

Garen tugged on the straps of his gauntlets, checking to ensure that they were secured to his wrists. While it was hard to fathom, there had been a time when he wasn't a member of the Dauntless Vanguard. Those days were full of merciless training, including a loss of armor here and there.

As he further inspected his armor, a young page ducked into the room. The sound of his voice snapped the warrior out of his thoughts.

"Lady Crownguard wishes to speak to you," he said. Garen stood from the wooden stool, towering over the boy.

"Thank you for the warning. Girls can be scary, you know," Garen responded, cracking a small smile. The page seemed to be unamused. He turned heel and left, disappearing out of Garen's line of sight. Garen's smile vanished simultaneously.

Garen pondered whether or not the joke had been too vague for the boy to understand. Then again, no one knew Lux as he did.

To the citizens of Demacia, Luxanna Crownguard was a precious soul that embodied their spirits. She was a shining beacon of hope. Of course, she was much more fragile than Garen, and was often coddled by everyone despite being an adult. Still, she remained an important figure of Demacia.

To Garen, she was, and always would be, a child. One that shared the same blood as him. There was no doubt that he loved her as a sibling, but there were far too many times that he found himself regarding her as somewhat of an unequal companion. He might even call her dangerous.

The mighty knight made his way out of the preparation room and made his way down the hall. There was one door ajar.

He turned his body sideways, slipping into the room. Inside, his sister was seated on a cot, her staff laid neatly across her lap.

"You called for me?" The knight asked, his gaze calm and collected.

"I did," she replied, not looking up from her staff. "You didn't have to come right away."

"It would be rude for a man to stand idly by when his sister calls, you know."

“Since when were you concerned over being rude or proper?” Lux finally turned her attention to her brother.

“I have always been concerned about my attitude, Luxanna.” Garen shifted his weight to one side, narrowing his eyes. “What have you called me here for?”

“You’re going to attack a Noxian camp on the edge of the forest, right? With the new guys? Don’t you need help—”

“You are *not* coming,” Garen said sharply. “My men can handle this.”

Lux opened her mouth, but quickly shut it, staring at her brother. Tension hung in the air for a matter of seconds.

“That was all I wanted to know,” she hummed quietly as her gaze turned back to her staff. “Come home safe.”

“I will,” he replied. He stood there, watching his sister. A part of him wanted to say something to her. He trusted her war instincts just as much as he valued his own. However, to her misfortune, she had been asked to stay behind.

And, as all Demacians knew, orders were orders.

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Nighttime had fallen by the time Garen and his squadron reached the location of the Noxian encampment. Fortunately, despite the long trek, many of his men were still energetic and ready to battle. He expected nothing less. Even as novices to battle, they were Demacians; men of many talents and few weaknesses.

The mission was simple: Drive the Noxian soldiers out of the territory. Dead or alive.

Garen signaled to his men as they charged into the camp, slashing and hacking at their foes, their golden armor shining in the moonlight. The mission started off as planned.

Then... Why were his men dropping like flies? He swung his sword in an arc, watching the steel pierce through the armor of his foe. Beside him, a Noxian soldier swiftly decapitated another Demacian soldier. Garen spun around, extending his sword away from his body. It sliced

through the armor of several men, including the killer. They fell in unison, the clatter of their armor ringing in Garen's ears.

The sound of battle was starting to deafen the warrior. He let his sword fall to his side, his focus slipping. What was this? The feeling of— No. Garen was a warrior of the Dauntless Vanguard. Defeat was not an option.

Garen was so immersed in his self-rallying that he didn't hear a soldier coming up behind him. The opposing warrior raised their sword above their head, ready to deal a devastating blow.

"Garen!" Lux cried out, holding her staff before her. Garen barely had time to turn his head and meet his sister's stare before he saw it: light forming from her staff.

Time melted away. Everything was in slow motion. The Noxian's blade met his armor, getting stuck just before piercing Garen's skin. The light coming from Lux's staff was immense. It burst out before her, flying at the Noxian and burning his skin. He fell to the ground beside Garen, his backside seared as if the wrath of a thousand suns had been unleashed onto him.

Garen could not wrap his head around what he had just witnessed. Lux dropped her staff to the ground, running to his side. She knelt beside him, shaking him, repeating his name over and over. He ignored her, his eyes locked onto the staff. There was only one word to describe what he had witnessed.

Magic.

Lux's magic.

As Lux continued to shake him, Garen slowly pushed himself off of the ground, surveying the battlefield. The remaining Noxians had seen Lux's power and were fleeing. Many dead from both sides laid on the ground, unmoving.

"Garen," Lux repeated for what felt like the hundredth time. "Garen, please, tell me that you are okay."

"You were asked to stay back in Demacia," Garen said, his voice laced with anger. "I told you, we had this covered, Luxanna."

"You were a liar, Garen." Lux looked as if she was fighting back tears.

“And?”

Garen reached up for the sword stuck in his armor, yanking it out. He cast it aside, letting it slam against a dead Noxian soldier.

“You had a choice, Lux,” Garen growled. “Listen to orders, or ignore them.”

“I chose to save your life, Garen! Surely you understand! If you had a choice--”

“If I had a choice, which I did, I would follow orders!” He shouted. “I always choose Demacia.”

As Garen turned away, he wondered if he would choose Demacia first, even if it came to her. He knew the answer.

After all, it was always his choice.