

Adrien, An Icarian Tale

By

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Prologue

Somewhere in the Vedarian Sea.

The Realm of Icaria.

The Thirteenth of Maies, 1135.

*Young Adrien stands upon the deck of the refugee ship *Teshian*, entranced by the world ablaze around him. The screams of innocent refugees radiate in his ears as they frantically run past him like mice caught in a trap. Smoke and flame fill the air from the gaping hole where the captain's helm once resided. Waves crash against the vessel, rocking it back and forth. Rain pours over the boy's leather cloak as he turns his eyes starboard.*

Not far away, a Tarshian galleon closes in, its black and blood red flag flapping in the stormy winds.

The Rav'akir.

He had heard stories about these elite and ruthless pirates, how they roamed the seas in search for prey and cannibalized any vessels that crossed their path. Those who were lucky to survive were left to be devoured by the sea.

Adrien watches as the galleon draws closer. He catches sight of a bright orange glow coming from their deck. As he tries to look closer, the glow shoots from the galleon and into the heavens above. It rises high into the clouds and seems to vanish for a short time. A bolt of lightning leaps across the clouds and Adrien's eyes grow wide with horror at the impending doom.

Slicing through the rain, the orange glow breaks through the clouds, revealing fiery arrows descending upon the ship. The boy begins to hyperventilate, frozen in fear. The barrage comes closer and closer.

A large, rounded shield comes over Adrien's head as he is grabbed from behind and gripped tightly.

"Brace, Master Adrien!" shouts a boisterous male voice.

Snapping out of his trance, the boy ducks, covering his head with his hands. He closes his eyes, bracing for the emanate impact.

The sound of steel piercing wood fills the air. Adrien opens his eyes and looks up. On the underside of the shield, only one arrow made it partially through to within an inch of Adrien's head. He looks and sees the remaining arrows have imbedded themselves in the deck, their flames beginning to taste the wood. The boy turns to his savior.

“Torvac!” he exclaims.

The imposing Torvac stands before Adrien, armed with his bronze shield and short sword and clad in his traditional Petrovian armor, which consists of hardened leather gauntlets and boots, a bronze chest plate, and a Volunian striped panther skin helmet. The burly warrior stares down at Adrien, concern upon his face.

“What were you thinking, boy!?” he sternly shouts over the pouring rain, “You almost got yourself killed!”

“I’m sorry! I just wanted to help you fight!”

“It is not safe for you up here! Go back below deck with your mother!”

“But-!”

Another Petrovian warrior sprints across the deck, waving his hands frantically in the air.

“Torvac! Another, port side!”

Adrien and Torvac spin around and see another galleon barreling down upon them. A curse flies from Torvac as he turns back to Adrien.

“Get below, now!”

Without hesitation, Adrien leaves the warrior's side and dashes toward the hatch to the lower deck. The hatch flies open, catching him off guard as refugees desperately claw their way out from below. Adrien scans the crowd, looking for his mother, Jilania.

"What is the meaning of this!?" Torvac sternly inquires.

Hakvir, the ship's cook, pushes his way through the crowd, shaking uncontrollably.

"We are taking on water!" he replies, his voice shuddering with every word, "the lower decks are nearly flooded!"

Torvac curses, letting out a cry of anger as he turns to the heavens.

Jilania appears from amongst the mass of refugees, dressed in her Alexandrian purple robes. Her raven black hair blows in the breeze as her deep brown eyes meet Adrien's

"Mama!" Adrien cries out.

He rushes to her arms. The two embrace, tears flowing down his mother's cheek.

"It is alright, Adrien," she comforts him.

The crowd begins to panic.

"This is the end, isn't it!?" some cry out. "I don't want to die!?" shout others.

Torvac grits his teeth as he turns to look at the two galleons, which continue their course at ramming speed, bringing closer the Teshian's doom. Their maneuver seemed very familiar.

He falls to his knees, dropping his shield as he stares vacantly at the sky.

Jilania sees Torvac. She turns and looks at the galleons. Her heart sinks as she watches them draw closer.

A sudden peace washes over her. She grips Adrien tighter and kisses him on the cheek.

"I love you, Adrien," she says to him, choking up as she continues, "You are the jewel of my being, the light in my darkness. From your birth, you have always been my strength. From the deepest pits, you have raised me up."

Jilania hesitates as she gently turns Adrien's head. Their eyes meet.

"You are my beautiful boy, Adrien. There is nothing in this world that compares to you."

Tears trickle down Adrien's face as Jilania kisses him on the forehead. Hakvir sees the galleons closing in.

"I shall not die at the hands of those animals!"

He pushes his way through the crowd and sprints to the boat's edge.

“Let the Void decide my fate!”

He dives off and plunges into the ocean, disappearing beneath the waves. The refugees scream in horror as they panic.

Jilania looks to see Torvac, who remains in his defeated state.

“Go to Torvac, my son,” she tells Adrien, “Go and be his strength.”

Adrien turns and sees Torvac. He hesitates, still gripping his mother’s hand.

“It is alright, Adrien.”

He looks back at his mother, a smile gracing her face. He returns it in kind. He lets go of her hand and sprints to Torvac’s side.

Thunder rolls as Adrien comes to the burly warrior, who remains prostrate on the deck. The boy kneels down beside him.

“Come, Torvac!” he shouts above the wind, “You must summon your strength! We need to rally ourselves!”

Torvac remains motionless.

“Torvac! Do you hear me! We have to defend the ship!”

The warrior slowly turns to Adrien, eyes filled with sorrow.

“They are not going to board us, boy,” he says with a voice of defeat.

Adrien looks at him, terror filling his soul. He turns to Jilania. She gives him a weak smile, then nods.

“I am sorry, Master Adrien.”

Without warning, Torvac wraps his arms around Adrien and lifts him off the deck.

“Torvac! What are you-!”

“No one survives a Rav’akir attack, boy!” Torvac interjects, walking toward the edge of the ship, “Even if you endure the ramming, their raiding party would tear you apart! Your mother knows this!”

Adrien squirms in his grasp, staring at his mother with pleading eyes.

“Mother, please!” he calls out to her, “Tell him to stop! Mother!”

Tears well up in Jilania’s eyes as she turns away, unable to bear what she must do.

“Master Adrien, listen to me!” Torvac continues, “You must remain under the sea’s surface for as long as you can! It is your only hope if you are to live!”

The brute spins the boy around so their eyes meet.

“You must survive, Adrien! For all of us!”

Tears trickle down the mighty warrior’s face.

“Torvac...don’t-!”

“May the Void have mercy on us both.”

With great force, Torvac throws Adrien off the ship. Time slows as the boy stares at the warrior in disbelief. He flails his arms, reaching out to him in desperation.

Torvac does not reach back.

Adrien plummets, gasping before plunging into the raging waters. He struggles under the waves, frantically pawing toward the surface. His head breaks above the waves. He gasps for air as he flails his arms madly about him.

“Torvac!” he cries out.

*He looks up to see the *Teshan* drifting away from him.*

“Mama!”

A loud roaring catches his attention. He spins around and freezes in fear.

One of the galleons is barreling down on him at full speed.

Without another moment’s hesitation, he takes a deep breath and plunges back into the waters, frenziedly swimming as fast as he can to avoid the ship. The large waves made by the vessel’s momentum catch Adrien, causing him to tumble about under the water. The boy tries to regain control, but to no avail.

A thundering boom radiates through the ocean, followed by the sound of something breaking apart. Adrien feels his heart skip a beat as a sudden horror engulfs his soul. The sound intensifies. He clasps his hands against his ears as he continues to flail about. His lungs burn as he reaches the end of his air supply.

Adrien's vision begins to go black as he feverishly looks for escape from the water and the relief of the air above. He pushes upward, his arms slicing through the ocean. His vision grows dimmer, and dimmer...

*Adrien breaks through the surface, gasping for the fresh air. Waves smack against his face as he struggles to keep his head above water. He looks about him, searching for the *Teshian*.*

Out of the corner of his eye, he catches sight of it. His heart sinks at the sight.

*The refugee ship has been split apart, slowly being pulled down into the depths below. Screams echo into the stormy skies from those who survived the ramming, now keen prey for the *Rav'akir* whose two galleons are now encircling the wreckage.*

He closes his eyes, a lone tear escaping.

A piece of charred debris passes to his right. Adrien grabs it, and, with the last of his strength, pulls himself onto it. He lies limp, allowing the waves to carry him away.

As the rain continues its relentless descent, Adrien's eyes slowly close as he drifts into the realm of unconsciousness, his mind traveling back to times past, back to better days.