1819 Pursued

Rain froze, afraid to move.

There, below her, far away, something was moving In the darkness. Sunlight did not reach that deep Into the canyon, but she was still able to discern a vague and frightening shape.

The creature was immense and hunched, with countless arms protruding like a sinewy forest from its massive hump. She thought she saw a clawed hand reaching up to grab the weathered rocks, and in the next moment, an echoing sound of rolling stones rose from the canyon.

Rain's whole body grew tense.

The Awakened Tyrant they had fought before falling into the river seemed to be alive. Worse than that, it was here now, either by coincidence or because it had followed their scent.

For a moment, her heart was drowned with fear.

She had battled and slain many Nightmare Creatures. Most of the were dormant, while some were Awakened. The strongest of them had been the Huntsman... and barely survived that fight.

There was no chance that she would be able to survive a battle against an Awakened Tyrant. That creature was not something a mundane person could ever kill. Not even an Awakened would face it alone - even a full cohort was not always enough to deal with a Tyrant.

To rain, the hideous abomination was like a herald of death.

...Still, she forced herself to calm down. Fear was not going to help her

What would, though? Nothing came to mind.

‘Run. We must run.'

That was the only logical conclusion.

Forgetting to breathe, Rain slowly backed away from the edge, trembled as she turned her back to it, and silently rose to her feet. Then, She took several cautious steps forward, and broke into a sprint.

'Damn it, damn it, damn it...'

So much for hiding from danger in the ruins. So much for waiting for ten days. Not only had danger found them, but it was also of a kind that they had no hope against.

Rain glanced at her shadow and hesitated, not knowing if she should say something. Her teacher had been strangely silent since the morning, as if he wasn't there at all...

In the end, she didn't say anything.

Entering the ruins, she saw that Tamar was laying on the floor, staring at the ceiling with a bleak expression on her face. The younger girl was in terrible shape, so Rain had hoped that she would have an opportunity to rest and recover a little.

Sadly, that was not in the cards anymore.

Noticing Rain's hurried motions and grim expression, Tamar rose on an elbow and scowled.

"What's the matter?"

Rain was already rolling the strips of monster meat into her jacket, knowing that hunger and physical strain did not go well together. In the wilderness, food was life, and hunger was death.

"Get on the stretcher."

She paused for a moment, and then added darkly:

"The damned Tyrant has followed us. It is climbing up the canyon."

Tamar's eyes widened.

She froze for a moment, then gritted her teeth and silently crawled onto the makeshift stretcher.

Rain threw the rolled jacket to her, then grabbed the handles and grunted.

'Ah...'

The young Legacy girl wasn't exactly heavy, but she still weighed much more than Rain could carry comfortably. Worse still, that weight wasn't distributed evenly between her shoulders and waist, like that of a backpack would. Dragging her to the ruins was a bit of an exercise... but would Rain be able to drag the stretcher across many kilometers of rough terrain?

Not without killing herself, most likely.

'Curse it all!'

There was no time to think. For now, she had to create as much distance between them and the Tyrant as possible. There was still a possibility that the creature had been carried to this corner of the Moonriver Plain by the same current as them - so, It could have been here by coincidence. In that case, they still had a chance to escape.

If not...

"Let's go."

Rain dragged the stretcher out of the ruin and hesitated for a few moments, a lost look on her face.

Where were they supposed to head?

Every direction was the same - except for where the canyon, and the Tyrant, were. So, Rain felt inclined to rush in the opposite direction from the abomination, goin west.

But she decided to ask Tamar's opinion first. As if guessing her thoughts, the Legacy girl spoke quietly from the stretcher.

"The canyons of the Moonriver Plain typically stretch from north to south. We have been carried far south by the river - so, the main camp should be somewhere northwest of our position."

She hesitated a little, and then added:

"However, we don't know how far we were carried, exactly. It may be more prudent to head further south, instead. That way, we might reach the edge of the plain and find the Lake of Tears.”

The Lake of Tears and the great waterfall, Weeping Goddess, were where Clan Sorrow's Citadel stood.

Rain remained motionless for a few moments, considering her options.

The main construction camp of the road crew was northwest of their position. The Lake of Tears was somewhere south. The problem was that they did not know which one was closer.

Eventually, she decisively turned south.

Her choice was very simple, and had nothing to do with distance. She chose the Lake of Tears simply because they would have to follow along the canyon to reach it... which meant that they would most likely not have to cross other canyons on the way.

With Tamar incapacitated, crossing even one could become an insurmountable obstacle - not even taking into account that they might end up being pursued by an Awakened Tyrant. Wasting time was a luxury they did not have.

So, really, the Lake of Tears was not the best choice. It was simply the only choice.

Gritting her teeth, Rain strained her tired body and pulled the heavy stretcher south.

At that moment, she was thankful for the cloudy sky and the cold dribble. Even though her face and hair were already damp, the dust covering the stony plain had turned to mud. Because of that, it was easier to drag the stretcher across it.

She was still struggling, though.

'I'll need to come up with a better way.'

Somewhere behind them, there were more sounds of rocks falling deep in the canyon. The Tyrant was already close to crawling out of the darkness.

Rain hurried her steps.