

The Shadow of Giants

A Second Age of Retha Drabble

By A. M. Sohma

As the First Officer for Observational Fiends, Teara was the defacto leader while the guild was stranded in Second Age of Retha and their Guildmistress was unavailable.

It was an honor she hadn't expected—and frankly didn't want—and it was made worse by the fact that Observational Fiends was one of the biggest guilds that had a significant portion of members online. This meant the leaders of the other large guilds—like Silver Army, Corporate Force, and KOS—contacted *her* to coordinate plans and ideas.

Teara had spent the majority of the time worrying if she was doing right by her guild and absent Guildmistress...until Kit the elf-dancer smashed her way into Elba with a rag-tag party and forcibly stopped the fighting between *Midnight Watch* and *Steadfast*.

Kit had shown off her strategic mind and battle savvy both in the way she stamped out the infighting *and* used forces who had spent *days* fighting one another to repel and defeat a goblin invasion.

It impressed Teara, but it also seemed appropriate once she got past Kit's horrible character design.

Kit was from Milk Crown. She was a reminder from a chapter in Retha that was long gone, and the last player in a long dead guild that had set records that still hadn't been beaten.

Seeing the different way she played was enough to convince Teara to follow her, but it was what she said in the aftermath that bought her loyalty.

"Your guild is more important than preserving past roles," Kit said as they looked out on Elba's harbor. "They have clearly chosen to follow you. But as long as you second-guess yourself, Observational Fiends is going to be unstable because it means *you* don't believe in *them*."

The elf dancer had gone on to offer Teara and Observational Fiends the use of Milk Crown's guildzone.

Her words and offer made Teara realize that Kit hadn't succeeded just because of her raid experience, but because she saw the hearts of people and acted not to preserve their dignity or opinions of themselves, but rather to save them from the deathtrap they were caught in.

Kit didn't care if she was popular. She was more concerned about getting everyone out alive.

And that is the type of leader we need right now, Teara thought as she strode through the streets of Luminos, slowly making her way north. *Though it does make me wonder what the rest of Milk Crown must have been like. Kit said she wasn't even an officer, and she's this extraordinary. How amazing were the leaders?*

She glanced up, spotting her pygmy owl—one of the smallest birds bonded to her character—flying high above the streets, veering around colorful flags and wooden store signs.

You have a private message from: Metronome

Accept message?

The prompting flickered to life in front of her. Teara pressed the button to accept the message. "Is something wrong, Metronome?"

"Nah, everyone is having a blast. This guildzone is incredible, you've gotta see it. But I thought I'd give you a ring and find out how Luminos is doing?"

“Not great. There’s no fighting, but it has a...stale taste to it. I think the only reason why there isn’t rioting is because of all the patrols the big guilds do.”

Teara had taken Kit up on her offer to use Milk Crown’s guildzone. She had dropped off all her guildmates at the zone—after being put through the wringer in Elba she wasn’t going to allow her guild to be used for patrols until they had at least a few days of rest—and had turned around and left before getting much more than a glimpse inside the guildzone as Kit set their visitor status.

“*I guess it’s a good thing you’re out and about, then,*” Metronome said, interrupting Teara’s thoughts. “*To show everyone you’re still here and doing fine after the Elba mess.*”

“Yes, but it’s probably unnecessary.” Teara held up her hand, and her owl glided down and landed on her wrist—which was safely covered with her falconer’s glove. “Midnight Watch and Steadfast have been partying nonstop since we got back. Between them and the gossips that are the RPer’s, I think everyone knows what went down in Elba.”

“*Maybe, but you can bet Saint isn’t walking around in the streets, showing himself just to reassure everyone.*”

“It’s fine,” Teara assured her as she strolled down hedge lined walkway that would shuttle her into the guildhall. “I’m almost back.”

“*Great! You’re gonna love this place. They have a swimming pool in the garden—with a waterfall!*”

Teara frowned as she stepped into the shadow cast by the massive building. “A swimming pool?”

“*Well, it’s not technically a swimming pool. I think Fame called it a pool of reflection. But she and Fortune both said Milk Crown members swam in it all the time.*”

Yes, more and more Teara had to wonder what the disbanded guild was like in its prime. (It was a weird sensation—like wanting to attend a sports game of a team that no longer existed.)

“A pool of reflection sounds expensive.”

“*Maybe so, but it certainly is fun—particularly because we didn’t have to pay for it.*”

Teara cracked a smile. “Yeah, Kit said Milk Crown invested a lot of money in their guildzone. I can’t wait for an official tour. I’ll talk to you when I arrive?”

“*I’ll keep watch for you.*”

It didn’t strike Teara as being necessary, but she cut off the PM without saying so.

It took her a few minutes to make her way to the door to Milk Crown’s guildzone. It was in a tower—one of the more large and expensive locations.

Teara put her hand on the door, and a new screen popped up.

Speak the Password to Enter.

She ignored it but kept her hand on the door. A few moments passed before the blue words turned green.

Visitor Pass Detected

The door clicked, and Teara easily pulled it open.

The passageway of the guildhall had been silent, but inside the Milk Crown guildzone was a storm of happy voices, badly out-of-tune songs, and high spirits.

Konk ran past in a pair of blue swimming trunks that looked out of place among the multi-story tall angel statues, the stain glass windows, and the general fantasy feel of the place.

Shooty D'Arrow and a few other guild members were laughing as they drank punch and ate the plates of food—everything from fresh baked bread to meat roasts to cut pieces of fruit drizzled in royal honey.

But the happiest of all were possibly the two guild NPCs, Fame and Fortune. They were surrounded by a swirl of eager Observational Fiends.

“You all ought to line up—we best be efficient!” Fame unrolled a map with a flourish that made her red pigtails bounce.

“Yes, and if you all crowd around me like this, your poor armor choices might distract me from whatever Hero is receiving our services at the moment.” Though Fortune’s words were a bit harsh, his smile was just as wide as the one mirrored on his sister’s face, and he clapped to contain his obvious joy.

As the players shifted around him, Fortune glanced at a death knight and shook his head. “Though I can tell *you* that you really ought to get the full Night Cry Knight gear set.”

“That’s dropped in the Cloud Caper raid—each piece has a drop range of .0035%,” Fame said. “But I do happen to have the map for the raid dungeon here!”

“Teara!” Metronome slung her lyre across her back, then trotted across the chamber. “Hey everyone—Teara is back!”

Teara smiled in greeting, but was surprised when all of Observational Fiends stopped what they were doing and turned to greet her.

“Welcome back!”

“How was it?”

“I think we ought to salute you when you come in now—we need to remind stupid ol’ *Saint* that you’re our leader.”

“Hey Teara!”

“Teara!”

“You should have *some* of us come with to protect you.”

The greetings were so intermingled and mixed Teara couldn’t discern who said what—though the last one sounded like Konk, of course.

Metronome pushed her way to the front. “Are you ready for your tour? Fame and Fortune said Kit gave us permission to take any of the unclaimed armor, and I stumbled on a trophy room a bit ago. You have *got* to see it!”

Teara scanned her guildmates faces. The strain that had clouded their eyes and tightened the muscles of their faces during the grim time in Elba had already faded away. She could *feel* the difference in them.

I won’t let that happen again she vowed. I might screw up and make a mistake, but they’ll forgive me. And I’ll do everything I can to see them through this.

“Yes,” Teara said. “I’m ready.”

And as Observational Fiends rested in the shadow of a long gone giant and the First Officer made a vow that would change *everything* in the way they operated, the guildmembers laughed and rejoiced.

The End