

Chapter 11 Calm

The wheels spun against the gravel before the truck was propelled forward, Kate steering past the Golden Swan and out towards the edge of town. She saw movement through the rear mirror but focused on the road. She tried to dodge the bodies and debris as well as she could. Not a task she entirely succeeded at but they got out of town a few minutes later, the car nearly drifting as she left the main road.

Kate didn't dare ask about Grey. Instead she checked their surroundings. The dirt road led westward but she knew the area well enough to get them back in the fastest manner possible. She just hoped it was enough.

Dark clouds had started moving through the valley, moving eastward towards Keilberg and Falstadt. It would likely take an hour or two for them to reach them but she was glad at least that they had managed to avoid the rain. Kate gulped, the adrenaline starting to leave her body as her breathing sped up. She glanced right and saw distant fires in the valley. Not houses or patches of forests in flames but what seemed like bonfires. Tiny creatures moved around and between them, some much larger. Hundreds, if not more.

She looked back at the road. Nothing followed them. A few goblins they had missed in town pointed at the moving truck but they wouldn't make it. Nor did their bows reach them at the already considerable distance. *We'll get back*, she thought and shuddered. A glance down showed her hands still covered in blood, whose she didn't know. Her crowbar was wedged between the high seat and the door, a dark red sheen visible on the top half of the impromptu weapon.

The sound of the engine rattled on, wheels moving on the dirt road. The air felt stuffy, smelled of blood. Her shoulder hurt, more with each passing minute. She didn't really care. It didn't bleed, not badly. She would be fine.

Kate wiped at her face, more just adding blood to her cheeks than getting rid of the itching tears. *Pull yourself together*. She just focused on driving, as fast and safe as she could. *Melusine will know what to do. She can save him*.

Memories of corpses in the armory flashed before her mind's eye, her hands shaking. She tried to keep them steady. Kate focused on her breathing before she turned on the radio. Lars must've stored some songs on the device itself because the moment she turned it on, Metal started blasting through the speakers. She turned it down a little but didn't change the song. It fit the urgency and fear she felt, pushed her onward. *Lars' music. A dead man. Survive. Survive*. She started repeating the word, in a whisper first and then louder, talking to herself as she sped through the forest.

A peaceful forest, once a space to find calm, beauty, balance to her dangerous and hectic work. Now it was just another hellscape, full of unknown dangers. She didn't dare open the windows, her focus on the road, on the music.

Kate didn't know when they arrived at the castle but they did. She honked several times before she got out of the truck, glad to see no new monsters in the area. "How is he?" She got out and opened the loading area.

"Still breathing," Jon replied in a shaking voice, his face covered in sweat.

"Help me move him out and then go get Melusine," Kate said as she got onto the loading area. They

carefully lowered Grey, Kate shouting for help as they went. The boy looked pale, his eyes closed, bandage soaked through with blood. She bit her lips and carried him towards the gate, Melusine running out as soon as she saw them.

“Medical supplies,” Jon said, rushing towards the gate with two of the backpacks.

“Inside,” Kate said when the woman reached them.

“Talk to me, wounds, treatment?” Melusine said instantly, walking next to her as they passed the gate.

“He got stabbed in his stomach. Bleeding badly, not all the way through,” Kate said as she set him down in the yard.

Melusine immediately went to work. She checked the bandage, touched his cheeks, checked his pulse then went through the pile of boxes Jon poured out next to her.

Kate just knelt there and watched. She grabbed Grey’s hand and glanced between the boy’s face and Melusine. Bert and Eloise closed the gate in the meantime, the truck still running out front.

“He’s losing too much blood,” Melusine said and looked up to Jon with a tense expression. “Dear, I need your arm.”

He took off his jacket and rolled back his sleeve in a hurry. The man started laying down next to Grey when Melusine stopped him.

“I need you higher up than him. Kate you have to hold him,” she said and started preparing syringes, unpacking various tubes as she rolled back the sleeve on Grey’s arm.

Kate did as she asked. She assumed Jon couldn’t handle needles. She walked behind him, holding his back and arm in place.

He closed his eyes. It didn’t help. The man started wobbling as soon as Melusine pushed the needle into his vein.

She connected the tube and pushed the other end into the arm of Grey. She needed three attempts to get to his vein. “I hope this works,” she murmured as a red flow of blood started moving out of Jon’s arm. “He’s still losing blood... I can’t remove the bandage...” she murmured in a slightly shaking voice, looking through the pile of medical supplies when she glanced up. “You have to lie down,” she said in an absentminded voice before she grabbed a thick bandage.

Logan had joined them from the armory, a hand to his head as he walked over with stumbling steps. He fell to his knees near Grey and gagged. The man refocused and put both of his hands on the injured stomach of the boy.

Kate could hear her jaw grind as she kept the semiconscious Jon as steady as she could, his arm held up to make sure the blood flowed towards Grey. Her eyes went wide when a warm light came to life around Logan’s hands. She could feel the hairs on her arms stand up, both her and Melusine staring at the large man and what looked like magic.

He started sweating a few seconds later, blinking his eyes before he swayed to the side and puked. Logan forced himself back up and moved his hands towards the blood covered bandages again.

“Stop,” Melusine said. “We don’t need two dead,” she added and touched the bandages, waiting for a few seconds before she moved up again. “It’s better. Lie down Logan, I can give you something too now,” she added and grabbed a package from the pile. She ripped it open and took out three

pills, stepping over to the man before she shoved them into his mouth.

He gulped them down and closed his eyes, head hitting the ground as he passed out.

“I’m not a fan of this magic,” she murmured and checked her husband. “A little more,” she said and looked at Kate. “How are you holding up? You look horrendous. Seen death?”

Kate didn’t reply, her eyes on the dying Grey, the smell of puke and blood irritating her senses. Something wet touched her shoulder, the sudden piercing pain making her twitch. She glanced up to see Melusine tapping the wound with a soaked cloth.

The woman looked into her eyes and smiled. “I’ll need a lot more than what you got me if this is how you return from every trip.”

Kate sighed and turned her attention back to Grey. “Is he gonna make it?” She held her breath, the sound of her own heartbeat audible in her ears.

“With Logan’s magic touch, maybe,” Melusine said and checked her husband. “The only reason I married him was his type O blood,” she murmured and touched his cheek. “You’ll be fine, dear. Just a little longer.”

“Thank you,” Kate said.

“I’ll have a look at your face and shoulder later. You’re all too reckless,” Melusine murmured. “Eloise, can you get something to clean up the puke?”

The girl nodded and ran off.

Bert moved over with his shotgun at the ready. “Ye don’t look so good.”

Kate carefully set down Jon after Melusine had removed the syringe. She went to Grey and held his hand. His pulse felt strong, the spread of blood through the bandages stopped, his breathing more steady. *God you fucking idiot. I told you to leave,* she thought and let go of his hand. Kate stood up and took in a deep breath before she refocused. There was work to be done.

Melusine touched her arm. “You need stitches. Sit down before you pass out.”

Kate nodded slowly. *That makes sense.*

She sat down, eyes on the three half passed out men as Melusine threaded a needle. She twitched slightly when the woman started closing the wound on her shoulder. They didn’t speak. Slowly, she started to calm down, taking in deep breaths as she relived the intense last hours in her mind. *We killed them. And nearly died.* A deep breath. She noted with an absent mind how Eloise cleaned up the puke. They were out in the open. Rain would soon come. *We have time.*

Bert went up to the battlements, complaining about the running car as he did so.

Kate felt absolutely drained. Every muscle in her body ached, her arms especially. Her face hurt, as if a train had slammed into it. And her shoulder stung. She could feel her legs fall asleep and moved them. A familiar smell made her look up, Eloise holding out a cup full of steaming liquid. *An angel, in the dark of night.*

She took a sip and sighed, watching as Melusine prepared two needles, a few bottles, cloths, and several bandages. Kate watched her check the medical scissors before she got to work. She gulped when she saw the large incision, messy too.

Melusine paused for a split second right after she had wiped away the blood. Then she got to work,

first cleaning as much of the wound as she could before she sewed it shut, covered everything up and finished with two sets of fresh bandages. She took off the medical gloves and threw them on the pile of blood soaked materials.

“Why is his skin so hard to pierce... Oh... now that is something...” she said, lost in thought as she stared into nothing.

“What is it?” Kate asked, drinking from her coffee as she closed her eyes.

“I think I unlocked a Class. Based on all the medical care I provided, I can become a Healer,” she explained and glanced at Kate. “I suppose I should accept. Wisdom was the thing that helped with more magical energy, was that what Grey said?”

“It’s usually like that, yes,” Kate confirmed.

Melusine was occupied with reading for a few minutes before she looked up again. She touched Grey for a moment, moving her hand over the wound and to his heart. “He will survive,” she said and touched the fresh bandages with both hands. They glowed in the same warm light as Logan’s had. “But this might help.”

“You can heal wounds with magic?” Kate asked.

“As absurd as it sounds, but yes, it appears to work that way. Care with medical tools and supplies is supposedly better too, and the healing is more efficient if the injuries are properly taken care of,” she said. “Five point five percent.”

“Did you get a new thing as well, a stat? Like Vitality and Endurance,” Kate said.

Melusine glanced at her. “Yes. It’s called Calm. This is all very confusing.”

“Just take care of them,” Kate said. “I’ll get the rest of the supplies and clean up. You should get them inside soon, I think it will rain.” She finished her coffee and stood up.

Eloise took the mug. “Can I help?”

“Sure, let me get the rest. You can get it to the armory and start to sort everything,” Kate said and went to the gate. “Bert! Is the outside clear?”

“Yes, yes,” the man said as he looked out from the battlements. “No need to shout,” he murmured.

She opened the gate and went to the car. The bodies were all still around. Somehow she felt light on her feet. Kate turned off the car and got onto the loading area. Checking one of the bags, she got on fresh gloves over her still blood covered hands. Cleaning up now didn’t make much sense. She jumped down with the bags and the third backpack. *Weird*, she thought, looking down at the bags before she raised them up a little. They were light. Lighter than they should’ve been.

All that from two points in Strength? she wondered and checked the forest around her. Nothing came running at her and she went back to the gate. She left the bags on the ground and looked around. Logan and Grey were still passed out, Jon now sitting up with a hand to his head. She spotted a band-aid on his arm and smiled lightly.

Eloise had packed up the spilled out supplies in the meantime.

“Let’s get them inside the armory,” she said and went for Logan.

“Let’s get the bed fra-” Melusine started when Kate lifted the large man with a puff.

She took a step back to stabilize herself but held on. "I'll m... manage," she said and walked towards the armory with steady steps.

The large man in her impromptu princess carry opened his eyes at some point and smiled. "Sure..." he murmured and closed his eyes again. "Why not."

She helped with Grey and Jon, everyone but Bert back in the armory. Eloise had brought the bags and already started sorting through things.

"Melusine, where did you put all the bodies?" Kate asked. "We should get started on that pyre. I don't want to find out what kind of monsters will be attracted by all those corpses," she said, thinking of the wargs and the large humanoid beings she had seen in the distance. *Will they come here? What if they see the smoke?* She pondered the thought for a moment before she made a decision.

"In the old barracks," the woman replied, mixing something into a glass of water before she held it to Jon's mouth.

"I'll... get rid of them. The monster ones that is," Kate said and went back outside to open the gates fully. She walked to the truck with her crowbar in hand and got to work. All the goblins they had killed, and the orcs. Even the latter she managed to lift and put into the bed of the truck. She was breathing a little when she was done but nothing like what she had expected from the exertion. *Endurance. Right. These stats are pretty fucking useful.*

She drove the truck inside and parked in front of the old barracks. Jumping out, she went to the door and hit the wood with her blood covered weapon. She listened for a few seconds but nothing resounded from within. The key was stuck. Kate opened the door and looked inside. "Any zombies?" she asked and took in a deep breath. When nothing answered, she went in.

A few minutes later, she had added the monster bodies to the bed of the truck. The only ones she left in the barracks were the two humans. She didn't dwell looking at them. The light wasn't good and she had seen enough for a single day already. The door locked once more, she drove the car back outside and closed the gate.

"Will you be alright on yer own?" Bert asked.

"I'll just dump them and come back," Kate said and got back into the car. A few minutes later she stopped, having driven a little farther up on the slope towards the mountain chain. She waited for about a minute to see if something would attack the car before she got out, her crowbar at the ready.

Each monster corpse was dumped into the underbrush, one at a time until she threw the last goblin down onto the pile. She looked at them, lifeless bodies. Intelligent beings once. Somewhat at least. And yet she didn't feel bothered or conflicted. All she thought of were the dead humans in the barracks, the injured and nearly dying Grey, the dozens of bodies down in Keilberg.

She gripped her crowbar and went back into the truck, turning on the radio as she reversed. She checked the available frequencies but received only the same warning message from before. A last glance went to the pile of bodies before she switched the radio back to the music stored on the drive.

Lars apparently had an eclectic taste. From Metal to Techno, to pop, and even piano only. She arrived at the small castle when the first rain started to fall, the skies now gray. Kate stopped the car and turned the key, the sounds replaced by the silent pattering of rain. She sat there for a minute, looking at the shrouded form of Bert behind the wood covered battlements.

Her muscles ached and she felt tired. They still had a few hours till nightfall but she didn't exactly know what else to do. *Shower. A shot, and some food would be nice*, she thought and finally left the car.

Bert came down to open the gate, the rain and wind picking up with every passing minute.

She went inside and gave the old man a nod. "You should probably get inside as well."

"Ain't as frail as you think," Bert said with a grin. "You go warm up. We'll need ya if more of 'em come at night."

Kate left without another word, towards his house and the shower inside.

Kate Lindgren

Unspent stat points: 0

Class: Berserker – lvl 4

- ***Active: Mindless Ferocity – lvl 4***
- ***Active: Furious Dance – lvl 5***
- ***Active: Reckless Charge – lvl 2***
- ***Active:***
- ***Active:***
- ***Passive: Toll for the Living – lvl 4***
- ***Passive: Courage of the Unarmored – lvl 3***
- ***Passive: Two Handed Weapon Fighting – lvl 3***
- ***Passive:***
- ***Passive:***

Support class: Locked

Status:

Vitality: 14

Endurance: 14

Perseverance: 4

Strength: 11

Dexterity: 8

Intelligence: 7

Wisdom: 10

Equipment:

Torso: -

Legs: -

Trinket: -

Food: -