

Garen tugged against the straps of his gauntlets, making sure 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. He lost armor here and there.

A young page ducked into the room. "Lady Crownguard wishes to speak to you," he said.

"Thank you for the warning. Girls can be scary, you know," Garen responded, smiling. The page was unamused. He turned heel and left. Garen's smile vanished simultaneously.

Garen pondered whether the joke had been too mature 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; a shining beacon of hope. Of course, she was fragile, and was often coddled by everyone despite being an adult. Still, she was an important figure of Demacia.

To Garen, she was- and always would be- a child. There was no doubt that he loved her as a sibling, but there were far too many times that he found himself double checking that she shared their parents' blood.

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

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

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

"I did," she replied, her eyes on her staff. "You're fast."

"It would be rude for a man to prolong a meeting when a woman calls, you know."

"Since when were you concerned over being rude?" 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 returned 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 battle techniques just as much as he valued his own. However, 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 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. They charged into the camp, rushing at their foes with swords and spears at the ready. The mission started off as planned.

Then... Where did his army go? He swung his sword in an arc, watching the steel pierce through armor of an enemy. Beside him, a Demacian soldier’s head was swiftly decapitated.

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 battle was deafening the warrior. He dropped his sword 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 immersed in his self-rallying, and deeply so. He didn't hear the Noxian sneaking up behind him. The foe was 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. Garen ducked down. Light that had formed within Lux's staff burst out before her, flying at the Noxian. It pierced through his armor like a butterknife. 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.

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. Bodies lined the forest clearing.

"Garen," Lux cried. "Garen, please, tell me that you are okay."

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

"You were a liar, Garen." Lux was fighting back tears.

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

"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 to follow 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.