

Shard Crossed Lovers

Unite them. Syl's father had always harped on about unity. He had preached it about both the spren in Shadesmar and the disparate humans on Roshar. But storms if she didn't feel particularly inclined to unite with the symbol sitting in front of her.

"Honorspren. Your kind are an interesting lie." Pattern droned. Syl stamped her foot in the air.

"Lies?!" Her eyes bulged. "We are an embodiment of truth, of *honor*! Not..." She struggled to think of the right words, but the Cryptic cut her off.

"You call yourselves spren of honor, no? And you do not tell lies? Mmm, but you are a lie. You are an idea, a fabrication. The Cognitive Realm is a place of subjective thought, no? Only the Spiritual Realm is a place of pure tru-"

"Knock it off you two." Shallan sighed. Kaladin opened his mouth to second the Radiant when Syl suddenly materialized as a Shardblade on the table.

"Storms!" Kaladin jumped back. Pattern piped up excitedly.

"The manifestation of a Shardblade in a non-combative situation is considered to be a grave insult in spren culture. Insults are curious lies."

"This is a combative situation." Syl grumbled. Kaladin raised an eyebrow at Shallan.

"At least they're talking to each other now." He shrugged. For nearly a week in Urithiru, they, along with Dalinar and Renarin, had been trying to cohesively work together. There had been issues on the way; the Stormfather only participated infrequently, and Glys infrequently manifested as a Shardblade, even if summoned. Navani had suggested that it could have been related to her close proximity to a dead Shard for the past few weeks. But the biggest was Syl and Pattern's utter contempt for one another.

"Look. We're not asking you to like each other." Kaladin started.

"We just need you to work together. It'll be just like me and Brightlord Boring here." Shallan piped up.

"Brightlord Boring?" Kaladin asked with a faint smile.

"Do you prefer Highprince of of Humdrum?" Shallan asked innocently.

"Stick to Brightlord Boring. Anyways, Shallan is right. Countless lives depend on you setting aside your differences and working together. Now are you going to cooperate?" Kaladin asked. There was no answer.

"Syl? Are you there?" He asked.

"She has retreated to Shadesmar. I believe she is sulking." Pattern said.

"Storming spren." Kaladin threw his hands in the air.

"Why don't you talk to her somewhere else." Shallan suggested gently. Kaladin stormed out of the room, swearing lowly under his breath.

"What a contemptable creature." Pattern sniffed.

"Don't you start on us too." Shallan snapped crossly.

"Do not mistake me Shallan, I am attracted to all lies. But that honorspren is unpredictable. I do not see a pattern to her actions." Pattern complained.

"Is the lack of a pattern a pattern?" Shallan suggested.

"No." Pattern said curtly. Shallan sighed.

"We're all going to die you know, if you don't put your differences aside."

"So? Sylphrena already died. Why not once more." Pattern said in a low voice.

"*Pattern!*" Shallan cried, appalled.

"Well I'm right. The Windrunner briefly killed her." Pattern pointed out.

"Come with me. Let's find something else to do." Shallan walked away.

"Of course I will come with you. The Nahel bond –" Pattern began to babble.

"And parshmen with red eyes have been seen approaching the Oathgate on the Shattered Plains." Dalinar finished. Before him sat the Radiants, along with Navani, Adolin, Sebarial, and Aladar.

"Do they plan to attack through the gate?" Aladar asked.

"I don't see how they can. They need a full Shardblade to open it and R'lain has told us that Parshendi can't form that sort of bond with spren." Dalinar replied.

"Then what are the Voidbringers doing?" Navani spoke out.

"Seems like a siege." Kaladin contributed from his seat. All eyes turned to him.

"We're on a mountain high enough that plants here don't get rain. We only have a limited amount of gemhearts and livestock; only our sorties on the Shattered Plains have increased our food supplies. If they cut us off from the Oathgate, they can starve us out." He explained.

"How many Voidbringers are approaching the Shattered Plains?" Shallan asked.

"Scouts say as many as ten thousand." Dalinar told her.

"*Ten thousand?*" Aladar spluttered. "I didn't even know there were ten thousand parshmen in the world." He whispered.

"We had three thousand alone in the warcamps. Factor in parshmen owned by lords who governed away from the Plains, or the parshmen in Jah Keved, Kharbranth, Thaylenah, or Azir, and that's a lot of Voidbringers." Navani explained.

"I have a plan. If we can activate the Oathgate in Kholinar, we should be able to get necessary supplies through to replace what we're losing on the Shattered Plains." Dalinar announced.

"Kholinar is a far way off. Where even is Urithiru?" Sebarial finally opened his mouth.

"Far away from Kholinar. However, we happen to have two soldiers who can move very quickly." Dalinar turned his eyes to Kaladin.

"I can get to Kholinar, but I'll need a lot of spheres. And you said two soldiers. Who's the second?" Kaladin asked.

"The Order of the Lightweavers can enter Shadesmar and travel great distances quickly. Jasnah always said it was dangerous, but so is starving to death." Shallan piped up.

"Sir, you understand that our spren are incompatible, right?" Kaladin mentioned to Dalinar.

"I understand that they still have issues getting along, which is why I'm sending Shallan as backup. They can learn to work together during this mission." Dalinar rumbled.

"Damnation." Kaladin grumbled.

Nothing made Kaladin feel alive like flying. Although a close second was probably the look on Adolin's face when Kaladin jumped from a tower on Urithiru and fell sideways, towards the capital of Alethkar.

"So, what's the plan?" Syl asked as Kaladin enjoyed the feeling of wind on his face.

"We find the Oathgate in Kholinar, and stick you or Pattern in it while Renarin activates the gate in Urithiru." Kaladin explained.

"Hold on. Did you say the Cryptic is coming with us?" Syl demanded. Kaladin rolled his eyes.

"You don't have to talk to him. Just don't make your problems our problems." He chided the spren. Syl let out an angry huff.

"The Cryptic is a problem for all of us." She complained. Kaladin decided not to press the issue.

"Oof!" He gasped as he finally landed outside Kholinar. Shallan Davar stepped through a ring of Stormlight next to him. Strangely, she had several leaves stuck in her hair, and a new scar running along her cheek. Kaladin found it made her more attractive. He quickly shook his head.

"What... happened?" He asked.

"Shadesmar. Are there any more leaves in my hair?" Shallan asked. Kaladin shook his head forcing down a grin.

"Good. I—" She glanced down at a puddle.

"You liar! There are leaves in my hair." She growled, and shook them out. Pattern crawled into the puddle.

"I like his lies." He buzzed.

"Kaladin, stop lying." Syl snapped.

"But I like his lies." Pattern protested. Syl gave the fractal symbol a death glare, before returning to Kaladin.

"So, do we know what to look for?" Kaladin asked.

"It should be in the oldest part of the city. Kholinar was constructed during the Silver Epochs, back when Alethela still existed. If it's here, it will be in a district that existed during that time." Shallan explained. The two of them approached the city gates.

"I believe I am beginning to see a pattern in Sylphrena's behavior. She is consistently hostile towards me." Pattern whispered in Shallan's ear. She silently swatted the spren. Pattern let out a squeak of protest.

"I do not say so in an insulting manner. I find any pattern attractive." Pattern explained.

"Attractive?" Shallan glanced at the Cryptic.

"Halt! By order of Queen Aesudan Kholin, no one is to enter this city." A guard spoke from the other side of the gate.

"My name is Kaladin, and this is—" Kaladin started, when the guard replied,

"Shallan Davar, I presume? I'd open the gate, but as my boy Taln showed the last guards here, it's not Shardblade proof." Kaladin and Shallan stared at each other. The gate opened, to reveal Him. An enemy far worse than any Voidbringer or assassin.

"Wit! What... how?" Kaladin spluttered.

"Wit!" Shallan ran forward to hug the man. Wit took a step back, avoiding the bear hug.

"Ah, Brightness Davar. I was just talking to your master. You know, the only individual I find more annoying than her is that Windrunner who looks like an axehound mated with a santhid. Ah, Kaladin, did you ever find my flute?" Wit strode over to Kaladin.

"My master?" Shallan's head perked up.

"Your flu —" Kaladin started when Wit shushed him.

"Yes my flute. Do you see many Yolenese flutes around here man?" Wit demanded.

"Yolenese?" Kaladin asked. Wit ignored Kaladin and talked to Shallan.

"As I have difficulty explaining matters of import to humans in dullform, listen to me. I heard a rumor there's an Oathgate in the Kholinar crypts." Wit said.

"A rumor? Who's telling rumors about a secret Oathgate?" Kaladin frowned. Wit frowned and walked away.

"I just say what the spren tell me. Also I visited it and found buried parshmen there to be quite unpleasant after the Everstorm hit. Have fun kiddos!" Wit ran off with a beggar, shouting something about being a stick.

"Something about that man is suspicious." Kaladin sighed.

"Did you think of that in dullform?" Shallan smirked, then turned away. "He said he was talking to my master. Does that mean Jasnah is alive?"

"He's not from this world." Syl spoke up. Both Radiants turned to look at the honorspren.

"I... I don't know how I know that. I have a vague memory of buying drinks for him once." She tried to explain.

"A spren bought drinks for Wit?" Kaladin said slowly.

"It wasn't when I was a spren." Syl huffed. "I was something else."

"She's right." Pattern spoke. "I share the memory, from the time we were united."

"Don't tell me I'm right." Syl snapped, and turned invisible to everyone from Kaladin.

"You're grinning." Kaladin noted to his spren.

"I am not!" Syl stamped her foot, struggling to force down the grin. Kal raised an eyebrow.

"Like a Cryptic's opinion matters to me." She snapped, then paused. "It just feels good to get some validation. That's all." She started to sulk.

Meanwhile, Shallan had walked aside to talk to her spren.

"That's a start. Agreeing." She mentioned.

"I have studied friendship. An interesting lie." Pattern said. "It seems to begin with arguing. That is how you and Kaladin started your friendship." He explained. "Then they find common ground and can bond over that. We spren are good at bonding." He finished proudly.

"Yeah, well, Kaladin and I are a special case. Not all friendships begin with boot banditry." Shallan said behind a small smile.

"But statistically at least one did. Should I steal Sylphrena's boots?" Pattern inquired.

"Do spren have boots?" Shallan asked.

"Bootspren do." Pattern replied. Shallan stared at the Cryptic for a long moment, trying to decide if this was one of his strange attempts at humor, then shook her head.

"Hey, are you ready?" Kaladin shouted from the gate. Shallan nodded.

"Jasnah forced me to read – Jasnah! I almost forgot, Wit said Jasnah's alive!" Shallan danced a little jig. "How could she – oh, of course. She escaped into Shadesmar when the assassins boarded our ship. How else could she have escaped." Shallan whispered, tears leaking from her eyes.

"Shallan, as much as I share your delight that Jasnah and Ivory live, we must focus on the task at hand." Pattern noted.

"Yes, yes. As I was saying, Jasnah forced me to read about Kholinar. The crypts are in the southern part of the city, not far from here. I can lead us there. Wit said something about buried parshmen." She mused.

"We can handle a couple of parshmen." Kaladin shrugged. The two set off in the direction of the crypts.

"Sylphrena?" Pattern voiced out.

"Go away." Syl snapped.

"I was hoping the two of us could speak in Shadesmar, alone." He requested.

"Go ahead." Kaladin said.

"I don't want to." Syl crossed her arms.

"Syl..." Kaladin warned her.

"Fine!" Syl snapped. The world around her became filled with spheres, as the sun became a dark and distant light. In Shadesmar, Pattern appeared to be a cloaked figure, with the symbol visible in the Physical Realm for a head.

"I would like to apologize for any antagonisms I may have caused." Pattern began.

"Any antagonisms?" Syl raised an eyebrow.

"I realize that an honorspren might find being called a lie insulting. It was not my intent to hurt. I find patterns and lies to be attractive." Pattern explained.

"You're still causing me a lie if... hold on. You find me attractive?" Syl demanded.

"Oh yes. My people have been called liespren. Much like you are attracted to honor, I am attracted to lies." Pattern buzzed excitedly.

"You're a bit short for me." Syl said dryly, before regaining her composure. "But I accept your apology. I'm sorry for how I've been behaving. I suppose I've been treating you like a bad honorspren rather than a good liespren. I know you didn't mean any harm." She finished. Pattern stared. "And I'm sorry for manifesting as a Blade in front of you. It's inexcusable and you deserve better." She added.

"Thank you Sylphrena. I hope to be your friend." Pattern buzzed, satisfied.

"But don't expect to call me a lie anymore, mister." Syl growled, before resurfacing to the Physical Realm. Kaladin and Shallan were staring at their spren.

"So. How did it go?" Shallan asked.

"I believe it went well. I explained to Sylphrena that I have no harmful intentions towards her and that I find her attractive." Pattern explained. Shallan smirked.

"You keep saying that, but I don't think you understand what attractive means." She laughed.

"Mmm, perhaps it is a lie, no? Like you are attracted to Adolin?" Pattern asked. Shallan's jaw dropped.

"Oh." Was all she managed.

Meanwhile, Syl and Kaladin were discussing their conversation.

"All we did was apologize. Don't think for a moment that I like that Cryptic. He's still the wrong kind of spren, he's annoying... even if he is handsome." Syl vented.

"Is he?" Kaladin asked, bemused.

"Well yes. Any foolspren can tell that." Syl pouted. Kaladin started to chuckle, then doubled over laughing.

"Oh stop that. He's still a disrespectful Cryptic, the exact opposite of that Rock fellow." Syl complained. Kaladin stared at her.

"We're done here." Syl blinked out of Kaladin's vision.

"We ready to go?" Shallan asked.

"Just about. Come on." Kaladin walked over to the Lightweaver.

"Crypts are just a block east. Let's go." She said.

Arriving at the crypts, they found a board over the door with glyphs written over it.

"Do not enter. Mad parshmen." Shallan translated.

"Looks like this is it. Come on, we don't want to keep Renarin waiting." Kaladin said. He tapped the door and Lashed it to a building across the street. Immediately, the door ripped from its hinges, and marbled pair of hands wrapped around Kaladin's throat. A silvery blade stabbed it through its face and the Voidbringer died with its red eyes burning.

"Storms." Kaladin gasped weakly, as Shallan stood before him, wielding Pattern.

"And that is why he's handsome." Syl whispered in Kaladin's ears. Kaladin summoned Syl, and the two of them entered the crypts.

"Spooky place." Shallan whispered. "The Voidbringers don't help, but it would be spooky without them too." She added.

"Come on." Kaladin opened a gate inside as the two of them walked through. The two of them glowed slightly with Stormlight, fighting off the oppressive darkness.

A hiss suddenly rang out and a parshman with glowing red eyes swung a sword at Kaladin. He raised Syl and cut through the sword, as Shallan spun around and beheaded a charging Voidbringer.

"Ambush!" Kaladin shouted as five more Voidbringers entered the hall. Kaladin stabbed one as Shallan pulled back, and killed another Voidbringer with a quick stab.

"Keep steady feet! Hold Pattern with two hands, that's Stonestance." Kaladin shouted from behind her, cutting a Voidbringer from its hips to its face. It fell promptly with burning eyes. Shallan blinked, and swung her blade, killing the last attacking parshman. The two of them breathed heavily for a second. Then Kaladin shouted as an clattered off the stones next to him and a second flew, aiming directly for his eye when it stopped in midair, a shield having formed between him and the arrow. Shallan ran forward and stabbed the Voidbringer archer.

"Thanks Syl." Kaladin said. "That arrow would have killed me if you didn't form the shield."

"That wasn't me. I didn't see the second arrow." Syl said, confused.

"Archery is a pattern. If one arrow misses, a second one is likely to be shot." Pattern piped up.

"Pattern, *you* saved Kaladin?" Syl stared, incredulous.

"Yes." Pattern gave a satisfied buzz.

"See? He's not so bad." Kaladin grinned. Syl fell silent.

The Radiants wandered further into the crypts.

"We must be getting close. How much larger could this place be?" Shallan asked.

"If it dates back to the Silver Kingdoms, large. That's a lot of generations of dead people." Kaladin shrugged.

Syl had pulled into Shadesmar, as had Pattern.

"I was wrong about you." Syl said.

"Did we not already discuss this? Ah, a lie. I believed we were friends when you still harbored animosity." Pattern droned. Syl glared at him.

"Are you done?" She asked. Pattern was quiet. "As I was trying to say, I was wrong about your kind. I was raised in an honorspren family. We were always taught that Cryptics were evil, that they were dishonorspren. But you saved my human there. You saved me. You did an honorable thing. Why?" She demanded.

"I enjoy lies, Sylphrena. Does this make me a bad spren? Mmm, I think not. Maybe I am a bad spren. But a lie is not evil. You are humorous. Humor is one of my favorite lies. Is humor evil?" Pattern asked.

"Of course not." Syl replied.

"You are honorspren. Some might say honor is evil." Pattern continued.

"Why you little –" Syl spluttered.

"I do not think so. Kaladin is a good man. He is honorable. Amaram is a bad man. Killing him would save many lives. Honor tells that killing him is wrong. Mmm, honor is an interesting lie. Spying on our enemies is a good. Lying to our enemies is dishonorable. Yes, honor is neither good nor bad. It is how we use it that determines its morality. Lies are no different." Pattern finished. Syl was silent for a moment.

"Pattern?" She asked.

"Mmm?" The Cryptic replied.

"You said earlier that I'm attracted to honor." She mentioned.

"This is true. Much like I am attracted to lies." Pattern chirped.

"I think you are an honorable spren." Syl told him.

"Think this is it?" Kaladin asked Shallan, in front of an ornately decorated gate.

"Looks like it." Shallan nodded. Kaladin breathed in, and Lashed the door to the wall. It slammed open, and the two entered. Ten sarcaphegi sat around the perfectly circular room, with a series of gems lining it.

"This is it. It's just like the one at Natanatan, except for the coffins." Shallan said. She reached her hand out to summon Pattern, when a coffin opened. A fully armored Voidbringer stepped out, holding a spear. One by one, the rest of the coffins opened, and twelve Voidbringers emerged.

"Oh storms." Kaladin growled, and held out his hand to summon Syl. Nothing formed in his hands.

"Syl? Syl, I need you!" Kaladin shouted. Similarly, Shallan stared at her empty hand, Pattern not forming.

"Damnation!" Shallan shouted. A Voidbringer swung a spear at Kaladin. Kaladin ducked, and lashed the creature to the ceiling. Grabbing the spear, Kaladin spun around and quickly impaled a second. He tossed a second spear to Shallan.

"Go! Run!" He shouted. Shallan shook her head.

"I'm not leaving you." She snapped, and deflected a stab from a Voidbringer. She shoved the spearhead into the creature, who glanced at the wound and struck her, knocking her back. Kaladin turned and threw his spear, shearing the Voidbringer's throat.

"I said go! You're not a warrior." Kaladin snapped.

"Behind you!" Shallan pointed. Kaladin spun around and grabbed the handle of the ax a Voidbringer was swinging, fighting the creature for the weapon.

"Syl, if you can hear me, I'm sorry for yelling at you about Pattern. I really need you right now!" He shouted. There was no response. The Voidbringer kicked Kaladin's shin, knocking him down. With a look of contempt, it swung its ax, and split open Kaladin's head.

Kaladin vanished into Stormlight. The Voidbringer had enough time to look confused before Kaladin stabbed it through the back with a Voidbringer spear.

"Be more careful, I don't have enough Stormlight to create another illusion of you!" Shallan shouted, knocking away stabs from another Voidbringer with her spear.

"Where are our storming spren?" Kaladin growled, punching in Voidbringer teeth.

"I—" Shallan started when her eyes widened.

"Kaladin, we're back!" Syl shouted.

"Where in Braize were you?" Kaladin growled.

"It doesn't matter. Hold out your hand!" Syl commanded. Kaladin summoned his Shardspear, as Shallan produced her own Shardblade. The two of them swung in unison, cutting down the remaining Voidbringers. Shallan stormed over to the Oathgate and plunged Pattern in. Nothing happened.

"Maybe Renarin is wherever our *storming* spren were." Kaladin started when the portal flipped and they were suddenly in Urithiru, surrounded by Dalinar, Renarin, Navani, and Adolin.

"Congratulations. You just saved us from starvation." Navani said warmly. Adolin rushed over to the frazzled Shallan.

"Are you okay?" He asked, worriedly. Shallan shoved him aside.

"I'm fine. I need to have a chat with a spren." She growled. She and Kaladin hurried into the next room, where Syl and Pattern materialized before them.

"Sorry about that." Syl said weakly.

"What happened." Kaladin demanded.

"Well, Pattern and I were very busy, doing some scouting in Shadesmar. We thought we saw a Voidspren nearby." Syl quickly said.

"I am attracted to your lies Sylphrena. But our Radiants should know the truth. We did not see a Voidspren. The two of us were in Shadesmar together bonding." Pattern explained.

"Bonding? You mean like—" Shallan asked.

"A process similar to human mating." Pattern replied with a hint of smugness.

"*Pattern!*" Syl swatted the symbol. All anger faded from Kaladin's eyes.

"You mean, the two of you were... while we..." He doubled over laughing, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Copulating." Pattern piped up helpfully.

"That was supposed to be a secret." Syl pouted with crossed arms.

"An honorspren keeping secrets? You really do love him." Shallan giggled.

"Well, I guess that solves our teamwork problem. Next time you two need some time alone, don't do it in the middle of a battle." Kaladin wiped some tears from his eyes, holding in laughs.

"Maybe I want to be alone now." Syl snapped, and pulled into Shadesmar. Next to her, Pattern appeared in his cloaked form. Syl glared at the Cryptic.

"Do you intend to continue where we left off?" Pattern asked with a twinge of laughter in his voice.

"Shut up." Syl said, and sat down, holding the Cryptic's hand. The two of them gazed at the Shadesmar landscape of Roshar. Somewhere out there, the Everstorm was ravaging the land. Odium, the One who Hates was at work with the Last Desolation. It was a time of fear and death. Yet next to Shallan's spren, Syl felt strangely calm. The honorspren and the Cryptic were united. If they could come together, perhaps the rest of the world could too.