Chapter 1: From Disappointment to Destruction

Zev stormed out of the Sage’s alcove. That woman had no feelings sometimes. The wizened councilor had a bad habit of laughing when Zev failed. And this last time was the one that almost broke him.

Leaving the central castle of the seaside village, his mood was broody but truly no more than usual. He continued to stomp toward the door that led to the cliff-face battlements. Exiting, he slammed the door behind him, warning the guards to give him a ‘moment’.

The wind hit him hard as he rounded the battlement wall and headed toward the ramparts.

His cloak flapped violently and he pulled his hood and secured the edges, wrapping him in darkness.

On the horizon, over the sea, a tempest rolled closer as the North Eastern wind buffeted against the cliffs and the battlement walls. Thunder and lightning rattled the sky. Waves and seawater-filled air crashed and pushed toward the village marina below.

The sea pounded out a beat like the drums of battle. Roar. Crash. Roar. Crash. Roar. Crash…

With a deafening crack, a colossal bolt split the sea, striking mere paces from the beleaguered vessel.

Zev beheld the ship valiantly charging the tempestuous maelstrom, but it was a losing battle.

Yet even amidst the chaos, he espied a glint - a diplomatic rune infused with magic, flashing on the hull.

As the ship careened sideways, it righted itself with a miraculous deftness, narrowly evading a crushing blow from the next rush of waves.

The glowing symbol on the hull provided the motive he needed at that moment. Zev leapt into action. Any second the tempest would claim its prize.

Zev dashed to the fourth rampart and jumped to the edge. Without looking Zev knew the distance to the rocky turbulence below was roughly one thousand arms giving ample time for this special move.

In a practiced and fluid movement, stepped off. Zev fell like a stone. Quickly, Zev crouched into a runner’s stance in the air. The hard wind slammed into Zev the salty air knocking him back closer to the cliff face and then it was time.

He cast Shadow Glide and kicked out against the wall. Counteracting the fast decline, he cast Shadow Grapple and targeted the pier’s end.

And then it was too late. The ship was caught. The storm mercilessly tossed the vessel around like a toy in a tub.

Determined as ever, Zev shot toward the mooring station closest to the ship. He cast Shadow Grapple and Shadow Net in the same move and latched on to the capsized vessel.

Zev secured the magical tendrils to the pillion and pulled.

He didn’t have to pull so hard.

The storm sent a gentle reminder in the way of tossing the boat directly at Zev. Wrong place; wrong time.

Barely dodging the ship, Zev spun and strained against the inertia. Grunting, he flipped the ship.

Zev's heart pounded in his chest as he realized the gravity of the situation. The ship was carrying a diplomatic mission to the Orc city across the bay, and if it failed, the consequences would be dire. He scanned the tumultuous seas, searching for any sign of the crew or the captain.

As he strained against the inertia of the ship, Zev's eyes caught sight of a figure clinging to a piece of driftwood in the raging waters. It was the captain, Kit, and she was barely holding on. Zev knew that he had to act fast if he wanted to save her and the diplomatic mission from certain doom.

He focused his mind, calling upon his training in the art of shadow magic. With a surge of intense concentration, Zev cast Shadow Grapple once again and shot towards Kit, his body slicing through the storm with incredible speed. He caught her just as the waves threatened to swallow her whole, pulling her towards him with all his strength.

As they fell towards the water, Zev's mind raced. They needed to get to safety, and fast. He cast a retaining walls spell, creating a protective barrier around them as they hit the water with a resounding splash. The storminess of the sea was relentless, but Zev was determined to save the captain and complete the mission.

With Kit in tow, Zev began to swim towards the shore, his muscles burning with exertion. The wind howled and the waves crashed around them, but he refused to let them defeat him. He knew that he had the power of shadow magic on his side, and he would use it to overcome any obstacle.

As they neared the safety of the shore, Zev felt a surge of relief. They had made it, against all odds. He turned to Kit, his eyes alight with determination. "We will complete this mission," he said firmly. "No matter what.