

# Fairytale

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## Kapitel 3: Chapter 3

Weeks passed by, and in the middle of the growing army, growing everyday a little bit more as they wandered in direction of the borders where the enemy waited, Nate walked slowly, his sword on his side, the pike over his shoulders, his head loped head. He had joint the grunts, a large gaggle of lower society men, criminals and villains or just men who didn't want to live anymore. Men like him. In the long nights in the camp they played cards, told their for the most part sad or just disgusting stories, drank the mouldy beer, sometimes a bottle of hard liquor went around.

Nate had never heard so many stories that made him nearly puke out of sheer disgust towards the teller. Proudly some guys told stories about raping and killing women, children or even other men or animals, they showed the worthy things they stole, some of them showed the scars they got in other fights and wars. Nate instead was just sitting there, waiting for the moment they finally would reach the borders to the Pins' country, and fight against their army.

He looked up while walking, turning his head and watched the incredibly long trek of people that slowly crawled like a snake through the plains. Not only soldiers or warriors walked there, but a huge mass of carts and such, full with supplies, tools, weapons and, to Nate's amazement; women and children. Nate had known about war-treks, but he never realized, what they really looked like. Whole families joined it, just following their husbands and fathers, without home or hope, always following the provider. And those families were not only a support for the men, no they were thieves, looters and beggars as well. Bunches of whores followed the trek as well, and they were needed, badly needed. The larger the trek grew the more often awkward screams and cries of women could be heard in the camps.

Nate always cupped his ears in his tent he shared with 5 other guys, trying to ignore the cries for help, the weeping or the yells in the night. And he ignored the dead bodies lying at the path in the morning, when they started over again.

The bunch of grunters walked in the last middle of the trek, which was lead by the carts and wagons of the Nobles. Most of them rode, some of them had palanquins or other fancy stuff. Their armour shone in the pale sunlight of this too rainy summer, their weapons were polished and they held their heads high.

They were followed by the middle class warriors, on horses as well and their families. The cavalry was the proud of this continent, and they represented the largest group in this trek. In the evenings delicious smells came from their camps, the smell of grilled meat, freshly cooked soups and beer, that wasn't mouldy at all.

Nate often wished, he had stolen a horse before joining this mixed army, but now it was too late for thoughts like that. He sighed again and looked away from the last

part of the trek and watched the ground to his feet again.

At least, he was in the middle of the long line. Behind him the social rest followed. There was no way to get any deeper. Whores, thieves, looters, murderers, all the human scum followed the war, trying to take advantage and benefit from this trek and the war.

He knew exactly, that the last end would stay back, not reachable for the actual fight, and as soon as one side won, they would pitch into the battlefield like vultures, ripping everything from the dead bodies and in some cases he could even imagine, they would eat the dead bodies or at least parts of them.

He shivered, then he looked up again, watching a group of 12 horseman passing him by in full galloping, heading for the forefront of the trek. He blinked in astonishment and a cold shiver ran down his spine. Those riders wore the colours and the emblem of Swordsforge. Instinctively he lowered his head, facing the ground hiding his face in his hood. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed appalled, that it had been the best idea, because behind this horseman group 2 more riders followed, slowly trotting their horses near the walking humans.

One of them was a huge and handsome man, with a groomed beard, the visor of his helmet opened. His hazel eyes examined nearly every face very exactly and just from the quick gaze Nate was able to recognize the man, who had danced with Elaine in that fateful night so often. Nate didn't need a second look to know who the second rider was. The figure on that horse, which had the colour of desert sand with dark mane and tail, was smaller and more slender, even in armour, then all of the other riders and from behind he could hear some guys making wolf whistles and yell dirty things.

She found him! Nate broke out in a cold sweat. No, she had not found him right now. This trek was big enough to hide in it. He knew, he couldn't desert, he signed the contract and they'll kill him at the first try, but he could hide in the mass. He hurried to get more in the middle of the bunch of dirty and filthy men, avoiding to be seen by one of the two riders. He caught a quick gaze of her face, missing him in that mass of disgusting guys and his heart started to beat heavy in his chest again. She looked so wonderful in her decorated but strong armour, the cheek pieces of a cap worn under a helmet framing her face with those blue eyes he had been fallen for. Her face looked serious, a little bit disappointed but arrogant at the same time. And all over that her face showed disgust, pure disgust over this trek.

But her eyes, blue like the sky on a clear summer's day, searched every viewable face, gleaming in the hope of spotting a certain person. Nate shivered again and looked downwards. This whole stuff had gotten very, very complicated RIGHT now.

He hid his face until she passed by and raised his head again when she finally was past. He stared at her back, hidden by a dark blue coat showing her own coat of arms, the shoulders capped with silverfish armour, a long dark-blonde braided plait seesawing at her back, her silver and decorated helmet with the long dark blue braid under one arm.

Nate overheard the callings of the soldiers for this 'Amazon' with the 'nice back' to 'have some real guy's fun', staring at her like mesmerized. That was going to be... hard and complicated and he knew it.

Elaine looked at all those worn out faces at the end of the trek. A wave of

enviousness, anger, even hate over-rolled her by those poor people, eager on the few worthy things they might take with them after the war. She wasn't used to folks like them, for she always tried to give at least a base for a living to the inhabitants of her own country. She had seen poor people, beggars, thieves in other big cities, but they were more or less a shadowy existence, not touching her area of life.

The young Archon was aware that those people existed and that some things even in her little kingdom happened and will happen, which were worse than burglary. Elaine had employed a few maidens who stole in the castle a few years ago, despite the fact that the maidens had a really good life in her house. She had them whipped in the public and she had banned them from the country. But the thought of another happening made her still shiver in dark nights.

A few years ago people disappeared, mostly younger people and children. Her kingdom knew about child abusers or even child murderers, they got usually hanged on a public place, but in this case it was clear that it wasn't one of those guys. They found the bodies by sheer accident, in a cellar of a rich house, disembowelled and scared, hanging from the ceiling around a table, where the rich owner of the house had tried to... create something.

Elaine swallowed hard just from the thought of the sight back then. They had sent for her, the shock about this... disgusting happening and the... thing on the table was just too much for the souls and minds of the small kingdom. They were completely overextended with a happening like that, so they cried out for their archon.

She remembered it like yesterday: The shape of the rich man, hanging shoulders, looking on the ground, but still smiling. The living lump of flesh on the table with all those fissures and additional parts. It had winced in pain, making those horrible noises. The dead bodies hanging from the floor, the metallic smell of the blood, the feculent stink of rotting flesh. And all those faces of the people, their eyes widened in horror, asking her for help and a decision.

And Elaine had made a decision. She had stepped forward and rammed her sword into the poor lump of flesh, the horrible creation, which had once been the wife of the man, relieving it from this reality and she hoped to bring the creature at least into a better world than it had lived in for years. Then she spat into the face of this lunatic, let the soldiers enchain him and threw him into the dungeon of her castle. She needed a few weeks, until she finally decided to make an example of that whole story. It wasn't a nice sight, but she let him be disembowel alive on the middle of the market place, for everyone to see. And the people had cheered at the sight, good lord, had they cheered. After that, she hadn't slept for weeks.

Elaine had seen the maniac twinkle in the eyes of that man back then, and she could spot exact that sparkle in a few eyes here in this very trek. And she saw the other light in the eyes, the light of people getting excited about someone else dying in pain. She shivered slightly, and turned her head away in disgust. She couldn't imagine Nate being into that part of the trek. So she hit the flank of her horse with her heels, hurrying to get to the more civil part of that trek.

She followed Andrew, who was riding in front of her, and changed the speed of her horse into trotting again, when they passed the part of the trek where the actual soldiers were.

Here she spotted tired, worn-out faces, sometimes with a glint of evil and spite, but a lot better than the back part of the trek. Those men were the lowest one, maybe being searched for something bad they've done, or maybe running away from

something. She noticed that Andrew got more attentive as well, so she figured that he thought to find Nate in this bunch too.

But there were so many of them, talking, shouting, laughing, turning their heads, making dirty comments to her. It was just impossible to spot a single person in this ocean of faces.

And she got fed up with all the nasty and dirty stuff, the kinky names the guys gave her. Her eyes narrowed slightly. A guy jumped out the row of soldiers, right in front of her horse, made a titillating gesture and leered at her. "Hey, warrior-princess, what about sharpening my sword in your slit? I assure you'll have a better ride then on your horse!" He laughed dirty and his so-called friends cheered at him, then he drew slightly aside, when she rode by, making some more gestures with very clear intention. Elaine saw Andrew's head turn around to check, but she shook her head adelmorphic, turned her face to the grunt and smiled sweetly.

"Yeah, Baby, that's right! Ya know a real man when you see one, heh?" His comrades cheered even more, but stopped instantly, when her foot slit out of the stirrup and hit the man right in the face. He fell back into the bunch of his comrades, with a torrent of blood shooting out of his nose, his lips lacerated and possibly a few broken teeth as well.

"Screw you, bastard." Elaine spat in his direction and tipped her heels one more time into the flanks of her horse, which obediently followed the command and sped up. Andrew grinned at her widely and admiringly. "Well done, Mylady. Well done." Behind them an enraging noise rose, the dirty comments changing into serious insults.

"Thank you, General. I tried my very best." She smiled at him and gave him a wink.

Someone next to Nate laid a hand on his shoulder. He looked up into a striking and friendly face of a guy a little bit older then himself, slightly grinning. "You know that rider-chick, mate?"

Nate managed not to wince and made a devaluing noise. "No, of course not. What made you think that?"

The other guy grinned wider. "You're a bad liar, mate. Even a blind guy could tell you wanted to hide and now you try to lie in a very unrealistic way." The man was wearing a used helmet and used armour and his eyes wore the soft gaze of someone who had seen too much before. "I'm Hannes. And I'm neither blind nor dumb. What's your honourable name, mate?"

Nate sighed and continued to look at Elaine slowly veering away from him. "Nathan. Nice to meet you." He said, without looking at the other man.

Hannes followed his gaze. "Wanna tell the story, brother?"

"No." answered Nate. He frowned when he saw a soldier jumping in Elaine's way. He couldn't hear what was said because of the distance, but he blinked irritated, when he saw his former lover kicking that guy right in the face.

Next to Nate, Hannes chuckled. "Hell, that lady sees how the cat jumps, heh? I mean, literally and stuff. Nice friends do you have indeed."

Nate's head flipped around. "She is not my friend."

"Oh? Not? What is she then, exactly?" Hannes raised one eyebrow and grinned.

"She... forget it. Go and find another man to talk his ear off, will you?" Nate hissed slightly, what caused another chuckle from his opponent.

"Awww, come on, mate. Don't be a milksop. Here, take a mouthful of the good old one." He offered Nate a hip flask and grinned friendly and pacifying.

Nate grabbed it and took a deep gulp, after examining the face of Hannes. This man didn't really look mean or sneaky, just a soldier with a slightly grim sense of humour and too much things seen, which won't leave his head ever again. And the whiskey in that flask was indeed one of the good old ones. It was something you didn't share in a trek like this usually. Nate gave in and grinned back, a small grin, but the first one on his face, since he joined this army and Hannes chuckled satisfied.

"See, mate, they will lead us to mischief, smiling their sweet smile while you drown, and you can't stop loving them, even if they kick you in the face, heh?" He winked at Nate and hid the hip flask in his vest again he wore over the heavy piece of armour. "And don't be afraid, I won't tell her where you are. I stay away from girl of this calibre."

"What do you know about those things?" answered Nate sarcastically.

Hannes pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in direction of the supply carts of the grunts. "My fair lady is walking back there with the little ones. She'll kick into something more important than my face, if I get too close to the other blossoms, if you understand." He winked again.

This man was giving Nate a warm feeling like he hadn't had for years. This man felt like family in a weird but comforting way. So he allowed the small grin to grow into a smile. Maybe this Hannes was right, maybe he was safe here, at least for a while.