1786 Decent Archer

Her teacher seemed to be sulking, and did not speak with her the next morning. Rain crawled out of her tent, disassembled it, and prepared for a long day of marching across the desolate plain.

She was in a good mood because of having managed to tease her teacher successfully last night.

There was no need to do the survey work anymore, so the team moved west at a brisk pace. They were also familiar with the terrain, and could follow an optimal route instead of wandering aimlessly.

Of course, Tamar of Sorrow had been exaggerating a bit when she said that they would go in a straight line. The Moonriver Plain was within the borders of the Song Domain, but the only Citadel here was far to the south, at its very edge. And since there was nothing but the Hollow Mountains to the north, this land was wild and dangerous.

There were plenty of Nightmare Creatures here, and so, the survey team had to avoid the hunting grounds of the more dangerous abominations.

Still, they were making good progress.

The further west they went, the more canyons barred their path. By now, the members of the survey team were very familiar with crossing them, so much so that it had almost become a habit.

They would try to find the place where a stone bridge once stood, since the canyons were usually narrow there. The remains of the bridges also further narrowed the chasm.

Then, young Tamar would mount her wolf Echo and leap over the canyon while holding a rope. After fastening it on the other side, she would raise a simple pulley system.

The carts and equipment would be transported over the chasm first, and the people would follow. The whole process was a bit tiring, but not especially dangerous - even if the canyon started to wail and was suddenly flooded by rushing water, the ropes remained above the powerful current.

The porters just had to be careful not to look down.

The canyons were incredibly deep, their depths shrouded in inky darkness. Falling down meant death. The currents, however, were incredibly violent - so, falling into the water was not much safer.

The survey team reached another canyon and went through the familiar motions. This one was not very wide, but it was still going to take some effort to transport all the equipment to the other side, Rain, who was usually one of the last people to traverse the chasm, leaned on the cart she had been pulling and took a deep breath.

Since the crossing was monotonous, and they had already gone through the process countless times, It was easy to grow numb and allow one's mind to wander. However, even while presenting a relaxed facade, Rain still maintained vigilance. She knew all too well that a moment of carelessness could mean death in the Dream Realm.

Which was why she was one of the first people to see it.

Tamar and her Echo were already on the other side, and the ropes were drawn across the chasm. The carts had been attached to the hooks and pulled over the canyon. Now, it was time for humans to follow.

There were three ropes - one for them to walk over, two to hold with their hands. Awakened Fleur was in the middle of crossing, and one of the survey specialists was waiting for his turn to follow.

However...

Rain was suddenly distracted by something. It was the dead man standing a small distance away from the resting porters.

His gaze was just as empty and expressionless as ever. However, he had just turned his head, silently facing the canyon.

She frowned.

The pilgrim had always been passive and quiet. He never did anything except for following the survey team.

Why had he moved now?

'Crap...'

Before anyone could react, there was movement in the canyon.

An enormous, clawed hand rose from somewhere below and swiped at the survey specialist. it's desiccated palm was the size of his entire body, and the vicious claws seemed sharp enough to rip the man to shreds.

Rain's eyes widened.

Luckily, the surveyor staggered back and tripped, seemingly on nothing, just in the nick of time. The claws missed him by a hair's breadth, failing to rip his body apart.

...They did snap the three ropes, though.

"Fleur!"

Ray's shout tore apart the silence, but he was far away to do anything.

‘What are you shouting about... she's an Awakened...'

Fleur might not have been strong enough to survive a fall into the canyon, but she definitely could hold on to the ropes.

It was the porters who were in real danger, because the enormous hand was already reaching toward them with its claws.

What saved them wasn't a miracle, but the cold steel of Tamar's sword.

The Legacy girl had been on the other side of the canyon, watching the others cross. She reacted at the first sign of danger. The Echo was standing guard further away, so she simply jumped into the chasm without wasting any time.

Tamar of Sorrow, like all Awakened, possessed two Awakened Abilities.

One allowed her to step on the air. She could do it once as a Sleeper, and twice now that she had Awakened. The second Ability allowed her to burst with startling speed for a short amount of time she was so fast, in fact, that it seemed as if she was simply teleporting from place to place.

Which was how Tamar crossed the canyon without the help of her Echo.

By the time she landed on the other side, her sword had already woven itself from sparks of light. It was a brutish zweihander with a leather-bound ricasso. Tamar was a young woman of medium height, so the great sword looked comically large in her hands... she did, however, wield it with effortless ease.

She activated her Awakened Ability again and shot forward, delivering a terrifying slash to the wrist of the hidden abomination's arm. Despite the fact that it was as thick as the trunk of an ancient tree, the zweihander cut through the tough hide, steel muscles, and adamantine bone, severing the creature's enormous hand.

Tamar seemed to disappear from one spot and appear in another in the blink of an eye. At the same time, the hideous hand separated from the creature's arm in a flood of viscous blood.

It fell heavily on the ground... and continued moving, crawling toward the terrified porters.

"Ray!"

Finally, Awakened Ray reacted. He dashed to Intercept the hand, while Tamar turned to the canyon.

By then, the Nightmare Creature was already climbing over the edge.

It was huge and hideous, with a gaunt body and long, sinewy limbs. Its head was disproportionately large for the emaciated torso, with two little bloodshot eyes and an enormous, crimson maw.

Worst of all, it seemed to possess too many arms.

Tamar had severed one at the wrist, but three hands were already reaching toward her. Two more were gripping the edge of the canyon, pushing the giant up.

There was barely any time to react.

The young Legacy did something that most warriors would never do in a battle - she jumped high into the air, dragging the great length of the brutish zweihander behind her.

A jump was usually tantamount to death because one could not control their direction or react to the opponent's attacks without standing on the ground. A strike delivered in the air was also weaker than a strike delivered while using a solid surface for support.

However, that did not apply to Tamar.

She pushed off the air once, soaring to greater height, and then once more, changing her trajectory completely. At the same time, she spun like a wheel and brought the zwelhander down on the enemy's arm.

This time, the force contained in the strike was not augmented by the startling speed of her Awakened Ability, but it was still fearsome. The arm of the abomination was not severed, but the great sword bit deep, not only slicing the veins and muscles, but also cracking the bone.

She had evaded the other two hands by jumping over them, as well.

Tamar would have been clear if not for the fact that at that moment, the creature's two sinister eyes locked on her, and another three hands shot at her from the canyon.

The young Legacy faltered for a split second.

...Then, a sharp arrow whistled past her and pierced one of the abomination's eyes. A moment later, another arrow sank into the remaining eye of the hideous Nightmare Creature, effectively blinding it.

A pained roar shook the plain.

Landing on the ground, Tamar activated her Awakened Ability and dodge to the right, avoiding the grab of the blinded abomination. She would have been in trouble if it could see, but now, things were different.

Shaking the fetid blood off the blade of her great sword, she prepared to attack and glanced back briefly.

Ray was busy pushing back the severed hand... so who had made those stunningly accurate shots?

The beautiful porter girl, Rani, was standing near the pile of unloaded equipment, holding a simple recurve bow. Her black hair was dancing in the wind, and there was a strangely serene expression on her pale face.

Her black eyes were glistening with something that resembled... excitement?

She was already drawing the bow again, the fletching of a handmade arrow brushing against her white cheek.

A little stunned, Tamar turned back to the enormous abomination.

‘...She did say that she was decent with a bow.'

If that was decent... then Tamar did not even know what great was.

As she pushed her body forward, a stray thought surfaced in her mind.

Rani had also said that she had some experience trekking in the wilderness and could handle a sword fine,

Suddenly, Tamar wanted to know what her definition of "fine" was.