2291 An Elegant and Noble Outing  
  
Rain laughed and glanced at the intricately inked snake that coiled around her arm and shoulder. Tamar wore a dress with long sleeves, so hers was mostly out of sight - only its tail could be seen, resting on her smooth caramel skin.  
  
'Sorry, Telle… I can get you in touch with the artist, but I doubt that your parents will approve.'  
  
Telle leaned back with a sour expression. 'My mom has a wild side too, you know? One time, she went and killed a Valor Saint. Our entire family was sent to Antarctica as punishment. But, whatever…' She threw one last look at Tamar's shoulder and turned away with a haughty scoff.  
  
'I wouldn't want a snake tattoo, anyway. Birds eat snakes.' She didn't quite manage to hide the hint of envy from her voice, though, which almost made Rain giggle.  
  
Telle and Tamar were quite similar in the sense that they both had been raised by stern Legacy rulers, and tended to present a stony facade of reserved poise to the world. However, while Tamar's grim composure came quite naturally to her, Telle's attempts to maintain an aloof exterior were often clumsy, transparent… and very cute. Rain barely suppressed a smile.  
  
Naturally, that was only true if one knew her well. To a random stranger, Tell of White Feather would appear as the personification of stark and severe Legacy pride - and to those who were misfortune enough to find themselves on the other end of her sword, she would be like a cold and merciless nightmare.  
  
…But that only made the haughty young woman more endearing.  
  
Rain looked around and waved for a waiter. Soon enough, the three of them were staring at gorgeously served cocktails. Each was like a still life painting captured in a glass, decorated so exquisitely that drinking them seemed like an act of vandalism.  
  
Telle glanced at her two friends hesitantly. 'So… we're drinking alcohol?' Despite her confident exterior, the breathtaking Feather Knight was actually quite inexperienced in worldly matters. It was quite possible that she had never tried alcohol before, so she seemed unsure.  
  
Tamar shrugged. 'I guess. I am confused, though. Why is there so much ice? It's more like we're drinking ice with a few drops of alcohol.'  
  
Rain looked at them with indignation. 'You guys don't understand anything! I thoroughly studied the gourmet section of the Bastion Gazette. This place is the most fashionable spot on the Lakefront Promenade these days, and these three cocktails are supposed to be sublime. They are themed after the fallen Sovereigns. See… these are the Bloody Queen, the Old Valor, and the Sweet Shadow.'  
  
Tamar's cocktail was bright red, Telle's nearly transparent with sharply cut ice cubes, while Rain's own was entirely black. She grinned. 'There's also the fourth one, the White Flame, which is the most popular… they make it with the best Beast Farm cream and strong spirits, so it's both smooth and fiery, warming the body and soothing the heart. Well, at least according to the Gazette. Anyway… cheers!'  
  
They raised their glasses and clinked them gingerly. Then, each of the three girls tasted hers.  
  
'Oh… so it's black bеcause of coffee liqueur!' Rain was pleased. The Sweet Shadow was, indeed, delicious, she decided to trust the Bastion Gazette from now on.  
  
Tamar put her glass down and smiled. She did not smilе often these days, so it was a rare and welcome sight.  
  
'Oh, aren't congratulations in order? I saw the street lamps light up last night. You guys actually did it?'  
  
Rain grinned. 'Sure did!'  
  
Telle glanced at them, took another sip of her cocktail, and sighed. 'I'm envious. You guys already have electricity… it will probably only reach the Chained Isles in a decade.'  
  
After the war, the paths of the three Awakened girls had forked in different directions. The White Feather clan had regained their original demesne, so Telle returned to the Sanctuary of Noctis with her parents. She spent most of her time on the Chained Isles now, only returning to Bastion once every few months to represent her clan and conduct official business.  
  
Tamar's fate, meanwhile, was almost exactly the opposite of Telle's. Her father, the Saint of Sorrow, had fallen in the final battle of the Realm War. Humanity had lost countless valiant warriors on that dark day, and she was one of countless who had lost friends and family to the ruthless crucible of battle.  
  
Rain had wanted to stay by her friend's side for a while, but sadly, Tamar did not receive a lot of time to grieve. As the only surviving child of the Saint of Sorrow, she had to assume responsibility over her clan - and in its darkest days, no less.  
  
Tamar might have become the new Lady of Sorrow, but she was merely an Awakened. As such, she could not claim ownership of the ancestral Citadel of the Sorrow clan - and therefore, her family had to relinquish their lands to someone who could.  
  
That someone was none other than Saint Seishan, the former commander of the Seventh Royal Legion. Seishan had treated the family of the former master of the Lake of Tears with respect, but although they were not forced to leave, they still chose to abandon their former domain. Thus, Clan Sorrow became one of the many fallen noble families in the wake of the War.  
  
…Naturally, Rain knew Tamar well, so she was certain that her friend's clan would rise once again in the future. In fact, its reputation was already climbing up.  
  
Tamar had joined the Shadow Clan first. Then, she participated in the tournament organized by the Fire Κeepers and distinguished herself in the arena, defeating myriad powerful Awakened in a most brutal and spectacular fashion. She performed well enough to end up in the final round, no less.  
  
So, now, Tamar was somewhat of a double agent - granted, the forces she served were deeply allied instead of being hostile to each other. Officially, she was a rising star among the newer members of the Fire Keepers. Unofficially, though, she served as the Shadow Clan's team leader in Bastion… as well as Rain's personal bodyguard, on occasion.  
  
Life was truly unpredictable sometimes.  
  
As for Rain herself… She had stayed in Godgrave for a while, then came here to Bastion to learn Shaping from Lady Nephis and civil engineering as a member of Chief Bethany's team.  
  
Oh… and somewhere along the way, she had also unsealed her Aspect.