

"There it is again" she muttered to herself.

It was the fourth time during this midnight guard shift she had seen that light, an eerie light just at the edge of her vision. Each time the moment she turned to track the light, it disappeared in a flash. Any normal guard would have dismissed it as travellers on a different path, yet she knew better. That light shone in a strange hue. It was not orange, not the sunset color a normal torch would throw but something foul and sinister, something from her nightmares.

Pulling her hood tighter around her face again, she became keenly aware at how cold it was suddenly becoming. It was only moments before her watch was over, but her training demanded caution and care.

*Never be seen* she reminded herself. It was the Rogue's Code, the Assassin's Code and even for a poor sellsword on Caravan protection duty, the advice served well.

She heard her relief long before she saw him. He was lumbering Kaelar fighter who did not have a complex thought in his head. As expected, he walked straight past her oblivious to her presence. Pulling her twin blades from under her cloak she silently stalked him. When it had become evident he was unable to locate her, she quickly placed one blade flat on his shoulder near his neck the other on his spine.

"You failed again Makial" she said with a slight laugh.

"By all the Gods of Verra, I've warned you not to do that Tinge" he spat as he drew a long sword and whirled to face her.

Before he could even react she had stepped in close to him. Her blades pressed into his side and she inside his attack arc.

"Buy me an Dunir ale when we reach our destination?" she said with a smile.

Putting the sword back in its sheath Makial knew he had been bested. "Of course, but only if you tell me where you got those" he said looking down to her blades.

Without another word she turned back to the caravan. He had been trying to learn the secret of those blades she met him seven caravans ago. She couldn't blame him, she knew that a man was either interested in your weapons or your wares and the latter was not available.

Looking at the blades she marveled at them the same way Makial did. Anyone else would assume them identical, only she knew that they weren't. The right-handed blade was a replica, an exact duplicate down to the details of the runework of the much older and more powerful blade in her left hand. She had studied the marital forms expected of every Empyrean, especially the children of Lord Jahlon high Cleric who was revered among her people. Of all the weapon forms she studied, she found twin blades to be her favorite.

She laugh, "if only her father could see me now."

Failed out of Cleric school, a disgrace to the family name, she knew her father was disappointed and no longer held any love for her. It was such an embarrassment to her, and to him, when she failed at being a Cleric, so much so that she had taken the weapon from her father's armory and headed to the Rogue's guild in Py'rai

without even leaving a letter. In all these years her father had never tried to find her, and because of that her heart had turned to stone.

Turning her head slightly she caught the scent of something rotting. Maybe an animal, maybe a corpse. Turning the blades so they ran along her forearms, the left one was so much lighter than the right, but so much stronger. No matter where she traveled with caravans, no matter how many merchants or craftsmen of the four races she talked to, none could even identify the blade let alone duplicate it. She had even visited Underrealm to see if the weapon was known to the Tulnar. There were never any answers.

Just as she was about to slide the blades under her cloak the runes on the left blade began to glow green.

"What in the..." and before she could finish uttering the words a death shriek pierced the night as an explosion from the direction of the caravan engulfed the forest camp.

Darting into a dead sprint, she thought the fire her ally for everywhere she looked there was a shadow to hide in and Rogues do love their shadows. As she reached the edge of the camp she saw the undead, and entire horde of them devouring a camp that had never had warning. Corpses in different states of decay gnawed on the living and even some of the recently living rose up to join the ranks of the undead.

In the center of the carnage she saw a woman, robbed in shadows with hair the color of flame. Sliding between two wagons, Tinge stepped out with the speed of an Assassin's strike and drove her blade through the heart, of an illusion.

"Hello my daughter," the woman said. "I would have thought you'd know better than to attack a mirror image."

The words froze her. Tinge had never known her mother. Her father told her that her mother died in childbirth, a lie she knew he was telling for who could die under the protection of an Empyrean Cleric, but a lie she had accepted for none would tell her the truth.

"I've searched for you such a long time"

At first Tinge thought her mother was speaking to her, but instead it was clear she was speaking to the weapon she held in her left hand. As her mother reached out with her hand the weapon seemed to be in Tinge's hand one moment and in her mother's in a blink of her eye. Reaching under her own cloak, she drew what could only be the weapons mate from her belt. The two weapons, now reunited, seemed to be aware of each other's presence, and the undead seemed to be aware of them as well.

As her mother turned to walk away she stopped and then faced her daughter again.

"Well I certainly won't be needing you anymore."

With a single lunge she drove both blades into her daughter's stomach. As the blades pierced her flesh it felt as she had been set ablaze by all the fires in the world. As she fell to the ground she could feel the blood spilling from the wounds but she was unable to move to treat the wounds. With her head sinking into the mud she began to get desperately ill as she watched several mindless drooling zombies begin to shuffle towards her. With every ounce of her willpower she wanted to grip the dirk she kept strapped to her ankle and end her own life before the first bite of these monsters pierced her flesh condemning her to the ranks of the undead.

Try as she might she was unable to move even the slightest bit. Even though she knew her prayers would fall on deaf ears, she began to pray to the Gods

She could hear the hiss of the undead she knew would reach her first. She could smell the rot of his flesh, she could smell the fresh blood on his clothes. She closed her eyes and prepared for the bite to come.

“Bui I rod plural...” she heard uttered from the edge of the woods.

The Empyrean was rubbish and broken, yet seemingly effective at forcing the undead away from her. The camp, which had been under the glow of several fires still burning now glowed white from the hands of the caster.

She knew that voice, but what she didn’t know was how or when Makial learned anything of magic, yet it didn’t matter now. She was soaked in blood, the ground damp all around her. She could barely breathe and she knew she was dying.

As her eyes closed, she saw the gates of the afterlife. She knew she would be judged. As the light in her eyes dimmed, she could hear, almost as an echo, the prayer of Endow life being sung above her.

She wasn’t sure how much time had past, but when she finally awoke Makial was carrying her like a child.

“The Daughter of Lord Jahlon does not die this day” he said taking her to one of the few surviving horses.

“Now mount up, we have to get back that fancy blade of yours”