

Katastrof Blood - Victorious

Hunter:

Initiation

Where Is This?

The clapping thunder tore me from my unconscious trap. My eyes opened from the depths of darkness to instead gaze into a pitch black nothingness. Trickle of water from the outside of this shadowy place danced on the outside of — something. I felt around me and only touched some cold, rough surfaces. A second growl of thunder broke my nerves, "Auntia Maria? Jasper? W-why is it so dark? Auntia! Where are you?!" I cried.

From the black abyss a commanding, yet austere, voice rippled to me, "Child, dear child — settle yourself. You are not lost."

My chest tightened at his words. I held my breath and brought my knees up to my chest in a defensive panic. I flinched at a coldness touching my forehead and the bringer of this voice, seeming to notice this, gently pushed my skull against the rough surface behind me. The voice rippled again, "Soothe yourself, child."

The darkness began to vaporize as light took its place. Alas able to view my surroundings, I looked around only to find... walls. Four rough, stony gray walls trapping me and a ceiling of matching. There was not a single door, not even a window, and all there was upon the ceiling was a black, hanging scone. It was a large, unsettling thing trapping a flame. At the rightmost wall, an old table of dark wood sat. It had a glass cup on it and some other things that I failed to make out from my low position.

But most disturbing to me of it all was the tall, bald man in front of me. He had a fairly long jaw weighed down by his, apparently, deep disinterested demeanor. The man was shrouded in ankle-reaching black pants and cloak covering all of his being except from his neck up. A medallion hung just below the neck with an odd design at the center circle piece. It was a silver rose with six overlapping triangles encasing it, but none of them made contact with the silver rose - almost as if they knew better. He stared down at me with frightening seer and, despite himself being emotionally droughted, made my heart race with fear. He faced the table and walked to it with unusual synchronization in his steps before setting a black cloth upon it. He then lifted the cup to his lips and before setting it aside to a cold, glassy clang. With his eyes focused on some object on the table, he uttered aloud, "Tell me, child — do you Dream?"

I looked at the man in confusion, briefly trying to process his question without reason why. But eventually my little mind broke and I fell into tears. I screamed, "Where's Auntia and Jasper?! Where am I?!"

He tilted his head to my direction and gazed with his dreadful, emotionless face. "They are in danger," he said, "but you do not Dream; you are ill-prepared."

"Where are they?! What did you do! How did I get here?! I want to leave!"

He brought his finger up to his lips and his glare bolted into my heart. My chest felt as if it was full of liquid and dozens of knives were stabbing into it to free the excess. He faced the table again and reached for something. He turned back to me and moved in his strange way to hand it over – a small dagger. "They are in danger. If you can Dream, then you will save them. But this does not come with no risks...you will end up with the monsters should you fail. Are you willing to lose your life for theirs?"

Without so little a blink I shouted, "Yes! Where are they?!"

He hurried to the wall behind me and placed his left palm on it. Then, he dragged his hand diagonally southeast, moved it west, then diagonally northeast. He repeated the motion, each time moving more and more inward until he could not without overlapping the rubbed path. Upon doing the motion a final time, the stone wall I once had my back against opened and before me was a long hall of dirt, root and stone. Torches in the walls barely lit the grave pathway but, in the distance, I could make out two bodies that I could not mistake for another: my cousin Jasper and Aunt Maria. They were sitting against a wall, masked in some dark cloth. She was in her white dress from earlier in the day and her brown, poofy hair had been shaved off while Cousin Jasper was still in his blue shirt and brown shorts and pushed up against her in desperate security. Their hands were behind them. The old man placed his hand on my back and his knees popped as he kneeled and whispered into my ear, "You must be very careful. The monsters are down there with dangerous weapons, and they will end you should you awake them. Move with caution, but you must be quick because the creatures may end your family instead! You can do this, young one, but only if you disregard mere dreams and instead intake *the* Dream!"

My body went stiff as I watched them placed against the wall helplessly. They didn't say anything but my ears just barely picked up low sobbing from their direction. My blood could no longer stomach this and thus blindly, I raced to them ready to fend off the monsters wanting to devour my family. But as the pitter-patter of my little feet echoed on the stony floor, a beseeching shout walled me – a cry from my 'Auntia' Maria. She yelled, "Is that you, Lorenzo? Stay away! Stay far, don't come near!"

My feet refused to move any further, my small hands gripped the blade tightly, all while my brain shouted at me, "Hurry, save them!" and, "Why doesn't she want me to help?"

Then a heaviness fell on my shoulders. It was him, the old cloaked man. I stared into his eyes with my teary own and he said, "Child, do you wish to save them before they are taken from you? Just like the others?"

I took much time to process his words, and when it alas hit me I began to sob, but now with tears of rage and regret. I tossed my restraints into the flames and rushed to my dear Auntia Maria and cousin Jasper with the tiny dagger in tight grip, ready to fend off the beasts. As the reverberations of my small feet grew increasingly frequent, Auntia Maria bawled loudly. And as I crossed over into the chamber, a gut-wrenching crunch killed my soul, halting me. Red spilled off of a blade like rain on a slanted roof and seeped to my feet. The dagger fell from my hand and clanked upon hitting the ground, but I did not flinch. Then the large blade retracted back into the darkness and something bumped my legs. Reluctantly, my eyes lowered to the ground and four more stared back at me. My mind in a panic refused to breathe and my stomach boiled. My throat bubbled until the meal from earlier brought itself back to the world. My eyes flooded and produced a fall with the mucus pouring from out my nostrils until alas grief won the battle and I fell into the revolting pool of blood and puke to bawl over the heads of my dear 'Auntia' Maria and cousin Jasper. Again, a heaviness fell on me - onto my right shoulder. "I am dearly sorry, young one... What went wrong?"

"Th-they k-killed..." My voice trembled.

"There, there, child... Why would those dastardly beasts cut them down?"

"Aun-auntia said n-not to go to her!"

"And what did you do?"

"I... I ran to her."

"Why would she not want you to move near her? You had a blade to slay the beasts. Her and your..." he paused, "*cousin's* lives. Cut short simply because you moved closer to her? No, I don't believe so. Why would she be so strongly against your help?"

My thoughts clicked for once. "What if the monsters were trying to hit me... but they killed them instead?"

"That's certainly a conclusion to reach. In which case – who is at fault for your dear '*Auntia*' and cousin's murder?"

"M-me..."

"I'm not so sure about that, young one. I do not believe you are to blame for this terrible end. Perhaps the monsters were mad and they were already doomed."

I continued staring at their lifeless heads looking at mine. "She told me to stay away. Nothing happened to them when I was far away, but I ignored her and ran in to save them – and then their heads were..."

"Oh dear," the man intruded, "So it appears that you did have a hand in their murder. Perhaps even the one who triggered it. So dreadful... did you — did you not love them? Is this what you wanted?"

"No! I would n-n-never want..."

"A foolish presumption from me... I apologize for being so grim. It is more likely because of how ill-prepared you were. Too weak, so frail. How unfortunate."

He turned back to the sole room of bright light and moved towards it. From within the stony room, he turned to my back and said, "Do you wish to stay in the dark and mourn? These tears and dread will not salvage their lives... not much can. But I know how you can avenge them. Make the choice, child: Stay here and weep forever, or assure it never happens again."

I wanted to scream at him to leave me alone, but I took another glance at the bloodied nightmarish hall and the emptiness of it all. I heard metal scraping in the distance coming from the headless bodies of Jasper and Aunt Maria, but rather than becoming terrified, I grew angry. I rose to my feet and turned to the old man. With my first step to him, he nodded. "Together with the blessings of the Dream, we will make you grow, child. We will assure you never endure such gruesome atrocities ever again. I, Father, promise that to you."