1626 The Incredible Adventures and Astonishing Deeds of Heroic Dreamer... Wait, Who? What Was His Name? Abridged (Volume VII)

Dropping the bow, she hurriedly picked up a long javelin that had been laying under the ash.

Rain's weapon of choice was a bow. However, that did not mean that she was only versed in using a bow. Her teacher insisted that a ranged weapon was only good if one could keep the enemy at range, and in the Dream Realm, not even Saints could guarantee something like that.

Therefore, she was proficient not only with ranged weapons, but also with a wide range of weapons.

Rain was nothing if not resourceful.

By the time she grabbed the javelin and jumped to her feet, the Stone Worm was almost upon her.

With fetid blood spilling from its torn maw, the horrid creature raised its front limbs to slice her into pieces...

And suddenly disappeared from view.

The pit Rain had dug up and covered with branches might not have been deep, but it was perfectly placed to stop the charge of a mindless monster.

There was a great benefit in being able to handle a multitude of weapons, but there was an even greater benefit in always being prepared. Her teacher had hammered that simple principle into her head a long time ago.

Before the Stone Worm could recover from suddenly dropping through the ash, the heavy javelin struck it with all the force she could muster Its white scales were broken by the wide spearhead, and the abominable monster let out a piercing screech.

Rain paled a little and finally drew her sword. The enemy was severely wounded, but it was not dead yet.

A mess of hideous flesh and thin limbs staggered out of the pit, only to be met by the blade of the tachi. Rain severed the front limbs of the sluggish monster, then delivered a ruthless slash across its scaly neck, putting a gash into it.

A few more precise strikes and well-timed dodges, and the abomination finally grew motionless. Only half of its vile body managed to crawl out of the shallow pit, and was now laying on the ash.

Rain slumped and grabbed her knees, panting heavily. She could feel a trickle of foreign essence seeping into her soul, and a river of adrenaline coursing through her blood.

'D-d-dam it..!’

Then, a voice resounded from behind her.

"You have slain a Dormant Monster, Stone Worm Your shadow grows stronger!"

Turning around, she threw a dark look at her teacher, who had finally deigned to crawl out of her shadow in all his shameless splendor.

"...What the hell are you on about?"

The young man who was standing behind her, wearing light armor woven out of dark silk, looked away in embarrassment.

"Ah, that. Don't mind me. Just something i used to hear often."

Rain took a deep breath and turned away with a stoic expression on her pale, but beautiful face.

‘...I am definitely going to kill him one day.’

Was it possible to kill a ghost?

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Rain's teacher... was a strange existence.

Usually, he resided in her shadow, only showing up when no one else was around. At first, she thought that she had gone insane and was hallucinating, but after spending some time with the mysterious apparition, Rain slowly realized that it was real.

And not only that, but also immensely powerful.

Luckily, the apparition was mostly benevolent, and did not seem to harbor any ill will toward her. On the contrary, it... he... treated Rain with something that resembled familial affection. It was almost as if he was the spirit of her distant ancestor.

She did not think that her family had such an ancestor, though. But then again, Rain was adopted, and didn't know much about her biological parents. So... it might have been possible that there was an eccentric dark deity in her family tree?

Her teacher did, indeed, look a little bit like her. A much more glamorous, handsome, and male version of her, to be precise.

...Even if he was on the shorter side.

In any case, her teacher - who called himself Shadow was a strange being. When he emerged from her shadow, he looked like a young man with flawless alabaster skin, raven-black hair, and beautiful eyes that resembled two pieces of glistening onyx. His exquisite appearance was perfectly human, if a bit too sublime.

That said... her teacher did not have a shadow of his own.

He also avoided mirrors like a plague, to the point that she was prohibited from having any in her vicinity. So, although Rain couldn't confirm it, she suspected that he did not have a reflection, either.

Which led her to believe that her teacher was a vampire.

He wasn't afraid of sunlight, though, and did not seem interested in drinking her blood. Or any blood, for that matter.

In short, even after spending four years in the company of her teacher, Rain still had no idea what he was.

Any attempt to ask him questions about his identity resulted in nonsensical answers that simply couldn't be taken seriously.

Like:

"Teacher... please tell me. Who are you, really?"

"Haven't I told you already? Gods, how many times do I have to repeat it? I am... you long-lost brother."

"I'm pretty sure I would remember having an older brother."

"You would assume so, wouldn't you? Ah, but, you see... after I killed the evil version of myself and reached the estuary of the river of time, which flows inside the great pyramid that an dreadful demon had built from the blood and flesh of an Unholy Titan, I was attacked by a vile, odious, very nasty, no good bird and had my fate stolen. So, no one in the world remembers me."

"...Uh-huh."

"Oh, but before that, I was very famous. Not only was I famous, but even my secret alter ego was famous. World-renowned, even. I was a war hero, too. And extremely wealthy. In fact... do you know Princess Nephis? Changing Star of the Immortal Flame clan? I was practically her boyfriend."

"Uh-huh..."

Or:

"Teacher, can I ask you a question? How old are you, exactly?"

"You certainly can. Huh. That's a complicated question! One might say that I am a few years older than you. But, at the same time, this incarnation of me has only been born about four years ago? Oh, but actually, I guess I'm thousands of years old. I've just forgotten most of it after my cursed magical sword rebelled against me, and I had to destroy it, as well as my memories."

"A... cursed magical sword? How did you destroy it?"

"Well, I just told it to be gone. And it was gone. Your teacher is that awesome."

“…”

Or.

"Teacher, tell me the truth... you're not an evil god, are you?"

"Of course not!"

"Really?"

"Sure. I mean... the blood of an ancient demon does flow in my veins, and I did devour the alabaster phalanx of a nebulous deity after being cast down into the darkness of a bottomless abyss. And technically, I am indeed the master of a lightless fragment that was torn from a divine realm. But, an evil god? Preposterous!”

"I... I see."

"I mean. I am a demigod, at best..."

In short...

After a while, Rain had stopped asking questions.

She felt that, even if she had not gone mad yet, she definitely would if she continued.

So, she just lived her life and endured the harsh training, as well as the odd and eerie quirks of her mysterious teacher. Despite blaming him for not getting a chance to challenge the First Nightmare, Rain knew that his guidance had saved her life on numerous occasions. She had grown much stronger and more capable under his mentorship, too.

After a while, she had grown accustomed to his company, and even found comfort in it.

Not right now, though. Right now, she was seriously considering exorcizing him.

"Hey, Rain? Why are you spacing out?"

She flinched and looked at her teacher, feeling slightly embarrassed.

He shook his head.

"Go on, harvest that Stone Worm before the Queen takes it."

Rain stared at the revolting corpse of the dead abomination, sighed, and jumped down into the pit.

Pulling a sharp hunting knife from the sheath attached to the small of her back, she grimaced and got to work, mumbling

"Before the Queen takes it? Ha! Why would she take a measly Stone Worm... as if she has need of such a weak and ugly servant…”