

A Flash of Insight

Dr. Zartali Kätta was working late at night, as had become customary ever since Queen Vaz noticed her work. It was storming outside. The weather in the capital had stronger seasons than other cities, despite the fact that the kingdom was spread over flat terrain. Nobody was able to explain why.

Her upcoming presentation needed to be exceptional. She wasn't completely sure about how the queen heard about her, but she imagined it must have been a mention of her name coupled with the juicier parts of her contributions to Dr. Vats' work. However it had happened, she was not used to managing this amount of pressure. She knew her body would give up eventually.

And so it did.

That night, she found herself in the Blue Palace. The place was unrecognizable to her, but she knew she was on one of the higher floors. In her dream, she was working on a project. Not hers. It was another project. She couldn't recognize the letters in her blueprints. It was a language she had never seen.

Looking out the window, she saw a vast field covered in rubble. Warriors, some of which were human, ran into the horizon, fighting enemies that appeared out of thin air. Bodies fell to the ground, only to slowly disappear, as if dragged somewhere beyond.

She felt that this was partially her fault.

A raspy, exhausted voice spoke from behind. It was the voice of the king. The blue kingdom hadn't had a king in power for generations. He asked for good news. She did not have any.

"They are starting to break through the walls," he said. "We didn't have time to train all the rooks to fix them. It's hard to build with bricks that we cannot see."

She pretended to think about what he was saying. She pretended she understood, but she didn't manage to hold back from asking: "What is happening?"

"We're losing. They're appearing inside the palace now. I think I am in check."

He seemed to have accepted his fate.

"I'm more worried about the people."

He appeared to be a good king. Maybe his heart had mellowed by the thought of his oncoming death. It was hard to know for certain when she'd known him for two minutes.

He stared at her, silently. Pensively. He was expecting something. She didn't know what it was.

"That's what those texts are about, is it not?"

Dr. Kätta looked back at the work beside her, searching for a paper she could understand. There were symbols that were too different from the rest. Blueprints labeled in another language. What, exactly, were these about?

"This isn't the first time. We've known this for a time, now. Not enough time. Never enough time."

"I'm sorry, I don't think I understand..."

"I don't expect you to. You've done enough for us already. We can only hope they'll leave us alone again. Then someone else can begin working. We can't put a stop to them, but I know that someone else will."

She stared at her hands. She was not in a different body. It was hers. The king was talking to another person, but the message was hers.

"We must ensure that we are not forgotten. We must ensure that someone will remember this."

She looks up, glancing at the work for a second, then at the king. A pained expression stares back. He says words that were not meant for the one he thought would hear them.

"I want you to work on that."