

# A clash of Knights

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They had only been to sea for a few suns, but the small Elezen kept looking wistfully out the porthole in their shared cabin. Was she right about her hunch of her Ser? Was this gallant knight, the one who saved her from a life of suffering and misery, the one who gives so freely of not only house and home to a poor lowborn, but also gives money to her family, was she truly one of the evil few? How could it be? It didn't make sense, but Istrone couldn't deny the signs. She'd have to be blind to not see them. No, there had to be something more to it.

She sighed deeply and looked over towards the Rava. Her quill hadn't been set down since they did their morning exercises. The Viera was ever dutiful in making sure everything was being done according to meticulous plan. While she had to relinquish some trust and control to the ship's captain for once, Istrone could easily see how much this bothered her Ser. Yet, the Viera knew her place. As long as their liege was safe, that's all that mattered. Her eyes shifted now towards one of the two blades that the Ser had brought along.

It even felt as though a wickedness was emanating from the weapon. The blade itself, as long as Istrone was tall. That was one of the biggest signs, both literally and figuratively. Sure, there were some from The Holy See who traditionally used such a weapon, but it was in ever of The Fury's hallowed service. They also felt... differently. No, this was a much more sinister blade. There was something cold about it that the Elezen couldn't quite place.

Then, there were the scars. Wounds that normally should have killed someone. A grave wound across her midriff, merely scar tissue now. A scar lining in a ring around her neck, reminiscent of a noose having done its job. Yet, if it had, would she still walk among them? No, she should be six fulms under. Each of those scars alone should have killed her, but still she stood. She seemed not even phased by these wounds when many Templar-Knights have been felled by less, not to mention being maimed beyond service.

Yet, here Ashlyn stood. Not just proud, but almost in defiance of the natural order. There was something unnatural about her Ser. Something that caused her to still stand when many would fall, something that would cause her the ability to wield such a wicked weapon. Yet, the wonder burned in her. Would she still follow the Rava? Would she still study under her? What would cause such an evil being to follow a princess as pure as their liege. Nothing added up to the Elezen.

Finally she couldn't take it anymore. "Ser, pray forgive me if I'm speaking out of order. I know we are to be relaxing right now, but may I ask a few questions?" Her light voice rang out within their rather spacious accommodations. This sudden question caused Ashlyn's ear to twitch. "Oh? You know I am fine with you asking things. After all, we can't learn anything if we never inquire about the star around us." She responded warmly. This was the Ser she knew. This couldn't have been one of the accursed ones, right? One of the Dark Knights of legend? Istrone averted her eyes for a moment while she thought about how best to tackle this.

Back but a year ago, she would have stupidly blurted out the question bluntly. Yet, in her time with Ashlyn, the lowborn had already began to learn tact and the social graces of the highborn. Had she not known any different, she would have expected Ashlyn to have been born as one of them. The Viera kept smiling brightly towards her young squire. "Well, it's.... about you...." She asked finally.

This made Ashlyn practically freeze in place. Her ears were unnaturally rigid as the bunny began thinking about what this could be regarding. Sure, she's been asked things before, but usually it

was directly related to their training. "Well, I... am rather curious what you wish to know Istrone. You know I have nothing to hide from you." She replied softly. Truth be told, she hid quite a bite from the Elezen.

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She did indeed hide the true reason as to her strength. She hid the source as to her scars. She hid all of this to protect her protegee. She did so to let the girl live in ignorance of what the Ser truly was. Taking a deep breath, Ashlyn expected for the worse. After a few moments more of silence, what felt to be an eternity. The young Elezen spoke.

"Ser, I will admit I am young. I am still only fifteen twelvemoon old, I still have five more twelvemoon before I become an adult, let alone a knight. Forgive me if I am out of line in this but I must ask..." At first, the girl began soft, almost coyly. Then, as she spoke the next part, her gaze hardened. "Why do you live when your scars say you shouldn't?" This question burned the hottest in the girl's mind.

Ashlyn was taken aback. Where did this come from? "Istrone, I've... I..." She knew that she couldn't turn around and tell the Elezen to not worry. To not think anything of it right after telling her that she had nothing to hide. Clearing her throat, the Viera thought about how best to answer. "Istrone... You must understand a few things first..." She began softly, her gaze was almost motherly to her charge. Yet, the Elezen knew some bullshit was about to come her way.

"Save it Ser, I've heard lies before." she stated softly. She knew this kind of talk would only go to mentioning her age, mentioning wanting to protect her. This was all the same she had heard time and time again from her parents. "I may not be an adult, but I am training to be a knight under you, am I not? I've earned the right to have your respect, have I not?" She stated proudly. Her Ishgardian heritage showing in the very way this smaller girl held her head up. Ashlyn went to speak once more, but then Istrone went on the attack, her youth getting the best of her.

"Ser, are you a dark knight? Are you one of the heretics that we were warned about? Are you one of... the dark ones who haunted our lands, who slew the Templar-Knights, who acted like they were above-" As she was going, the Elezen's voice was shaking, but she never got to finish. "Enough!" Called out the Rava. "No Ser! I will not let you squirm away from this. I need you to be honest with me. I need you to tell me the truth!"

To this, Ashlyn slammed her fist against the desk. "Enough I said!" Her voice rang out firm. Standing up, the Rava merely gives an order. Her warm demeanor gone. "Clean and sharpen my Thorn." The order came through firmly. It was clear that the Rava was intent on avoiding this discussion as long as possible. Standing up, the Viera walked to the door. "But Ser! I-" Though, before she got another word out, Ashlyn snapped. "You heard me Squire!"

The seriousness with which she spoke the title. Istrone knew it was pointless to pursue this longer. Maybe she could get some answers from her Ser's lovers who are coming with. "Yes Ser. Sorry Ser for speaking out of line..." Her voice remained low, and the Elezen kept looking towards the floor. With that, the Viera opened the door. "I'm going up on deck, I need fresh air. Come find me when you are done, we need to get back practicing your basic form." With that, the Rava departed and Istrone remained quiet.

Still lost in her thought, the Elezen realized, even if it turned out to be true. She still wanted to follow Ashlyn to the ends of the star. She knew that the Rava was far more than just what the legends would tell of her kin. There had to be significantly more, like the truth about the history of the Dragonsong War, but like that, this one is keen on keeping the truth hidden. Istrone wouldn't let that stop her, no. She will see this khani and girlfriend... maybe even the Princess may know.