

Neshkan

THE PROTECTOR OF THE SANDS



“I abandoned Shurima once.
It's time for me to come back.”

Neshkan used to be a medical student, passionate and always eager to learn more. Very early on, he developed interest in the body, going from one discovery to another, particularly about blood.

He managed to treat incurable-said patients and that caught the eye of his superiors. They followed his many successes closely, bringing him more and more desperate cases. Rich, poor, anyone could have a chance to pass through the hands of this young noble heart.

His qualities as a healer reached the ears of the highest Shurimian circles. Having someone on the battlefield who can heal almost any wound, putting a doomed soldier back on his feet, is a gift. But having someone on the battlefield that can fight as well as mend his fallen comrades, is a fearsome weapon.

At the dawn of his 16th birthday, Neshkan was moved to another department. One where blood was meant to be spilled instead of brought back into vessels. There, he was to learn fighting technics and the handling of weapons. There, he was to learn how to make the frightful wounds he had so far cared for.

At first, the noble heart he was could not cope with the art of war. But then, forced by the intense teaching, he came to understand the necessity of it. To protect his homeland and its values, his family, he had to become the fierce general he was looked upon. For he knew the value of blood though, maybe he could bring respect of it in the art of war. Quickly, Shuriman soldiers fought by his sides and swore by his name for he inspired strength, courage and moderation.

Then, it was only a matter of time before Neshkan was proposed to be Ascended. At the end of the holy stairs, he was to be judged before the Solar Disc. Heart and soul bathing in the light of the deadly Judgement. And when the last beams of the burning Sun faded, a Lion emerged, the embodiment of the perfect blend of strength and nobility of the heart. At the dawn of his 24th birthday, Neshkan became one of the youngest Ascended warrior-gods of the Shurimian History.

The celebrations were short lived though. Not long after the ritual, the Emperor felt seriously ill and Neshkan was called for help. Unfortunately, his impressive talents could not defeat the evil that had stricken the Emperor. If not to cure the magical poisoning, at least he could try to soothe the pain. And so he remained day and night, until the seventh night, when the emperor took his last breath.

Then, succeeding his father, the son of the deceased Emperor requested Neshkan to be in charge of his personal protection. And Neshkan became so over six generations of emperors. More than foiling many assassination attempts over the years, the leonine Ascended became a respected General of war and earned the title of “Protector of the Sands”.

Not on the war ground anymore but adviser of war from a distance, Neshkan remained true to his values and spread them to soldiers. He advocated peace above all and if war could not be prevented, he made sure it did not turn into bloody conquests. Until Nashramae.

Renekton's violence could not have been prevented. He had left the rebel city bare of life. On every floor, the spilled blood of thousands of innocents. A city of wonders stained forever. That was not how it was suppose to go. Renekton was suppose to soothe the rebellion and find common ground, not leave carnage in his wake. To never forget, Neshkan dipped his hand in the unjustly shed blood and left an indelible mark on his face and his body.

Flying back to the Shurimian's throne, he roared his rage and disgust to the actual Emperor's face who had already taken in the celebrations of Shurima's victory. Having seen the greed in the man's eyes, Neshkan knew the cause was lost. He broke his vows with the Emperor for Neshkan was only linked to him by duty if not by magic. Granted with eternal life, the Ascended could still be killed and the Emperor had threatened him with that but Neshkan left away all the same. This very night, Neshkan set off and never looked back.

None of the other Ascended intervened. The Emperor forced them never to speak the name of their former brother. The name was forgotten and Neshkan fell into oblivion. Months went on and Neshkan still crossed the endless immensity of sands. Until he found refuge in a small temple, long forgotten by men and gods. There, he settled and buried himself in the sands to sleep for millenials. To remain far from the greed of men, the violence of demi-gods.

More than three millennia passed and nothing could awake the sleeping legend. Until one day, not far from his hiding place, a cry for help. The pure soul of a warrior who clings to life is what awake Neshkan. The sand slipped away as his muscular body emerged from the ground. He shook his mane to get rid of the last grains and went to find the soldier, sheltering behind a meager oasis.

At first, the woman felt wary of this stranger coming out of nowhere but not having the choice, she let herself be approached. When Neshkan removed his hood and revealed his leonine face though, the woman let out a cry of surprise. Legends told all Ascended had died during the battle of Icthia, how could this one be standing in front of her? Probably a mirage, the dream of the last instants given the number of wounds she suffered from. She passed out and Neshkan carried her to his place and nursed her back to help as best he could.

When she woke up, he learned her name, Iha Ziharo. She was a grave robber and earned her wounds after an adventure gone wrong. An outrageous thing for the former soldier of the Emperor's army Neshkan was. What Emperor and what army? the woman asked. Those were long gone. She laughed at his shocked face and told him about the sad fate of Shurima. The nation had perished in the sands, the Ascended fallen with it. Neshkan shed a tear at that.

The two stayed together for four weeks, the time it took for the woman to heal properly. She updated him the history of the thousands years he missed while he told her about the glory days of Shurima and the Ascended and the Solar Disc. Then she left him to go on a quest of revenge and he never heard of her again.

Once again alone, Neshkan had only two choices. To hibernate deep in the sands for another millennial to pass and bury his sorrow of a long lost brilliant nation. Or to cross the sands in search of a sign of the Shurimian rebirth. He took the latter.

Years happened before he saw it. The Solar Disc rising. It could only mean one thing, a future emperor had come to life again. And it was time for Neshkan to win back his rightful place. He had been the right-hand man of the Shurimian emperors for centuries and he would become so again to bring Shurima back to life.

