

Eleanor

Blurring bodies fell to the ground as the two danced, their blades singing a melody that only thieves would know—they stole the silence with each clash and beat of their boots against the ground beneath. Their figures swam among those who had fallen that night. The streets in Ghorsdale hardly ever saw respite from constant battle.

Eleanor held her lengthy rapier an arm's length away, practiced movements taking control of her being as she parried forwards and backwards, sidestepping when her opponent's longsword neared her silhouette. Tonight had been her brother's birthday, quite fittingly. Welsh had turned the age of adulthood mere hours before his death. Ele had been remembering the very moment the axe pierced his skull three moons past. She took a breath, remembering where she was immediately. She continued her fight, nearing her masked opponent with each slash of her sword.

It was time to finally honor her sibling's valor: Welsh had been a thief, but unlike her, he always repaid his targets. He stole to keep his head, and hers, above the treacherous waters of debt and corruption that plagued their town. It was a typical occurrence; many subjects of King Haulst were exhausted of the continuous rise in taxes, the imbalanced legal system, and of course, the inevitable persecution of supporters of the King's sister, Oaisha.

Ele let out an impatient cry: she was unused to being so evenly matched. Quickly, she feigned an attack to her opposer's neck, and as the cloaked figure sidestepped, she twisted around, now behind them. With a final duck, Ele kicked out her left leg and buckled the knees of her target. She let out a short laugh, holding her blade to the shadow's neck.

"Give in, you bastard. You know I've bested you." She smirked, feeling pride swell in her chest as she had yet again beaten someone to the ground. To Eleanor, there was no better feeling than that of looking down upon a helpless being—she felt all-powerful. She made a small cut at their cheek.

"Throw down your blade. Or I'll cut you open and take it myself."

Quickly, the figure unmasked himself, holding up his hands to block Eleanor's blade: a mistake on his part, "Plea—"

She drew back her blade, and before he could lower his hands, his right one fell to the ground. He shrieked, blood gushing from the nub where his hand once was. He held his mutilated limb, crying out in pain.

Ele kicked him over onto his stomach and slid her blade clean through. She heard a last whimper escape the man's lips as his blood seeped between the cobblestones of the road.

Swiftly, Eleanor pocketed the coins the man was carrying, along with his longsword. She chuckled softly at the blade as she concealed it within its scabbard. It was apparent to her that his sword, in addition to his equally lengthy arms, created a balance an uneven as the road she stood on—a mistake Ele hardly ever made. She, of course, had her imperfections, but swordplay was not among them.