

III – Dawn

The sun slowly vanished behind the horizon, while Dawn finished the last repairs on the sword. Smiling brightly, she handed it over again, before turning back to watch the two girls in the garden.

“You love to observe their training, don’t you?” Grinning back at her, Luther put Darkstorm away again. It had been a gift from Copper, whom he had given Tohan’s Sword, and it was a wonderful weapon, yet it always bothered him he had to ask a magician to repair it, whenever it was damaged. Luckily, he was married to one. “How is she holding up today?”

“Better, but despite her great potential she still is no match for Sioned.” She took a sip from the cup of wine next to her, then watched as Sioned once again easily evaded her daughter’s attack. “She still is a little too slow. but what do I want – she’s just six years old after all.” And yet, she was very talented. Give or take a few years and Dawn feared she’d lose her job.

It wasn’t really surprising though. After all, her father was a former ancient god. Yes, Luther had decided to leave his power behind for the sake of humanity. She remembered well the sad look on his face and how she had talked him into it. There was just a little bit of Scotia’s ambition in him and their daughter.

Scotia...

The others had been weak. They had failed in comparison to Scotia, or Margarithe Fisten, as she had been called at that time. Dawn had been eight then, but she could clearly remember the greed in Scotia’s raven eyes. It was the only thing that had kept the dark woman from becoming a Talamari.

From that day on, they had been rivals to death. Whenever they met, their encounters were hostile. She couldn’t remember a single time when she had seen gentleness or even warmth in her eyes and now – as Dawn watched her husband play and fool around with their daughter – she wondered how Scotia could have been a mother to him.

Of course, it had caused serious problems in their relationship at the beginning. It started with as simple a thing as removing all pictures of Kieran from their house and ended with heavy disputes over the fine borders between what was allowed when dealing with magic and what was not. And yet, they had always found a solution together.

Their wedding had been soon after the glorious return of Copper from the portals. As a “wedding gift”, Copper had presented Darkstorm to them, since Luther would not reaccept Tohan’s Sword. The black blade fit her husband just perfectly: dark, mysterious and dangerous if need be.

Only a summer later, she had given birth to their daughter. They had agreed on being content with one child and they had not regretted it. Some people close to her – like Sioned – loved to call her savage child. And truly, it was impossible to keep the girl under control. When she wanted to leave, she left, when she wanted to speak, she spoke. Manners and conventions were nothing but nerve-wracking distractions to her, as was ceremony. She kept to it, if necessary as so not embarrass her parents, but every time else, she left them out cold.

In a way, she really reminded Dawn of the Savages – only one of the many races she had encountered during her service among the Talamari. Children of nature they were. Pure and innocent as daylight, but with all the power of a storm. She wondered what their daughter would say about them. They would probably seem much more pleasant company to her than most of the stern Gladstone people.

Sighing, Dawn reached for her cup and went back inside again. it was time to go on with her work. She had devoted her life to the course of Gladstone, but still the sheer amount of work seemed unbearable to her at times. There was fatigue, yes, and there was a tiny edge of

anger every time she went back to work after breaks such as this one. Hopefully, things would quiet down once the Dark Army was gone for good.

Since Scotia's death, the decline had happened quickly and what remained were either scattered Orcs, or left alone Magi, hidden inside their caverns.

Unfortunately, this was exactly her field of work.

Tracking them down was the easy part. On the map on her desk several points marked the places where they had been able to locate any unusual amount of magical activity that could indicate the presence of a Magi. Sadly, this was about the only thing she knew.

Sometimes, she really hated her job.

On the other hand, she simply couldn't picture a Gladstone without a Dark Army anymore. It was true they were worse than the plague, but they had also turned Gladstone into what it was: A place of shelter and a symbol of freedom and the fight against evil. It had made HER what she was. An important, powerful magician and a woman who'd rather die than giving up on what she believed to be right and just.

The door slid open and Dawn turned her head slightly, just to find Luther, her wonderful husband, staring right back at her. She knew all too well what the look in his eyes meant.

"Luther, this is important."

"I know it is. It always is."

"And I must have these plans finished before I present them to Richard in the morning."

A smug smile slid across his lips instead of sharp words. She knew exactly what his trail of thought was, as well as he knew hers. "Then go ahead darling. I'll stay here and wait until you are done." Slowly, Luther took one of the chairs and sat down next to her. He could easily see the confusion and irritation in his wife's face, but he simply didn't bother.

"You know I can't work with someone peeking over my shoulder all the time." Dawn finally stated, but only caught a smile in response.

"And you know you can't think straight tomorrow, not to mention the inability of presenting anything to anyone, if you keep working all night. How many hours have you been up anyway? Twenty? Thirty?"

She wanted to argue, but the sentences melted on her tongue like butter in a frying pan. He was right. She had lost track. He had lost track. "It still doesn't change the fact that this IS important." When he simply kept glaring at her, Dawn frowned at nothing in particular. "Alright, alright, I am going to bed. But promise me you'll wake me up at sunrise so I'll still have time to finish these plans!"

"I swear by my ancestors."

Now, a sleepy smile curved her lips. He always used that phrase. Ancestors, hell yes. Including Scotia. He just knew how to tease her. "I'll have your head roll, if you don't." She planted a short kiss on his lips, then left the room quickly. Erasing the smile, Luther went to take a look at the maps. It took no Crown Mage to figure out how to trap a few Magi. And certainly, a former god could do just as well.

On the other end of the hall, Dawn peeked into their daughter's room quickly. Their little princess was sound asleep already and once again Dawn felt that she did spend way too little time with her. Maybe it really was about time she put in one or two weeks of vacation. Sioned was definitely able to take her place for a few days, as were one or two other members of the Talamari. She couldn't remember ever having been on vacation and she couldn't imagine what it would be like. Maybe it was about time to give it a try.

Their own bedroom was dark and quiet. The windows were open, but even the last sunset birds had already gone to sleep. From the southern sky, pale moonlight fell into their chambers and illuminated her path to the broad maple bed with the deep red cushions. Yes, she was tired and Luther had been right to send her away without bothering for her

complaints. Now that rest lay so close in front of her, ready to grasp it any minute, a number of pains and aches made themselves known to her. Her head was screaming, while her feet suddenly seemed long dead to her. . Closing her eyes, Dawn let herself fall into the cosy depths of velvet pillows and drew a blanket over her shoulder. She knew it would be useless to wait for her husband to come and join her. He was probably sitting in front of her plans right now, finishing the work so he could leave her asleep until the late morning hours. It was a trait of his that both infuriated and pleased her at times.

Sighing deeply, Dawn turned around again, so she could face the window while sleeping. Soft winds made the white curtains move slowly back and forth and she could feel her eyes close almost automatically. Tonight, she would sleep.

And tomorrow, the plan of this night would have been long forgotten.