# Hevyn

Hevyn laid in the lush grass scenery of the prairie. The scent of grapefruit and daisies filled her nose dulling her other senses. She was at peace—until in a single eye blink, the calm around her collapsed into dust.

The clear sky faded into black as onyx. Warmth of the sun turned to ice against her skin. She propped herself up on her forearms, to her left stood an older gentleman adorned in garnet and gold religious robes.

“I failed to see it. Through the death of a loved one marks his return. Only you can stop him,” his words were sharp whispers spewing from his tongue. Suddenly he screamed at her, his mouth forming a circle larger than a natural shape. His hand snatched her wrist, cutting into her flesh.

*Wake…up.*

Hevyn shot from her slumber within Lady Akiko’s room. Her breaths were heavy within her chest as sweat trickled from her forehead. What she found on her left forearm shocked her. An imprint, darker than her bright complexion, rested on her skin. The sensation was as strong as her dream. Something wanted her awake.

 With a torch in hand, she searched through the halls of the Gosho Guruma. The three-level transport rivaled that of a castle. Countless doors and entryways, it was a labyrinth of green-crimson sigils and décor.

 A glint caught her attention. A stark red light outlined a set of chamber doors. Strange***—***at this hour, most were asleep.

 She crept towards the bright beam shooting from under the thick iron-barred doors. Her steps were slow and light. With her fingertips, she nudged the door open. The sight before her sucked breath from her body.

Azar, the man that saved her grandmother from Errols, had established an altar of a faceless figure. He positioned himself on his hands and knees in prayer. The candles burned red as blood. Around Azar’s neck hung a ruby gemstone emitting a crimson light that illuminated the entire room. Under his breath he repeated a chant; it was foreign yet demonic in her ears. Suddenly, he sped up his words and a figure began forming in the light.

Clouds of black dust coated with red ash took shape. Evil was pouring from the candles as the stone around his neck shone brighter. A smell snuck into her nose, earthy and subtle.

Frankincense.

“Your will shall be done my Lord,” Azar chanted, his words muffled by the floor. “A conduit for the one true King will form in the shape of water.”

An indistinguishable voice spoke from the flames, the sound lifted the hairs of Hevyn’s skin.

A face then appeared.

It was dark with a square jawline, almost godly in her presence. It had slanted hollow eyes with a devilish smile; an expression Hevyn swore she had seen before—maybe from a book or an old tale. Either way, she could not bring herself to look away.

Suddenly, Azar cast his eyes towards the door. They locked eyes. Hevyn took a step back and froze by his sudden movement. By the deranged look of this false wizard, she should not stay. He was going to kill her.

Hevyn bolted back into the halls, running so hard her lungs were about to explode. What did she see back there?

*Thud.*

Hevyn slapped into a hard surface, landing on her elbows. She rubbed her face, trying to make sense of it all.

“Princess!” Nightblaze said, running toward her from down the hall. “Are you hurt?”

“Oh, I am fine,” she said, walking off quickly.

Nightblaze was not quick to let her go. He found a spot at her side as they began walking leisurely. He kept his gaze on her, tracing her curves from head to toe.

“How are you, really?”

She hesitated.

Nightblaze glanced at her arm.

“What is that?”

Hevyn rubbed her shoulder trying to cover the bruise from her slumber. “I have been having dreams, but I feel they are more than dreams.”

“That happened in your sleep?”

Hevyn nodded.

“Then you must have one of the healers look at it. That mark looks bad, Hevyn.” He sighed “And as far as the dreams, do not be afraid. I am right here for you.” He corrected himself. “We are all here for you.”

Nightblaze turned to walk back to his quarters. His words usually brought her comfort, but he this time they did not.

“And? There is something else you are not telling me.”

The two grew up together. He knew her tells whether she liked it or not. As Hevyn fiddled with her fingers, a long silence stayed between them while they walked together.

“I am betrothed to someone.”

Nightblaze’s eyes narrowed. He swallowed then cleared his throat. Even if he did love her back, she would never know it.

 “It is our custom to form a union with an outsider, and you are of marrying age.” he said, looking into the distance.

It was hard to hear, but he was right. As difficult as it may be, sometimes duty came before desire—just like Nightblaze, a fierce protector, especially of his own heart.

Hevyn continued her slow pace back to her chambers. The thick double doors were within sight, Nightblaze beside her.

“These dreams, when did they start?”

“A few days ago, but they’ve gotten much stronger since then.”

“And what do you see in them?”

“It starts out peaceful. It looks like Orischka, not our barren lands, but prairies full of life and jubilance. Orischka at its best. It is so blissful that I can feel the happiness in the flowers. But then… everything turns cold, ice cold, even my blood runs a chill.” Hevyn grabbed her shoulders as though trying to warm herself. “Then a man appears. Without a head.”

“Hmm, what do you think it all means?”

“I do not know. Earlier today was the first time I saw him outside of a dream. I think I am losing my mind.” Hevyn paused, an idea came to her. “Could he be my father reaching out to me?” Her excitement soon faded. “Or Maybe he is…. already dead.”

“You cannot allow evil into your thoughts. Keep hope alive. You will find your parents one day.” Once again, his kind words had no effect. He stopped his stride and faced her. “Hevyn, if anyone can figure this out, it is you.”

Nightblaze gazed at her long between his eyes. He said everything without speaking. They were never this close, so close that a subtle bump and their lips would meet for the first time. She was no longer sure if he was talking about the dreams or her engagement.

They continued their walk back to her room. No one spoke for a while. That was their problem: all their true feelings stayed within the confines of their own minds. Yet, only death could rip them apart.

“How was your voyage?” Hevyn spoke first.

“On the journey to the east, my father and I encountered a pack of Bamdeers.”

“Bamdeers are not real.”

“Had I not seen the fire-breathing gazelles myself I would agree with you.” He said, almost laughing. “The closer you get to Mehneim’s forest, the stranger things become.”

“So how did you survive?”

“Well, they have a weakness; their giant crooked horns are their blind spots.” Nightblaze slowed to a halt, remembering something. “Hevyn, what I am about to tell you no one else can know about.”

Hevyn waited eagerly. He looked concerned, what was bothering him?

“Three weeks ago, during our trip crossing the Eastern borders, my father and I ran into the High Priest near Reaper’s forest.”

“What?”

“I know—I never said anything because my father told me not to tell anyone, and I am sure the Chieftain knows. Not even a day later, Tyrio turned up dead.”

“Did he look in danger or say anything to you?”

“No, nothing. He blessed us and sent us in a direction for meat. If it was not for him, we would not have brought back much at all.”

“Nighblaze, do you realize what this means… You might be the last person to see the High Priest Tyrio alive.”

There was reason in Nightblaze’s silence. If the Crown learned of this Nightblaze and his father, the King would not let either of them keep their heads.

 They stopped in front of her chambers.

“Did someone speak of Reaper’s Forest?” Azar appeared behind them. His presence startled them both.

“I mean you no harm my lady” he said, “And my good sir.”

 She gasped, the sight of him was truly terrifying. His sunken cheekbones and dirty dreadlocks looked sickly even in the dim lighting.

“What are you doing here.” Nightblaze said, but his words were anything but a question.

The man worshipping that idol was not the man standing in front of her. Such sorcery was demonic. This man from the black mists of the Cadena was strange indeed.

“You saw him, did you not?” Azar inquired. “Only those blessed with Noirblood can see him. Others like myself… well we have our ways of finding the truth.” He then stepped around Nightblaze’s lean figure. An eerie smile jumped onto Azar’s face.

“Saw who?” Hevyn took a step backwards. Noirblood? Hevyn heard stories that only those touched from the Gods had such a gift coursing through their veins. Given the fact she did not know her parents, it was possible. But Hevyn was not that special.

“Answer me this,” Azar said. “What has no end and no beginning and has never been born but will never die? Solve the riddle my Orischkan princess and you will learn the truth many seek.”

Hevyn took another step away from the strange man.

Nightblaze stepped between Hevyn and Azar. “I think it is time for you to leave.”

“Is everything alright?” Akiko asked as she opened the door.

“Yes, we’re fine,” Hevyn replied.

“I know for a fact that is true, Lady Hevyn. Life is about to get much more interesting for you. He has shown me.”

“He… who?” Hevyn asked, moving from behind Nightblaze.

“All shall come to light I shall let you all enjoy the rest of your night,” Azar said, bowing before he walked down the halls back to his altar. His cloak dragged along the stone floors.

Hevyn closed the door behind her, careful not to disturb her kind roommate. She noticed Akiko staring into the mirror while rubbing her stomach. Heyvn shuffled over to her.

“Do you have names yet?” she asked.

Akiko shot her eyes at her, shocked, then smiled. “No, I***—***I have not thought about it much honestly.” her voice was delicate, treading off as she spoke. “How did you know?”

“In Orischka we can always tell. It is in the woman’s aura.”

“I see the gods have blessed you indeed Lady Che’Quai.”

Hevyn found it hard to receive a compliment as such from anyone, strangers at best, seeing a light within her. Only darkness kept Hevyn company. She was doomed to live a life always an outsider. No gift could save her from that.