Self Annihilation

Prince Daiano

“Prince Daiano has returned from his expedition!” an ironclad soldier cried out. I looked over the king’s shoulder and found a faint smile on his face. He called for the gates to be opened so that he may welcome his son. Prince Daiano was a popular young man with ample love for everything and everyone, last I saw him. He, along with his siblings Varena and Carano were sent on a mission a few weeks ago by the king. The details were not discussed with the court, nor with myself, his personal aid and loyal protector.

Two guards pulled each of the large and heavily decorated doors open, and the lone prince entered. His figure was hidden under a plain brown cloak, and a hood prevented us at the throne from seeing his face. Had the guards truly confirmed that this was Prince Daiano? He gradually approached the throne, sparing not even a glance toward the court members lined up on the sides of the room.

“Come, my son. Do not kneel, I want to hold you in my arms again. Come and embrace me, and let us all cheer, for the Lord has brought my eldest son back in one piece!”

The room went from silence to clamorous alleluias, as everyone was delighted to see the prince come home. I was still not convinced. Where were his siblings? Why wasn’t he dressed in royal garb? I postured next to the king, just in case anything were to happen. He noticed this and gestured for me to back off. Despite my apprehension and instinct, I honored his command.

My focus wavered as I found myself mesmerized by the crowd. The applause grew louder when they finally embraced. This room, normally filled with the noise of dreary meetings with merchants and ambassadors is the loudest it has ever been. The sound of joy permeated every corner. It was spectacular.

*“I have to let you go.”*

I looked back at the king and found a puddle forming beneath his feet; his burgundy mantle was staining a deeper red. Deafening silence engulfed the room. I could not move, nor could I speak— there was an unbearable pressure holding me still. Prince Daiano killed the king of Serali.

Daiano

*“I am Daiano, I am the young man you once swaddled in your arms, and I am the student you beat until I had memorized the scriptures.*

*“My sister Varena, she was a kind young lady despite the comments about her ugliness.*

*“My little brother Carano, just a growing boy, knew nothing of this horrible world.*

*“My father sent us on a mission. We were to kill a beast, one that lived at the edge of our continent. So we left the safety of our home and passed through the tricuspid bridge into Celtervin, the badlands of Serali.*

*“This beast lured Varena in with promises of everlasting beauty. The voices that called to her entranced her, and brought her to a bluff. The tempestuous winds on that day prevented anyone from following her. Despite Carano and I calling out, begging her to come back, she jumped and was swept away by the sea.*

*“This beast left trails of food, which Carano followed and ate willingly. The edges of Serali are uninhabited, and we were with hunger for many days while searching for our target. I was able to forage enough food to satiate just one person, and Carano was not happy with this. He ate and ate the beast’s food until it led him to a pack of dogs. I was not even there to see it happen, for he had eaten my only way of finding him. All I could hear were his cries.*

*“That was when I understood what this beast was. It challenged me in many ways. I saw a mirage of beautiful virgins lined up in front of me. I heard the sounds of my siblings calling out for their brother. I was tested with promises of immortality, wealth, and strength.*

*“At last, the beast gave up, but it was not beaten. I realized at this point that in order to defeat it, I must kill my father, the man and thing I love most in this world, for he was the last desire I had to forgo. So I traveled home, and now the beast is gone. I have slain my self, and all of us are now free. We are approaching perfection.”*

I am

Despite this pressure preventing me from moving, I could still see. Members of the court were transforming into salt pillars as Daiano spoke. Some were spared and remained still, seemingly also trapped in place. The walls and doors, once lavish and decorated, were now turning plain white. Why did this beast require our great king’s sacrifice to be defeated? Our king, with endless love, who protected Serali and could not easily let go of those he cared for, how could his death possibly be needed?

*“I am Adonai.”*