Chapter 926 Warriors

Trian pushed his wings as far as he could. The winds felt strange, the air hot. Magic thrummed all around. He could feel the heavy pressure, as if he was in the North. Snow still covered the valley as he landed before the crowded city walls of Ravenhall. Mobile teleportation platforms had already been set up, leading straight down into the Haven. Hundreds of civilians were crowded in front of the city, the Shadowguard trying to reign in the panic as they funneled people onto the platforms and through the city gates.

"Healer!" he shouted right as he landed.

The bright barriers above shined with magic, the cannons at the ready, all the magic near overwhelming to his senses. Trian set down the two people he had carried. They had fallen on the way here, trampled before he went in and got them out. Thousands were arriving through the many gates in Morhill, most making their way to Ravenhall, and the Haven.

A Medic appeared, Hadley, he realized, clad in ash armor and crouching down next to the two injured. Blood covered her hands.

Trian didn't wait. He gave her a look before he vanished, flying down and back towards Morhill.

A stream of people, all kinds of species, was being funneled towards Ravenhall, and the Haven. Taleen machines lined the road and helped carry people whilst trying to prevent a panic. Still, they had to intervene constantly. Two Shadows shot past him in the air, followed by a group of Sentinels.

Trian watched the endless stream of people as he flew, seeing faces streaked with tears, dirt, and blood, mobile platforms set up along the valley, Guardians funneling people away and towards the gates.

The light all around flickered yet again, as if he stood in a candlelit room on a winter night, a cold breeze moving the flame. People screamed and shouted, Aki moving in with his machines to pluck out and carry those who were panicking.

The mountains shook, an avalanche forming nearby, rushing through the forests before a team of Shadows flew there, an ice mage slowing the descent, walls of rock sprouting from the ground to stop the snow entirely.

Trian teleported and flew, finally reaching Morhill, the gates open with guards shouting and Guardians keeping people moving. He saw a constant stream of people coming out of the teleportation halls. People from the western cities, people from Virilya, from the former Baralia, from Kroll, Asila, and Nipha. Every town and settlement with a connection to Morhill.

Aki guided people in the city onto mobile gates. Trian assumed they led to the Meadow, Iz, or the Haven.

He moved in to help.

"Our shelters are safe! This region is defended against the Extraction. Stay calm!" Aki's voice resounded from Executioners and Praetorians alike.

Trian joined a group of Sentinels breaking up a throng of people coming out of a teleportation hall. Dany's group. He helped two people up as the others healed and did the same. "Stay calm!" he shouted when Cornelius turned, the dust mage looking out towards one of the nearby stone roofs.

Trian felt something strange.

An instinct perhaps.

"Get away!" Cornelius shouted at the throng of people, his voice lost in the chaos.

Trian watched as space itself unfolded, a strange creature stepping into reality. Six legs, all of them elongated and purplish. Its head looked like a smooth sphere, no eyes nor mouth.

What is that? he aimed his hand to charge a spell when a purple sphere rushed down from somewhere else. He saw a Guardian run and jump in front of the projectile, the impact silent before the machine burst in an explosion of metal shrapnel. Shouts turned to screams as three more spheres came down, two stopped by Guardians with the last exploding in the crowd, a shock wave of void magic disintegrating flesh and armor alike, people flung aside as strips of flesh, bone, and blood splattered into the crowds.

Trian screamed and sent his lightning at the creature he had seen step into reality.

It jumped away from the building as his surge of red lightning burned against the roof, leaving a trail of glowing stone. He staggered back, hit by the smell of blood and death, the air vibrant with thick magic, his vision a blur as he saw more spells impact the screaming and running crowd.

He heard a voice shout from nearby. Something hit his face, his vision clearing slightly. A ringing came to his ears.

"Headmaster! We need to get away! They're too high-" Raphia shouted, roots springing up from the ground before a dull impact resounded from beyond, void magic eating through her spell. "Headmaster!" She shouted again.

Trian breathed out, his vision clearing. "We retreat to Ravenhall," he said, his hands shaking as he saw the running crowd mowed down into nothing by strange creatures of the void.

Another impact broke through the wooden barrier. Raphia was hit and slammed against the wall of the teleportation hall. Her eyes looked vacant, a hole in her chest, blood leaking out.

Trian sent bolts of lightning out at the approaching monsters, seeing a Centurion jump down from a roof opposite them, its core glowing before a detonation shook the ground, sending debris, flesh, and bits and pieces of the void creatures through the plaza. He covered his head, finding Dany already crouched next to Raphia.

"No… no, no… not like this, Raph! Please!" She bit her lips, hands calm as her magic flared up. She reached into the chest of the other Sentinel. "She's alive!"

Cornelius appeared next to them, waves of dust magic whirled up to obscure their position. Void magic flashed past, the Sentinel spinning when something ripped away his arm. He landed in a crouch and grit his teeth, touching the wound with his remaining arm. "We have to move! Take her with you!"

"I can't! She's not stable!" Dany shouted.

Trian reached down and grabbed the girl. "I'll hold her. Side street, this way!" He nodded past the building, the others following, Dany with her hand still in the chest of her friend.

They moved, shrouded partially in dust. Screams resounded all around, explosions and spells shaking the ground and buildings. A heavy impact cleared the dust, Trian looking down the narrow street at a single creature covered in purple and leathery skin, its head opening up like a blooming flower. Purple energy gathered within.

He turned and charged his lightning, holding Raphia with one arm as he tried to put his body between himself and the creature's spell.

Dany kept healing while Cornelius summoned his magic.

I will not let you die. It felt as if time slowed, his perception spiking as his red lightning crackled in his hand. *Should I have flown up? No, we needed the cover.* Would his spell be enough? He doubted it. And still, it felt right. If one of his students would survive instead. He sent out his lightning and grit his teeth, pushing in all the mana that he could.

He saw a flash of silver rush past, green eyes, blades shining purple. A shield flickered before the Executioner crashed into the being of void, walls torn away from the houses as its blades cut into the monster.

The machine turned its head. "Fly past above me! To Ravenhall!"

Trian steadied Raphia. She looked pale. If not for Dany's words, he would've thought her dead already. The others followed as he carried her, past above the struggling monster, still alive despite the Executioner, strange screeches resounding before it was silenced right when they passed by, his wings moving as Dany tried to keep steady, her gaze focused entirely on her teammate as she flew by his side.

Trian saw glimpses of void projectiles above, other spells mixed in between. He saw glimpses of machines and Shadows, Sentinels, and war machines, cut down by the increasing number of monsters, shouts resounding through the chaos, calling for retreat, for Ravenhall. The buildings shook again, all light fluctuating for a moment as they rushed through the alley.

Two more streets when a Centurion broke through the wall, grappled by something that looked like a thin and hairless spider. They flew past, an explosion roaring out behind them when they had crossed into the next street.

"This way!" Cornelius called out, the wound on his shoulder no longer bleeding.

Trian saw the city wall right when a monster stepped out into existence at the end of the alley. Four long and thin limbs, a flower like head and long fingers.

A figure came crashing down, a shock wave of fire extending. Wet impacts resounded before the woman stood up, her black axes wreathed in fire. Blood and dirt covered her face, her brown hair flowing free. A grin was on her face. Verena didn't speak a word as she rushed past them, back into the fray.

Trian flew up and over the city wall of Morhill, his eyes going wide at the sight of the battlefield beyond. Void creatures still appeared all over, the monsters hunting down the fleeing humans, Shadows and adventurers fighting alongside Taleen machines, Sentinels flying past with injured people, others crouched above dying humans amongst the chaos, protected by war machines shouting as they sent burning projectiles into the monsters.

He kept flying, Dany next to him as they tried to keep their flight stable. Trian forced them down when a void projectile flashed past, dodging in the last moment before they went on, just above

ground and between the fighting. Screeches resounded as ice and crystal exploded, walls of stone set up with teams of fighters protecting those injured, healers teleporting among them.

"I will go help!" Cornelius shouted and vanished as Trian continued onward with Dany. Up the slope with hundreds of beings, silver machines slaughtering the monsters but unable to kill them all, Guardians using their forms to block the creatures, rushing between projectiles and those running for their lives.

They passed a group of Mind Weavers, their monsters clashing with the beings of the void. Trian glanced to his left and saw a line of creatures, several of them charging purple spells. The light flickered and he could feel the dense magic all around. The hair on his arm stood up as he felt the pressure change. A bright beam of red thrumming light flashed past them, incinerating the group of monsters, snow and stone burned away with a furrow of glowing rock left behind. More beams lit up now, Trian looking up to see the cannons set into the mountains above Ravenhall. Red light lit up as their beams slashed into the monsters.

He saw golden streaks of light rush past to strike their enemies, more Shadows flying in the air now, walls of ice, stone, and crystal erected to protect the fleeing civilians. *We made it.*

Something hit his back, the impact cold. A numb feeling instantly went through him. His wings vanished and he fell. Someone caught him, still in the air. His vision darkened before he gasped, a hot searing pain flaring up.

"You're slacking."

He heard Luke's voice and grit his teeth against the searing pain. He wouldn't scream in front of his Sentinels. He could feel the healing magic as his vision darkened.

Trian coughed when he woke up again, opening his eyes as he took in the sounds and smells. He was on a crowded plaza. Sentinels and other healers ran around, crouched above people with limbs or half their heads gone. The air was thick with the iron smell of blood. Above he saw the bright barriers of Ravenhall, the rumbling of enchanted cannons roaring all around. He winced as he sat up, touching something wet on his cheek. His hand came back with blue color. He saw a few of the healers applying more to unconscious people on the ground. Others were marked with orange.

The dead.

Pain shot through his back as he turned. He found the brown haired healer he had carried. *Raphia.*

Sliding over, he saw the blue paint on her face, a large bandage around her chest and destroyed armor. Trian broke down, hands on the ground as sobs racked through him, each one sending pain through his back. He punched the ground and forced himself to stop. He focused on his body and spells. His back hurt, but he was not in danger, his health and mana steadily recharging.

Summoning his wings, he flew up, finding it less painful than walking. He saw no void creatures appearing in the stone city streets. *The barriers? Or the Haven?*

Rushing to the outermost walls, he found void spells impacting the bright light of the barriers, spent and injured fighters gathering in the squares and streets, on buildings, or leaning against the walls themselves. Beyond, he saw the last fighters outside, standing with a line of machines and magically constructed barriers. Cannons roared, red beams of arcane energies tearing into the

approaching monster hordes, dozens disintegrated with every blast, but crawling through the valley and over the mountains, he saw thousands.

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Alice scrambled past a half destroyed building, healing the wound in her stomach. It felt as if half of it was missing. A single spell, not even aimed at her. Her ears were ringing still, people all around her running down into the tunnels, down to the Root. Shadow came into the alley and she teleported into the building next to her, bracing herself just before the first strike of arcane lightning hit. The ground and walls shook, but the lightning didn't hit this one directly, or she would no longer be alive.

The dust settled, another strike impacting somewhere farther away. She moved to the destroyed window and saw void creatures already close to the tunnels, catching fleeing humans or cutting them down with spells. She slammed down to the ground when she saw a creature step into existence on the opposite roof. Holding her breath, her mind racing.

The gates are destroyed, half the city already rubble. And the only way down into the Root and all the shelters is past those monsters. And more are coming. She didn't know if help would come. If this was only happening here, she assumed the Accords would've arrived already, but the few machines that had been here were destroyed or went into the tunnels to protect the shelters and guide everyone there.

How was she supposed to face down three mark monsters that appeared from nowhere? How was she supposed to survive magical lightning, and whatever was happening to the sun. She decided to stay for a moment and hide when lightning crashed down through the house. She was blinded and sent flying, crashing through a wall and rolling in debris. Something was stuck in her side. She tried to get up but couldn't move. Turning her head, she saw some strange creature with a flower on its head.

"What are you?" she asked, her lips trembling at the numbing pain, feeling her mind overwhelmed entirely.

The creature stepped close and grabbed her. It raised her up to its strange face, something purple starting to glow between the flower like head.

Alice watched on. She felt light. So very light.

It's okay, she thought. *Jaime would have made it. He was closer to the Root. He's going to be fine.*

She watched the strange creature when the glow vanished, replaced by shining fields of gold.

Falling, she felt the large hands of the monster slacken. Above, she saw purple crackling light move through a dark cloud. It flashed down and slammed into a golden barrier.

A man appeared next to her, clad in sleek black armor, golden seams flowing through the strange material. His eyes looked like those of a snake, she thought, the idea quite amusing to her. He lifted her up before everything around her moved faster.

A moment later, she was set down.

This isn't the Root, she thought, seeing the large square right in front of the tunnels. Corpses and debris littered the ground. She saw the man vanish again, her own healing flowing through her. Did he rescue her just to leave her here to die?

Wind flowed past and she looked up, her eyes wide as she glimpsed a flying humanoid entirely made of steel, air flowing around it as it sent spells out with simple gestures.

The being glanced down, two glowing white eyes. Two more people were set down nearby by the same man. Warmth flooded through Alice as she gasped, the powerful healing entirely overwhelming.

She coughed and sat up, looking at the hordes of monsters crawling over the natural city walls provided by Karth.

"Leave, child. Down and to the shelters," a voice spoke into her mind. *"Find a silver machine, and tell it that Dawntree requires reinforcements."*

Alice staggered up, stumbling for a few steps, and then she ran.

"Empress, I implore you. The void creatures are ranging in the mid to high three marks. You would be putting yourself in danger. We should wait in the central shelters until we know more," Major Falken spoke.

Alyris did not blame the man for his thinking, but she had made her decision long ago. The Empire would stand, for if they could not fight for themselves, then who would think them worthy? Who would think her worthy? She stood up, looking at the strained faces of her highest officials, nobility and military rank carried by all.

They had scrambled when demons had been summoned into their capital, had watched as Lilith appeared and brought with her an army of high level machines and fighters, demonstrating the might of the Accords. They were losing more and more people to them, their influence and power shrinking by the day. A flying elven city, a dragon set atop Ravenhall, their machines, and the Meadow.

The same questions she had asked herself were on everyone's minds. She could see it in their faces, their eyes. Their city was getting destroyed, the barrier broken and the outer walls of their shelters bombarded by spells of void magic. It was only a matter of time before the monsters broke through.

And it was for this moment that she had gathered them here, knowing that nobody would refuse to sit here, at the very deepest part of their defense. But neither would they escape her here.

Summoning her armor, Alyris looked down at the rings on her fingers. "What right do we have? To call ourselves rulers? If we stay here and wait, while the world is on fire, our peoples slaughtered or

hiding in fear." She looked up. "I will go and stand, at the entrance to these shelters, to defend the Empire of Lys. And you will join me."

Velamyr Ryse stood up, followed by Leonard Braak. Thor Lysdain, Major Valen, Brandon Karrick. She watched them closely, noting their expressions and the way they stood. Walking out, she made sure that the people around saw them. She saw fear and terror in their eyes, her own expression confident and proud. She needed her people, now and after. And she would give them all the strength that she could summon.

When they reached the outer sections of the shelters, she could hear the sizzling sounds of breaking enchantments. Soldiers and adventurers parted to let her through, Alyris joining her waiting guard.

The hall was broad and large, the stone harsh and gray, magical lights flickering with some of the tremors and impacts. It felt far above now, all the chaos, and still, many of the creatures had found their way down.

She looked at Heron, his expression strained, his eyes cold.

Malkorn she found leaning against the shelter walls, his large arms crossed as he waited.

Valarienne and Retribution stood among the soldiers, ready to fight.

Ruler was not present, though he often left.

Alyris found the white and silver mask of Syrithis, taking in the sight as she forced herself not to smile. *Syrithis.*

She closed her eyes for a moment and breathed, then opened them.

"Monsters are knocking at our gates. They will soon break through," she said and summoned her silver magic, tendrils moving around her as power flowed through her armor. She felt something strange from among the crowd but ignored it for the time being.

Everyone was quiet, all the attention on her.

"This is our home, so let us kill them."

Cheers resounded all around, silenced only when the gates shook again, the last of the enchantments sizzling out.

Alyris focused on her own magic as she felt the spells appear all around her. "Hold!" She shouted. Hold your ground! Imperials!"

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Ilea looked out onto the broken fields beyond the capital. She saw the steady light of the Primordial Flame around her, felt its heat, its power. She saw the crawling creatures of the void, all scrambling towards her, like moths towards a flame.

Her arms raised, she summoned the Pyroclastic Flow, creating a wall of burning smoke and ash. An avalanche that reached out into the wracked landscape, incinerating and suffocating all that walked within. Turning her head, she teleported across the city and to the other side, kilometers away. Only few machines remained now, still looking through the rubble or fighting the many void creatures appearing throughout.

She flew above the destroyed city wall and breathed out. Arcane lightning snapped at her, the energy flowing through her at a slow pace, some of the mana returned to her own.

Summoning her flame above herself, she watched the lands move, crawling monsters of the void, led away from their destinations and towards her ash, and fire, all of them burning in her creation.

Ilea let her fires rage as she opened up a gate next to her and flew through, appearing above Riverwatch. Smoke flowed into existence below her and spread far throughout the city. There were no survivors above ground anymore, only creatures of the void. The surrounding forests had been reduced to only small pockets and lines of trees, few still untouched by the arcane lightning and the flares of solar fire.

Ilea looked eastward at the crawling creatures when the sun flickered in the sky.

And vanished.

She could see the wave of magic, all present, all consuming, as if a wave large and endless as an ocean flowed down into this very realm. Her lips trembled and Sunbound Creation activated as she watched from within her creation.

Mountains shook as tremors moved through the very air. The ground split, deep and webbing cracks spreading out as far as she could see. What remained of Riverwatch and its surrounding forests slowly sunk down into the earth, trees and rivers swallowed by the trembling land as new hills and mountains formed by moving earth and rock.

The primordial flame burned against the excess mana that Ilea saw and felt all around.

Mere seconds later, it had passed.

One sun remained in the sky and arcane storms lashed out into the ground.

Before her stretched the lands of the Plains, and yet she thought that she was in the North.

She felt something strange then, watching the wisps of space all around. Moving in patterns that she had never seen. And in the skies above, she saw the very fabric split, shattering with waves of magic. Ilea's breathing picked up as she watched tendrils of flesh reach out into this reality. Horrors from beyond, massive, like the creatures she had fought in Kohr, pulling themselves into this realm. She could feel their dense magic from here, and she saw the spatial cracks kilometers in size, more appearing in the distance.

A memory of the fissure created by Adam Strand came to her mind, and she couldn't help but laugh, unable to process the emotions that she felt.

A grin on her face, she took comfort in the marks left throughout the world. Her friends and allies, still alive, and hidden in their shelters. Ker Velor had brought ruin and death to their lands, but they were still here.

She was still here.

Taking in a deep breath, Ilea looked at the first of the massive beasts, when the fabric shifted next to her.

She smiled. *"Finally decided to join the fun? We have a lot of work to do."*

Violence did not turn to look, before she realized it was not Violence at all.

Space shifted to her right and another of the Fae appeared.

White flame slowly formed before her, dozens of the small creatures appearing every passing moment, flowing into the growing fires.

The white flame of creation encompassed all that she could see before her. A pulse of space magic rushed out, more pure and perfect than she had ever felt before.

She bit her lip and felt tears running down her cheeks.

A thousand voices spoke into her mind.

"We are the Fae. Our ways are those of life. Of space. And fire. We have found much to see, in the lands of Elos, and we hold these stories dearly to our hearts. Know that, Ilea Spears, Lilith of Ravenhall, that we shall do, what our ways permit."