AIDAN: GUARD OF THE OUTSKIRTS

"I fell," Aidan thought as he opened his eyes. He sat up slowly, rubbing his head partly because it hurt and partly to get the green sand out of his hair.

He stood up grateful that nothing was broken, remembering his failed attempt to jump over a gully that he had often jumped over during his laps round Prismwoods.

Today wasn't a normal lap. He was being pursued. He didn't even have time to try to remember where the traps hunters had set for Prismwood guardians laid. He just hoped he wouldn't get caught in one of them.

 "He's going to get me if I don't keep running. I'll never make it to the Amber Dynasty".

"You lose," Leo's voice came from behind him, arrow pointed and smug grin on his face.

"I only lost because I fell," Aidan pouted.

"You've never outrun me, Aidan."

Leo lowered his bow and walked over. "Come on. Let's head back."

"Tomorrow's the exam, Leo," Aidan said, brushing himself off. "If I stop now, I'll never become a Royal Guard."

"That'd be a good thing," Leo muttered. "There's something off about those palace people."

Aidan didn't understand why Leo always said things like that, but he followed him anyway. They walked through the shimmering Prismwoods, past the glowing foliage and whispering winds, and into the Mystical Valley, where Aidan's village sat on the outskirts.

Leo lived in the city, close to the castle.

"You're one lucky, rich brat", Aidan often told him. But Leo didn't act like he was.

Aidan was an orphan. His parents had been murdered when he was eight—while he and Leo were out playing. His father had claimed to be a retired Royal Guard, but Aidan had never believed it. How could a former Royal Guard die poor?

He always believed the Shamans—beings of elemental magic—were responsible. That belief drove him. He would become a Royal Guard, just like his father claimed to be, and avenge his parents.

Now, ten years later, his chance had come. But he still wasn't sure he was ready.

That night, after dinner, Leo left early so Aidan could rest. He thought he wouldn't sleep, but the moment his head hit the pillow, he was out cold.

By morning, he was on his way to the Colossal Battleground. The competition was intense, but his opponents were slower and weaker than Leo. He cleared the rounds easily until the final stage.

His last opponent was different. He had skill and a better sword. But Aidan was more cunning and he used that to defeat his opponent.

He could hardly believe that his dream was about to come true.

He was taken to the Amber Dynasty for orientation. The palace was more magnificent than anything he'd imagined so he snuck around for a solo tour. It dazzled with jewels and they even had a legendary Sagistor statue that was rumoured to whisper ancient truths to those who listened.

As Aidan admired it, he heard voices from the next room.

"These new warriors will wipe out the Shamans once and for all."

"And then, the Ebonfire Covenant will rise. Chaos will reign. We'll sacrifice as many outskirters as we please."

"It's poetic. Aidan will be helping the people who killed his parents. His father suspected us and 'retired.' Once he's served his purpose, we'll reunite him with his family and sacrifice him first."

Aidan couldn't believe his ears.

He ran.

He escaped the palace and rushed to Leo, telling him everything. Without hesitation, they fled to Raven's Hollow, a place cloaked in shadows and secrets.

Meanwhile, the cult realized someone had overheard. Aidan was gone.

"Like father, like son," one muttered as they placed a bounty on his head.

In Raven's Hollow, Aidan and Leo decided that they needed answers. So, they set out for Luna Tower, home to scholars and keepers of forgotten wisdom.

There, they met the Avian Titan, a colossal bird of wisdom. It told them the truth: The Shamans weren't enemies. They were elemental sorcerers protecting humanity. The Ebonfire Covenant, the real threat, had manipulated the Royal Guards into hunting them.

"The Shamans hesitate to kill humans," the Titan said. "That's why the Covenant uses you."

The Titan sent them to Imperium Sanctum, where they found the Harmonisers—beings of deep healing and truth. The Harmonisers confirmed everything and told them the only way to stop the evil patron was to destroy his altar in the palace.

"We can't do that alone," Leo said.

Almost as if summoned, the Shamans appeared.

"We'll help you," they said.

Though hesitant, Aidan agreed. They traveled in secret back to the Prismwoods, where they formed a plan to destroy the altar.

The plan was simple but risky, Leo would go in using his father's influence and use a sleeping bomb made from the Shamans magic to take care of most of the guards and distract the others.

Aidan and the Shamans would then be able to enter and they would deal with the Covenant and their personal guards.

If they could just keep the other guards occupied long enough, the mission would succeed.

At dawn, their plan was in motion. Everything was going smoothly but the battle between the shaman and the Covenant's personal guard was more difficult than they thought it would be. Aidan maneuvered his way to the altar, and with the help of the Shaman's magic, he used his sword to destroy an orb on the altar and it collapsed.

The guards hesitated, their strength faltering without the altar's dark energy fueling them. The members of the covenant fell in despair and accepted defeat.

Victory was theirs.

Aidan stood in the courtyard, panting. The magic weared him out and he was conflicted on what to do to the covenant, he wanted revenge but he couldn't bring himself to strike them.

He went out to address the guards who were confused by all the commotion. They had a hard time convincing them of the Shamans innocence but they got through to them eventually.

Leo stood beside Aidan and smirked. "Is now a bad time to say I told you so."

Aidan chuckled, tired but proud. "There really was something off about those palace people. The Shaman can take care of things here. Come on. Let's head back "

And with that, they turned away from the wreckage and walked back through the Prismwoods back to Aidan's village in the outskirts.

The end.

This story is built on the following Realms and lore:

Amber Dynasty: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Amber_Dynasty

Avian Titan: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Avian_Titan

Colossal Battleground: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Colossal_Battleground

Ebonfire Covenant: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Ebonfire_Covenant

Harmonizers: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Harmonizers

Imperium Sanctum: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Imperium_Sanctum

Luna Tower: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Luna_Tower

Prismwood Guardians: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Prismwood_Guardians

Raven's Hollow: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Raven%27s_Hollow

Sagistor: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Sagistor

Shamans: https://infinitylabs.fandom.com/wiki/Shamans