

She was completely bloody in no less than an hour, there was fighting on every single street that she came into, she lost count after she had killed her fourteenth man, blood was slowly dripping from her steel sword, dripping into much bigger pools on the cobbles below her feet. She just about managed to reach the cathedral district. It was pure torment there, corpses piled on top of corpses in front of the cathedral, still they struggled to gain entry and crush this rebellion. There were more guards that she anticipated and more common folk took up arms against the church, they were all slaughtered, however, there was no lack of their dead as well, a few she saw inside the cathedral a few hours ago were all dead and done, too. The blood was so plentiful, the very air she breathed made her taste the metal in her mouth, she wanted to throw up, but there was nothing to throw up, Alliana simply coughed and gagged for a bit, then managed to calm herself and walk towards the cathedral.

Clutching her sword she just about reached the stairs, there was still a row of men with huge shields, preventing entry and every once in a while a spear went flying into a narrow squeeze between those shields, impaling a man behind it. That allowed a chance, but each time a new body was put on guard before more than two were able to get themselves killed trying to get inside the cathedral. Slowly, but surely the men were pushing the shields back into the cathedral and it was not long before they could gain entry. Alliana reached the men on their rear, but as she got there everything suddenly slowed down, she glimpsed a faint light behind the shields of the men guarding the way into the cathedral, then she felt all of her breath push out of her lungs and suddenly she was flailing in the air, falling, knocked back down the stairs, through the air on the cobbles below. She hit the ground hard, she lost her sword, but thankfully she still held her consciousness, others were not at all fortunate. She saw both their men and the attackers down with her, through some had hit so hard they cracked their skulls open, one of the men wearing a shield was screaming in agony to the left of her, he was completely burned, others were either dead or going to be dead in the next few moments. She peered up at the cathedral and saw Father Bouchard, with one palm extended horizontally into nothingness before him. His other hand was over his head and made into a fist, his lips moved in silence and as the next wave was rushing up towards the stairs the priest moved his fist down through the air, then again was a flash, though this time it was as bright as the sun, it almost blinded her and again the men were set flying through the air into the ground below, one was flailing so hard he might have just flown before his face crushed into the marble fountain below, he died instantly. The priest's robes were moving gracefully in the wind and his open palm started shining white, some kind of light was flowing around that palm and as the third wave of men hesitated in their approach he closed that palm. Another flash was seen, but thankfully she looked away and then again at Father Bouchard just catching the glimpse of a huge bright wave of pure Light knocking men back, sending them flowing through the air. After that, Father Bouchard stood still, alone in silence, awaiting the next wave to come, but it didn't. Alliana took that chance and struggled up the stairs.

She had never seen such fury in a man's eyes, nor has she since for that matter. Augustus looked as if the whole world was his enemy and as she passed him on the top of the stairs he did not even grant her a look, he simply stood there and waited. She was just about to enter the cathedral as a few men with shields made their way out, setting themselves before Augustus, she couldn't go in for that moment, then she got her chance but somehow she stopped again, looking at Father Bouchard. She heard a hissing sound through the air and an arrow found its way into her shoulder, some would have reached Father Bouchard, but thankfully the shields were placed up just in time, she found that

odd, but only after she plucked the arrow out of her shoulder, thankfully not a barbed one and did not go deep, the armor stopped it sufficiently enough.

As she slumped down against the wall in a pool of blood that was not just her own, an officer came grumbling out of the cathedral, he whispered something to Father Bouchard and yelled at his own men.

“We move to the keep,” said the Priest and one of the men holding the shields dropping it for a moment to sound his horn, it was a deep sound and a terrible one at that. The roar was long and everyone in the city must have heard it, still the attackers of the cathedral dared not to ascend the stairs in fear of the Priest’s might. Then Augustus whispered, Alliana wasn’t quite sure how they heard him, but they did.

“Slaughter everyone who stands in your way.”

On they went, shields first and lances at the back, soldiers came spilling out of the cathedral entrance, past Father Bouchard and passed Alliana as well, they engaged the men below the stairs with fury and riotousness, doing as Father Augustus bid. Alliana and Augustus looked at the carnage and while she was horrified how far this went Augustus said nothing, he simply observed. The farmers and shoemakers below were slaughtered quite quickly and it was only when the last man threw down his sword, Augustus made his way down the stairs and made for the keep, at first alone but soon enough other men were flanking him and making sure he was safe, they formed a column once more and together they bound for the keep, where the king of the white city dwelled, together with the nobles of his court.

The keep was right over the draw bridge, a number of stairs leading up to the tall, grand entrance of the castle, though the moment she saw their obstacle, she knew there was no entry. The walls around the draw bridge were strong and could withstand years of siege, if proper siege weapons would be used of course, Father Bouchard had none of those built, nor was he building any. In truth she did not know what he was thinking, was he expecting a freeway in? Alliana rushed towards him, in vain. The crowd already forced her out of reach, it was futile, one step forward, two back. She did hear the commander screaming his lungs out:

“You worthless wastes of space! You heard the Holy Father! Get the damn chest, follow the robed one!”

He pointed somewhere and then she saw Cyantor, somehow he managed to sneak up on her and join the fray rather stealthily. He took several men with him and left, and then the commander went screaming once more:

“Back! ALL BACK, RETREAAAAT!”

His voice sounded desperate as if he were facing death itself right there and then, the men ran back to find cower, bumping into her, but she chose that moment to make her way to Augustus.

She found him alone, in front of the draw bridge, with his arms stretched out before him, palms open and facing the pulled up bridge, his lips moving silently. Only then did she realize what he was going to do, she froze up, watching him, watching all the men around her fleeing for their lives, she saw the

men on the walls throwing their swords down, their bows once the arrows simply burned before they reached Augustus.

“He can’t be harmed...he...he can’t be harmed...” she realized, all her sense was telling her to bolt, to run away as fast as she can, soon Augustus would bring down all the fury of the heavens and burn this bridge, burn her and all on those walls down with the power of the Light. His palms were already shimmering as he was chanting his prayer, he had no clue where such power he came upon. It was too late, she couldn’t run now, so she closed her eyes and prepared for her death...but then Augustus looked over his shoulder, odd even for him in this moment, the draw bridge fell down, making way into the keep free, all stood in shock, apart from the commander and Father Augustus...and Cyantor and his men, who generously scaled the falls while the others were fleeing the priest’s grand act.

It took a moment, but once Augustus started moving inside, all the other men charged up, so did Alliana in truth, none of the men even so much as touched Augustus while he was walking as the others were running past, swinging sword and shields and axes, and so on. It was a quick massacre in the courtyard, only a few royal guards who were standing vigilant, fell. The officers gathered their soldiers after the battle, many of them weary, bloody, injured, and dying. Alliana did not suffer any horrid wounds, but she felt her fatigue. The officers counted and realized many had fallen so far, they rather decided to report to Father Bouchard, so she followed them, hoping her advice would be heard in the council.

An hour passed before Father Augustus finished talking with some of the officers individually and the council then met in the cathedral far back from the keep, a young knight commanding the vanguard of the priest’s rebellion began speaking.

“The Royals are locked in the keep, there is no entry, nor is there an escape out of the castle. They’re trapped in and we can’t get in, no-“

The priest interrupted him:

“Build siege weapons, am I expected to tutor you lot in warfare?”

His gaze was all but friendly and his teeth later clenched together hard, Alliana swore she could even see his lips twitch. Another older veteran of war added in after.

“That is possible, in fact, Holy Father, my men are doing so already, but I must say, they are exhausted, the siege will have to wait until tomorrow.”

All the others agreed, but Alliana took one look at Augustus to know that he would have slashed every throat including hers at the moment, if he could spare the officers, of course. She cleared her throat and as the talking died out, she looked at Augustus, saying very loudly:

“Holy Father...victory...could be achieved quicker if you use...the item.”

All the sounds died then, the officers young and old alike had no idea what she was talking about, but Augustus just kept looking at her, deep in thought. Eventually he stood up, said to the commanders:

“You are dismissed, we take the castle tomorrow.”

He kept looking at Alliana and added:

“Stay.”

As if she were a dog. After all others had left and a few minutes of silence had passed, he spoke up:

“The item? The most sacred thing we have come across, you wish me to use it on this royal filth?”

Alliana was quick in her reply:

“Less will die.”

Father Bouchard clasped his hands together in front, almost piously :

“This is only the beginning, and we still have much to do. Many more will die.”

She had nothing to say to that at first, then told him with a flattering voice:

“I saw you...you wield the Light as no one before you, with ease you blast away enemies, with the item you could do so much more, Holy Father, for the sake of these men, use the item, aid them, mend them...I beg you.”

She came outside of the cathedral not long after that, the bodies were still there, no one had decided to clean them up, the crows were already on them, pecking away at their eyes and tearing the flesh. She threw her shield on the ground in a sort of defeat, looking at the crows gnaw and battle for that one corpse by the fountain. She sat down on the stairs and sighed out, wiping the blood of her forehead, she was so exhausted, only then did she start feeling the pain, the fatigue again. She managed to convince him, yes, but only to kill more innocent men, she felt sick, the crows still pecked and she wondered if one day, that corpse would be her. She lied down against the cold cobbles and peered up into the sky, it was dark again and she went to sleep, her only thought was a prayer she would not awake to flames.

She dreamed of the past.

TO BE CONTINUED...