

Part 1: Transform
Chapter 1:

Not for the king.

Never for the king.

As my blade severs my enemy's head, I ask myself what the fuck am I doing this for. Ahh yes, I am here for the bloodshed, but my allies are here for their country—for their stupid king.

All hail the king! They shout.

What a bunch of donuts. You cannot even see the king himself fight for us, and they are here wasting their lives for that bastard. A good king is the one who fights at least once in a while, in that way we can feel that we are fighting as a legion fighting for the same purpose, not as a cult who blindly follows the head—a greedy fucking head. Things could have been different if the head was honorable, in that case, it is a leader serving its people, not the other way around.

I realize that I am alone and that the donuts I am with are dead, while I'm surrounded by hmm... at least 18 soldiers. I try to make it a duel to separate the others, but it's too overwhelming when there's others trying to stab you in the back. As I keep slashing at the enemies, I realize that I am smiling. Every time my blade connects to their body it feels like I'm in my bed feeling warm and comfortable. God, I really love this.

By the time I stop counting, from eighteen turns into five.

"Look around and look at your friends" I say as I taunt the five of them. Although I love slaughtering these knights, I can't help but to feel drained. I'm just finding a way to just end this right now.

"You will die, Agean" one of them shouts.

He rushes at me, but I quickly slide beneath his raised arm, and then slash his torso.

I immediately move backwards as one of the soldiers tried to take a swing at me. He swings but I parry and knock his sword from the heaviness of my reply and stab his neck.

I parry from an enemy from the right and knock his blade aside.

Another knight attacks from the left, I parry his attack, I slide under his shoulder and quickly slash his belly.

The one from the right tries to swing at my shoulder, it connects but just a cut, not too deep.

With great force, I swiftly deflect the blade from right and reach to cut his hands and sever his head.

One knight remaining.

I spread my arms as an eagle spread its wings. His eyes are full of fear, but he charges and before he gets to me, his head is cut off. Julian stands beside, with a sword, and a smile.

"I thought I was alone mate" I say to Julian. "Well, I wanted to leave you but I wouldn't want you to take the glory of it all" Julian replies.

Julian and I sits down under a tree, waiting for reinforcements.

Julian looks at the bodies where I was a while ago.

"How the fuck did you survive all that?"

"I honestly just kept on slashing and hoped for the best"

I say humbly, while knowing I did all that with pure confidence. Fueled by my manic state, I could've been severely injured, If it weren't for Julian's vigilant attack. I should learn to control this arrogance I have. I may perform well, but it is a double edged sword and the other edge may cut deeper.

"Have you heard the rumors from home? Your brother is being accused of causing an uprising against Agea" Julian says.

"Amr?"

Julian nodded. "His writings, Fath. They say his novels spread rebellion."

"Knowing him, it's expected," I reply boastfully.

"It's a serious accusation, mate. He could—"

"Get his chopped off?" I finish his sentence, knowing the consequences my brother could face. I am scared for Amr, the strongest drive for me to go home is to keep my family safe, especially him. Amr believes his writing can change the kingdom. I like to think that words are candles—bright enough to inspire people, but too weak to stop an executioner's blade.

"We need to go home for your brother," Julian says.

"If only we could," I reply.

"Will they still recognize us?" Julian asked laughing but with a hint of sadness, realizing this war has taken a huge part of us and probably changed some part of us.

"I think so, we're still the same troublemakers in the eyes of our mom." I answer with a smile.

"Do you remember the time that we took on our five seniors just because they stole some books of Amr just to make fun of him?" Julian says laughing.

"Won't ever forget that because I was held at gunpoint" I reply laughing.

"You were being manic again at that time, you just stared at him, taunting him while moving towards him like a fucking maniac"

"I knew he wasn't going to pull that trigger. That guy has a life ahead of him. He won't ruin it for that something simple"

"He's the son of Senator Nolan, of course he has a luxurious life ahead of him. Now, we're here working for that donut"

"Yea, now we're here"

A huge airship comes from the north.

"Well that ain't ours" Julian says surprisingly.

A tall, well-built man drops from the airship.

"Bloodydamn, they sent a demon. In our state, we are no match for that shit" I say with a hint of fear.

"I think it knows we're here, mate," Julian whispers.

"We have to battle this out, it's coming towards us already while he's... 500 meters away from us. It has a strong sense where I think running is not an option" I reply.

"Let's stall that demon until Damus comes, I'm sure he's near—" Julian stops.

I stand in shock, my eyes full of rage as I saw my friend getting strangled by the demon.

"Julian!" I shouted.

The demon holds Julian's neck with one hand and looks at me. He throws Julian's body and pulls a katana out of thin air and moves as it tries to slash me.

The katana comes for my neck but I am quick, I raise my blade in time to parry. I move backward while still holding my blade in a defensive position. He swings his katana harshly, I try to parry again, but steel to steel my blade split.

His katana vanishes. Then his hands wrap around my throat and slam me to the ground. I cough blood as I stumble across the ground, the demon looks at me and then he makes a sniffing gesture as if he know someone's near. Then it vanishes.

Damus with the reinforcement must be near, Damus is a demon alright, but I can feel that the demon that just attacked us is on another level that is beyond from the demons I have seen and that's including Damus.

I look at the sky and wonder if this is gonna be my end. I always dreamed of a death like this, a slow death in the ground by the forest or a mountain. I try to get up to be with Julian, I have never been an endearing friend, but knowing this may be the end, I at least want to let Julian know that I am with him. Throughout my life, I have never had a real friend. I don't know if it's because of my own instability, I know I'm difficult to be around. I've known myself to push people not because of hate but because there's a part of me that feels that they probably don't want to be with me. I never felt that with Julian. I realize that I do have someone I can laugh with, share moments with, and above all, someone I can count on. Julian was like a brother to me as Amr is.

When I reach Julian, rage replaces my grief. His head bloodied lies at an unnatural angle where it had struck the rock. A tear drops from my eye, and the urge to bring hell in this bloody damn place is swelling.

I am filled with guilt bringing Julian into this bloodshed, but what bothers me more is that I am too far to redeem my friend.

Worry not, my friend, while I am too far to make a mess, blade too broken to last a fight, I will bring hell no matter what.

Chapter 2:

I wake beneath a canvas roof, my back stiff and fragile. When I try to sit up, pain shoots through my spine.

“FUUCKK!!”

“Be careful, you might completely break your back” A medico says as he rushes to enter the tent..

“What took you all so long” I ask angrily,

The medico ignores my question and asks, “What happened to you?”

I repeat my statement while keeping the same tone.

“Heh.” the medico smirks. “Doesn’t matter, Damus will be here in a while to ask questions”

I am shocked knowing Damus is alive. Does it mean they defeated the jin?

“Have you seen Julian?” I ask hoping he’s still alive.

“Was it the guy beside you?”

I nod.

“He’s been given a proper burial ceremony”

I know Julian is dead. I watched the demon throw him against the rock. Still, hearing that he has already been buried makes the loss real. The world has continued without him.

A tear drops in my eye, as my heart starts feeling heavy.

I can’t, I can’t do anything, my back is broken and I am even without a blade.

“FUUUUUUUCK!” I shout.

I am spiralling feeling the guilt knowing that the revenge for my friend is out of reach.

“Calm down, lad” Damus says as he enters.

I am relieved to see him.

I ask anxiously “Did you meet him?!”

“Who?” Damus replies.

“A jin did this to us!” I say while raising my voice.

“We know, based on your strangle marks and your friend’s, but we haven’t seen it. We tried looking, but there’s nothing” Damus says.

I just realize that maybe the demon was there for something else. He’s there looking for something, I initially thought it’s because of Damus and the reinforcement.

“How long will I recover?” I ask the medico.

“You’ll be fine with a week full of rest” the medico replies.

“Why do you have plans to be somewhere?” Damus asks.

I shake my head.

“This jin you are talking about, does he have a katana? And if he does, what does it look like?”

Damus asks.

“It was long and it had red markings on the steel. How did you know it was a katana? Do you know him?” I reply.

“Shit. He was here”

“Who?” I ask curiously.

“The jin who attacked you has a name,” Damus says. “Reian.”

“Who is he?”

“A member of the Dark Order.”

“Why was he here?”

Damus’s expression hardens. “He is searching for something. A blessing from their lord.”

My heart trembles due to the fact that the person whom I aspire to face is part of the *dark order*. I feel crushed knowing I have no chance to make my revenge. The chance keeps getting thinner and thinner.

“I am sorry for your loss, Fath. Julian was a good lad.” Damus says sincerely.

“Tell me more about Reian,” I need to know more. I can’t give up. I won’t give up.

"Well, what we know of Reian is that if they find the blessing, they have a big chance to make this world a hell hole for us." Damus replies. "The Dark order uses the Ionia to be their front in the new world they want to create."

I laugh hysterically. So, this is it huh? I tell myself.

"Recover soon, we need to leave Ionia as soon as possible. Things are getting out of control now." Damus speaks while about to leave with the medico.

Later, I wake from a restless nap.

Finally, we're about to go home, I say to myself while looking at the canvas roof as I wake up from a nap. I try to get up, but my back still feels brittle. This discomfort, pain, and my situation makes me feel hopeless. I wish it was all just a dream. I now have to worry about facing Julian's mother.

My heart beats as if I was running when I think about going home without Julian and facing his mother. I think that despite planning to prepare what to say. My mouth will not open as my mind closes the words I should speak.

The medico enters the room with a bowl of hot soup. He places the bowl on the floor and helps me to sit up.

"You gonna spoon feed me, daddy" I ask humorously.

"Shut up and eat," the medico replies in a serious tone.

I feel as if I'm high, but I know it's from the things that have been happening or maybe because of the morphine they probably injected me with. I don't even know anymore.

"What's the date today, if I may ask?"

"Does it matter?" the medico answers.

"Huh, what do you mean? Just answer the question. Goddamn it" I reply confused with a bit of frustration.

"Today's May 3, you've been here for two days"

Damn, May 4 tomorrow huh? Happy fucking birthday, I tell myself.

The medico leaves as I finish the bowl.

I've been thinking that tomorrow is the day I turn 21. For the past four years, Julian has trained with me on my birthday. He is the only family I have in Ionia.

Tomorrow, I turn twenty-one. Julian will not be there to train with me.

"All right," I whisper to the empty tent. "Time to fucking sleep."

Chapter 3:

I woke up from the sound of a noise.

“The end?” that’s what I hear. That’s what they’re saying as if they’re gossiping and whispering, but I can hear them clearly.

I’m astounded as I get up, my back..., my body... It feels better. No, more than better, it’s PERFECT. But the noise... I can still hear it.

In an instant, everything turns black. It’s not dark, not a shadow, just empty.

“The end.” someone says repeatedly and it gets louder and louder.

Then I wake up.

For a moment, I thought everything was fine. Until, I tried to sit up and was astounded from what I’m feeling. How the fuck did I sit up smoothly. My body...It feels fine as how I felt in my nightmare.

“Oh bloody hell, just wake me up mate” I raised my voice alone in the tent.

The medico enters the tent.

“What the hell is your problem?” medico says

He freezes as he sees me effortlessly getting up from the floor bed.

“How?! You weren’t supposed to be able to do that until the next 4 days” he says in shock.

“I think... I think I’m dreaming” I say as I am also astounded by what’s happening.

“Wow, so like my purpose in life is to make you feel better huh?” Medico says sarcastically.

“Because you know... I’m fully conscious in “your dream”. This fucking guy mate” He follows up as he slaps me harshly in my face. “Goodmorning, sunshine”

“What the fuck is that for!” I say angrily.

“I want to say that there’s something wrong with you as you are here standing in front of me, as if you haven’t experienced getting slammed by a fucking demon few days ago, but you seem fine” he says as he smiles sarcastically.

We were interrupted by a sound.

“He’s here!” Someone shouts outside the tent.

I rushed outside, hoping to see what’s happening.

“He’s here” I say as I see him again. That figure, that “himma”, it’s him. The one who took someone from my own. The one who I seek. The one who shall face my wrath.

He is surrounded by knights, but they are too afraid to move against him. I looked around to find a blade I could use.

“I have no time for this” I say as I stop looking for a blade. I feel it again. My manic feeling..., the aggression I have inside me..., it is surging.

Damus instantly appeared in front of the demon.

“What?!” I say as I see Damus kneeling before him, before Reian.

Was Damus have been always in his side or something happened a few days ago. I’m starting to think that yesterday while he was interrogating me, he provided substantial information about Reian. But, if he is on his side, why would he tell us all that information?

Some knights ran away, but some followed Damus.

Reian looked at me, followed by Damus.

My vision goes dark.

Knights fell on the ground. The night's breeze is palpable.

Then Damus appears in front of me like a lightning, but I am like the darkness that consumes the light.

Damus swings his axe to meet my neck as soon as he appears, but it just passes through me. I manifested a blade in thin air and I swing to sever his head.

I disgustingly smiled and looked at Reian.

He kneels.

I flashed before him.

"Yes, kneel before me, for I am your god and I sentence you to death" I say as I sever his head."

I looked at my blade, and the bloodshed I caused.

"I have no clue which of the gods blessed me with this power. I may not be jinn, a conqueror, and an imperator to deserve this godsend. However, what I am is a knight of my own conviction, the wheels of my purpose, and the blade of my beloveds. With this might, my will pushes forward. Oh

