

Gentoria: The Last King of Nigeleriin

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It is said that at the dawn of epochs there was only the Gloom (or Darkness)—a bottomless void that knew neither time nor memory. From its depths, light arose, and the light became blood, and from that blood, *ex nihilo*, appeared Lent, the stronghold of a proud people. From that blood arose the children of the gods—the Gentorians—called to guard the world from the claws of the darkness. They called themselves the Bloodborn, for they believed that the power flowing in their veins was not of mortals, but of the gods themselves.

There were nine tribes of them, nine glorious faces of a single truth.

The Fahlms—the flame that does not fade. The Zandals—the singing thunder of the clear sky. The Nerays—fearless seafarers, conquerors of the fierce waves. The Matands—the children of steel, devoid of magic, who forge destiny itself. The Kmanorians—hard as the stone of the earth. The Yarzams—the wolves of the eternal northern snows. The Tallarians—the keepers of the ancient forests. The Arshads—the shadow of death, where souls rest. And the Stormals—the wind that vanished without a trace.

Each tribe had its own Guardian-patron, an emissary of the holy heavens; each had a share of the truth. But no one could keep it whole. And when the gods fell silent, the Gentorians were left alone—proud, fearless, cursed by their own legacy. They fought for the land, for their faith, for the very right to remember who they were. Their blood flowed on the stone, and from that blood grew new legends.

Millennia passed.

The world grew old, but the word lived on—the word that mortals called Gentoria. No hand wrote it, for it had always existed—in the hearts of those who survived the fire and the night. Every Gentorian who returned from war added their lines to it, unaware that one day their voice would become part of one great song.

But now, Gentoria is bending toward its seventh age. The old gods are silent, and the shadows of the past rise from their graves. Steel speaks again, and flame blazes over the seas. For when the Bloodborn forget where they came from—the Gloom returns to remind them.

1: Shadow of the Legion

The capital was jubilant with celebrations: today, the ruler of Nigelriin, the true empire that had once united all nine Gentorian tribes under one banner, was to present his heir to the people. The entire square around the main temple of Sakkalis—the very heart of the empire—was filled with citizens who impatiently awaited the good news. The whole world paused in anticipation, trying to guess who would next ascend the throne of Nigelriin: the elder son, an exemplary diplomat and orator, or perhaps the younger one—an exceptional soldier and fiery commander.

The King of Gentoria stood on the threshold of the temple, his crimson mantle shimmering in the sun, the golden tongues of flame seeming to feed on the very heart of Sakkalis. His eyes swept over the crowd: joyful faces, the shining eyes of children, huge banners fluttering in the wind.

“Brethren!” his voice rang out firmly. “Today we are gathered to witness a great moment... Today it will be revealed who will inherit Nigelriin and lead our peoples into a bright future, despite the hardships that loom over us.”

Everyone listened, holding their breath, and the King, elevated above the people, happy to announce the good news, stretched his hands forward, as if holding the very fate of the empire in his palms.

“And the time has come...” he declared, making a pause that weighed tons. “The time has come to present the heir...”

And precisely at that moment, the silence was shattered by a deafening metallic clang. The tocsin! The bell that always summoned everyone to prayer or announced holidays was sounding an alarm. The hearts of the citizens sank into

their chests, and the King himself fell silent for a moment, first puzzled, then realizing—the city was under siege.

The speech was cut short on the word "heir," and the celebratory triumph instantly crumbled like a fragile glass cup. Now, not delight, but dread reigned in the square, and the air grew thick with the smell of smoke and iron: the "distant" war had reached the very walls of Sakkalis, reminding them once more of the cursed name of the one who started it all—Galtran.

In an instant, the celebration turned into a desperate struggle. The "City of Fire" abruptly plunged into flames, while the legionaries, led by the King himself and his two sons, fought with all their might to hold the walls against an enemy they had contained in the northern provinces for twenty years... until today.

The ranks thinned like dew under the morning sun, unable to withstand the pressure of a horde that seemed to have appeared from nowhere. Fire rose above the rooftops, and the screams of the residents and the clash of swords merged into a single ominous symphony. The legionaries held the walls, but the onslaught of the unholy force was overwhelming, its eyes burning with fire as they looked upon the city.

And amidst this chaos, he appeared—Galtran, the ruler of the Arshads. There was no time for surprise or preparation: everyone thought the civil war was contained in the northern provinces, far from the capital. But he was already here, outside Sakkalis, commanding the horde of death, and his shadow fell upon the square like a dark prophecy.

Screams, fire, metal, and fear mixed into a single storm. And then, amidst all the uproar, a muffled, urgent cry sounded... but the words were lost in the chaos. Darkness swallowed consciousness, and everything—the noise, the flame, the screams, the burning pain throughout the body—vanished instantly. Only one voice managed to ring out before the light finally left the gaze:

"Sairas!"

Sairas woke up amidst the nocturnal chill of the military camp. A light wind played through the tent fabric, and the weak light of the torches emphasized the tense silence of the warriors, already preparing for the next guard shift. His heart beat like a startled hare: the nightmare from seven years ago visited him in his sleep almost every night, or at least every other.

He remembered nothing but his own name and a hellish pain in his right arm. Instinctively, he raised his right hand—it was metallic, yet it moved and felt touch as if it were alive.

For the first time since waking, Sairas fixed his gaze on the cold metal—in its reflections, the shadows of Galtran and memories of past battles flashed. He looked no older than twenty-five, yet his youthful face was instantly overshadowed by a merciless gaze, as if an endless river of blood flowed behind him.

He wore no armor, only a black doublet with gold stripes, missing the right sleeve. His wide white trousers were stained in places with the blood of the vanquished, and his shining black riding boots were covered in the dirt of past campaigns.

Yet, his face stood out even more: red paint around his eyes signaled his Fahlim origin, and a long copper lock of hair, coiled around his right ear, hinted at noble lineage. His gaze was serious, unforgiving, and remarkably indifferent—as befitting Legion officers... or what was left of it. Two ruby earrings, shaped like sharp arrowheads, hung from his ears. He stood like the personification of death—elusive and inevitable.

“Nightmares again?” a voice sounded from the treacherous silence of the uneasy night.

Salifas entered the tent.

Tall, unyielding as a mountain peak, he trod softly, but every step echoed in the heart like thunder. Long, ash-colored hair fell to his shoulders, partially hiding

the scars that told of battles where his might and will held the line between chaos and order. His eyes burned with a cold fire—not a flash of anger, but a restrained authority that made even those who had seen war tremble.

Sairas nodded silently. “The same as always, nothing new...”

Salifas sighed, sitting on a modest stool next to Sairas’s cot. His hand rested lazily on the hilt of his sword, likely the only comrade of everyone who had joined the army after the infamous March of the Dead.

When you think about it, Salifas had been at the helm the longest—ever since Sakkalis burned to the ground seven years ago, he had taken on the role of Regent to prevent the remnants of Nigelriin from completely sinking into chaos due to the war, and only the gods knew how he managed not only to rebuild the capital but also to piece together the barely living fragments of a once-vast army.

“Do you even remember what we’re doing here, Sairas?”

“Restoring order.” Sairas’s voice was dry and mechanical, still tired after the bad sleep.

“You wouldn’t be wrong... But a better reminder: we are reclaiming the lands that were taken from us while we were pinned down by the horde outside Sakkalis.”

“And how did we even manage to miss so much?”

Salifas sighed again: Sairas was always sharp in his remarks, even toward him, the Regent, but he could be understood—after all, to be the sole survivor of your lineage, barely remembering your own name... not everyone could endure that.

“We didn’t expect ‘guests’ from the south. Half the Legion was locked down in the north, keeping the war within Elsheid’s borders, and the other half was dispersed across the remaining provinces. We simply didn’t have time to call everyone together, even with forced marches...”

Silence reigned in the tent for a moment. Salifas didn't explain further, and Sairas didn't ask, though the gaps weren't getting any smaller. However, for now, the information was sufficient: if they talked much more, his head would be pounding.

"I suggest we go out for some air." Salifas broke the silence, rising from the stool. "Neither of us can sleep anyway, and we can check on the night guards currently on duty."

Sairas silently agreed. A moment later, he stood at the tent exit—sword at his waist, shoulders straight, eyes dim from sleeplessness.

"Then let's go," he said, stepping out first.

The camp seemed surprisingly empty. Most of the legionaries, except for the patrols, were asleep in their tents, waiting for dawn. Only faintly glowing campfires hinted that an army was even stationed here.

The entire encampment was hidden in a dense forest, under a dark canopy of crowns. Somewhere out there, beyond the trees, beyond the Sea of Salzas, lies Fort Arlu—their goal and first obstacle.

"Didn't we bring too few men for this gamble?" Sairas tossed out, just to break the silence.

Salifas merely shrugged.

"We couldn't bring more. Otherwise, the north would be left exposed, and Galtran is just waiting for that. We don't need a second March."

"So we're going to take the fort by storm?" Skepticism rang in Sairas's voice. "Great idea. Count how many of us would fall before we scale those walls."

Salifas smiled faintly.

“Don't count. You do what you do best. You are a *sakh*, remember? The highest rank among the officers. It's not for nothing that I spent half the treasury on your training, even if the chancellor has been nagging me for seven years.”

“Just don't start again,” Sairas grumbled, rolling his eyes. “Those few skirmishes on the way here are no proof of mastery yet.”

“I'm just joking,” Salifas waved. “We'll see at dawn. I know you like the back of my hand: eyes are fierce, but you guard your fools like the apple of your eye. Speaking of them...”

Precisely at that moment, emerging from the shadows of the trees, soldiers approached the Regent and his *sakh*—their “lads,” tired but vigilant, ready to listen. They stopped three steps away from the two, lining up in a straight formation. One of them—the cohort commander—stepped forward and struck his chest with a fist in a sign of respect.

“At ease, boys,” Salifas said, waving his hand. “The night is still quiet, no need to strain yourselves. Don't mind Sairas: he's naturally grumpy; you just haven't had a chance to mess up yet.”

Sairas chose to remain silent, only sighing and rubbing the weariness from his brow with his fingers. His gaze slid over the soldiers—briefly, sharply—and settled on Salifas. This was enough for everyone present to understand: the Regent's jokes had not found their intended recipient today.

The cohort commander took another step forward—young, but already with wrinkles around his eyes, the kind that only appears on those who have seen death too closely.

“Lord *sakh*,” he began, bowing his head. “The scout team has returned. There are between five hundred and a thousand fighters in the fort; we can't say for sure. Half are holding the walls, the rest are inside the courtyard. Ballistae, crossbows, a couple of catapults... all old, but functional. Still from the time when the fort was ours.”

“And what about us?” Sairas asked curtly.

“Two hundred Fahlims, *sakh*. Infantry, crossbowmen, plus two cannons that miraculously haven’t fallen apart into pieces. The rest are in reserve.”

Sairas nodded briefly. His gaze swept over the darkness where the campfires burned.

“Anything else?”

The commander hesitated for a moment.

“Yes, sir. While we were watching the walls, we noticed... strange ones beneath them. They look like us, but their skin is gray, like ash. And their eyes, I swear, seemed not to be from this world at all: their sclera was black, and their pupils glowed white, like candles.”

Silence fell for a moment. A branch cracked somewhere nearby, and even the fire seemed to dim.

“Are you sure it wasn't just shadow or smoke?” Sairas asked cautiously.

“They said they heard them talking. Didn't understand a single word, probably not our tongue.”

Sairas frowned, tilting his head slightly.

“Who are they?”

And then he saw Salifas, always composed, change his expression subtly—like a brief spasm or a shadow that flashed and vanished.

“Ventari,” the Regent said calmly. “They came from the south, where all sorts of riff-raff crawl around. That’s why we originally built this fort, actually.”

“And all we know about these 'Ventari' is the name,” Sairas stated.

“That’s enough,” Salifas replied evenly, looking at the cohort commander. “Tell your men that dawn won’t wait.”

“Yes, Regent,” the soldier struck his chest with a fist and retreated.

Sairas stood silently for a while longer, gazing into the darkness where the soldiers had just disappeared.

“All sorts of riff-raff crawl around,” he repeated. “Poetic, for a mist.”

“Mist is the best cover,” Salifas replied quietly. “Especially for those who don’t want to be recognized. That’s why it’s best for us to deal with this as quickly as possible.”

With that said, Salifas headed toward his tent, leaving Sairas alone. He walked slowly, as if every step weighed the years that lay between him and the day it all began. In the firelight, his face looked calm, but a shadow flickered in his eyes—old, familiar, like ash that doesn’t disappear even after the rain.

Seven years had passed since they last stood before fire and death, during the March of the Dead. And now, as the wind once again carried the scent of ash, it seemed that the circle had finally closed, beginning a new era of endless battles...

Re:Kindled

WIP Re:Zero crossover-fanfic (purely for fun)

As the lights faded, the vision slowly turned blurry, hiding the entire world beyond the dark embrace. The echoes of what seemed to be an endless battle of life and death went silent at last, leaving just a trembling memory of a once glorious kin, now erased from cosmos itself.