

Epics of Isavoire

Chapter 15: Queensguard

Of all of Wynveria's major cities, Llendor was Bryn's favorite. Then again, it was also her home, so she could not say her opinion was entirely unbiased.

The red haired Wynverian sat inside a small tavern, still unable to believe what was going on. As it was going on, she was starting to look over her new letter and medallion. As a member of the Khalthane family, Brynn was a woman of some renown in her home country. Legends said that the entire Khalthane family descended from Calathane, a primordial dragon of some note. For many that would bring pride, and even while Brynn was happy with her heritage, she felt it just made her want to prove herself even more.

As she began to read over the letter with glee, she carefully folded it and hid it before holding the medallion in her hand. It was emblazoned with the face of an old dragon. The front of the symbol was platinum, while the back was plated gold. As she admired it, she noticed a few people staring and decided to hide it in her pocket before leaving shortly after. Once she was outside, Brynn was exposed to the cold winds and falling snow as she and many others went through the crowded street. According to the letter, she was supposed to meet at the Deepwell, a reservoir of water said to lead to a deeper cavern within the mountain.

Flying there would take time and the meeting wasn't for another three hours time. Thanks to the nearby oil clocks, she could see that there was enough time for her to at least pick up some fruit in the market. As she continued to walk, she eventually came to a trader whose store dealt in foreign goods. Rumor had it he dealt in sugar-apples from the Lurion Islands.

Walking into the store, intent on buying some, she saw the lady who ran it, a sheep Ellen, was making sure everything was set out neatly. "Hello, Brynn."

"Miss Aver, how are you?" Brynn asked warmly as she walked in.

"Ah, Brynn. I'm doing good. Here to pick up your usual snacks?" the white-haired woman asked kindly.

“More or less. Conversation’s always fun, too,” Brynn said coyly as she gave the merchant some money and went to pick up her fruit. Soon, she came to a crate with wool nestled inside to keep the food from getting too cold. Picking a piece up, she smiled as she looked at the green fruit and imagined the delicious taste. Picking another three up, she started to place them into her bag when someone else bumped into her. “Agh!”

“Sorry,” came a deep male voice.

Looking up slightly, Brynn saw a man with black hair. He appeared to be taller than her with a particularly muscular build. His eyes were indigo colored, while his hair was long and straight, save for his braided beard.

The man smiled softly, his lips never parting. He couldn’t be much older than Brynn, judging by looks. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to bump into you.”

“Oh, accidents happen.” Brynn smiled back. “My name is Brynn.”

“Ivonn.” He then offered her his hand before Brynn took it. “Are you from around here?”

“Yes, actually. I come to this place all the time,” Brynn said as she crouched down to pick up her fallen fruit and a few coins she had also dropped. “How about you?”

“My first time here. I wanted to pick up some food before I went to work.”

“Oh?” Brynn asked with interest. “What work is that?”

“I rather not say. I hope you don’t mind.”

Brynn shook her head. “Nah, I don’t mind at all. We all have our secrets.”

“Well, I hope it won’t have to be secret for too long.” Ivonn smiled. “In the meantime, I should be going. Take care of yourself, miss.”

“You too, stranger.”

Before long, Ivonn left, just as Brynn went to show the produce she had taken. “Alright, took what I paid for.”

“Nice, but I wish that guy from a bit ago had bought some. Especially with that interesting coin of his.”

“”Interesting coin”?”

“Yes,” Averi said. “The front looked like it was made of silver, but it was gold on the back. It looked valuable.”

Brynn paused. Was it possible that her pocket had been picked? “Um, I better go. Thanks, Averi!” Hastily, Brynn ran after the man, trying to find him, but she didn’t see him anywhere. “Damn it all.”

Panicked, she began to think, wondering where he had gone to. Thinking, she knew that the street ended in a dead end save for the path back to the pavilion. With no room for any Wynverian to transform, there was no way that Ivonn could have wandered off too far.

After some searching, she finally found him near a back alley, speaking with a shady figure.

“You have to do this, Ivonn. You know how important it is to our family,” the stranger said.

“I don’t care. I’m doing this for myself. Whatever grudges you and the others hold on to are on you.” Ivonn glared as he revealed the medallion.

Brynn gasped as she stared, not believing he had actually taken it from her. The noise had caught both of the men’s attention.

“Who is this?” the other man asked. “A spy?”

Ivonn narrowed his eyes at the man. "No one you should be concerned with, now go."

The other person glared. "Fine, but this isn't over." Hastily, he turned and left, going past Brynn brusquely.

Once he was gone, Ivonn sighed, looking at Brynn softly. "So, I see we meet again."

"Yeah, people tend to look for the person who stole their stuff."

"...What did I steal?"

"My medallion." Brynn pointed to the one in his hand.

Ivonn looked at it. "This is mine. I received it along with a letter from Queen Zelina Hanari."

"You're joking, you took my letter, too?!" Brynn exclaimed, now growing heated. She could feel her entire body starting to burn up as the snow around her began to slowly melt.

Ivonn's eyes widened in surprise. "How are you doing that?"

"It doesn't matter! You stole that from me. How could you pull something so underhanded?"

For a moment Ivonn was quiet, though he remained calm. "Check your pockets."

"What?" Brynn asked.

"Check your pockets," Ivonn repeated. "This medallion and this letter is mine."

Angrily, Brynn began to check her pockets, eager to show Ivonn was wrong and continue to lambaste him, however she as she felt around, she realized both the letter and the medallion were in her pocket at the same time. "Oh...I had it in my pocket the entire time."

"You certainly did," Ivonn said coldly. Putting his own away, he soon left, just as Brynn turned to speak.

"W-wait! I'm s-" Brynn began, but by then Ivonn was long gone. Sighing, the Wynverian wished she had not been so hasty earlier. Once he was gone, she checked the nearest oil post to see that it would be time to go soon.

Without much choice, she left, knowing that she would see Ivonn again later on.

Once she was in the outskirts of Llendor, Brynn changed forms, shifting into her dragon one in order to fly.

As she did there was a searing heat, her body exuding radiant energy as snow melted and quickly became steam. With a long, loud sigh, she emerged, now with mostly red scales and a few black spikes among her spines. Her dragon form had black horns as well and gray claws. Spreading her long wings, Brynn began to fly off towards the Deepwell. When she arrived, she saw that there were twenty other Wynverians around. Changing back into her normal form, she went near the others, the group of them looking forward.

In front of them was the entrance to the Deepwell, with a Wynverian standing before them wearing a new looking, gray outfit. With snow white hair and aquamarine eyes, a few recognized her as Captain Grey, a prominent warrior from the Elustrian Conflict.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am glad the twenty of you decided to come. I am Captain Deidrah Grey. I am here to oversee your opportunity. An opportunity to join an illustrious, new group within Wynveria."

Slowly, the nearby Wynverians began to chatter.

"A new group, huh?" a young, scarred man asked.

A giddy looking woman with black hair giggled. "Do you think it's a chance to become an officer?"

"I just want to know if it pays well," a third said.

The gossip continued until Grey raised a hand to silence them. "You will be tested and narrowed down on many counts. Once we have sufficiently decided who will move on and who will not, the successful will be offered membership. Anyone who does not make the pass will be otherwise considered for other services, should they decide to still serve Queen Zelina's cause."

Afterwards, the assembled candidates looked among themselves. Brynn in particular wondered who among them would be in her group if she succeeded, but eventually she noticed Ivonn.

"From here on you two will be split into teams. Please pick whoever you like amongst yourselves. Only two to a group."

Before a minute had passed, the others began to mill about, looking at the others and talking to each other until Brynn began to wonder who she would talk to. Given her earlier actions, she thought Ivonn would want nothing to do with her. As she walked, however, she saw Ivonn in front of her, staring. "Oh, er...Hi."

Ivonn gave a hasty, slight nod of acknowledgement, looking nervous.

"Listen, I'm sorry about before. I made a dumb assumption and-"

"It's fine. I'm used to that kind of thing." Ivonn then looked at her. "I wanted to ask if you will team with me."

"Wait, you do want to team up?" Brynn asked, cocking her head to the side. The Wynverian woman folded her arms and began to wonder if he really meant it.

"Yes. I don't like being around so many strangers at once. Please."

Brynn smiled softly. "Sure. It's the least I can do for you."

"Thank you," Ivonn said appreciatively.

After some time, others paired up as ten groups were assembled. Captain Grey took notice and smiled before continuing. "Now, each of you will be given a test tomorrow. In the mean time you are expected to camp out in these mountains and return at dawn. Until such a time, feel free to get to know your partner, both in strengths and weaknesses. Your very success may depend on it."

As soon as the captain finished, many Wynverians left, some on foot, others changing forms and flying off. A handful, however, stayed around the Deepwell entrance. Both Brynn and Ivonn were among those who stayed.

Once the groups had thinned out and Ivonn seemed more comfortable, Brynn spoke up. "So, again I want to apologize about before."

"It's fine. It was an honest mistake and like I said before I'm used to people thinking ill of me."

"But...Why? Sure you come off a little stony faced, but otherwise you're a very nice guy."

Ivonn smiled slightly. "Well, I appreciate you complimenting my stoicism. It's because I'm a member of the Schanga family."

Brynn was quiet. The Schanga family was a well known errant brood. They were known to have several infamous troublemakers and criminals, among them Freid Schanga and Arlan Schanga, both known to have been exiled with their wings cut off. Among Wynverians who cared about honor, having one's wings removed was the ultimate sign of shame, to a point that death was vastly preferred. "So you've had to carry that shame?"

Ivonn nodded before looking down wistfully.. "To be honest I rarely speak about it. My cousin, Dain, was the one who was speaking with me. He wanted to go in my place in hopes of having my family gain prestige over my deeds."

“What deeds?”

“Back when the Elustrians invaded, my family didn’t side with them, but they were going to attack a village near where we lived. I went out and stopped a small group.”

“How small is a small group?” Brynn asked.

“Eight Elustrians. It wasn’t easy, but I managed.” Ivenn looked at Brynn. “It was the right thing to do, but doing this...I want to do it for myself. I want to have a legacy that isn’t connected to anyone else...Or rather, I want to forge my own path.”

Brynn thought for a few moments. Thinking about how much was expected of her and how her bloodline may have gotten her into the event. She had not done any daring deeds like Ivenn, and yet here she was. “You know...I want to do the same.”

“You do?”

Brynn nodded. “You asked before why I was exuding so much heat. I have a primordial for an ancestor...A ways back, but his blood runs strong...Still, I don’t want that to be all I do. I don’t want to be just another relative of some great figure. I wish to be my own woman.” Brynn clenched her fist, feeling determination well up inside her. “Even if it is his blood flowing through my veins, it is my blood that is spilled on the ground, my body that stands to defend others and myself. I want that to be remembered.”

Ivenn was silent for a time, watching as Brynn’s emotions overflowed. Once it seemed she had calmed down some, he offered his hand. “Then I suppose we should make a pact. You and I will both forge our own destinies, starting here and now. Don’t worry about the fame or infamy, just who you will be.”

Eagerly, Brynn clasped his hand, a gentle grin on her face as she still felt energetic. “Damn right. We’ll do this for ourselves.”

On that day, the tests to determine who would join Zelina's Queensguard began, but of equal importance, a strong friendship was born.