

Chapter 12

*The Northern
Spear*

The arrival of the Spearhead was met with much fanfare and cheer, regardless of the now cloudy sky. The orchestra performed admirably despite the change in cellists, and Sivan was quite pleased to overhear comments of praise from the nobles gathered around below him. The hard work he'd poured into organizing this event had paid off.

Sivan's father had built a raised platform a few years ago to make announcements to the commoners. The earl was at the top, now sitting after giving a rather lengthy speech to the returning sailors about the glory of Grenaldian expedition, the dawn of a new age, opportunities for the ready, and on and so forth. Sivan was positioned on a lower wing of the platform, just high enough to remind the crowd of his status, but low enough to be shown off.

"I have returned, my lord," the breathless voice of Nereus announced quietly from behind him. Sivan turned around to see

the boy on the stairs leading up to his wing. He had changed into new clothes, likely due to the aftermath of his time in the torrent of Eliza's kitchen.

"Ah, you made it." Sivan smiled at him. "So you wanted to get a good look at the Spearhead, hm?"

Nereus blinked quickly, the faintest hint of confusion on his face. "I returned to serve you, my lord."

Sivan sighed and shook his head. "You don't have to serve me every second of the day, Nereus," he said gently.

His attendant huffed quietly, and Sivan did not need to look at him to know he was pouting.

The sailors began to disembark from the ship, streaming out onto the docks in perfect formation. This was Sivan's cue to begin waving, and he did as such, greeting each and every sailor politely as they walked by.

Sivan Montgomery was not an experienced youth. Every moment of his life had been set and scheduled by his father and tutors. This left little time for the frivolous matters of the heart and body, which left the young lord completely unaware of the beauty he had grown into. His copper skin glowed even in the overcast sky. A dark silver vest with a flowing trail and a high collar perfectly complemented his light silver hair, cropped short except for a fringe which cascaded down the side of his face in elegant waves. His eyes were golden kindness and held within them a well of warmth and grace.

Sivan was a beautiful young lord from a wealthy family, nearly of age to marry, and this did not go unnoticed by the sailors who streamed past the Montgomery's platform. A few of them even broke their strict march and stumbled to return the wave and smile stupidly at the beautiful lord. Sivan was not aware of the effect he held on these people, and so he simply continued to wave politely as he had been instructed.

A very quiet noise of disapproval was coming from his attendant with every returned wave from a sailor. Sivan looked back at Nereus and found the boy was scowling at the sailors as they rounded the side of the platform.

“Nereus, behave,” Sivan warned.

“I’m not doing anything, my lord,” the boy grumbled.

“Is that right?” Sivan laughed quietly. He turned partially to face his attendant. “You cannot reserve your smiles for me alone.”

“Yes, I can,” Nereus said obstinately. “You are the only one who deserves them.”

Sivan wasn’t sure if he should laugh or cry. Honestly, this boy was far too attached to him for his own good. “That is not true, and even if it were, that is not how the world works. Sometimes you must put on a pleasant face even if you do not feel happy.”

Nereus simply made another noise of disapproval, and Sivan could not hold back the laugh that escaped him.

“Come here, you have flour in your hair,” he said, beckoning the boy to come closer. Nereus did as he was told and stepped forward to allow Sivan to dust away the remnant flour. “So, if you must, reserve your real smiles just for me, and come up with another smile to show the rest of the world.”

Nereus looked up at him, face pink, green eyes sparkling with something Sivan did not have the understanding to recognize.

“My lord-“

A mighty crack of lightning shook the sky above, forcing all in attendance to look up in fear. Thunder followed almost instantly after.

The dark storm Nereus had predicted rolled in supernaturally fast. Grey overcast clouds turned a sickly, dark hue, and

opened a sudden deluge upon the crowd below.

“Where is your umbrella?” Nereus shouted over the rumbling thunder. He was frantically looking for it, desperate to get his lord out of the rain.

But it was too late. Sivan was already drenched, along with the rest of those in attendance. The nobles and sailors rushed to find cover from the sudden storm, but Sivan stood dazed, mesmerized by the strange fog that was now rolling in over the port.

“Wh-what is that?” Nereus breathed, a mixture of fear and awe in his voice.

The boy’s eyes were keen, as Sivan was just barely able to make out the shape of a massive ship emerging from the fog. It was three times the size of the Spearhead, a hulking beast of a vessel. Sivan had never seen a ship that large, and it was even stranger that it had not been sighted on the horizon earlier. It had not been foggy mere minutes ago, and the ship would’ve had to approach at unnatural speed to have traveled so quickly. It was like the ship had arrived with the fog, seemingly out of nowhere and just as ominous.

“It’s an Uncharted battleship! Everyone to your stations! Now!” Earl Tristan Montgomery shouted, his voice carrying clear over the panic that was brewing below.

His father’s order snapped Sivan out of the cloying fear that was crawling under his skin. He reached at his side, but his swords were not there. He had no reason to carry them today, or at least he thought he didn’t this morning.

The ship came into full view, the fog seeping out into the docks and streets. It was covered in huge barnacles and writhing tentacles that seemed to be searching for anything nearby to take hold of. It bore no sails, no means of propulsion. It was just a hulking mass of rotting steel and aquatic tumors. Yet somehow it had sailed here.

The front of the ship suddenly split open, right down the seam of the bow, the metal peeling back on its own. Inside was pitch black, and Sivan just knew there was something dark waiting inside. A thousand shattering screeches pierced the ears of the onlookers, making them all shrink back in pain and horror. Uncharted creatures spilled out from the open maw of the ship and descended on the waiting sailors and onlookers.

Battle broke out all around them, Grenaldian sailors clashing with ferocious Uncharted demons. Sivan turned to Nereus, whose face was shocked and pale. "I don't have my swords," he said, golden eyes meeting green in a shared moment of dread.

With those words, Nereus jumped into action. "Find safety! I'll get them for you!" he shouted before dashing down the stairs of the platform.

Sivan attempted to follow after him, but was stopped by his father grabbing his arm. "Where are you going? You are not fighting in this battle!" the earl bellowed, his face a stern mask of fear. He led Sivan down the platform, his grip firm.

"But father! Nereus went to the manor to—"

"I don't care where that brat went! You!" His father pointed to a tall young recruit with deep copper skin and dark gray hair.

The man stood straight, saluting the earl properly. "Yessir!"

"Make sure my son finds safety," he said. His father drew a longsword and faced the enemy ship.

"But father! I can fight!" Sivan protested, but he was ignored as the earl began shouting commands at other sailors.

"Follow me, my lord," the tall sailor said, offering his hand for Sivan to take.

Sivan ignored the hand and marched off towards the Montgomery estate. He knew this would be where the sailor took him, so he refused to give the man the satisfaction of leading him anywhere.

Sivan made it back to his room safely, but he had been locked inside, much to his consternation. He could hear the battle against the Uncharted raging at the docks even from his closed window. The storm only grew wilder and more ferocious the longer time went on. The dark clouds completely obscured the sun, turning the afternoon into a dim twilight broken up by flashes of brutal lightning.

His swords were still in his room. Nereus had not made it back to the manor after all.

Worry churned in Sivan's gut. His mind cycled through a million deadly outcomes for his attendant. The boy had some skill with a blade, Sivan had made sure of that, but he was nowhere near strong enough to fend for himself against this tide of danger. Sivan had no real experience himself with the Uncharted, but he had been trained to use a sword since he was young. Despite what his father thought about him, Sivan knew he was ready to fight.

His anger and frustration grew with every passing minute. During all this chaos, no sailor would stop to help a scrawny attendant. The only chance the boy had was Sivan, and he was locked away in a tower.

Leaning down near his door, Sivan checked to see if the tall sailor who had escorted him was still guarding his door. The shadow of two boots confirmed that the man was still there, so Sivan turned towards the tumultuous storm outside his window.

He flung open the doors to the short veranda outside, wind and rain blowing into his room.

"My lord, is everything alright?" the sailor outside his door called.

Sivan didn't waste any time and ran out onto the veranda. He was on the third floor of the manor, the courtyard vast below

him. There was a trellis against the wall on either side, and Sivan decided to take his chances and use it as a ladder. He kicked his legs over the railing and attached himself to the trellis covered in slippery vines.

The wet leaves made his grip precarious, and the criss-crossed wood groaned under his weight. He carefully made his descent, praying to whichever gods were listening that he'd get out of this without any broken bones.

"My lord! That is dangerous! What are you doing?!" the panicked voice of the tall sailor shouted out from above.

"Someone has to help him!" Sivan shouted back.

"Help who?!"

Of course. No one cared about Nereus other than him. Now more than ever, Sivan had to come to the boy's aid. He tried to hurry his climb down, but his foot slipped on a vine and he began to fall backwards. Sivan grasped at the trellis, attempting to regain his footing, but part of the wooden trellis ended up coming with him, and they both fell backwards with a mighty thud.

The wind was knocked out of Sivan, but he was not seriously injured. He coughed a few times, blinking rapidly against the downpour slipping past his spectacles.

"My lord!! Are you hurt?!" the sailor still on the veranda called out from above.

Sivan ignored him and sat up as quickly as he could. He tossed the trellis off his body and scrambled to his feet, heaving as his breath started to return to him.

He heard footsteps from above fade back into his room, and Sivan knew he would not have long before the man caught up with him. Taking another steadying breath, he began running towards the kitchen.

If anyone else knew were Nereus ended up, it would surely be Eliza.

Sivan made his way towards the kitchen, and was horrified to find an Uncharted beast dead at the entrance. The sword Sivan had given Nereus for his thirteenth birthday was embedded into the thing's chest. Sivan tried to pull out the sword, but it was too firmly stuck into the blood-stained torso. Pitch-colored Uncharted blood had been spilled everywhere, but it was mixed with a red shock of presumed human blood. Cold fear drained into Sivan's chest. The kitchen was a disaster, broken dishes everywhere, dark scorch marks marred the walls. It was a far cry from the orderly chaos of Eliza's cooking. A battle had been fought here, but the cook was nowhere to be found.

The red blood left a trail in a direction outside the kitchen. It was just barely visible now after the rain had washed away most of it. But it gave Sivan a direction, and he began running.

"My lord!" The tall sailor had found him and was now chasing him. But even after falling Sivan was still plenty fast. He let his feet carry him until he reached a fork under an awning. One path went back to the battleground that the docks had become. The other led up a flight of stairs, towards the watchtower of the estate.

"Lord Montgomery!" a breathless voice called from behind him. "Please wait! It is not safe for you to be out here!"

The sailor had caught up to him, and Sivan's frustration had reached a breaking point. He turned on him, drawing one of his swords. In a flash he had the tip pointed at the man's throat. There was no real threat in his expression, but Sivan needed the weapon to show he was serious.

"Give me your name!" Sivan snapped.

The tall sailor opened and closed his mouth a few times, his mind stuttering over the sudden threat from the young lord who's public persona was marketed as polite and unassertive.

"R-Renalt Dubois."

“Renalt, you will not take me back there. You can either help me look for my attendant or get out of my way.” Sivan’s words were firm, and his golden eyes burned with the gravity of the situation.

Renalt held up his hands and backed up a step, surprise clear on his face. Apparently he had not expected Sivan to actually put up a fight. The threat had stunned him into silence, and he merely watched as Sivan turned his back to him and entered the tower.

Then there was a shrill screech from above, and Sivan immediately began running towards it. The stairs circled the watchtower, bringing Sivan upwards until he ran into the Uncharted monster that had made the ungodly sound.

Pale yellow scales armored the beast. It looked like a massively overgrown serpent, huge scales forming ridges of gold before dissolving into frills of spikes. The thing could have looked elegant swimming through the blue ocean, but in the gray deluge it appeared unnatural and sickly.

The beast hissed at a pair backed into a corner of the watchtower. Sivan’s chest clenched as he recognized the two as Nereus and Eliza. Nereus was crouched on the ground, his eyes wide with fear. He was doing his best to protect the woman behind him, but he had been forced to leave his sword in the previous Uncharted he had killed, and he was now brandishing a iron pan as a poor weapon.

Eliza was collapsed on the ground, keeping a tourniquet bound around her right knee. Her leg was gone from her upper calf down. Sivan now knew where the red blood had come from.

The yellow serpent attacked, and Nereus was just able to deflect the gaping maw of sharp black teeth with a hit from the iron pan. The creature hissed again, now angry, and snapped the pan out of the boy’s hands.

Sivan acted quickly. He drew his other sword and ran forward, slashing with both blades at the back of the beast. His strike was true, but the armored scales stopped his swords from piercing it directly. He managed to chop off some of the frilly spikes, which only served in angering the Uncharted creature further.

“My lord!” Nereus called, voice a mix of relief and dismay.

The serpent attacked Sivan, and he deflected it by crossing both blades in front of him. The yellow beast snapped at him, the foul breath of its mouth invading Sivan’s senses. He braced one arm and released the other, freeing a blade and driving it upwards through the creature’s jaw and into its brain. Holding the speared beast up by his sword, Sivan released his other sword and slashed down through the serpent’s soft underbelly, spilling open its stinking guts and black blood.

Sivan dropped the sword still embedded in the Uncharted’s head and stood over it, panting as he caught his breath. Everything was silent except for his breathing, the downpour outside, and the distant horror happening down at the docks.

Unbeknownst to Sivan, Nereus and Renalt, who had followed him up there, were both transfixed by the young lord. He was covered in black blood, chest heaving, golden eyes burning fiercely with the heat of battle. He was the most beautiful and most dangerous person either young man had seen before, and both had truly fallen in love with him then and there.

Nereus was the first to move, scrambling up from the floor to hug Sivan tightly despite the blood he was drenched in. “My lord! You came!” He sobbed pitifully, clinging to his lord with trembling hands.

Sivan sighed, finally coming down from fighting the serpent. He used his free hand to pat the boy’s head reassuringly. “Of course, I couldn’t just leave you, now could I?”

Nereus leaned into his touch, his eyes shimmering brightly with tears. He looked like he wanted to say something, but he did not have the words to voice what it was he felt.

“What the hell did that piss tart of an earl do to provoke the Uncharted like this?” Eliza grumbled from the floor.

“My gods, Mrs. Day! What happened to your leg?” Sivan cried, kneeling down next to her to inspect the wound. Her foot and calf had been torn away, her flesh in tatters around broken bone. She had been smart enough to affix a tourniquet before she bled out, but she required immediate medical attention.

“The one in the kitchen got my leg before the brat finally managed to kill it. Gods-!” She grimaced, clutching her thigh.

“Excuse me, my lord!” The tall sailor behind them piped up. “I have medical training, if you’d allow me to fetch supplies I could treat her leg.”

“Hurry up then!” Eliza snapped at him. Sivan nodded at Renalt, and he disappeared down the stairs.

“My lord, what is going on down there?” Nereus asked as Renalt attended to Eliza’s leg.

“Honestly, I’m not sure. I was carted back here not long after you ran off,” he replied, joining the boy in looking out over the battle ensuing on the docks below.

Nereus turned his head down, frowning. “I am sorry for leaving you, my lord. I just wanted to be helpful.”

Sivan looked at the boy for a long moment. He wasn’t sure what drove his attendant’s devotion towards him. Sure, he had picked him up off the streets after he had saved Sivan’s life, but the fervor in which Nereus conducted his duties was almost fanatical. It could not be expected of an attendant with proper status and training, yet this vagrant boy conducted every task given to him with an unparalleled passion. Considering the situation, it

was not always a good thing.

“It is alright, but you acted too rashly,” Sivan chided. “I thought you wanted to serve me. How are you going to do that when you’re not there?”

Nereus looked up at him, eyes sparkling once again, his mouth open with a confession he didn’t know how to phrase.

Both of their attentions were drawn towards the window. A red flare shot up into the sky, reaching past the deluge to explode into a bright white star.

“That’s the signal to retreat,” Renalt gasped from behind them. He had finished dressing Eliza’s leg, and was gazing at the flare signal in the sky, his deep copper face a little ashen at the sight. “The— There’s another port on the southern side of the island. That’s where the evacuation vessels are.”

“Let’s get the fuck out of here then,” Eliza huffed, struggling to stand up with Nereus’s help.

“Indeed, let’s go,” Sivan agreed. He walked over to the Uncharted beast he had killed and took hold of his sword still embedded in it. Bracing a foot on its head, Sivan pulled out the blade, black blood trailing from the end.



The four of them made their way to the other side of the island. The wind and rain continued to batter at them, making their progress slow and difficult. Because they were closer in height to Eliza than Renalt, Sivan and Nereus braced the cook on either side to assist her walking.

The southern port was in sight. Most of the evacuation vessels had left already, but a great hulking battleship was still

docked in the bay. Its sails were being hoisted, the sailors on board readying the ship for departure.

“The last ship! It’s leaving. Everyone, hurry!” Sivan shouted at the others, and they all attempted to hasten their pace.

A great wooden bridge was built into the side of the island, giving them an easy entry point for the ship. They had just made it to the foot of the bridge when a huge explosion was heard from the north. It was such a large blast that it shook the island, forcing them all to hold on to the railing or each other to keep their balance.

“What was that?” Sivan breathed, dreading the answer.

“I think...I think they found the gunpowder stores in the academy. If that blew up...not much of it will be left,” the tall sailor said, his voice grave.

“Let’s get out of here then,” Eliza grunted, pain evident in her voice. She was in no condition to walk, but she had little choice now.

Something like an arrow shot through the water below and hit the base of the bridge. The structure shook violently, causing the four of them to stagger. Sivan looked over the railing and saw an emerald snake shooting through the water unnaturally fast. His first thought was that it was another Uncharted beast like the one he had killed earlier. But then it stopped and raised itself above the water. A dark-skinned woman with shockingly white hair emerged from the water. She was wearing armor, streamlined to let her swim with ease. And from the waist down her body turned into the winding tail of a siren.

Magic crackled around her, and she drew an arrow from the quiver strapped around her chest. Her bow was large and powerful, and as she docked the arrow it crackled with white electric magic.

None of them had time to react properly. Sivan was about to

shout at them to move when he was yanked forward by Renalt. The arrow's magic pierced the spot Sivan had been standing in, cleaving the bridge clear in two. The two halves of the bridge wobbled precariously, the wood creaking in its death throes.

Sivan and Renalt had been separated from Nereus and Eliza. "Nereus!" Sivan shouted, reaching out a hand to perhaps drag the boy across with him. But the gap between them was too wide. Sivan could not take hold of his attendant, and neither could he could jump across.

"The boat is leaving, my lord!" Renalt shouted frantically, pulling at his arm to make Sivan look at the ship.

Sivan saw it was true. The last escape vessel was now in a hurry to escape the siren that had found the southern port. The anchor was being hoisted, their chance of leaving the island narrowing.

Another arrow crackling with magic hit the bridge, further making it less stable. Eliza threw up a magic barrier, but it only managed to cover her side of the bridge. The side Sivan was on had been left exposed.

"My lord!" Nereus shouted from the other side. He looked like he wanted to jump, but Eliza stopped him by yanking his collar firmly.

Sivan wanted to do something. He felt like he had to do something. Nereus had been his one and only friend during his time on this island, and he could not just leave him here like this.

But Renalt's grip on his arm hardened. "It's too late for them! Quickly, we have to board the ship before this bridge collapses!"

"No!" Sivan shouted, resisting the sailor. Renalt had no choice but to restrain Sivan, overpowering him and dragging him away from Nereus and Eliza. "Nereus! I will return for you!" he sobbed. "Find somewhere safe to hide and wait for me! I promise I will not abandon you here!"

The tears that had been welling up in Nereus's eyes were now spilling out, but the boy nodded. "Yes, my lord!" he cried.

Sivan was dragged onto the last Grenaldian ship to leave the Northern Spear intact. He watched miserably as his beloved attendant grew smaller and smaller in the distance until he could no longer be seen.

He left that island with every intention of fulfilling that promise and returning for Nereus. But that attack on the Spear had been the beginning of the war between Grenaldia and the Uncharted, and promises were not as easy to keep when a war was raging around him.