

One Moment Among Thousands More

"You're not supposed to be out here." Calliope's chipper, if not slightly annoyed voice scolded in his ear. Alvar scowled, ignoring her. He kept his eye trained on the sniper scope, keeping watch on the dilapidated house below.

He had received intel from another Hidden that one of Ethyr's killers was holed up here, in the EDZ. It was the third day he had been watching the house, trying to spot any hint of movement. So far, nothing.

"It's been days. The intel was probably wrong." Calliope chirped again.

"Shh." Alvar hissed, his aim unwavering. If there was even a slight chance that this intel was accurate, Alvar knew he couldn't miss the opportunity to cross another target off his list.

"You weren't supposed to follow me, Calliope." He muttered. She tilted her hovering shell, which Alvar has come to know as her way of raising an eyebrow.

"Don't turn it back on me, mister. This is about *you*."

"Isn't it always?"

"It wouldn't have to be if you didn't keep disobeying orders."

Alvar didn't answer, instead sighing in frustration. He's had this argument with Calliope countless times; and he's learned that she tends to win.

Well...always wins.

He was about to launch another retort when he noticed a quick flash of movement next to the house.

"Wait..." He whispered, intently watching the spot. It was too fast to tell what the movement was...could it be his target?

"Did you see something?" Calliope asked, suddenly curious.

"Maybe."

Whatever it was, it was gone. Alvar let out an exasperated sigh, finally giving up for the day.

"Fine. You win. I'll give it up...for now." He reached into his bag, pulling out a lamp. It was getting dark out.

“You know your helmet has a light, right?”

“Just my preference.” Alvar replied. The real reason was because it reminded him of his time with Ethyrys and her crew. They would relax by the lamplight, watching the stars.

His gaze drifted upward, the sun slowly setting on the horizon. A few stars already dotted the sky, accompanied by the soft glow of the early moon.

“It really is beautiful, isn’t it?” Calliope reveled.

“Sure is.”

They sat together, watching as the sun finally set and gave way to a beautiful and mesmerizing night sky. The stars seemed to shine brighter than ever, as if filled with a semblance of cosmic joy.

Alvar looked back down at Calliope, smiling for what felt like the first time in a long time.

“Calliope.”

“Yes, Alvar?”

“This is nice.”

Although she couldn’t form expressions, Alvar could tell that she was smiling.

“It really is.”

A rare reprieve amongst the unfettered chaos of Alvar’s life...it almost made him want to turn away from his vengeful crusade...but if anything, a moment like this hardened his resolve.

For a moment, for a fleeting moment...Alvar saw Ethyrys smiling back at him. Then, in an instant, she turned back into Calliope.

“Well, I’m going to let you get some sleep now. So...eyes down, Guardian.” She joked, in the nerdy, goofy way that only Calliope could. Alvar chuckled, nodding in tired agreement.

“Goodnight, Alvar.”

“G’night, Calliope.”

And goodnight, Ethyrys.