

SHOES TO FILL  
By Kelly McGlade

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## CHARACTERS

ALANNE, brand-new empress of Damaria after the recent passing of her father, the king. Eighteen.

DONNAR, Damaria's top governor-general and the crown's closest military advisor. Late thirties.

SARICK, ambassador from the neighboring kingdom of Rackton. Forties to fifties.

MESSENGER, a Damarian messenger.

## TIME

Midmorning.

## PLACE

The office of the emperor within the Damarian imperial palace

*(Lights up. DONNAR and SARICK stand at attention on either side of a pair of carved wooden double doors. An elaborate desk with stacks of paper and spread-open maps stands front and center before them. There is visible negative tension between the two men.)*

*(The sound of heels on marble approaches from within. The doors open and ALANNE steps into the office, crowned in the regalia of her kingdom.)*

ALANNE

Morning, gentlemen.

DONNAR

Your Imperial Majesty.

SARICK

Your Majesty, welcome.

ALANNE

*(Shaking DONNAR's hand)*

General Donnar, it's good to see you again after all these years. And...

SARICK

*(Swooping in to shake ALANNE's hand)*

Sarick, Your Majesty. Ambassador from your allied kingdom of Rackton.

ALANNE

Of course. Sarick. My father wrote of you often.

SARICK

My condolences on his passing and congratulations on your crowning, if it's not too soon to say.

ALANNE

No, no. I thank you. We are at war, after all. I understand there's little time for sentimentality.

*(ALANNE sits at the desk. DONNAR and SARICK hover over either shoulder.)*

SARICK

Yes, so, about the war...

DONNAR

*(Pointing to a map on the desk)*

Damaria holds three key forts along our northern border. Enemy Lorian forces have been pummeling the easternmost for two months now, but as long as our supply lines remain secure they won't get through.

SARICK

Rackton, Your Majesty, has also just completed work on three new battleships. They may join your floundering Damarian fleet on the West Sea at your convenience.

ALANNE

I see. And what of Rackton's armies?

SARICK

Moving for your easternmost fortress with fresh guns and ammunition as we speak. A show of good faith. Your father was good friends with Rackton's king for many years, we see no reason why that friendship couldn't survive Damaria's transfer of power.

ALANNE

Of course. General Donnar, what is the status of our domestic supply line?

DONNAR

Stable, for the moment. We have cavalry regiments stationed at every outpost along the route, though it does leave our port cities underdefended. There could be a danger from the sea-

SARICK

Your Majesty, you needn't worry your little head about supplying all your troops alone. Bolster your ports, let Rackton bear the brunt of resource distribution, as we *are* allies.

DONNAR

Your Imperial Majesty, I wouldn't advise-

ALANNE

Let me handle this, General. Ambassador Sarick, forgive me for my bluntness, but don't think I can't see exactly what you're doing.

SARICK

My apologies if I've offended, I mean no ill will-

ALANNE

No, certainly not, from such a longstanding ally of Damaria. But this is how it starts, isn't it? I accept your generous munitions gift, then I incorporate Rackton-built battleships into my navy. Pretty soon, Damaria finds itself reliant on your little gifts and entirely dependent on your kingdom to survive.

SARICK

Do you not wish to see these conquering Lorians vanquished?

ALANNE

I wish to protect my kingdom, as it is so newly mine to protect. Threats do not come from invading armies alone.

SARICK

Your Majesty, your father put his full trust in Rackton's alliance-

ALANNE

I'm well aware, Ambassador. I may have spent the majority of my life up until this point at the royal boarding school in the country, but believe me, my father kept his heiress well informed. Specifically, I fail to recall *any* such generous displays of wartime good will while he was on the throne. Why send your ships and munitions now? Could it be because Damaria's new empress is young and untested in your eyes? Easy to manipulate, perhaps?

SARICK

What an insensitive accusation! Rackton would never!

ALANNE

I'm sure.

DONNAR

Your Imperial Majesty, as much as I am loath to admit it, our navy is losing ships and territory on the seas. Perhaps the addition of Rackton's battleships, just this once, could keep Loria from breaching our shores.

ALANNE

This country was left in my hands, General. I refuse to be the empress who lets a foreign power seize control of our resources simply because she came to power amid the chaos of war. My father may have blindly trusted Rackton, but I will not allow their talk of *alliance* to distract me from my duty to Damaria.

SARICK

My king will be most displeased to hear of your answer, Your Majesty.

ALANNE

It's 'Your Imperial Majesty Alanne of Damaria.' And you may tell your king that I will accept his friendship, but Damaria can – and will – fight this war without his handouts.

SARICK

You will regret that decision before this war is out.

DONNAR

*(Going for the sword at his hip)*

Is that a threat?

*(A MESSENGER bursts through the doors, ALANNE, SARICK, and DONNAR all whirl.)*

## MESSENGER

The Republic of Alpine has relinquished their vow of neutrality! They've just sacked Loria's capitol city with a massive army! Loria surrendered, the war is over!

*(Silence in the office. The MESSENGER starts to read the room and shirk slowly back towards the doors.)*

## ALANNE

*Alpine?*

## SARICK

Since when did that little island build up an army big enough to sack Loria?

## DONNAR

Decades of neutrality and secretive borders. I knew they were up to some project...

## ALANNE

*(Rising)*

Well, then. You heard the man, gentlemen. The war is over. Damaria will have no need for Rackton's battleships after all. Ambassador Sarick, if you would be so kind as to arrange for a summit between your king and myself. I believe it would be most beneficial for our country's friendship if we were to lay some ground rules moving forward.

## SARICK

*(Reluctantly, casting a restrained scowl about the room)*

Of course... Your Imperial Majesty.

*(SARICK bows stiffly and leaves the office.)*

*Fade to black.)*