

The Tempest was known for many things. Her large, unyielding body; eyes as sharp as a distant fire. On the battlefield, her prowess was overwhelming. Her force and strength could easily best any soldier and so it was not uncommon for the king to call for her aid. Here she would learn of her kingdom's most recent adventure, one she was both uninterested and uninvited to. Old, ancient Cresian ruins of the lost city of Obarrah. Three raiding parties were sent in and only one survived whatever horrors lurked within. Not a single raider ever saw the city, trapped within the forest's mist. But the group that survived ran captured who did, a Cresian expedition of nearly half the size of a single raiding party.

"I take it they're here now."

"Some yes. Only the ones that mattered. Most of them are simple brutes and foot soldiers who can barely pronounce the word *syllable*." said Talon, the High Mage of Vlagos. "But we do have another one, a small mage who's seen the city first hand."

"That's a first." The Tempest crossed her arms. She looked to Heron, her king, in search of something to indicate that this story was bullshit. But when his eyes met hers, they were nothing but serious. With the smallest of sighs, she looked to Talon and gave him a nod.

"The mage's name is Astraea and from her notes, it seems like they found something. But we couldn't decipher them, the entire journal was written in code. Her crew also had several other things on them such as books and maps, but it's all in some other language."

Her notes. A woman. "Can we decode them?"

"Our best linguists and ciphers were on that expedition. The ones we have here can tell that there are several languages being used in rotation per page. Only the mage can decipher her own writings. And it would seem that the mage could translate the other relics."

"But we need her to talk." Heron adds. "We've had her in for weeks and not only has she remained quiet, but she's escaped twice."

"Twice?" The Tempest smiled a fraction. "Have you tried a truth spell?"

"We have. And as a trained mage she knows to either remain silent or find a way around it."

"And that is?"

"She speaks in a different language. Seven from my last count of it."

The Tempest's snicker was not a welcomed one, but really she was amused. The mage must've been some old bat. Seven languages, that must've counted for quite a few years of experience. And having the skills to fool Talon amongst other highly trained mages? This was going to be a fun assignment at the very least. "And what do you need me for?"

“To put it simply, we need you to break her.” Talon stated. “Not kill her, but we need her to be compliant.”

“Fine. Where is she?”

“As a mage, she's been my prisoner. We have moved her to your lodgings for the time being. I trust you can keep her under control.”

The Tempest just smiled, giving them a nod. “Is that all? Your majesty?”

“That will be all Tempest.”

With Heron's nod off, The Tempest placed a fist over her heart and proceeded to leave. Sauntering out of the castle, furs falling over her massive shoulders, The Tempest spared not a single glance towards the simple creatures around her. Save for the scullery maids who's eyes lingered over her. Even The Tempest had her charms; rugged good looks, countless battle scars, rippling muscles. She'd steal a glance back, throw a smirk their way. Maybe she would remember their faces for later. Maybe she wouldn't.

The walk to her lodgings was not a long one and a job like this probably wouldn't take her too long. Breaking people was what she was good at and what the mages couldn't do with their fancy magic was keep the pain going. She spotted palace guards stationed at the front of her lodge, spears and swords at the ready. At the sight of her, they stood at attention, giving her a strong nod before leaving. The Tempest simply nodded back, a slight one. This wasn't the first time she had been left to her own devices with a prisoner. Sometimes things were easy; she was big and intimidating, people tend to tell you things when you look like that and threaten them with physical violence. If not, well usually you could beat the information out of them or wear them down enough to tell who wasn't a liar or just utterly useless.

The Tempest entered her home, a modestly sized cabin that was simply decorated. Nothing screamed “noble” or “decorated raider general” save for the weapons mounted on the wall or the large, bear skinned rug on her floor. Everything else was common for a home; a small, clustered kitchen, a chair by the fireplace and of course, several doors leading to other basic rooms. Throwing her fur-lined cloak over her chair, The Tempest made her way over to where her prisoners were usually kept; a small room with no windows. It was deep within her lodge, the only room with a second lock. Here her prisoners were usually tied hands back to a large wooden pole embedded in the house. It was lit by candle when she wanted and there usually was nothing left inside that could be easily reached unless your limbs were free.

The guards knew the protocol; enter, restrain the prisoner, light a single candle, lock the door and leave. The Tempest checked the door. It was locked as usual. Good, competent work. Unlocking it, she entered the dimly lit room before closing the door behind her. Barely paying the prisoner any mind, she took the candle and proceeded to light more she left hanging around the

room. This was the only competent light source and The Tempest did not want the luxury of a window, a source of natural life and escape. "The High Mage seems quite annoyed by you." she growled. "He told me to break you, but I promise if you're a good girl, I'll let you go nice and easy."

The Tempest was prepared for an older, taller, wiser looking crone. Someone who looked old enough, smart enough to talk circles around the Elven High Mage. But instead she got a little, round looking girl. Not a child, but definitely younger than The Tempest. The room nor the circumstance did not do her justice, she was a pretty little thing with her long, thick hair draping messily down her back and onto the floor. As she got closer, The Tempest could see her bright, brown eyes followed by what appeared to be a pair of matching, crescent shaped scars. She noticed that her little mage was hardly looking at her, but rather the door she could now see.

"You'll never reach it. Not while I'm here."

That got her attention, those brown, amber-lit eyes. Despite being gagged, Tempest could tell that the little mage was smirking. It was small enough to entice The Tempest to lean in just a little closer. This one was not like the other prisoners. Not a hint of fear on her face or pride like some Cresian soldiers had. Only confidence.

The Tempest barely let out a breath when the mage sprang into action. She didn't notice that the ropes were cut and on the floor, partially covered by her hair. Or the small knife in her hands. She only felt the momentary sharp, piercing pain one felt when they got stabbed and for The Tempest, this was a familiar one. The little mage plunged a dagger deep in her side, leaving it there before swiftly rolling around The Tempest, sticking to the floor like a broom. The kick was light, with just enough pressure to make her knees buckle. A seasoned fighter like Tempest knew what mattered was not how hard the maged kicked, but rather where; aiming for the back of the knees to deal a quick trip.

As The Tempest fell onto her knees, she turned to find the little mage pulling the door. She gave Tempest a wink before pulling her gag off and throwing it onto the floor. The smart little thing pulled the door shut and locked it before The Tempest could hear her little feet dashing away. Now this was what she wanted, a chase.

She did not think twice as she swung her battle axe at the door handle, cutting it clean off and breaking the lock on impact. She nearly kicked the door down, breaking it off one of its hinges as she sprinted after her prey. Every stride, she felt the knife wiggle a little deeper into her side. It was not a vital hit and that was the mage's mistake. Her front door was wide open when the Tempest dashed out. She didn't bother calling out for help, making a mad dash towards her prey.

In the daylight, she could make out the features just a little better. Dark brown skin, a short, loose white dress, bare feet. She looked clean, had Talon gone out of his way to have her cleaned? Now wasn't the time to think. Only chase.

Catching up was an easy task. The Tempest was bigger, her strides were longer. The mage only made it easier when she turned around to cast a spell, stopping her briefly in her tracks. With magic, she picked up and flung a merchant's bag of goods at her. It hit The Tempest dead on, but the damage seemed to wash away like dust against her massive body. But the mage, Astraea, she was just as smart as she was cunning. Hurdle after hurdle, she used her magic to send several objects flying behind her. Whatever was in front was quickly submerged in pink light and flung towards the raging Tempest. And like rain, she took every hit head on.

The Tempest was used to the cruelty of battle, the pain of an attack. Adrenaline was her shield, experience was her armor. Each hit only seemed to strengthen her, to lengthen her stride. Victory was in sight, her prey like a rabbit and she was the fox. The Tempest wasted no time grabbing and forcing the runaway down onto her back. With one hand pushing her down around her neck, The Tempest rested on top with a devilish grin on her face.

“You surprised me. I’m impressed.” her voice rang out in a low, hungry growl.

Before the mage could attempt any more tricks, The Tempest picked her up by her neck, choking her briefly. Quickly, she slammed her head back into the floor, effectively knocking out her prey with minimal to no bleeding. Taking a breath, she eased up on her grasp as the mage’s hands slumped to the side. The Tempest would pick her up with ease, carrying her back as she spotted the two guards who had left her in her home.

“You two really should do a better job.” The Tempest grunted as she finally pulled the dagger out from her side. The hilt of it, like all daggers of this make, was encrusted with Vlagosian steel and filigree. Something that would be commissioned for a guard of high rank. The Tempest threw it on the ground in front of them, eyeing the empty sheathe that either one had yet to notice. A third failed escape attempt after minutes of receiving her, the superiors were not going to be happy about this.