
Nalen Incen

Glory. Glory rightfully earned. Glory against a worthy adversary. That's what you've been working towards your whole adult life. That's what you've sought. And now, when you finally deserve it, to get passed over? That's the ultimate insult.

You were born and raised Water caste. You learned to count beans and balance accounts, organize caravans and negotiate prices. Useful enough skills. Practical. Boring. Stifling.

There's a reason the Fire caste is above Water. What does Water risk? A few disks of metal? The ability to buy furnishings for your sitting room? What value is there in that? In the trappings of finery bought with numbers?

Fire soldiers risk their bone and blood, their very lives, to earn glory fighting for their home and country. What could be more worthy than that? And yet, you were born to merchants, doomed to the quiet suffocation of the Water caste.

You weren't willing to accept that.

You took some gold from your mother's desk, bought some things, and stole off. You heard there was unrest at the border with Izar, so you went to a fort there. You presented yourself as Nalen, the youngest child of a provincial Fire family sent to aid in the war. They were happy to put you through training.

Training wasn't easy work, far from it. You were used to sitting at a desk with a quill and ink. You weren't decadent the way those Air weaklings get, but you'd never been through a Fire training regimen. The other soldiers laughed at your weakness and panting. But you didn't let it get to you. You practiced extra hours, late into the evening when the other soldiers were resting, lifting stones, climbing stairs, and doing drills to get your strength up.

One evening, you noticed you weren't the only one doing extra training. Kinito Ironsword seemed to be in a similar situation to the one you were in. Seeing your attention, they asked you if you wanted to spar. Soon, you were training together every evening. You could help them out, give them tips on how to improve. And it was good to have someone you could talk to who didn't make you feel like a weakling.

You wondered about Kinito's story, but they never seemed inclined to talk much about their past. Until one evening, they slipped. They'd mentioned being from a branch of the Ironsword family in the capital, so when they told a story about being out in the fields with one of their siblings, it stood out. When you asked about it, Kinito stared at you like a kid in the larder. But after a moment, they came clean. They told you that they were actually Earth caste, in disguise to join the army. You were impressed; they'd done a good job with the disguise. And then you decided to take a calculated risk, and told them your story. The mutual confidence brought you even closer together, and you became staunch allies.

Then one night, after the Izarians got bold enough to test some of the border forts, your division was out scouting near an enemy encampment. You were on night guard duty. Kinito said they heard movement. The other guards wouldn't listen, but you went with Kinito to investigate. And you found a whole troupe of Izarians, dressed to blend in in the dark, sneaking past the border. You knew at once that this was important. If they weren't stopped, they could wreak untold havoc, terrorizing the countryside or assassinating leaders. This was your chance. You told Kinito to track them and leave a trail while you went for help. You wasted no time in rousing the captain back at camp. You told him in no uncertain terms the urgency of the situation, and he listened. Of course, rousing the camp was not an instant manner, but it happened, you led them down the trail, and the battle was joined. Your decisive action lead to a solid victory. The Izarians were totally blindsided. It was your first taste of real glory.

Or it should've been. Your haste and decisiveness was key to the successful action, and that victory lead to the discovery of further, similar infiltration parties elsewhere on the border. You helped turn what could have been immense destruction and a long, bloody war into a strong and decisive campaign for Tetrana. So, why did Kinito get all the credit? All anyone seemed to remember was their bloody sword and their walk through the woods, none of your sprint or ability to discern the almost-invisible

trail they left on an overcast night. And you accounted for yourself well in the brief battle, too. But Kinito's the one who gets proclaimed a hero, who gets a feast in their honor back at the fort, who gets a personal visit from the monarch and proclaimed a General of the Armies. You, you're just a footnote, a sidekick, an assistant. A lieutenant.

You trusted Kinito as an ally, and now they're basking in all the honor and you're just following along as an afterthought. You wouldn't have put it past them to even neglect to bother putting you on the Fire delegation to the Convergence. There are so many important people here. There must be some way to show that you're the real hero, or at least that Kinito doesn't deserve all this outrageous treatment. You'd love to take them down a peg or two. Of course, if you let their secret out, yours might come out too, and that would just be adding more humiliation. So you have to be clever. But clever has always been your strong suit.

Meanwhile, this is the Convergence, and it's a prime opportunity to keep those frail little aristocratic Air artists and the greedy worthless Water brokers from selling out Tetrana in the name of "peace" and "prosperity". You know that for Tetrana to get the respect and position it deserves, you need to be known for your strong military. And that's why it's important to overturn this absurd prohibition against the use of fire magic in warfare. War's for real, not some sort of spectator event. Only a fool goes to a fight without the best weapons available.

And, of course, the Realignment brings the opportunity to move the Fire caste, and thus the military, to the top of the heap. Military leadership means more resources for the army, a stronger country, and a position for expansion. More wars means more opportunity for glory. You know that Tetrana could show the world, if those weak nancy pansy artists weren't holding it back. But with Fire in charge, they wouldn't be able to.

(Of course, not *actually* being Fire clan, you'll need to get two Water gems and make a Water butterfly without letting your secret out. But that shouldn't be too hard if you keep your wits about you.)

Every battle hinges on a key point of decision. This Convergence may not be a true battle of blood and glory, but it's a point of decision nevertheless. Make sure Tetrana chooses the right path, and one way or another, you'll get the glory you deserve.

Goals

- Find a way to show up Kinito and get the recognition you deserve.
- Ensure that Tetrana allows the use of fire magic in to enhance your combat superiority.
- Move Fire to the top in the Realignment to turn Tetrana's focus away from silly frivolities and towards showing the rest of the world our superiority through war.
- If Fire does switch places with Air, then you should convince Ceranest to select you and not Kinito as the new ruler of Tetrana.

Contacts

- **Kinito Ironsword:** Your best friend among the Fire soldiers. Secretly Earth caste. They got lauded as a hero after the two of you stopped the Izarians and their subterfuge, and didn't seem to mind your contributions getting ignored.
- **Ter Fiero:** The third member of the Fire delegation. Supposedly an excellent soldier.
- **Quan Northwind:** An exceedingly attractive noble of the Air caste. Even with all that's going on today, perhaps you could find some time to get to know them better...
- **Mim Kinril:** The leader of the Water caste. Awfully pompous and self-important for someone who is quite content with the safe life of a merchant.

Items

- Fire gem (×5)
- Nalen's Spirit Butterfly