of refugees. Lindow was Harvested just last week.”

Making a face, she adjusted her burden so she could open a door.

“Eliade does what she can to help with these things, sometimes taking on more than she can handle,” she continued, “but that’s just her! Never content to let others suffer.”

Unsure how else to respond, I said, “She sounds very kind.”

Ren laughed at that.

“She is! And given what I know of you, the two of you should get along famously,” she said. “Dury, on the other hand...”

“That’s your father?” I asked.

With a nod, Ren said, “Dury’s exceptionally kind to the people he trusts, but earning that trust... it might be difficult for you.”

Fantastic. As if I didn’t have enough trouble with that skill when it came to normal people.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine,” I said, partially to myself.

My sister gave me a doubtful look, but then, she pushed through another set of doors, and I had no more time to prepare.

Revision #2

Created 28 August 2024 05:03:25 by FatalisticFable

Updated 8 September 2025 00:58:25 by FatalisticFable