

“You are a traitor.”

“You are a fool.”

Osiris and Set tried to stare each other down, each furious. Set's aura was manifesting, flickering flames that danced around his lacquered armor and sang whistling songs as they boiled sweat into jets that streamed from his helmet. He kept clenching his fists then forcing them open, and the taut tendons running down the backs of his hands stood out like overtightened cables. Stone-faced Osiris refused to give any indication of the anger he felt. He stood with feet planted impassively on the earth, arms crossed, and wore a disdainful scowl. By the sight of him, he might have simply been irritated. But the dangerous slant in his voice belied that, and the loose silk of his robes was hardening like granite, ignoring the wind.

“I took an oath. You took an oath. We all took an oath,” Set spat the words like an accusation. “We vowed, on our sacred honor, that no matter what we would take care of each other.”

“We did,” Osiris retorted. “In Rubylak I carried you from the field of battle while the Lookshy arrow storm riddled my skin and tore the flesh from my bones. In Windcreche I wandered the bleached fjords of the grinding ice, slaughtering the underbeasts that I could pile their steaming carcasses upon you when the cold had driven even your Immaculate fire from your bones. And in Vostok I held Bast's feet above my shoulders that she could breath even as I sank to the depths of those black waters. I almost died for her then.”

“That simply isn't good enough!” Set snapped.

Set's fire-child aura flared brighter, licking at his hair until they seemed inseparable. Osiris's face turned a darker shade of gray, matching the stone in his robe.

“Our oath contained no quotas. You never vowed to protect our brotherhood once, or twice, or seven times seven times. You vowed forever! You swore nothing, not so long as life beat in your breast, would you fail to give her proper funeral rights.”

“We did!” Osiris screamed. Finally the incredible restraint of the Dragon-Blooded Earth born cracked, and he shrieked back at the fire child. “Do you not see the Passage Right?” He stabbed a finger over his shoulder at the lights that lit the great Manse of House Tepet. “There are her funeral rights. There is her soul being guided to its next incarnation. There is a mountain of jade for her family. It dwarfs the five talents tradition calls for. There is my oath complete!” Osiris was roaring, and his voice sounded like the shattering of bedrock.

“She isn't there!” Set bellowed back.

“And she never will be!”

You stand back a bit, startled and slightly afraid of the naked rage in your two brothers. Set's rages are terrible to behold, indicative of horrible things to happen. But Osiris is a man of stone. You've never seen his emotions get the best of him. This fury is as alien as the sun rising at night, or the sky raining blood.

“Then I will get her body. If a man stands in my way, I will kill him. If a great villain tries to an stop

me, I will kill him. And if an army stands in my way, may whatever gods it worships have mercy on its souls, for I will not.”

“You will destroy yourself now, when your clan cannot bear the loss of another Exalt. Your life will come to nothing, and your family will pay the price.” By monumental effort, Osiris got himself under control. His voice was flat and deadly cold. “This is why we undertook the Passage Right. That the living may not be destroyed for the dead.”

“I took no such oath. The words I swore are burned on my heart now as then, even as they must echo hollowly on the emptiness within your breast. You may feel nothing but-”

Osiris struck him full in the face. Set toppled back and tumbled down the hill, setting fire to shrub and grass with his passage. He came to a rest and glared death at his attacker.

“You know nothing of how I feel, fool! You have no idea the stupidity you speak, and I won't tolerate it any more. Kill yourself, if you must. You are no longer my brother.”

Osiris stalked away, returning to the Manse of Tepet. You all trade glances, feeling a sudden lurch, a sensation of breaking, and realize that the bonds between you and him are broken.

“Good! Begone, false brother!” Set cries from the base of the hill, but there are tears in his eyes. Two of you hurry down to help him up and carry him back to the rest. He's weeping, but he says, “I won't abandon her. I never will. I'm going after her, even if it is just for her body. I'm going.”

The rain begins, but you can see the tears before they are washed away. “Please, come with me. I can't get her alone. Please, brothers. I need you.”

What else can you do? You swore an oath.