1826 Coming Storm

While Rain was in the middle of her Awakening.

Tamar was struggling not to drown. Streams of water were pouring from the sky, mixing with mud. . . laying powerlessly on the stretcher, she felt weak and spent.

The situation seemed to be hopeless.

Not only would he die, but Rani, who had refused to abandon her and strived so stubbornly to save them, would be killed, too.

Looking at the furious black sky, Tamar wanted to give up.

But she couldn't.

“Ah…”

A long sight escaped from her lips.

Then, a whirlwind of sparks surrounded her, forming into a beautiful spear.

Tamar gritted her teeth, then rose to her feet, using the spear as a crutch.

Immediately, severe pain pierced her fragile legs.

It had been six or seven days since they were broken. The bones had healed, somewhat, but even for an awakening, that was not nearly enough time to recover. She was probably undoing all that healing. . . but, still.

Tamar refused to die lying down.

Better yet, she didn’t want to die at all. She was also indignant at the thought of Rani dying because of her.

So, she had a hard decision to make.

‘I have to summon the Echo.’

The monstrous wolf was protecting the survey team, and she was unwilling to compromise their safety. However, at this point, there was no sense in keeping the Echo with them.

That was because it would disappear if Tamar died, leaving the survey team similarly defenseless.

The problem was. . .

That there was no way to guarantee that summoning the Echo would save them. It was an

Ascended Monster — a protector gifted to her by her clan. An Ascended Monster was a powerful creature, but it was not a given that it would be able to defeat an Awakened Tyrant.

Especially this Tyrant in particular, who seemed both ancient and exceedingly powerful.

The wolf wouldn't be able to carry them away, either, because the Tyrant was too close, and the

Echo would instantly attract its attention.

So. . . in order to increase their chances, Tamar would have to assist the Echo in fighthing the

Tyrant herself. She could still draw her bow, even if doing so would make her wounds open.

‘I’ll. . . I'll summon it, then.’

And yet, she hesitated.

Watching the Tyrant slowly draw closer, Tamar waited for something. Maybe something would happen. . . some miracle that would lead the hideous giant away. Maybe a bolt of lightning would descend from the sky and burn it.

Maybe she wouldn't need to fail her friends and mission, after all.

But nothing happened.

The Tyrant was already too close. It was still following their scent. A miracle did not descent, and their fates were still sealed.

Tamar took a deep breath and prepared to dismiss the Echo.

. . But just before she did, a hand suddenly landed on her shoulder.

Tamar flinched and looked back.

Rani was standing there, looking at her calmly.

Constant flashes of lightning were reflecting in her striking black eyes, making it seem as though they were illuminated by inner light.

The mundane girl. . . looked different, somehow.

Tamar couldn't tell what about her had changed, exactly, in the lightning-infused darkness.

Rani smiled.

"It's alright. I'll take care of it now.”

She paused for a moment, and then added calmly:

“Summon that sword of yours. ”

Tamar looked at her in confusion, failing to understand what was happening. Her reason told her that Rani must have lost her mind, and that there was no point in listening to her ramblings.

But, somehow, Tamar did not believe it. She felt a strange compulsion to be unreasonable and believe in her companion.

And, after a long pause. . . she did.

Instead of dismissing the Echo and summoning it here, she summoned her brutish zweihander and offered it to Rani.

Rani took it with a thankful nod.

She could barely lift it before. But now, she was holding it easily, as if her strength was suddenly in no way inferior to Tamar's own.

Patting Tamar on the shoulder reassuringly, Rani turned and walked away from the edge.

She was heading toward the approaching Tyrant.

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Rain walked through the storm, carrying the heavy greatsword easily. Sadly, she had not had a lot of time to bask in the ecstasy of having Awakened — they were still in mortal danger. The Tyrant was still drawing closer.

And she had to kill it. . . Which was a tall task.

Even now that Rain was an Awakened, the Tyrant posed a lethal threat to her. After all, most

Awakened did not fight such powerful creatures alone. . . her case was especially precarious, because she was a singular existence.

Not only had she Awakened mere minutes ago, but she also did not possess an Aspect yet. Unlike the carriers of the Nightmare Spell, those who

Awakened naturally, like her, had to spend time slowly discovering their Aspect and Flaw.

Before that happened, she would not have powerful Aspect Abilities to assist her in battle.

All she had was her enhanced physical prowess, cunning, and Tamar's sword.

Now, she would see if that was enough.

Reaching a certain point, directly in the path of the approaching Tyrant, Rain lowered the zweihander to the ground, assumed a stance. . . and froze.

She had thought a lot about how to kill that damned Tyrant.

Actually, it wasn't that hard to achieve.

The creature did not possess an impenetrable carapace or thick fur to stop her blade. Its defense was mostly in the form of overwhelming offense — the forest of arms were its minions, so damaging or destroying them would not harm the abomination. One had to reach its body to deliver a fatal wound, but to do that, they had to fight their way through the avalanche of monstrous hands.

Which was close to impossible for someone like her.

However. . .

The Tyrant was blind now.

So, that was what Rain decided to gamble her life on.

Standing motionlessly in the path of the abomination, she did not make a single sound. In fact, she even held her breath and forced her heartbeat to slow down — in the middle of the roaring storm, the creature would not hear it.

At least that was Rain's hope.

As she watched the hideous Nightmare Creature approach, all her instincts were screaming for her to turn away and run. However, she did not move at all.

Soon, the Tyrant drew so close that she could discern every ghastly detail of its gaunt body, flooded by the light of the flashing bolts of lightning.

The creature was coming right at her. . . But it was not aware that its prey was so close, yet.

Soon, a monstrous hand landed in the mud directly to Rain's right.

Then, another landed in the mud to her left.

The abomination dragged itself closer.

Its appalling, oversized head was now almost above her, the enormous maw close enough to swallow her whole in an instant.

Rain smiled darkly.

‘Got you.’

Instead of fighting her way through the forest of hands, she had allowed the blind Tyrant to bring itself to her.

She finally moved.

As soon as she did, the Tyrant's head jerked, turning toward her.

But it was already too late.

The zweihander exploded forward, slicing through the mud and rising in an upward arc. Rain pulled with one hand and pushed with the other, using its long handle as a lever. Her Awakened strength was great enough to make the blade of the greatsword turn into a blur.

A split second later. . .

The zweihander struck the Tyrant's chin. Its sharp blade carried enough force and momentum to slice its jaw in half, sever its tongue, break through the fragile bones of the nasal cavity, cut cleanly through its brain, and finally escape from its forehead.

In an instant, the abomination's head was split in two halves.

A moment later, Rain was already jumping back.

She easily leaped a dozen meters back, then slid in the mud the same distance.

By then, countless hands were already pummeling the spot where she had stood. If she had been even a little bit slower, she would have been crushed.

But it did not matter.

Because those hands were nothing but minions.

The Tyrant itself. . . was dead.

Its body swayed heavily, and then collapsed into the mud, a river of blood spilling from its mangled head.

Just like that, the pursuit was over.